Attribution for conflict in close relationships and its relation to memory and relationship evaluation.

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ATTRIBUTION FOR CONFLICT IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS
AND ITS RELATION TO MEMORY AND RELATIONSHIP EVALUATION

A Thesis Presented
by
MICHAEL K. ZUSCHLAG

Submitted to the Graduate School of the University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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ATTRIBUTION FOR CONFLICT IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS
AND ITS RELATION TO MEMORY AND RELATIONSHIP EVALUATION

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ABSTRACT

ATTRIBUTION FOR CONFLICT IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS
AND ITS RELATION TO MEMORY AND RELATIONSHIP EVALUATION

May 1987

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It is suggested that a partner's evaluation of a close relationship depends on the type of attribution made for conflict. Conflict in relationships is typically attributed either to personality traits, or "dispositions," or to patterns of the pair's interaction. Dispositional attributions lead to less favorable evaluations of the relationship than do interactional attributions, because dispositional attributions imply blame and indicate that the outcome of a conflict is uncontrollable. It is suggested that conflict attributions are based on a partner's general understandi schemata of conflict in a relationship. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that details of a conflict that are relevant one's schema will be remembered better than will irrelevant details.
Two studies were conducted to investigate the role of conflict attribution in the evaluation of romantic relationships. In Study 1, respondents were given descriptions of 12 conflicts with apparent dispositional causes and 12 conflicts with apparent interactional causes. Subjects reported that they would be more distressed by dispositional conflicts than interactional conflicts.

In Study 2, respondents made attributions for conflicts described in four stories, and performed a task that tested memory for details of the stories. Memory for details relevant to each respondent's attribution was not correlated with the attribution apparently due lack of the respondents' involvement. However, it was found that subjects who positively evaluated the relationships tended to have better memory for details relevant to interactional attributions than for details relevant to dispositional attributions.
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2. Mean Distress Ratings for Dispositional Conflicts .............. 12
Many researchers have discussed the effect of conflict in a close relationship (Braiker & Kelley, 1979; Deutsch, 1968, 1973; Fincham, 1985; Gottman, 1979; Gottman, Notarius, Gonzo, & Markman, 1976; Huston, Surra, Fitzgerald, & Cate, 1981; Kelley, 1979; Levinger & Hickman, 1984; Madden & Janoff-Bulman, 1981; Orvis, Kelley, & Butler, 1976; Peterson, 1983; Pruitt & Rubin, 1985; Rands, Levinger, & Mellinger, 1981; Raush, Barry, Hertel, & Swain, 1974; Rusbuldt, Johnson, & Morrow, 1985; Sillars, 1981; Syna, 1984; Whitbourne, 1986; Zuschlag & Levinger, 1985;). In this paper, I suggest that the impact of a conflict is determined by the partners' attributions for the conflict. Specifically, I will examine how the kind of attributions they make influences memory of the conflict and evaluation of the relationship.

People in close relationships have frequent and diverse interactions (Kelley, Berscheid, Christenson, Harvey, Huston, Levinger, McClintock, Peplau, & Peterson, 1983). Thus some degree of conflict is unavoidable. More frequent and diverse interactions increase the probability that one partner's actions will interfere with the other's actions (Peterson 1983). Indeed, Huston et al. (1981) and Kelley (1979) both report that as a relationship grows, conflict increases. However, conflict itself is not inherently harmful. Most close relationships seem fulfilling despite the
presence of conflict (Kelley 1979, Peterson, 1983). Thus, the question is what determines conflict's effect on a relationship.

To answer this question, some researchers have proposed typologies of conflict, in which some kinds of conflict are considered more harmful than others (Braiker & Kelley, 1979; Deutsch 1969). For instance, Braiker and Kelley say that conflict about incompatible personality traits (e.g., selfishness) is potentially more damaging to a relationship than conflict over specific behaviors (e.g., who gets to use the car). Others have said that the issue of a conflict matters less than the partners' methods for resolving it. Accordingly, these researchers classify conflict resolution "styles" or "strategies" (Pruitt & Rubin, 1985; Randa, Levinger, & Mellinger 1981; Rusbult et al., 1985). Styles that use coercion or force are harmful to a relationship, while those that use negotiation and compromise are helpful.

Another approach is to study the partners' beliefs about the conflict. Two beliefs about a conflict appear strongly related with evaluation of one's relationship and one's partner: (1) perceived control of the conflict's outcome, (2) perceived responsibility for the conflict (Madden & Janoff-Bulman, 1981; Sillars, 1981). Although these two beliefs are correlated, Madden and Janoff-Bulman's (1981) causal models indicate a tenuous connection.

Fincham (1985), Levinger and Hickman (1984), Syna (1985), and Zuschlag and Levinger (1985) all found that blaming one's partner for causing the conflict is associated with poor attitudes toward the partner and relationship. Orvis, Kelley and Butler's (1976) study of
attributonal conflict also shows the importance of blame. They found that partners were minimally concerned about the conflict's interfering actions. Instead, they were typically concerned about who was responsible for the conflict.

While blaming is associated with low relationship satisfaction, perceived lack over control over the conflict's outcomes is more important (Madden & Janoff-Bulman, 1981). If one believes a desired outcome is attainable, one will be satisfied even if one blames one's partner. On the other hand, if one thinks the desired outcome is unattainable, one will be dissatisfied no matter who is to blame.

I suggest that perceived control and blame are directly related to the attribution of the conflict. Two aspects of a cause of a conflict are relevant to control and blame: (1) the stability of the cause of the conflict, and (2) the degree to which the attributer is causing the conflict.

Attributions are usually classified as either "dispositional" or "situational" (e.g., Kelley, 1967; Jones & Davis, 1965). Dispositional attributions ascribe the cause of a behavior to the personality traits of the actor, while situational attributions ascribe the cause to features of the immediate situation. However, Levinger and Hickman (1984) found that situational attributions are rare for conflicts in close relationships. Perhaps situational attributions are uncommon because the partners in a close relationship have frequent and diverse interactions. As a result, an attributing partner has had the opportunity to observe the same behavior across different situations. This observation of low distinctiveness
inhibits situational attributions (Kelley, 1967).

In close relationships nondistinctive behavior does not have to be attributed to a dispositional cause. The behavior may have an "interactional" cause. That is, it may be due to the partners' habitual patterns of interaction. I will now describe dispositional and interactional attributions of conflict and their relation to perceived control and blame.

**Dispositional Attributions**

Dispositional attributions ascribe the cause of a conflict to stable dispositions or attitudes of oneself and/or one's partner. The following are common types of dispositional attributions: (a) Partner's personality traits inhibit enjoyment in the relationship; for example, one's partner is overbearing, dominating, or exploitative; or the partners have incompatible personalities. (b) One's partner is not worthy of esteem; for example, one's partner is racist, crude, or has other undesirable characteristics. (c) One's partner has a negative attitude towards one; for example, one's partner is inconsiderate, untrusting, or unaffectionate.

Dispositional attributions are associated with low perceived control for two reasons: (1) Dispositions and attitudes are, by definition, unlikely to change. It is difficult to change one's own personality or feelings; it is even harder to change the personality or feelings of one's partner. (2) Dispositional attributions indicate that each partner acts independently. The attributor believes the conflict's cause is the partner's internal states, which occur...
irrespective of attributor's own actions. Thus, the attributor cannot control the cause.

Dispositional attributions lead to blaming through the processes of self-serving biases and egocentrism (Greenwald 1980). Egocentrism is the tendency to perceive events from only one's own perspective. Thus, one regards one's own dispositions as normal, but the other's dispositions as deviant. A self-serving bias is the tendency to distort information to support one's self-esteem. One justifies one's own dispositions, and in comparison, downrates the different dispositions of others. Because these biases condemn the apparent dispositions of one's partner, one will blame one's partner for the conflict.

Thus, a dispositional attribution implies low control and high blame. Therefore, it should be associated with poor evaluation of the relationship.

**Interactional Attributions**

Interactional attributions ascribe the cause of a conflict to mutual patterns of behavior. The following are common types of interactional attributions: (a) The partners do not communicate well; for example, the partners do not thoroughly discuss plans for mutual activities. (b) The partners have habits or roles that inhibit satisfaction; for example, the partners often work together inefficiently. While dispositional attributions mean that the partners behave independently according to their respective traits, an interactional attribution means that each partner affects the other's
actions. As a result, interactional attributions yield more perceived control than do dispositional attributions. Interactional attributions indicate that one's behavior affects the partner's behavior. One can control the conflict's outcome by changing one's own behavior. Dispositional attributions, on the other hand, regard personality traits to be unaffected by one's behavior.

There is a second reason why interactional attribution yield more perceived control than dispositional attributions. Interactional attributions consider a cause to be behavior rather than internal states. One can change one's behavior, even a "habit," but one's personality and attitudes are usually regarded as relatively uncontrollable.

Interactional attributions indicate that the behavior of one partner causes the behavior of the other. Therefore, blaming should be less common with interactional attributions. Blaming one's partner for a behavior is senseless because one caused the partner to perform that behavior; one cannot blame oneself as an alternative, since one's own behavior is caused by one's partner. Therefore, interactional attributions should be associated with little blaming in either direction.

Because interactional attributions are associated with higher perceived control and less blaming than are dispositional attributions, interactional attributions should be associated with better evaluations of the relationship.

Two studies investigate attributions for conflict. In the first study, subjects rate the degree of distress due to conflicts with
interactional and dispositional apparent causes. The second study investigates the biases in memory associated with both kinds of attributions.
CHAPTER II

STUDY 1

If persons feel they have little control over a valued outcome, they will tend to be distressed. Since perceived control is determined by perceived cause, the apparent cause of a conflict should have an effect on a partner's affective state. If the cause of the conflict appears to be one’s partner's dispositions, one will feel less able control its outcome, and so will feel distressed. On the other hand, if the cause appears to be the interaction patterns between the partners, one will feel greater control and less distressed.

This hypothesis was tested in Study 1. Subjects were given descriptions of 12 conflicts with an apparent dispositional cause and 12 conflicts with an apparent interactional cause. It was hypothesized that subjects would report that they would be more distressed about the dispositional conflicts than the interactional conflicts.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 14 male and 18 female students from psychology courses. Each received credit towards his or her course grade for
participation.

Materials

The materials were questionnaires containing 29 short descriptions of conflicts (see Appendix A). Each conflict was described to be between the subject and a hypothetical romantic partner, with a different partner for each conflict. For female subjects, all partners were said to be male; for male subjects, all partners were female. Five of the 29 conflicts were especially severe to help subjects set the end points of the scale of unhappiness. The remaining 24 conflicts were written so that 12 had dispositional causes, and 12 had interactional causes.

After each description was an 11-point scale of distress on which a subject rated his/her feelings about the conflict. A rating of "0" meant that the subject was not at all unhappy about the conflict, "5" meant the subject was unhappy enough to want to talk to the partner about the conflict, and "10" meant the subject was sufficiently unhappy to end the relationship with the partner.

Procedure

Each subject was given a copy of the questionnaire, along with two other questionnaires connected with different studies. The subjects were instructed to "put yourself into each of the following situations by imagining you are one member of an intimate couple."

Results

The data for Study 1 were analyzed with a within-subjects
analysis of variance. Random effects variables were subjects and conflict description nested within apparent cause. The effect of the apparent cause was tested with a quasi-F ratio (Myers, 1979). As hypothesized, subjects reported that they would be more unhappy about conflicts with dispositional causes than about conflicts with interactional causes. The mean unhappiness rating for an interactional conflict was 2.94, while the mean for a dispositional conflict was 4.03. The difference in these means was significant (F = 5.91, p < .025). If conflict description nested within apparent cause is considered to be a fixed effect variable, the F ratio is much greater (F = 69.9, p < .0001). The marginals for each conflict are given in Tables 1 and 2.

Discussion

Study 1 established that conflicts with apparent dispositional causes make a person more unhappy than do conflicts with interactional causes. However, Study 1 did not test the relation of the apparent cause of a conflict with evaluation of the relationship as a whole. Also, Study 1 showed that dispositional causes yield more distress, but this association may not exist when subjects form their own attributions instead of being told the causes.
Table 1

Mean Distress Ratings for Interactional Conflicts

Colin goes to the drug store to get you some things. He misunderstands what you wanted and gets aspirin instead of Tylenol.  

1.22

You ask Sam to help you with some homework. It turns out he knows less about the subject than you do, so you end up being even more confused.

2.78

Steve was going to pick you up from work tonight, but it was unclear at what time, so you wait half an hour for him.

3.49

You are in the car at night. Kevin is driving even though you have much better night vision.

3.37

You have to study for a big exam tomorrow, but you forget to tell Ted and he invites a bunch of friends over tonight.

4.03

You sand an old chair you have and Chuck varnishes it. It would have come out better if Chuck had sanded it and you varnished it since you're much better at varnishing than sanding.

2.37

Ed messes up your alphabetically organized bookshelf because he didn't know that you recently rearranged it.

3.19

You are out with friends until 2:00 a.m. Matt assumes you are staying over at their house and locks you out of the apartment.

4.25

Len throws out a withered potted plant he thought you didn't want but you really thought it might survive and had wanted to keep it.

3.87

Because you wanted to use the shower first in the morning, Keith stays in bed. He soon falls back asleep and has to be reawakened.

0.53

Because you were too busy to take a phone call, Paul takes a message but doesn't get the phone number of your caller because he figures you knew it.

3.25

Alan puts up a picture in the living room which he thought you liked, when in fact you don't like it at all.

2.72
Table 2

Mean Distress Ratings for Dispositional Conflicts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Scenario</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4.72</td>
<td>You and Doug each want to see different movies tonight. Doug says that he doesn't want to go to the movies at all unless you go to the one he wants to see.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>You are going with Jim to his family in Arizona. Jim was supposed to call the airlines to confirm your reservations but he &quot;forgot.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>Roger agreed to mail week, but he doesn't until the end of this week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>You're balancing a checkbook at the desk when Neil asks you to move, saying that he has work to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>Peter puts off studying for a difficult test he has until the morning of the day it's given and he does badly on it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>Owen haphazardly registers for his Fall semester classes on the basis that they &quot;sound good.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>John asks for a magazine you're reading because he wants to read it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>On Saturday morning, Luke suddenly decides to go to New York for the weekend and leaves an hour later.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>Mark insists on storing his bicycle inside the apartment, even though he knows it gets in your way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.62</td>
<td>You and Cal had planned a week ago to go to a particular play together. On the night of the play, Cal decides he rather go out to a bar with some of his friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>You ask Frank to proofread a term paper you just wrote but he says he doesn't feel like doing it right now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>Dan wants old newspapers thrown out within a day after they are received, while you would rather keep them longer.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this study, subjects made their own attributions and they evaluated several relationships as a whole. It was hypothesized that subjects who make interactional attributions would give better evaluations of the whole relationship than would subjects who made dispositional attributions.

The Sources of Attribution

Given the finding of Study 1 that conflicts with dispositional causes lead to more unhappiness than do ones with interactional causes, it becomes important to know how a partner determines the cause of a conflict. I suggest that a person makes an attribution based on his/her general understanding of the subject matter. This understanding is organized as a schema (Zajonc 1968), which guides a person’s attribution (Fiske & Taylor, 1984; Kelley, 1972). Specifically, a person has a schema of conflict in close relationships. This schema includes representations of the features and the causes of conflict.

When the person faces a specific conflict, s/he tests the fit of the features of the conflict with his/her schema. If the features fit, a cause can be ascribed to the conflict. If they do not fit, the person feels s/he does not understand the conflict and makes no
confident attribution.

Some schemata of conflict are "interactional" because they represent conflicts as having interactional causes and, thus, yield interactional attributions. Others are "dispositional" because they represent conflicts as having dispositional causes and yield dispositional attributions.

A conflict schema is a part of one's relationship schema (Raush et al., 1974). Like the relationship schema as a whole, a conflict schema is developed through one's experience in the relationship. By interacting with, and observing one's partner, one makes attributions to account for the partner's behavior. In order to conserve mental resources, one attempts to explain the most behavior with the least attributions (Fiske & Taylor, 1984). As a result, one selects a set of attributions which explain most of the partner's behavior in a conflict. Different relationships may have different conflict schemata depending on one's experiences in the relationships. A person may have a mainly interactional schema for a conflict in one relationship, and a dispositional schema in another.

If attributions do indeed come from schemata of conflict, then the effects of schemata on memory should be demonstrable (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Fiske & Taylor, 1984; Wyer & Srull, 1981). Specifically, features of a conflict that are relevant to one's conflict schema should be remembered better than irrelevant features.

For example, assume that Carla and Luke have a conflict in which Carla plays records that Luke dislikes. One feature of the conflict is that Carla continues to play the records when Luke is clearly
annoyed. Another feature is that Luke has never actually told Carla that he dislikes the records. According to Luke's conflict schema, conflict in this relationship usually has a dispositional cause. This leads Luke to make a dispositional attribution; — i.e., that Carla is inconsiderate. Luke's schema also makes relevant features of the conflict easier to remember than irrelevant features. Thus, he is more likely to remember that Carla plays the records when he is annoyed, than the fact that he never told Carla his feelings. The former feature is relevant to the attribution that Carla is inconsiderate, while the latter is not.

Thus, a dispositional conflict schema, which yields dispositional attributions, increases the chance that one will remember features relevant to the dispositional attribution. Likewise, an interactional conflict schema, which yields interactional attributions, increases the chance that one will remember features relevant to the interactional attribution. Thus I hypothesized that type of attribution would be associated with certain biases in memory: the more a person cites an interactional cause, the better his or her memory for features of the conflict relevant to that interactional attribution, and the worse the memory for features relevant to a dispositional attribution.
Method

Subjects

Thirty-seven female and 18 male undergraduates were recruited from psychology courses. Each received credit towards the course grade.

Experimental stimuli

Four stories were composed (see Appendix B) that describe a relationship featuring a conflict between the subject and a hypothetical romantic partner the subject is living with. For each conflict, four sentences are relevant to a dispositional schema, and four are relevant to an interactional schema. Male subjects were given versions of the stories in which the partner is female; females were given versions in which the partner is male.

A summary of the conflicts and potential attributions follows:

Alan/Amy. The "partner" of the subject, who buys all the couple's groceries, schedules a very limited variety of dinners, so that the subject is getting extremely bored with the food. The dispositional attribution is that the partner is inconsiderate of the subject's needs. The interactional attribution is that the couple have roles in the relationship that do not match their talents.

Carla/Carl. The partner repeatedly plays music that the subject intensely dislikes. The dispositional attribution is that the partner is selfish, while the interactional attribution is that the subject has not adequately communicated his/her dislike of the music.

Lori/Len. The subject has been doing a disproportionate share of
the housecleaning despite an agreement to split it equally. Dispositional: the partner is irresponsible and does not fulfill his/her obligations. Interactional: the subject habitually cleans, while the partner habitually delays doing his/her share.

**Tom/Teri.** The partner is using cash from a heating bill fund to buy household goods. Dispositional: the partner is impulsive and undisciplined. Interactional: the purpose of the cash fund is not clearly understood by the partners.

**Measures**

**Attribution.** Two open ended questions were used to measure the kind of attribution the subject gave for each story: (1) "What do you think is the difficulty between you and ______?" (2) "What would you say is(are) the most probable cause or causes of the difficulty?"

The answers to these questions were coded for interactional and dispositional attributions. The number of statements coded as "interactional," divided by the total number of statements coded as either "interactional" or "dispositional" is the attribution score. A score of 1.00 represents a maximally interactional attribution, and a score of 0.00 is a maximally dispositional attribution.

Two additional questions were included but not coded for attribution: (1) "How do you feel emotionally at this time about the situation?" (2) "How would you deal with this situation? Exactly what would you say or do to ______, if anything?"

**Relationship evaluation.** Relationship evaluation was measured with a series of semantic-differential scales. With these scales,
subjects rated both present and expected satisfaction in the relationship. A single relationship evaluation score was calculated from these items.

**Memory task.** A memory task was designed to measure the subject's accuracy of remembering statements relevant to an interactional (vs. dispositional) schema of conflict. The subject was presented with eight pairs of sentences. One sentence in each pair was an exact quote from one of the stories, the other was a slightly altered version of the same sentence. One sentence in each pair was relevant to an interactional schema; the other was relevant to a dispositional schema. The subject's task was to decide which sentence in each pair was the exact quote. The more often a subject chose the interactional-relevant sentence, the more his/her memory was considered to be biased toward an interactional attribution. For each story, a score of eight indicated a maximally interactional bias, while a score of zero was a maximally dispositional bias. Three distractor pairs were also included for each story.

In summary, this study used the following measures: (1) attribution type, (2) relationship evaluation, and (3) memory bias. The scores for all three measures were averaged for each subject across the four stories, in order to improve stability.

**Procedure**

Subjects were given a packet of the stories (randomly ordered) and their respective questions measuring attribution and relationship evaluation. Subjects read instructions that told them: "Imagine you
are in the following situations and have the same wants and needs you are described as having." Seven to nine days after completing the packet, the same subjects returned to do the memory task.

**Results**

One hypothesis of Study 2 was that interactional attributions are associated with better relationship evaluation than are dispositional attributions. This hypothesis was tested by correlating attribution scores with the relationship evaluation scores. This correlation was .01 and did not differ significantly from zero.

The other hypothesis of Study 2 was that memory of the conflict would be biased in accordance with the attributions for the conflict. In other words, interactional attributions are associated with a interactionally biased memory score. This hypothesis was tested by correlating attribution scores with memory bias scores. The correlation was .11 and did not significantly differ from zero.

However, memory bias was significantly correlated with relationship evaluation (r = .37, p < .005). Subjects who had positively evaluated the relationship tended to recognize statements relevant to an interactional schema, while they forgot statements relevant to a dispositional schema.

**Discussion**

Study 2 did not find direct support for either of its hypotheses.
The first hypothesis stated that relationship evaluation would be correlated with attribution score, but this correlation was zero. This finding contradicts the results of Study 1 (which found that apparent dispositional causes led to unhappiness) and the findings of many other studies which link dispositional attributions to relationship dissatisfaction (Madden & Janoff-Bulman, 1981; Sillars, 1981; Fincham, 1985; Levinger & Hickman, 1984; Syna, 1984).

The second hypothesis of Study 2 predicted a correlation between memory bias and attribution score. This correlation was also zero, but a significant positive correlation was found between memory bias and relationship evaluation. This indicates that positive evaluation of the relationship is associated with a better memory for statements relevant to an interactional schema, while memory one's for statements relevant to a dispositional schema is worse.

The correlation between memory bias and evaluation suggests that the measure of attribution lacked construct validity. If attribution type is not associated with relationship evaluation, or memory bias, there is no reason for memory bias to be correlated with evaluation. On the other hand, this correlation could appear if attribution type actually is associated with evaluation and memory bias. The most plausible explanation for the results is that both hypotheses are correct and the measure of attribution is invalid. This would also account for the contradiction between the results of Study 2 and other research. It is necessary to conduct a new study, with a different measure of attribution to confirm that the attribution measure was invalid.
It may seem odd that the measure of attribution proved to be invalid. The measure consisted of a pair of straightforward questions. The coding of the responses was reported to be easy by the coders and interjudge reliability was high ($r = .92$). An examination of the responses to the two questions measuring attribution reveals that the subjects' answers tended to be short. They were usually shorter than the answers to the later two questions, which inquired about the subject's feelings and intentions. In some cases, each attribution question was answered with a single word. This made coding easy, but it appears that subjects gave superficial answers which did not reflect their true feelings. Perhaps the subjects were not involved enough in the task and gave incomplete answers. Thus, a subject may have answered the questions by simply stating that the conflict's cause is poor communication (interactional coding). S/he may then neglect to state that the poor communication is due to the partner being stubborn (dispositional coding). This explanation of the invalidity seems especially plausible since the attribution questions were the first questions the subject answered after reading the story. It is possible that the subjects had not thought enough about the cause of the conflict so soon after reading about it.
CHAPTER IV

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Implications

The association between attribution made for a conflict and memory for a conflict was not sufficiently substantiated to warrant detailed discussion. However, there is considerable evidence that a partner who perceives a dispositional cause to a conflict tended to be less satisfied than a partner who perceives an interactional cause. The implications of this will now be discussed.

Conflict is defined as incompatible actions between two parties. The results of these studies suggest that in close relationships, the actual incompatible actions may not be very important. Rather, the apparent cause of the conflict determines satisfaction. For example, compare the two items from Study 1 (the mean unhappiness ratings are shown in parentheses):

Sue was going to pick you up from work tonight, but it was unclear at what time, so you wait half an hour for her. (3.49)

You're balancing a checkbook at the desk when Nancy asks you to move, saying that she has work to do. (5.37)

The second event was rated as more distressing than the first, even though waiting half an hour is at least as inconvenient as moving from a desk. The difference in the unhappiness ratings appears due to the apparent causes of the conflicting actions, not the actions themselves. In the first item, the cause of the waiting was a lack of
communication -- it was not clear when the pickup would be. In the second, Carla appears to be selfish and inconsiderate.

The following is another example of the importance of the apparent cause:

On Saturday morning, Linda decides to go to New York for the weekend and leaves an hour later. (5.42)

Although this example was rated as relatively distressing, it is not necessarily a conflict at all. The description does not indicate that Teri's trip to New York interferes with the subject's actions; it appears distressing because it indicates that Teri is an impulsive, perhaps irresponsible, person. Such traits would be undesirable in a permanent partner.

All this suggests that attributions for a conflict determine the degree of dissatisfaction. Partners are generally much more concerned about their attributions than about executing their conflicting actions. Several implications follow:

1. Attributional conflict. Attributional conflict is a disagreement about the cause of an event. Orvis, Kelley, and Butler (1976) report that subjects could easily recall cases of attributional conflict in their relationships. They found that the attributions were almost always for past actions by one partner that annoyed the other partner. Apparently, the partners had discussed their differences in attributions at length because both could recall each other's attribution. Attributional conflict is difficult to understand if conflicting partners are mostly concerned with the interfering actions. Since the actions occurred in the past, it is
too late for the partners to resolve the interference. So why do partners discuss a past conflict, if nothing can be done about it? I suggest that the partners are trying to agree on the cause of the past conflict. This is important for them because satisfaction in the relationship depends on it. If attributions are associated with biases in memory, it is not surprising that such conflicts rarely end in agreement (Orvis, Kelley, & Butler, 1976).

2. Conflict escalation. Conflict escalation in close relationships often consists of each partner introducing more and more issues into the discussion. Gottman et al. (1976) used the term "kitchen-sinking" to describe how partners apparently grab at anything to throw into the argument. Most theorists (Peterson, 1983; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Raush et al., 1974) have argued that escalation results from each partner trying to subdue the other by accusing each other of wrongful behavior in the past. This explanation suggests that there is little connection among the past behaviors.

The results of the present studies suggest an alternative explanation for such escalation. An outside observer may perceive that a partner is introducing issues haphazardly. However, the partner sees a connection among all the issues. The issues are features that fit the same specific attribution (Braiker & Kelley, 1979). Thus, partners may not themselves perceive that they argue about a disjointed accumulation of small issues, as suggested above. Instead, they argue about the cause of a set of past events. To the partner, there is a clear and important connection between the past events: s/he believes they all have the same cause.
3. **Constructive conflict resolution.** Behaviorally and communication-oriented marriage therapists often try to train couples to avoid escalation and to concentrate on the specific incompatible behaviors that presently face them (Raush et al., 1974; Christenson, 1983). While it is probably true that conflict escalation can be harmful, such training may not be completely helpful. By encouraging the couple to focus only on the specific behaviors, the partners may be prevented from discussing the attributions. Thus, harmful attributions may not be invalidated, and beneficial attributions may not be made.

Gottman et al. (1976) have found that partners' attributions are often "hidden agendas" that drive a conflict without ever being stated. By encouraging one partner to tell the other his/her attributions explicitly, the two may resolve the conflict constructively (Gottman et al., 1976). Constructive resolution may consist either of the attributing partner rejecting the attributions and adopting a more sophisticated conflict schema, or of the acting partner refraining from the action now that he or she knows its significance.

4. **Styles of conflict resolution.** There is abundant evidence that coercive styles of conflict resolution are associated with low satisfaction in the relationship (Rands, Levinger, & Mellinger, 1981; Sillars, 1981; Syna, 1984; Rusbult et al., 1985; Zuschlag & Levinger, 1985). Consistent with the findings of the studies presented here, satisfaction is also associated with the attributions for the style of resolution (Sillars, 1984). These attributions may mediate between
satisfaction and both interfering actions and the method of handling interfering actions.

The phenomenon of "conflict-habituated" couples (Cuber & Haroff, 1966) may be explained if attributions mediate between resolution style and satisfaction. Conflict-habituated couples use coercive, aggressive resolution styles, but they often appear to be satisfied with their relationship and have no intention of ending it. Perhaps these partners have evolved conflict schemata that do not include dispositional attributions. Thus, they do not make the dispositional attributions that yield dissatisfaction. Instead, the partners may see the conflict as a game both of them play, as a natural consequence of their interaction.

Future Research

Future research may investigate these implications. Researchers should note that measuring conflict attributions is difficult. A semi-structured interview may be necessary to probe for a deeper response. Future research should also employ actual couples so that genuine, rather than imagined, satisfaction and happiness may be measured. With actual couples, one may be able to observe how attributions are derived from the features of a conflict. By interviewing both partners, one may be able to study if conflict escalation is organized around attributions. One may also ask what types of relationships or personalites tend to make which type of attribution. Also, one may investigate which type of attribution is best under what circumstances. Attributions of conflict are important to a partner because they indicate the amount of control s/he has and
thus, the amount of happiness to expect in the future. It is important that an attribution suggests to the partner what actions will lead to the greatest happiness.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE FROM STUDY 1

We are interested in how people would feel in a series of problematic situations. Please put YOURSELF into each of the following situations by imagining that YOU are one member of an intimate couple. In each of the following imaginary cases, you are involved with a different man with whom you have been living intimately for about two months.

For each case, circle one number between 0 and 10 on the scale below.

1) Colin goes to the drug store to get you some things. He misunderstanding what you wanted and gets aspirin instead of Tylenol.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I am not at all unhappy.</th>
<th>I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it</th>
<th>I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship</th>
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<tr>
<td>No reason to do anything.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
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2) You ask Sam to help you with some homework. It turns out he knows about the subject than you do, so you end up being even more confused.

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<th>I am not at all unhappy.</th>
<th>I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it</th>
<th>I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship</th>
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<tr>
<td>No reason to do anything.</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
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</table>
3) You and Doug each want to see different movies tonight. Doug says that he doesn't want to go to the movies at all unless you go to the one he wants to see.

I am not at all unhappy.
No reason to do anything.

I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it

I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship

4) You are going with Jim to his family in Arizona. Jim was supposed to call the airlines to confirm your reservations but he "forgot."

I am not at all unhappy.
No reason to do anything.

I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it

I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship

5) Bill has repeatedly lied to you about his family and friends.

I am not at all unhappy.
No reason to do anything.

I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it

I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship
6) Steve was not going to pick you up from work tonight, but it was unclear at what time, so you wait half an hour for him.

I am not at all unhappy.  
No reason to do anything.  

I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it  

I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7) Roger agreed to mail the he doesn't until the end of this week.

I am not at all unhappy.  
No reason to do anything.  

I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it  

I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8) You are in the car at night. Kevin is driving even though you have much better night vision.

I am not at all unhappy.  
No reason to do anything.  

I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it  

I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
9) You feel you don't love Robert any more, after the two of you have been engaged for three months.

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10) You have to study for a big exam tomorrow, but you forget to tell Ted and he invites a bunch of friends over tonight.

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11) You're doing a crossword puzzle at the desk when Neil asks you to move, saying that he has work to do.

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12) You sand an old chair you have and Chuck varnishes it. It would have come out better if Chuck had sanded it and you varnished it since you're much better at varnishing than sanding.

I am not at all unhappy. I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

13) You discover that Don has been dating someone else and not telling you.

I am not at all unhappy. I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

14) Ed messes up your alphabetically organized bookshelf because he didn't know that you recently rearranged it.

I am not at all unhappy. I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
15) Peter puts off studying for a difficult test he has until the morning of the day it's given and he does badly on it.

I am not at all unhappy.  
No reason to do anything.

I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it

I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship

16) You are out with friends until 2:00 a.m. Matt assumes you are staying over at their house and locks you out of the apartment.

I am not at all unhappy.  
No reason to do anything.

I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it

I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship

17) You and Tom both feel very distant from each other as if you're just existing together. Neither of you really enjoys being together any more.

I am not at all unhappy.  
No reason to do anything.

I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it

I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship
18) Owen haphazardly registers for his Fall semester classes on the basis that they "sound good."

I am not at all unhappy. No reason to do anything.
I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it


19) John asks for a magazine you're reading because he wants to read it.

I am not at all unhappy. No reason to do anything.
I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it


20) Len throws out a withered potted plant he thought you didn't want but you really thought it might survive and had wanted to keep it.

I am not at all unhappy. No reason to do anything.
I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it


21) Because you wanted to use the shower first in the morning, Keith stays in bed. He soon falls back asleep and has to be reawakened.

I am not at all unhappy. No reason to do anything.

I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it

I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

22) On Saturday morning, Luke suddenly decides to go to New York for the weekend and leaves an hour later.

I am not at all unhappy. No reason to do anything.

I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it

I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

23) Your sexual activity with Carl is not at all satisfying to you.

I am not at all unhappy. No reason to do anything.

I am unhappy enough that I want to talk with my boyfriend about it

I am so unhappy I want to end our relationship

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
24) Mark insists on storing his bicycle inside the apartment, even though he knows it gets in your way.

I am not at all unhappy.  
No reason to do anything.  

25) You and Cal had planned a week ago to go to a particular play together. On the night of the play, Cal decides he rather go out to a bar with some of his friends.

I am not at all unhappy.  
No reason to do anything.  

26) Because you were too busy to take a phone call, Paul takes a message but doesn't get the phone number of your caller because he figures you knew it.

I am not at all unhappy.  
No reason to do anything.  

27) You ask Frank to proofread a term paper you just wrote but he says he doesn't feel like doing it right now.

I am not at all unhappy.
No reason to do anything.

28) Alan puts up a picture in the living room which he thought you liked, when in fact you don't like it at all.

I am not at all unhappy.
No reason to do anything.

29) Dan wants old newspapers thrown out within a day after they are received, while you would rather keep them longer.

I am not at all unhappy.
No reason to do anything.
APPENDIX B

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE FROM STUDY 2

Male subject

Last Five Digits of Your Student Number

Perceptions of Interpersonal Problems

You are going to read four stories. In each you are described as living with a different roommate of the opposite sex with whom you are intimately involved. Each story gives some background of "your" relationship and describes a problem you are currently facing.

Please read each story carefully. Imagine you indeed are faced with the situation in the story, and you have the same wants you are described as having.

After each story are a number of questions about your perception of the situation. Please answer these without turning back and re-reading any part of the story. We are interested in your first impression of each situation. The questions ask for your opinion of the situation --there are no right or wrong answers.

One week after you fill out this questionnaire, you will return to do another related task and answer some more questions about your perception of the events in these stories.
You and Amy have known each other since high school but didn't start dating each other until you and she were home together during the summer after your first year at UMass. By winter break of the following year you felt you loved each other. Amy transferred from her college, Tufts, to UMass so she could be with you. That was almost three years ago and now you've been living together in an apartment in Sunderland for seven weeks. Over the past year, Amy has been most supportive of you while you were having some hard times with your parents. It was during this time that you came to regard yourselves as "engaged" to each other.

Right now the situation you're facing is in regards to food. Because Amy needs the car to go to work, she is in charge of buying the groceries. In exchange, you do the laundry every week. Amy is in the habit of buying for only a few different dishes. Often, in fact, you may find yourself eating the same food several nights in a row. As a result, you've become increasingly bored with the dinners; at times you don't even feel like eating. You would like something different to eat each night of the week.

When you've asked Amy to buy a greater variety of food, she replied that it would be too much trouble for her. Even something simple, such as buying some spices, Amy has refused to do. It appears that Amy is unable to buy for anything other than the most ordinary dishes. Unfortunately, you can't do the shopping instead, because Amy needs the car to go to work. Amy doesn't seem to see a good reason for changing what she buys. "You don't like the food I buy? Well, that's your problem," she said once. Amy suggested that you go with her when she shops, but you eventually rejected this as being too complicated. Now Amy has been trying to have you teach her how to get more variety. So far you've yet to succeed in making this work and the situation remains the same.

You and Amy have had occasional difficulties throughout your past. While dating, Amy would sometimes irritate you by being late in meeting you, and at times you wished she'd spend more time with you alone, instead of going out with her friends. You also have had difficulties after you started living together when you both needed the car for something or wanted to watch different programs on TV.
What do you think is the trouble between you and Amy?

What would you say is the most probable cause (or causes) of the trouble between you and Amy?

Imagining that you are the first character, how do you feel emotionally at this time in the situation?

Why?

How will you deal with this situation? Exactly what will you say or do to Amy, if anything?
Please rate on the following scales how you feel about your RELATIONSHIP with Amy.

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<th>fulfilling</th>
<th>1</th>
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<td>moving away from marriage</td>
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Carla

You and Carla met in your intro biology class while you were a sophomore at UMass. After dating regularly for three months, you fell in love with each other. A year later you moved into an apartment together, and are now considering getting married next year after you graduate.

Your relationship with Carla has been largely rewarding in the past. Last summer your parents met her for the first time and they seemed to like her, which pleased you. Later that summer you suggested that both of you spend a vacation on the Cape. At first Carla didn't want to do it, but eventually she agreed because she could tell you really wanted to. You both ended up having a wonderful time.

Currently, you and Carla are faced with a difficulty. Carla has discovered a new music group which she likes. She now owns three of their albums which she plays often. You, though, don't like the albums at all, and are upset by Carla's playing of them.

You've talked about this with Carla a few times. On one occasion you told her you don't like her music. The conversation didn't go well because Carla was continually distracted by something or other. Carla continued to play the records just as often. You've noticed that Carla would continue to play the albums even while you were visibly annoyed.

This Tuesday, Carla started playing the albums after you got home from classes. When she turned and looked at you, she asked "Don't you like this kind of music?" and you replied "It's not my favorite." On Thursday, as she began to play them, she said sarcastically "Now for the record you like so much." You responded with exasperation that it "drives me crazy." "Does it?" Carla said with a confused look on her face. You didn't answer her and since then you haven't raised the issue, while Carla continues to play her records.

This is not the first difficulty you've had. You've had some trouble with Carla not leaving you alone when you needed to study, and with Carla tying up the phone for hours while she talks to her best friend. Also you've found it irritating that sometimes she is reluctant to loan you some of her belongings such as her camera.
What do you think is the trouble between you and Carla?

What would you say is the most probable cause (or causes) of the trouble between you and Carla?

Imagining that you are the first character, how do you feel emotionally at this time in the situation?

Why?

How will you deal with this situation? Exactly what will you say or do to Carla, if anything?
Please rate on the following scales how you feel about your RELATIONSHIP with Carla.

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Lori

You met Lori through a mutual friend over two years ago. Two months after meeting your feelings for each other grew into love. You planned to marry probably after both of you graduate from college. This year, before the start of the semester, you rented a small apartment together in South Amherst. You've been living there now for the past four months.

For the most part you've enjoyed your relationship with Lori. You have compatible religious and political views. Just recently, Lori gave you money to make it through winter session after you got laid off after Christmas.

One difficulty has been increasing over time. When the two of you started living together, you both agreed to split the housecleaning, although you allowed that occasionally one of you might be too busy to do it for a particular week. But, as this semester progressed, Lori has been doing less and less of the housekeeping. This semester Lori had to take an especially difficult computer course that requires many hours at the terminal, and more time examining printouts. She says that as a result of this, she has been having trouble finding time for housework. For the past three weeks she hasn't done any housework at all.

Three weeks ago, after she hadn't done the cleaning in days, she left to go to the Campus Center. As she was leaving, she said that she'd do her cleaning as soon as she got back. Almost out of habit, you did her share yourself while she was gone. Late that evening, when she got back, she was pulling the vacuum out of the closet when you explained that you had already done her share.

Two weeks ago, you suggested to her that it would be a good time to do the cleaning. She replied that she "didn't feel like cleaning," and that he'd do it later. Ultimately, you again ended up doing all the housework. When Lori discovered this, she said she appreciated that you did all the work. Later she said "I would have done it, but I had trouble fitting it into my routine."

Last week you again asked Lori to do the cleaning. She replied that she was too busy and started to work on one of her printouts. You waited awhile then did her share. Several minutes after you were done cleaning, Lori put her printouts away. This week you finished your share yesterday and Lori still hasn't done anything.

You and Lori have had other difficulties since you started living together. When you first moved in, you disagreed on how to arrange the few pieces of furniture you have. Later you were upset when Lori would bring friends over without telling you first. Also, Lori sometimes sleeps in late in the mornings and would get annoyed if you woke her up, though it's hard not to sometimes.
What do you think is the trouble between you and Lori?

What would you say is the most probable cause (or causes) of the trouble between you and Lori?

Imagining that you are the first character, how do you feel emotionally at this time in the situation?

Why?

How will you deal with this situation? Exactly what will you say or do to Lori, if anything?
Please rate on the following scales how you feel about your RELATIONSHIP with Lori.

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Teri

You met Teri two years before you moved in together, shortly after another relationship of yours broke up. You soon came to love each other and date each other exclusively. You have both always been willing to help each other in times of trouble and give emotional support, and you remember spending long hours talking with each other about almost everything in your dorm room.

You have been living together for over three months and have encountered a difficulty. Two months ago, you received the heating bill for February and it was over eighty dollars — more than either of you could comfortably spend at one time. You've heard from the former tenants that the bill for December and January can be just as high. So, after you both manage to pay off the February bill, you decided it would be best to establish a fund for heating bills. Every month each of you would contribute ten dollars in cash to the Fund through the spring, summer, and fall. In this way you hope to avoid having to pay so much all at once for heat.

But ever since the Fund was established, Teri has been taking a little cash out of it now and then to buy certain things. First she bought drinking glasses, since you only have two. A couple of weeks later she bought an extra phone for the bedroom, which is something the two of you talked about getting. A couple of days later, after you mentioned that the apartment could use some greenery, Teri bought a planted plant with cash from the Fund.

When she bought the glasses, you asked her why she used money from the Fund for it. She answered, "Where else should I've gotten the money from?" As for the phone, she explained that it was on sale and "I couldn't pass up an opportunity like that." When she bought the plant you suggested that she should have waited until you could raise the money from some other source. She replied that it was something she really wanted to buy now. She noticed that you seemed bothered by her purchases. She said, "Why are you upset? Didn't we agree we needed this stuff?" You pointed out that the things she bought were not the same as heat. Teri was perplexed: "But I bought only things for the apartment." After you said that money needed to be saved for heating bills next winter, she commented that December is so far away and she couldn't think that far ahead. "We'll start to plan to pay for the heat when it gets cold," she said.

Yesterday you showed Teri just how much the Fund had been depleted. After some thought, she recommended that, considering all the expenses, "We better increase how much we put in the Fund so we can still pay for heat."

Your relationship with Teri has had trouble before. Teri's habit of nail-biting has been irritating to you. Teri is not very interested in going dancing, which you are; at times the two of you have just
stood around at parties when you would have liked to dance too. Also, when you were going to move in together, you disagreed on where to live. Teri wanted to live in Northampton because it was more lively, but you favored South Amherst because it was generally cheaper. Eventually you compromised and took an apartment in Hadley.
What do you think is the trouble between you and Teri?

What would you say is the most probable cause (or causes) of the trouble between you and Teri?

Imagining that you are the first character, how do you feel emotionally at this time in the situation?

Why?

How will you deal with this situation? Exactly what will you say or do to Teri, if anything?
Please rate on the following scales how you feel about your RELATIONSHIP with Teri.

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Amy

Recognition Task

Following a synopsis of the story, you will read 11 pairs of sentences from the story about you and Amy. One sentence in each pair is an exact quote from the story; the other is the same sentence, but changed slightly.

Please select which sentence in each pair you think is the exact quote and write its letter in the available blank.

Synopsis:

Amy needs the car to go to work, so she is in charge of buying the groceries. Amy has been buying for only a few different dishes. Often, in fact, you may find yourself eating the same food several nights in a row. As a result, you have become increasingly bored with the dinners; at times you don't even feel like eating. You would like something different to eat every night of the week.

1.____

A. "You don't like the food I buy? Well that's your problem," she said once.

B. "You don't like the food I buy? Well that's a real problem," she said once.

2.____

A. It appears that Amy is unable to buy for anything other than the most ordinary dishes.

B. It appears that Amy is unwilling to buy for anything other than the most ordinary dishes.
3.____
   A. In exchange, you do the dishes every day.
   B. In exchange, you do the laundry every week.

4.____
   A. Amy doesn't seem to see a good way for changing what she buys.
   B. Amy doesn't seem to see a good reason for changing what she buys.

5.____
   A. When you asked Amy to buy a greater variety of food, she replied that she wouldn't know how.
   B. When you asked Amy to buy a greater variety of food, she replied that it would be too much trouble for her.

6.____
   A. Amy transferred from her college, Tufts, to UMass so she could be with you.
   B. Amy transferred from her college, Boston College, to UMass so she could be with you.

7.____
   A. Unfortunately, you can't do the shopping instead because Amy needs the car for her convenience.
   B. Unfortunately, you can't do the shopping instead because Amy needs the car to go to work.
8. 
   A. Amy suggested that you go with her when she shops, but you eventually rejected this as being too complicated.
   B. You suggested that that you go with her when she shops, but she eventually rejected this as being too complicated.

9. 
   A. It was during this time that you came to regard yourselves as "engaged" to each other.
   B. It was during this time that you came to regard yourselves as "in love" with each other.

10. 
    A. Even something simple, such as buying some spices, Amy couldn't do.
    B. Even something simple, such as buying some spices, Amy has refused to do.

11. 
    A. Now Amy has been trying to have you get more variety.
    B. Now Amy has been trying to have you teach her how to get more variety.
Carla

Recognition Task

Following a synopsis of the story, you will read 11 pairs of sentences from the story about you and Carla. One sentence in each pair is an exact quote from the story; the other is the same sentence, but changed slightly.

Please select which sentence in each pair you think is the exact quote and write its letter in the available blank.

Synopsis:

Carla has discovered a new music group which she likes. She now owns three of their albums which she plays often. You though strongly dislike the albums, and are upset by Carla's playing of them.

1. __

A. You noticed that Carla would continue to play the albums even when you were visibly annoyed by it.

B. You noticed that Carla would continue to play the albums even when you felt very annoyed by it.

2. __

A. On one occasion you tried to tell her you don't like her music.

B. On one occasion you told her you don't like her music.
3. __
A. On Thursday, as she began to play them, she said sarcastically "Now for the record you like so much."
B. On Thursday, as she began to play them, she said seriously "Now for the record you like so much."

4. __
A. After dating regularly for three months, you fell in love with each other.
B. After dating occasionally for three months, you fell in love with each other.

5. __
A. The conversation didn't go well because Carla was continuously distracted by something or other.
B. The conversation didn't go well because Carla was continuously distracting you with something or other.

6. __
A. You've talked with Carla about this many times.
B. You've talked with Carla about this a few times.

7. __
A. When she turned and looked at you she asked "Don't you like this kind of music?" and you replied, "I don't like them at all."
B. When she turned and looked at you she asked "Don't you like this kind of music?" and you replied, "It's not my favorite."
8. __
A. Later that summer, she suggested that both of you spend a vacation on the Cape.
B. Later that summer, you suggested that both of you spend a vacation on the Cape.

9. __
A. This Tuesday, Carla was playing the albums when you got home from classes.
B. This Tuesday, Carla started playing the albums when you got home from classes.

10. __
A. You responded that it "drives me crazy." "Does it?" Carla said with a confused look on her face.
B. You responded that it "drives me crazy." "Does it?" Carla said with a disinterested look on her face.

11. __
A. Your relationship with Carla has been largely rewarding in the past.
B. Your relationship with Carla has been somewhat rewarding in the past.
Recognition Task

Following a synopsis of the story, you will read 11 pairs of sentences from the story about you and Lori. One sentence in each pair is an exact quote from the story; the other is the same sentence, but changed slightly.

Please select which sentence in each pair you think is the exact quote and write its letter in the available blank.

Synopsis:

When the two of you started living together, you both agreed to split the housecleaning, although you allowed that occasionally one of you might be too busy to do it for a particular week. But, as this semester progressed, Lori has been doing less and less of the housecleaning. She says that because of a difficult computer course she has been having trouble finding time for housework.

1. __________
   A. She replied that she was too busy and continued to work on one of her printouts.
   B. She replied that she was too busy and started to work on one of her printouts.

2. __________
   A. This year, after the start of the semester, you rented a small apartment together in South Amherst.
   B. This year, before the start of the semester, you rented a small apartment together in South Amherst.
3. **A.** Several minutes after you were done cleaning, Lori put her printouts away.

B. Several hours after you were done cleaning, Lori put her printouts away.

4. **A.** As she was leaving, she said she'd do her cleaning some time after she got back.

B. As she was leaving, she said she'd do her cleaning as soon as she got back.

5. **A.** Late that evening, when she got back, she was pulling the vacuum out of the closet when you explained that you had already done her share.

B. Late that evening, when she got back, she was pushing the vacuum into the closet when you explained that you had already done her share.

6. **A.** You have opposing religious and political views.

B. You have compatible religious and political views.

7. **A.** Three weeks ago, after she hadn't done the cleaning in days, she left to go to the Campus Center.

B. Three weeks ago, after she hadn't done the cleaning in days, she left to go to the Computer Center.
8.____
A. You met Lori through a mutual friend over two years ago.
B. You met Lori at a party over two years ago.

9.____
A. She replied that she "didn't have time for cleaning," and that she'd do it later.
B. She replied that she "didn't feel like cleaning," and that she'd do it later.

10.____
A. Later she said, "I would have done it, but I had trouble fitting it into my routine."
B. Later she said, "I would have done it, but I had trouble getting motivated."

11.____
A. When Lori discovered this, she said she figured you'd do all the work.
B. When Lori discovered this, she said she appreciated that you did all the work.
Teri

Recognition Task

Following a synopsis of the story, you will read 11 pairs of sentences from the story about you and Teri. One sentence in each pair is an exact quote from the story; the other is the same sentence, but changed slightly.

Please select which sentence in each pair you think is the exact quote and write its letter in the available blank.

Synopsis:

You and Teri established a fund to pay for heating bills next winter. Both of you would regularly contribute to the Fund throughout the warm months. But ever since the fund established, Teri has been taking a little cash out on it now and then to buy certain things, and as a result, the fund isn't growing as fast as you think it should.

1.
A. She replied that it was something she really wanted to buy now.
B. She replied that it was something you both really needed now.

2.
A. She commented that December is so far away and she could build the fund back up by then.
B. She commented that December is so far away and she couldn't think that far ahead.
3.  
A. She said, "Why are you upset? Didn't we agree we could use this stuff?"
B. She said, "Why are you upset? Didn't we agree we needed this stuff?"

4.  
A. Teri was perplexed: "But I bought only things for the apartment."
B. Teri was perplexed: "But I bought only good things."

5.  
A. Every other month each of you would contribute ten dollars in cash to the Fund through the spring, summer, and fall.
B. Every month each of you would contribute ten dollars in cash to the Fund through the spring, summer, and fall.

6.  
A. As for the phone, she explained that it was on sale and "I couldn't pass up an opportunity like that."
B. As for the phone, she explained that it was on sale and "We shouldn't pass up an opportunity like that."

7.  
A. She answered, "Where else should I've gotten the money from?"
B. She answered, "Where else could I've gotten the money from?"
8.____

A. After some thought, she recommended that, considering all the expenses, "We better increase how much we put in the Fund so we can afford them all."

B. After some thought, she recommended that, considering all the expenses, "We better increase how much we put in the Fund so we can still pay for heat."

9.____

A. You remember spending long hours talking to each other about almost everything in your dorm room.

B. You remember spending long hours talking to each other about almost everything in her dorm room.

10.____

A. We still have to plan to pay for the heat when it gets cold.

B. We'll start to plan to pay for the heat when it gets cold.

11.____

A. You've heard from the former tenants that the bill for January and February can be just as high.

B. You've heard from the former tenants that the bill for December and January can be just as high.