

## **The Judgment and Consequences of Justice Among American Newlyweds: A Social Exchange Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Using social exchange perspectives, we investigated how the distribution of various resources influence individuals' subjective judgments of justice and the consequences of perceived injustice. This study used a sample of 162 newly married couples, drawn from the third wave of a three-year panel study during 1991-1993, conducted in the state of Washington. A structural equation model was used to evaluate whether the distribution of resources (socioeconomic characteristics, affection, personal traits, working hours, and housework) affects perceptions of justice, and whether injustice has negative consequences on the individual assessments of marital quality and psychological distress. The results showed that the distributions of affection and housework were two main factors in the husbands' determination of whether the marital relationship was fair or

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Received September 20, 2005; accepted November 29, 2006; last revised  
November 24, 2006

Proofreaders: Jeffrey Cuvilier, Wen-chi Chang, Yu-jy Chen, Min-Hsi Shieh

unfair. On the other hand, personal traits and housework performance were the primary sources of wives' judgment of relative justice. The distribution of income and occupational status had an indirect effect on perceived injustice, mediated by housework allocation. Perceived injustice was found to be associated with a decrease in the marital quality and psychological distress for wives, but not for husbands.

**Key Words:** justice, American newlyweds, social exchange theory

The issue of justice or fairness in family relationships has only recently been considered an important area of investigation for family scholars. Much of the current research focuses on perceptions of justice as these relate to the allocation of household labor (e.g., Blair & Johnson, 1992; DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; Greenstein, 1996; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994; Wilkie, Ferree, & Ratcliff, 1998). The issue has become more salient primarily because of the increasing involvement of women in the paid labor force. In 1960, less than one-third of married women were in the paid labor force; by 2003, the proportion has reached 60% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2005). This increase has not been associated with a comparable decrease in the proportion of housework performed by working wives, or with a significant increase in the proportion of housework performed by their husbands (South & Spitze, 1994). Arlie Hochschild (1989) refers to this phenomenon of inequity as a “stalled revolution” where many women work double shifts, one shift at a paid job and a “second shift” at home.

Despite the fact that working wives perform a greater proportion of housework than their husbands, few wives or husbands describe their division of household labor as unfair (Acock & Demo, 1994; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994). A number of studies have explored the possible reasons for the discrepancy between objective inequalities and perceived fairness (Blair & Johnson, 1992; DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; Greenstein, 1996; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994; Thompson, 1991). Much of the debate engendered by this literature centers around the criteria family members use to make judgments about the fairness of their relationships to other family members.

The principles governing the evaluation of justice have been the focus of social psychological literature, particularly the work of social exchange theorists. These theorists propose that perceptions of justice are judged based on the distribution of resources individuals exchange in social relations (e.g., Blau, 1964; Hatfield, Utne, & Traupmann, 1979; Homans, 1974). Individuals differently value exchanged resources in accordance with their personal preferential hierarchy,

which encourage different subjective interpretations of exchange outcomes. As Hatfield and her colleagues suggest, “equity is in the eye of the beholder. An observer’s perception of how equitable a relationship is will depend on his assessment of the value and relevance of the participants’ inputs and outcomes” (Hatfield et al., 1979: 102). In order to understand the determinants of justice, it is important to examine the value individuals attach to each of the various resources that may be exchanged within the relationship. We argue that various types of resources are differently linked to the judgment of justice. Our focus is on the beginning years of marriage. How relations develop in these early years may influence the long-term stability and quality of the marriage. Thus, we explore the effects of resource distribution and perceptions of justice on marital quality in the early phases of marriage. In this paper we address two questions: (1) Which resources exchanged are most relevant to influencing the evaluation of justice among American newlyweds? (2) What are the consequences of perceived injustice? We first review empirical literature pertaining to the perceptions of justice in marriage, and then present and test a theoretical model that describes the process of evaluating justice and its consequences.

## I. Literature Review

Perceptions of justice or fairness in the family have been studied most in the division of household labor. In spite of a clear presence of gender inequality, wherein wives usually perform two-thirds of all household chores, few married couples feel the division of housework to be unfair (Blair & Johnson, 1992; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994). Some researchers have attempted to find out the predictors of women’s sense of fairness about family work. Brenda Major (1987) proposes three factors predicting the sense of fairness: outcome values, comparison referent and justification. She claimed that women will feel that an injustice exists if they lack some valued outcome, evaluate their outcomes

against high standards, and feel dissatisfied with the justification offered for their being deprived of those valued outcomes. Linda Thompson (1991) elaborated this approach by suggesting that wives value interpersonal outcomes of family work more than task outcomes. Following this rationale, several studies have indicated that wives' perceptions of injustice are affected by task outcomes where wives do more housework (Blair & Johnson, 1992; Hawkins, Marshall, & Meiners, 1995; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994; Wilkie et al., 1998) or by interpersonal outcomes where wives feel appreciated for their efforts in family work (Hawkins et al., 1995; Gager, 1998).

In addition, three main reasons, gender ideology, power, and equity, have been reported to explain the relationship between an inequitable division of household labor and wives' perceptions of justice/injustice. **Gender ideology** influences the perceptions of justice by emphasizing a gender link in the division of labor. Thus, married couples who define housework as a female task will be more likely to accept the arrangement in which the wife does most of the household chores (Blair & Johnson, 1992; DeMaris & Longmore, 1996; Greenstein, 1996). **Power** is determined by the distribution of resources between the various family members. Married persons with more resources and alternatives outside of marriage tend to have more power and, consequently, higher expectations and standards of fairness. Given sufficient resources, people have the ability to change unequal divisions. Conversely, the inability to control resources is likely to lower expectations. People with less resources and alternatives are more likely to view objectively unequal situations as fair. Thus, many women who have fewer resources than their husbands may be inclined to perceive given divisions of housework as fair (Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994). **Equity** pertains to the proportion of resource exchange between partners that is considered fair on the basis of some normative standard. For example, married persons who do more of the household labor and yet do less in other domains such as paid work and child care may perceive this trade-off as fair (DeMaris &

Longmore, 1996).

Injustice may have detrimental consequences for the quality of the couples' relationship and their psychological well-being. Several studies have indicated that perceptions of fairness in household chores were a significant factor for marital satisfaction for both husbands and wives (Voydanoff & Donnelly, 1999; Wilkie et al., 1998; Yogeve & Brett, 1985). However, Sampson Lee Blair (1993) did not find a significant relationship between these factors for husbands. Some research has also found that wives' perception of fairness was associated with husbands' perception of marital satisfaction (Curtis, 1986). Finally, the perception of injustice in the allocation of household responsibilities has been linked to marital conflict and other difficulties, such as diminished trust (Bumpass, 1990).

Research on relations between perceived fairness and psychological outcomes have yielded differences between husbands and wives. Wives are more likely to display symptoms of depression when they perceive unfairness in household chores, whereas husbands are more likely to indicate feelings of depression when they perceive unfairness in paid work (Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994; Ross, Mirowsky, & Huber, 1983). Using scales of unfairness to self and spouse in the areas of household chores, working for pay, spending money and child care, Monica A. Longmore and Alfred DeMaris (1997) found that both under-benefiting and over-benefiting in relationships increased the degree of distress for both husbands and wives.

There is considerably more research on the wife's perceptions of justice in family situations than on comparisons between spouses (Blair & Johnson, 1992; Gager, 1998; Greenstein, 1996; Hawkins et al., 1995; Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994; Major, 1987; Thompson, 1991). More importantly, with a few exceptions, many studies have investigated the sense of justice in relation to household chores, paid work and child care rather than in more global justice judgments in marriage.

Other factors that may influence the process by which

married couples evaluate their relationship are also under-investigated. For example, in addition to housework, personal characteristics have been found to be associated with perceptions of equity in marriage for both husbands and wives. There is some research suggesting that individuals who are more expressive (e.g. compassionate, understanding), more committed to the relationship and more sociable than their spouse are more likely to perceive their spouse as being benefiting from the relationship (Kollock, Blumstein, & Schwartz, 1994; Van Yperen & Buunk, 1990).

In general, there seems to be very few studies in which the justice evaluations of both husbands and wives are assessed. Nor has there been much systematic research using global assessments of justice. Finally, the relevance of resource distribution in estimating justice outcomes suggests that the social exchange theoretical framework provides the most useful approach to understanding the conditions leading to perceptions of justice and injustice. Accordingly, this study utilizes social exchange principles in establishing and testing a theoretical model that depicts the process of evaluating justice and the consequences of injustice for couples in the early years of marriage.

## II. Theoretical Background

A basic premise of the social exchange perspective is that the sense of justice is based on the distribution of rewards (or benefits) and costs (or investments) (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1974). There are three major distribution rules of justice that can be applied to evaluating a relationship as fair or not. The first rule is **equity**, indicating that the relationship is perceived as just when one's received outcomes equal to his or her contribution. Equity theorists, particularly Stacy J. Adams (1965) and Elaine Walster and her associates (Walster, E., Walster, G. W., & Berscheid, 1978), suggest that justice is perceived to be satisfied if one's ratio

of outputs to inputs equals the ratio of outputs to inputs of another person involved in the relationship. Injustice is perceived when one's benefits are disproportionate to one's own investments (Homans, 1974). The second rule is **equality**, indicating that the relationship is considered just when both partners receive the same outcomes regardless of their contributions (Deutsch, 1975). The third is the **need** principle, meaning that the relationship is viewed as just when one's needs are satisfied (Deutsch, 1975).

Scholars have argued that the particular principle of distributive justice that is brought into play is based on the type of relationships in which the actors are involved (Deutsch, 1975; Stolte, 1987). In productive relations in which all members contribute and benefit (i.e., payoffs are proportional to investments), equity is likely to emerge as a dominant principle. In exchange situations in which group members give and receive resources, the principle of equality is the most likely to be applied. In caring-oriented relationships in which group members are concerned for the welfare of each other, the principle of need is the most appropriate rule of justice (Deutsch, 1975). Based on such rationale, the principles of equality and need seem to be most applicable in marital relationships.

There is evidence suggesting that when an individual experiences a sense of injustice, the relationship in which he or she is involved is likely to be unstable, resulting in dissatisfaction and tension (Adams, 1965). The more unjust the relationship is perceived to be, the greater the distress felt by the individuals involved (Walster et al., 1978). Anger and outrage are postulated as the most likely emotional reactions of the recipient of an unjust exchange and guilt is the most likely reaction of the beneficiary (Homans, 1974; Stolte, 1987). Empirical studies in intimate relationships have also indicated that under-benefitted partners—who receive fewer rewards—are likely to feel sad, frustrated, angry, and hurt and the over-benefitted partners are likely to feel guilty (Sprecher, 1986). The under-benefitted partners felt more dissatisfied in their relationship than the over-benefitted

partners (Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994; Sprecher, 2001; Van Yperen & Buunk, 1990).

On the basis of the above reports, justice judgment processes involve a person's assessment of the distribution of valued resources that satisfy one's need obtained from the relationship. Nevertheless, what types of resources are relevant when people make justice evaluations remains relatively under-investigated. Researchers have summarized possible types of resources that may be needed or exchanged between spouses. Peter M. Blau (1964) specifically identifies six types of resources: personal attraction, social acceptance, social approval, instrumental services, respect/prestige and compliance. Edna B. Foa and Uriel G. Foa (1980) also classify six kinds of resources that give an individual an ability to contribute in the relationship: love, status, services, goods, information and money. According to Steil, individuals come to assess their own and their partners' contributions to the relationship and outcomes obtained from the relationship across a variety of resources. They include (1) personal characteristics (e.g., intelligence, attractiveness); (2) emotional concerns (e.g., love); (3) day-to-day exchanges (e.g., earning money, doing housework); and (4) opportunities gained and lost (e.g., the opportunity to marry others) (Steil, 1997: 62). Our approach to this question incorporates most of the behaviors involved in Steil's categories, but somewhat more specifically. We propose the following four types of resources that serve to establish a standard in evaluating justice in marriage. They are:

1. **Socioeconomic characteristics** (income, education, and occupational status). These variables are usually considered valuable resources contributing to the standard of living and social status of the family.
2. **Affection** (e.g., love, liking) is viewed as emotional concern that is exchanged between and necessary for both partners in marriage. The more a person has affection for the other partner, the more he or she values and depends

on reciprocated affection, the more vulnerable and anxious he or she is to maintain the relationship even at a high cost (Safilios-Rothschild, 1976). The imbalance in giving more and receiving less affection was found to be associated negatively with married couples' commitment level (Hsiao, 2003).

3. **Personal traits** are the resources that can "either enhance or reduce a person's symbolic worth" (Kollock et al., 1994: 342). Previous research has shown that men and women value different personal traits. Men tend to emphasize physical attractiveness in a partner or potential partner more than women do, whereas women value earning capability, social status and intelligence more than men do (Sprecher, Sullivan, & Hatfield, 1994). If the exchange of these resources is imbalanced, the partners' commitments to the marriage tend to decrease (Hsiao, 2003).
4. Finally, **day-to-day exchanges** (e.g., working hours and housework) have been viewed as a major factor in justice judgment process, especially for wives. Wives are more likely to perceive injustice as their share of working and household labor increases.

### III. Modeling Justice Judgments and Consequences

According to a social exchange perspective, the distribution of valued resources between the spouses is a major criterion applied when people estimate the relative justice of their marital relations. We have no direct measures of the resources married couples need and value. In lieu of such measures we can only infer the need and value of certain resources from respondents' estimates of justice or injustice resulting from the distribution of key resources. The distribution of resources between the spouses is measured by the difference in the proportion of a resource contributed by a person and the proportion contributed by his or

her spouse. The closer to zero the difference score is, the more balanced the resource distribution. The distribution of resources can be assessed in the same domain (e.g., who does more housework or earns more money for the family) or different resource domains. The exchange of economic resources for household labor has typically been used to explain why wives complete more household chores than do husbands. It is argued that men can use their higher incomes to essentially buy their way out of responsibility for housework (Chafetz, 1988). Husbands, who traditionally have earned more, are expected to have more financial resources to bring to the relationship in exchange for the time and effort spent on housework by their financially dependent wives. Our primary interest is in whether the distribution of a given resource affects one's perceptions of justice. For example, do people take into account the proportion of money contributed by a couple or the proportion of housework performed when they assess the justice of their relationship? Is money a more salient resource of exchange than housework?

The conceptual model that guides our study is shown in Figure 1. We suggest that the distribution of the resources identified earlier will influence the perception of justice in the marital relationship. That is, the greater the relative contribution of a given resource by a partner, the more likely he or she is to perceive injustice in relationship. Furthermore, the division of household labor can be viewed as a bargaining process in which people with more resources are likely to make the other dependent person compensate for his or her own lack of contribution (e.g. Blair & Lichter, 1991). The distribution of the resources may have an indirect effect on the process of evaluating justice, mediated by housework allocation. Therefore, we predict that the greater contribution of a given resource by a partner, the less shares of housework he or she will perform, and the less likely he or she is to perceive injustice. In addition, an unequal distribution of resources is hypothesized to provoke a sense of injustice, leading to lower levels of marital quality and greater distress for the under

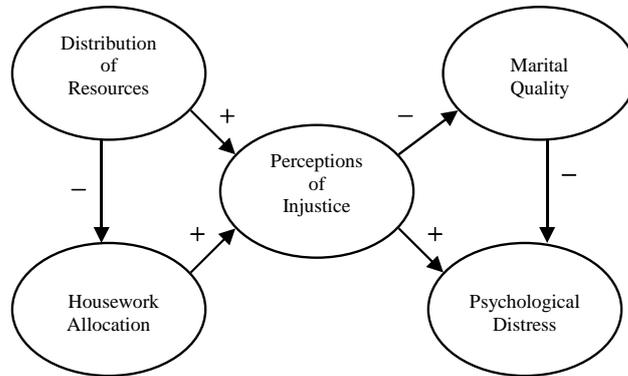


Figure 1 The Conceptual Model Describing the Justice Judgment Process and Its Consequences

benefited. Finally, evidence from various studies has indicated that the quality of marriage is associated with the individual's psychological well-being (e.g. Kim & McKenry, 2002). We expect that marital quality is associated negatively with the couple's psychological distress.

## IV. Method

### A. Sample

The data for this study were taken from a sample randomly selected from marriage registration records in two middle-size cities in the State of Washington in 1991 and 1992.<sup>1</sup> The general aim of the original study was to examine marital dynamics of

<sup>1</sup> The research reported in this paper is part of a longitudinal study of first-time married couples, "Socialization into Marital Roles," funded by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health (NH46928). The research is under the direction of Irving Tallman, Peter J. Burke, and Viktor Gecas.

newly married couples. The criteria of sample selection were the couples in which both partners were over age 18, in their first marriages, and had no children at the time of the marriage. There were three waves of data collection. The first occurred shortly after the marriage ceremony in 1991 (the median time of the interview was 50 days), the second wave of data was collected approximately a year later, and the third wave was a year after the second one. The data collection each year involved a 90-minute face-to-face interview, 4 one-week daily diaries, and a 15-minute videotape of the couples' interactions about areas of disagreement. Due to the fact that the perception of justice was only measured in the year three, the current analyses are based on information from the interview and daily dairies in the third-wave data collection period.

The original sample size was 313 couples. The attrition rate from the first to the third wave was 32%. Couples dropped out of this study for personal reasons (e.g., divorce or separation, relocation) and administrative reasons (e.g., difficulty in scheduling). Compared with couples who dropped out of study, the remaining participants were older, more highly educated, and of higher socioeconomic status. This attrition bias could influence the results of this research by reducing variability in the couples' perceptions of marital satisfaction. The sample used in this study is limited to 162 couples who provided available data for the measures used in the third wave.

In our sample, the mean ages were 28 for husbands and 27 for wives. Ninety-five percent of husbands and 80% of wives were currently working for pay. The average family income was between \$25,000 and \$35,000, and the mean educational level for the couples was "some college." Forty-two couples had at least one child by the third year of their marriage.

## B. Measures

### (A) The Distribution of Resources

We measured the following eight resources: income,

education, occupational status, love, liking, personal traits, working hours, and housework. Income was measured in eight categories, ranging from under \$5,000 to \$75,000 and over.<sup>2</sup> Education was measured in thirteen categories, ranging from no formal education to graduate degrees.<sup>3</sup> Occupational status was determined based on the respondent's employment, job titles, and job activities. These responses were then coded by the Total Socioeconomic Index (TSI) based on Gillian Stevens and Joo Hyun Cho's (1985) revised Socioeconomic Indexes.

We used Zick Rubin's (1970, 1973) love and liking scales to measure the respondent's affection toward his or her spouse. According to Rubin, the love scale reflects the individual's feeling of emotional dependence and exclusiveness. Respondents were asked to report how strongly they agreed or disagreed with thirteen statements such as "I would do almost anything for my spouse" on the eight-point scale. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients for the love scale were .81 for wives and .80 for husbands. The liking scale represents the individual's admiration and respect for the spouse. This instrument also included thirteen statements such as "My spouse is one of the most likeable people I know" on an eight-point scale. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficients for the liking scale were .85 for wives and .88 for husbands.

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<sup>2</sup> Response categories for income were as follows: 1=under \$5,000; 2=\$5,000-9,999; 3=\$10,000-14,999; 4=\$15,000-24,999; 5=\$25,000-34,999; 6=\$35,000-49,999; 7=\$50,000-74,999; 8=\$75,000 and over.

Responses were recoded to the midpoint of the category.

<sup>3</sup> Response categories for education were as follows: 1=no formal education; 2=some grade school; 3=completed grade school; 4=some junior high or middle school; 5=completed junior high or middle school; 6=some high school; 7=completed high school or equivalent; 8=completed high school plus other training but not college; 9=some college; 10=completed 2-year college; 11=completed 4-year college; 12=some graduate work; 13=graduate degree. Education was recoded as the number of schooling. For examples, a response of no formal education was recoded to 0, a response of some grade school was recode to 3 years (the midpoint of grade schooling years), and a response of graduate degree was recoded to 18 years of schooling.

Personal traits were measured by asking respondents to assess their own ranking on intelligence, physical appearance, likeability, friendliness and understanding. Respondents were also asked to estimate their spouse's ranking on those five attributes. The scales ranged from 0, indicating the respondents considered themselves or their spouse as completely lacking in the attribute, to 100, indicating a perfect representation of that attribute. The item formed a single scale of self-ranking with reliability of .79 for husbands and .77 for wives. The items also formed a single scale of spouse-ranking with reliability of .82 for husbands and .75 for wives.

The final resource measured was working hours and housework. The daily diaries of the third year included the respondent's report of the number of hours per day spent on working and household chores. The household chores consisted of (1) cooking and food preparation, (2) cleaning and housekeeping, (3) shopping, and (4) yard work and home maintenance.<sup>4</sup>

The distribution of a given resource between the spouses was measured as the difference in the proportions of the respondent's and the spouse's contribution to total amount of that resource obtained from the relationship. This calculation,  $(\text{Respondent's contribution} - \text{Spouse's contribution}) / (\text{Respondent's contribution} + \text{Spouse's contribution})$ , was used to estimate the degree of economic dependency, originally suggested by Annemette Sørensen and Sara McLanahan (1987). The value of 1 indicates that the self makes the total contribution of a given resource to the relationship, the value of -1 indicates that the spouse makes the total contribution and the value of 0 indicates the self and spouse make an equal contribution of a given resource to the relationship.

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<sup>4</sup> Response categories for working and chores were on a seven-point scale: 0 represented "no time," 1 "half hour," 2 "one hour," 3 "two hours," 4 "three hours," 5 "four hours," and 6 "more than four hours." Responses were recoded from the scale to the number of hours spent on working and housework.

### (B) Perceptions of Injustice

The injustice measure was assessed by a question modified from the Global Measure of Equity/Inequity scale (Hatfield et al., 1979). Respondents were asked: "Considering what you put into your marriage, compared to what you get out of it . . . and what your partner puts in, compared to what s/he gets out of it, how would you say your relationship 'stacks up'?" Responses were on a seven-point scale (1-7) with "I am getting a much better deal" at one end (coded 1), "Both getting an equally deal" in the middle (coded 4), and "My spouse is getting a much better deal" at the other end (coded 7). A low score indicates respondents considered their spouse unjustly treated in the marriage, a high score indicates that respondents felt injustice to themselves, and a score of 4 indicates that respondents believed they were equally treated.

### (C) Marital Quality

Marital quality measures included marital happiness, closeness to spouse and marital satisfaction. Marital happiness was measured by a question asking respondents how happy they currently were with their marriage (1=not at all happy, 5=very happy) and closeness to spouse was measured by a question asking respondents how close they felt to the spouse today (1=not at all close, 5=very close). Marital satisfaction was measured with revised Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (Schumm et al., 1986). Two items were used to ask each spouse their degree of satisfaction with their husband/wife as a spouse and satisfaction with their marriage. Respondents were asked to respond to each item on a seven-point scale (1=extremely dissatisfied, 7=extremely satisfied).

### (D) Psychological Distress

Psychological distress was measured with a modified form of the Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (Radloff, 1977). Respondents were asked the number of days during the past

week they had experienced such situations as “been bothered by things not usually bothering them,” “not felt like eating,” and “felt depressed.” When this scale was factor analyzed, it yielded two distinct factors. One included items which reflected anxiety responses ( $\alpha = .92$  for wives and  $.85$  for husbands) and the other indicated depression ( $\alpha = .87$  for wives and  $.78$  for husbands).

### C. Statistical Analysis

We began by testing whether husbands and wives differ in justice perceptions and if they agree on this judgment. Then we reported descriptive statistics on justice, resources, marital and psychological outcomes as well as comparing the characteristics of husbands and wives. Correlation matrices between key variables were also examined. Finally, structural equation modeling (SEM) was a main statistical analysis tool in evaluating the conceptual model depicted in Figure 1. SEM is useful to test the relationship between the theoretical model and a measurement model that links latent variables to one or more observed variables and evaluate how mediating variables operate sequentially in the relationship (Bollen, 1989). Using covariance matrices, the LISREL 8.52 statistical package (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1993) provided maximum likelihood estimates for the model defined here. The overall fit of the model was evaluated using three kinds of indices: (1) absolute fit measures: chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ), goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA); (2) relative fit measures: non-normed fit index (NNFI) and comparative fit index (CFI); (3) parsimonious fit measures: parsimony normed fit index (PNFI) and critical N (CN).<sup>5</sup> If the goodness of fit of the model is confirmed, it indicates

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<sup>5</sup> Researchers recommend using multiple fit indices to evaluate the goodness of fit of the SEM models. As recommended by Fang-Ming Huang (2003), and Li-Tze Hu and Peter M. Bentler (1999), *p-value* of chi-square of greater than .05, GFI and AGFI of .90 or above, a RMSEA of less than .05, NNFI and CFI of .90 or above, a PNFI of .5 or above, and a CN of 200 or above

no difference between predicted and observed data.

## V. Results

### A. Preliminary Analyses

As shown in Table 1, perceptions of justice vary by gender. Husbands, on average, rated themselves as benefiting more from their marriage than did wives. The mean injustice score is 3.64 for husbands and 3.92 for wives ( $t=2.262$ ;  $p<.05$ ). Here we categorize injustice scores on three levels: injustice to husband, justice to both, and injustice to wife.<sup>6</sup> Most couples believe they were equally treated in the marriage (56.8% of husbands and 58% of wives perceive justice). However, over twice as many wives as husbands feel injustice to themselves (only 8.6% of husbands report injustice to self while 20.4% of wives report injustice to self).

There appears to be some disagreement among couples in which at least one partner reports some injustice. Among husbands who perceive injustice to themselves, about two-thirds of wives disagree. Among wives who perceive injustice to themselves, 60.6% have spouses who agree on this. It seems that newlyweds disagree about whether the relationship is unjust to the husbands. Of all couples, about 35.2% of newlywed couples have an agreement on whether they are treated fairly in the marriage, and 12.3% of them feel that the relationship is unjust to wives, while only 3.1% agreed that husbands are under-benefited.

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<sup>6</sup> indicate a satisfactory fit to the data.  
<sup>6</sup> We recoded injustice measures within seven categories as follows. For husbands, the responses regarding to “spouse is getting better deal” were categorized as “injustice to husband,” “both getting an equal deal” as “justice to both,” and “I am getting better deal” as “injustice to wife.” For wives, the responses regarding to “spouse is getting better deal” were categorized as “injustice to wife,” “both getting an equal deal” as “justice to both,” and “I am getting better deal” as “injustice to husband.”

Table 1 Crosstabulation of Husbands' and Wives' Perceptions of Justice (N=162)

Wives' Perceptions	Husbands' Perceptions							
	Injustice to Husband		Justice to Both		Justice to Wife		Total	
	N	Percent <sup>a</sup>	N	Percent <sup>a</sup>	N	Percent <sup>a</sup>	N	Percent
Injustice to Husband	5	13.5	25	67.6	7	18.9	37	22.8
		35.7		26.6		13.0		
		3.1		15.4		4.3		
Justice to Both	8	8.7	57	62.0	27	29.3	92	56.8
		57.1		60.6		50.0		
		4.9		35.2		16.7		
Injustice to Wife	1	3.0	12	36.4	20	60.6	33	20.4
		7.1		12.8		37.0		
		0.6		7.4		12.3		
Total	14	8.6	94	58.0	54	33.3		

Husbands' perceptions mean (SD) = 3.64 (0.98)

Wives' perceptions mean (SD) = 3.92 (1.13)

Differences between husbands' and wives' perceptions = -0.28\*

<sup>a</sup> Percentages indicate row, column, and total percentages.

Note: *t* tests were used to compare the differences between husbands' and wives' perceptions.

\**p* < .05

Descriptive statistics for all of the resources and outcome variables included in this study are presented separately by gender in Table 2. In general, husbands and wives made a relatively equal contribution with regard to such resources as education and occupational status. As expected, husbands earned more income than wives did. Husbands also reported greater love for their spouse than wives did, whereas wives reported more liking for their spouses than husbands did. Based on couples' perceptions, both husbands and wives rated their spouse higher in personal traits.

Table 2 Descriptive Statistics and Gender Differences for Resources and Outcome Variables (N=162)

Variables	Husbands		Wives		H-W Difference
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
<b>A. Resources</b>					
Income	26157.41	14596.38	16867.28	13826.54	9290.12***
Education	14.47	1.94	14.45	1.81	0.02
Occupation	41.41	18.83	39.64	17.49	1.77
Love	86.17	10.29	81.88	11.96	4.29***
Liking	84.80	11.17	87.10	10.26	-2.30*
Personal Traits <sup>a</sup>	76.55	10.82	76.43	9.79	H: -5.82*** W: -6.01***
Working Hours	36.86	16.37	27.85	17.59	9.02***
Housework	11.36	7.58	14.56	8.00	-3.20***
<b>B. Outcomes</b>					
Marital Quality					
Marital Happiness	4.77	.47	4.72	.57	0.05
Closeness	4.65	.57	4.65	.66	0.00
Satisfaction with Spouse	6.58	.61	6.51	.82	0.07
Satisfaction with Marriage	6.56	.70	6.53	.81	0.03
Psychological Distress					
Anxiety	16.62	14.60	18.05	16.50	-1.43
Depression	4.14	5.32	4.97	6.51	-.83

<sup>a</sup> The scores for this variable are calculated by the difference between the self's and spouse's personal traits based on a person's perceptions. The difference were tested based on one's perceptions of the self and spouse.  
Note: *t* tests were used to compare the differences between husbands and wives in variables above.  
\**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01; \*\*\**p* < .001

In this sample, husbands worked on average 37 hours (about 57%) and wives worked on average 28 hours (about 43%) per week. Husbands spent 11 hours (about 43%) on housework, whereas wives' contributions (15 hours, about 57%) were largely made through traditional female tasks (cooking, cleaning and housekeeping, and shopping). Interestingly, both husbands and wives contributed about the same amount of time to employment and domestic work combined. While this is traditional, the distribution of housework is more equal than expected. The fact that couples in our sample appear to allocate their domestic work more equally than the couples studied in previous research may represent either a new trend in married life for this generation or it may indicate that couples in the first stages of marriage are more egalitarian in their division of labor. However, when calculating the relative contribution of individuals to housework for couples who had children and those who did not, we found that mothers performed 64% of all household chores. Furthermore, there were no significant differences between husbands and wives in the level of marital quality and psychological distress.

Table 3 and Table 4 show the correlations between variables in the models, along with the means, standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis. In general, the correlations were in hypothesized directions. Among resources variables, husbands' perceptions of injustice were associated positively with more contribution of housework; while wives' sense of injustice were associated positively with more contribution of occupational status, personal traits, and housework (albeit modestly). The exception was that the couple's perceptions of injustice were related negatively with their more contribution of liking, which will later be discussed in the next section. The wives' perceptions of injustice, marital quality, and psychological distress were inter-correlated in the expected direction; however, husbands' perceptions of injustice were unrelated to any measures of marital quality and psychological distress. Finally, the four indicators of marital quality were positively correlated, as were the measures of psychological distress. With two exceptions, both indicators of

Table 3 Correlation Matrix, Means, Standard Deviation, Skewness, and Kurtosis for Husbands

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Distribution of Income	1.00														
2. Distribution of Education	.15	1.00													
3. Distribution of Occupation	-.16	.37	1.00												
4. Distribution of Love	.06	.07	.03	1.00											
5. Distribution of Liking	-.03	-.10	-.06	.45	1.00										
6. Distribution of Personal Traits	-.06	-.02	.12	-.07	-.18	1.00									
7. Working Allocation	.78	.10	.08	.08	-.02	.02	1.00								
8. Housework Allocation	-.22	.10	.20	.06	.12	.02	-.19	1.00							
9. Justice Perceptions	-.03	.02	.03	.10	-.17	.02	-.04	.21	1.00						
10. Marital Happiness	-.10	-.10	.09	.00	.09	-.07	-.07	.06	-.13	1.00					
11. Closeness	-.09	-.10	.06	-.02	.09	-.04	-.12	.04	-.02	.57	1.00				
12. Satisfaction with Spouse	-.10	-.09	.03	.03	.18	-.06	-.07	.03	-.09	.72	.59	1.00			
13. Satisfaction with Marriage	-.13	-.08	.10	.02	.08	-.05	-.11	.03	-.02	.68	.64	.81	1.00		
14. Anxiety	-.03	.00	.03	.02	-.01	-.11	-.10	.16	.07	-.28	-.30	-.28	-.28	1.00	
15. Depression	-.10	.00	.02	.03	.09	-.05	-.20	.11	.00	-.17	-.23	-.11	-.14	.70	1.00
M	.26	.00	.01	.03	-.01	-.04	.18	-.14	3.64	4.77	4.65	6.58	6.56	16.62	4.14
SD	.50	.07	.26	.08	.08	.06	.53	.36	.98	.47	.57	.61	.70	14.60	5.32
Skewness	.25	.09	-.02	.74	.10	-.67	-.07	.09	-.31	-1.81	-1.60	-1.15	-1.85	1.51	2.10
Kurtosis	-.11	.05	-.42	1.79	1.09	2.17	-.02	-.30	1.00	2.44	2.64	.30	4.43	2.06	4.71

Notes: Distribution of resources is calculated as (Respondent's contribution - Spouse's contribution) / (Respondent's contribution + Spouse's contribution).  
All correlations greater than or equal to .16 are significant at  $p < .05$

Table 4 Correlation Matrix, Means, Standard Deviation, Skewness, and Kurtosis for Wives

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Distribution of Income	1.00														
2. Distribution of Education	.15	1.00													
3. Distribution of Occupation	.16	.37	1.00												
4. Distribution of Love	.06	.07	.03	1.00											
5. Distribution of Liking	-.03	-.10	-.06	.45	1.00										
6. Distribution of Personal Traits	-.01	.02	.05	-.20	-.21	1.00									
7. Working Allocation	.78	.10	.08	.08	-.02	.03	1.00								
8. Housework Allocation	-.22	.10	.20	.06	.12	-.11	-.19	1.00							
9. Justice Perceptions	.06	.09	.21	-.12	-.18	.23	.10	.14	1.00						
10. Marital Happiness	-.06	-.14	.00	.20	.09	-.10	.06	-.09	-.14	1.00					
11. Closeness	.06	.16	.02	.18	.04	-.11	.04	.02	-.23	.61	1.00				
12. Satisfaction with Spouse	.08	.10	-.03	.21	.15	-.17	.10	.04	-.23	.77	.72	1.00			
13. Satisfaction with Marriage	.07	.13	-.06	.17	.12	-.13	.11	.03	-.26	.76	.75	.86	1.00		
14. Anxiety	-.08	-.02	.03	-.11	.07	.05	-.10	.04	.22	-.16	-.12	-.20	-.26	1.00	
15. Depression	-.09	-.03	-.03	-.10	.05	.01	-.12	.07	.26	-.26	-.27	-.37	-.43	.77	1.00
M	-.26	.00	-.01	-.03	.01	-.04	-.18	.14	3.92	4.72	4.65	6.51	6.53	18.05	4.97
SD	.50	.07	.26	.08	.08	.07	.53	.36	1.13	.57	.66	.82	.81	16.50	6.51
Skewness	.25	.09	.02	-.74	-.10	-.40	.07	-.09	-.24	-2.11	-2.08	-2.07	-2.18	2.28	2.80
Kurtosis	-.11	.05	-.42	1.79	1.09	2.34	-.02	-.30	1.28	4.31	4.18	5.02	5.71	6.67	10.09

Notes: Distribution of resources is calculated as (Respondent's contribution - Spouse's contribution) / (Respondent's contribution + Spouse's contribution). All correlations greater than or equal to .16 are significant at  $p < .05$ .

marital quality and psychological distress were negatively associated. All variables in the model had acceptable distributions that fell within the limits of the assumptions of SEM with a value of skewness ranging from -3 to 3 and a value of kurtosis ranging from -10 to 10 (Huang, 2003). Our next analysis examines separately the association between the distribution of resources and justice assessment, and the consequences of perceived injustice for husbands and wives.

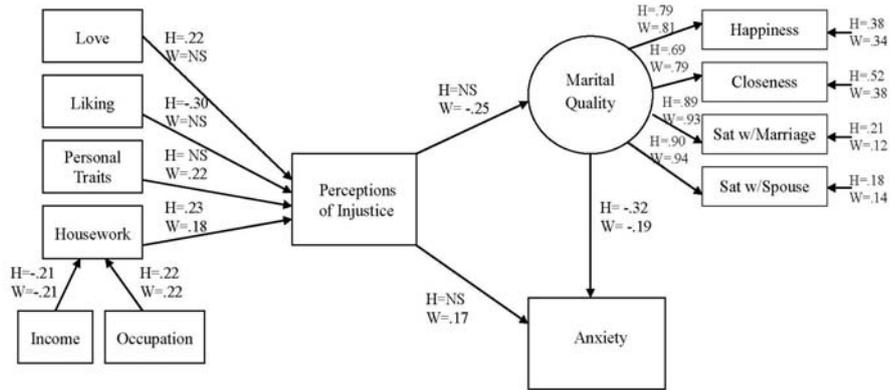
## B. Testing the Model

Our model tested the mediating effect of perceived injustice between the distribution of resources and marital as well as psychological outcomes. Figure 2 shows the standardized results of the SEM testing hypotheses relations for husbands and wives.<sup>7</sup> According to the multiple fit indices used in the study, the overall fits of the husbands' and wives' models were good. In the measurement model, all of the paths between observed indicators (happiness, closeness, satisfaction with marriage, and satisfaction with spouse) between the latent variable (marital quality) were statistically significant at  $p < .05$  and substantial ranging from .69 to .94 for the husbands' and wives' models.

In the structural model, consistent with our hypothesis, the distribution of resources was significantly linked to decisions concerning their fairness or unfairness. For husbands, the salient factors when they made determinations of justice were the distribution of love, liking, and housework. As expected, the stronger the husbands' expressed feelings of love for their wives and the greater their share of housework he performed, the more likely they were

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<sup>7</sup> The distribution of education and working hours did not have significant effects on housework allocation and the perceptions of injustice for both husbands and wives; therefore, the path for education and working hours were removed from the model. Owing to the problem of collinearity between anxiety and depression, we removed depression variable from the model.



Goodness-of-fit Estimates

Husbands:  $\chi^2(43)=41.47$  ( $p=.54$ ), GFI=.96, AGFI=.93, RMSEA=0.00, NNFI=1.00, CFI=1.00, PNFI=.60, CN=252.94.

Wives:  $\chi^2(43)=48.67$  ( $p=.26$ ), GFI=.95, AGFI=.91, RMSEA=0.029, NNFI=.98, CFI=.99, PNFI=.61, CN=214.67.

Notes: Only paths significant for at least one spouse at  $p<.05$  are shown; NS=not significant.

Figure 2 Standardized Results for Measurement and Structural Models Describing the Justice Judgment Process and Its Consequences for Husbands and Wives

to perceive injustice to themselves in marriage. However, the effect of liking was contrary to what we had hypothesized: the greater husbands' liking of their wives compared to her liking of him, the more he considers himself to have benefited from marriage (we return to this point later).

Socioeconomic resources affected husbands' justice judgments differently from other types of resources. As expected, the distribution of income and occupation had an indirect effect on perceived injustice, mediated by housework allocation. The higher the husband's income relative to his wife's, the smaller the proportion of housework he performs. However, the effect of occupation was counter to our expectations: the higher the

husbands' occupational status, the larger their share of household chores (we return to this point later).

The factors that concerned wives when making justice evaluations differed substantially from husbands' considerations. The effects of personal traits and housework were significant and in the direction hypothesized. The greater the inequity between the personal traits of the wife and her spouse, that is, in the degree to which the wife sees herself as a better person than her husband, the more likely she is to perceive injustice to herself in marriage. As was true for husbands, housework allocation mediated the relationship between the distribution of socioeconomic resources and perceived injustice. The more income she contributes to the marriage in relation to her husband, the less the share of housework she does. However, the finding for occupation was contrary to what we had expected: the higher occupational status a wife has in relation to her husband, the more share of household chores she performs (we return to this point later). Finally, the actual division of household chores contributed to wives' perceptions of justice: the more share of housework a wife does, the more she feels injustice to herself in marriage.

The final concerns are the consequences of perceptions of injustice for marital quality and psychological distress. As we proposed earlier, the perception of injustice of an event will be associated with decreased marital quality and greater psychological distress. Figure 2 shows that wives who perceived injustice to themselves in the relationship felt that the marriage was of lower quality. The symptoms of anxiety significantly increased when wives perceived the marital relationship as unfair to themselves and when they were in a unhappy marriage. However, there were no significant associations between husbands' perceptions of injustice, their marital quality, and anxiety. As was true for wives, the higher the level of perceived marital quality, the less likely a husband is to suffer anxiety.

## VI. Discussion

Employing a global measure for the perception of justice, the findings provide a reasonable support for the distribution of resources as an important determinant of justice in marriage. The first striking feature of our results is the small degree of consistency between husbands and wives when it comes to factors relevant to evaluating justice. Housework allocation was the major and common source of justice evaluation for married couples. For husbands and wives, the greater their relative contribution to household chores, the more they perceive injustice to themselves. Prior research has suggested that husbands and wives perceive the domestic division of household labor as fair, despite objectively unequal distribution of housework (e.g., Lennon & Rosenfield, 1994). Men's perceptions of justice may not be affected by housework due to their privileges of escaping from doing chores in the gender division of labor (Sanchez, 1994). Women tend to accept current domestic arrangements as fair because family work is intermingled with love and care for family members (Thompson, 1991). However, in line with few previous studies (Sanchez, 1994), our findings show that husbands and wives similarly value the time spent in housework as critical to their perceptions of justice. Housework usually is characterized as menial, unfinished, repetitive, routine and unfavorable tasks that are devalued in the labor force (Thompson & Walker, 1989). To get stuck doing household chores is not a valued outcome for either men or women, and thus provokes the sense of injustice.

Housework was also a mediator of the relationship between the distribution of income and perceived justice. The less income one earns leads to the greater share of housework he or she performs, which generates the perceptions of injustice. Housework has been characterized as "menial work performed by a lower status person for some of higher status" (Ross et al., 1983: 821). Traditionally, husbands have earned more income than wives;

therefore, they feel entitled to greater rewards such as household chores and sex. Wives, who are usually financially dependent upon their husbands, contribute the time and effort on housework in exchange for economic security.

One's occupational status, however, produced an unexpected finding for both husbands and wives: the higher the occupational status one holds, the greater share of housework one performs. The result is somewhat striking, but makes more sense when we dichotomized the scores of occupation into two groups and then employed analysis of variance to detect the group difference in housework allocation. The results show that the husband whose occupational status was lower than his wife performed a lot less than did his wife (H=39%, W=61%) whereas the husband whose occupational status was equal to or higher than his wife performed an equivalent share of housework to his wife (H=46%, W=54%,  $F=4.72$ ,  $p=.031$ ). One possible reason for this relationship is that deviant neutralization may be a mechanism both husbands and wives use to balance the incongruence between normative economic roles and their current economic status (Greenstein, 2000). Wives in the higher status than their husbands may try to neutralize their deviant identity by doing more housework, whereas lower-status husbands may try to neutralize their deviant identity by doing less housework.

In addition to income, occupation, and housework, the salient factors when the partners made justice evaluations were different for husbands and wives. Love and liking were essential resources for husbands in deciding whether a relationship was fair, whereas personal traits were the resources that had a significant impact on wives' justice judgments. Husbands who indicate greater love for their wives than their wives have for them tend to perceive injustice to themselves in the relationship. Francesca M. Cancian (1987) argues that the dominant definition of love in American culture is feminized. Love is identified with women and with qualities seen as feminine, such as tenderness and the expression of feelings. Women are thought to be more interested and more

skilled in love than men. Our results suggest that, at least in the early years, husbands are particularly dependent on their wives' love and thus seek to balance the discrepancy, at least in their own mind, by perceiving themselves under-benefited greatly from the relationship.

However, the finding regarding liking was not in accord with our expectations. Husbands who scored higher on the liking scale than their wives were more likely to feel benefited in the relationship. One possible explanation for this finding is that liking reflects the husbands' trust, admiration and respect for their spouses (Rubin, 1970). Thus the husband's perceptions of being benefited may stem from their confidence in their wives' capability to deal with the life events and provide the desired support for them. Such reliance increases men's dependence upon the women in their lives.

Finally, the data indicated that imbalance in personal traits will lead to wives' perceptions of injustice. The perceived balance or matching of personal attributes is associated with a couple's sense of marital justice, at least in the beginning stage of marriage. These data are consistent with a body of theory and research applying the matching law to mate selection processes. Specifically, individuals possessing approximately equal levels of personal attributes appear to be more likely to affiliate with one another in heterosexual dating and marriage (Murstein, 1972).

In sum, our research suggests that certain types of resources are more salient than others when newlywed couples evaluate the justice of their marital relationship. Moreover, when balance in the distribution of valued resources is obtained, individuals are more likely to perceive their marital relationship as fair. While the empirical literature has typically studied justice regarding the division of household labor, our results indicate that affection and personal traits also are the primary resources effecting justice judgments, at least in the initial phases of the marriage. These findings lend credence to the work of Blau (1964) and Foa and Foa (1980), who maintain that social assets (such as attraction, love,

and status) as well as economic resources represent valued resources within relationships and therefore serve as important bases of exchange and justice evaluations.

The current study also offers some insight into gender differences in perceptions of justice. Consistent with previous studies (Kollock et al., 1994), husbands perceived themselves as benefiting more from marriage than their wives. The data also suggest that Jessie Bernard's (1982) notion that men and women view their marriage differently and usually marriage is perceived more beneficial to men.

Moreover, our findings suggest that when evaluating justice in marriage husbands emphasize affection whereas wives focus on personal traits. The literature has documented such gender differences in heterosexual romantic love and the mate selection process. Men tend to be more romantic than women and tend to emphasize physical attractiveness for dating partners while women seem to prefer men of higher social and economic status and interpersonal understanding in the dating partner (Lindsey, 1997). Perhaps it is not surprising, albeit to our knowledge undocumented, that these patterns persist into marriage.

The data reported in this paper indicate that marital quality is decreased when wives, rather than husbands, perceive injustice to themselves in the relationship. Perceived injustice in marriages was also associated with increased anxiety for wives, but not for husbands. Consistent with the social exchange literature, we found that marital quality was associated with the perception of injustice if one is under-benefited in an exchange relationship (Adams, 1965; Berger, Zelditch, Anderson, & Cohen, 1972; Homans, 1974). However, our work found no negative consequence if one is over-benefited. In fact, individuals in the over-benefited and equitable relationship tend to feel satisfied. Thus, our results seem contrary to the assertion of George C. Homans (1974) that the beneficiaries of injustice will also suffer negative consequences. Further research is needed to ascertain the long-term effects that perceptions of injustice have upon individuals and the marital

relationship. Such research would be particularly critical in light of the significant ramifications that perceptions of injustice have for the wife's marital quality and psychological distress, as well as for the stability of these marriages in general.

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## 美國新婚夫妻的公平觀 ——社會交換理論的解釋

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### 摘 要

本研究以社會交換理論的論點來解釋新婚夫妻形成公平觀的原因及其所帶來的影響。文中以結構方程模式分析一九九一至一九九三年於美國華盛頓州連續進行三年研究中的第三波資料，探討一百六十二對新婚夫妻之資源分配與公平觀的關係，以及公平觀對婚姻品質和個人心理健康的影響。結果顯示，當個人在婚姻關係中所投入的資源越多，越容易在關係中產生不公平的感受。在不同的資源分配中，雙方在情感的投入及家務分工模式是丈夫用來判斷關係是否公平的重要因子；個人擁有的特質及家務分工模式是影響妻子在關係中感受公平與否的主要關鍵；而收入及職業地位則是透過影響家務分工模式間接影響夫妻的公平觀。當妻子在關係中感受到不公平，其婚姻品質容易降低，也較容易產生焦慮的徵兆。然而，丈夫的公平觀對其婚姻品質及焦慮狀況並無影響。

**關鍵詞：**公平觀、美國新婚夫妻、社會交換理論