Attributional Models of Depression and Marital Distress

Karen J. Horneffer
University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign

Frank D. Fincham
University of Wales, Cardiff

The authors compare the attributional models presented in depression and marital literatures by examining simultaneously their prediction of depressive symptoms and marital distress. A total of 150 married couples completed the Attribution Style Questionnaire (ASQ), the Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM), and measures of depression and marital distress. For both husbands and wives, a full model that included paths from depressogenic and distress-maintaining marital attributions to both depressive symptoms and marital distress provided a better fit to the data than a model that omitted paths from distress-maintaining attributions to each outcome. The theoretical implications of these findings are discussed.

A robust association has been documented between attributions and a variety of adaptational outcomes (see Forsterling, 1988; Graham & Folkes, 1990; Weiner, 1993). Among the most widely researched outcomes are depression and marital distress. Depressive symptoms have been linked to causal attributions or explanations (depressogenic attributions) given for events from a variety of domains (for a review, see Peterson, Meier, & Seligman, 1993), and marital distress has been related to attributions (distress-maintaining attributions) for marital events (for a review, see Bradbury & Fincham, 1990). The role of attributions in understanding these two adaptational outcomes could be studied more parsimoniously by determining which types of attributions are most predictive of depression and which are most predictive of marital satisfaction. To date, however, there has been no attempt to consider simultaneously both types of attributions with regard to the adaptational outcomes of depression and marital distress. The present study, therefore, examines the theoretical implications of this omission and investigates the differential utility of de-

pressogenic and distress-maintaining attributions in understanding depression and marital distress.

Attributions, Depression, and Marital Distress

Research on attributions and depression was stimulated by the attributional reformulation of learned helplessness, a source that also gave rise to the study of attributions in relationships (see Fincham, Bradbury, & Scott, 1990). Not surprisingly, these areas have much in common; they have focused on the causal dimensions emphasized in learned helplessness theory and have related them to the adaptational outcome investigated. That is, respondents' ratings of the extent to which a cause is internal, stable, or unchanging, and global or influential across a variety of domains, have been related to the adaptational outcome studied.

Although the viability of cognitive models of depression has been debated (see Pervin, 1992), Sweeney, Anderson, and Bailey (1986) concluded from their meta-analytic review of 104 studies that "for negative events, attributions to internal, stable, and global causes have a reliable and significant association with depression" (p. 974). Although some studies have failed to obtain such findings, these inconsistencies have been attributed to lack of statistical power (Robins, 1988). Similarly, marital distress is related to viewing negative marital events as caused by the partner and as having stable and global causes (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990), a finding that is among the most robust phenomena documented in the marital literature (Fincham, 1994).

Both depression and marital researchers have also examined the causal relation between attributions and adaptational outcomes, primarily by conducting longitudinal research. Numerous longitudinal studies on depression and attributions "are for the most part consistent with the prediction that depressive explanatory style precedes depressive symptoms" (Peterson et al., 1993, p. 203). Four analogous longitudinal studies on attributions in marriage similarly yielded findings consistent with the view that attributions cause marital distress (Bradbury, 1990; Fincham & Bradbury, 1987, 1993; Fincham, Bradbury, Arias, Byrne, & Karney, 1994).

Given the documented association between depression and marital distress (see Barnett & Gotlib, 1988; Beach, Arias, & O'Leary, 1986; Beach, Sandeen, & O'Leary, 1990; Gotlib & Hooley, 1988), it is not surprising that researchers have questioned whether similar cognitive factors may be associated with both adaptational outcomes (e.g., Heim & Snyder, 1991; Townsley, Beach, Fincham, & O'Leary, 1991). With regard to attributions, existing research has focused on ruling out depression as a variable that might account for the association between attributions and relationship distress (Fincham, Beach, & Bradbury, 1989; Fletcher, Fitness, & Blampied, 1990; Senchak & Leonard, 1993). Although there is no evidence to show that depression accounts for the attribution-relationship distress link, only one study has directly assessed both depressogenic and distress-maintaining attributions (Fletcher et al., 1990). In this study, Fletcher et al. (1990) focused on depression as a potential mediating variable and assessed the associations among attributions, depression, and relationship satisfaction in a nonmarried sample. The current study expands on this research by being the first to simultaneously consider these two types of attributions as predictors of both adaptational outcomes in married couples.

Comparing Attributional Models
of Depression and Marital Distress

Several lines of research suggest two possible models that may be appropriate in predicting the outcomes of depression and marital distress: (a) a model in which only depressogenic attributions account for depression and marital distress (reduced model) and (b) a model in which both depressogenic and distress-maintaining attributions are included (full model).

In support of the first, or reduced, model is the well-documented association between depression and marital distress (see Beach et al., 1990). This association suggests that similar attributional processes may underlie both adaptational outcomes, and thus assessing either depressogenic or distress-maintaining attributions may be sufficient for understanding both depression and marital distress.

In this event, parsimony dictates that scholars avoid duplication of phenomena under different labels and consider the possibility that distress-maintaining attributions are simply an instance of a more general pattern of making attributions that is captured by assessments of depressogenic attributions. If marital attributions are a subset of depressogenic attributions, the existence of distinct models of attributions in depression and in marital distress is quite misleading. When studying depression within the marital context, or studying both adaptational outcomes, it may be most efficient and accurate to integrate these attributional models by relying solely on depressogenic attributions. This line of reasoning implies that a reduced model containing only depressogenic attributions may be sufficient for predicting both adaptational outcomes.

On the other hand, theoretical debates regarding the level at which attributions are best conceived and studied suggest that a model containing both types of attributions may be more appropriate. For example, if attributions are meaningful only "within domains of situations" (Arntz, Gerlsma, & Albersnagel, 1985, p. 84) or at a "moderate level of specificity" (Anderson, Jennings, & Arnoult, 1988, p. 981), using a broader attribution index (as in depression research) should be less useful than a domain-specific index (as in marital research). Stated differently, attribution ratings collapsed across domains may obscure relations with potential correlates and preclude discovering whether all constituent domains are important. This would hinder construct validation and might account, in part, for the small size of the correlations found between attributions and depression (see Robins, 1988; Sweeney et al., 1986). This reasoning suggests that distress-maintaining attributions may be more predictive not only of marital distress but of depressive symptoms as well. Thus, from this perspective, a model including both types of attributions would be necessary.

Turning to the practical level, acceptance of the reduced model suggests that depressogenic attributions should result in not only depressive symptoms but also marital distress. Accordingly, individual cognitive therapy, which is known to change depressogenic cognitions, should also alleviate marital distress. However, clinical outcome studies show that marital therapy is effective in alleviating marital distress and depressive symptoms, whereas individual cognitive therapy is effective only in treating depression (Foley, Rounsaville, Weissman, Sholomskas, & Chevron, 1989; O'Leary & Beach, 1990; Sher, Baucom, & Larus, 1990). Such findings suggest that marital attributions may be critical for understanding both marital distress and depression, and thus a full model may be needed to adequately capture the relationship of attributions to both adaptational outcomes.

Overview

The overall goal of the study was to compare attributional models of depression and marital distress. Toward this end, we examined simultaneously the contribution of depressogenic and distress-maintaining attributions to depressive symptoms and to marital distress using structural equation modeling. Because distress-maintaining marital attributions may simply reflect depressogenic attributions, a causal model in which depressogenic and distress-maintaining attributions account for unique variance in depression and in marital distress was compared with a reduced model that included only depressogenic attributions. If the models differ significantly, this would support the hypothesis that both types of attributions are needed to predict depression and marital distress and that distress-maintaining attributions provide information above and beyond that conveyed by depressogenic attributions. However, if the models do not significantly differ, this would support the hypothesis that distress-maintaining attributions are a subset of depressogenic attributions and do not provide unique information in understanding depressive symptoms and marital distress.

METHOD

Participants

Participants were 150 married couples who were recruited from marriage license records and from advertisements in the local media. Couples had been married an average of 3.6 (SD = 5.3) years, averaged 0.94 (SD = 1.44) children, and had a median family income of $30,000 to $35,000. Husbands averaged 30.4 (SD = 7.3) years of age and 15.4 (SD = 3.0) years of education. They obtained a mean score of 108.5 (SD = 25.2) on the Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959) and a mean score of 5.8 (SD = 6.5) on the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck & Beamesderfer, 1974). Wives averaged 29.3 (SD = 7.0) years of age and 14.8 (SD = 2.6) years of education. They obtained a mean score of 111.9 (SD = 26.7) on the Marital Adjustment Test and a mean score of 8.0 (SD = 7.0) on the Beck Depression Inventory. The sample was primarily Caucasian.

Measures

Depressive symptoms. The Beck Depression Inventory (Beck & Beamesderfer, 1974) was used to assess depressive symptoms. This scale reliably measures the severity of affective, cognitive, motivational, and physical symptoms of depression in nonpsychiatric samples and is highly correlated with clinical ratings and other measures of depression (Beck, Steer, & Garbin, 1988). Participants were asked to report the degree to which each of 21 depressive symptoms had been present during the week.

Marital distress. The short Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959) is a widely used 15-item measure of marital satisfaction. It has adequate reliability (split half = .90), discriminates between nondistressed spouses and spouses who have documented problems (Locke & Wallace, 1959), and correlates with clinicians' judgments of marital discord (Crowther, 1985).

Depressogenic attributions. The Attributional Style Questionnaire (ASQ; Peterson et al., 1982) was used to assess depressogenic attributions. The reliability of individual attribution dimensions on the ASQ is moderate (alpha coefficients typically range between .40 and .70), and test-retest reliabilities over several weeks to several months are high (r = .60 or more). Schulman, Seligman, and Amsterdam (1987) showed that the purpose of the instrument is not transparent to respondents, as they were not able to produce desired responses even when given explicit instructions about the purpose of the test and a high incentive to produce the most desirable responses. A voluminous literature on the correlates of the ASQ speaks to its validity (see Peterson et al., 1993). However, attribution responses for good events are "not well understood" (Peterson et al., 1993, p. 157), and results relating to such events are quite inconsistent. As a consequence, only the negative event items from the ASQ were used in the present study.

Each participant was presented with six hypothetical events (e.g., "You can't get all the work done that others expect of you") and instructed to vividly imagine the situation happening to him or her. Next, the participant was asked to write down the major cause of the event and to mark 7-point rating scales to answer questions about the locus of the cause (e.g., "Is the cause of the event due to something about you or something about other people or circumstances?"; responses could range from 1 = *Totally due to other people or circumstances* to 7 = *Totally due to me*), stability (e.g., "In the future will the cause of this event again be present?"; responses could range from 1 = *Will never again be present* to 7 = *Will always be present*), and globality (e.g., "Is the cause something that just influences this event or does it also influence other areas of your life?"; answers could range from 1 = *Influences just this particular situation* to 7 = *Influences all situations in my life*).

Distress-maintaining attributions. The Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM; Fincham & Bradbury, 1992) was used to assess distress-maintaining attributions. Reliability of responses to individual attribution dimensions is acceptable (alpha coefficient ranges from .62 to .83), and 2-week test-retest reliabilities are high (r = .60 or more). The validity of the measure has been established by demonstrating associations between RAM responses and attributions for spouse behaviors, marital difficulties, and actual spouse affects observed during marital interaction. As in attributional research on depression,

attributions for negative events have been most consistently related to marital distress (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990). In light of this finding and to ensure comparability with the ASQ, we used only negative partner behaviors as stimulus events.

Each participant was presented with four negative partner behaviors (e.g., "Your spouse criticizes something you do") and instructed to vividly imagine his or her spouse performing the behavior. Unlike the ASQ, respondents do not write down a major cause for the event and then rate the cause. Fincham and Bradbury (1992) argued that this task involves a high level of abstraction and sometimes results in judgments about the event itself rather than its cause. To make the respondent's task as simple as possible, the RAM requires participants to rate their agreement with concrete attributional statements. Thus a wife, for example, rates her agreement with three statements on a 7-point scale ranging from *Strongly disagree* to *Strongly agree*. These statements referred to partner locus (e.g., "My husband's behavior was due to something about him [that is, the type of person he is, the mood he was in]"), stability (e.g., "The reason my husband criticizes me is something that is likely to be present again in the future"), and globality (e.g., "The reason my husband criticizes me is something that affects other areas of our marriage").

Procedure

Participating couples were mailed two sets of materials with separate postage-paid return envelopes and a cover letter thanking them for their participation and instructing them on their task. They were asked to complete the questionnaires independently and to seal them in separate envelopes before discussing the project. Couples received payment ($20) after returning the completed materials. This procedure has been used previously in marital research and has yielded similar results to those obtained from completion of measures in the laboratory.

RESULTS

As husband and wife responses are not independent, separate analyses are reported for each spouse. Unless otherwise specified, the presented results pertain to the wives ($n = 150$) and husbands ($n = 150$) who provided complete data on all of the variables investigated.

Reliability of Attribution Measures

For both the ASQ and the RAM, responses to each causal dimension were summed across stimuli (six items and four items, respectively) to form subscales for each attribution dimension. For each dimension, higher scores reflect attributions that accentuate the impact of

negative events and behaviors (e.g., the individual sees events as more internal, stable, and global). Reliabilities for the three ASQ dimensions and three RAM dimensions were computed using coefficient alpha. The internal consistency of the ASQ dimensions were similar to those reported by Seligman, Abramson, Semmel, and von Baeyer (1979), who developed the ASQ. Coefficient alpha was moderate for wives (locus = .43, stability = .49, and globality = .64) and husbands (.46, .59, and .67, respectively). The reliability of the RAM dimensions was higher (wives: locus = .80, stability = .86, globality = .85; husbands: .81, .88, and .84, respectively) and met the criterion of reliability recommended for research instruments (i.e., alpha > .70; Nunnally, 1978).[1]

Modeling the Relations Among Attributions, Depression, and Marital Distress

To meaningfully compare the predictive utility of the ASQ and the RAM, structural equation modeling that included a measurement model for depressogenic and distress-maintaining attributions was performed using LISREL (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1984). In the models examined, depressogenic and distress-maintaining attributions were treated as exogenous latent variables with three indicators each. They are represented by labeled circles. Depression and marital satisfaction were endogenous observed variables and are represented by labeled squares. Unlabeled circles represent residual variances. Models for both wives and husbands were estimated using the method of maximum likelihood (see the appendix for covariance matrixes). Figure 1 presents the full and reduced models that were specified. The path diagram can be interpreted as a series of simultaneous multiple regression equations in which unidirectional arrows represent regression paths and bidirectional arrows represent correlations between latent constructs.

Acceptance of the full model suggests that both types of attributions are needed to predict depression and marital distress, and thus distress-maintaining attributions provide information above and beyond that conveyed by depressogenic attributions and vice versa. Alternatively, acceptance of the reduced model would support the hypothesis that distress-maintaining attributions are a subset of depressogenic attributions, and thus depressogenic attributions alone are sufficient to predict depression and marital distress. Including all six indicators in both path diagrams allowed for comparison of these nested models via a chi-square difference test. As suggested by Loehlin (1992), this comparison of full and reduced models is superior to fitting only one model because alternative explanations can be ruled out. Thus a model that fits the data can be accepted with more confidence. Figures 2 and 3 present the standardized
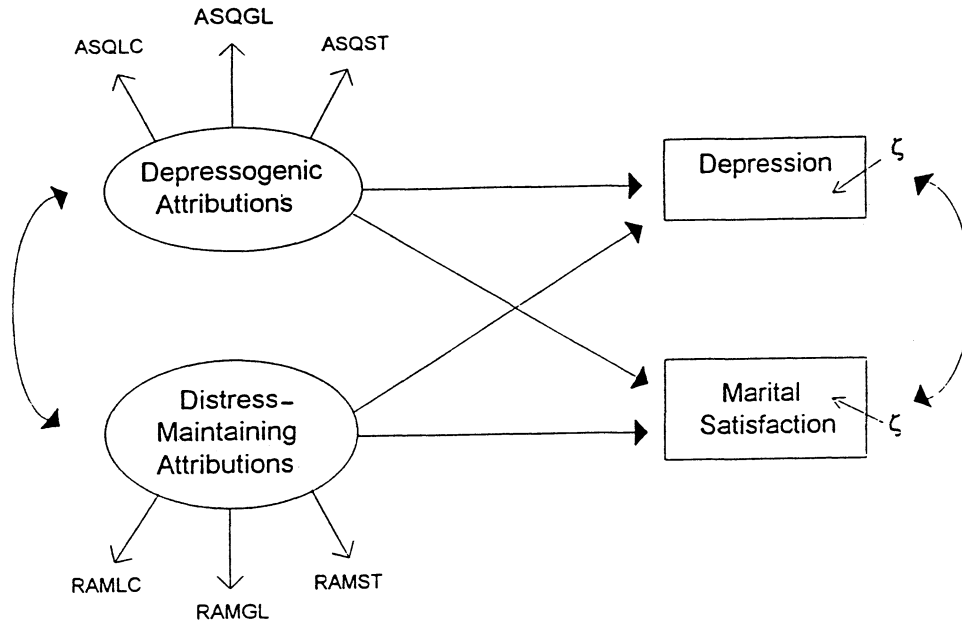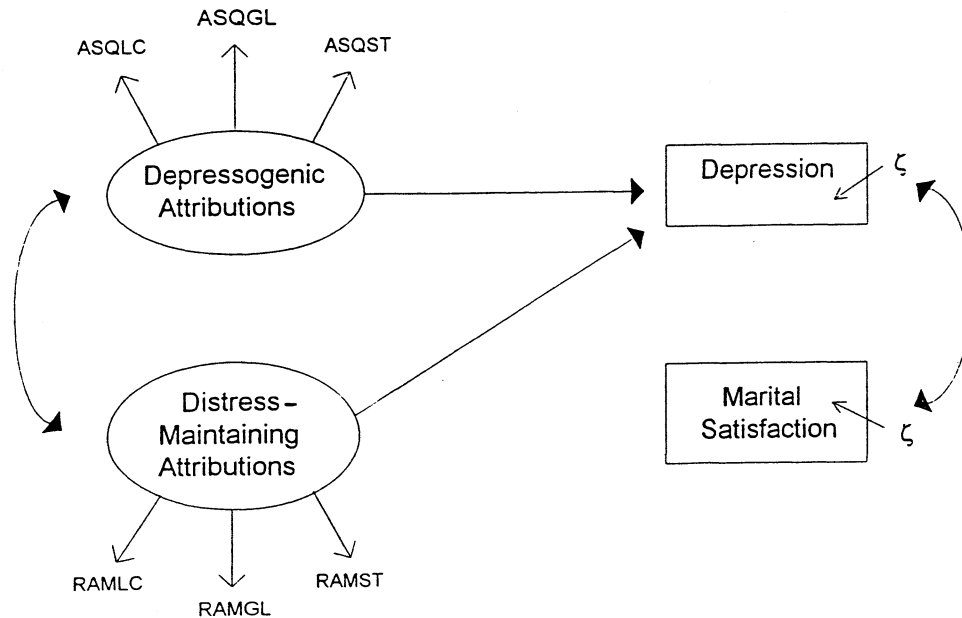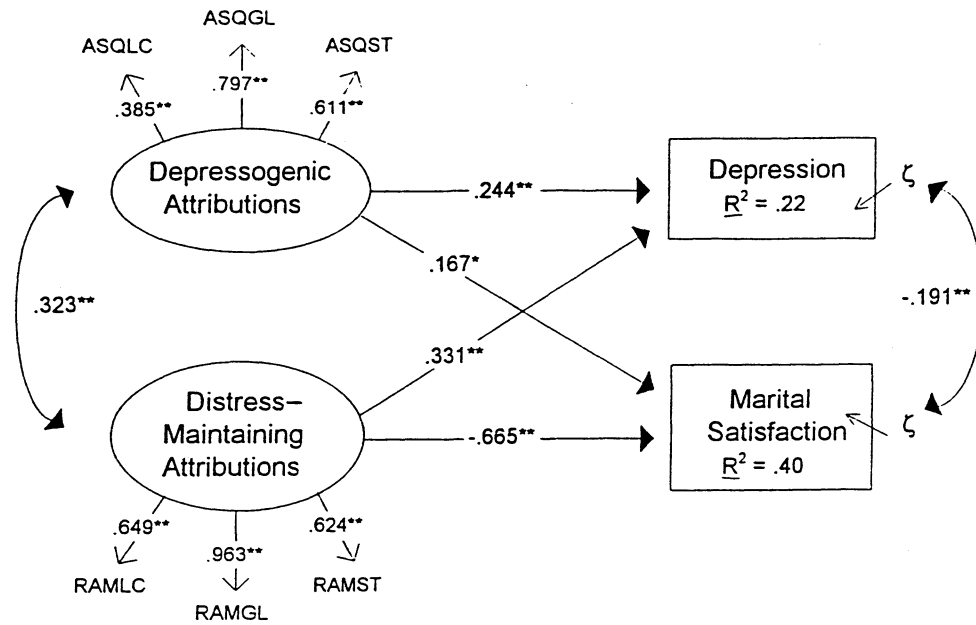
Figure 1   The conceptual model (full and reduced).
NOTE: ASQLC = Attributional Style Questionnaire—Locus Dimension; ASQGL = Attributional Style Questionnaire—Globality Dimension; ASQFT = Attributional Style Questionnaire—Stability Dimension; RAMLC = Relationship Attribution Measure—Locus Dimension; RAMGL = Relationship Attribution Measure—Globality Dimension; RAMFT = Relationship Attribution Measure—Stability Dimension.
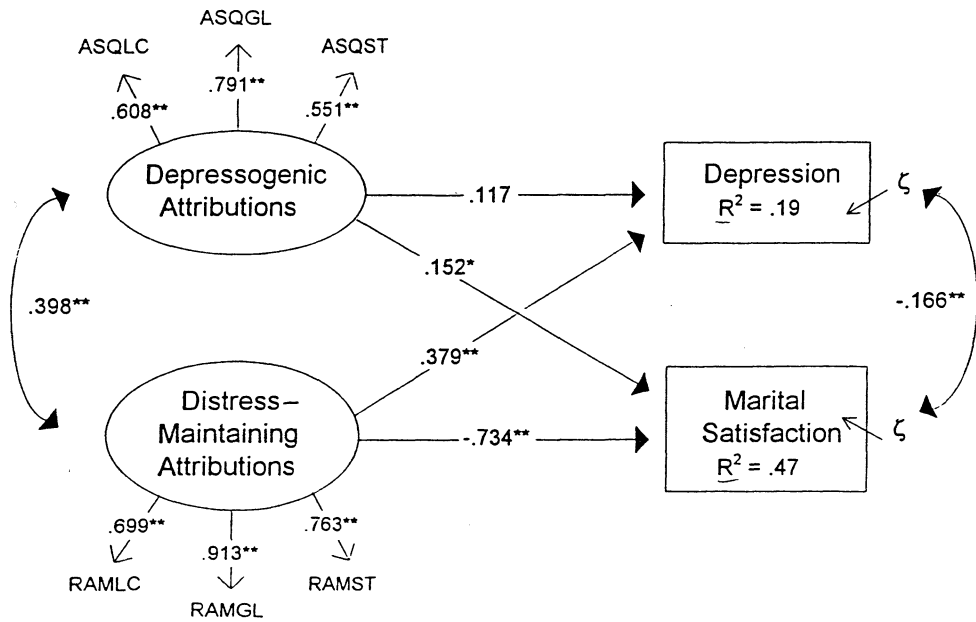*p < .05. **p < .01.

Figure 2   Maximum likelihood estimation of the full model for husbands and wives: Standardized path coefficients.
NOTE: ASQLC = Attributional Style Questionnaire—Locus Dimension; ASQGL = Attributional Style Questionnaire—Globality Dimension; ASQFT = Attributional Style Questionnaire—Stability Dimension; RAMLC = Relationship Attribution Measure—Locus Dimension; RAMGL = Relationship Attribution Measure—Globality Dimension; RAMFT = Relationship Attribution Measure—Stability Dimension.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

Full model

Reduced model

Figure 3   Maximum likelihood estimation of the reduced model for husbands and wives: Standardized path coefficients.
NOTE: ASQLC = Attributional Style Questionnaire—Locus Dimension; ASQGL = Attributional Style Questionnaire—Globality Dimension; ASQFT = Attributional Style Questionnaire—Stability Dimension; RAMLC = Relationship Attribution Measure—Locus Dimension; RAMGL = Relationship Attribution Measure—Globality Dimension; RAMFT = Relationship Attribution Measure—Stability Dimension.
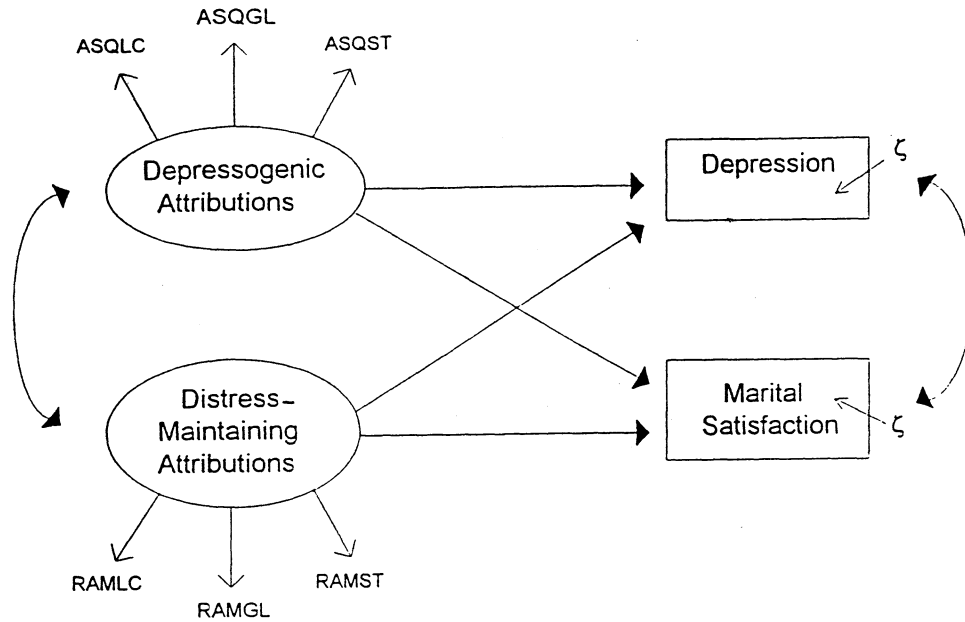*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

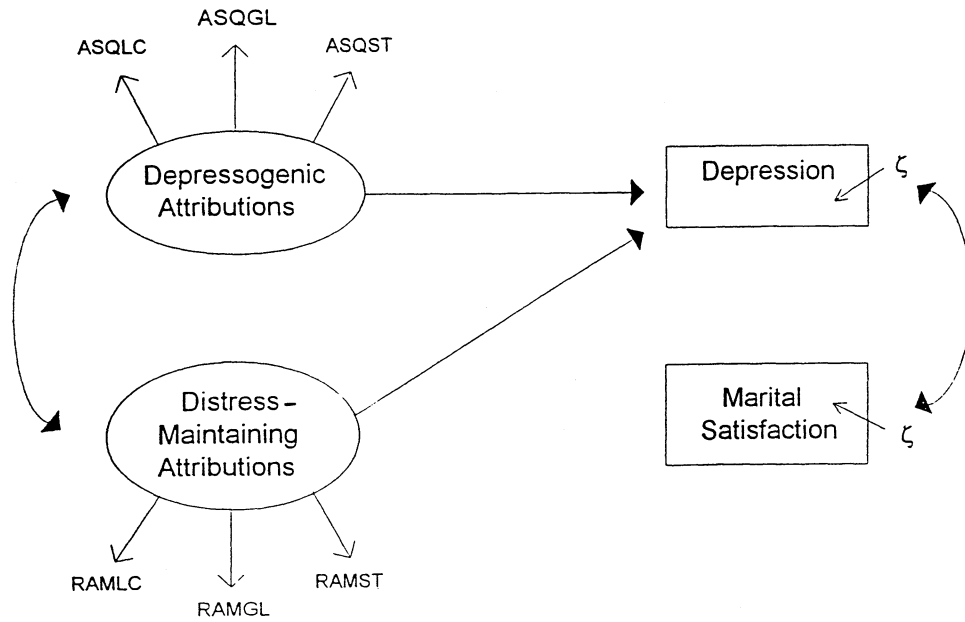TABLE 1:   Summary Statistics for Nested Latent Variable Structural Equation Models

	Husbands		Wives	
	Reduced Model	Full Model	Reduced Model	Full Model
χ^2	77.65	12.64	99.20	29.88
	($p = .00$)	($p = .70$)	($p = .00$)	($p = .02$)
df	18	16	18	16
χ^2/df	4.31	0.79	5.51	1.87
Goodness-of-fit index	.897	.978	.871	.952
Adjusted goodness-of-fit index	.794	.952	.741	.891
Root mean square residual	4.00	0.608	3.84	0.389
R^2 of depression explained by general attribution	.17**	.06**	.12**	.01
R^2 of marital distress explained by general attribution	.03*	.03*	.10**	.02*
R^2 of depression explained by marital attribution	—	.12**	—	.14**
R^2 of marital distress explained by marital attribution	—	.44**	—	.54**
Model comparison: χ^2 difference test	65.01		69.32	
	($p < .05$)		($p < .05$)	
	Conclude full		Conclude full	

*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$.

estimates obtained for the full and reduced models for both wives and husbands.

Based on recommendations to use multiple criteria for judging the overall goodness of a model (e.g., Biddle & Martin, 1987; Lavee, 1988; Loehlin, 1992), several indexes were examined. The chi-square goodness-of-fit test indicates the degree to which the specified model is able to reproduce the original covariance matrix. Thus a large significant chi-square indicates that the model does not fit the data, and a nonsignificant chi-square indicates that the model is able to reproduce the original covariance matrix. Several authors (e.g., Lavee, 1988) have noted the limitations of the chi-square test due to its sensitivity to assumptions of normality and to sample size (models based on smaller sample sizes are more likely to fit than models based on larger sample sizes). In view of these limitations, the goodness-of-fit index (GFI) is also presented because it is not affected by sample size and is robust against departure from normality (Lavee, 1988). Although there is no clear cutoff, Hoelter and Harper (1987) suggested that a GFI greater than .90 indicates a good fit. Two other indexes were also examined. The adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI) takes into account the degrees of freedom in the model, whereas the root mean square residual (RMSR) is a measure of the mean discrepancy between the data and the proposed variances and covariances. Thus the lower the RMSR, the better the fit. Unfortunately, there exist no absolute criteria for interpreting the AGFI and the RMSR.

Table 1 presents a number of statistics associated with the models tested. Because distress-maintaining marital attributions may simply reflect a depressogenic attributional style, we first examined whether depressogenic attributions alone account for depressive symptoms and

marital distress. This question is addressed by determining whether the reduced model fits the data. The chi-square test and GFI, presented in Table 1, indicate that the reduced model does not fit the data for either wives or husbands. Thus depressogenic attributions alone do not adequately predict the outcomes of depression and marital distress.

In view of the findings obtained for the reduced model, we next examined whether each attribution type made a unique contribution to each adaptational outcome. This question was addressed by examining the full model, which included both depressogenic and distress-maintaining marital attributions. For husbands, both the chi-square test and GFI indicate an adequate fit between the data and the complete model. For wives, only a marginal fit was obtained given that the chi-square test is significant (suggesting a lack of fit), whereas the GFI is within the acceptable range. Examination of the path diagram reveals a nonsignificant relationship between depressogenic attributions and depression for wives. As Biddle and Martin (1987) suggested, if any part of the causal model does not fit the data set, the model as a whole may not fit. Unfortunately, the suggestions for improving model fit by the modification indexes in LISREL could not be justified conceptually and thus were not pursued.

In considering the above findings, it is important to note Jöreskog and Sörbom's (1984) and Lavee's (1988) observation that the limitations of the chi-square measure may make it more useful for testing whether there is a significant difference in the fit of two models than for testing the fit of a single model. Following their suggestion, a chi-square test was used to compare the fit of the full model and the reduced models. Chi-square

difference tests were performed for both wives and husbands, and both indicated that the full model was a significantly better fit than the reduced model (see Table 1). Thus distress-maintaining attributions provide unique information in the prediction of depression and marital distress and do not appear to be a subset of depressogenic attributions.

Finally, we examined whether depressogenic and distress-maintaining attributions were equally powerful in predicting depression and in predicting marital distress. This was done by first creating reduced models in which paths linking both types of attributions to adaptational outcome were constrained to be equal to each other. Second, the reduced models were compared with a full model in which these paths were unconstrained. For both husbands and wives, when the paths from depressogenic and distress-maintaining attributions to depression were set to be equal, the resulting reduced model did not differ significantly from the full model. However, when analogous paths from attributions to marital distress were constrained in this manner, the reduced model did not fit as well as the full model. This suggests that the path coefficient linking depressogenic attributions to marital distress differs significantly from the path coefficient linking distress-maintaining attributions and marital distress.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide important information for understanding depressive symptoms in the context of marriage. Unlike prior research, which has shown that depressogenic attributions predict depressive symptoms and that distress-maintaining attributions predict marital distress, the present findings examined the simultaneous contribution of each type of attribution to understanding depressive symptoms and marital distress.

Comparison of a full model, in which both types of attributions were related to both adaptational outcomes, with a reduced model, which omitted paths between distress-maintaining attributions and adaptational outcomes, showed that the full model was a significantly better fit than the reduced model. Thus, rather than simply representing a specific subset of depressogenic attributions that reflected redundant information, distress-maintaining attributions yielded unique information in the prediction of both marital distress and depressive symptoms. In other words, no evidence was obtained to support the suggestion that maritally distressed spouses simply manifest the depressogenic attributions associated with depression (Fincham, Beach, & Baucom, 1987). These findings have important theoretical implications.

Theoretical Implications

At a theoretical level, our findings point to the potential fruitfulness of simultaneously considering attributional models of depression and marital distress. Such an integration, however, should not accord depressogenic attributions a privileged status as the source of distress-maintaining marital attributions. Instead, our data suggest a broader type of integration in which the inclusion of each type of attribution is necessary to fully understand the adaptational outcomes of depression and marital distress. Thus our findings highlight the unique contributions of distress-maintaining attributions. Additionally, they suggest that depressogenic cognitions may be useful for understanding marital distress and, in a similar vein, that attributions associated with marital distress are important for understanding depressive symptoms.

Our findings support the observation that "relationship distress, nonmarital affect, attributional processes, and their myriad of determinants and consequences are bound up in an inextricably complex snarl that defies simple untangling" (Snyder & Heim, 1992, p. 303). In contrast to the notion that no overlap may exist between the cognitive variables most important in the production and maintenance of depression and marital distress (Townsley et al., 1991), our data highlight the need for greater richness in such theories by considering the role of attributions across domains of functioning. For example, acceptance of the full model is consistent with the suggestion of Beach et al. (1990) that the use of distress-maintaining attributions may result in an increasingly stressful and nonsupportive environment and thereby may produce increased dysphoria and a greater likelihood of depression.

Similarly, the current findings present an interesting alternative to the view of Townsley et al. (1991) either that depressogenic cognitions underlie marital cognitions or that no overlap exists between the two. Our results suggest that the study of cognitive variables identified in the depression literature will be insufficient for understanding depression in the context of marriage and that a more complete understanding of spousal depression will require consideration of marriage-specific attributions. Although distress-maintaining attributions were more important for understanding marital distress than were depressogenic attributions, our findings also suggest that the investigation of depressogenic attributions in marital research will enrich our understanding of marital distress.

The present findings also have implications for the level at which we study attributions, and perhaps cognitions more generally. Our findings are consistent with

conceptualizing attributions at "moderate level of specificity" (Anderson et al., 1988, p. 981) or within specific domains. This is important for construct validation and for understanding adaptational outcomes such as depression and marital distress. Measurement of attributions across domains may obscure correlations that exist between attributions and adaptational outcomes. Thus our comparison of the latent variable models supports the hypothesis that the study of attributions is more meaningful within a particular domain and at a moderate level of specificity. Similar to Arntz et al. (1985), we recommend that a useful next step for attribution researchers is to determine a fruitful classification of situational domains. Although several authors have narrowed the focus of attributions studied, domains of specificity have ranged widely from, for example, interpersonal-related situations (Metalsky, Halberstadt, & Abramson, 1987) to all instances of "coming down with a cold" (Cutrona, Russel, & Jones, 1984, p. 1055). Our findings suggest that an appropriate classification of situations lies between these extremes.

Along with having implications for the level at which attributions should be studied, our findings suggest the usefulness of incorporating methodological strengths of both attributional models into future research endeavors. There are distinct features of the attribution literatures on depression and marital distress that could lead to potentially fruitful cross-fertilization if theoretical ideas developed in regard to each adaptational outcome are explored in relation to the other. For example, the idea that attributions create a susceptibility to depression that is activated only when exposure to a suitable stressor occurs could profitably be explored in the marital literature. Similarly, the analysis of attributions concerning responsibility and blame in the marital literature could be explored in relation to depression, as depressogenic causal attributions might be important because they reflect self-blame (see Brewin, 1986).

Limitations and Conclusions

Although wives' depressogenic attributions correlated with their depression, this association was not significant when the latent depressogenic attribution variable was examined in the full structural equation model. This finding emphasizes the importance of examining depressogenic attributions in the context of marital attributions. Although it may appear somewhat surprising, the failure to obtain a significant relation between depressogenic attributions and depressive symptoms is not uncommon. Peterson, Villanova, and Raps (1985) reviewed 61 studies and found that significant relations between the internal, global, and stable dimensions and depressive symptoms were found in only a subset of the studies (53%, 78%, and 46% of the studies, respectively).

Because of gender differences in depression, the differential fit of the models examined for husbands and wives is noteworthy even though no statistical tests were available to compare the fit of the models across gender. It is possible that marital attributions are especially salient in their relationship to depression for women, a speculation warranting further attention. As suggested elsewhere (see Horneffer & Fincham, 1995), the nonsignificant relation between general attributions and depression for wives and the low internal reliability of the ASQ may suggest a conceptual weakness in the construct of general attributions. Again, this lends support to conceptualizing attributions as a domain-specific phenomenon. In either event, the marginal fit of the full model for wives indicates that caution should be used in interpreting the relationships within this model.

The present study is among the first to consider two substantial but separate literatures relating attributions to the adaptational outcomes of depression and marital distress. The utility of marital attributions in predicting depression and marital distress suggests that attributions are best studied within specific domains and that clinical interventions for clients presenting with depression in marriage should include attention to marital cognitions. In addition, it suggests that marital attributions are not merely a subset of depressogenic attributions but, rather, are important to study in their own right. In sum, the integration of attributional models of depression and of marital distress should include depressogenic and distress-maintaining attributions and should not rely on a single type of attribution.

APPENDIX
Covariance Matrices

	ASQLC	ASQGL	ASQFT	RAMLC	RAMGL	RAMFT	LOCKW	BDI
Husbands								
ASQLC	0.910							
ASQGL	0.313	1.216						
ASQFT	0.227	0.436	0.677					
RAMLC	0.139	0.129	0.066	1.267				
RAMGL	0.187	0.351	0.178	0.879	1.536			
RAMFT	0.137	0.179	0.107	0.606	0.965	1.714		
LOCKW	−1.732	−0.874	−0.399	−10.312	−18.336	−15.764	640.758	
BDI	0.417	2.165	1.103	1.291	3.293	1.933	−67.282	43.146
Wives								
ASQLC	0.704							
ASQGL	0.439	1.156						
ASQFT	0.183	0.332	0.492					
RAMLC	0.191	0.100	0.171	1.031				
RAMGL	0.233	0.388	0.228	0.794	1.493			
RAMFT	0.204	0.217	0.206	0.765	1.061	1.624		
LOCKW	−3.012	−2.410	−1.674	−11.485	−20.322	−18.235	718.819	
BDI	1.256	1.712	0.246	1.177	3.609	3.002	−82.815	49.883

NOTE: ASQLC = Attributional Style Questionnaire—Locus Dimension; ASQGL = Attributional Style Questionnaire—Globality Dimension; ASQFT = Attributional Style Questionnaire—Stability Dimension; RAMLC = Relationship Attribution Measure—Locus Dimension; RAMGL = Relationship Attribution Measure—Globality Dimension; RAMFT = Relationship Attribution Measure—Stability Dimension; LOCKW = Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Test; BDI = Beck Depression Inventory.

NOTE

1. Although similar to the reliabilities initially reported by Seligman et al. (1979), the low internal consistencies of the ASQ dimensions could reflect a measurement problem or a conceptual weakness in the construct of general attributions. In the present context, this creates an important interpretational ambiguity; the discrepancy found between the reliabilities of the ASQ and RAM dimensions may account for any differences found in the predictive power of these two attribution measures.

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