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FACE THREAT, FACE SUPPORT, AND ADVICE EFFECTIVENESS FOLLOWING INFIDELITY

Molly S. Eickholt
University of Kentucky, msei222@g.uky.edu

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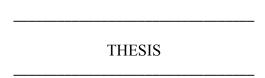
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FACE THREAT, FACE SUPPORT, AND ADVICE EFFECTIVENESS FOLLOWING INFIDELITY

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THESIS
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the College of Communication and Information at the University of Kentucky

By

Molly S. Eickholt

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Brandi N. Frisby, PhD, Professor of Communication

Lexington, Kentucky

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

FACE THREAT, FACE SUPPORT, AND ADVICE EFFECTIVENESS FOLLOWING
INFIDELITY

This study examined advice interactions following infidelity. Participants ($N = 213$)
completed a survey concerning an instance on infidelity and a subsequent advice
interaction. Injured party perceptions of advice interactions were measured by examining
advice messages, perceived face threat, and perceived face support, in addition to
perceived effectiveness of the advice message. Results from this study showed no
significant differences in perceived face threat, perceived face support, or advice
effectiveness between different advice messages. Results also indicated both positive and
negative face threat as negative predictors of advice effectiveness. While negative face
support was a positive predictor of advice effectiveness, positive face support was a
negative predictor. When controlling for relational closeness, negative face support was
the only significant predictor of advice effectiveness.

KEYWORDS: Face threat, face support, infidelity, advice effectiveness, relational
closeness

Molly S. Eickholt

June 4, 2013

FACE THREAT, FACE SUPPORT, AND ADVICE EFFECTIVENESS FOLLOWING
INFIDELITY

By

Molly Susan Eickholt

Brandi N. Frisby, PhD
Director of Thesis

Timothy L. Sellnow, PhD
Director of Graduate Studies

June 4, 2013

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Despite common relational expectations for faithfulness and the negative

outcomes associated with being unfaithful, infidelity occurs relatively frequently.

Wiederman and Hurd (1999) found that 75% of men and 68% of women have engaged in

some act of infidelity at some point. However, the definition of infidelity differs across

romantic relationship types and in different contexts (Blow & Hartnett, 2005). While

sexual intercourse with someone other than an individual's romantic partner may seem to

be the most obvious form of infidelity, smaller transgressions still raise questions about

what constitutes infidelity for each individual. For example, one romantic couple may

agree that holding hands with someone outside of the relationship counts as infidelity

while another couple only views sexual intercourse with another individual as infidelity.

Even within couples, there can be disagreements about what constitutes infidelity

(Cupach & Metts, 1994). One member of the couple could believe casually flirting with

another member of the opposite sex is harmless, while the other partner may consider

those actions unfaithful. This study concerns the injured party (i.e. the romantic partner

who did not commit the transgression) within the transgression.

While individuals may differ on his or her views and understanding of infidelity,

socially constructed negative perceptions of infidelity are fueled by religion, media, and

social conventions (Atwood & Seifer, 1997). Furthermore, the language associated with

infidelity is largely negative (e.g. "adultery," "infidel," "cuckold"). In fact, colloquially,

infidelity is commonly referred to as cheating. These social constructions influence an

individual's relational expectations, definitions of, and responses to infidelity. Infidelity

has been defined as the violation of the exclusivity expectations and standards set by one

within a romantic relationship (Tafoya & Spitzberg, 2007). Similarly, Cupach and Metts (1994) define a relational transgression as an instance when "one or both partners consider them to be *violations of some rule of conduct or…expectation*" (p.70), for the instance of infidelity, a rule of exclusivity. Considering both definitions, for this study, infidelity will be defined as the perception by one or both partners that a violation of exclusivity standards has occurred. This conceptualization allows for study participants to report on any type of behavior they perceive as acts of infidelity in their own romantic relationships.

Face, Infidelity, and Support

While individuals may have differing perceptions of what constitutes a relational transgression, including infidelity, the potential for face threats still exists. An individual's face refers to his or her desired public persona (Goffman, 1967). Through social interactions, an individual's face can be supported or threatened (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Goffman, 1967). Within romantic relationships, infidelity is a damaging relational transgression (Wiederman & Hurd, 1999) to both individuals involved as well as to the romantic relationship (Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2005; Hall & Fincham, 2009; Shackelford & Buss, 1997). One consequence of infidelity is the potential face threat individuals may experience (Olson, Russell, Higgins-Kessler, & Miller, 2002). For example, the method of discovery of the transgression can provide varying degrees of face threat (Afifi, Falato, & Weiner, 2001). Olson and colleagues also find that individuals seek support in order to cope with infidelity, as well as the associated face threats. The support individuals receive can additionally influence the relational and individual consequences following infidelity.

Among the various types of support individuals may receive following infidelity, advice is one form of support that can influence the coping process. While the advice they receive, either solicited or unsolicited, may provide them with benefits (e.g. another point of view, assistance with solving a problem; Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997), these individuals also potentially experience further face threats (Cupach & Metts, 1994). These face threats can occur because of the nature of the advice, the nature of the relationship with the individual, the implication that the recipient is not competent enough to solve the problem, or whether the individual chooses to follow the advice (Cupach & Metts, 1994; Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997). Advice providers have the potential to either threaten or support the individual's face, which can influence perceptions of the supportive message. For instance, perceived regard for face within supportive messages also predicted evaluations of the supportive message (Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000).

For this current study, the main focus on the evaluation of the advice message is advice effectiveness. Following the operationalization of advice effectiveness by Jones and Burleson (1997), advice effectiveness will be conceptualized in reference to advice messages perceived by the injured party as person-centered, helpful, appropriate, and sensitive.

Research Goals

As infidelity is a frequent face-threatening relational transgression (Wiederman & Hurd, 1999), and advice interactions may risk further face threats for the injured party, the overarching research goal for this study is to explore the face threats and face support associated with advice interactions following infidelity. Under the umbrella of this overarching research goal, the specific research questions and hypotheses for this study

will concern (1) the relationships between advice messages and the injured party's perceptions of face threat, face support, and advice effectiveness; (2) the relationship between face threat and advice effectiveness; (3) the relationship between face support and advice effectiveness; and (4) the relationship between the relational closeness of the advice provider and the injured party and the injured party's perceptions of face threats, face support, and advice effectiveness.

Inherently, infidelity is a face-threatening transgression for individuals involved (Afifi, Falato, & Weiner, 2001; Frisby & Booth-Butterfield, 2010; Shackelford, LeBlanc, & Drass, 2000). While support my help individuals cope with this relational transgression, (Olson et al., 2002), support may also involve risking an individual's face (Cupach & Metts, 1994).

Practical Value

Because this research goal concerns face support, face threat, and advice following infidelity, working toward this research goal will be useful in several important ways: (1) by providing important insight into the aftermath of infidelity; (2) by finding information that can be useful for counselors, friends, and family members who may provide advice to individuals experiencing infidelity; and (3) by extending extant research on infidelity, advice, and face theories. The following paragraphs explain each of these ideas in more detail.

This study aims to further understand the injured party's perceptions of advice following infidelity, regardless of whether the injured party actively sought or passively received the advice. Exploring these perceptions will provide a more in depth understanding of the aftermath of infidelity by examining the face threats and face

support individuals perceive during advice interactions following infidelity. Examining these processes is important to further understanding the coping process following infidelity.

Understanding advice interactions after infidelity can be translated to more practical areas, such as counseling individuals who have experienced infidelity. Following infidelity, individuals may seek professional service. Current research pertains to various aspects of counseling following infidelity (Atwood & Seifer, 1997; Gordon, Baucom, & Snyder, 2004; Gordon et al., 2005), which is a common subject couple therapists encounter (Blow & Harnett, 2005). However, as Blow and Harnett also argued, much of the research is difficult to translate to counseling sessions, as existing research is somewhat conflicting and hard to determine practical value. As the current research aims to understand more about the face threats, face support, and advice effectiveness associated with advice interactions following infidelity, counselors can use this understanding to tailor their messages to clients while considering the risk of face threats. By considering the potential for face threats, counselors may provide individuals with more effective advice, while also supporting their face needs. The current study may bring practical value to counselors helping individuals experiencing infidelity.

While counselors can use the information in this study to help support those experiencing infidelity, this study is also translational to friends and family members of affected individuals. Following infidelity, individuals expect support and advice from friends and family members (Colarossi, 2001). Additionally, Wilson, Roloff, and Carey (1998) found that while individuals may have concerns about their friend's romantic partners, these concerns are oftentimes not disclosed. Furthermore, perceptions of advice

effectiveness can be influenced by how the advice provider tends to an individual's face (Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000). Much like the value of this study for counselors, friends and family members can also consider the risk of potential face threats and the opportunity for face support in order to provide more effective and face-supportive advice to the injured party.

Theoretical Value

In addition to the practicality of this research for counselors, friends, and family members, the research goal is aimed toward extending present research surrounding infidelity, specifically face threats and advice following infidelity. For example, much of the extant research pertaining to infidelity concerns the conceptualization of infidelity (e.g. Atwood & Seifer, 1997; Blow & Hartnett, 2005; Kitzinger & Powell, 1995; Mattingly, Wilson, Clark, Bequette, & Weidler, 2010; Wilson, Mattingly, Clark, Weidler, & Bequette, 2011), the propensity to commit infidelity (e.g. Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Drigotas, Safstrom, & Gentilia, 1999; Mongeau, Hale, & Alles, 1994; Shackelford, Besser, & Goetz, 2008), the prevalence of infidelity (e.g. Tafoya & Spitzberg, 2007; Wiederman & Hurd, 1999), and the aftermath of infidelity (e.g. Buunk, 1982; Gordon et al, 2004; Gordon et al., 2005; Roloff, Soule, & Carey, 2001). This study extends extant infidelity research by exploring the perceptions and effectiveness of advice during the aftermath of infidelity. In addition, this study will examine the processes behind advice interactions after the potential compounded face threat of infidelity and advice.

While there are some studies that explore supportive communication following infidelity (e.g. Colarossi, 2001; Olson et al., 2002), fewer studies concern the risk of face threat associated with advice interactions following infidelity. Much of the research on

support and advice focuses on the positive individual and relational benefits of social support (Abbey, Andrews, & Halman, 1995; Cobb, 1976; Uchino, 2009) and how supportive messages can promote these beneficial outcomes (Barrera, Sandler, & Ramsay, 1981; Dunkel-Schetter & Skokan, 1990; Goldsmith, 2000; Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; Jones & Burleson, 1997).

Furthermore, while the risk of face threat inherent in supportive communication is explored in current research (e.g. Cupach & Metts, 1994; Goldsmith, 2004), little research exists pertaining to face threatening advice following infidelity. Current research also does not focus on the idea of compounded face threat, first from infidelity, and second from receiving advice in order to cope with the infidelity. This study aims to provide more insight into injured party's perceptions of advice interactions following infidelity. This insight is useful for determining how advice effectiveness is influenced by these perceptions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Goffman (1959) examined individuals' public performances and formed a distinction between the image individuals wish to project to the public and the image they wish to keep private. Later, Goffman (1967) coined the term "face" as an individual's persona they wish to present to the public. The idea of "face" was later applied to basic social interactions (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Cupach & Metts, 1994; Goffman, 1967). Face theory explores the maintenance of individuals' face to understand how relationships function on a daily basis.

In the following sections, the concept of face is introduced as a framework and applied to the context for the present study. Infidelity is presented as a face-threatening and damaging phenomenon for both individuals and relationships. Following infidelity, individuals oftentimes receive advice, either solicited or unsolicited, from friends, family members, and professional counselors, potentially experiencing further face threats. These potential face threats could also potentially influence the effectiveness of the advice messages.

Theoretical Framework

The idea of "face" was introduced by Goffman (1967) as the image individuals present to the public. That is, an individual's face is the persona they wish the public to see and know. While individuals strive to present their desired face to the public, their face can be maintained or threatened. During instances in which an individual's face may be threatened, the individual usually experiences embarrassment or humiliation, the most common of these instances being unmeant gestures, inopportune intrusions, and faux pas (Goffman, 1967). Additionally, individuals may experience anger and hurt,

perceive damage to the relationship with whom the face threat is associated, anxiety and depression, and perceived devaluation from others (Cupach & Carson, 2002). Individuals maintain face by behaving in ways consistent with their self-perception and how others perceive them. Actions that compromise, or threaten, an individual's face are called face-threatening acts (FTAs) (Brown & Levinson, 1987). In instances in which their face is threatened, individuals practice face support, or processes used to "save face." For this study, face support refers to how an individual perceives others' attempts to maintain or support their face or faces.

From Goffman's (1967) work in social theory and the concept of face, Brown and Levinson (1987) extended his work and applied the idea of face to the wants of the individual. From this, Brown and Levinson conceptualized face to include two basic distinctions: positive face and negative face. Positive face is an individual's desire to be liked and accepted by others (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Specifically, this relates to an individual's self-esteem, as positive face involves a person's want to be understood, liked, or approved of by others. Brown and Levinson state that individuals also want others to desire what they want or have achieved.

Conversely, negative face is defined as an individual's need for independence (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Negative face refers to an individual's freedom to act. That is, if an individual imposes on another, he or she is threatening the other's negative face. Similarly, negative face-saving strategies follow the non-imposition of individuals. While both positive face and negative face are important to support in order to avoid embarrassment, support of one type of face may threaten the other (Cupach & Metts, 1994). For example, suppose an individual strives to support his or her relational

partner's negative face by encouraging them to make independent plans one weekend to promote independence and autonomy. The relational partner may perceive this as a threat to his or her positive face, if they feel they are not desirable enough to make plans with over the weekend. Similarly, an individual who strives to support his or her relational partner's positive face by constantly communicating reminders and assurances of positive affect may be perceived as overbearing, thus threatening the relational partner's negative face.

While in the best-case scenario an individual would strive to maintain the face of the other (Goffman, 1967), there are still instances in which the individual's behavior threatens another's face. Through self-respect, individuals tend to protect their own face. Through considerateness, individuals tend to protect the face of others. FTAs can threaten positive face, negative face, or both positive and negative face. The two main face work processes are preventative and corrective (Goffman, 1967). Both preventative and corrective processes can help minimize or prevent negative effects of FTAs.

There are many different situations that involve FTAs, or embarrassing predicaments that result in face threats to individuals. However, the various types of embarrassing predicaments can be categorized into two different types: (a) self-induced embarrassing predicaments; and (b) predicaments created by others (Cupach & Metts, 1994). Self-induced embarrassing predicaments (i.e. accidents, mistakes, conspicuousness, inept performance, tactlessness, deliberate rule violation) involve face threats to the person who created the predicament. Predicaments created by others (i.e. awkward interactions, team embarrassment, individualization, rudeness or abusiveness, false accusations or implications, privacy violations, empathic embarrassment, causing

others to look unpoised), enacted by an individual create face threats for others involved (Cupach & Metts, 1994). Oftentimes, as the focus of this study is on the injured party, infidelity is arguably a predicament created by others, in this case, the transgressor.

While each individual within a romantic relationship has a specific face, the individuals also have a relationship-specific face (Cupach & Metts, 1994), which relies on the norms for behavior and expectations within the relationship. When one partner deviates from these norms, or commits a transgression, the relationship-specific face is threatened, as well as each individual's face. Furthermore, relational transgressions threaten an individual's positive and negative face. When an individual commits a relational transgression, his or her relational partner may feel disliked or underappreciated. Additionally, the relational partner may also feel like he or she has less control within the relationship. The focus of this study largely concerns an individual's specific face.

Face theory can potentially be applied in almost all types of social interactions. Generally, studies suggest that messages that support an individual's face are oftentimes evaluated more positively by that individual (Caplan & Samter, 1999; Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000; MacGeorge, Lichtman, & Pressey, 2002). There are many ways messages can be constructed in order to support the recipient's face. These may include hedging, disclaimers, appeals for suspended judgment (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975), humor (Knapp, Stafford, & Daly, 1986), apologies (Goffman, 1967), and excuses and justifications (Cupach & Metts, 1994). Furthermore, complaints expressed to an individual tend to be face threatening by nature (Cupach & Carson, 2002).

Infidelity and Consequences

When dealing with infidelity, individuals may experience both positive and negative face threats. The injured party experiences positive face threats, or damage to his or her self-esteem and feelings of being liked, understood, and appreciated by the romantic partner (Shackelford et al., 2000). In a study of dating relationships, Frisby and Booth-Butterfield (2010) found greater positive face threat was associated with infidelity when compared to other reasons reported as the cause of relational termination (e.g., deception, long distance). Furthermore, Olson and colleagues (2002) reported that the injured party may experience perceived social isolation and embarrassment after infidelity, which also ties directly to positive face threat and to Cupach and Metts' (1994) argument about the face threats involved in embarrassing predicaments. The injured party may also experience negative face threat following infidelity through feelings of relational helplessness and powerlessness (Shackelford et al., 2000). This suggests a negative face threat, as these feelings relate to autonomy and control.

Infidelity can damage both individuals and relationships. These damaging effects include emotional distress, violence, and relationship dissolution (Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Gordon et al., 2005; Hall & Fincham, 2009; Shackelford & Buss, 1997). Infidelity often disrupts relational trust and the principal beliefs about a romantic relationship (Gordon et al., 2005). By breaking this trust through infidelity, the transgressor (i.e. the individual who committed the infidelity) also compromises many of the assumptions the injured party may have about the relationship. The discovery of infidelity can interfere with daily interactions between romantic partners (Gordon et al., 2004). Specifically,

relational termination, persistent questioning of the transgressor, and hypervigilance by the injured party are common (Gordon et al., 2005).

Olson and colleagues (2002) argued that after the disclosure of the infidelity, partners typically experience three emotional and relational phases: (1) roller coaster phase; (2) moratorium phase; and (3) trust building phase. During the roller coaster phase, individuals experience a wide variety of emotions, including anger, hope, and self-blame. Next, during the moratorium phase, individuals try to make sense of the transgression through seeking details, retreating, and seeking support from outside parties. Within this phase, individuals may feel socially isolated and embarrassed that their partner was unfaithful. Olson and colleagues found family members and friends as the primary means of support for the injured party during the moratorium phase. In fact, the "support, expectations, and advice of others often served as a factor in keeping couples together" (Olson et al., 2002, p. 428). During the last phase, trust can be regained, communication increases, and individuals may be reassured of commitment to one another.

Buunk (1982) explored the common coping strategies individuals use after they find their partner has been unfaithful. Avoidance of their partner, reappraisal of the relationship, and open communication with their partners were the most common strategies reported. All of these factors concern actions the injured party takes during interactions with the transgressor. While this wide array of coping strategies may help the injured party, seeking outside support to cope, whether professional or otherwise, may also help the individual to process the infidelity, as suggested in the second stage of Olson and colleagues' (2002) model. Supportive communication refers to "verbal and

nonverbal behavior produced with the intention of providing assistance to others perceived as needing that aid" (MacGeorge, Feng, & Burleson, 2011, p. 317).

Along with the relational and individual damage associated with infidelity, individuals who experience infidelity may also experience some form of social stigma. A prominent conceptualization of stigma states "stigma exists when elements of labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, and discrimination occur together in a power situation that allows them" (Link & Phelan, 2001, p. 377). Furthermore, as social stigma relates closely to self-esteem and self-concept (e.g. Crocker, 1998; Crocker & Major, 1989; Crocker, Voelkl, Testa, & Major, 1991), there are also strong links between the idea of face and stigma.

Advice interactions following infidelity sometimes involve disclosing to another that infidelity has occurred. Vangelisti and Caughlin (1997) found that while "taboo" topics may illicit social stigma, individuals still disclose to others. Applying these ideas to experiencing infidelity, injured parties may experience stigma surrounding infidelity, however, they may still choose to disclose to others in order to receive advice.

When applying social stigma to the context of infidelity, the injured party experiences negative outcomes, including potentially feeling stigmatized. While not much research exists on stigma as a consequence of infidelity, it is conceivable that the injured party experiences labeling, stereotyping, separation, status loss, or discrimination, to some degree. The injured party may experience status loss, as they may no longer be in a relationship that exhibits exclusivity. Because of this, the injured party may experience stereotyping or discrimination from members of his or her social network, if they perceive outside parties viewing them as unable to uphold a romantic relationship

consistent with social norms and relational expectations. Because many individuals believe infidelity to be negative and problematic (Atwood & Seifer, 1997), the injured party may perceive members of their social party as thinking less of them, which may lead to lower self-esteem and feelings of stigmatization. Self-stigma, or the stigma an individual experiences as a result of their own perceptions, is a common problem throughout stigma research (e.g. Corrigan & Watson, 2006; Wahl, 1999). Individuals experiencing infidelity may seclude themselves from society because of perceived reactions from their peers.

Goldsmith (1992) has argued that face theory is a particularly useful theoretical framework for studying supportive communication and support effectiveness. When dealing with social support between two individuals, face also becomes a relevant factor. Ideally, when receiving support, the recipient's positive face is supported (Cupach & Metts, 1994), as the supportive interaction may suggest the supporter likes or accepts the recipient. However, support can threaten both the recipient's positive and negative face. Advice, a specific type of support, can also threaten the recipient's face. For example, advice can be perceived as implying the recipient is inferior, threatening his or her positive face, and needs help solving his or her problems, threatening his or her negative face (Goldsmith, 2004).

Advice Interactions Following Infidelity

As mentioned previously, individuals experiencing infidelity expect to receive support from both their friends and their parents (Colarossi, 2001), and, furthermore, may seek support from these individuals (Olson et al, 2002). Olson and colleagues also found the support individuals involved with infidelity receive can sometimes help determine

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whether the relationship will persist or terminate. That is, an individual may decide to end a relationship based on support they received from others. Similarly, an individual may decide to move past the incidence of infidelity as a result of support they received from others.

The nature of supportive communication requires at least a perceived need of support by the individual giving the support. The individual with the problem, perceived or real, acknowledges a need for support and may seek task assistance from the person giving the support, or the support provider (Horowitz et al., 2001). Conversely, an injured party may not seek support but another may provide support regardless. Within supportive communication, Horowitz and colleagues describe three domains of content including: (a) the types of problems an individual may have; (b) the types of goals inherent within the problem; and (c) the types of reactions from the support provider. In instances of infidelity, the infidelity would constitute the type of problem, the injured party may have goals to make a decision about the fate of the relationship or to process the information, and the support provider will respond in a variety of ways in reaction to the problem.

Social support can manifest in the form of advice. Goldsmith (2004) conceptualized advice as a type of enacted informational support. Oftentimes, advice allows individuals to hear or obtain an expert opinion about a problem, another point of view useful for decision-making, or assistance with understanding options to solving a problem (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997). Goldsmith and Fitch found three problems associated with advice that apply in the context of coping with infidelity. First, when an individual provides another with advice, this support can either be interpreted as helpful

and caring or as intrusive. The perception of intrusive advice can threaten an individual's ideas of self-worth and autonomy. This problem identified by Goldsmith and Fitch relate to the present study in two ways. First, friends tend to withhold expressing concerns about an individual's romantic partner for several reasons, including not wanting to upset a friend, or the friend believed his or her concern was none of his or her business (Wilson et al., 1998), which is applicable when discussing infidelity. Goldsmith and Fitch (1997) also found that relational closeness and expertise on the part of the advice provider both affect the interpretation of the advice. For the purposes of this study, suppose an injured party discusses an instance of infidelity with a third party. The third party may give the injured party advice pertaining to the outcome of the romantic relationship. The injured party may gladly accept this advice, viewing it as helpful or caring. On the other hand, the injured party may find the advice intrusive, as the third party is not a member of the romantic relationship and may not have expertise on the situation.

Second, Goldsmith and Fitch (1997) found advice providers may potentially have to decide between being honest and being supportive of the advice recipient. The advice provider, if they disagree with the recipient's point of view, can either support the recipient's point of view, or provide them with an honest opinion. In advice interactions following infidelity, an advice provider may give the injured party an honest opinion about what the individual should do about the romantic relationship. Conversely, they may support the injured party's point of view through their supportive messages. For example, if an injured party discusses an instance of infidelity with a friend, they may disclose to their friend their intentions to maintain their romantic relationship. If the friend honestly believes the injured party should terminate their romantic relationship,

they can either provide the injured party with their honest advice, or provide support that follows the notion of maintaining the relationship.

The third and final dilemma Goldsmith and Fitch (1997) found is that provision of advice can potentially imply that the recipient is incompetent and needs another's expertise on a subject. Thus, following advice may lead to the individual feeling less autonomous, while rejecting advice may make the individual seem ungrateful. In advice interactions following infidelity, suppose the injured party discusses an instance of infidelity with his or her mother. The mother may provide them with advice to terminate the relationship. If the injured party decides to maintain the romantic relationship, they may appear disrespectful concerning the advice the mother gave them. The previous examples in this section do not specify if the advice the injured party receives is solicited or unsolicited. This study focuses on advice following infidelity, regardless of whether the injured party actively seeks or passively receives the advice.

Advice Interactions and Face Threats

Receiving advice to deal with infidelity involves multiple risks to the advice receiver, in this case the injured party, who must admit that infidelity has occurred, risk judgment, and make themselves vulnerable to face threats. With close interpersonal relationships, those in which social support is an integral part, each individual in the relationship comes to know when the other is vulnerable (Cupach & Metts, 1994). When receiving advice, an individual's face can become vulnerable and threatened, depending on the sensitivity of the situation. While supportive communication may be intended to help an individual feel better about a distressing situation, advice can potentially make that individual feel inadequate at coping with his or her own problems (Cupach & Metts,

1994) and solving their problems (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997). The severity of face threats can affect the perception of the support as being positive or negative (MacGeorge et al., 2002). Advice about a problem an individual is experiencing can also threaten the recipient's face (Brown & Levinson, 1987). The face threats associated with advice can be mitigated through face support, which in turn may influence the effectiveness of such supportive messages. The effectiveness of such messages is discussed in the following section. In situations where relational partners are already dealing with a face threatening situation, infidelity, the face threats they are subject to may be amplified through supportive interactions aimed toward dealing with the infidelity.

The positive and negative face threats associated with advice interactions may vary drastically for the injured party. The injured party usually has to disclose to his or her support provider that their partner was unfaithful. This could threaten an individual's positive face, as they may feel their partner was unfaithful because of dissatisfaction, perceived ability to deceive their partner, or perceived better alternatives outside the relationship (Glass & Wright, 1985; Wiederman & Hurd, 1999; Mattingly et al., 2010). This threatens the individual's positive face because it suggests the individual may not be well-liked by their romantic partner. Additionally, the injured party may seek support from a friend they hold in high esteem who advises them to react a certain way, threatening their negative face, or freedom to make their own decision about the relationship future. With self-disclosing and advice interactions comes the potential for face threats and face support, which may influence advice effectiveness.

Face and Advice Effectiveness

Of particular interest to this study is the advice recipients' perceptions about whether the advice was effective. Effective advice messages are conceptualized as person-centered, helpful, appropriate, and sensitive (Jones & Burleson, 1997). Face threat and face support provided by the advice provider likely influence how the recipient receives the advice message. For example, when the advice provider uses face support to deliver advice, the advice is preferred more than advice given more bluntly (Feng & Burleson, 2008). The face threats inherent in supportive episodes, or conversely the face support, will influence the support recipient's perceptions of advice effectiveness. For example, in a study examining the effect of various factors (e.g. face support, advice content, recipient sex) on the evaluation of advice messages, face support elicited the most positive evaluations of the supportive message (MacGeorge et al., 2002). Furthermore, when the recipient perceived face support, they evaluated the message as more effective (Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000). That is, when an advice provider practices face support, or appears to practice face support, the recipient of the advice perceives the message as more effective.

Relational closeness has interesting influence on the perception of advice messages as well. Previous research suggests that, in addition to affecting from whom individuals may seek or receive advice, the quality of the relationship with the advice provider also affects how individuals interpret the advice given. An individual's emotions and feelings are influenced by the individual's appraisal of an event or situation (Young, 2004). Within hurtful interactions, individuals with relational satisfaction may experience humiliation, because of openness and vulnerability within the relationship.

(Vangelisti, Young, Carpenter-Theune, & Alexander, 2005). Within the current context, an injured party during advice interactions may experience embarrassment or humiliation as a result of the face threats associated with advice as well as the infidelity. Previous research also suggests the relationship, such as relational satisfaction and relational closeness, may influence perceived face threat. In fact, Zhang and Stafford (2008) found that relational satisfaction may be a factor in perceived face threats during hurtful interactions. Specifically, individuals who reported higher relational satisfaction also reported lower face threats during hurtful interactions. In addition to relational satisfaction, during advice interactions, Goldsmith and MacGeorge (2000) found no significant association between advice recipient and advice provider relational closeness and face threat. MacGeorge and colleagues (2011) suggested that relational closeness relates to important sources of support. Individuals tend to view romantic partners, close friends, and family members as prominent sources of support. Following research surrounding relational quality, this study will focus on the relational closeness between the injured party and the advice provider.

The relational closeness between the individual and the advice provider can also affect the interpretation of the advice message (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997). Specifically, the advice message may be more hurtful to the individual if they have a close relationship. As mentioned previously, one problem of advice involves the relational closeness between the injured party and the advice provider. While relational closeness has been conceptualized throughout research in several ways (Berscheid, Snyder, & Omoto, 1989), several common themes exist. Some of these themes include interdependence (Berscheid et al., 1989), similarity and dependability (Floyd, 1995), and

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self-disclosure, support, and shared interests (Floyd & Parks, 1995; Parks & Floyd, 1996). Furthermore, relational closeness depends on individuals' evaluations of their relationships, based on three factors: (1) psychological closeness; (2) everyday centrality; and (3) similarity (Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997). Together, these three factors lead to an individual's evaluation of their relational closeness. In the present study, the relational closeness in question refers to the injured party's evaluation of their relationship with the advice provider. Vangelisti and Caughlin found individuals are more likely to disclose secrets to individuals with whom they have higher perceived relational closeness. For this study, the relational closeness between the injured party and the advice provider may be a factor influencing injured party perceptions of advice interactions following infidelity.

While the extant research has covered many different contexts where advice is necessary, very little research applies face threat and face support and advice effectiveness in situations following infidelity. Because infidelity is inherently face-threatening, the role of face support and face threats in advice messages may become even more important in predicting advice effectiveness. Additionally, because supportive communication is part of the coping process following infidelity, the role of advice effectiveness leads to individual and relational outcomes.

Research Questions

During advice interactions after infidelity, individuals may receive many different supportive messages. Based on research pertaining to differences in advice content (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997; MacGeorge et al., 2002), and the differing levels of face threat associated with different advice messages, it is plausible that different advice content

may affect an injured party's perceptions of face threat, face support, and advice. The first research question is as follows:

RQ1: Does the advice message the injured party receives influence his or her perception of face threat, face support, and the effectiveness of the advice?

As noted, there are multiple opportunities for individuals to experience face threats when disclosing infidelity and through advice interactions. Although the advice provider can threaten an individual's face (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997), the advice provider simultaneously have the opportunity to practice face support through advice interactions. While previous research suggests both positive and negative face support may affect advice effectiveness (Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000), and positive and negative face threats decrease advice effectiveness (Feng & Burleson, 2008), this has never been applied to the context of advice following infidelity. Thus, the following hypotheses are posed:

H1a: Positive face threat will negatively predict advice effectiveness following infidelity.

H1b: Negative face threat will negatively predict advice effectiveness following infidelity.

H2a: Positive face support will positively predict perceptions of advice effectiveness following infidelity.

H2b: Negative face support will positively predict perceptions of advice effectiveness following infidelity.

Face theories and research surrounding face discuss relational closeness as one factor that can influence perceptions of face threats and face support (Goldsmith & Fitch,

1997). In advice interactions, relational closeness also affects the perceptions of face

threat and advice effectiveness. However, it is unclear how relational closeness may

affect the injured party's perceptions of advice following relational infidelity. The

following research questions aim to gain more understanding:

RQ2a: When controlling for relational closeness between the injured party and

the advice provider, what is the ability of face threats to predict injured party

perceptions of advice effectiveness?

RQ2b: When controlling for relational closeness between the injured party and

the advice provider, what is the ability of face support to predict injured party

perceptions of advice effectiveness?

Chapter Three: Method

Overview

The sample for this study included students from a large southeastern university who have been in a romantic relationship where their partner had committed infidelity as a relational transgression. Participants were recruited to complete an online survey which first asked about the nature of the infidelity, followed by the relational closeness with the advice provider, the message of advice they received, the perceived face threat and face support experienced when they received advice, and lastly the effectiveness of the advice. Scales used for the survey included modified versions of the Relational Closeness Scale (Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997), Perceived Face Threats Scale (Cupach & Carson, 2002), Instructional Face Support Scale (Kerssen-Griep, Hess, & Trees, 2003), and an advice effectiveness scale (Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000). Both qualitative and quantitative data analyses were used to test the hypotheses and respond to the research questions.

Recruitment Procedures

Participants were recruited through an online participant recruitment database at a large southeastern university. In order to appeal to college vernacular, the term "cheating" was used instead of the term "infidelity." The study description was posted in January 2013, stayed open for four weeks, and stated:

> This study examines advice received following an instance of cheating within a romantic relationship. This study is open only to students who have had a romantic partner cheat on them within the past six months. Questions pertain to the romantic relationship, the instance of cheating, the advice received, and the relationship with the advice provider.

Along with the description, participants also received other information pertaining to the study (i.e. eligibility requirements, estimated duration of survey, link to the survey).

Only participants who were 18 years of age and who were the injured party following an instance of infidelity within a romantic relationship within the past six months were eligible to participate. If they were interested in participating, they first signed up to take the survey. After signing up, they were directed to the survey link for the survey hosted on Qualtrics survey software.

Participants

Participants for this study were any students at least 18 years of age, either in a current or past dating relationship who have been the injured partner dealing with infidelity and who had received advice about the infidelity. For both past and current relationships, the incidence of infidelity and subsequent advice had to have occurred within the past six months to assist with participant recall. For this study, 236 students signed up to participate, and 214 participants completed the survey. One of the survey responses was dropped from the sample, because the participant reported not receiving any advice follow infidelity. Therefore, all participants included in the sample ($N = 213$) completed the survey about the advice they received following infidelity. Participants included males ($n = 73$) and females ($n = 139$) between the ages of 18 and 37 ($M = 19.42$, $SD = 2.10$); 164 (77%) were Caucasian, 30 (14.08%) were African American, 10 (4.70%) were Asian/Pacific Islander, 2 (.94%) were American Indian/Alaska Native, 2 (.94%) were Hispanic, 2 (.94%) were biracial, 1 (.46%) was Hatian, and 2 (.94%) did not specify a race. Participants had been involved in between 1 to 69 ($M = 3.79$, $SD = 5.35$) romantic relationships at the time of the survey.

Survey Procedures and Instrumentation

When participants clicked on the link to enter the survey, they first read a consent letter. They were told that all information they provided would be kept anonymous and confidential, their participation was completely voluntary, and that they were able to leave the survey at any time with no negative consequences. If participants chose to provide consent, they were directed to the survey hosted by Qualtrics, an online survey software system. The survey consisted of four main sections with 55 total questions. The entire survey took an average of 42 minutes for participants to complete.

Section one focused on the relationship with the romantic partner and the infidelity incident. Participants were asked to report on one instance of infidelity that occurred in the past six months. Questions asked how long ago the infidelity occurred, the length of the romantic relationship at the time of the infidelity, the status of the relationship at the time of the relationship, and the current status of the relationship. Of the participants who reported how long ago the instance of infidelity occurred ($N = 205$), 98 (47.80%) participants reported between one and four months, 68 (33.17%) reported between five and eight months, 19 (9.27%) reported less than one month, 14 (6.83%) reported over a year, and 6 (2.93%) reported between nine months and a year. Of the participants who reported how long they had been in a relationship with the transgressor when the infidelity occurred ($N = 208$), 75 (36.06%) participants reported over a year, 55 (26.44%) reported between nine months and a year, 39 (18.75%) reported between five and eight months, 37 (17.79%) reported between one and four months, and 2 (.96%) reported less than a month. When given options for the status of their relationship with the transgressor at the time of the infidelity, 125 (58.70%) participants selected "seriously

dating" the transgressor, 69 (32.40%) selected "casually dating" the transgressor, 13 (6.10%) selected "friends with benefits," 2 (.90%) selected "engaged," and 4 (1.90%) selected "other." When given options for the status of their relationship with the transgressor at the time of the survey, 81 (38.03%) selected "no contact" with the transgressor, 61 (28.64%) selected "some contact," 27 (12.68%) selected "seriously dating," 15 (7.04%) selected "friends with benefits," 13 (6.10%) selected "casually dating," 12 (5.63%) selected "friends," and 4 (1.88%) selected "other." Participants were then asked to describe their experience with infidelity in an open-ended response. In order to increase validity, participants were asked to report on the same romantic relationship and incidence of infidelity throughout the rest of the survey.

Section two focused on the advice provider and the advice given to the participant following the infidelity. The opening prompt for this section asked participants to report on the most memorable time they received advice about the instance of infidelity. The prompt read:

Please report on the most memorable time when someone (e.g., close friend, family member, counselor) gave you advice about the instance of cheating you described above. This person will be referred to as your advice provider. Answer the following questions about this person, your relationship with this person, and what advice they gave to you about the instance of your romantic partner cheating.

This section also asked for demographics about the participants' advice provider. Advice providers included males ($n = 67$) and females ($n = 146$) ranging in age from 16 to 92 ($M = 26.63$, $SD = 13.06$); 165 (77.50%) were Caucasian, 33 (15.50%) were African

American, 7 (3.30%) were American Indian/Alaska Native, 5 (2.30%) were Asian/Pacific islander, and 3 (1.40%) were Hispanic.

Relational closeness with advice provider. Participants were then asked to describe their relationship with the advice provider and complete a modified version of Vangelisti and Caughlin's (1997) Relational Closeness Scale. The original scale includes 14 items and assesses three dimensions including psychological closeness, similarity, and everyday centrality. Psychological closeness was measured with 6 items, similarity was measured with 5 items, and everyday centrality was measured with 3 items. Each dimension was analyzed and measured separately. Previous reliabilities for psychological closeness, similarity, and centrality have been high at $\alpha = .93$, $\alpha = 74$, and $\alpha = 82$, respectively (Vangelisti & Caughlin, 1997). Participants responded on a scale ranging from not at all (1) to very (7). The items allowed the participants to evaluate perceived closeness with another person.

In this study, the three dimensional, 14 item scale was used to assess participant's relational closeness with their advice provider. This scale was modified to fit the advice context by using the words "advice provider" in the items (e.g., How close are you to your advice provider?). Based on how the scale has been used in past research, each dimension was analyzed separately. For this study, the psychological closeness dimension was reliable, similarity was not initially reliable, though reliability improved after dropping one item, and everyday centrality was reliable. See table 3.1 for all scale reliabilities, means, and standard deviations and variable correlations.

Advice message. An open-ended question to prompt participant recall was used to gather participants' recount of the advice interaction. This open-ended question was modeled after Young and Bippus' (2001) research in which they examined participants' perceptions of hurtful messages, though modified to fit the context of infidelity. For this current study, participants were asked to report on an interaction during which they received advice from their advice provider by providing a script of the conversation. They were asked to indicate the piece of advice they perceived as most prominent. The open-ended prompt read:

> Please recall the conversation in which you received advice from your advice provider. Please provide as much detail as possible by creating a "script" of the conversation. When completed, place a star next to the main piece of advice your advice provider gave you.

This method of recall is beneficial for several reasons. First, in previous research this method has shown to encourage participants to recall an episode. Second, once they recall the episode, this prompt encourages participants to provide detail when creating the "script" of the interaction (Vangelisti & Young, 2000; Vangelisti et al., 2005; Zhang & Stafford, 2008). Third, after providing a script and indicating a particular message, participants are able to complete the rest of the questionnaire while considering a particular message (Vangelisti et al., 2005; Young, 2010; Young, 2004; Young & Bippus, 2001). The survey asks that participants only report on the main piece of advice their advice provider gave them. This was the piece of advice on which participants were asked to focus when completing the rest of the survey.

Table 3.1

Correlation Matrix of Sample Variables

Variable	α	*M*	*SD*	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.
1. PC	.88	6.29	.85	-						
2. S	.86	6.00	.95	.71**	-					
3. C	.85	5.52	1.29	.57**	.55**	-				
4. PFT	.93	1.48	.84	-.50**	-.38**	-.31**	-			
5. NFT	.91	1.54	.96	-.41**	-.28**	-.28**	.81**	-		
6. PFS	.83	1.51	.85	-.45**	-.36**	-.28**	.95**	.78**	-	
7. NFS	.91	5.79	1.49	.34**	.23**	.17*	-.38**	-.47**	-.37**	-
8. AE	.87	6.23	1.00	.41**	.35**	.30**	-.62**	-.60**	-.62**	.54**

Note. Entire sample of participants (*N* = 213) *p < .05, **p < .01

PC = Psychological closeness, S = similarity, C = centrality, PFT = positive face threat, NFT = negative face threat, PFS = positive face support, NFS = negative face support, and AE = advice effectiveness

Face threat, face support, and advice effectiveness. Section three focused on the participant's evaluation of the advice interaction including measures of perceived face threat, perceived face support, and advice effectiveness. This section used modified versions of the Face Threat Scale (Cupach & Carson, 2002), Face Support Scale (Kerssen-Griep et al., 2003), and Advice-Effectiveness Scale (Jones & Burleson, 1997).

Face threat. The original Perceived Face Threats scale includes 14 items that measure two dimensions: positive face threat and negative face threat (Cupach & Carson, 2002). Positive face threat included 10 items, with a reliability of $\alpha = .88$. Negative face threat included 4 items, with a reliability of $\alpha = .68$. Participants responded on a scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). The scale was updated in previous research by adding two items to measure negative face threat, which gave the scale a reliability of $\alpha = .74$ for negative face threat (Frisby, Booth-Butterfield, Dillow, Martin, & Weber, 2012). These items allow the participant to evaluate the perceived face threats they received from the advice message.

In this study, some items were reworded to avoid reverse coding. For example, "My partner's actions were tactful" became "My partner's actions were not tactful." One item from the positive face threat dimension was dropped (i.e. "My partner's actions were impolite") to avoid redundancy. The directions were modified to fit the advice context by using "My advice provider," instead of "My partner" (see Appendix C). Previous research reports reliabilities for each dimension separately. For this study, both dimensions were reliable.

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Face support. To measure the participants' perceived face support when receiving advice, they were asked to complete a modified version of Kerssen-Griep et al.'s (2003) Instructional Face Support Scale. The original scale contained 15 items, 5 of which measured tact, 5 of which measured solidarity, and 5 of which measured approbation. The scale was later modified to only include 4 items measuring positive face support and 3 items measuring negative face support (Kerssen-Griep Trees, & Hess, 2008). The scale, commonly used within instructional communication research, has also been used in an interpersonal context, specifically post-divorce interactions, prior to the current study (Frisby et al., 2012). Participants responded on a scale ranging from not at all (1) to very (7). This allowed participants to report on the perceived face support they received.

Specifically for this study, the items were modified to ask participants to report on perceived face support their advice provider gave them. The 8-item scale (Kerssen-Griep et al., 2008) was reworded, using the words "advice provider" instead of "instructor." Items also were changed to match the context of receiving advice, as opposed to instructor feedback (e.g. "My advice provider made me feel like I could choose how to respond to the advice"). To attempt to improve reliabilities from Frisby and colleagues (2012), items were also reworded positively to avoid reverse coding (see Appendix D). Both dimensions were analyzed separately and both were reliable.

Advice effectiveness. The scale used to measure perceived effectiveness of the advice received was a modified version of an advice-effectiveness scale (Jones & Burleson, 1997). The 4 items contained adjective pairs in which participants evaluated an advice message on a 10-point scale (i.e. 0 = very effective, very helpful, very

appropriate, and very sensitive; 9 = very ineffective, very unhelpful, very inappropriate, and very insensitive). Goldsmith and MacGeorge (2000) later used the same items on a 7-point scale (e.g., 1 = very effective, very helpful, very appropriate and very sensitive; 7 = very ineffective, very unhelpful, very inappropriate, and very insensitive).

For the present study, the modified 4-item 7-point scale was used to determine participants' evaluation of the effectiveness of the advice they received. The directions were changed so participants were asked to report on the advice they received (e.g., "Please indicate the degree to which the advice you received was appropriate"; see Appendix E). For this study, the overall scale was reliable.

Qualitative Data Analysis Procedures

RQ1 involved the advice message the injured party received following infidelity. Specifically, this research question was concerned with the recommended action, or actions, the advice provider suggested for the injured party. Participants were asked to indicate the most prevalent piece of advice they received from their advice provider. Of all the participants, 59.62% ($n = 127$) placed an asterisk next to the piece of advice they found most prevalent. The entire advice script was coded, as opposed to just the advice with an asterisk, for three reasons: (1) to still allow coding of responses where participants did not provide an asterisk; (2) to provide context for the messages with asterisks; and (3) to code accounts with multiple asterisks.

The primary researcher first read through every response and determined common themes across the data. Open coding, or coding without restrictions or previous concepts from the literature (Berg & Lune, 2012), was used to analyze trends prevalent in the advice messages received following infidelity. In order to organize the data, the primary

researcher analyzed each description of the advice interaction and, using open coding, placed the responses into categories constructed through this analysis (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Once a list of common themes was compiled, the primary researcher and the faculty advisor discussed and consolidated the themes to create a codebook. Using this codebook, the primary researcher and a trained independent coder analyzed over 20% of the data ($n = 50$) independently and labeled the participants' responses with a category from the codebook.

For responses which could be coded under more than one category, Owen's (1984) guidelines were used to determine the most appropriate category. Owen stipulates the criteria for finding prevalent themes are (1) recurrence, (2) repetition, and (3) forcefulness. For the current study, if at least two parts of the advice script contained the same idea with different wording, that idea was considered recurrent. To be considered repetitive, the advice script must have contained at least two instances of the same idea with the same wording. Recurrence and repetition differ mainly with wording. Finally, forcefulness refers to the inflection or nonverbal cues from the advice script. For example, an idea that is underlined or completely capitalized would be considered more forceful than the same idea without and underline or in lower case letters. For those responses without asterisks, the coder determined which part of the response was the most prevalent by following these guidelines. Each prevalent piece of advice was treated as a coding unit, allowing for diverse advice messages to emerge. Intercoder reliability was then measured using Cohen's Kappa. Intercoder reliability was acceptable ($k = .82$). Given, the high intercoder reliability, it was then appropriate for the primary researcher to assign codes to the remainder of the advice messages, again using the codebook and

Owen's (1984) criteria. These codes were entered into the SPSS data file to allow for statistical analyses and comparisons.

Quantitative Data Analysis Procedures

RQ1 pertained to the differences between face threat, face support, and the effectiveness of the supportive message based on the type of advice received. The type of advice determined through qualitative coding was entered as the independent variable, and face threat, face support, and advice effectiveness were entered as the dependent variables in a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to determine whether there were different perceptions of face threat, face support, and advice effectiveness for the various types of advice.

To address H1a, H1b, H2a and H2b, linear regressions were employed to determine how well positive and negative face threat and positive and negative face support predicted advice effectiveness. H1a posits positive face threat will negatively predict advice effectiveness. A linear regression was used with positive face threat entered as the predictor and advice effectiveness entered as the outcome variable. Similarly, H1b suggests negative face threat will negatively predict advice effectiveness. Negative face threat was entered as the predictor while advice effectiveness was again entered as the outcome variable. H2a posits that positive face support will predict reports of advice effectiveness. As before, a linear regression positive face support was entered as the predictor and advice effectiveness was entered as the outcome variable. Lastly, H2b posits that negative face support with predict reports of advice effectiveness. In this case, a linear regression was also used, with negative face support entered as the predictor and advice effectiveness entered as the outcome variable.

RQ2a and RQ2b involved face threat and face support as predictors of advice effectiveness while controlling for relational closeness. Two multiple regressions were employed with face threat and face support entered as predictors of advice effectiveness. Relational closeness was entered in the first step as a covariate for RQ2a and RQ2b. As relational closeness could affect the perceived face threat and face support within an advice message, including this covariate to reveal the effects of face threat and face support on advice effectiveness more clearly (Malachowski & Dillow, 2011). For RQ2a, relational closeness was entered as the control variable in the first block, while face threat was entered as the predictor variables in the second block. Finally, advice effectiveness was entered as the dependent variable. For RQ2b, relational closeness was entered as the control variable in the first block, while face support was entered as the predictor variables in the second block. Finally, advice effectiveness was entered as the dependent variable.

Chapter Four: Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the face-threatening nature of advice interactions following an instance of infidelity, an inherently face-threatening relational transgression within a romantic relationship, between the injured party and an advice provider. Finally, participants described the advice episode. The results from this study are outlined in the following sections (see Table 4.1 for all Cronbach's alphas, means, standard deviations, and correlations of all study variables).

Research Question 1

RQ1 examined the injured party's perception of the advice they received including perceptions of face threat, face support, and advice effectiveness.

Qualitative analysis of RQ1. The advice messages that emerged from analysis included terminate the relationship, persist with the transgressor, communicate, options, feelings, and self-centered messages. Table 4.1 provides a brief description and exemplar from the data of each major theme.

Terminate the relationship. The most commonly reported advice message received fell under terminating the injured party's romantic relationship with the transgressor, and made up 53.10% ($n = 113$) of the sample. To be categorized under this theme, the most salient piece of advice must have been for the injured party to end their romantic relationship with the transgressor. There were two subthemes within this theme: explicit advice to terminate the relationship, and implicit advice to terminate the relationship. Within these two subthemes, there were various ways of falling under the overarching theme of terminating the relationship.

Table 4.1
Advice Message Type

Advice Message	Frequency	Definition	Exemplar
Terminate	$n = 113$, 53.10%	Explicitly state or imply the participant should end their romantic relationship with the transgressor	I think you guys should take a break. He isn't that great of a boyfriend and you deserve better than a liar and a cheater.
Feelings	$n = 31$, 14.6%	Messages directed toward recipient's feelings; provide reassurance to recipient	Its not easy right now but if it were meant to be it would have been. Everything happens for a reason, and every bad situation or mistake is a learning experience if you let it be.
Persist	$n = 16$, 7.50%	Explicitly state or imply the participant should stay with the transgressor	My advice provider told me that people make mistakes, and that forgiveness is the best option for me.
Communicate	$n = 10$, 4.70%	Messages that advise recipient to communicate with the transgressor for information or to determine how to respond to the infidelity	I would just talk to him about it. I know how much you love him and maybe he isn't cheating, but at the same time I would do what you need to do.I don't believe he would actually do this to you because he is such a good person and a good boyfriend.
Options	$n = 10$, 4.70%	Messages that leave the recipient free to choose how to respond to the infidelity	Monica just told me that if I loved him and believed he wouldn't' do it again to take him back. But if I thought I wouldn't ever be able to get over it or I would hold it over his head from now on not to take him back.
Self-Centered	$n = 8$, 3.8%	Advice provider compares injured party's situation to their own, or advice provider states he or she predicted the transgression in some way	I began by telling my mom about how her and I had been fighting recently and not spending time together. Finally I told her that she cheated on me and that we were done forever. After that my mom began to tell me the story o how my dad had done the same thing to her and that she knew exactly how I felt.

The first subtheme under the terminate theme involved the advice provider explicitly telling the injured party to end the current state of their relationship with the transgressor. Responses categorized as advice to break up involved the advice provider telling the injured party to end their romantic relationship. For example, one participant reported their advice provider telling them, "you need to break up with him because it's not gonna get any better.[i]" Advice providers also advised the injured party to take a break from their relationship with the transgressor. These responses involved the advice provider telling the injured party to take some time off from their romantic relationship with the transgressor. For example, one participant reported their advice provider telling them, "y'all don't have to jump right back into a relationship right now if you're not ready. Just take a little time ou as friends and try to figure things out." Additionally, some advice providers also told the injured party to completely cut off ties with the transgressor. Advice of this type included avoiding the transgressor's calls, not contacting or talking to the transgressor, and completely cutting the transgressor out of the injured party's life. For example, one participant reported:

> She said to stop hanging out with his friends, stop going to his fraternities parties, delete his number, stop letting him get to you, stop worrying what he's doing or what he has to say about what you're doing, stop texting him back, stop hanging out wit his, forget about him

The next subtheme within the advice to terminate the relationship with the transgressor involved more implicit advice. That is, the advice provider may not have explicitly told the injured party to end their romantic relationship, but the advice strongly implied them to do so. The first variation within this subtheme involved the advice

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provider implying to the injured party that the transgressor must not care about or love them, if they would commit infidelity. For example, one participant reported, "my friend told me that if my boyfriend really cared about me then instead of hurting me by cheating then he would have just gotten out of the relationship." The next variation involved advice providers telling participants that if they brush off the instance of infidelity, they will set a precedent and repeat the transgression. Additionally, some advice providers implied that if the transgressor cheated once, either before or during the relationship with the injured party, they are sure to cheat again. For example, one participant reported their advice provider said, "She said that i made the right decision. That cheaters never change and can't be trusted." The next variation involved the advice provider telling the injured party they are too good to be involved with the instance of infidelity. These advice interactions also implied to the injured party to terminate their romantic relationship with the transgressor and included the advice provider telling the injured party specifically that they deserve better and that they are too good for the transgressor. For example, one participant stated their advice provider said, "I think you guys should take a break. He isn't that great of a boyfriend and you deserve better than a liar and a cheater."

The next variation under the subtheme of implicitly suggesting relational termination involved the advice provider telling the injured party to move on and to focus on something other than the transgressor. The advice provider could have told the injured party to find other distractions, such as focusing on their education or career. For example, one participant reported their advice provider as saying, "Just focus on yourself and school and when the time is right the right person will come." Advice providers could have also told the injured party to move on by finding new romantic contacts.

Many participants mentioned their advice provider as telling them there are plenty of fish in the sea and they should find someone else better suited for them than the transgressor. One participant reported, "He told me that there will be plenty of other women out there and that if it didn't work out this time it just wasn't meant to be."

Feelings. The second most commonly reported advice message received fell under feelings advice, and made up 14.60% ($n = 31$) of the sample. Advice messages that fell under the feelings theme included responses in which the advice provider gave advice messages that were directed toward the injured party's emotions or feelings. These messages may not have included a specific action the injured party should take, but were still prevalent to the advice message. Feelings advice messages related closely to Burleson's (1994) research on person-centered supportive messages. Supportive messages that legitimize an individual's feelings or allow the recipient to make sense of their feelings are highly person-centered (HPC). HPC advice messages that allow the participant to further understand or legitimize their feelings and emotions following the instance of infidelity fell under this category.

Advice under this theme included several different variations, all dealing with reassuring the recipient. First, advice providers gave the injured party some reassurance that they have handled the situation effectively or that they will support the injured party, regardless of what they decide to do. For example, one participant stated their advice provider told them, "You handled it really well. He deserved everything you said." Additionally, another participant their advice provider said, "I knw it won't be easy, but I'll support your decision and be here for you either way, whatever you decide."

The second variation involved advice providers reassuring participants that the situation will get better for them. In several instances, advice providers encouraged participants to find the positives within the infidelity. One participant reported their advice provider as saying, "Its not easy right now but if it were meant to be it would have been. Everything happens for a reason, and every bad situation or mistake is a learning experience if you let it be." Some advice providers also argued the instance could be considered a "blessing in disguise" in order to allow the injured party to find positives from the infidelity. Additionally, advice messages that mentioned religion as a way to cope with the infidelity also fell under this variation. For example, one participant reported their advice provider said, "There are more girls out there. She is not the only one. God has a plan for everyone if it is ment to be with her then it will happen if its not ment to be then you will get over her."

Persist with the transgressor. The third most commonly reported advice message received involved the advice provider explicitly stating or implying to the participant to get past the instance of infidelity and stay with his or her romantic partner, and made up 7.50% ($n = 16$) of the sample. Three variations emerged under the theme of persistence: giving the transgressor a second chance, stating that if the injured party loves the transgressor, they should make their relationship work, and noting that the transgression was a mistake.

The first type of message under the theme of relational persistence included advice providers telling the injured party to give the transgressor a second chance. They may have explicitly or implicitly stated they should stay in a romantic relationship with the transgressor. For example, one participant stated, "I told him I could see myself with

her for a while so he told me I should give her another chance." Similarly, the second variation was for the injured party to consider how they felt about the transgressor and maintain their romantic relationship. Responses of this nature included ideas such as staying with their partner if they truly loved them (e.g. "if you really love him you should consider forgiving him"), if they were able to forgive them (e.g. "I needed to think about whether or not I still wanted to be with him, and if so- could I truly forgive him"), or if they would be able to trust them again (e.g. "If I took him back- would I ever be able to trust him?"). Several other participants reported their advice provider suggesting the transgressor made a mistake, one that anyone could have made.

Communicate. The fourth most commonly reported advice message received dealt with communicating more with the transgressor, and made up 4.70% ($n = 10$) of the sample. There were several interesting trends within this theme. Some participants reported their advice provider suggested they confront the transgressor with the intent to terminate the relationship. For example, one participant reported:

Me: "well, what should I do? how should I end things?"

Friend: "just ask her to get coffee, talk it over, and then tell her that you feel

betryed and you can't continue to see her."

Me: "Whew, well that will be hard for me, but I'll give it a shot. Thanks man."

Other participants received advice to confront the transgressor with the intent to work through the transgression and allow the relationship to persist. One participant reported their advice provider as saying:

I would just talk to him about it. I know how much you love him and maybe he

isn't cheating, but at the same time I would do what you need to do.I don't believe

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he would actually do this to you because he is such a good person and a good

boyfriend.

In addition to the advice to confront with intent to persist or terminate the romantic

relationship, some advice providers suggested confronting the transgressor to gain more

information in order to make a more informed decision about their relationship. For

example, a participant reported their advice provider as saying, "I think it's really

important to confront Joey and Rachel separately in a calm mnner and then you should

really evaluate whether or not you still want your relationship with Joey to continue

knowing what he did.[ii]"

Options. The fifth most commonly reported advice message received involved

the advice provider giving the injured party multiple options to demonstrate a variety of

actions that could be taken in response to the infidelity, and made up 4.70% ($n = 10$) of

the sample. Within these responses, participants reported receiving two or more choices,

allowing them freedom to decide how to deal with the infidelity.

Self-centered. Lastly, the sixth most commonly reported advice message

received included advice messages that were centered more around the advice provider

than the injured party, and made up 3.80% ($n = 8$) of the sample. Advice that fell under

the self-centered theme related more closely to Burleson's (1994) conceptualization of

low person-centered (LPC) and moderately person-centered (MPC) messages. These

messages tend to deny an individual's feelings and emotions or implicitly offer

recognition or legitimacy of their feelings, respectively.

Two variations emerged among self-centered advice messages. First, several

participants reported receiving messages in which advice providers knew the infidelity

was bound to happen. For example, one participants stated, "I had told my friend about the incident and she said she knew it would happen sooner or later. I was in shock she saw it coming." The second variation involved advice providers relating the participant's experience to their own. This tactic takes the focus off the injured party's feelings and emotions and places the focus on the advice provider. For example:

> I began by telling my mom about how her and I had been fighting recently and not spending time together. Finally I told her that she cheated on me and that we were done forever. After that my mom began to tell me the story o how my dad had done the same thing to her and that she knew exactly how I felt.

Quantitative analysis of RQ1. To examine RQ1, which inquired about the differences in perceptions of the advice messages, a MANOVA with advice message entered as the fixed factor and face threat, face support, and advice effectiveness entered as dependent variables was used. The results of MANOVA indicate there were no significant differences of perceived face threat, face support, and advice effectiveness among the different types of advice message $\Lambda = .88$, $F(7, 203) = .74$, $p = .87$, $\eta^2 = .03$, power $= .67$). Table 4.2 shows the results from the MANOVA. A post hoc MANOVA to determine differences in face threat, face support, and advice effectiveness between advice to terminate the relationship and all other advice messages also showed no significant differences.

Hypotheses 1a and 1b

H1a posited that positive face threats would predict injured party perceptions of advice effectiveness. H1b posited that negative face threats would predict injured party perceptions of advice effectiveness. A linear regression model was significant, $F(2, 202)$

Table 4.2

Summary of MANOVA (RQ1)

Advice Message	PFS		NFS		PFT		NFT		AE	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Terminate (*n* = 109, 53.43%)	1.55	.92	5.55	1.69	1.54	.91	1.62	1.08	6.17	1.02
Other-Centered (*n* = 27, 13.24%)	2.05	1.31	5.83	1.19	1.92	1.28	1.82	1.20	6.09	1.36
Persist (*n* = 16, 7.84%)	1.59	.80	5.63	1.58	1.49	.61	1.81	1.07	6.22	1.09
Communicate (*n* = 10, 4.90%)	1.35	.50	5.98	1.31	1.35	.56	1.41	.67	6.32	.89
Options (*n* = 10, 4.90%)	1.23	.42	6.20	1.11	1.17	.24	1.23	.62	6.58	.79
Self-Centered (*n* = 8, 3.92%)	1.08	.24	6.17	1.09	1.10	.32	1.10	.18	6.68	.47

Note. Values in parentheses are observed frequencies and percentages of the advice messages. PFS = Positive face support, NFS = negative face support, PFT = positive face threat, NFT = negative face threat, and AE = advice effectiveness.

= 72.81, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .42$, with positive face threat being a significant negative predictor

($\beta = -.41$, $t = -4.53$, $p < .01$) and negative face threat being a significant negative predictor

($\beta = -.27$, $t = -2.99$, $p < .01$). Both H1a and H1b were supported. Table 4.3 demonstrates

the results from this regression.

Table 4.3

Summary of Linear Regression (H1a and H1b)

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	β
PFT	-.48	.11	-.41**
NFT	-.28	.09	-.27*

*Note. $R^2 = .42$, *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$*

PFT = Positive face threat and NFT = negative face threat.

Hypotheses 2a and 2b

H2a posited that positive face support would predict injured party perceptions of

advice effectiveness. H2b posited negative face support would predict injured party

perceptions of advice effectiveness. A linear regression model was significant, F (2, 207)

= 99.02, $p < .01$, $R^2 = .49$, with positive face support being a significant negative

predictor ($\beta = -.49$, $t = -9.07$, $p < .01$) and negative face support being a significant

positive predictor ($\beta = .36$, $t = 6.67$, $p < .01$). H2a was not supported, while H2b was

supported. Table 4.4 demonstrates the results from this regression.

Research Questions 2a and 2b

RQ2a and RQ2b concerned the ability of face threat and face support to predict

injured party perceptions of advice effectiveness, while controlling for relational

closeness between the injured party and the advice provider. Hierarchical multiple

Table 4.4

Summary of Linear Regression (H2a and H2b)

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	β
PFS	-.57	.06	-.49
NFS	.24	.04	.36

Note. R^2 = .49 (p < .01)

PFS = Positive face support and NFS = negative face support.

regressions tested the relationship between face threat, face support, and advice effectiveness, when controlling for relational closeness. Relational closeness was entered in the first block as the control variable, face threat and face support were entered into the second block as predictor variables, and advice effectiveness was entered as the dependent variable.

The first regression model only included relational closeness predicting advice effectiveness and was significant, F (3,197) = 13.58, p < .01, R^2 = .17. The first regression model accounted for 17% of the variance. The second model, with the control variable and positive face threat, negative face threat, positive face support, and negative face support as the independent variables was also significant, F (7, 193) = 28.46, p < .01, R^2 = .50. Thus, the overall model was improved to account for 50% of the variance when accounting for relational closeness. For the improved model, ΔR^2 = .34, meaning the model was improved by accounting for an additional 34% of the variance. In the second and improved model, negative face support (β = .31, t = 5.33, p < .01) and positive face support (β = -.35, t = -2.14, p = .03) were the only significant individual predictors for perceptions of advice effectiveness. Psychological closeness (β = -.01, t = -

.08, $p = .93$), similarity ($\beta = .06$, $t = .78$, $p = .44$), centrality ($\beta = .08$, $t = 1.18$, $p = .24$),

positive face threat ($\beta = -.04$, $t = -.21$, $p = .83$), and negative face threat ($\beta = -.11$, $t = -$

1.18, $p = .24$) were not significant predictors of perceptions of advice effectiveness.

Table 4.5 shows the hierarchical regression model results.

Table 4.5

Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis (RQ2a and RQ2b)

	Model 1			Model 2		
Variable	*B*	*SE B*	β	*B*	*SE B*	β
PC	.38	.11	.34**	-.01	.09	-.01
S	.07	.10	.07	.06	.08	.06
C	.05	.06	.06	.06	.05	.08
PFS				-.41	.19	-.36*
NFS				.20	.04	.31**
PFT				-.04	.20	-.04
NFT				-.11	.09	-.11
R^2		.17			.50	
F change		15.06**			33.84**	

Note. *p < .05, **p < .01

PC = Psychological closeness, S = similarity, C = centrality, PFS = positive face support,

NFS = negative face support, PFT = positive face threat, NFT = negative face threat.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The overarching purpose of this study is to further examine the aftermath of infidelity, specifically advice as a part of the coping process. As advice, whether solicited or unsolicited, is one way individuals can cope with infidelity, the current research goal is to understand the perceptions of advice injured parties receive from others. Specifically, as infidelity is inherently face-threatening (Olson et al., 2002), and advice interactions involve the potential for face threat as well (Cupach & Metts, 1994), the compounding face threat and influence on advice effectiveness was the focus for this study.

As outlined in Chapter 1, this study extends current research pertaining to infidelity (e.g. Atwood & Seifer, 1997; Buss & Shackelford, 1997; Buunk, 1982; Tafoya & Spitzberg, 2007) by exploring advice interactions following infidelity. Furthermore, the current study extends research pertaining to supportive communication, infidelity, and face threat (e.g. Colarossi, 2001; Olson et al., 2002) by also examining the potential for compounding face threat associated with a relational transgression, infidelity, and advice as a potentially face threatening interaction. In addition the nature of this study, the results also elicit theoretical and practical implications.

Overall, the importance of the recipient's perception of face support and face threat in relation to his or her perception of advice effectiveness was strongly supported by these results. The following sections outline the findings from this study. Each research question and hypothesis is discussed in turn, with theoretical implications detailed. Following the discussion of results from each research question and hypothesis, practical implications from this study are presented, which should be considered with

several important limitations of the study in mind. These limitations are discussed, followed by suggestions for future research.

Injured Party Perceptions of Advice Messages

The results of this study did not reveal significant differences between advice messages and face threat, face support, or advice effectiveness. This suggests that, regardless of the specific advice messages that an injured party may receive, individuals may perceive advice messages as relatively equally face threatening, face supportive, or effective. This finding is inconsistent with Goldsmith (2004), who argued that the relationship between advice content and the context influenced receiver's perceptions of the advice. For example, the advice message should fit the relationship between the advice provider and the advice recipient, as well as the contextual situation. Goldsmith also noted that measuring the appropriateness of advice while considering the context and relationship of the individuals involved is difficult through research. For the present study, the lack of differences between advice messages may be explained by many different factors, including the relationship between the advice provider and the injured party, the relationship between the injured party and the transgressor, the relationship between the advice provider and the transgressor, and the nature of the infidelity, along with other contextual factors. As suggested previously, infidelity may also be a stigmatizing situation for those involved. The stigma related to instance on infidelity might also contribute to the context and how well the advice fits the situation. The way the advice content fits into the context may influence advice recipient perceptions of face threat, face support, and advice effectiveness, which may help to explain the lack of

differences in these perceptions among different advice content. Additionally, whether the advice was solicited or unsolicited may also explain the lack of differences.

While the themes developed through qualitative coding of advice messages did provide interesting insight and distinctive categories, some of the themes involved only a small amount of participant responses. For example, only 8 participant responses fell under the options theme. Because some of these themes had relatively small cell sizes, the results of the MANOVA including advice message, face support, face threat, and advice effectiveness may be difficult to generalize. Furthermore, for this study, the level of power was relatively low (Johnson, 2009). This means there could be group differences undetected by the MANOVA.

Face Threat and Advice Effectiveness

Both positive face threat and negative face threat negatively predicted advice effectiveness (H1a and H1b). Specifically, and consistent with past research (Cupach & Metts, 1994; Goldsmith, 2000), positive face threat was a moderate negative predictor while negative face threat was a small negative predictor. However, these results extend previous research by considering the compounding effects of two inherently face threatening events: infidelity and advice interactions. Positive face threat was a stronger negative predictor of advice effectiveness than negative face threat. The results from H2a also add to existing research. Specifically, these results suggest that following infidelity, an individual's perception of how their positive face is threatened is an important factor influencing perceptions of advice effectiveness. Also, the results suggest participants who perceived their advice provider as actively threatening their positive face also found the advice they received as more effective.

H1b, which posited that negative face threat would negatively predict advice effectiveness, was supported by the results. These findings support previous research, as supportive advice messages perceived as threatening to the recipient's negative face were evaluated negatively (Goldsmith, 1992). In the current context, injured parties who felt as if their sense of independence or autonomy was threatened perceived advice messages as less effective.

Face Support and Advice Effectiveness

Results from this study show that both positive face support and negative face support are predictors of advice effectiveness. Contrary to predictions (H2a), the results of this study showed positive face support as a moderate negative predictor of advice effectiveness. That is, when participants perceived advice providers as supporting their positive face (e.g. making them feel liked and accepted), the advice was perceived as less effective. Previous studies suggest the opposite: positive face support should lead to perceptions of more effective advice (Caplan & Samter, 1999; Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000).

The contradiction between this study and previous research may be partially explained by the context for the present study. Specifically, following infidelity, individuals oftentimes seek advice to help cope (Olson et al., 2002) and expect to receive support from friends and family members (Colarossi, 2001), with whom support recipients likely have close relationships. Indeed, participants of this study generally reported having a close relationship, or a relationship characterized by similarity, positive affect, trust, understanding, and acceptance (Parks & Floyd, 1996), with their advice provider. These characterizations are directly tied to conceptualizations of an

individual's positive face. Because individuals receive advice from close relational partners, and these close relationships may already support the individual's positive face, perhaps this lessens the need for further positive face support.

The negative relationship between positive face support and advice effectiveness may further be explained by what the injured party may hope to get out of the advice interaction. That is, the individual may find advice that is simply supportive of their positive face as unnecessary and unhelpful, while advice without regard to their positive face may be perceived as more helpful and effective. Goldsmith and Fitch (1997) outlined that advice providers often have the option of being supportive or being helpful when giving advice. If positive face support is focused on showing the injured party that they are liked or approved of, then the advice may not offer any informational support or assistance in decision making about responding to the infidelity, which may detract from perceptions of effectiveness. For example, if an individual wants advice that explicitly tells them whether they should terminate or persist within their romantic relationship, they might find advice messages that simply reaffirm their positive face as ineffective. In a study on perceptions of hurtful messages, Young (2004) found that the packaging of a message helps to determine the recipient's evaluation of the message. Additionally, hurtful advice messages were perceived as supportive (Young, 2010). This may relate to the results of this study as it suggests less regard for the recipient's feelings, or perhaps face, may yield more effective advice. Specifically, less positive face supportive messages may also be perceived as more effective.

While H2a contradicts previous research, H2b, concerning negative face support and advice effectiveness, more closely follows some of the extant research (Cupach &

Metts, 1994; Goldsmith, 2004) and challenges other studies (Caplan & Samter, 1999).

Goldsmith and MacGeorge (2000) found negative face support influences perceptions of advice and advice effectiveness, with advice messages that support an individual's face being perceived as more effective. However, Caplan and Samter (1999) found no relationship between negative face support and positive evaluations of advice in terms of two of the four components of advice effectiveness, helpfulness and sensitivity. In the current study, negative face support was a moderate positive predictor of advice effectiveness. That is, when advice-providers employed strategies supportive of participants' negative face, the advice was perceived as more effective. These results generally supports previous research, as Goldsmith (2004) also suggests negative face support will positively influence the perception of advice interactions. Furthermore, as results from this study also show no significant differences in advice effectiveness between different advice messages (RQ1), this may provide support for Goldsmith's (2004) argument that advice can be face threatening, regardless of content. That is, participants who received face threatening advice perceived the message as face threatening regardless of the content of the advice.

Relational Closeness and Advice Effectiveness

Because previous research suggested the importance of relational closeness in evaluating perceptions of face support and face threat (Cupach & Metts, 1994; Goldsmith, 2004) during advice interactions, this study inquired about the effects of face threat and face support beyond relational closeness. Consequently, this study extends current research by exploring the influence of face support and face threat while

controlling for the influence of relational closeness with the advice provider (RQ2a and RQ2b).

Although relational closeness proved to be a significant positive predictor of advice effectiveness in the original model, the model controlling for relational closeness and including both face support and face threat was a better model for predicting injured party perceptions of advice effectiveness. Specifically, negative face support and positive face support were the only significant predictors of advice effectiveness. These results suggest that perceptions of face support and face threat employed by the advice provider during the advice interactions are better predictors of perceived advice effectiveness than relational closeness with the advice provider.

Given the ability for face threat and face support to predict perceptions of effectiveness beyond relational closeness, the results from this study lend further support for the viability of using face threat and face support as a framework for understanding advice interactions. Theoretically, and as noted, this study extends previous findings by examining a series of events which likely compound face threat. Specifically, infidelity is a face threatening and potentially stigmatizing event that may lead to advice interactions, whether solicited or unsolicited, that have also been recognized as face threatening (Olson et al., 2002). While advice is generally more threatening to an individual's negative face threat, unsolicited advice is especially negative face threatening (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997).

Practical Implications

The results from the current study have several important practical implications. Given that infidelity occurs relatively frequently (Wiederman & Hurd, 1999) and that

support from family and friends is important in assisting with the coping process (Olson et al., 2002), many individuals may experience infidelity first hand, or be placed in the position to provide advice to a friend or family member who has experienced infidelity.

During instances in which an individual provides advice to an injured party, the results from this study can be useful when constructing and sending advice messages. Specifically, these results suggest that, advice providers who likely desire to be effective at providing advice, should send advice messages that support the injured party's negative face, regardless of the closeness of their relationship. Appealing to an individual's negative face needs may include providing the recipient with more implicit advice, hedging, or providing options of contingencies (Goldsmith & MacGeorge, 2000). Within close relationships, advice providers should find a balance between supporting and threatening the injured party's positive face. That is, when providing advice following infidelity, injured parties may evaluate advice messages that neither support nor threaten their positive face more favorably. For example, when advising an individual to terminate his or her romantic relationship, an advice provider may choose to say, "perhaps find someone else who can better satisfy your relational needs" as opposed to messages that directly threaten or support his or her positive face (e.g. "you're too good for her").

Regardless of the relational closeness between the injured party and advice provider, injured parties may not desire positive face supportive messages because they may be perceived as ineffective. Additionally, injured parties may desire negative face supportive messages. For example, advice providers can provide negative face supportive messages to injured parties by presenting options for the injured party.

Perhaps injured parties should seek advice from someone who would not prioritize supporting their positive face, but instead prioritize supporting negative face and providing information necessary to make decisions about how to respond to the infidelity. While this does not necessarily mean advice providers should intentionally threaten the injured party's positive face, they perhaps should not be as concerned with supporting their positive face as they should be with providing effective advice and informational support. That is, they do not need to assure the injured party that they are well liked and accepted.

Because previous research shows that individuals do turn to professionals in order to cope with infidelity (Atkins et al., 2005; Gordon et al., 2004), professional counselors may also glean practical implications from these results. While only a small number of respondent reported on counselors or professional help as advice providers, respondents reported significantly less levels of psychological closeness and similarity with the professionals. However, face threat and face support were more influential in advice effectiveness than relational closeness, suggesting that counselors still have some responsibility in the messages they construct regardless of the professional-client relationships. From this, counselors and other professionals should consider the importance of face support and face threat when providing advice to clients. Specifically, and similar to close relationships, counselors should create advice messages that support the recipient's negative face. Additionally, they should ensure their advice messages do not threaten either their positive or negative face. Interestingly, as positive face support was still a negative predictor of advice effectiveness when controlling for relational

closeness, perhaps counselors should consider advice messages that specifically do not support the recipient's positive face.

In summary, the results from this study can be used in practical advice interactions following infidelity. Friends and family members, as well as counselors, of injured parties following infidelity can use the results within advice interactions. While the results do yield practical implications, both should be considered in conjunction with important limitations to this study.

Limitations and Future Directions

The results from this study should be considered with certain limitations in mind. Several of these limitations are common in infidelity research. Other limitations are specific to the current study. From these limitations, future directions for research can be gleaned.

The first limitation, which is common among studies in which participants recall events that have occurred previously (e.g. Cupach & Carson, 2002; Vangelisti & Young, 2000; Zhang & Stafford, 2008), concerns the nature of the survey methods. This limitation has two important components: self-report and memory. First, for the current study, participants were asked to report on an advice interaction following an experience they personally had with infidelity and the advice interaction. When self-reporting, data can be affected based on the reporter's perceptions or opinion. The researcher has no observations from the interactions of events detailed throughout the data set. Similarly, as the participants were asked to report on an advice interaction following an event that could have happened up to six months prior to the study, participants' memory or biases could affect the data.

While not the primary focus of this study, the second limitation involves the very nature of research concerning infidelity. Infidelity can be an emotionally-charged experience for those involved, which may affect perceptions and recounts of interactions and situations, including advice interactions, following the infidelity. Specifically, ill feelings, resentments, or hostilities may resurface as a result of recalling the experience. Similarly, perceptions of the advice interaction at the time of the study may differ from perceptions during, or surrounding the advice interaction, as a consequence of the emotions experienced at the time of the interaction. These perceptions may affect participants' responses as well. Moreover, participants may be reluctant to disclose important details about the infidelity, or the aftermath of the infidelity. For example, some injured parties may have decided not to participate in the study as a consequence of strong emotions. While this study mainly focuses on the advice received following infidelity, the data may still be affected due to the nature of the context.

Thirdly, participants received research credit for participating in a research study conducted through an online research database through the university. Data could have been affected by participants more interested in the research credit than filling out the survey accurately and completely. In order to help decrease the effects of this limitation, students did not receive research credit until after the end of the survey. Furthermore, the survey was easy to follow and relevant to many college student experiences to keep participants' attention.

Future studies concerning the aftermath of infidelity and advice about coping with infidelity should consider each of these limitations. While some may be unavoidable, such as problems with participant memory and self-report, study design should take these

factors into consideration. Personal interviews may help researchers minimize the discrepancies between definitions of ideas and concepts, while creating a positive rapport with participants, potentially minimizing problems with self-reporting about infidelity.

Specific to this study, several limitations should be considered when reviewing these results. First, participants were asked only to report on one piece of advice within one advice interaction. Following infidelity, an individual may receive many pieces of advice from multiple advice providers. The nature of the survey for the current study limits participants to report on one specific advice message, thus not considering other advice messages or interactions. In light of this limitation, future studies should allow participants to report on more than one piece of advice and more than one advice provider. This may be achieved, again, through focus groups, interviews, or other more extensive qualitative methods.

As noted in the review of relevant literature, the degree of face threat during advice interactions differs between solicited advice and unsolicited advice (Goldsmith, 2000). Another limitation to this current study is that the survey procedures did not differentiate between advice that was solicited or unsolicited. Differences in perceived face threat, face support, and advice effectiveness due to how the advice interaction was initiated are not accounted for in this study. Future studies should consider differentiating between solicited and unsolicited advice.

Participants responded to the survey for this study, regardless of actively seeking or passively receiving advice. The face threats and face support inherent in advice interactions may differ between instances in which the advice recipient seeks the advice or passively receives the advice. For future studies, the nature of the initiation of the

advice interactions should also be considered to determine differences between the two situations.

The research questions and hypotheses for this current study did not concern the nature of the infidelity the participants experienced. There are various types of infidelity conceptualized through previous research (e.g., emotional, sexual, emotional and sexual; Blow & Hartnett, 2005; Glass & Wright, 1992). Participants were not asked to identify what type or types of infidelity they experienced. As Goldsmith (2000) noted the appropriateness of advice content influences the evaluation of the advice message, and certain advice messages may be more appropriate for one type of infidelity but not for another. Additionally, there may be differences in how face threatening each type of infidelity is perceived to be, which influences the compounding effects of face threat as an injured party moves from an instance of infidelity to advice interactions. As the type of infidelity was not considered in the present study, future research should include infidelity type as a factor when exploring advice effectiveness. In addition to infidelity type, method of discovery may also influence face support, face threat, and advice effectiveness during advice interactions following infidelity.

As mentioned previously, individuals oftentimes seek support from counselors in order to assist with the coping process following infidelity (Atkins et al., 2005; Gordon et al., 2004). Because only a small number of participants for this study reported seeking advice from a counselor, the results may not be representative of those who do receive support from counselors. Future research can use Goffman's (1967) concept of face as a framework to examine the processes involved with counseling interactions following

infidelity. That is, future studies should apply the concept of face among participants who have received advice from a counselor following infidelity.

As another limitation, this study focuses solely on the advice the injured party receives following infidelity. However, the transgressor also likely experiences face threats as a result of infidelity. Additionally, the transgressor also may use support from others as a way to cope with relational turbulence (Olson et al., 2002). Future studies should explore the advice interactions the transgressor experiences to further understand the processes involved with the coping process. Another interesting direction for future research could involve the transgressor's companion. By applying the concepts of both positive and negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1987) as well as FTAs, the individual with whom the transgressor commits the transgression may also experience face threats because of his or her role in infidelity. Examining the initial face threatening act (i.e. infidelity) may provide more interesting insight to the compounding nature for risking face threat by receiving advice for all parties involved.

For the current study, advice effectiveness was the only outcome variable tested. Other factors, such as the propensity to follow the advice, other types of support individuals receiving following infidelity, and the influence of infidelity on future romantic relationships, could also provide interesting insight to the coping process following infidelity. Future studies should look at other factors involved with coping with infidelity, both by the injured party and the transgressor.

After considering these limitations to this study, future researchers should be able to further examine the processes involved with advice interactions following infidelity. The potential for compounding face threat involved with advice interactions following a

face threatening relational transgression, such as infidelity, poses an interesting point for

research. These face threats, and similarly, face support, do influence perceived advice

effectiveness following infidelity. As infidelity is a common occurrence within romantic

relationships (Wiederman & Hurd, 1999), the results from this study, and the directions

of future studies, are important to many individuals. Whether an individual experiences

infidelity firsthand as the injured party, the transgressor, or a third party, or if an

individual plays the role of advice or support provider to someone else, this study, as well

as future studies, will provide insight into the coping process. These findings and future

studies' findings are translational to individuals experiencing infidelity, which is a

common occurrence (Wiederman & Hurd, 1999), as well as translational to those who

provide advice to these individuals.

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[i] All responses were typed verbatim from the participant's typed responses. Thus, all grammar and spelling
was kept as typed by the participant.
[ii] All names were changed to protect the respondent and all others involved within the advice interaction.

Appendix A

You have signed up for this study because you have had a romantic partner cheat on you in the past six months. For the following questions, please think of *one* instance of cheating that occurred within your romantic relationship within the past six months.

1. How long ago did this occur?

2. How long had you been involved with your romantic partner?

3. What was the status of the relationship at the time?

4. What is the current status of your relationship with your romantic partner?

5. Recall your personal experience with this specific instance of cheating. Please describe what happened.

Please think of this relationship and this instance of cheating for the rest of the survey.

Appendix B

Please report on the most memorable time when someone (e.g., close friend, family member, counselor) gave you advice about the instance of cheating you described above. This person will be referred to as your advice provider. Answer the following questions about this person, your relationship with this person, and what advice they gave to you about the instance of your romantic partner cheating.

1. What is your advice provider's age?
   _____
2. What is your advice provider's race?
   _____
3. What is your advice provider's sex?
   a. Male
   b. Female
4. Please describe your relationship with your advice provider.

Please respond to the following questions where 1 = not at all and 7 = very.

1. How close are you to your advice provider?
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
2. How much do you like your advice provider?
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
3. How often do you talk about personal things with your advice provider?
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
4. How important is your advice provider's opinion to you?
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
5. How satisfied are you with your relationship your advice provider?
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
6. How much do you enjoy spending time with your advice provider?
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
7. My advice provider and I like a lot of the same things.
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
8. My advice provider and I share a lot of the same attitudes about things.
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
9. My advice provider and I have very different values.
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
10. My advice provider and I are very similar.
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
11. My advice provider and I have a similar outlook on life.
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
12. How often do you see your advice provider?
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
13. How central is your advice provider to your everyday life?
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
14. How often do you talk to your advice provider?
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 measured psychological closeness. Items 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11 measured similarity. Items 12, 13, and 14 measured centrality. Item 9 was removed to improve reliability.

15. Please recall the conversation in which you received advice from your advice provider. Please provide as much detail as possible by creating a "script" of the conversation. When completed, place a star next to the main piece of advice your advice provider gave you.

Please think of this advice provider and the starred piece of advice for the rest of the survey.

Appendix C

Modified Face Threat Scale (Cupach & Carson, 2002)

Please indicate the level to which you agree with each statement, where 1 means you strongly disagree and 7 means you strongly agree.

During the conversation where I was given advice, my advice provider's actions:

1. Were rude.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. Were insensitive.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. Showed disrespect toward me.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. Were not justified.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. Were hostile.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. Weakened the relationship between us.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. Showed contempt toward me.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. Damaged the relationship between us.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. Were not tactful.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. Constrained my choices.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. Took away some of my independence.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. Made me look bad in the eyes of others.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13. Invaded my privacy.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. Made me feel obligated to comply.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. Made me feel like I had no control.
    1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 measured positive face threat. Items 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 measured negative face threat.

Appendix D

Modified Face Support Scale (Kerssen-Griep et al., 2003)

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each statement concerning the support you received from your advice provider, where 1 means you do not agree with the statement at all and 7 means you agree very much with the statement.

My advice provider:

1. Worked to avoid making me look bad.
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
2. Left me free to choose how to respond.
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
3. Made sure that s/he didn't cast me in a negative light.
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
4. Showed understanding.
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
5. Did not make me feel pushed into agreeing with his/her suggestions.
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
6. Made me feel like I could choose how to respond to the advice.
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
7. Seemed attentive to me as an individual.
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Items 1, 3, 4, and 7 measured positive face support. Items 2, 5, and 6 measured negative face support.

Appendix E

Modified Advice Effectiveness Scale (Jones & Burleson, 1997)

Please indicate the degree to which the advice you received was:

Effective   Ineffective

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Helpful   Unhelpful

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Appropriate   Inappropriate

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Sensitive   Insensitive

    1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Appendix F

Demographic Questions

Please answer the following demographic questions.

1. What is your age?

    _____

2. What is your race?

    _____

3. What is your sex?

    a. Male

    b. Female

4. How many romantic relationships have you been involved in?

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Molly Susan Eickholt

<u>**Education**</u>
Bachelor of Science
Ohio Northern University, Ada, OH
May 2011
Primary major: Mathematics
Secondary major: Communication Studies
Honors: High Distinction

<u>**Academic Employment**</u>
Graduate Teaching Assistant
University of Kentucky, Lexington, KY

Undergraduate Teaching Assistant
Ohio Northern University, Ada, OH
Spring 2010 – Spring 2011

Mathematics Tutor
Ohio Northern University, Ada, OH
Spring 2009 – Spring 2011

Research Assistant
University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE
Summer 2010

<u>**Other Employment**</u>
Peer Career Assistant
Ohio Northern University, Ada, OH
Fall 2010 – Spring 2011

<u>**Refereed Publications**</u>
Booth-Butterfield, M. Frisby, F. & **Eickholt, M.** (under review). Divorce doesn't mean
 it's over: Face threats and face support in co-parenting and child-free post-divorce
 turning points. *The Journal of Social and Personal Relationships.*

Signed: Molly Susan Eickholt