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Do Women and Men See Unfairness Differently?

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Janice Elaine Butler

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PERCEPTIONS OF INEQUITY IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS: DO WOMEN AND MEN SEE UNFAIRNESS DIFFERENTLY?

By

Janice Elaine Butler

A THESIS

Submitted to
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ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS OF INEQUITY IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS: DO WOMEN AND MEN SEE UNFAIRNESS DIFFERENTLY?

By

Janice Elaine Butler

Previous research on equity has looked at the effects of being overbenefited versus underbenefited on general populations. This study seeks to determine whether men and women will perceive the same inequitable situation differently, whether they experience different amounts of distress as a result of perceived inequity, if the direction of the inequity (underbenefited vs. overbenefited) affects the amount of distress felt, and whether men and women will use different strategies to restore equity.

Subjects were asked to report their perceptions of an inequitable interpersonal situation. They were then asked to identify any potential strategies they would use to restore equity in the given situations.

Two significant findings were discovered. The first indicates that women are more distressed than men when they are the underbenefited partner. The second main effect indicates that subjects are much more likely to experience distress under the condition of underbenefited inequity.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my father, Dale A. Butler. He has always been there to witness my successess and console me when I have failed. His love and support have, in many ways, made me the woman I am today and this thesis would not have been possible without his help and encouragement. I have learned more important lessons from my father than any teacher or professor. Thank you, Dad. I love you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I.   INTRODUCTION

Over the years since I began dating, I have had a number of conversations with friends about romantic relationships. Many times the discussions were about the magic of being in love. Often the conversations revolved around pain and heartache. Usually something in the situation "just isn't fair!" Whatever the specific topic, those conversations always seemed critical at the time. Any time, any place, under any circumstances, love is important!   Kelley (1979, p. 2) said, "In its various manifestations in dating, marriage, cohabition, and romantic liasons, the heterosexual dyad is probably the single most important type of relationship in the life of the individual and in the history of society. It occasions the greatest satisfactions of life and also the greatest disappointments."

As an extension of Kelley's statement, I have observed that when relationships are equitable among romantic partners, they seem to be most satisfying. On the other hand, is seems that when relationships are inequitable, they can be greatly disappointing. Hence, the most vehement discussions I have had with my friends seem to have occurred when the romantic relationship was perceived as being unfair in some way.

These unscientific observations have led to a keen interest in how men and women perceive inequity in their relationships, how upset they become when they find themselves in inequitable relationships, if being the overbenefited or underbenefited partner affects how they react, and what they might do to restore their relationship to an equitable state. These questions led to the study

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that was conducted, and are discussed further in the sections to follow.

First, a review of literature relating to equity theory and sex differences will be presented. Following that are sections discussing research questions asked, methods used in the study, results, and discussion.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In reviewing the background information on how perceptions of inequity may differ between men and women, and how they might react to any differences found, the literature fell into two basic areas: equity theory, and sex differences. Each area will be covered separately in this literature review.

Equity Theory

In the article entitled New Directions in Equity Research, Walster, Berscheid, and Walster (1973) elucidate and expand the work of Adams (1965), Blau (1967), and Homans (1961), which were earlier writings dealing with equity theory. The basic tenets of this article were later expanded further into a book entitled Equity: Theory and Research (Walster, Walster, and Berscheid, 1978a). The majority of subsequent research is based on their writings. Therefore, a detailed discussion of their work follows.

Equity theory, according to Walster, et al. (1973, 1978a, p. 6), is comprised of four basic propositions. These are:

Proposition I: Individuals will try to maximize their outcomes (where outcomes equal rewards minus costs).

Proposition IIA: Groups can maximize collective reward by evolving accepted systems for equitably apportioning resources among members. Thus, groups will evolve such systems of equity and will attempt to induce members to accept and adhere to these systems.

Proposition IIB: Groups will generally reward members who treat others equitably, and generally punish (increase the costs for) members who treat others inequitably.

Proposition III: When individuals find themselves participating in inequitable relationships, they will become distressed. The more inequitable the relationship, the more distress individuals will feel.

Proposition IV: Individuals who discover they are in an inequitable relationship will attempt to eliminate their distress by restoring equity. The greater the inequity that exists, the more distress they will feel, and the harder they will try to restore equity.

The first proposition, stating that individuals will try to maximize their outcomes, is based on the assumption that people tend to be selfish (Walster, et al., 1978a, p. 7).

Proposition IIA, which states that groups maximize collective rewards by evolving systems for equitable apportioning of resources, is supported by Walster, et al. (1978a, p. 8) in their discussion of people as being social creatures who are all anxious to gain the good things in life. An example is given that states if any one person were allowed to pursue individual gains completely unchecked, others would band together to take back resources.

Proposition IIB asserts that groups will generally reward members who treat others equitably, and generally punish members who treat others inequitably. Walster, et al. (1978a, p. 9) argue

that in order for a group to effectively influence individuals to behave in an equitable way, they must make it more profitable for them to behave equitably than inequitably.

Walster, et al. (1978a) do acknowledge that though all societies create a system for the equitable distribution of resources, there will be differences between societies in terms of what is considered to be equitable.

Even though different societies develop diverse standards for distributing resources, general principles and a formula for defining an equitable relationship were proposed by Walster, et al. (1973, p. 152) and extended by Walster, et al. (1978a, p. 10). Following is the formula used to calculate whether or not a relationship is equitable (Walster, et al., 1973, p. 152) :

$$\frac{O_A - I_A}{(I_A)} = \frac{O_B - I_B}{(I_B)}$$

where outcomes (O_A or O_B) are defined as "'the positive *and* negative consequences that a scrutineer perceives a participant has received in the course of his relationship with another'. The participants outcomes, then, are equal to the *rewards* he obtains from the relationship minus the *costs* that he incurs" (Walster, et al., 1978a, p. 12). The net gain for each participant is calculated by subtracting their inputs from their outcomes (Person A's net gain is $O_A - I_A$; Person B's net gain is $O_B - I_B$). So, a person will be overbenefited in a relationship when their outcomes are greater than their inputs (Walster, et al., 1978a). Similarly, a person will be underbenefited in a relationship when their outcomes are less than their inputs.

The above formula is based on two fundamental principles: 1) the nature of the person; and 2) the nature of the situation. The first principle states that the more a person contributes to the relationship, the more s/he should profit from it; the second principle looks at relationships under varying circumstances -- namely when "times are good", when "times are so-so" and when "times are hard" (Walster, et al., 1978a, p. 13). These situations are clarified as follows:

1. *Times are good:* If person A is reaping a profit from a relationship, it seems only fair that his partner should reap some profit, too. (Of course, the participants may deserve very different amounts of profit.) For example, in good times, if Person A, who has contributed slightly positive Input, reaps a huge reward, his partner, who has contributed a large negative Input, should reap only the most minimal of profits.

2. *Times are so-so:* Each person should get out of the relationship just about what he puts into it. Neither partner should reap a profit nor suffer a loss.

3. *Times are hard:* If one person is suffering a loss from the relationship, it seems only fair that his partner should suffer some loss, too. (Of course, participants may deserve very different amounts of loss.) For example, in hard times, if Person A, who has contributed a slightly positive Input, suffers a large loss, his partner, who has contributed a large negative Input, should suffer the most horrendous of losses.

Given the formula and general principles, who decides whether or not a relationship is equitable? In the end, equity is in the eye of the beholder. Each person's perception of how equitable a

relationship is will depend on how they assess the value and relevance of the various participants' inputs and outcomes. Partners, even after prolonged negotiation with one another, will not always agree completely on the value and relevance of various inputs and outcomes. If each partner does calculate inputs and outcomes differently--and it is likely that they will--it is inevitable that they will differ in their perceptions of whether or not a given relationship is equitable (Walster, et al., 1973, p. 152)

Proposition III states that when individuals find themselves participating in inequitable relationships, they will become distressed. It further states that the more inequitable the relationship, the more distress individuals will feel (Walster, et al., 1973). In support of the contention that individuals feel distress in inequitable relationships when they are the underbenefited party, experiments by Walster, et al. (1970), Leventhal, et al. (1969), Jacques (1961), and Thibaut (1950) are cited. Additionally, the works of Jacques (1961), Adams and Rosenbaum (1962), Adams (1963), and Leventhal, et al. (1969) are cited in support of the contention that individuals will feel distress when they are the overbenefited partner in a relationship.

The final proposition put forth by Walster, et al. states that when individuals discover that they are in an inequitable relationship they will attempt to eliminate their distress by restoring equity. The greater the inequity that exists, the more distress they will feel, and the harder they will try to restore equity (1973, 1978a). The authors contend that restoration of equity falls into

two categories: restoration of *actual* equity or restoration of *psychological* equity.

A person can restore *actual equity* by appropriately changing the inputs and/or outcomes of either themselves or their partner (Walster, et al., 1973, p. 154). For instance in a romantic relationship if one partner finds out the other is being sexually unfaithful, they could, theoretically, establish equity in four possible ways by: 1) lowering his/her own inputs (e.g., refusing sexual relations with the partner); 2) raise his/her own outcomes (e.g., also having an extramarital affair); 3) raise his/her partner's inputs (e.g., request/demand more frequent sexual relations from the partner); and 4) lowering partner's outcomes (e.g., confronting the partner and demanding that the extramarital affair end).

Psychological equity can be restored by distorting his/her perception of self or partner's outcomes and inputs (Walster, et al., 1973, p. 154). Using the same romantic relationship as an example, four possible ways of restoring psychological equity are given: 1) inputs can be minimized ("I don't please my partner sexually, so it is only fair that they find someone who does); 2) outcomes can be exaggerated ("my partner's affair takes the pressure off me sexually"); 3) partner's inputs can be exaggerated ("my partner satisfies me completely, in every way, and I am confortable with the current situation"); or 4) partner's outcomes can be minimized ("the guilt my partner is experiencing as a result of this infidelity is probably making him/her miserable") (Walster, et al., 1978a, pp. 18-19).

Walster, et al. (1973, 1978a) apply equity theory to four major areas of human communication: business relationships, exploitative relationships, helping relationships, and intimate relationships. For the purposes of this thesis, only the application to intimate relationships, and specifically romantic relationships, will be discussed.

While attempting to define intimacy, Walster, et al. (1978a, pp. 145-146) recognized that intimate relationships are extremely complex and different for every person. Even so, they conceptually define intimates as "loving persons whose lives are deeply entwined."

Citing a 1977 study done by Walster, Walster, and Traupmann that looked at the perceptions of inputs, outcomes, and equity/inequity of dating couples, the authors report that the more equitable a couple's relationship, the more content and happier they were (Walster, et al., 1978a). In addition, it was found that the partner who was receiving a great deal more than they deserved was uncomfortable with the situation. They reported feeling less content, less happy and much more guilty. Similarly, those who were receiving a great deal less than they deserve also felt less content, less happy, and much angrier (Walster, et al., 1978a, p. 178).

As stated earlier in Proposition III, when inequity is perceived attempts will be made to restore equity. In romantic relationships, actual equity may be restored in one of the following ways: 1) the partner who feels that s/he is contributing far more than his/her fair share to the relationship will be likely to set things right by

demanding better treatment from his/her partner; and 2) the partner who knows s/he is contributing less than his/her fair share, may reluctantly agree to provide the rewards that are requested (Walster, et al., 1978a, p. 180).

Psychological equity, on the other hand, may be achieved by the person closing their eyes to the problems and reassuring themselves that "really, everything is in perfect order" (Walster, et al., 1978a, p. 183).

The most extreme form of equity restoration in romantic relationships is termination of the relationship, also termed "leaving the field" (Walster, et al., 1978a, p. 184).

Though they concede that data is sparse, Walster, et al. (1978a, p. 184) state that equity theory provides a convenient standard for studying romantic relationships.

Perhaps in an attempt to rectify the scarcity of data in this area, two specific studies testing the propositions put forth by Walster, et al., were published in 1978. One, entitled Equity and Extramarital Sexuality, was conducted by Walster, Traupmann and Walster. The experiment tested the hypothesis that in inequitable relationships the underbenefited partner would be more likely to engage in extramarital sex than the overbenefited partner. The study found that, indeed, underbenefited men and women in inequitable relationships had more extramarital affairs and began their extramarital activities earlier than did overbenefited men and women in inequitable relationships (Walster, et al., 1978b). The second study, entitled Equity and Premarital Sex, was conducted by Walster, Walster and Traupmann. The experiment proposed that "if

people feel they are getting less from a relationship than they deserve, they feel entitled to 'call the shots' sexually" (Walster, et al., 1978c, p. 82). Subjects completed a questionnaire that included the Walster, et al. (1977) Global Measures of Participants' Inputs, Outcomes, and Equity/Inequity and the Austin Measure of Contentment/Distress. Though they did find support for the proposition that when individuals find themselves in inequitable relationships they feel distress, the hypotheses were not confirmed.

In an article discussing alternative approaches to equity, Van Avermaet, McClintock, and Moskowitz (1978) extend the ideas of Adams (1965) and Walster, et al. (1973, 1976) (Van Avermaet, et al., 1978, p. 422).

Ueleke, Miller, Giesen, and Miles (1983), in a study hypothesizing that in response to hypothetical situations in which marital inequity existed, subjects would respond with allocations of inputs/outcomes designed to restore equity (p. 5), results were consistent with their predictions. They found that when subjects were presented with descriptions of marital relationships where inequity existed, the individuals would compensate for the inequity. Specific ways that individuals would compensate their partner for the inequity were not measured, however. Responses were coded as either "equity resolving" or "non-equity resolving" (Ueleke, et al., 1983, p. 6).

In a longitudinal study conducted by Van Yperen and Buunk, the proposition that inequity is more likely to lead to dissatisfaction in intimate relationships, as opposed to dissatisfaction leading to inequity, was tested (1990). In presenting their findings, they state

that there was "some evidence that the association between the perception of equity and relationship satisfaction might be interpreted, albeit cautiously, as a cause and effect relationship. Among women, the perception of equity appears to be a better predictor of relationship satisfaction one year later than satisfaction is a predictor of equity one year later. Inequity thus seems to produce dissatisfaction with the relationship and not *vice versa*" (Van Yperen and Buunk, 1990, p. 303). Van Yperen and Buunk conclude that the results of this study point to the use of equity theory in predicting satisfaction in intimate relationships as being valid (1990).

Two studies by Sprecher (1986, 1992), dealing with inequity in close relationships, in some ways resemble the present study. The 1986 study tested the hypotheses that perceived inequity (whether the partner is overbenefited or underbenefited) is positively associated with negative affect and negatively associated with positive affect. Secondly, it was hypothesized that underbenefiting inequity will be related to the positive and negative affect experienced in the relationship to a greater degree than overbenefiting inequity (Sprecher, 1986, p. 311). Sprecher reports both hypotheses being supported. Most interestingly, she reports that the underbenefiting situation creates stronger emotions in both men and women than in the overbenefiting situation.

The 1992 study proposed the following hypotheses: 1) people will expect to experience distress in response to an inequity occurring in their close relationship; 2) people will be more distressed in response to underbenefiting inequity; 3) people will

report being more likely to behave so as to restore equity than to do nothing in response to inequity; 4) the more distress a person feels the more likely they will be to engage in equity-restoring actions; and 5) females will be more likely than males to expect to respond to inequity by attempting to restore equity (Sprecher, 1992). She reported support for the hypotheses that subjects expected to become distressed when they were the underbenefited partner, and that individuals will expect to restore equity to an inequitable relationship. She did not, however, find support for the hypothesis regarding gender differences in expectations about emotional reactions to underbenefiting and overbenefiting inequity. She states: "contrary to the prediction, women expected to become significantly more distressed than men in response to underbenefiting inequity. There was no gender difference on the distress index for overbenefiting inequity" (Sprecher, 1992, p. 62).

So, for the purposes of the present study, the two most important propositions put forth by Walster, et al. (1973, 1978a) are: Proposition III, which states that inequitable relationships will cause distress and that the more inequitable the relationship, the more distress an individual will feel; and Proposition IV which says that individuals who discover that they are in an inequitable relationship will attempt to eliminate their distress by restoring equity -- the greater the inequity that exists, the more distress they will feel, and the harder they will try to restore equity.

Also pertinent to this study is the concept that the net gain for each participant is calculated by subtracting their inputs from their outcomes. So, a person who is overbenefited is receiving outcomes

greater than their inputs, and a person who is underbenefited is receiving outcomes that are less than their inputs. However, in the final analysis, what is equitable in a relationship is defined by each person individually, based on their perception of the value and relevance of the various inputs and outcomes.

After reading the literature, and relevant research, regarding equity theory, I began to wonder how individuals developed their definitions of what is equitable. When I thought about the conversations I have had with my friends, and the conversations between men that I have overheard, I began to wonder if there are some fundamental differences between men and women that cause them, in a broad sense, to perceive inequity differently. This led to a review of literature on human sex differences, which will be discussed in the next section.

Sex Differences

As would be expected, much of the literature concerning differences between men and women deals with the obvious biological and physiological differences. Though there are myriad books and articles on the subject, for a comprehensive discussion see the text entitled <u>A world of difference: Gender roles in perspective</u> by E.R. Greenglass.

Also common in sex differences literature are the early upbringing and socialization differences between male and female children, commonly termed the "nature versus nurture" debate. This work is discussed at length in texts by Stewart, Stewart, Friedley, and Cooper (1990), Doyle and Paludi (1991), Ivy and Backlund (1994), and Wood (1994).

While biological/physiological and socialization differences are certainly important building blocks in the varying ways men and women respond to the world around them, more germane to this particular work are differences in perceptions and ways of communicating for men and women. This area of research will be discussed more fully in the following pages.

In the text entitled <u>Sex differences in human communication</u> (Eakins and Eakins, 1978), four major ways that sex differences account for differences in communication are discussed. Paraphrasing the authors, these are:

1. *Cultural elaboration.* A number of sex differences may be due to cultural elaboration of gender. Because of the relative sameness of males and females, human beings have gradually developed an elaborate system of gender display. They have worked out certain rituals and patterns of verbal and nonverbal behavior that belong distinctively to and mark each sex. An added facet of the cultural-elaboration explanation is the argument that females and males are socialized to different stereotyped personality patterns in our society. Females are supposedly brought up to be passive, docile, self-effacing, and self-deprecating. Their verbal and nonverbal gestures follow from a personality patterned, elaborated, and embellished by society. In the same way, males are socialized to another pattern, and therefore their communication follows from that personality.

2. *Division of labor by sex.* Our society relegates certain work, activities, responsibilities, and privileges to people on the basis of sex. Even with women's recent political and economic progress and the new attitudinal climates encouraged by the women's movement, the belief persists that

childcare and home-related tasks are solely "woman's work." There are, of course, some specialized duties around the house (car repair, outside home maintenance, and carpentry tasks) relegated to males. These specializations according to sex probably carry over into many aspects of communication.

3. *Male dominance.* Another possible explanation for sex differences in communication involves what some refer to as the factor of male control. According to this theory, communication takes place in the cultural context of male dominance–dominance that is built into the familial, economic, political, religious, and legal structures of society. This power structure and the relationship of superior to subordinate can be seen in our communication as well. Patterns of nonverbal communication such as touching, smiling, and staring, as well as verbal mechanisms including use of expletitives, forms of address, explanation, commands, and requests, all supposedly function to reflect, establish, or maintain power relationships.

4. *Differing value systems.* Individuals' value systems may differ according to sex. Two value systems are generally believed to exist in American society. One, the dominant orientation, is supposedly appropriate for those of higher rank, such as American males. This system is characterized by an emphasis on individual achievement, independence, external evaluation, instrumental behavior to overcome obstacles, and future time orientation. The other is an alternate, or variant, system said to be the perspective of females and other persons of lower status. This system stresses group identity, the importance of existence and self-realization, harmony with the world, and a present time orientation. These differing systems may account for behavior differences between the sexes. Males have been shown to be more aggressive and domineering, to view the world as a

hostile environment from which one must forcibly grasp success and reward. Females supposedly have a more social orientation. They are concerned with developing their interpersonal skills, are more people-oriented, and are more concerned with harmonious interpersonal relations. They manifest greater dependency and emphasize caring for and relating to others (Eakins and Eakins, 1978).

The authors continue the discussion in terms of how these differing orientations may manifest themselves in ways that men and women relate to one another. The point is made that males generally initiate activity, are usually deferred to, put their own interests first, and act directly to further their interests. Women, on the other hand, keep themselves responsive to the male, sensitive to his needs, tend to put their own interests second, and gain their own ends in an indirect way (Eakins and Eakins, 1978).

Rubin, Peplau, and Hill (1981) proposed that in romantic relationships men tend to fall in love more readily than women. They also proposed that women tend to fall out of love more readily than men. They found that women tend to be less likely to be swept off their feet into a love relationship, are more likely to perceive the problems in a relationship and terminate it if necessary, are better able to get over their feelings of loss when a relationship ends, and when rejected are better able to accomplish the transition from love to friendship (Rubin, et al., 1981). As stated by the authors, the data indicates that "women were less 'romantic' than men, more cautious about entering into romantic relationships, more sensitive to the problems of their relationships, more likely to compare their relationships to alternatives, more likely to end a relationship that

seemed ill fated, and better able to cope with the rejection" (Rubin, et al., 1981, p. 833).

In her book entitled You Just Don't Understand, Dr. Deborah Tannen discusses different approaches men and women take in "engaging the world" (1990). She states that men engage the world "as an individual in a hierarchical social order in which he is either one-up or one-down. In this world, conversations are negotiations in which people try to achieve and maintain the upper hand if they can, and protect themselves from others' attempts to put them down and push them around. Life, then, is a contest, a struggle to preserve independence and avoid failure" (pp. 24-25) Women, on the other hand, approach the world "as an individual in a network of connections. In this world, conversations are negotiations for closeness in which people try to seek and give confirmation and support, and to reach consensus. They try to protect themselves from others' attempts to push them away. Life, then, is a community, a struggle to preserve intimacy and avoid isolation. Though there are hierarchies in this world too, they are hierarchies more of friendship than of power and accomplishment" (Tannen, 1990, p. 25).

Dr. Tannen makes the case that because women speak and hear a language of connection and intimacy, while the language men speak and hear is of status and independence, communication between the sexes can be considered cross-cultural -- instead of different dialects they can be said to speak different genderlects (1990). These differentiations are apparent from very early ages. For instance, boys usually play outside, in large groups that are

hierarchically structured, at games having distinct winners and losers. Girls, though, play in small groups or in pairs often at games that do not have winners or losers. The center of a girl's social life is her best friend, as opposed to a group of friends (Tannen, 1990).

Essentially, what I found is that men and women do communicate very differently. From the four major ways sex differences account for differences in communication put forth by Eakins and Eakins (1978), to Dr. Tannen's work on genderlects, the previous research seemed to indicate that men and women would perceive inequity differently

III.   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As noted previously in the literature review, Walster et al., (1973, 1978a) argue that humans strive for equity in their romantic relationships but due to the extremely individualistic perceptions of what is equitable, inequity will occur. Equity, as discussed earlier, occurs when outcomes are proportional to inputs. Outcomes are consequences received by partners and may be positive (rewards) or negative (costs). Inputs are contributions to the relationship that partners believe should be rewarded. Inequity, then, occurs when outcomes are disproportionate to inputs. Individual perceptions, especially in terms of equity/inequity, are assessed by each individual based on the value and relevance of various inputs/outcomes. Therefore, relational partners may (and probably will) differ in their ideas of what is equitable.

Given the extent of work done in the area of equity theory, it would seem that a clear idea of how men and women differ in their perceptions of equity would be established. However, the empirical studies reviewed did not differentiate between men and women. In the area of sex differences, the idea put forth by Eakins and Eakins (1978) regarding male dominance -- that communication takes place in the cultural context of male dominance in familial, economic, political, religious, and legal structures -- would suggest that men and women would differ in their perceptions of what is, and is not, equitable. Given that the issue has not been empirically tested in the area of either equity theory or sex differences, the following research question is asked:

> <u>Research Question 1</u>: Given identical scenarios, do men and women differ in their perceptions of how inequitable the situation is?

Previous research has discussed the effects of inequity on relationships, and specifically that inequity will cause distress, whether the individual is overbenefited, or underbenefited. Further, it is stated that the more inequity is perceived, the more distress will be felt. Distress, for the purpose of this work, is conceptually defined as "mental or physical strain imposed by pain, trouble, worry, or the like" (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1974). A person who is *overbenefited* in a relationship has rewards which outweigh inputs. An *underbenefited* person in a relationship is the person whose inputs outweigh the rewards they receive.

Much research supports the contention that individuals will feel distress when they are in an inequitable relationship and the amount of distress felt is determined by the amount of the inequity perceived (Walster et al., 1970; Leventhal et al., 1969; Jacques, 1961; Thibaut, 1950; Adams and Rosenbaum, 1962; and Adams, 1963; Walster, et al., 1978; and Sprecher, 1986, 1992). Interestingly, a potential explanation for the possibility that men and women do differ is offered by Sprecher (1992): "because men traditionally have had more powerful positions within the larger hierarchical social structure, they may not become as distressed (i.e., guilty) as women in response to receiving an unfair exchange advantage, but may experience more distress (i.e., anger) in response to receiving an unfair disadvantage" (p. 58). This contention would seem to be supported by work done in the area of sex differences. Dr. Tannen's discussion of men operating in a constant hierarchical struggle, while women operate by creating networks and connecting with others (1990) seems to support the idea that men would be more competitive in their desire to have equitable rewards. Women, on the other hand, might be expected to willingly concede more often to create connection and intimacy. Based on this argument, it would also be expected that men would be much more distressed when they are the underbenefited partner in a romantic relationship. Women would be expected to be more distressed when they are the overbenefited partner. However, given that the issue of whether men and women react differently with regard to the amount of distress felt has not been empirically tested

in the area of either equity theory or sex differences, the following research questions are asked:

> **Research Question 2:** When inequity is perceived, do men and women differ in the amount of distress that they experience?

> **Research Question 3:** Does the direction of the inequity (overbenefited vs. underbenefited) differently affect the amount of distress felt by men and women?

Finally, it has been suggested that when inequity is perceived, and distress is felt, attempts will be made to restore equity. A study done by Ueleke, et al. (1983) indicated that in response to situations where inequity existed, subjects reported that they would attempt to compensate for the inequity. However, this study did not measure the specific action(s) a subject might take in order to rectify the inequitable situation, but rather simply reported whether they would or would not compensate. Sprecher (1992) also found that subjects reported being more likely to restore equity rather than do nothing. Sex differences literature would seem to suggest that because men and women engage the world in different ways (Tannen, 1990) they would be likely to use different strategies to restore equity. The combination of empirical studies in equity theory and the discussions of sex differences would indicate that men and women would use different strategies. However, since no empirical study found has specifically looked at this issue, the following research question is asked:

<u>Research Question 4</u>: Do men and women use different communication strategies when attempting to restore equity in inequitable situations?

In general the literature addresses, separately, equity theory and its affect on human subjects, as well as differences between men and women. However, the issue of sex differences in perceptions of equity, amount of distress felt, whether being overbenefited or underbenefited affects the amount of distress felt, or whether men and women would use different strategies to restore equity has not been empirically studied. Therefore, these research questions are asked in order to explore the issue more fully.

IV. METHOD

Pretesting of Stimulus Situations

Prior to full data collection, a pretest was conducted in order to examine different types of hypothetical situations created to depict inequity. The situations were generated by the author based on previous work in equity theory which also used hypothetical situations (Ueleke, et al., 1983, Sprecher, 1992). Sixty subjects (who were not participants in the full study) were asked to read and rate one of three interpersonal situations: overbenefited, underbenefited, or equitable. The situations contained the same relational situations and information, the only change being the manipulation of the direction of equity/inequity. The intent was to confirm through a manipulation check that subjects saw a difference in terms of what is equitable and what is inequitable. The

pretest situations are attached as Appendix A. Subjects were equally distributed across the three situations (20 respondents for each situation). Analysis of pretest data confirmed that there was a significant difference between the equitable situation and the two inequitable situations. Standard score coefficient alpha is .98. The mean for Group 1 (overbenefited) is 7.9; the mean for Group 2 (equitable) is 23.5; and the mean for Group 3 (underbenefited) is 10.4.

Main Study

Procedure

Participants were 138 female and 77 male college undergraduates taking courses in the Department of Communication at Michigan State University. Subject age ranged from 18 to 43 (M=21.9, SD=3.2) All subjects voluntarily participated in the experiment.

Subjects in the main study were presented with one of the two inequitable (overbenefited or underbenefited) questionnaires described above. Distribution of the questionnaire was random. Prior to reading the situation and completing the questionnaire, subjects were instructed to put themselves in the position of the partner in the relationship when reading the situation, even if they felt that it was not typical of their own romantic relationships. Subjects were then left to complete the questionnaire at their own pace. Subjects in the study were evenly split across equity type (N=107 for the underbenefited situation; N=108 in the overbenefited situation). Sixty-four percent of the subjects were female (N=138), and 36% were male (N=77).

Questionnaire Format

The instrument used in the full study began with one of the two hypothetical situations depicting an inequitable romantic relationship (either overbenefited or underbenefited) that were previously tested. Each situation dealt with the same four relational issues: commitment, spending time together, emotional support, and physical affection. The situations differed only in the viewpoint that was to be taken by the subject. In the overbenefited situation the subject was asked to imagine themselves as receiving much greater rewards than their partner. This was reversed for the underbenefited situation--the subject was asked to imagine themselves as giving a great deal to their partner. The subject was then asked to complete semantic differential and Likert-type items measuring both perceived inequity and distress, and an open-ended question asking the subject what (if anything) they would do and/or say to resolve any unfairness they perceived in the situation. Lastly, the subject was asked for demographic information that included sex, age, and race (see Appendix B for the full text of the overbenefited questionnaire and Appendix C for the full text of the underbenefited questionnaire).

Independent Measures

The principle independent measures in this study were respondent sex and equity type (underbenefited or overbenefited). As mentioned previously, respondent sex was manipulated by subjects reported sex in the demographic portion of the questionnaire. Equity type was manipulated, as mentioned

previously, by presenting subjects with one of two hypothetical situations that had been constructed by the author.

Dependent Measures

The principle dependent measures in this study were perceived inequity, distress, and strategy type reported for reconciling inequity. Perceived inequity was measured using semantic differential questions, with answers ranging from one to seven, one being inequitable and seven being equitable (see Appendix D for specific items). Based on confirmatory factor analysis, this scale proved to be unidimensional with a high reliability. The standard score coefficient alpha for the perceived inequity items is .909. Distress was measured using six of the seven initial Likert-type questions, with responses ranging from one to seven on a "Completely Disagree" to "Completely Agree" scale (see Appendix D for specific items). Based on confirmatory factor analysis, this scale proved to be unidemensional with a high reliability. The standard score coefficient alpha for distress is .871. The open-ended question was coded separately to determine strategies used by individuals to restore equity. All responses were coded separately by two coders. The following seven strategies were identified: 1) Discussion (state feelings to partner and/or ask how they feel in order to get more information); 2) Terminate (end the relationship); 3) Compensate (acts that either give more to the partner or allow the partner to give less; 4) Apologize (tell partner sorry for what has happened); 5) Demand Compensation (specific statements commanding the partner to give more or notifying partner that they will give less); 6) Retaliate ("get even" with

partner); and 7) Justify (tell partner what happened is fair -- either self or partner deserved the outcome). Overall agreement between coders was 86%. Further analyses using Cohen's Kappa to remove any agreement due to chance showed .81 (Cohen, 1960).

Design

This study formed a 2x2 factorial design in which two levels of inequity (overbenefited/underbenefited) were fully crossed with two levels of sex (male/female) and there were three principle dependent measures.

V. RESULTS

Two significant main effects were found using a 2x2 analysis of variance (distress and perceived inequity by sex and equity type). The first significant, albeit small, main effect is for sex of subject on distress ($F = 4.920$; $df = 1$; $p < .01$), indicating that women are more distressed than men when they are the underbenefited partner. The second main effect is for equity type on distress ($F = 40.757$; $df = 1$; $p < .01$), which indicates that subjects are much more likely to experience distress under the condition of underbenefited inequity (see Table 1 for cell means). No other significant effects or interactions were found. Means for semantic differential items measuring perceived inequity (1-7 scale; 1 signifies inequitable end of scale) were as follows: Imbalanced/Balanced had a mean of 2.3; Unfair/Fair had a mean of 2.7; Unequal/Equal had a mean of 2.4; and Uneven/Even had a mean of 2.3; overall mean for measures of perceived inequity is 2.4. Means for items measuring distress (1-7

scale; 7=high distress) were: item one had a mean of 5.0, item two had a mean of 5.0, item three had a mean of 5.3, item four had a mean of 4.6, item five had a mean of 4.7, and item six had a mean of 4.6. Overall mean for items measuring distress was 4.9.

Table 1

Cell Means from ANOVA - Sex and Equity Type on Distress

	Underbenefited	Overbenefited
Women	5.6	4.4
Men	5.0	4.3

As illustrated in Table 1, women in the underbenefited situation report more distress than men in the same underbenefited situation. Also, both men and women report being more distressed when they are the underbenefited partner than when they are the overbenefited partner.

In terms of research question number one, which asked "Given identical scenarios, do men and women differ in their perceptions of how inequitable the situation is?," these findings suggest that men and women do not differ in their perceptions of inequity. Both men and women identified the same level of inequity across both situation types.

Research question number two asks "When inequity is perceived, do men and women differ in the amount of distress that

they experience?" and research question number three asks "Does the direction of the inequity (overbenefited versus underbenefited) differently affect the amount of distress felt by men and women?". The argument put forth when the research question was proposed contended that based on research by Sprecher (1992), men may not become as distressed (i.e., guilty) as women in response to receiving an unfair exchange advantage, but may experience more distress (i.e., anger) in response to receiving an unfair disadvantage (p. 58). This contention was supported by Dr. Tannen's discussion of men being more competitive in their desire to have equitable rewards, and women willingly conceding to create connection and intimacy. Additionally, it was argued that it would be expected that men would be much more distressed when they are the underbenefited partner in a romantic relationship. Women would be expected to be more distressed when they are the overbenefited partner. Quite the opposite was found, however. Findings in this study show that women were much more distressed than men when they were unfairly disadvantaged (underbenefited) than were men. Women were also slightly more distressed than men in the overbenefited situation, but not significantly.

The fourth research question asks "Do men and women use different communication strategies when attempting to restore equity in inequitable situations?" It was argued based on previous research by Ueleke, et al. (1983), and Sprecher (1992), that subjects would be more likely to attempt to restore equity than do nothing. It was also argued, based on sex differences literature, that men and women would be likely to use different strategies to

restore equity. Results in this area are very interesting. In the underbenefited situation, both men and women will use discussion (Strategy 1) as a strategy to restore equity, but women are more likely to discuss than men (57% of women, and 28% of men). In the overbenefited situation, they also reported using discussion as a strategy but to a much lesser degree (36% of women, 19% of men). In the underbenefited situation, women are more likely to use termination of the relationship as a strategy (23% of women, 15% of men). This finding supports the contention of Rubin, et al. (1981) that women are more likely to terminate a relationship where problems are perceived. The likelihood of terminating the relationship when the subject is the overbenefited partner is lower (15% of women, and 8% of men). As would be expected, there was greater reporting of compensation (Strategy 3) in the overbenefited situation (31% of women, and 14% of men) than in the underbenefited situation (11% of women, 5% of men).

Chi-Square analyses of strategies used by sex and equity type showed several significant differences on the use of strategies. There was a significant difference in use of Strategy 1 (Discussion) based on type of equity, $x^2(1)=22.156$, p. < .000, indicating that discussion was much more likely to be used in the underbenefited situation. There was also a significant difference in the use of Strategy 2 (Terminate) based on equity type, $x^2(1)=5.123$, p. < .02, indicating that termination is also more likely in the underbenefited situation. Finally, there was a significant difference in the use of Strategy 3 (Compensate) based on equity type, $x^2(1)=19.449$, p. <

.000, indicating that persons in the overbenefited situation are more likely to compensate than those who are underbenefited.

VI.   DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary findings of this study were that women are more distressed than men when they are the underbenefited partner in a romantic relationship, and that persons who are underbenefited in their relationship are much more likely overall to experience distress than those who are overbenefited.

The finding that women are more distressed than men when they are the underbenefited partner in a romantic relationship, is important because it does not follow either previous empirical research in equity theory, or theoretical discussions on sex differences. It was contended that men would experience more distress when they are underbenefited due to their traditionally more powerful positions within the higher social structure. It was also argued that women would be expected to be more distressed when they are the overbenefited partner because they, also, are used to men being in more powerful positions and have been socialized to be passive, docile, self-effacing, and self-deprecating (Eakins and Eakins, 1978). A possible explanation for this finding may be that the underpinnings of the previous arguments simply aren't valid any longer. The piece by Eakins and Eakins that discussed sex differences, and particularly the issue of male dominance and women's self-effacing passivity, was written in 1978. The role of women in society since the late 1970s has changed

dramatically. The students who completed this questionnaire were primarily the children of people who were the driving force in many of the changes in women's rights, and most were probably the product of families where both parents worked outside the home, and potentially where women thrived in positions of authority (though this was not measured). If, in fact, the subjects were brought up by persons who believed in a more positive role for women in our society (or were themselves powerful women), the issue was probably more salient, and, hence, they reported more distress for women who were underbenefited.

Secondly, it was found that persons who are underbenefited in their relationship are much more likely to experience distress than those who are overbenefited. This was not surprising in light of research previously done by Walster, et al. (1970), Leventhal, et al. (1969), Jacques (1961), and Thibaut (1950). Aside from empirical research, it also seems that, applying common sense, being the overbenefited partner in a relationship would be somewhat uncomfortable due to feelings of guilt, but being the underbenefited partner in a relationship would be much more distressing. Righteous anger at the unfair treatment of giving, with no corresponding rewards, just seems more plausible than getting angry because you are getting too much. The first proposition of Walster, et al. (1973, 1978a) is that individuals will try to maximize their outcomes. People tend to be selfish, and overall it is more distressing to give more than you get in return, as opposed to getting more than you deserve.

I think these results have practical implications for future research in sex differences and perceptions of inequity in romantic relationships. This was an exploratory study that broached, for the first time, questions concerning whether or not men and women respond in different ways to inequity. With results indicating the opposite of what would be expected based on both empirical and theoretical works, it seems clear that future studies are important for a clearer picture of what is occurring. From a nonscientific perspective, this seems to have implications for persons in the general population who make changes in the way they communicate with their partners based on works by authors such as Eakins and Eakins and Dr. Tannen. If, in fact, the findings in this study hold up in future studies, those people reading popular literature on sex differences may be making life changes based on erroneous information.

From a personal perspective, this work has made it clear to me that my own observations of romantic relationships had merit. Indeed, those relationships that are equitable are the most satisfying for the participants. Likewise, those that are inequitable are the most disappointing. Also, it was heartening to find that men and women do not seem to see unfairness differently. This was encouraging in the sense that restoring a relationship to an equitable state from a common ground of understanding is much easier than if both parties are at odds as to what the problem is.

As is the case with most questions asked, the answers led to even more questions. Now I would like to look at why women are more distressed than men at being underbenefited, and whether

men and women perceive things in the same way with regard to issues other than equity. I would also like to do more in-depth study on the communication strategies used by men and women and under what circumstances each is used.

Finally, the knowledge that I received from this study will, hopefully, help me the next time I get in a conversation with a friend about romantic relationships!

VII. APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Hypothetical Situations for Pretest

APPENDIX A

You and Chris have been dating each other exclusively for one year. This relationship is the most serious you have ever had, and the longest lasting. Everything has been perfect and seemed "right" — you have been in love. Over the past couple weeks, though, four separate incidents occurred that have caused you to question your relationship. Specifically:

You are deeply committed to your relationship with Chris and assumed that Chris felt the same way. You recently accepted a job locally for the sole purpose of allowing you and Chris to be together. You start your new position in two weeks. One day last week, though, when you were discussing your plans for getting an apartment together in East Lansing after graduation, Chris informed you that he/she is now seriously considering going to graduate school in Hawaii.

Second, spending time together has never been a problem until lately when Chris has been doing a lot of things without you. Last night, even though you had an exam to study for, you cleared your schedule in order to spend time with Chris. You even rented a video and ordered a pizza. Chris then informed you that he/she already had plans with friends. When you tried to make plans for tonight Chris was evasive and said that he/she would give you an answer later today.

Third, you and Chris have always provided each other with a lot of emotional support. When Chris was having trouble in Math 108 you spent your own study time tutoring Chris and being supportive when things were going badly. Last week you took a very difficult exam and didn't think you did very well on it. When you tried to talk about how badly you felt, Chris seemed disinterested and preoccupied. While you were telling Chris your horror story about the exam the phone rang. Chris picked it up and proceeded to talk to a friend for approximately fifteen minutes about an upcoming concert and whether or not they were going to try to get tickets.

Finally, you and Chris have always been physically affectionate. Whenever Chris has a bad day you have volunteered to give a long, relaxing shoulder rub to ease the tension and make him/her feel better. Two days ago you were working out and somehow strained the muscles in your back. It was very painful so when you saw Chris that night you asked for a back rub to try to ease the pain. Chris grudgingly rubbed your back for about one minute and then went off to watch TV.

None of these incidents, if they had happened separately, would really bother you. But because all of them have happened in the past two weeks you have begun to question how much Chris really cares for you and the continuation of your relationship.

Now, think about your and Chris's relationship. In particular, think about what you and Chris have each recently been giving to make the relationship work, and what you each have been getting out of the relationship. Using the following scales, rate how balanced you think this relationship is, in terms of what you each put into it and get out of it.

This relationship is:

Imbalanced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Balanced
Unfair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fair
Unequal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Equal
Uneven	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Even

You and Chris have been dating each other exclusively for one year. This relationship is the most serious you have ever had, and the longest lasting. Everything has been perfect and seemed "right" — you are in love. Over the past couple weeks several events have occurred that seem indicative your relationship with Chris. Specifically:

You and Chris are both deeply committed to your relationship. One day last week you and Chris were discussing your plans for getting an apartment together in East Lansing after graduation. You recently accepted a job locally for the sole purpose of allowing you and Chris to be together. Although he/she would really like to attend graduate school in Hawaii, Chris informed you that he/she is seriously considering going to graduate school here at Michigan State so the two of you can be in the same city.

Spending time together has always been an important part of your relationship with Chris. Last night, even though you had an exam to study for, you cleared your schedule in order to spend time with Chris. You even rented a video and ordered a pizza. Chris thought that you would want to spend some quiet time studying so had made plans to go out with friends. When you told Chris that you had a pizza and a movie, Chris called his/her friends and told them that he/she would be spending the evening with you.

You and Chris have always provided each other with a lot of emotional support. When Chris was having trouble in Math 108 you spent your own study time tutoring Chris and being supportive when things were going badly. Last week you took a very difficult exam and didn't think you did very well on it. When you told Chris how badly you felt, Chris was sympathetic and comforting. Since Chris got a 4.0 in that class last semester, he/she offered to spend some extra time with you before the next exam to help you bring up your grade.

You and Chris have always been physically affectionate. Whenever Chris has a bad day you have volunteered to give a long, relaxing shoulder rub to ease the tension and make him/her feel better. Two days ago you were working out and somehow strained the muscles in your back. It was very painful so when you saw Chris that night you asked for a back rub to try to ease the pain. Chris took special care to give you a very long back rub — making sure that you were feeling better before he/she stopped.

Now, think about your and Chris's relationship. In particular, think about what you and Chris have each recently been giving to make the relationship work, and what you each have been getting out of the relationship. Using the following scales, rate how balanced you think this relationship is, in terms of what you each put into it and get out of it.

This relationship is:

Imbalanced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Balanced
Unfair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fair
Unequal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Equal
Uneven	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Even

APPENDIX B

Overbenefited Questionnaire

APPENDIX B

The purpose of this questionnaire is to examine your perceptions of behavior in an interpersonal situation. DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME OR ANY IDENTIFYING INFORMATION ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE! All of the information that you provide us with will be kept strictly confidential. Therefore, please be as honest as you possibly can in responding to the situation.

In the situation below, you will be faced with what many consider to be a "difficult" communication situation. Read the situation carefully. When you have finished reading it, complete the remainder of the questionnaire.

38
Interpersonal Relationship Situation

You and Chris have been dating each other exclusively for one year. This relationship is the most serious you have ever had, and the longest lasting. Everything has been perfect and seemed "right" — you have been in love. Over the past couple weeks, though, you know that Chris has been bothered by four separate incidents that have occurred. Specifically:

You know that Chris is deeply committed to a relationship with you and has assumed that you felt the same way. One day last week, though, Chris informed you that he/she recently accepted a job locally for the sole purpose of allowing the two of you to be together. Chris then started discussing plans for the two of you to get an apartment together in East Lansing, after graduation. You informed Chris that you are now seriously considering going to graduate school in Hawaii.

Second, spending time together has never been a problem until lately when you have been doing a lot of things without Chris. Last night, even though Chris had an exam to study for, he/she cleared his/her schedule in order to spend time with you. Chris even rented a video and ordered a pizza. You then told Chris that you already had plans with friends. When Chris immediately tried to make plans for tonight you didn't want to deal with it so you were evasive and said that you weren't sure what was going on and would give Chris an answer later today.

Third, Chris has always provided you with a lot of emotional support. When you were having trouble in Math 108 Chris spent his/her own study time tutoring you and being supportive when things were going badly. Last week Chris took a very difficult exam and didn't think he/she did very well on it. When Chris tried to talk to you about how badly he/she felt, you were disinterested and preoccupied. While Chris was telling the horror story about the exam the phone rang. You picked it up and proceeded to talk to a friend for approximately fifteen minutes about an upcoming concert and whether or not the two of you are going to try to get tickets.

Finally, Chris has always been physically affectionate toward you. Whenever you have had a bad day Chris has volunteered to give you a long, relaxing shoulder rub to ease the tension and make you feel better. Two days ago Chris was working out and somehow strained the muscles in his/her back. It was apparently very painful because when Chris saw you that night, he/she asked you for a back rub to try to ease the pain. You really wanted to watch TV so you rubbed Chris' back for about one minute and then went off to catch your show.

None of these incidents, if they had happened separately, would really have bothered Chris. But because all of them have happened in the past two weeks Chris has begun to question how much you really care for him/her and the continuation of your relationship.

1. Now, think about your and Chris's relationship. In particular, think about what you and Chris have each recently been giving to make the relationship work, and what you each have been getting out of the relationship. Using the following scales, rate how balanced you think this relationship is, in terms of what you each put into it and get out of it.

This relationship is:

Imbalanced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Balanced
Unfair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fair
Unequal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Equal
Uneven	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Even

Now, think about the situation that you have just read. For each of the items below, circle the number that best represents how much you agree/disagree with the statement that is presented. Choose the answer that best describes your attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about the situation.

2. I resent the fact that my relationship with Chris is so imbalanced.

Completely Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely Agree

3. It makes me angry when I think about how unequal my relationship with Chris is.

Completely Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely Agree

4. This relationship is unfair.

Completely Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely Agree

5. I am more emotionally invested in this relationship than Chris is.

Completely Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely Agree

6. I am afraid that I will lose Chris if our relationship doesn't become more equal.

Completely Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely Agree

7. It is upsetting to realize that my relationship with Chris is so imbalanced.

Completely Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely Agree

8. I am giving as much as Chris is giving in this relationship.

Completely Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely Agree

9.   Chris loves me as much as I love him/her.

Completely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely
Disagree   Agree

10.   The unfairness of my relationship with Chris depresses me.

Completely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely
Disagree   Agree

11.   Chris gets more out of our relationship than I do.

Completely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely
Disagree   Agree

12.   Our relationship is fairly balanced and equal.

Completely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely
Disagree   Agree

13.   I am hurt by the fact that Chris and I are not giving equally to our relationship.

Completely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely
Disagree   Agree

14.   I am giving as much as I am getting in this relationship.

Completely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely
Disagree   Agree

15.   It is very disturbing to me that my relationship with Chris is unfair.

Completely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely
Disagree   Agree

16.   Now think about what you would actually do at this point in your relationship with Chris. Please describe, in as much detail as possible, what (if anything) you would say and/or what actions you would take to resolve any unfairness in this relationship:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

17.   I am (check one): ____ Male   ____ Female

18.   I am currently _____ years old.

19.   I am: ____ Caucasian   ____ Asian/Pacific Islander
                ____ African-American   ____ Native American
                ____ Hispanic   ____ Other (please specify)

APPENDIX C

Underbenefited Questionnaire

APPENDIX C

INTERPERSONAL PERCEPTION SURVEY

Department of Communication

Michigan State University

The purpose of this questionnaire is to examine your perceptions of behavior in an interpersonal situation. DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME OR ANY IDENTIFYING INFORMATION ON THIS QUESTIONNAIRE! All of the information that you provide us with will be kept strictly confidential. Therefore, please be as honest as you possibly can in responding to the situation.

In the situation below, you will be faced with what many consider to be a "difficult" communication situation. Read the situation carefully. When you have finished reading it, complete the remainder of the questionnaire.

Interpersonal Relationship Situation

You and Chris have been dating each other exclusively for one year. This relationship is the most serious you have ever had, and the longest lasting. Everything has been perfect and seemed "right" – you have been in love. Over the past couple weeks, though, four separate incidents occurred that have caused you to question your relationship. Specifically:

You are deeply committed to your relationship with Chris and assumed that Chris felt the same way. You recently accepted a job locally for the sole purpose of allowing you and Chris to be together. You start your new position in two weeks. One day last week, though, when you were discussing your plans for getting an apartment together in East Lansing after graduation, Chris informed you that he/she is now seriously considering going to graduate school in Hawaii.

Second, spending time together has never been a problem until lately when Chris has been doing a lot of things without you. Last night, even though you had an exam to study for, you cleared your schedule in order to spend time with Chris. You even rented a video and ordered a pizza. Chris then informed you that he/she already had plans with friends. When you tried to make plans for tonight Chris was evasive and said that he/she would give you an answer later today.

Third, you and Chris have always provided each other with a lot of emotional support. When Chris was having trouble in Math 108 you spent your own study time tutoring Chris and being supportive when things were going badly. Last week you took a very difficult exam and didn't think you did very well on it. When you tried to talk about how badly you felt, Chris seemed disinterested and preoccupied. While you were telling Chris your horror story about the exam the phone rang. Chris picked it up and proceeded to talk to a friend for approximately fifteen minutes about an upcoming concert and whether or not they were going to try to get tickets.

Finally, you and Chris have always been physically affectionate. Whenever Chris has a bad day you have volunteered to give a long, relaxing shoulder rub to ease the tension and make him/her feel better. Two days ago you were working out and somehow strained the muscles in your back. It was very painful so when you saw Chris that night you asked for a back rub to try to ease the pain. Chris grudgingly rubbed your back for about one minute and then went off to watch TV.

None of these incidents, if they had happened separately, would really bother you. But because all of them have happened in the past two weeks you have begun to question how much Chris really cares for you and the continuation of your relationship.

1. Now, think about your and Chris's relationship. In particular, think about what you and Chris have each recently been giving to make the relationship work, and what you each have been getting out of the relationship. Using the following scales, rate how balanced you think this relationship is, in terms of what you each put into it and get out of it.

This relationship is:

Imbalanced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Balanced
Unfair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fair
Unequal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Equal
Uneven	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Even

Now, think about the situation that you have just read. For each of the items below, circle the number that best represents how much you agree/disagree with the statement that is presented. Choose the answer that best describes your attitudes, beliefs, and opinions about the situation.

2.   I resent the fact that my relationship with Chris is so imbalanced.

Completely Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely Agree

3.   It makes me angry when I think about how unequal my relationship with Chris is.

Completely Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely Agree

4.   This relationship is unfair.

Completely Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely Agree

5.   I am more emotionally invested in this relationship than Chris is.

Completely Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely Agree

6.   I am afraid that I will lose Chris if our relationship doesn't become more equal.

Completely Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely Agree

7.   It is upsetting to realize that my relationship with Chris is so imbalanced.

Completely Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely Agree

8.   I am giving as much as Chris is giving in this relationship.

Completely Disagree	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Completely Agree

9. Chris loves me as much as I love him/her.

    Completely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely
    Disagree   Agree

10. The unfairness of my relationship with Chris depresses me.

    Completely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely
    Disagree   Agree

11. Chris gets more out of our relationship than I do.

    Completely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely
    Disagree   Agree

12. Our relationship is fairly balanced and equal.

    Completely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely
    Disagree   Agree

13. I am hurt by the fact that Chris and I are not giving equally to our relationship.

    Completely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely
    Disagree   Agree

14. I am giving as much as I am getting in this relationship.

    Completely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely
    Disagree   Agree

15. It is very disturbing to me that my relationship with Chris is unfair.

    Completely   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Completely
    Disagree   Agree

16. Now think about what you would actually do at this point in your relationship with Chris. Please describe, in as much detail as possible, what (if anything) you would say and/or what actions you would take to resolve any unfairness in this relationship:

    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____
    _____

17. I am (check one): ____ Male   ____ Female

18. I am currently _____ years old.

19. I am: ____ Caucasian   ____ Asian/Pacific Islander
            ____ African-American   ____ Native American
            ____ Hispanic   ____ Other (please specify)

APPENDIX D

Measures of Perceived Inequity and Distress

ITEMS USED TO MEASURE DISTRESS:

1. I resent the fact that my relationship with Chris is so imbalanced.

2. It makes me angry when I think about how unequal my relationship with Chris is.

3. It is upsetting to realize that my relationship with Chris is so imbalanced.

4. The unfairness of my relationship with Chris depresses me.

5. I am hurt by the fact that Chris and I are not giving equally to our relationship.

6. It is very disturbing to me that my relationship with Chris is unfair.

ITEMS USED TO MEASURE PERCEIVED INEQUITY:

Now think about your and Chris's relationship. In particular, think about what you and Chris have each recently been giving to make the relationship work, and what you each have been getting out of the relationship. Using the following scales, rate how balanced you think this relationship is, in terms of what you each put into it and get out of it.

This relationship is:

Imbalanced	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Balanced
Unfair	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fair
Unequal	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Equal
Uneven	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Even

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