CM310-Communication and Conflict
Unit 7: Case Study: Power
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"Eye to Eye"

It was early Saturday morning. The bright sun was shining into the kitchen window. Enrique and Monica, a recently married young couple, sat at the table, sipping coffee, chatting about the day ahead, what they would do during the day, where they might go in the evening. Monica chirped in, saying, "I have a real craving for pizza tonight. Or maybe we could go to the movies. Or maybe both! It's been so long since we've been out together."

"Let's see how the day goes first, ok?" Enrique replied. "I'm not sure, but we'll figure something out." He looked at Monica, then away, gazing into space.

"Well, alright," Monica said, "but let's really think about what we'll do tonight. I'd love to spend time with my new husband!"

There was a brief silence, when Monica quietly said, "There's so much to do around the house—you know, all the laundry that's been piling up over the last two weeks, cleaning the bathroom, vacuuming the house—all that stuff." Hoping for a response, she waited. "I wonder what he's thinking," she said to herself. She remembered her own mother and father's 'discussions" about housework and how they would always just jump into battle and 'bite each other's head off.' The shouting would continue, both trying to outdo the other. Her father would yell, saying, "I don't see why I need to help you around the house; I work all day and I'm tired. I just want to relax on the weekend! " Then, her mother would eventually give in, doing the housework herself.

Not getting a response from Enrique, Monica decided to change the subject altogether. "How's work?" she asked.

"Oh, you know, same thing, different day," he responded.

"You're up for a promotion, though, right?" she inquired.

"Uh huh. For a supervisor, Mr. Kelly's not too bad. I mean, we all like him, even though he's the boss. I just wish I had some pull, but there are so many other people who are after the same job. Just makes me feel like I don't have any say in the matter, you know?"

Wanting to be helpful and encouraging, Monica said, "I know how much you want that position and we certainly could use the money. How about we work on cleaning the house a little together, then we can go have a pizza? Will help you forget about the job for awhile."

"Forget about the job!" Enrique shrieked. "How am I supposed to do that? You know how important it is to me." Monica quietly got up from her chair, walked to the sink and silently began doing the dishes left over from the night before.

Enrique slowly rose from his chair and moved to Monica, put his arms around her, and whispered, "I'm sorry, honey. I guess we just see the promotion differently, right? I mean, when you say things like I should forget about it, I just go crazy."

"I didn't say you should forget it, Enrique. I said, let's do something else for awhile to take your mind off the job, like clean the house, then go out." After a slight pause, Monica turned around, faced Enrique, and resolutely said, "I wish you would listen to what I'm saying."

As Enrique backed away slowly, he could feel his blood pressure rise. He knew he was locked into a no-win situation—whatever he said or did now would definitely be bad. Monica had a temper—he'd seen it before. "Why does she always say I'm not listening?" he said to himself. "What's wrong

with her—doesn't she see how much I'm trying, how hard I'm working?" He believed he and Monica had clear picture of one another.

Enrique regained his composure, then said, "Ok, ok. I'll go see Jack for a while, while you clean the house. I'll come back later to pick you up for pizza, and who knows, maybe a movie."

"You mean you aren't going to help me around the house?" Monica demanded to know. Now, her blood pressure began to rise. "How am I supposed to do all the work around the house? I work too, you know! You're not the only one who's tired by the time Friday comes! Who says I have to do everything while you go see your friend?"

By this point, both Enrique and Monica were seething, facing off in a battle, each needing to win. Monica saw a cold unsympathetic husband she thought she knew, and Enrique saw a manipulative uncaring wife he thought he married.

"Fine," he said. "I'm going to Jack's house. I'll call you later."

As Monica watched him leave, she walked slowly to the kitchen table and sat down. She could not help but think of her parents and if she and her husband would end up that way