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Can Thinking Actually Improve Your Marriage? Need For Cognition And Attributions In Close Relationships

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Can Thinking Actually Improve Your Marriage? Need For Cognition And Attributions In Close Relationships

When your spouse unexpectedly gives you a bouquet of flowers, what is your reaction? Your interpretation of the reason *why* your spouse gave you flowers is doubtlessly more important than the act itself. In relationships, and social events in general, humans inevitably attempt to decipher the reasons underlying the behaviours of humans they interact with. However, individuals differ to the extent they attempt to find meaning in the human behaviours in their social environment (Fletcher, Danilovics, Guadalupe, Peterson, & Reeder, 1986). This paper will examine two social cognitive constructs, need for cognition and attributional complexity to see whether they are predictive of adaptive attributional processes that may lead to higher relationship satisfaction. Additionally, creativity and its link to attributions will be examined.

In a time where society is becoming more and more complex, individuals are more often without knowledge of the many things that exist around them. For example, many people everyday use cell phones, ATM machines, and personal computers without thorough knowledge of how they work. This way of living leads individuals to become passive in their environments because they are accustomed to not understanding how things work. This in turn can affect the way individuals process social information about other individuals' behaviours. However, some individuals nonetheless remain interested in knowing how things work and more importantly why individuals do as they do.

Need for Cognition

There are those who think and others that like to think. We think because our daily lives require us to. Problem-solving and other abstract cognitive processes have lead many individuals to achieve astonishing feats. However, some individuals enjoy thinking for its own sake, whether

it leads to a goal or not. Given the fact that some individuals intrinsically enjoy thinking more than others, it seems logical that these individuals probably spend more time thinking about the events that occur in their environment. These events contain social information about the behaviours and attitudes of the different people a person may interact with (including themselves). The psychological construct *need for cognition* refers to these individuals that have an intrinsic motivation to think (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982).

Attributional Complexity

Those who like to think also prefer to think more elaborately about the different information needed to understand the causes of individuals' behaviours (Fletcher et al., 1986). When attempting to determine reasons for individuals' behaviours, persons high in attributional complexity (AC) are more likely to look at more information and combine that information in more elaborate ways than individuals low in AC (Fletcher et al.). Thus, these individuals are more advanced processors of social information, as they have an intrinsic motivation to understand why people around them behave the way they do.

Theoretical and Empirical Precedents

Need for Cognition

Cacioppo and Petty (1982) first explored the idea of need for cognition (NFC) as an individual trait. They found that some people seem to be “cognitive misers” whereas others are “chronic cognizers” (Cacioppo & Petty, 1982). Hence although we may all attempt to make sense of our social world, individuals high on NFC rely significantly more on their cognitive faculties to make sense of events in their world (Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein, & Jarvis, 1996).

NFC has been shown to reliably predict frequency and depth of cognitive processing whereby individuals high on NFC have more frequent and deeper general cognitions (Cacioppo, Petty, Kao, & Rodriguez, 1986). NFC has also been shown to predict affective reactions to

challenging cognitive tasks. Individuals high on NFC exhibited less negative affect in response to difficult cognitive tasks (Thompson, Chaiken, & Hazlewood, 1993).

NFC has been linked to other psychological phenomena. For example, NFC was found to moderate the physical attractiveness bias effect (Perlini & Hansen, 2001). More specifically, individuals low on NFC showed a much stronger attractiveness bias, as compared to individuals high on NFC (Perlini & Hansen, 2001).

NFC has also been linked to the Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness factors of the big five model (Sadowski & Cogburn, 1997). NFC has been investigated in a dyadic context by Shestowsky, Wegener, and Fabrigar (1998). They found that when individuals high in NFC were paired with individuals low in NFC, the decision outcome of the pair most likely resembled the opinion of the individual with high NFC (Shestowsky et al., 1998).

Yet another psychological phenomena related to NFC is the correspondence bias, which is the tendency to conclude that a person's behaviour corresponds to the person's unique disposition, even when situational variables are readily observable (Gilbert & Malone, 1995). In a study, individuals high on NFC were less prone to exhibiting the correspondence bias as compared to individuals low on NFC (D'Agostino & Fincher-Kiefer, 1992). Because individuals high in NFC are intrinsically interested in thinking, they were able to take into account the potentially abstract and distal causes of a person's behaviour. This consideration of situational constraints as a force acting on an individual's behaviour thus leads to a decrease in the correspondence bias.

However, NFC effects have been shown to be moderated by situational variables such as personal relevance of an event (Cacioppo et al., 1996). In one study, both individuals high and low on NFC exhibited high effortful cognitive processing when thinking about topics that were

personally relevant to them (Axsom, Yates, & Chaiken, 1987). One might think that the results from the last mentioned study may work against the thesis of my present article. Because a close relationship with another is most likely personally relevant to oneself, it might be deduced that both individuals high and low on NFC will equally exhibit effortful cognitive processing. However, the last study used a manipulation that made it very salient that the speech they were going to listen to was about an environmental topic that would directly affect them in the near future. Also, in the personally relevant condition, participants were instructed to “listen very carefully” as compared to “just sit back and relax” while listening to the speech. This inevitably would make an individual (who may not intrinsically enjoy thinking) think because they were following the instruction of the study. In close relationships, however, the routine and naturalistic nature of the relationship does not make thinking about one’s partner’s behaviours salient. Hence, I would expect individuals low and high on NFC to differ on attributional complexity, albeit their relationship may be very personally relevant to them.

Finally, NFC has been shown to be positively associated with curiosity (Olson, Camp, & Fuller, 1984 as cited in Nair & Ramnarayan, 2000), desire for new experiences (Venkatraman et al., 1990 as cited in Nair & Ramnarayan, 2000), tendency to generate complex attributions for human behaviour (Fletcher et al., 1986), and negatively associated with closed mindedness (Petty & Jarvis, 1986 as cited in Nair & Ramnarayan, 2000). NFC and creativity have also been studied. In one study, individuals who experienced lucid dreams were significantly higher on NFC and creativity than their non-lucid dreaming counterparts (Blagrove & Hartnell, 2000). Although the last study does not explicitly show that NFC and creativity are related per se, it seems intuitive that they would be. Individuals with greater creativity may be less rigid in the way they perceive the world, and hence may have greater cognitive complexity. Thus this

creative ability to perceive social events may facilitate their process in considering abstract, distal explanations of behaviours. As Gilbert and Malone (1995) have noted, situational causes are sometimes far removed from the situation and thus are difficult to consider. However, if an individual is creative, they may be more likely to consider distal causes that other individuals may never have thought of.

Attributional Complexity

The extent to which individuals use sophisticated strategies for explaining human behaviours is known as *attributional complexity* (Fletcher et al., 1986). They suggest there exists several attributional constructs that constitute attributional complexity. Attributionally complex individuals will: (1) be more interested in explaining and understanding human behaviour, (2) prefer complex rather than simple explanations for human behaviour, (3) think about their own thinking processes, (4) be more aware of the fact that people's behaviours are affected by the situation and others, (5) infer abstract or causally complex internal attributions, (6) infer abstract, contemporary, external causal attributions, and (7) infer external causes that occurred in the distant past (Fletcher et al.). Their study demonstrated that psychology majors showed greater attributional complexity as compared to natural science majors. This result demonstrated that intelligence is not necessarily related to attributional complexity as both natural science and psychology majors would not be expected to differ substantially in intelligence. Finally, their study demonstrated that attributionally complex individuals both mentioned more causes in explaining a friend's behaviour and chose more complex explanations (i.e. considering a combination of dispositional and situational factors) for a human behaviour (Fletcher et al.).

Fletcher et al. (1986) make the prediction that complex individuals, as compared to non-complex individuals, would thus be less prone to the fundamental attribution error. The

fundamental attribution error refers to the fact that individuals may underestimate the situational factors and overestimate the dispositional factors when explaining human behaviour (Ross, 1977 as cited in Fletcher et al., 1986). Although this has not been tested empirically, it seems fairly logical that this would be the case. As Gilbert and Malone (1995) mention, “behaviour is easy to see, but situations often are not” (p. 30). They state that lack of awareness for situational forces is one of the causes that individuals infer dispositions for situationally caused behaviours (Gilbert & Malone, 1995). Many situational forces are far removed from the situations they affect and so awareness may be difficult (Gilbert & Malone, 1995). However, attributionally complex individuals may have an upper hand in considering these far-removed causes of behaviours because they consider more often abstract explanations (e.g. distal situations) that are occurring or have occurred in the distant past. Thus, attributionally complex individuals may therefore less likely underestimate situational factors when explaining behaviours.

Finally, Fletcher et al. (1986) also predicted a priori that women, due to their greater natural interest in relationships, should demonstrate higher attributional complexity. Results from their study indeed supported this contention (Fletcher & al).

Of more relevance to this article, a significant positive association was found between high NFC and high AC (Fletcher et al., 1986). Thus, individuals who like to think, in turn use more complex strategies to attribute causes to social behaviours in their environment.

Attributions in Close Relationships

In the context of close relationships, attributions made about a partner’s behaviour become very important. It seems intuitive that the better you understand someone, the closer you will psychologically feel towards that person, increasing your happiness in that relationship. And so it follows that the more accurate you perceive your partner’s behaviours (i.e. attribute the

correct causes for their behaviours), the more you will feel as though you understand them. Much research has examined the link between attributions and relationship satisfaction and a robust association between the two constructs have been documented (e.g., Baucom, 1987; Bradbury & Fincham, 1990). Distressed spouses as compared to non-distressed spouses were found to more likely see their partner's negative behaviours as intentional and selfishly motivated (Bradbury, Fincham, Beach, & Nelson, 1996). Additionally, Miller and Bradbury (1995) found that attributions spouses made for marital events were associated with behaviours made in a subsequent problem-solving discussion. Thus, attributions affect subsequent behaviours that can then indirectly affect marital satisfaction (e.g. Fincham & Bradbury, 1988).

Bradbury et al.'s (1996) study used Bradbury and Fincham's (1992) Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM), which I will go into detail because I will be using it in my study. The RAM consists of four negative events that commonly occur in marriages (e.g. "Your husband criticizes something you do"). For each event, spouses are asked to rate on a 6-point scale the extent to which they agree (6) or disagree (1) with each of six statements reflecting different attribution dimensions. Three of these dimensions (locus, globality, and stability) pertain to causal attributions (RAM-C) and the other three (intent, selfish motivation, and blame) pertain to responsibility attributions (RAM-R). For my study, I am expecting that attributionally complex individuals will consistently score lower on all of these items as these individuals use more cognitively complex strategies in analyzing social situations. Thus, their higher-order processing strategies will enable them to consider more often the external, distal causes that may be operating in influencing their partner's negative behaviours.

This rationale is supported by prior data that showed that attributionally complex individuals more often take into account the external and circumstantial stimuli that may have

caused a behaviour (McArthur, 1972). Fletcher et al. (1986) used a measure adapted from McArthur (1972) that asked participants to select the most plausible cause for an event. For example, given: “Ralph trips over Joan’s feet while dancing”, participants were required to choose among: (a) something about the person, (b) something about the stimulus, (c) something about the circumstances, or (d) some combination of a, b, or c. They found that attributionally complex individuals more often selected non-dispositional options (i.e. b, c, or d) as potential causes for the behaviour (McArthur, 1972). Thus, the logic is that if attributionally complex individuals more often think of abstract situational factors in analyzing situations, they should consistently score lower on the RAM items.

For example, the first causal attribution dimension is *locus* and the stimulus event is: “My husband’s behaviour was due to something about him” (see Appendix A). Evidently, individuals that can readily think of more situational factors will score lower on a question that is tapping into dispositional factors. The dimension of locus focuses on partner attributions because these have been shown to have the most impact on marital satisfaction (Bradbury & Fincham, 1992). The second causal attribution dimension is *stability* and the stimulus event is: “The reason my husband criticized me is *not* likely to change.” Due to the fact that attributionally complex individuals can more likely infer abstract external causal attributions that have occurred in the present and past, it seems likely that they will be able to conclude that because the behaviour was *not* completely due to their partner, their future behaviour is likely to in fact change. Finally, I will provide an explanation for the responsibility attribution dimension *selfish motivation*, which has the stimulus event: “My husband's behavior was motivated by selfish rather than *unselfish* concerns.” Similarly, attributionally complex individuals, due to the fact that they are more likely

to consider abstract external potential causes, will less likely infer that the behaviour was selfishly motivated.

Longitudinal analyses have also supported the notion that non-benign attributions made for a negative partner behaviour predicts lower marital satisfaction at a later time (Fincham & Bradbury, 1987; Fincham & Bradbury, 1993). However, a recent study suggests that perhaps the association between causal attributions and marital satisfaction is bi-directional (Fincham, Harold, & Gano-Phillips, 2000). That is, satisfaction with ones relationship may influence the attributional processes that partners exhibit. Nonetheless, this finding should not lead us to think that improving one's attributional processes will not prove beneficial to our relationship. The more accurate your partner attributions are, the more you will understand them for who they truly are. This in turn may incline you to grow psychologically closer to them and increase your satisfaction in your relationship. As Gilbert and Malone (1995) boldly state in arguing that people may not do just fine if they exhibit the correspondence bias:

In the past year, 1,000 people who thought they knew their acquaintances have been raped by them, 10,000 people who thought they knew their mates have divorced them, and 100,000 people who thought they knew their sovereigns have died as pawns in their wars. Just how capably do we navigate our social worlds? Just how accurate are our understandings of those around us? We do not know. Nobody does. But before we accept the stale contention that people do just fine when psychologists are not manipulating and measuring them, we should probably look around (p. 35).

My rationale for examining these constructs lies in the fact that individuals who intrinsically enjoy thinking will have more complex attributional tendencies, and thus will make more adaptive attributions and in turn experience greater relationship satisfaction with their partner. If this association can be supported by data, then these results may be important in marital therapy interventions whereby individuals could potentially learn that successful use of high cognition in marital relationship will benefit them indirectly.

This study will attempt to describe a procedure for measuring and tapping into the constructs of NFC, AC, and creativity to see if they are predictive of benign attributions and later relationship satisfaction.

My main hypothesis is that individuals high in NFC will also be high in AC and thus will make more benign attributions for their partner's negative behaviours and in turn experience greater relationship satisfaction. Conversely, individuals low in NFC will also be low in AC and will make more maladaptive attributions for their partner's negative behaviours and in turn experience lower relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, I hypothesize that individuals with higher creativity will make less maladaptive attributions for their partner's negative behaviours and in turn experience higher relationship satisfaction. Additionally, I also hypothesize that females will be higher on NFC and AC and thus will make more benign attributions for their partner's negative behaviours as compared to men.

Method

Participants

Sixty married males and 60 married females will participate in the present research study. Participants will be recruited from a class and from the community as to get enough married individuals. The rationale for using married couple is that the Relationship Attribution Measure includes negative behaviours that are commonly experienced by marital partners. Having participants in the sample that may not have experienced the negative behaviours with their partner (due to the length of their relationship) would compromise the results.

Procedure

The participants will be recruited to participate in a study investigating the role of personality variables in close relationships. Upon accepting to participate, they will be sent a

questionnaire packet including several scales. They will be completing a relationship satisfaction scale, a relationship attribution measure, a need for cognition scale, an attributional complexity scale, and finally a creativity scale. They will be instructed to complete the scales independently and not to consult their partner when filling them out. They will then send the completed questionnaire packet back to the researcher in the postage-paid return envelopes provided.

Relationship Satisfaction Scale

The first scale in the questionnaire will be the Quality Marriage Index (QMI; Norton, 1983), which has been shown to be valid and reliable. It asks six questions about evaluative judgments about an individual's overall marriage quality.

Relationship Attribution Measure

The next measure to be completed will be Fincham and Bradbury's (1992) Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM) (see Appendix A). As previously described, the measure includes four negative behaviours and six attributional statement items for each of the negative behaviours.

Need for Cognition Scale

Cacioppo, Petty, and Kao's (1984) Need for Cognition Scale will then be completed (see Appendix B). The NCS is composed of 18 items that tap into the intrinsic motivation to exert effortful cognitive processing.

Attributional Complexity Scale

Fletcher et al.'s (1986) Attributional Complexity Scale (ACS) will then be completed (see Appendix C). The ACS is composed of 28 items that tap into the sophisticatedness of an individual's strategies for explaining human behaviours.

Creativity Scale

Finally, Gough's (1979) adjective check list will be completed. The adjective check list is composed of 30 items that tap into individual creativity. These scales were purposely placed in this order because the NCS and ACS may affect results on the RAM. Reading about enjoying thinking and complex cognitive processing may inadvertently encourage individuals into thinking more and using more complex strategies in answering items on the RAM. Thus, the RAM was placed before the NCS and ACS. Additionally, thinking about negative partner behaviours may affect relationship satisfaction responses and so the QMI was placed before the RAM.

Data Analysis

Specifically, it will be expected that participants' scores on the NCS will be positively correlated to participants' scores on the ACS. That is, participants that score high on the NCS will score high on the ACS and participants that score low on the NCS will score low on the ACS. This result would replicate that of Fletcher et al. (1986). Next, I expect participants' scores on the ACS to be negatively correlated to participants' scores on the RAM. That is, participants that score high on the ACS will score low on the RAM and participants that score low on the ACS will score high on the RAM. This result, if determined to be significant, would be the first set of data to support a positive correlational association between attributional complexity and maladaptive relationship attribution processes. Finally, I expect participants' scores on the RAM to be negatively correlated to participants' scores on the QMI. That is, participants that score high on the RAM will score low on the QMI and participants that score low on the RAM will score high on the QMI. This result would replicate that of Baucom (1987), Bradbury and Fincham (1990), and Bradbury et al. (1996).

Other associations between constructs could be observed, but these seem too self-evident to elaborate upon. For example, knowing that NCS scores are positively correlated to ACS scores that are negatively correlated with RAM scores, one could logically deduce that NCS scores would also be negatively correlated with RAM scores. Finally, using the same logic, one could deduce that NCS scores would be positively correlated to QMI scores.

Analyses on the link between creativity and relationship attributions will then be assessed. I expect that participants with high creativity scores will have low scores on the RAM and so should have higher scores on the QMI. If this result is obtained, it would be the first set of data to show that creative individuals have an upper hand at making benign attributions for their spouse's negative behaviours.

Finally, a statistical test will be performed on the data to determine whether any gender differences exist among the five constructs measured in this study. As stated earlier, Fletcher et al. (1986) found that females are more attributionally complex as compared to men. If this result is replicated, it would be interesting to see whether women also have low RAM scores and higher overall QMI scores as compared to men.

Discussion

This paper has built upon the extant literature of both cognitive and social psychology disciplines. My research program demonstrates why it can be predicted that individuals that have an intrinsic motivation to think and muse about their world would ultimately have more satisfying intimate relationships with their significant other. Stereotypes of individuals who are obsessed thinkers may not be consistent with individuals that have satisfying relationships (e.g. the mad scientist stereotype). However, these stereotypes are exaggerations of typical thinking individuals like you and me that go about their daily lives occasionally thinking about the

“whys” of life. Less extreme “chronic cognizers” may indeed be at an advantage when it comes to ascribing causes to social events in their world.

Likewise, the thought that creative individuals may have an advantage in making adaptive attributions for their spouse’s negative behaviours may seem at odds with certain stereotypes of creative individuals. However, abstract thinking that deviates from a rigid way of perceiving the world may facilitate the consideration of distal causes that are needed to more accurately explain human behaviour.

It is interesting to think, however, that data confirming the predictions can be applied to marital therapy. If we can potentially teach individuals how to become more complex processors of social information, this may in turn help them achieve more satisfying relationships with their spouse. Cacioppo et al. (1996) have suggested that children may learn through observation and experience that their effortful cognitive activities yield advantageous and self-satisfying outcomes. This idea, if explored in the future, could mean that individuals can potentially learn to intrinsically value the act of effortful cognitive processing. However, we must use caution in the application of this psychological concept. When individuals have external reasons to justify behaviours they previously enjoyed intrinsically, their intrinsic motivation may significantly be reduced (Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, 1973). This process is known as the overjustification effect and has been widely researched (see Tang & Hall, 1995, for a review). Thus, individuals must learn to value effortful cognitive activities on their own end and then a secondary bi-product from this change may benefit their close relationship. If individuals that already value thinking come to realize that thinking is a means to an end (relationship satisfaction), their thinking behaviours may be significantly reduced in the absence of that end (Forehand, 2000). However, in our specific situation of close relationship, the overjustification effect may not actually be

relevant. All else being equal, it is safe to assume that relationship satisfaction will not all of a sudden vanish. Thus, the intrinsically valued activity that has now been converted to an externally valued activity will persist (unless, for example, another person poaches your spouse). Regardless of the relevancy of the overjustification effect in our situation, it seems intriguing that individuals that learn to intrinsically enjoy thinking may inadvertently improve their marriage.

Limitations

It is important to remember that the associations between these constructs are correlational and thus one must be cautious in thinking that these constructs are causally linked. It would perhaps be nice if psychology was that simple, but it is not. Human relationships are complex and influenced by a myriad of factors that can interact and further influence our behaviours. Many third variables may thus explain some of the associations that may exist between the constructs of interest I have explored. Although previous studies have eliminated some of these (e.g. depression and self-esteem as potential third variables for the link between maladaptive attributions and relationship satisfaction (Fincham et al., 2000)), many more third variables could be operating and affecting my predicted results.

Nonetheless, these associations, if significant, are real and thus will act to promote further investigations in understanding why they are related. When someone found that appliances could predict birth control practices, it did not take long for another person to determine that the third variable was socio-economic status.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the relationship between cognitive processes and relationship satisfaction and has attempted to form a chain connecting these two conceptual ideas. I explored the concept of need for cognition and described how it was related to attributional complexity. In

turn, I attempted to rationalize why attributional complexity would be associated to attributions individuals make in their relationships. Then, I delved into the connection between maladaptive attributions and relationship satisfaction. Finally, I examined the role creativity may play in the attributional process individuals endorse.

It is hoped that the relationships between these constructs indeed arise and that future investigations can further refine our knowledge of cognitive processes that may affect relationship satisfaction. The more we understand how people perceive and interpret the behaviours of the people around them, the more we will potentially be able to help them become better, more accurate processors of social information. Wouldn't you want a better marriage?

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Appendix A

Relationship Attribution Measure (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992)

This questionnaire describes several things that your spouse might do. Imagine your spouse performing each behavior and then read the statements that follow it.

Please circle the number that indicates how much you agree or disagree with each statement, using the rating scale below:

Disagree strongly (1), Disagree (2), Disagree somewhat (3), Agree somewhat (4), Agree (5), Agree strongly (6)

Your Husband Criticizes Something You Say:

1 2 3 4 5 6 My husband's behavior was due to something about him (e.g., the type of person he is, the mood he was in)

1 2 3 4 5 6 The reason my husband criticized me is not likely to change

1 2 3 4 5 6 The reason my husband criticized me is something that affects other areas of our marriage

1 2 3 4 5 6 My husband criticized me on purpose rather than unintentionally

1 2 3 4 5 6 My husband's behavior was motivated by selfish rather than unselfish concerns

1 2 3 4 5 6 My husband deserves to be blamed for criticizing me

Stimulus Events:

4-item version: Your husband criticizes something you say; Your husband begins to spend less time with you; Your husband does not pay attention to what you are saying; Your husband is cool and distant.

Appendix B

18-Item Need for Cognition Scale (NCS) (Cacioppo, Petty, & Kao, 1984)

1. I would prefer complex to simple problems.
2. I like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking.
3. Thinking is not my idea of fun. *
4. I would rather do something that requires little thought than something that is sure to challenge my thinking abilities. *
5. I try to anticipate and avoid situations where there is likely chance I will have to think in depth about something. *
6. I find satisfaction in deliberating hard and for long hours.
7. I only think as hard as I have to. *
8. I prefer to think about small, daily projects to long-term ones. *
9. I like tasks that require little thought once I've learned them. *
10. The idea of relying on thought to make my way to the top appeals to me.
11. I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems.
12. Learning new ways to think doesn't excite me very much. *
13. I prefer my life to be filled with puzzles that I must solve.
14. The notion of thinking abstractly is appealing to me.
15. I would prefer a task that is intellectual, difficult, and important to one that is somewhat important but does not require much thought.
16. I feel relief rather than satisfaction after completing a task that required a lot of mental effort. *
17. It's enough for me that something gets the job done; I don't care how or why it works. *

18. I usually end up deliberating about issues even when they do not affect me personally.

* Reverse scoring is used on this item

Appendix C

28-Item Attributional Complexity Scale (ACS) (Fletcher, Danilovics, Fernandez, Peterson, & Reeder, 1986)

1. I don't usually bother to analyze and explain people's behaviour.
2. Once I have figured out a single cause for a person's behaviour I don't usually go any further. *
3. I believe it is important to analyze and understand our own thinking processes.
4. I think a lot about the influence that I have on other people's behaviour.
5. I have found that the relationships between a person's attitudes, beliefs, and character traits are usually simple and straightforward. *
6. If I see people behaving in a really strange or unusual manner I usually put it down to the fact that they are strange or unusual people and don't bother to explain it any further. *
7. I have thought a lot about the family background and personal history of people who are close to me, in order to understand why they are the sort of people they are.
8. I don't enjoy getting into discussions where the causes for people's behaviour are being talked over. *
9. I have found that the causes for people's behaviour are usually complex rather than simple.

10. I am very interested in understanding how my own thinking works when I make judgments about people or attach causes to their behaviour.
11. I think very little about the different ways that people influence each other. *
12. To understand a person's personality/behaviour I have found it is important to know how that person's attitudes, beliefs, and character traits fit together.
13. When I try to explain other people's behavior I concentrate on the person and don't worry too much about all the existing external factors that might be affecting them. *
14. I have often found that the basic cause for a person's behavior is located far back in time.
15. I really enjoy analyzing the reasons or causes for people's behaviour.
16. I usually find that complicated explanations for people's behaviour are confusing rather than helpful. *
17. I give little thought to how my thinking works in the process of understanding or explaining people's behaviour. *
18. I think very little about the influence that other people have on my behaviour. *
19. I have thought a lot about the way that different parts of my personality influence other parts (e.g., beliefs affecting attitudes or attitudes affecting character traits).
20. I think a lot about the influence that society has on other people.
21. When I analyze a person's behaviour I often find the causes form a chain that goes back in time, sometimes for years.
22. I am not really curious about human behavior. *
23. I prefer simple rather than complex explanations for people's behavior. *

24. When the reasons I give for my own behaviour are different from someone else's, this often makes me think about the thinking processes that lead to my explanations.
25. I believe that to understand a person you need to understand the people who that person has close contact with.
26. I tend to take people's behaviour at face value and not worry about the inner causes for their behaviour (e.g., attitudes, beliefs, etc).*
27. I think a lot about the influence that society has on my behavior and personality.
28. I have thought very little about my own family background and personal history in order to understand why I am the sort of person I am. *

* Item scored in the reverse direction.