

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

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