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# Proximal versus distal romantic relationships : an analysis of construal differences.

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PROXIMAL VERSUS DISTAL ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS:  
AN ANALYSIS OF CONSTRUAL DIFFERENCES

A Thesis Presented

by

BILAL M. GHANDOUR

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
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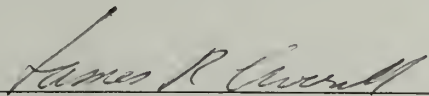
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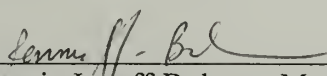
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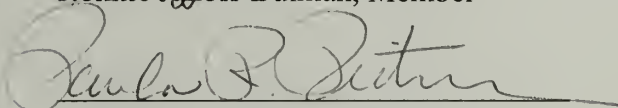
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## DEDICATION

To the loving memory of my sister, Rim.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The comparison between abstractness and concreteness is not new in the philosophical literature. Plato argued along the lines of two different worlds (reason and sense perception). Interestingly, he applied his theory to the concept of love. In The Symposium, Plato made a distinction between the superior form of love which is abstract (popularly known today as “platonic love”) and the inferior expression of the term which is bodily based (concrete). In his theory, Plato compared the “vast ocean of unbounded beauty” (the beauty of the soul) to “senseless” physical beauty. He says: “In comparison with this beauty [the soul] all physical beauty will appear...inferior.” (p.66) Descartes, too, argued for a separation between the abstract and concrete in his mind-body dualism theory. For him, true (abstract) knowledge can only come from the “clear and distinct thoughts” produced by the mind, the function and purpose of which are independent of the (concrete) concerns of the body.

In psychology, an analogous distinction has become increasingly popular. Arguing that events can be construed in terms that are relatively abstract or concrete, Action Identity Theory (Vallacher and Wegner, 1989) states that the different identities in human action are hierarchical. More specifically, “lower level identities convey the details or specifics of the action and so indicate *how* the action is done while higher level identities convey a more general understanding of the action and indicate *why* the action is done. Relative to low-level identities, high level identities tend to be... more abstract and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the action” (p.4) Applying a similar distinction between the why and how aspects, but within the context of time-related

events, Yaacov Trope developed a theory of Temporal Construal (Trope, Liberman, 1988) which states that near future enactments are viewed concretely (low-level construal) while far future ones are viewed abstractly (high-level construal). Trope also suggests that “temporal distance should increase the weight of the cognitive value and decrease the weight of the affective value in determining preferences regarding future options. The cognitive value reflects the super-ordinate “why” aspects of an action, whereas affection value reflects the subordinate “how” aspect of an action.” (p.35). A similar argument was put forward by Metcalfe and Mischel (1999) who distinguish between a “hot” affective value, which represents the concrete (specific) level and the “cold” cognitive value, which represents the abstract (general) level.

In testing their theory, Vallacher and Wegner (1989) developed the 25-item Behavior Identification Form (BIF) that listed different events (e.g. climbing a tree, making a list) and asked subjects to choose between two options of defining each event – a ‘higher’ or ‘lower’ order of description. For example, subjects had to define making a list as either “getting organized” (higher order, ‘why’ aspect) or “writing things down” (lower order, ‘how’ aspect). Individuals who chose high order descriptions were considered to have a ‘high-level’ of personal agency and those who tended to chose the lower order description were considered to have a ‘low-level’ of personal agency. The responses were then compared to the number of action errors agents committed in the past 6 months (Action Effectiveness Test). Examples of action errors that were identified on the Action Effectiveness Test included mishaps such as dropping things, forgetting why one went to one part of the house to another, bumping into people, accidentally throwing away something one wants. Vallacher and Wegner’s argument for comparing

action effectiveness with level of personal agency was that since low-level individuals are concerned with the detail of an action they have relatively few domains of expertise and thus should be less competent in performing action. On the other hand, high-level agents are experts in a number of action domains and “can maintain an action with higher-level identities in mind.” Indeed, Vallacher and Wegner found that there was a significant association between the choice of BIF definition and personal agency level, with low level agents choosing lower order definitions and high level agents opting for the higher-order definitions.

In similar vein, Trope (1999) asked participants to engage in two separate but related tasks. In the first task, they were asked to imagine themselves engaging in different activities (e.g., reading a science fiction book, moving into a new apartment) and describe them as either taking place tomorrow or next year. Results indicate that imagining an event taking place next year was described in a high-level (abstract) construal form; that is, participants chose a reply structure that fit a general description (e.g., “I read a book to broaden my horizons”). By contrast, imagining an event happening tomorrow was described in low-level construal (concrete) form; that is, participants more often chose a reply structure that fit a specific description of the activity (e.g. “I read a book by flipping the pages”). In the second task, participants were asked to restate the 25 items of the BIF having to choose between two alternatives, imagining the event in the near future, and imagining the event in the far future. Results showed that when they were asked to imagine an activity taking place in the near future, participants significantly more often chose the alternative with greater specificity (defined as answering the ‘how’ option) as opposed to the alternative with greater generality (defined

as the 'why' option). On the other hand, when subjects were asked to imagine an event taking place in the far future the trend was reversed (i.e. the tendency to choose the 'why' option as opposed to the 'how' option). For example, the activity cleaning the house in the near future was defined as "vacuuming the floor" (answering a "*how* do you clean the house" type-question); while cleaning the house in the distal future was defined as "showing one's cleanliness" (answering a "*why* do you clean the house" type-question). Similar results were found on most of the items including the activity 'eating' which was defined as "chewing and swallowing" (when imagined in the near future) and "getting nutrition" (when imagined in the distal future).

Since a number of separate studies seem to indicate that the concrete/specific vs. abstract/ general distinction is robust, we thought it might be possible to apply it to two types of interpersonal relationships: proximal and distal. More specifically, we tested the hypothesis that in romantic relationships, construals tend to be abstract in the case of physically *distal* partners and concrete in the case of physically *proximal* partners.

This presumes that physical accessibility permits concrete contact between lovers, and that denied physical access tends to render romances abstract. For example, partners who are side by side are aware of and use their sensory capacities. They can touch, feel, see and smell the person they are with, rendering their romance concrete. Furthermore, such romances can also be more specific or detail oriented concerning joint activities. Whether it is physical or lifestyle information, couples in proximal romances simply 'know' more information about each other. But what kind of closeness can link two lovers who are physically distant? With the lack of availability of sense perception, distal relations rely on a memory of the physical characteristics of the partner. Thus, the

relationship is construed in a more general sense and must rely on abstract expressions of love. For example, they can remind themselves that they are soul mates or that physical distance is just an artificial wall. We can also bring in the “how” and “why” distinction we formulated earlier by claiming that a couple in a proximal romance is more concerned with “how” their everyday life is functioning (how to get home on time, how to keep the house clean, how to look beautiful...) while two lovers in a distal romance are more concerned with “why” they are in love (why have I accepted a distance romance, why is this person worth the suffering, why I am not looking at other alternatives...).

A second hypothesis that can be formulated in terms of the abstract/concrete distinction is one related to the causes of break-up. According to the first hypothesis, distal romances tend to be construed as abstract and ideal, whereas proximal romances tend to be construed as concrete and specific. What role, if any, does construal play in the break-up of a romance? When one or both partners break off a relationship, something about the romance was unsatisfying. We think that one possible source of dissatisfaction in a romance might be an inconsistency between type of construal and type of romance. For example, a distal romance that is construed in overly concrete terms may be unstable, and similarly for a proximal romance that is construed in overly abstract terms. Following this line of reasoning, we hypothesize that those who report a break-up in the distal condition will have a significantly *lower* abstract score than their ongoing distal counterparts, and those who report a break-up in the proximal condition will have a significantly *higher* abstract score than their ongoing proximal counterparts.

A third hypothesis we wished to test is based on the main thesis of Temporal Construal Theory. Trope (1999) argues that the construal of an event changes depending

on whether one is temporally close to or far from it. He argues that while construal of a temporally close event is concrete and specific it becomes abstract and general when temporally far away (p.66) If he is correct in claiming that construal varies depending on whether one is near or far from a *future* event, one could argue that similar logic can be applicable to near or far *past* events. Consequently, we predict that participants who report about a past relationship will have different abstract construal of that romance depending on one's temporal distance from it. Specifically, we hypothesize that any break up that took place in the near past will be conceived of more concretely in comparison to break ups that occurred in the far past regardless of it proximal or distal condition.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

Based on a pilot study conducted in a University of Massachusetts Social Psychology class during the fall of 2001, we identified a number of key terms that people consistently use when discussing their romantic relationships, irrespective of romance type (proximal or distal) and romance status (terminated or ongoing). In determining those key terms, participants (32 males and 73 females) were asked to write about a past or current romance (see Appendix A). From the answers, 13 terms were considered to be 'key romantic terms' because of their repeated use amongst participants. A word eventually identified as key was any that appeared at least five times in the overall sample, with one maximum count per subject. The five most commonly used of those 13 terms were (in decreasing order): love (24), trust (19), commitment (18), jealousy (15), and cheating (12).

The study described below was based on a longitudinal analysis conducted at the University of Massachusetts at two different time points. The description is therefore divided into two parts. The first section provides description of Phase 1 of the study, conducted during spring 2001. The second section describes Phase 2 of the study, conducted during the spring of 2002.

#### Phase 1

##### Participants

In Phase 1, a sample of 82 male and female students was taken from a University of Massachusetts undergraduate course in Methods in Psychology. All participants

received extra credit for their participation. They were asked to provide their names, student ID, phone number and e-mail so participants could be re-contacted for Phase 2 of this study the following year. No participant refused to give the requested information.

### Materials

A questionnaire based on the information from the pretest but also including a substantial amount of additional questions was used. Participants were directed at various parts of the questionnaire to one of the four conditions that applied to the romantic relationship they were referring to: Distal current, distal past, proximal current, proximal past. In addition, subjects were required to fill in their responses in four different parts: 1) demographic; 2) questionnaire proper; 3) self-assessment of relationship and 4) key-term definitions. With the exception of part two, which pertained of different types of relationships, all other parts of the questionnaire had the same content (see Appendix B).

### Procedure

Participants were informed in an introductory paragraph that the study was looking at various aspects of proximal and distal relationships. They were then asked to complete two closed-ended questions regarding demographic information and multiple choice questions about the romance in question; these were followed by two open-ended parts: overall romance assessment and key term definitions (see Appendix C).

In the key-term definition section, participants were required to define within the context of the romantic relationship they have been answering questions about, each of the 13 terms identified in the pretest. In addition, a 14<sup>th</sup> term, “distance”, was added to the initial set of terms. We thought it appropriate to include “distance” as a key-term since



we specifically hypothesized that distance (physical or psychological) plays a key role in the construal of proximal and distal romances.

## Phase 2

### Participants

Since this was a longitudinal study, participants used in Phase 2 were the same as Phase 1. Participants were contacted in the final week of the fall semester; a year after Phase 1 was conducted, to be asked whether they wish to participate. Of the initial 82 who participated in Phase 1, 65 were successfully re-contacted and agreed to participate (19 males and 46 females). Three refused to partake in the study again while 14 were unreachable, rendering a dropout rate of 21 % for this study.

### Materials

Four different questionnaires were distributed, to the 65 participants. The four categories of interest are: 1) continuation of same romance reported in Phase 1, 2) split from the romance initially reported, 3) change in the status of the romance within the last year (distal to proximal or proximal to distal) and 4) split from the romance prior to Phase 1. The four different questionnaires had the same structure but differed from one another with respect to questions specifically applicable to their own category (see Appendix E). Also, participants again filled out the same key word definitions and romance assessment used in the first phase of the study.

The number of participants completing each questionnaire in Phase 1 and Phase 2 are presented in Table 1.

**TABLE 1**  
**Sample sizes**

Phase 2

Phase1	continuation in same romance	Split Between Phase 1 & 2	change in status dis/prox Prox/dis	Split prior to Phase 1	(Drop out)	Completed Phase 1 & Phase 2
Distal current	N= 8	N= 13	N= 0		(N= 4)	21
Distal Past				N=22	(N = 3)	22
Proximal current	N= 12	N= 4	N=0		(N= 6)	16
Proximal past				N=6	(N= 4)	6
TOTAL	20	17	0	28	(17)	65

Procedure

After coming into the lab, participants were asked to fill out an introductory form that reminded them what the study was about and made sure they remembered which romance they had initially reported. If recollection was a problem, lab assistants handed the participants a sealed folder which contained the information that identified which relationship they had been talking about in Phase 1 of the study. A total of seven participants requested such information. At the end of this introductory paragraph, participants were directed towards filling out one of four types of questionnaires. In order to avoid a disruption of silence, the four different types of questionnaires were made readily available and were easily identifiable on a nearby desk. Finally, participants filled out the final two questionnaire sheets: key-word definitions and romance assessment.

Each definition was coded by three raters as being either abstract or concrete and each participant received a total abstract and a total concrete score. An abstract definition of a term was an explanation in the form of a generalized description of what the term means while a concrete definition was a particular, situation-specific response – i.e., definition in terms of an example. For instance, if the term ‘betrayal’ was defined as “to be *misled*,” “someone who *distorts* the truth”, or “a person who *lies* about his intentions”, it was coded as abstract, since these terms represent general explanations of the term. Definitions of betrayal such as “she slept with another man,” were coded as concrete since these represent a specific example of betrayal (see Appendix D). It should be pointed out that coding of Phase 1 data was only performed once both phases of the study were complete.

### Scoring

For both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of this study, we used a scoring method based on the abstract score for a participant on the 14 key-word definitions. The total abstract score consisted of adding all points a participant could receive for each definition. Points for each answer were based on a 1 to 3 scale. A score of 1 indicated a concrete response, a score of 2 indicated an answer that combined abstractness and concreteness and a score of 3 indicated an abstract response alone. With three raters coding the key-word definitions, the potential range of score was a minimum of 52 (14 X 3) and a maximum of 126 (14 X 9). The actual range was a minimum of 57 and a maximum of 111 (for Phase 1) and a minimum of 54 and a maximum of 96 (for Phase 2).

In a second method for scoring, we used the dichotomous coding format. In this method, a participant’s overall response on the 14 key words was considered as being

concrete or 'capable of abstraction' (i.e. a combined concrete-abstract answer or simply abstract). Thus, the point awarded for a response could only vary between 1 (concrete) and 2 (abstract/capable of abstraction) as opposed to the 1 to 3 scale in the first method of coding.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

#### Reliabilities

Three types of reliabilities are discussed. Coder reliability, scale reliability and temporal reliability.

#### Coder reliability

Coders went through an extensive training process that resulted in the establishment of specific coding regulations (see Appendix D). Any disagreements in ratings were resolved through discussion.

#### Scale reliability

Item-analysis were performed on the 14 key-word definitions for Phase 1 and Phase 2 using the dichotomous coding procedure, Coefficient alpha was low on both sets of data ( $r = .61$  for Phase 1,  $r = .49$  for Phase 2). Results using the three point coding yielded better results, coefficients alpha =  $.70$  for Phase 1 and  $.67$  for Phase 2 (see Table 2 and 3).

**TABLE 2**  
**Phase 1 item-total reliability** (N=82)  
**(3-point scaling method)**

Variable name	Corrected Item-Total correlation	Alpha if item deleted
Care	.51	.65
Trust	.45	.67
Love	.25	.69
Stingy	.37	.68
Jealous	.34	.68
Effort	.31	.69

Cont., next page.

Table 2, cont.

Commitment	.20	.70
Selfish	.06	.71
Immature	.39	.68
Distance	.57	.67
Intelligence	.56	.67
Respect	.00	.71
Honest	.43	.68
Sexy	.48	.68

---

Reliability coefficient: .70

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Although some items were not significantly correlated to the total of the remaining 13 items in both sets of data and using both coding procedures, they were kept for two reasons. First, the non-correlated items were not the same in the different data sets. In Phase 1 of the study, selfish ( $r = .06$ ) and respect ( $r = .00$ ) were insignificantly correlated to the total while in Phase 2 the uncorrelated items were sexy (.10) stingy (.14) and love (.01). Thus, keeping items on the basis of item-total correlation would have implied dropping more than 1/3 of all items. Second, we believe keeping all items is warranted on theoretical grounds. Since such terms were identified in a pre-test as being key romantic relationship terms it is likely that the low item-whole correlations are due to measurement error or an over-simplified coding mechanism.

**TABLE 3**  
**Phase 2 item-total reliability** (N=65)  
**(3-point scaling method)**

Variable name	Corrected Item-Total correlation	Alpha if item deleted
Care	.08	.46
Trust	.25	.61

Cont., next page.

Table 3, cont.

Love	.01	.59
Stingy	.14	.61
Jealous	.34	.61
Effort	.43	.59
Commitment	.40	.57
Selfish	.13	.58
Immature	.48	.58
Distance	.16	.60
Intelligence	.34	.59
Respect	.12	.61
Honest	.28	.59
Sexy	.10	.61

---

Reliability coefficient: .61

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As indicated in the previous section, we used two different methods of coding: A 3-point (continuous) scaling system, and a 2-point (dichotomous) scaling system. Since both scoring methods yielded similar results, and the 3-point method was more reliable (had higher coefficient alphas), only the latter are reported here. However, it should be pointed out that the three-point system assumes at least an ordinal scale, from lowest to highest. The fact that the two scoring procedures yielded similar results, and the higher validity of the 3-point scale, would seem to justify this assumption.

#### Temporal reliability

To assess stability over time, Phase 1 construal scores were correlated with Phase 2 scores. The results are presented in Table 4. When correlations were calculated over all participants, temporal reliability was modest ( $r = .27$ ). Similar results were found if the relationships had broken-up before Phase 1 ( $r = .26$ ). However, when participants reported on a continuing romance, (i.e., the same romance in Phase 1 and 2) temporal reliability was much higher ( $r = .48$ ). Finally, when there was a break-up in the romance

between the two phases of the study, no significant relation was observed between Phase 1 and Phase 2. These results suggest that the construal scores were not simply a reflection of stable individual differences, but were also sensitive to the situation, changing as the relationship change.

**TABLE 4**  
**Phase 1 & Phase 2 correlation of abstract scores**  
**(3-point scaling method)**

Phase 1/Phase 2	N	<u>SE</u>	correlation
Present & Past romance:			
1. Proximal & Distal	65	11.89	.27**
2. Proximal	22	11.01	.27
3. Distal	43	12.45	.26*
Present Romance:			
1. Proximal & Distal	20	10.40	.48**
2. Proximal	12	12.09	.47*
3. Distal	8	8.64	.56
Past Romance:			
1. Proximal & distal	28	10.30	.26
2. Proximal	6	14.40	.27
3. Distal	22	8.68	.38
Change in status			
1. Present to Past (all)	17	7.06	.07
2. Present to Past (proximal)	4	13.70	.12
3. Present to Past (distal)	13	5.73	.07

\*  $p < .10$

\*\*  $p < .05$

We turn now to tests of the three main hypothesis outlined earlier.

*Hypothesis 1:* In romantic relationships, construals tend to be abstract in the case of physically *distal* partners and concrete in the case of physically *proximal* partners.

We first performed a one way analysis of variance on Phase 1 data to determine whether abstraction construal varied along the proximal/distal dimension. The results are presented in Table 5, top panel. The results were in the predicted direction, with the distal condition revealing higher abstraction scores than the proximal condition ( $M = 79.6$  vs.



$M=76.3$ ); the difference, however, was not significant  $F(1, 81) = 1.50, p = .22$ . A similar analysis was performed on Phase 2 of the study yielded comparable results (Table 5, bottom panel). Again, while the average abstraction score was higher in the distal condition ( $M=74.7$ ) than in the proximal condition ( $M=71.4$ ), it was not significantly so  $F(1, 64) = 1.33, p = .25$ . Hypothesis 1, then, was not supported with confidence, although the data are suggestive.

**TABLE 5**  
**Phase 1 & Phase 2 between- subjects ANOVA**  
**Abstract level of type of romantic relationship**  
**(3-point scaling method)**

Variable and level	N	mean score	<u>SE</u>	F value	sig. value
Phase 1:					
1. Proximal	32	76.3	2.33	1.50	.22
2. Distal	50	79.9	1.73		
Phase 2:					
1. Proximal	22	71.4	2.33	1.18	.28
2. Distal	43	74.7	1.73		

*Hypothesis 2:* Those who report a break-up in the distal condition will have a significantly lower abstraction score than their ongoing distal counterparts (i.e. their relationship would have been construed too concretely) and those who report a break-up in the proximal condition will have a significantly higher abstract score than their ongoing proximal counterparts (i.e. their relationship would have been construed too abstractly).

We performed a *t*-test to compare scores of participants who broke up with those who did not. In the distal condition, there was no significant difference in scores between those who were together during Phase 1 and broke-up before Phase 2,  $t(12) = 1.22, p = .24$ . However, we should point out that the difference was in the predicted direction with higher abstract scores in Phase 1 ( $M = 77.7$ ) than in Phase 2 ( $M = 72.0$ ) and that only 13 participants satisfied this condition. No such analysis was possible in the proximal/break-up between Phase 1 and Phase 2 condition since only 4 participants satisfied the conditions of this category.

*Hypothesis 3:* Break ups that took place in the near past will be conceived of more concretely in comparison to a break ups that occurred in the far past regardless of its proximal or distal condition.

We next wanted to test if the logic of Temporal Construal Theory can be applied to romantic relationships. More specifically we were interested to know if there was a difference in the construal of a past romance depending on one's temporal distance from it (e.g., comparing the construal of a past romance that ended six months ago with one that ended 1 year ago). According to TCT, the farther an event is in the future, the more abstract the perception of that event will be. The same line of reasoning should apply to past events. Thus, if a romance is considered an 'event', then the farther one is from the date of romance termination, the more abstract should be the construal of the romance. In Phase 1, 35 participants described a past relationship, (time since break-up ranged between 3 and 62 months and the median was 13 months). Results indicated no significant correlation between total abstraction score with months since the break-up occurred,  $r(33) = .16, p = .37$ . This means that temporal distance from a past event was not

**TABLE 6**  
**Correlation between abstraction and time since past romance**  
**(Phase 1 & Phase 2)**

Variable and level	N	correlation
Phase 1:		
1. Proximal & Distal Romance	35	.16
2. Proximal Romance	10	.45
3. Distal Romance	25	.09
Phase 2:		
1. Proximal & Distal Romance	41	.27*
2. Proximal Romance	11	.09
3. Distal Romance	30	.28*

\*  $p < .10$

a good predictor of how abstractly one construed the past romance (whether proximal or distal). However, an additional 12 months *away* from a past romance yielded different results. Phase 2 results indicate that one more year away from a past romance *enhanced* the abstract interpretation of that past romance,  $r(39) = .27, p < .10$  (see Table 6). An additional 12 months away from a past relationship did not affect the construal of the romance for the proximal condition. Thus, it is only the marginally significant findings of Phase 2 that accords with the findings of TCT that showed that the farther in time one is from an event (in this case different time points from a past romance) the more will one tend to construe the event abstractly.

#### Additional analyses

Finally, we examined if a difference in abstract construal could be found between proximal and distal romances based on the 'How close when apart' question. It should be reminded that this closeness question was used to measure the extent one felt romantically attached to their partner when separated by physical distance. Although we made no specific hypothesis related to this question, we thought it interesting to see if one

could predict the level of abstraction in a relationship depending on one's perceived psychological closeness of the relationship. Specifically, we were interested to see if perceived psychological closeness might be a better predictor of the level of abstraction in a romance than is the type of relationship (proximal or distal). We also were interested to see if those who report a break up between Phase 1 and Phase 2 would parallel the predictions of Hypothesis 2 (i.e. significantly less closeness when apart for distal break-up than their ongoing counterparts, and significantly more closeness when apart for proximal break-up than their ongoing counterparts). Finally, we wanted to see if a connection exists between temporal distance from a past romance and 'how close one felt when apart' during that romantic relationship.

In Phase 1 of the study, a regression analysis did reveal a significant correlation between the response to the 'how close when apart' question and one's total abstraction score regardless of relationship type,  $r(78) = .51, p < .001$ . Thus, the analysis revealed that the higher the abstraction score, the more likely was one to answer feeling 'all the time' closer when apart (see Table 7).

**TABLE 7**  
**Correlation between ratings of closeness and abstraction**

Variable and level	N	correlation
<u>Phase 1:</u>		
1. All	80	.51***
2. Proximal	30	.52**
3. Distal	50	.55***

Cont., next page.

Table 7, cont.

Phase 2:

1. All	65	.13
2. Proximal	22	.02
3. Distal	43	.27*

\*  $p < .10$

\*\*  $p < .01$

\*\*\*  $p < .001$

**TABLE 8**  
**Phase 1 relationship between ratings of closeness and abstraction**

Closeness when Apart	N	mean score	SE	F value	sig. value
1. ALL					
All time	13	95.2	2.56	10.4	<.001
Most time	18	80.5	1.68		
Half the time	14	73.2	1.35		
Some time	10	74.0	3.40		
Little bit of time	15	75.7	2.33		
Never	9	70.5	5.96		
2. PROXIMAL					
All time	5	96.2	2.57	22.1	<.0001
Most time	10	80.3	1.97		
Half the time	7	71.4	1.42		
Some time	4	64.5	4.40		
Little bit of time	2	67.5	0.50		
Never	1	49.0	-		
3. DISTAL					
All time	8	94.6	3.98	4.2	<.01
Most time	8	80.7	2.01		
Half the time	7	75.0	3.21		
Some time	6	80.3	2.65		
Little bit of time	13	77.0	2.51		
Never	8	73.2	6.03		

While a marginally significant correlation was found for the same relationship on phase 2 data with respect to the distal condition,  $r(41) = .12, p < .10$ , no significant correlation was found for both the proximal condition and the combined condition. However, a one-way analysis of variance did reveal a significant difference between different 'closeness' responses for both Phase 1,  $F(5, 59) = 10.40, p < .001$ , and Phase 2,

$F(5, 59) = 2.37, p < .05$ , (see Tables 8 & 9). The discrepancy between the non-significant correlation and the significant ANOVA in Phase 2 most likely indicates that differences between the various responses do not follow a clear linear trend. However, it should be noted that the 'pole' responses are very different - closer 'all the time' when apart ( $M=82.2$ ) and 'never' closer when apart ( $M=67.6$ ), with the high score indicating, as expected, the greater level of abstraction.

We next analyzed how a break-up affects the construal of a relationship in terms of the closeness question. An interesting finding was revealed in that results indicate that there is a marginally significant difference at Phase 1 between on-going proximal and on-going distal romances in terms of level of closeness to a partner when apart,  $F(1, 44) = 2.51, p < .10$  with  $M = 3.64$  for distal and  $M = 2.52$  for proximal. This marginally significant difference vanishes when a split occurred between Phase 1 and Phase 2. Thus, when an analysis was performed on Phase 2 of the data, distal romances that called it quits within the last year did not significantly differ from the proximal romance that were terminated,  $F(1, 15) = 1.50, p = .23, M = 3.38$  for distal and  $M = 2.75$  for proximal. More specifically, we notice, as predicted in Hypothesis 2, that a break-up in a distal romance yields a perception of *less* closeness when apart ( $M=3.38$ ) than their ongoing counterparts ( $M=3.64$ ), indicating that dissatisfaction in the romance might be due to the fact that the 'natural' tendency for distal relationships to be abstract did not fit their relationship style since their closeness level when apart is lower than their ongoing distal counterparts.

**TABLE 9**  
**Phase 2 relationship between ratings of closeness and abstraction**

Closeness when Apart	N	mean score	SE	F value	sig. value
<b>1. ALL</b>					
All time	7	82.2	5.11		
Most time	5	64.2	3.33		
Half the time	21	72.2	2.11	2.37	<.05
Some time	21	74.6	2.02		
Little bit of time	8	72.0	3.25		
Never	3	67.6	5.69		
<b>2. PROXIMAL</b>					
All time	2	76.0	19.00		
Most time	3	63.0	5.19		
Half the time	10	73.1	3.23	0.90	.48
Some time	-	-	-		
Little bit of time	6	74.5	5.45		
Never	1	56.0	2.66		
<b>3. DISTAL</b>					
All time	5	84.8	3.63		
Most time	2	66.0	5.00		
Half the time	11	71.5	2.89	2.62	<.05
Some time	15	74.7	1.97		
Little bit of time	7	74.2	2.67		
Never	3	67.6	5.69		

Finally, how does temporal distance from a past romance help predict one's feeling of closeness when apart? We answered this question by correlating length since a break-up occurred with perception of psychological closeness when apart. Phase 1 results yielded insignificant results  $r(33) = .12, p = .5$  indicating it was not true that the farther back in time a romance was the closer one felt when apart. However, our hypothesis was confirmed in Phase 2 as a significant correlation was found between temporal distance of a past romance and perception of psychological closeness  $r(39) = .34, p < .05$ . Although our third hypothesis did not make predictions about differences made on romance type we have also made and reproduced such analysis (see Table 10).

**TABLE 10**  
**Closeness and temporal distance from past romance correlation**  
**(Phase 1 & Phase 2)**

Variable and level	N	correlation
Phase 1:		
1. Proximal & Distal romance	35	.12
2. Proximal romance	9	.45
3. Distal romance	26	.28
Phase 2:		
1. Proximal & Distal romance	41	.34*
2. Proximal romance	11	.10
3. Distal romance	30	.37*

\*  $p < .05$



## CHAPTER 4

### DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to analyze the various factors that affect how romantic relationships are construed. We first compared proximal and distal romantic relationships and attempted to show that proximal romances are construed concretely and distal romances are construed abstractly. In a two-phase longitudinal analysis we found that although the results were in the predicted direction, the differences were not statistically significant. However, when we analyzed construal differences between those who broke-up between the two phases of the study we found that the level of abstraction of those in a distal break-up was lower than their ongoing distal counterparts, indicating that cause of break-up might be due, in part, to the fact that the abstract nature of their distal romance did not fit their more concrete construal style.

Another finding of this study resulted from the comparison of abstract/concrete construal of past romantic relationships. In Phase 2 of this study, we were able to reproduce Trope's Temporal Construal Theory by finding that romances tended to be perceived as more abstract the farther one was from a past relationship. Since we have been able to partly reproduce Trope's results, we would like to argue that this provides reasonable evidence to suggest there is something about the nature of distance that enhances abstract construal when it is increased and diminishes it when it is decreased. Our inability to find this effect in Phase 1 of this study and in the case of physical distance is not exactly clear. However, we do wish to suggest two possible explanations for the discrepancy.

First, it is widely acknowledged that the nature of romantic relationship is highly complex. Thus, it is hard to make an accurate interpretation of responses on questions about what makes a loving, trusting, or intelligent partner. Since we do not have agreed upon definitions of what these terms exactly mean, an interpretation of any response about them is particularly hard. Second, and maybe more importantly, the definition of what makes a distal romance had to be adjusted to the study population. While most distal relationships involve encounters of no more than a few times a year and/or usually involve considerable physical distance (e.g. another state, country), this was not the case in our study population. Since participants were all undergraduates from a public university, most of distal romances involved a partner from the same state making visits much more frequently than a 'normal' distal romance (almost all reported seeing their distal partner at least twice a month). Thus, the conceptual distinction between a distal and a proximal romance was probably not sufficiently different to permit a significant construal difference between the two conditions. In order for findings of physical distance be consistent with temporal distance, we need to improve both the coding mechanism of this study and apply it to a population where differences between proximal romances and distal ones are substantial. In order to maximize the difference between the two conditions we would compare, for instance, couples that actually live together (proximal condition) and couple that are separated by state or country (distal condition). Based on the encouraging results we have so far found, we expect our proximal/distal construal differences hypothesis to hold better.

Although we had not formulated it as part of our hypotheses, we also found that people who construe relationships abstractly will feel closer to their partner when

separated, regardless of whether the relationship is proximal or distal. This ability to feel more intimate with a romantic partner when physically distant indicates that a certain category of people are able to disregard the physical closeness as key to the romance (i.e. concreteness) in favor of spiritual or Platonic closeness (i.e. abstractness). This may explain why many people can remain romantically bonded for years, while distance separates them.

One important component omitted in this study that would have provided useful information about the nature of distal and proximal romances is character traits. Had we included a measure of personality, it would have helped us know better whether there are certain kinds of people that lean towards long-distance relationships and other kinds that lean toward proximal ones. It is quite possible that people who chose to be in long distance romance do so because of a certain personality characteristic. For example, one can intuitively argue that an introvert does not rely on the presence of others to be happy as much as an extrovert does and thus can be expected to be more likely to engage in a long-distance romance. Furthermore, and maybe more relevant to the overall conclusion of this study, including a measure of personality traits could have revealed that some people may be 'abstract construers' while others 'concrete construers.'

Despite the fact that this study was unsuccessful in confirming some of the hypotheses made, we think the nature of this work is of considerable importance in its contribution to a better understanding of the nature of romantic relationships and needs to be further pursued. Since we have been the first to show that abstract and concrete construal of romantic experiences vary depending on relationship length and perceived psychological closeness, we believe that more research needs to be done to confirm what

we have found and further investigate whether there are abstract-type and concrete-type people who tend to respectively choose distal or proximal romances. Future research should concentrate on better understanding the exact mechanisms as to how and why the Temporal Construal Theory of events fits the romantic relationship model as well as concentrate on finding a better measure of romantic statements that permits us to more accurately categorize responses into abstract and concrete dimensions.

APPENDIX A

PRETEST

GENDER:

AGE:

CLASS:

MAJOR:

1) Have you ever been in a romantic relationship?                      Yes                      No  
**(If you have answered NO, please go to question # 5)**

1) Are you in a romantic relationship now?                      Yes                      No  
**(If you have answered NO, please go to question # 6)**

3) How long have you been committed?

1 to 2 months                      3 to 6 months                      6 months to 1 year                      more than 1 year

4) What do you think are the most important characteristics of your romantic relationship that has made it successful?

**(If you have answered questions 1 to 4, please stop here)**

5) Imagine that you are/were in a romantic relationship. What do you think would be the most important characteristics of your relationship that would make it a success or a failure?

**(If you have answered question 5 please stop here)**

6) If you were in a romantic relationship but no longer are, what do you think was the most important characteristics of this relationship that has made it fail?

## APPENDIX B

### PHASE 1

#### Explanation of study

I am a graduate student working on a romantic relationship project. This particular study investigates the various aspects of proximal and long distance relationships.

Below is a questionnaire with different parts. Because you are not supposed to answer all questions, please pay particular attention to the instructions that tell you which questions you are supposed to answer, which questions you can skip and when you are supposed to stop. In answering, please try to be as accurate as you can. Thank you.

-----

#### Questionnaires

##### PART ONE

1) Have you even been in a romantic relationship?

Yes                      No

**IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED NO, PLEASE DO NOT CONTINUE FILLING OUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.**

2) Have you ever been in a long distance romantic relationship?

**NOTE: a long distance relationship is defined here as a situation where you have/had been in a romantic relationship FOR AT LEAST 2 MONTHS before you were geographically separated yet continued the romance from a distance.**

Yes                      No

**(IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED 'NO' TO THIS QUESTION, PLEASE GO TO PAGE 9 (PART 3, QUESTION 3 C)**

3A) Are you currently in a long distance romantic relationship?

Yes                      No

**(IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED 'NO' TO THIS QUESTION, PLEASE GO TO PAGE 5, PART 2, QUESTION 4 B)**

4A) How long have you been in this romantic relationship?

- 1) two to three months
- 2) three to six months
- 3) six months to a year
- 4) 1 year to 3 years
- 5) more than 3 years (please specify how many years)

5A) How long were you in this relationship **before** you were separated?

- 1) about two to three months

- 2) about three to six months
  - 3) about six months to a year
  - 4) between 1 and 3 years
  - 5) more than 3 years (please specify how many years)
- 6A) what was the cause of the geographical separation (i.e. who relocated and why)?

7A) When do you plan on making your romance proximal again?

**NOTE**

**PROXIMAL ROMANCE MEANS THAT YOU ARE NOT GEOGRAPHICALLY SEPARATED FROM YOUR ROMANTIC PARTNER. IN OTHER WORDS, YOUR RELATIONSHIP WOULD BECOME PROXIMAL AGAIN WHEN YOU WOULD NO LONGER BE PHYSICALLY DISTANT FROM YOUR PARTNER.**

- 1) less than 1 year
  - 2) between 1 and 3 years
  - 3) more than 3 years
  - 4) don't know
- 8A) in your long distance relationship, how often do you see one another?
- 1) every week
  - 2) one to two times per month
  - 3) one to two times per semester
  - 4) between semesters only
  - 5) once a year or less
- 9A) how often do you communicate via phone?
- 1) daily
  - 2) about three to four times a week
  - 3) about once a week
  - 4) about two to three times a month
  - 5) about once a month or less
- 10A) How often to communicate in writing?
- 1) Daily
  - 2) About three to four times a week
  - 3) About once a week
  - 4) About two to three times a month
  - 5) About once a month or less
- 11A) on a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship do you consider yourself to be?
- Least committed      1      2      3      4      5      Most committed

12A) on a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship do your partner to be?  
Least committed      1      2      3      4      5      Most committed

13A) some people report they feel closer to their partner when separated then when together ('absence makes the heart grow fonder'); other people report just the opposite ('out of sight, out of mind'). To what extent do you feel closer to your partner when separated then when together?

- 1) all the time
- 2) a good bit of the time
- 3) about half the time
- 4) a little bit of the time
- 5) none of the time

14A) As accurately as you possibly can, please describe your romantic relationship (i.e. what are your general points of agreement/disagreement, whether or not you have common goals or interests and what makes that person special to your heart or mind).

---

**PART TWO**

---

4B) When did your last romantic relationship end?    YEAR:                      MONTH:

5B) How long did that relationship last?

- 1) two to three months
- 2) three to six months
- 3) six months to a year
- 4) 1 year to 3 years
- 5) more than 3 years (please specify how many years)

6B) how long were you in this relationship become you separated?

- 1) about two to three months
- 2) about three to six months
- 3) about six months to a year
- 4) between 1 and 3 years
- 5) more than 3 years (please specify how many years)

7B) did you break-up while you were geographically separated or when together?

When together

when separated

8B) what caused your relationship to become long distance (i.e. who relocated and why)

9B) before you broke-up, when had you planned on making your romance proximal again?



**NOTE**

**PROXIMAL ROMANCE MEANS THAT YOU ARE NOT GEOGRAPHICALLY SEPARATED FROM YOUR ROMANTIC PARTNER. IN OTHER WORDS, YOUR RELATIONSHIP WOULD BECOME PROXIMAL AGAIN WHEN YOU WOULD NO LONGER BE PHYSICALLY DISTANT FROM YOUR PARTNER.**

- 1) less than 1 year
- 2) between 1 and 3 years
- 3) more than 3 years
- 4) don't know

10B) during the long distance phase of your relationship, how often did you see one another?

- 1) every week
- 2) one to two times per month
- 3) one to two times per semester
- 4) between semesters only
- 5) once a year or less

11B) how often did you communicate via phone?

- 1) daily
- 2) about three to four times a week
- 3) about once a week
- 4) about two to three times a month
- 5) about once a month or less

12B) how often did you communicate in writing?

- 1) Daily
- 2) About three to four times a week
- 3) About once a week
- 4) About two to three times a month
- 5) About once a month or less

13B) on a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship did you consider yourself to be?

Least committed      1      2      3      4      5      Most committed

14B) on a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship did you consider your partner to be?

Least committed      1      2      3      4      5      Most committed

15B) some people report they feel closer to their partner when separated than when together ('absence makes the heart grow fonder'); other people report just the opposite ('out of sight, out of mind'). To what extent did you feel closer to your partner when separated than when together?

- 1) all the time
- 2) a good bit of the time
- 3) about half the time
- 4) a little bit of the time
- 5) none of the time

16B) As accurately as you possibly can, please describe your romantic relationship (i.e. what are your general points of agreement/disagreement, whether or not you have common goals or interests and what makes that person special to your heart or mind but no longer is).

---

### PART THREE

4C) How long have you been with your partner?

- 1) two to three months
- 2) three to six months
- 3) six months to a year
- 4) 1 year to 3 years
- 5) More than 3 years (please specify how many years)

5C) how often do you see one another?

- 1) every week
- 2) one to two times per month
- 3) one to two times per semester
- 4) between semesters only
- 5) once a year or less

6C) how often do you communicate via phone?

- 1) daily
- 2) about three to four times a week
- 3) about once a week
- 4) about two to three times a month
- 5) about once a month or less

7C) on a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship do you consider yourself to be?

Least committed      1      2      3      4      5      Most committed

8C) on a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship do your partner to be?

Least committed      1      2      3      4      5      Most committed

9C) some people report they feel closer to their partner when separated than when together ('absence makes the heart grow fonder'); other people report just the opposite

(‘out of sight, out of mind’). To what extent do you feel closer to your partner when separated than when together?

- 1) all the time
- 2) a good bit of the time
- 3) about half the time
- 4) a little bit of the time
- 5) none of the time

10C) As accurately as you possibly can, please describe your romantic relationship (i.e. what are your general points of agreement/disagreement, whether or not you have common goals or interests and what makes that person special to your heart or mind).

---

#### PART FOUR

4D) When did your last relationship end?    YEAR:            MONTH:

5D) How long did that relationship last?

- 1) two to three months
- 2) three to six months
- 3) six months to a year
- 4) 1 year to 3 years
- 5) more than 3 years (please specify how many years)

6D) How often did you see one another?

- 1) every week
- 2) one to two times per month
- 3) one to two times per semester
- 4) between semesters only
- 5) once a year or less

7D) How often did you communicate via phone?

- 1) daily
- 2) about three to four times a week
- 3) about once a week
- 4) about two to three times a month
- 5) about once a month or less

8D) On a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship did you consider yourself to be?

Least committed    1        2        3        4        5        Most committed

9D) On a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship did you consider your partner to be?

Least committed    1        2        3        4        5        Most committed

10D) Some people report they feel closer to their partner when separated than when together ('absence makes the heart grow fonder'); other people report just the opposite ('out of sight, out of mind'). To what extent did you feel closer to your partner when separated than when together?

- 1) all the time
- 2) a good bit of the time
- 3) about half the time
- 4) a little bit of the time
- 5) none of the time

11D) As accurately as you possibly can, please describe your romantic relationship (i.e. what are your general points of agreement/disagreement, whether or not you have common goals or interests and what makes that person special to your heart or mind but no longer is).

---

## APPENDIX C

### DEFINITIONS

Below is a list of terms. Note that these terms are often used in a romantic context but can sometimes be used in other contexts. With this in mind, define what these terms mean to you in the context of your romantic relationship, even if that term has not been specifically applied to the romance you have been talking about.

TRUSTING ONE'S PARTNER:

CARING FOR THE OTHER:

BEING IN LOVE:

A STINGY PARTNER:

A FEELING OF JEALOUSY:

EFFORT IN MAINTAINING THE ROMANCE:

A COMMITTED PARTNER:

A SELFISH PARTNER:

A PARTNER WHO RESPECTS ME:

A DISTANT PARTNER:

AN INTELLIGENT PARTNER:

IMMATURE BEHAVIOR:

AN HONEST PARTNER:

A SEXY PARTNER:

### ROMANTIC ASSESSMENT

Please describe your romantic relationship you have been referring to:

a) What are/were your points of agreement/disagreement?

b) What are/were your common goals and interests?

c) What makes/made that person special to your heart or mind? And if you broke-up, how different are your feelings about that person now?

## APPENDIX D

### DEFINITION OF CODING TERMS

**Abstract**: This is a general definition; the first part of a dictionary definition. Responses that are coded under this category should not include any specificity to a participant's specific relationship.

**Concrete**: Specific examples OR just a fraction of what the whole definition could be.

**Abstract/concrete**: An answer that contains both a general definition and a specific example

**N/A Void answer**: falling under this category are responses to a definition that take the form "I would like this", "I would hate this", "this is bad", "this is good" etc...

### EXAMPLES

#### 1. FEELING OF JEALOUSY:

**Abstract**: mistrust, envious of others

**Concrete**: feelings of fear, or inadequacies that your significant other will leave you (This is specific to what some people get jealous about NOT what jealousy is)

#### 2. IMMATURE BEHAVIOR:

**Abstract**: acting below your numerical age

**Concrete**: not taking your relationship seriously, acting annoying, may be found obnoxious by others. (All are specific ways someone who is immature MIGHT act, but doesn't say what immaturity is exactly)

#### 3. CARING FOR OTHERS:

**Abstract**: loving and respecting your partner.

**Concrete**: being available whenever your partner needs you. (You don't HAVE to be physically there to be caring)

#### 4. TRUST IN ONES PARTNER:

**Abstract**: confidence in the intentions of your partner

**Concrete**: being in different places and knowing your partner isn't doing anything to hurt you (you don't HAVE to be away from your partner to have trust)

#### 5. BEING IN LOVE

**Abstract**: caring, sharing and trusting (\*\*there is no real abstract definition, so anything that most people consider love w/out specific examples of the participants relationship should be included here).

Concrete: not being able to get the smile off your face, when you want to spend all your time with that person. (Not true to “all” relationships, people can be in love and want to spend time alone)

#### 6. STINGY PARTNER

Abstract: one who withholds money, love, empathy (inclusive of all)

Concrete: someone who won't pay

#### 7. EFFORT IN MAINTAINING THE ROMANCE

Abstract: Working at a relationship to ensure the romance doesn't dissipate

Concrete: Someone who always makes sure the others needs is met and tries hard to make sure the relationship lasts, being romantic. (Having needs met are part of what might maintain a relationship but it isn't the only thing)

#### 8. COMMITTED PARTNER

Abstract: Being with your partner only both mentally and physically

Concrete: someone who is willing to give themselves to you completely (they don't have to give everything to you they just have to not give anything to anyone else)

#### 10. A PARTNER WHO RESPECTS ME

Abstract: Holding high esteem of a person

Concrete: Someone who values me as I am and lets me live my life like I want (this is what this person thinks respect should be)

#### 11. DISTANT PARTNER

Abstract: Someone who is either physically or mentally not connecting with you.

Concrete: reserved, unemotional not willing to share his thoughts or feelings. (You don't have to share to be a non-distant partner; you don't have to share thoughts and feelings to be close)

#### 12. INTELLIGENT PARTNER

Abstract: Someone who can reason and understand properly

Concrete: Someone who brings to light things that I had not thought of before. (They don't have to share things with you to be intelligent.)

#### 13. HONEST PARTNER

Abstract: Doesn't distort the truth

Concrete: Someone who always tells you what they are thinking (that's only one aspect of being honest, and they don't have to tell you everything to be honest)

#### 14. SEXY PARTNER

Abstract: a sexually appealing person

Concrete: someone who takes good care of themselves. (Any specific things that some “sexy” people are usually concrete because people tend to disagree on what the term means)



Appendix E

PHASE 2

**QUESTIONNAIRE # 1**  
**(Red folder)**

NAME:

STUDENT ID:

If you are filling out this questionnaire, this means that you are still with the person you reported being with in last year's questionnaire and that the status of your relationship has NOT changed. This means that if you reported being in a distal romance, you are still in a distal romance and if you reported being in a proximal romance, you are still in a proximal romance. To remind you, here is what we mean by proximal and distal.

**NOTE: If this questionnaire (# 1) does not apply to your romance, please go back to question # 6 in "INTRODUCTION" and check your answer.**

**distal romance:** you see/saw your partner no more than once per weekend (excluding school breaks when there is no limit to how often you see your partner) **AND** that partner is/was geographically distant from you (i.e. living outside the pioneer valley area)

**Proximal romance:** You and your partner are/were either living in a same city, or in a neighboring town within the pioneer valley.

**IMPORTANT NOTE: school breaks do not count as a change in romance status.**

-----

1) When did your romance start? MONTH: YEAR:

2) Have you had break-ups that lasted more than a month since you started your romance?

YES NO

1) In months or years, how much would you estimate is the total amount of break-up time your romance has gone through? For example, if you broke-up on two occasions, the first time lasting 3 months and the second time lasting 2 months, your total break-up time would be equal to 5 months.

- a) Never broke-up
- b) Less than 3 months
- c) about 3 to 6 months
- d) About 6 months to 1 year
- e) More than 1 year (please specify how many years)

If your romance is distal, please answer questions **4 & 5** and then **continue filling out** the questionnaire.

If your romance is proximal, please go to question **#6** and then **continue filling out** the rest of the questionnaire.

4) If your relationship is distal (i.e. long distance), how often do you see one another?

- a) every week
- b) one to two times per month
- c) one, two times per semester
- d) between semesters only
- e) once a year or less

5) If your relationship is distal, how often do you talk on the phone?

- a) Many times a day
- b) once a day
- c) a few times a week
- d) a few times a month
- e) We don't talk on the phone

6) On a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship do you consider yourself to be?

Least committed      1      2      3      4      5      most committed

7) On a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship do you consider your partner to be?

Least committed      1      2      3      4      5      most committed

8) Some people report they feel closer to their partner when separated than when together ('absence makes the heart grow fonder'); other people report just the opposite ('when the cat's away the mouse will play'). To what extent do you feel closer to your partner, **in a psychological sense**, when separated than when together?

- a) All the time
- b) A good bit of the time
- c) About half the time
- d) Some of the time
- E) a little bit of the time
- f) None of the time



6) If you were to say what/who was **primarily** responsible for the change in status, which from the choices below best applies to your romance? (**PLEASE CHOOSE ONLY ONE**)

- a) myself
- b) my partner
- c) both
- d) outside circumstances (work/school relocation)
- e) family and friends influence

7) How do you think the change has affected the romance?

Deteriorated it greatly    1            2            3            4            5 improved it greatly

8) In the space below, please try to explain in words why the relationship improved or deteriorated.

If your relationship has changed to distal please answer questions **9 & 10** and then **continue filling out** the rest of the questionnaire.

If your romance has changed to proximal, please go to **question #11** and then **continue filling out** the rest of the questionnaire.

9) If your relationship changed to distal (i.e. changed to long distance) how often do you see one another?

- a) every week
- b) one to two times per month
- c) one, two times per semester
- d) between semesters only
- e) once a year or less

10) If your romance changed to distal, how often do you talk on the phone?

- a) many times a day
- b) once a day
- c) a few times a week
- d) a few times a month
- e) we don't talk on the phone

11) On a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship do you consider yourself to be?

Least committed    1            2            3            4            5            most committed

12) On a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship do you consider your partner to be?

Least committed      1      2      3      4      5      most committed

13) Some people report they feel closer to their partner when separated than when together ('absence makes the heart grow fonder'); other people report just the opposite ('when the cat's away the mouse will play'). To what extent do you feel closer to your partner, **in a psychological sense**, when separated than when together?

- a) all the time
- b) a good bit of the time
- c) about half the time
- d) some of the time
- e) a little bit of the time
- f) none of the time

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**QUESTIONNAIRE # 3**  
**(Yellow folder)**

NAME:

STUDENT ID:

If you are filling out this questionnaire, this means that you are no longer with the person you reported being with in last year's questionnaire. The romance you reported about was either proximal or distal. To remind you, here is what we mean by proximal and distal.

**NOTE: If this questionnaire (# 3) does not apply to your romance, please go back to question # 5 in "INTRODUCTION" and check your answer.**

**distal romance:** you see/saw your partner no more than once per weekend (excluding school breaks when there is no limit to how often you see your partner) AND that partner is/was geographically distant from you (i.e. living outside the pioneer valley area)

**Proximal romance:** You and your partner are/were either living in a same city, or in a neighboring town within the pioneer valley.

-----

1) When did your romance start?      MONTH:      YEAR:

2) When did you romance end?      MONTH      YEAR:

3) Before your final break-up, have you had any other break-ups that lasted more than a month?

YES NO

4) In months or years, how much would you estimate is the total amount of break-up time your romance has gone through between the start and the end of your romance? For example, if you broke-up on two occasions, the first time lasting 3 months and the second time lasting 2 months, your total break-up time would be equal to 5 months.

- a) Never broke-up while in the romance
- b) About 1 to 3 months
- c) about 3 to 6 months
- d) About 6 months to 1 year
- e) More than 1 year (please specify how many years)

5) What was the status of your relationship when you broke-up?

A) Proximal b) distal

6) Was it different from what you had reported last year?

- a) No, it was the same as I reported last year
- b) Yes, when I broke-up it had changed from proximal to distal
- c) Yes, when I broke-up it had changed from distal to proximal

7) If it was different from what you reported last year, how would you best define the type of romance you were in?

a) Proximal b) distal c) not applicable/romance status never changed

8) If you were to say what/who was **primarily** responsible for the break-up, which from the choices below best applies to your romance? (**PLEASE CHOOSE ONLY ONE**)

- a) myself
- b) my partner
- c) both
- d) outside circumstances (work/school relocation)
- e) family and friends influence

9) In the space below, please try to explain in words why the relationship ended

If your romance was distal, please answer **questions 10& 11** and then **continue filling out** the questionnaire.

If your romance was proximal, please go to **question # 12** and then **continue filling out** the rest of the questionnaire.

10) If your romance was distal (i.e. long distance), how often did you see one another?

- a) every weekend
- b) once to twice a month
- c) once to twice a semester
- d) between semesters only
- e) once a year or less

11) If your romance was distal, how often did you communicate via phone or e-mail?

- a) daily
- b) about three to four times a week
- c) about three to four times a month
- d) about once a month or less

12) On a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship do you consider yourself to have been?

Least committed      1      2      3      4      5      most committed

13) On a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship do you consider your partner to have been?

Least committed      1      2      3      4      5      most committed

14) Some people report they feel closer to their partner when separated than when together ('absence makes the heart grow fonder'); other people report just the opposite ('when the cat's away the mouse will play'). To what extent did you feel closer to your partner, **in a psychological sense**, when separated than when together?

- a) all the time
- b) a good bit of the time
- c) about half the time
- d) some of the time
- e) a little bit of the time
- f) none of the time

**QUESTIONNAIRE # 4**  
**(Green folder)**

NAME:

STUDENT ID:

If you are filling out this questionnaire, this means that when you talked about a romantic relationship in last year's questionnaire you were reporting about a past romantic relationship. The past romance you reported about was either proximal or distal. To remind you, here is what we mean by proximal and distal.

**NOTE: If this questionnaire (# 4) does not apply to your romance, please go back to question # 4 in "INTRODUCTION" and check your answer.**

**distal romance:** you see/saw your partner no more than once per weekend (excluding school breaks when there is no limit to how often you could see your partner) **AND** that partner is/was geographically distant from you (i.e. living outside the pioneer valley area)

**Proximal romance:** You and your partner are/were either living in a same city, or in a neighboring town within the pioneer valley.

-----

1) Approximately when did your romance start?      MONTH:                      YEAR:

2) Approximately when did you romance end?      MONTH                              YEAR:

3) Before your final break-up, have you had any other break-ups that lasted more than a month?

YES                      NO

4) In months or years, how much would you estimate is the total amount of break-up time your romance has gone through between the start and the end of your romance? For example, if you broke-up on two occasions, the first time lasting 3 months and the second time lasting 2 months, your total break-up time would be equal to 5 months.

- a) Never broke-up while in the romance
- b) About 1 to 3 months
- c) about 3 to 6 months
- d) About 6 months to 1 year
- e) More than 1 year (please specify how many years)

5) What kind of romantic relationship was it? (If you reported it as being both, please circle the one that lasted longer)

A) Proximal

b) distal



6) If you were to say what/who was **primarily** responsible for the break-up, which from the choices below best applies to your romance? (**PLEASE CHOOSE ONLY ONE**)

- f) myself
- g) my partner
- h) both
- i) outside circumstances (work/school relocation)
- j) family and friends influence

7) In the space below, please try to explain in words why the relationship ended

If your romance was distal, answer **questions 8 & 9** and then **continue filling out** the questionnaire.

If your romance was proximal, please go to **question # 10** and then **continue filling out** the rest of the questionnaire.

8) If your relationship was distal (i.e. long distance), how often did you see one another?

- a) every weekend
- b) once to twice a month
- c) once to twice a semester
- d) between semesters only
- e) once a year or less

9) If your romance was distal, how often did you communicate via phone or e-mail?

- a) daily
- b) about three to four times a week
- c) about three to four times a month
- d) about once a month or less

10) On a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship do you consider yourself to have been?

Least committed      1      2      3      4      5      most committed

11) On a range from 1 to 5 (with 1 meaning least committed and 5 being most committed) how committed to this relationship do you consider your partner to have been?

Least committed      1      2      3      4      5      most committed

12) Some people report they feel closer to their partner when separated than when together ('absence makes the heart grow fonder'); other people report just the opposite ('when the cat's away the mouse will play'). To what extent did you feel closer to your partner, **in a psychological sense**, when separated than when together?

- a) all the time
- b) a good bit of the time
- c) about half the time
- d) some of the time
- e) a little bit of the time
- f) none of the time

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