

Decision Making for Couples

In a situation where a job hunter is not a relatively independent individual, but is highly interdependent with another person, such as a spouse or a fiancé, any decisions made will directly affect not just one but two people. The job selection decision-making process, which we have already seen is complex for an individual, becomes even more complex when the decision maker is a part of a couple. But exactly how much more complex it becomes, and in what ways, will vary depending upon the nature of the couple's relationship.

The Spectrum of Relationships

Exhibit 32-1 presents a spectrum of relationships for couples. At the extreme left of the spectrum is the traditional relationship: The husband is the breadwinner and the wife is the homemaker and child-raiser. As one moves from left to right across the spectrum, male and female roles change toward more equal participation in family and career. At the right extreme, both people essentially assume the same role, in terms of careers and homes.

In the case of the traditional couple, the job selection decision-making process usually comes the closest to what we have already seen for individuals. The only additional complication is that the decision maker typically adds to his selection criteria a few constraints related to his perception of his spouse's needs (for example, "She will never move outside the United States, so I won't bother to pursue non-U.S. jobs").

As we move to the right on the spectrum, the job selection decision-making process tends to become more complex. The further right we are, the more we are likely to find not one but two decision makers, both involved in analysis and choice. The additional complexity derives from the need to somehow coordinate two different cognitive *and* emotional processes—which may be very difficult and time-consuming.

Today, most couple relationships are still traditional or semi-traditional. But the trend over the past decade has been movement from left to right in Exhibit 32-1. And, for our purposes, that means movement toward additional complexity in job-related decision making. One might reasonably wonder how well prepared most people are for the increased complexity.

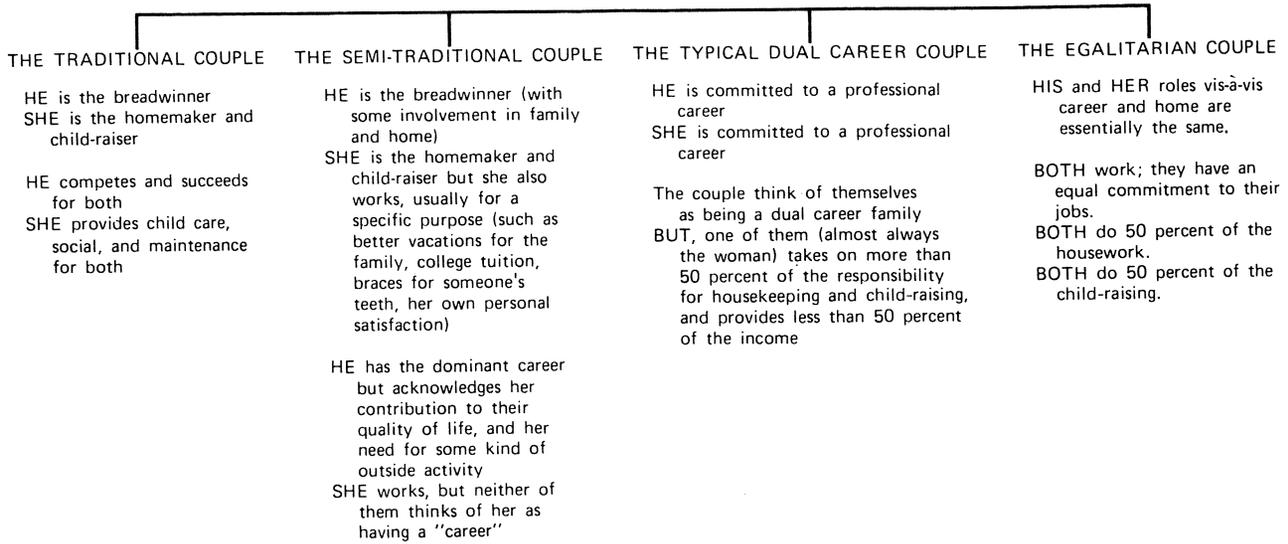
Assignment

The Bradshaw case is of a young couple involved in a job decision. Consider these questions when you study the case:

1. How is the decision being reached?
2. What are the key forces that affected the manner in which they went about reaching a decision?
3. What job do you think Jim accepted? Why?
4. How well do you think subsequent events will work out for the Bradshaws?
5. What generalizations, if any, might you draw from this case regarding job decision making for couples?

Exhibit 32-1

A Spectrum of Relationships for Couples



Note: Couples can change their relationships on the continuum. Perhaps the most typical example we see of this today is the couple who in their twenties assume a traditional couple role. In their thirties, after their children are in school, they shift to the semi-traditional role. And in their forties, after the children have left home, they become a dual career couple.

THE BRADSHAWs

Jim and Helen Bradshaw, both in their late twenties, looked tired and somewhat tense as they sat down in the apartment of a close friend on the afternoon of April thirtieth. They had felt the need to talk over their current problems with someone whom they knew to be a good listener. Jim, a second-year MBA student, had promised one company that he would let them know by May first whether he would accept their offer for full-time employment. He and Helen had spent the last few nights talking nonstop about the merits and drawbacks of the two offers they were considering. After lighting a cigarette, Jim launched into the subject.

Jim: A lot of things have been happening lately and it seems like it is happening a little bit too quickly. We have been on the merry-go-round here the last two years with Helen out working and me totally involved in school work. Now all of a sudden we're being con-

fronted with issues that we didn't really spend enough time thinking about or discussing.

The way I see it, there are really two dilemmas. One is the personal dilemma I have regarding job choice, and that can't really be separated from the other dilemma, which is my relationship with Helen.

Helen: I think it would be helpful if we explained to Doug what the two jobs are and the difference between them, since he doesn't really know.

Jim: Well, there are two companies. One is Davidson Manufacturing Company, which is located in St. Joseph, Missouri, and . . .

Helen: Small town—30,000 people.

Jim: . . . on a continuum that would be at one extreme according to my viewpoint, as far as its being the typical MBA opportunity. It has a lot of responsibility and a lot of exposure to top-level management. They have a lot of Harvard MBAs and they push

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- them ahead and give them many opportunities to move around. The big negative is the location. St. Joseph, Missouri, is just out in farm country and it's a small town.
- Helen: It's not near a big city and it doesn't have in its immediate vicinity all the nice things about a city that we very much like; theater, museums, galleries, restaurants, etc.
- Jim: On a rational level I can say that as an MBA going to work for them I would be on the fast track and it would just be very stimulating professionally, but socially it would leave just an awful lot to be desired. Everyone we talked to who's from that area or works for the company says it's a great place to raise a family.
- Helen: Which we have no interest in doing and everybody there does!
- Jim: The other extreme is working for Brown- ing Corporation in San Francisco. I would start out as an auditor—an internal consul- tant type. I would be on my own or work- ing with another person—which really ap- peals to me—but I would have to travel at least 50 percent of the time. I would be go- ing to all their subsidiaries and operations to find out what their problems are and to make some recommendations. There would be a lot of, I guess what people would term, mechanical work to that as well. A lot of number crunching.
- And yet that's a location we both like. We lived there before we came here. We enjoyed the life style out west. Our friends are out west. If we ever wanted to settle in a place, that would be it.
- The reason I've said this option is toward the other end of the spectrum is that there aren't many MBAs in the company. There is some uncertainty at this point concern- ing what I might be doing in the future. It's not clear that in one and a half years I would get this or that type of job. The potential is certainly there, because they are growing at the same rate Davidson is. They are a larger company to begin with, which means that it might be a little faster moving, but it is so difficult to tell based on one visit. The reason Davidson is so at- tractive is that I worked for them last sum- mer, or rather for one of their distributors (which is an independent business). Anyway I got to meet a lot of the people, and they got to know me and I performed very well and I guess they all liked me.
- Jim: Jim's got a couple of friends here at the school who worked with them, and so when we are with them it is very easy to get carried away and become very excited about the possibilities of working for that company.
- Jim: There are so many little minor pluses and minuses. You can live very well in St. Joseph, Missouri. It is very inexpensive. You can get a house comparable to something in Boston at half the price. Yet the wages there are higher or equal to Boston and New York. On the other hand, this offer on the West Coast is substantially lower in salary. Now money is not my top priority. I don't think money is that important in the short run or even in the long run. There has to be enough so we can live comfortably, but I don't think I would make a job decision based solely on that. I would make a deci- sion based on the elements of the job.
- Helen: If you were just making a decision on money, then the decision would very easi- ly be made.
- Jim: Right. I have talked to two firms in New York and one in Boston that I'll probably get offers from at higher salaries. (*Turning to Helen*) Perhaps this is a good time for you to get into the aspect of what you'd like to be doing, and I can talk about those other jobs and the cloudiness as far as my deci- sion goes a little later.
- Helen: My problem is I don't know what I want to do. I want to work and I feel a very urgent need to work but I don't have any profes- sional expertise. I don't have any creden- tials. I went to college and was then married and I have worked as a secretary ever since.
- Jim: And part of the reason that took place is we were moving every two years.
- Helen: We were never in one place long enough for me to get into anything.
- Jim: And there's always been that certainty. We knew when we got to a location that we would only be there as short as six months or as long as two years. That's been part of the problem, I guess.
- Helen: But I do want to work. I don't know what I want to do, as I said. In St. Joseph, Missouri, I don't see very many alternatives. I see none in the town itself. It's all union- ized and there have been layoffs left and right, and it is not a good time for someone from outside the area to come in and expect to be able to get a job. It is located about 30 miles from Greensville, which is where the University is. I suppose if I wanted to com- mute, I would look there for either employ- ment at the University or consider going back to school. Neither of those options has an enormous amount of appeal to me right now. In San Francisco there are lots of op- tions. I know several people who are in various businesses that I have some interest in. I see a couple of choices for myself out there. Some things I would like to try. I don't see any in Missouri.

Jim: Another thing about Davidson is that if you survive and do very well with the company, opportunities are pretty much in St. Joseph, Missouri. Certainly there are field operations and international operations, which would be a sidelight for a few years, but if you thought in terms of the long term, that's where we would be. The thought of that kind of scares me, because the things we like to do socially and even athleticwise just don't happen to be in the Midwest. They happen to be on the coasts. The life style itself is something we have always taken for granted because we have always lived in good places. In Georgia we lived not too far from Atlanta. We lived overseas for a couple of years in Japan, when I was in the Navy, and then the West Coast, and then Washington, D.C. These are all places we were very comfortable with—big cities, metropolitan areas, lots of activity. Of course Boston has a lot more to offer also.

Helen: I think that the closest I have ever come to living in what I would call a small-town environment is when we were in the military overseas. The American community was very close-knit and I didn't particularly like that. My idea of living in a foreign country is not spending your life on the base. So I had very few American friends over there and I had many Japanese friends. The thing I disliked about the ugly-American syndrome which went on over there was that U.S. people had nothing better to do than talk about other U.S. people, and I don't like—I am not comfortable in—an environment where everybody knows me, everybody knows when I come and go. I like the city. I have a need for that kind of privacy.

Jim: Because we have always had a lot of the good things that a big city has to offer, it's hard to decide what it is exactly that really attracts us. I did receive what I considered good professional offers in New York City, but the jungle aspect of the city just sort of overwhelmed me.

There's another company which I guess would be a compromise between the two companies we talked about earlier, and that was Johnson Company. It's in Chicago, which is a big city and not a bad place. The company happens to be located in the suburbs. It's not San Francisco, certainly, but it takes away the disadvantages that Davidson has, being in a small town in Missouri, because it has the restaurants, the museums, and what have you. I was really expecting to get an offer from them, and had I received an offer from them, that would have been the best of both worlds. It would have been a professional challenge on one hand, and also it wouldn't have been such a bad place to live. We have never lived in Chicago before, so it would be an adven-

ture for us, and we probably would have really enjoyed it. The program that they had for MBAs was very flexible. You could almost name the area you wanted to start in, and they would guarantee that you have a different job after about 6 to 12 months. There was a lot of mobility, top-management exposure, and good salaries. It just really seemed to be sort of an ideal situation. Unfortunately, I didn't quite make the final cut, and I know why—I had a good set of interviews with the exception of one person and he happened to be the person that they were looking for an MBA to work with. He was a little bit older than everyone else, and I knew he wasn't totally impressed with me. I wasn't totally impressed with him either. I have one trait which sometimes turns out to be a weakness, I am honest. After the day was over, someone asked me what my impression was, and I told them exactly what my impression was. I felt that at that point in the job search I fool myself when I try to fool anyone else, because it can come back and bite me in the ass. I also value very highly a person's honesty and straightforwardness, and that's why I discuss everything the way I see it. I think that's probably the way I cut my throat, although they waited until the very end until they rejected me. I suspect that I wasn't unacceptable, but there were other people that were more acceptable, so they had to wait until they had everything in.

There was another factor that added to the confusion of the job search. The company I worked for last summer was in Los Angeles and, as I said, was an independent distributor for Davidson Manufacturing. They have on the order of \$15 million in sales. When the summer was over I was told by my employer, who was an HBS alumni, that he would be in a position to offer me a job. He was president of a company by the age of 36 or something like that. He was 32 when he got out of the B-School, so he didn't waste much time in going through the hierarchy. He went in as a divisional manager and a year later he was a vice-president and two years later he had his own business. He was in Boston last week, and unfortunately I didn't get to see him. I just talked to him on the phone. He saw Helen before he saw me.

Helen: And so he told me that he couldn't offer Jim a job. . . .

Jim: . . . because of the economy. He said the last nine months had been slow. So he told Helen. I was on an interview trip out in Denver. She called me up on the phone that night before I had my interview with Browning (that's where their headquarters is). . . .

Helen: I thought you'd like to know.

- Jim: I'm glad you told me, because prior to that I wasn't too serious about Browning. I got rejected from Johnson at the beginning of the same week, which was last week. Johnson rejected me on Monday morning and on Thursday afternoon I found out that I wouldn't have an offer from the place in L.A. Then—this is the same day—I called Davidson because I hadn't heard from them in a month, and they told me the job I was being considered for initially at Davidson, which was assistant to this Executive Vice-President, and which I was really excited about, was being filled by someone else. So now they had something else in mind for me but they didn't know exactly what it was. I found out just last night when this other vice-president called that essentially it would be a sales rep. I would do that for six months just to learn the product, and that appeals to me. I think that would be the best way to find out about the nature of the business and their customers and deal with the people.
- Helen: Well, it's almost a kick in the teeth from them, isn't it?
- Jim: Well, in a sense. But then again, when I asked them last night on the phone if they didn't hire me for this job would they hire someone else, they said no, they wouldn't hire anyone. So that sort of rebuilt my ego a little bit by saying that they are interested in me as a long-term investment as a person. The fact that I got rejected from Johnson and the guy I worked for last summer in the same week and I didn't know what my status was has sort of weighed a little bit heavy on me. Now I am getting a little concerned that while the job in San Francisco has so many pluses, there are a lot of question marks.
- Helen: Long-term question marks you mean.
- Jim: Right. I must admit that the organization and the people I have met in Davidson by and large really impressed me. I got along with them, and it's just a great working environment. But then there is St. Joseph. There would always be other options—I could take no job and just pack up and go out to the West Coast or any other place.
- Helen: I don't really see that as beyond the realm of possibility.
- Jim: At the same time it is not something that one would like to do.
- Helen: It's the riskiest option.
- Jim: Right. There's enough uncertainty in our lives already. It costs a lot of money to move, so financially it would be a hardship in the short run. Of course in the long run I am sure we are talking about nickels and dimes. On the other hand, if we did go out to San Francisco, say, no matter what company I would go with, unless it was a small business, chances are that I wouldn't stay in one place.
- Helen: To get ahead and have the kind of professional future that we would like, we must move. That's always been our assumption.
- Jim: I think I've always enjoyed moving. I love being on the go, and adventure, and new experiences, and new challenges and not doing the same thing year after year. That's been in my blood, but needless to say, that might change. I try to keep an open mind even now.
- Helen: In me that is starting to change now. The idea of settling down and staying in one place has more appeal to me today than it used to. Maybe that's because I'm tired out—I'm moved out.
- Jim: But the reason that appeals to you is that you were in a place, the San Francisco Bay area, that you really enjoyed. Since you're a little more uncertain about your professional future than I am, you feel that you have to be in a location for longer than just a year so that you can get into a job and get some experience and maybe find out some of the things you'd like to do. I don't think you could say with certainty that a profession you might get into would require that you would stay in one place forever and ever.
- Helen: It might not, I'm just saying that, professional considerations aside, I think what I want to do more and more is settle down, have a house, live in a neighborhood.
- Jim: That definitely has appeal, but one of my problems is that I'm not ready to say that's what I want to do. *(Pause)*
- Going to San Francisco if nothing else has some very good short-term considerations from our point of view, and it could or could not have some good long-term possibilities. But when you look at Missouri, you think that it wouldn't be so bad for a couple of years. Professionally I could do very well, and yet the thought of spending 20 or 30 years in a place like that just leaves us both very cold.
- Helen: I keep thinking, well you know it might only be for a year and a half and then we would move someplace else, but the fear that keeps jumping into my head is that someday I am going to wake up 40 and be in the same damn spot that I am right now and I really don't want that to happen.
- Jim: I could always say, well a company like Davidson would be a great challenge and give me much more than I could handle, which would push me along and help me. Then after a couple of years if I found I didn't really like St. Joseph, Missouri, I could go somewhere else. It's a good place for corporate headhunters, so there is a lot of visibility there. Yet making a decision to do

that scares me a little bit, too, because I have never done anything like that.

When I was in the military for four years, I always got my first choice and I had independent jobs so that people were not pressing their thumbs down on me all the time. I had a lot of flexibility and latitude. I was allowed to become an expert in some areas that nobody else had any detailed knowledge of. It was very rewarding and satisfying. Yet at the B-School here it has been a very painful experience. Certainly there's more work here than any place I have been before, although I am not averse to work. Most of my classmates say they view it the same way. I must admit, it's a real chore to get up in the morning at times.

Two years is a short amount of time, however. I certainly don't regret the decision, and it will be worth it to me. I probably won't realize the benefits fully until I have been gone for several years, because many of the things we acquire at the B-School are intangible. After having been here, I say maybe I'm ready to quit postponing my pleasure.

I don't mind paying my dues. I realize that whatever company I go to work for will have services I'm not totally knowledgeable about, and it will take a little bit of effort in burning some midnight oil to come up to speed and learn the politics of the organization and learn how everything flows. I think that is normal wherever one goes. I think I can be very happy in a place if I have an unpalatable job or if there are some painful things to do for a few months like working late or working on weekends. But when you put together a bad environment with bad working conditions, well, I'd rather dig ditches, I really would.

Helen: You just answered the question then.

Jim: I say that now, but my gut will be gnawing away at me when I go home tonight. I'll be thinking, now wait a minute, am I giving up an opportunity. . . . If I say no I don't want to go to Missouri, am I giving up an opportunity that I might have had otherwise?

Helen: If it were such a great opportunity, it wouldn't be this hard to make a decision, would it?

Jim: Well, probably not.

Helen: (*Looking at Doug and shaking her head.*) We seem to be going back and forth just day in and day out.

Jim: We're very happy about Davidson and that offer, and then not so happy about the other. Then the next day we'll think of San Francisco and some of the possibilities with Browning, and I guess when we do this we rationalize whichever decision we seem to be leaning toward. For instance, the other day we were looking through the St. Joseph

local newspaper and looking at the houses. There were some fantastic prices and just really far-out things. We were, I don't know, trying to come up with some good things we could do there that we couldn't do elsewhere. You could play golf cheaply and play it every weekend, for example.

Helen: Somehow all of those very nice little things don't add up to having enough weight to really swing us that way.

Jim: And yet the anxiety about going the other way is that. . . .

Helen: Maybe part of the problem with the Browning job is that you don't have a clear enough picture in your mind as to where you could go with that company, whereas you do have somewhat of a clearer idea of where you would go in Davidson.

Jim: Well, that's part of it. But I'm not averse to that kind of uncertainty—that's what life's all about.

Helen: It's not just a question of uncertainty. You don't even know what options there are.

Jim: Well, I know a little bit about the options. They have a computer subsidiary and they have a leasing subsidiary which leases anything. It is a financial institution. They have many service operations like food service, catering, transportation, and things along that line. While their total sales aren't growing at the same rate that some companies' sales are going, some of their businesses are growing quite a bit. I'm certain that at some point in the future, if I decided I liked the company, I'd be given the advantage of these vacant slots. But there aren't a lot of MBAs in the company and so they look upon this institution as, you know, one of those Ivy League schools which turns out arrogant people. It demands exorbitant salaries for people who don't like to get their hands dirty. Some of it's true. They do hire MBAs, though; in fact what they call an internal audit staff is composed of 26 people evenly divided between career people and MBAs—young guys like myself who come in and go out and see all the businesses and give them a lot of ideas and yet rely on experience that the older guys have. So there is a constant turnover and the average guy maybe takes three years before he goes into a line job. The best guy probably gets out in about 18 months. Now I would consider myself as good as the rest of the competition. I could get out some of the mundane tasks within two years. That doesn't bother me. I think I could learn an awful lot about their business and a lot about just going in and evaluating businesses.

Helen: Now you see, my impression all along has been that that was the part of the offer that you found most unpalatable. I have been thinking all along that you would just be

unhappy for the first 18 months and wouldn't like what you were doing. (*Directed to Doug.*) I don't want to ask him to do that.

Jim: Well, if I was with Davidson, my dues-paying period would be shorter, probably about six months. As long as I was learning, that Browning deal wouldn't bother me at all. There is travel involved in the Browning job which would involve a month or two months in one location, where I'd be by myself. That's a little bit of a headache. On the other hand, I don't mind personally at this point in my life traveling around. I think the MBA program really prepares one to adjust to situations like that very rapidly.

We're still not addressing the problem that we as a couple, as a married couple, face. We've avoided the issue very conveniently in the past—realizing that what Helen wants to do and what is best for her growth and what is best for me might not be in the same place. We don't have any children, so that's not a factor, and we don't have aspirations of starting a family now. I still suspect that in a couple of years from now, at most, when I do well, I will be offered an opportunity and it probably won't be in San Francisco. It will probably be somewhere else. It could be in Denver, could be Boston, could be anywhere. Someone will come to me or I will go to them and say, "Hey, I want to get my teeth into a little bigger responsibility," and there will be an offer made. We have no idea what Helen will be into at that point.

Helen: And that's a problem. I don't know how to find answers short of trying a bunch of things, but I have to be in an environment where the possibilities are open so I can try them.

Jim: I realize that it would be unfair for me to expect Helen just to pack up and move wherever the company says they want to send me.

Helen: That's what we call the tag-along syndrome.

Jim: Well, we have been married six years and Helen has had to move along wherever I have gone up until now. I guess there was some hesitancy in the past. You didn't really want to come to Boston because you liked San Francisco. You even applied to Stanford, and in fact I didn't apply to Stanford, even though it probably would have been the easy way out. I probably could have found it a bit easier to get a job on the West Coast when I graduated had I been there. Harvard was unquestionably the best opportunity for me as far as graduate education, and it was really Helen who pushed me toward it.

Helen: That's what I've done all along, encouraged Jim to go after the *best* opportunity available.

Jim: And yet, up to now I haven't pushed her into anything. That is the basic difference in our personalities.

Helen: It's a big difference. It's just the whole way I was raised. I wasn't taught to think. I was always pushed—told I would do this and I would do that. I would go to college. It didn't matter where I went. Nothing mattered but that after a certain number of years the sheepskin. My parents expected that I would then get married and be a housewife just like my mother, and I didn't really quite question that or start thinking about it until the last few years. Now I'm really in a fix because I don't know what to do or how to go about finding out what I'm good at.

Jim: Well, there are two problems in that regard. The first being that I don't have that much confidence in my ability to be objective and to help Helen find out what she wants to do. I certainly don't have any training or experience. By nature, I just don't like to impose my standards or my ideals consciously on someone else, and my perception is that's what I'd be doing if I tried to suggest what Helen should do and. . . .

Helen: And I don't quite see it the same way.

Jim: In fact you see it very differently.

Helen: In fact, I would like to think that Jim would say, you know, well here's the way I see you, here's what I think you are good at, why not check out these possibilities. I want to hear something from him. I want some advice.

Jim: Based on our conversation the other day, I suspect you would also like a little bit of firmness from me, like saying, "Hey, get off your ass and go do this."

Helen: That wouldn't hurt. But that's not what I need. I know full well that nobody can make any decisions for me; I just feel that I'm not aware enough of what sorts of jobs are out there. It sounds incredibly naive, but I don't feel that I have the knowledge of what sorts of positions I could go after and I want some help in trying to find out what they are.

Jim: And since I don't go ahead and fulfill the expectations that she has for help, she looks upon me as being unconcerned, or less concerned, which isn't true.

Helen: Well yes, but you see that's the biggest difference between Jim and me. He's an extremely analytical person and I operate intuitively, almost exclusively. So you can see how he's trying at this level and I'm at another level—and it gets in the way.

Jim: In the past when I have tried to explain things to Helen, it has become very frustrating for me because on my terms she won't understand it. If I can be aware that I should relate to her on her level then perhaps I can be persuasive, but that takes

- a lot of awareness and a lot of energy as well.
- Helen: See, because I am such an intuitive person, I am greatly affected by my environment. If I'm not going to feel happy there, I'm not going to be happy there. I'm not going to feel comfortable or at ease. I'm not going to like it. I mean that's the only way to say it.
- Jim: Why, Helen?
- Helen: Well, you know when one is talking about intuitive feelings it is very difficult to say why I am not going to like it.
- Jim: Since we both make decisions at a very different level, one of the things we know that happens between us is that Helen often has a tendency to overreact or to imagine bad situations as being worse than they really turn out to be, and I on the other hand tend to underestimate the badness. Many times unconsciously and unknowingly we can both make totally different assumptions in a situation. I'm trying to think of a good example that has happened recently. Well, we made a different assumption the other day and we both got upset and started arguing and there was no cause for that.
- Helen: We had a conversation and I came away perfectly satisfied that I knew what was supposed to take place. Jim came away satisfied that he knew exactly what was going to take place, but we were thinking different things.
- Jim: So in the case of this job decision I made a lot of assumptions about Helen that are just very far off base compared to her assumptions, especially with respect to this job search for her and this uncertainty she has about what she might be doing. So I guess Helen doesn't want to feel that her needs are being imposed on me by saying, "Well, we have to go to San Francisco because that's where I can do my thing." She doesn't want to feel guilty or responsible if I take a job that I don't consider to be the best job for me just to make her happy. Yet I don't want to say, "Hey, Helen, you have to go to St. Joseph, Missouri, and live there for a while," because that would be forcing my structure on her.
- So I guess there's another option. She can go to San Francisco, and I can go to St. Joseph, Missouri, which probably creates more problems in the long run than it would solve. Although we certainly have an element of independence. Last summer I spent three months on the West Coast and she stayed here most of the time because that was the best job opportunity. Now I could have stayed here and had a job that I didn't enjoy. After spending nine months at HBS doing work I didn't enjoy I wasn't about to do that. She really couldn't have quit her job because part of the condition of her employment was that she would stay here during the summer.
- Helen: Well, I accepted that job and I felt I didn't want to give it up for what was in my mind a ridiculous reason. I have a sense of responsibility about wherever I work even though it might not be the most glamorous job in the world. It was my choice to stay at work.
- Jim: In that case, it was a simple decision for both of us. While I was in the Navy I was always away, so it was not a new experience to be separated. Living under the same roof 365 days a year tends to make one nonobjective at times. We all need a rest and a change of pace.
- The way we come out is we don't mind sacrificing for the other person, but if you're in that other person's role the knowledge that the other one is giving up something just for you is just not acceptable. That's why if we had another job offer. . . .
- Helen: Well, we don't, so that's not another possibility—two jobs or none.
- Jim: Well, we can just pack up and start driving around and I can extend my job search for a while longer. *(He pauses and stares at the floor, and then lifts his head suddenly.)* The other thing that is frustrating from my point of view is that I haven't fully thought this out and it's sort of catching up to me. The circumstances are sort of forcing me to think about it. Yet to compare all our awareness of this dilemma we're in now versus what it was two months ago—is just a totally different situation. We've really sort of been complacent, I guess for too long. We can't undo that, of course, so we won't sit here and be anxious about it, but . . .
- Helen: I have no doubt that I will eventually find some work which is meaningful to me and satisfying to me and that's not my real problem. My real problem. . . . Six months ago if anyone had said, "What are you going to do in June?" my answer would have been, "Well, we'll go where Jim gets a job." But I took an Interpersonal Behavior course this spring and I began to really think about me and Jim, and now I don't like the implications of simply following Jim around. But now we get down to what's more important. . . . Is it more important for me to be Jim's wife or for me to be an employed member of the work force? Since I'm only just beginning to think about the implications of both, I don't know which direction I am going in. *(Long pause.)* Work is not so important to me that I would do that at the risk of our relationship, however. . . . *(Long pause.)*