Introduction

• Support is an essential feature of satisfying relationships (Bradbury & Karney, 2004).
• Support expectations may shape how individuals approach and interact with their partners and how their partner responds (Sanford, 2003).
• However, whether expectations are met may also affect support satisfaction because individuals may feel an increased sense of security when expectations are met or a decreased sense of closeness when expectations are violated.
• We examined whether spouses’ expectations and violated expectations (whether the discussions were better or worse than expected) predicted support discussion satisfaction.

Participants and Procedures

• 157 newlywed couples discussed a worry or concern and completed questionnaires before and after the discussion.
• Relationship length: $M = 4.24$ years
• Husbands: $M = 29.47$ years of age; 77.7% Caucasian
• Wives: $M = 27.69$ years of age; 70.7% Caucasian

Measures

• **Expectations** “Thinking only about the positive/negative aspects of the discussion, how positive/negative will the discussion be?”
• **Perceptions** “Thinking only about the positive/negative aspects of this discussion, how positive/negative was it?”
• **Violated expectations** were calculated as a difference score (perceptions – expectations).
• **Positive violations** represented the degree to which the discussions were more positive and less negative than expected.
• **Negative violations** represented the degree to which the discussions were more negative and less positive than expected.

Results and Conclusion

• Positive, but not negative, expectations predicted more satisfying support discussions for husbands and wives, which may suggest that positive expectations lead spouses to behave constructively during discussions.
• Positively violated expectations did not predict discussion satisfaction, but when partners failed to live up to expectations, spouse were less satisfied with their support discussions.
• When spouses do not have the discussion they hoped for, they may feel misunderstood, less connection, or disappointed, thus leading to dissatisfaction with the interaction.
• This suggests that what spouses expect from their discussions, and whether or not these expectations are met, both play a role in support discussion satisfaction.