

CHAPTER 8

Intimate Relationships: A Perspective from Equity Theory

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Equity theorists have explored men's and women's reactions in a variety of casual encounters and equity principles have been found to be important in such diverse contexts as industrial relations, exploiter/victim relationships, philanthropist/recipient relationships, and the like (see Walster *et al.*, 1978 for a review of this research). Equity theory has proved to be surprisingly successful in predicting people's reactions in such casual interactions, but, until recently, researchers never explored whether or not Equity theory was equally successful in predicting men's and women's reactions in the most profoundly important of human interactions: intimate relationships.

In the last few years, however, a revolution has occurred. Social psychologists have begun to theorize about intimacy (e.g. Hatfield, in press; Kelley, 1979; Cook and McHenry, 1979; Walster and Walster, 1978); feminists agree that intimacy is a profoundly important concern (Firestone, 1970); Marxists have discovered it (e.g. Foucault, 1978); and even gerontologists have begun to recognize its importance (e.g. Huyck, 1977).

In this chapter, we will explore the insights that formal Equity theory gives us into romantic and marital relationships. Having briefly reviewed Equity theory in the first section we will go on to examine theorists' sharp disagreements as to whether or not Equity considerations should operate in intimate

relationships. Subsequently, we will review the current research which indicates that, indeed, considerations of fairness do seem to be critically important in intimate relationships, as in all other.

The Equity Formulation

Equity theory is a strikingly simple theory (more fully described in Walster *et al.*, 1978). It is comprised of four interlocking propositions:

- (I) Individuals will try to maximize their outcomes (where outcomes equal rewards minus punishments).
- (IIa) Groups can maximize collective reward by evolving accepted systems for equitably apportioning rewards and punishments among members. Thus, groups will evolve such systems of Equity and will attempt to induce members to accept and adhere to these systems.
- (IIb) Groups will generally reward members who treat others equitably, and generally punish members who treat other inequitably.
- (III) When individuals find themselves participating in inequitable relationships they will become distressed. The more inequitable the relationship, the more distress they will feel.
- (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 conceptual definition of equity

Equity theorists provide a precise conceptual definition of what is meant by an equitable relationship: an equitable relationship exists when the person evaluating the relationship — who could be Participant A, Participant B, or an outside observer — concludes that all participants are receiving equal *relative gains* from the relationship; i.e.

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

where I_A and I_B designate a scrutineer's perception of Person A and B's Inputs; $|I_A|$ and $|I_B|$ designate the *absolute value* of their Inputs (i.e. the perceived value of their Inputs, disregarding sign); O_A and O_B designate the scrutineer's perception of Person A and B's Outcomes. The exponents k_A and k_B take on the value +1 or -1, depending on the sign of A and B's Inputs and A and B's gains (Outcomes - Inputs). The value k_A or k_B is + if A or B make a positive contribution (+) and reap a gain (+). . . . or make a negative contribution (-) and incur a loss (-), from the relationship. Otherwise k_A or k_B is -.

Operational definitions of equity

Several theorists have developed scales to assess how equitable men and women perceive their intimate relationships to be and for this purpose the two most popular Equity scales are *The Traupmann-Utne-Hatfield (1978) Scale* and *The Hatfield (1978) Global Measure*. With the former scale subjects are asked to estimate how well they do (how good a deal they get) in relation to their partner in each of 25 areas of concern found to be more important to marriages (for example, personal concerns, emotional concerns and opportunities gained and lost); while the latter yields a single global estimation of the relationship.

Typically researchers have used scales such as these to determine whether intimates feel Overbenefitted, Equitably treated, or Underbenefitted in their most intimate of relationships.

The psychological consequences of inequity

From time to time, men and women find themselves caught up in relationships where they feel they are getting either far more or far less than they deserve. For example, one new mother whom we interviewed classified herself as "over-benefitted" (+3) on the *Hatfield (1978) Global Measure*. Soon after her child was born, she had had a nervous breakdown and had been "good for nothing" since then; she was deeply depressed, she had no energy, and her husband had been saddled with the care of their child while trying desperately to keep his faltering business afloat (-3). Another interviewee classified herself as "underbenefitted" (-2). She had tried to understand her husband, had worked hard to put him through school, but now felt really "ripped off" because the day he completed medical school he filed for divorce and her own plans to continue her education went down the drain.

According to Equity theory in such cases both the beneficiaries and the victims should feel uncomfortable about the iniquitous position, and, indeed

in studies of casual encounters, and in a few studies of intimate affairs, researchers have found that equity and distress are typically related as depicted in Fig. 1. (For reviews of this research, see Walster *et al.*, 1978, and Hatfield *et al.*, in press.) In such cases, Equity theory proposes that the over-benefitted person will feel guilty, whilst the underbenefitted person will feel angry.

Techniques for reducing the distress caused by inequity

Proposition IV proposes that people who find themselves caught up in inequitable relations will try to reduce their distress — their guilt or anger — by restoring equity to their relationships. There are only two ways that people can set things right: they can re-establish *actual* equity or *psychological* equity. In the first case they can inaugurate real changes in their relationships, e.g. the underbenefitted may well ask for more out of their relationships, or their overbenefitted partners may offer to try to give more. In the latter case couples may find it harder to change their behaviour than to change their minds and so prefer to close their eyes and to reassure themselves that “really, everything is in perfect order”.

At this point, Equity theorists confront a crucial question. Can they specify when people will try to restore actual equity to their relationships and when they will settle for restoring psychological equity instead? Equity theorists argue that people should follow a Cost/Benefit strategy in deciding how to respond. It has been found that decisions to respond to injustice by attempting to restore actual equity, by distorting reality, or by doing a little of both, depend on the costs and benefits that individuals expect will be associated with each strategy.

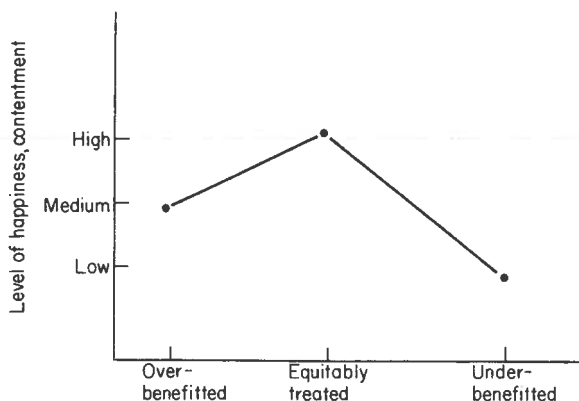


FIG. 1 The effect of equity on contentment / distress (after Austin 1974).

Of course, if couples find themselves enmeshed in inequitable relationships and cannot “set things right” — they have one last resort: they can abandon the relationship. Some couples “abandon” their relationship by withdrawing psychologically — they start spending less and less time with one another, and more and more time at work, with their children, or with friends; they have affairs. Sometimes couples make a more clear-cut break; they separate or divorce. Fuller details of these and other features are given in Walster *et al.*, 1978a.

Equity Theory and Intimate Relations

If one asks: “*Should* intimates be concerned about whether or not they are getting or giving their fair share in their love relationship?” most theorists find they have mixed feelings.

On the one hand, for most people, the family *is* “a haven in a heartless world” (Lasch, 1977). Zaretsky (1976), in his analysis of the place of the family in capitalist society, observes:

In addition, the family is the institution in which one’s personal uniqueness is central. It is the crucible in which our emotional life first takes shape and throughout life is the major institution in our society in which we expect to be recognized and cared for, for ourselves. . . . But even as adults, our “personal life” is confined to the family or to relationships — friendships, love affairs, communal life — that closely resemble it or are based upon it (p. 17).

Zaretsky points out that the family is the last refuge from the demands of capitalist society. So, in part, most of us feel that in a family, everyone is entitled to unconditional love; fairness should not “count” in love relations.

On the other hand, if intimates were *really* totally insensitive to issues of fairness, then intimate relationships could not survive, since real people are simply not willing to give and give with no thought of return. Hay and Horton (in press) go one step further: they argue that one should be suspicious of those who romanticize love relations. Paradoxically, they argue, such “romantics” may have a vested interest in mystifying love relations; as they wryly observe, one reason so many men can argue so eloquently that love should transcend concern with equity (transcend the minutiae of marriage contracts) is that they don’t want clean the bathroom. So there may be a certain logic to the argument that a high-flown concern with altruistic love may cloak a desire to maintain an inequitable *status quo*.

Equity theorists have predicted that equity considerations should have a critical impact on intimate relations at six different points and this can be expressed in terms of a number of hypotheses (Walster *et al.*, 1978a):

Hypothesis 1: Men and women should be most likely to continue to date, to live together and to marry, if they feel their relationships are equitable.

Hypothesis 2: Men and women in equitable relationships should be fairly content whilst men and women who feel they've received either far more, or far less, than they deserve, should be uncomfortable (the more inequitable their relationships, the more uncomfortable they should be).

Hypothesis 3: Intimate relationships which are perceived as equitable will be more satisfying overall than relationships in which men and women feel either overbenefitted or underbenefitted.

Hypothesis 4: Intimate relationships which are perceived as equitable will be more sexually fulfilling than relationships in which men and women feel either overbenefitted or underbenefitted.

Hypothesis 5: In all marriages there are certain crisis periods. For example: when a dating couple marries, moves in together, and begins to discover what marriage is really like; when their first child arrives; when the children leave home; when someone loses his or her job. . . . or retires. At such times of precipitous change, a couple may find that their once equitable relationship is now woefully unbalanced.

Hypothesis 6: Equitable relationships will be especially stable relationships.

Let us consider the data which exist to support, or to rebut, these six Equity hypotheses.

Equity theorists have accumulated considerable support for *Hypothesis 1* (see Walster *et al.*, 1978a; and Hatfield, in press). To consider a typical study: Walster *et al.*, (1978b) interviewed 537 college men and women who were casual or steady daters. Their first step was to find out how equitable couples perceived their relationships to be, using a measure which asks:

Considering what you put into your dating relationship, compared to what you get out of it. . . . and what your partner puts in compared to what (s)he gets out of it, how well does your dating relationship stack up?

Men and women are asked to estimate self Inputs, partner Inputs, self Outcomes, and partner Outcomes. From these estimates, men and women were classified as overbenefitted, equitably treated, or underbenefitted in their love affairs.

Walster *et al.* (1978b) attempted to assess whether or not the couples seemed to be moving towards more intimate relationships in two ways: (1) by asking couples how confident they were that their relationships would last, and (2) by asking couples how far they had progressed sexually. As predicted, the authors found that men and women in equitable relationships generally

believed their relationships would last for quite some time. They were confident that they would still be together “one year from now” and “five years from now”, and their confidence may well have been warranted. In a follow-up study (four months later) couples in equitable relationships *were* more likely to be still dating than were other couples. Both the overbenefitted (who would seem to have some reason to hope their relationships would last) and the underbenefitted (who would seem to have every reason to hope that something better would come along) were pessimistic about the future. If their relationships were not already in disarray, they expected they they soon would be.

Men’s and women’s perceptions of the equitability or inequity of their relationships seemed to have a considerable impact on how willing they were to chance a sexual relationship. Walster *et al.* (1978b) found that couples in equitable relationships had the most sexual relationships, generally including sexual intercourse. Both the greatly underbenefitted and greatly overbenefitted however tended to stop before “going all the way”.

The authors then asked respondents who *had* had intercourse, why they had gone so far. The participants in relatively equitable relations were most likely to say that they had intercourse because they *both* wanted to, (i.e. to say that “Mutual curiosity”, the fact that “We are/were in love”, “We like/liked each other”, or “Mutual physical desire, enjoyment” were their reasons for having intercourse). Those who felt extremely overbenefitted or extremely underbenefitted were less likely to say that sex was a joint decision.

Thus research in this area seems to suggest that in the casual and steady dating period, it is couples in equitable relationships who expect their relationships to evolve into permanent ones.

The prediction of *Hypothesis 2* is an intriguing one. It is easy to see why men and women who feel they are being exploited by their partners would be furious, but the other side of the coin is less obvious. Men and women who feel they are getting far *more* than they deserve are involved in inequitable relationships, too, and if Equity theorists are right, the overbenefitted should have mixed feelings about their excessively good fortune. On the one hand they may well be delighted to be receiving such benefits, but they know that they don’t deserve them and this should make them uncomfortable.

Several studies have explored these issues. Walster *et al.* (1978b) asked casually and steadily dating couples to estimate how equitable their relationships were on a global measure. They then assessed how contented the individuals were in their relationships via Austin’s (1974) measure of Contentment/Distress and found that men and women who were involved in relatively equitable relationships were far more content and happy than were their greatly underbenefitted or greatly overbenefitted peers. As might be expected, the *greatly* overbenefitted felt extremely guilty about their

favoured position, whilst the *greatly* underbenefitted felt extremely angry about the way they were being treated.

Traupmann (1978) and Utne (1978) interviewed a range of 118 newly wed couples from a variety of occupational backgrounds between three and six months after their marriage, the average age being around the mid-20s. They used an array of both global and detailed measures of perceived equitability, and Austin's (1974) Measure of Contentment/Distress. As predicted, the spouses who felt their relationships were equitable felt most content and happy and least angry and guilty in the relationship. Such data make it clear that even newly wed couples, who might be expected to be "honeymooning" for at least the first two months, are distressed by inequity. Together these two studies seem to suggest that from the dating years onwards, well into married life, couples are deeply concerned about the fairness or unfairness of their relationship.

To see whether this concern lasts throughout one's life or not, Traupmann and Hatfield (in press) interviewed 106 older women ranging in age from 50 to 82 years of age, using measures of equitability and contentment, but they found almost no differences between the women who felt overbenefitted, those who felt equitably treated, and those who felt underbenefitted. Virtually all of the women reported feeling very content and happy and not at all angry about their relationships. Although the overbenefitted were slightly distressed, and the underbenefitted even more distressed, by existing inequities, the predicted differences were not significant.

Because the studies have produced cross-sectional rather than longitudinal data we cannot be sure if this apparent lack of concern about equity reflects differences between young women's and older women's attitudes about how intimates *should* feel or if, after many years of marriage, intimates do become less concerned about issues of fairness. This question will remain unanswered until longitudinal studies on equity and marriage are completed.

Hypothesis 3: Intimate relationships which are perceived as equitable will be more satisfying than relationships in which men and women feel either overbenefitted or underbenefitted.

Do inequities in intimate relations have any effect on couple's *overall* satisfaction from them? Equity theory clearly predicts that marital inequity should detract from a couple's satisfaction with that relationship, but critics might argue that intimate relations are more complex than that. People may well be concerned about the equity/inequity of their relationship (as Hypothesis 2 suggests they are) but that will have little impact on their satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the relationship *as a whole*.

Recent studies both using dating couples (Traupmann *et al.*, in prepara-

tion) and using married couples (Traupmann, 1978; Utne, 1978) have shown clearly that partners' evaluations of Equity and their satisfaction are related. People in equitable relationships report the highest levels of satisfaction, those who felt overbenefitted came next, and those who felt underbenefitted were least satisfied and least happy with the relationship.

There is evidence, then, that inequities in intimacy are distressing and can influence the overall level of satisfaction which dating couples and newlyweds may derive from their partnerships. It is the Equitable intimate relations, not relationships in which the man or the woman has the upper hand, which seem to be most fulfilling for both men and women. Men and women feel uncomfortable receiving either far more or far less than they deserve. It is only very late in life, if ever, that couples cease to be concerned with whether or not their relationships are "fair".

Hypothesis 4: Intimate relationships which are perceived as equitable will be more sexually fulfilling than relationships in which men and women feel either overbenefitted or underbenefitted.

According to Equity theory, men's and women's perceptions that they are fairly/unfairly treated should have a considerable impact on their sexual relations such that couples in equitable relationships should feel fairly comfortable about their sexual relations whilst couples in inequitable relationships should not. But how does this relationship to sexuality come about? Many sociologists have argued that marital satisfaction and sexual satisfaction are linked in the following ways:

- (1) *Sexual satisfaction generates marital satisfaction.* It is argued here that sex is critically important to couples, that intensely passionate or companionate feelings contribute to marital happiness whilst routine, dismal, frustrating sex can threaten the best of relationships (see Kinsey *et al.*, 1948 and 1953; Bell, 1966; Hunt, 1974).
- (2) *Marital satisfaction generates sexual satisfaction.* Sex is a delicate interaction. If couples like or love one another, if they feel equitably treated, if they feel comfortable with one another, sex may go well. If couples dislike or hate one another, feel trapped in inequitable relationships, feel uncomfortable in one another's presence, their deepseated resentment or guilt may corrode their sexual encounters (see Berne, 1964; Hunt, 1974; Kinsey *et al.*, 1948 and 1953; Masters and Johnson, 1976).

Traupmann *et al.* (in preparation) interviewed 189 dating couples about their sexual relationships and measured the equity of the couple's

relationship, their level of overall sexual satisfaction and their feelings immediately after a sexual encounter. The results, however, were not totally consistent. Looking at men and women's estimates of their *overall* sexual satisfaction, there is no evidence that equity considerations are important in determining how satisfied couples are with their sexual relationships. It is only when we begin to ask about the specifics of sexuality — ask how psychologically satisfied they are by a given sexual encounter (how close and loving they feel immediately after a sexual encounter) and how physically satisfied they are with sex — that we secure any evidence that men and women care about equity. The results, then, provide only partial support for the contention that equity considerations do have some impact on men and women's sexual satisfaction in a marriage.

These latter results are however, buttressed by earlier research. Walster *et al.* (1978a) found that couples in equitable relationships had the most intensely sexual relations, and that most couples in equitable relationships were having sexual intercourse whilst couples in inequitable relationships were not. Taken together, then, these results provide a certain amount of support for the contention that equity considerations *might* be an important determinant of whether or not people engage in sexual behaviour at all and if they do, how satisfied they will be with their sexual encounters, though the data are not conclusive. In addition, there seems to be a consistent though statistically non-significant difference between men's and women's reactions to equity and sexuality (Hatfield *et al.*, in press). On the whole, results in this area are intriguing but at the moment inconclusive, and a great deal more research is required to provide a clear picture.

Hypothesis 5: In all marriages there are certain crisis periods. For example, when a dating couple marry, live together, and begin to discover what marriage is really like; when the first child arrives; when the children leave home; when someone loses his or her job. . . . or retires.

At such times of precipitous change, a couple may find that their once equitable relationship is now woefully unbalanced. Equity theorists would predict that if we contacted couples just before such crises, in the midst of such crises, and then again, after couples had a chance to deal with the crisis, we would find that the couples would have found the crisis period very unsettling, and worked hard to reestablish the equitableness of their relationship. . . . or that their relationships would be floundering.

Couples may *start off* in fairly well matched relationships (see Hypothesis 1), but sooner or later dramatic upheavals in the marital balance inevitably occur. One question that Equity theorists have asked is: what effects do such

wrenching changes in the equity of a relationship have on the dynamic equilibrium of a marriage? Equity theorists have maintained that such changes in a marriage's balance should send reverberations throughout the entire system. When couples are confronted with the fact that there is a gross imbalance in their relationship, they should try to set things right. They should: (1) try to make their relationship actually more equitable, (2) try to convince themselves (and their partners) that things are fairer than they seem, — or — if all else fails, (3) withdraw from their relationship.

Unfortunately when we turn to the effects of shifts in marital balance most of the evidence in support of the contention that couples *do* try to readjust their relationships is anecdotal. There are some data which suggest that when people's physical appearance changes drastically — through accident, plastic surgery, or dieting — their expectations may change too. For example, Jones (reported in Palmer, 1974) warned *Weight Watchers* magazine readers that:

Marriage, like all relationships, is a balance. When one partner is overweight, the fact has been considered, perhaps unconsciously, in setting up the balance. Obviously, when you remove the obesity, you upset the balance. The relationship shifts and takes on a different complexion.

In the same article, Palmer adds:

Gone are. . . . the attempts to buy love through acquiescence and the overweight's traditional don't-make-waves-they-may-throw-you-out policy. In their place comes a new pride, an awareness of rights and a tendency to speak up for those rights (pp. 23-50).

There is also a limited amount of survey data which support the contention that any change in the equity of a relationship affects the entire system. For example, the Depression afforded Komarovsky (1971) a tragic opportunity to study the impact of a dramatic change in the marital balance. Komarovsky reasoned that:

In the traditional patriarchal view of the family, the husband is expected to support and protect his wife. . . . she, in turn, is expected to take care of his household, to honor and obey him (p.2).

What happens, then, Komarovsky asked, when a man loses his job? Does he begin to lose authority?

During the Winter of 1935-36, Komarovsky contacted 58 families who were receiving public assistance. In all the families, before the Depression the husband had been the family's sole provider but when the Depression hit, all this changed: the men lost their jobs and were forced to go on relief. Komarovsky interviewed family members to find out what impact, if any,

this change had on the husband's and wife's relationship, and he found that, in 13 of the 58 families, when the husband lost his ability to support his family, he began to lose his authority.

Two major types of changes occurred in families. (1) In some families, the couple's relationship began to evolve into a more egalitarian one. For example, in one family, the man began, for the first time, to take on part of the household duties. In another family, a Protestant father who had forbidden his children to go to a Catholic school relented. (2) In a very few cases, the husbands' and wives' status was reversed and the dominant husband became totally subordinate. For example, in one family, so long as the husband was employed his wife had treated him with careful respect, but, once the economic depression hit, she no longer bothered to be so polite and began to blame her husband for his unemployment, to ignore his wishes, to complain about his behaviour, to argue with him, to nag him constantly, and to criticize him sharply even in front of the children.

There is further survey evidence that men's and women's economic contribution to a family determines their relative power . . . and that profound changes in the economic *status quo* produced equally profound changes in the relative power in a couple. For example, Cavan (1973), studying the effects of unemployment, found that men who become unemployed soon lost power in the family. Gillespie (1971) found that wives who work and thus have an independent source of income have more power than those who stay at home and have no independent income. Finally, after his studies of divorce, Goode (1956, p. 63) commented that "wilful failure in the role of breadwinner is often met by wilful destruction of the sexual and social unity of the marriage".

There is, then considerable *anecdotal* evidence that marital crises do send reverberations throughout the system and do provoke couples to try to set things right.

Hypothesis 6: Equitable relationships will be especially stable relationships.

According to Equity theory, if a couple's relationship becomes grossly inequitable, and the partners can envisage no way to set things right, then they should be tempted to abandon that relationship. Of course there are many ways of "withdrawing" from a relationship: for example, if casually dating couples are unhappy with a casual date, it's easy enough for them to put a swift end to things and, as we saw in discussing Hypothesis 1, most inequitable dating relationships do simply end. Once couples marry, however, things change. Marriages are supposed to be for "better or worse" and divorce is still costly in both emotional and financial terms (see Bohannan,

1971). Thus, many married men and women, upset by the marital give-and-take, withdraw *psychologically* from the situation — they bury themselves in their work, or give their all to their children, to their friends, or to backgammon. Yet, if a marital relationship is unbalanced enough, for long enough, couples do sometimes opt for separation or a divorce. (In 1973, for instance, in the United States, 913 000 couples opted for an annulment or a divorce and Udry, 1974, has estimated that 20-25% of first marriages end in annulment, desertion, or divorce.)

In the previously cited studies by Utne (1978) and Traupmann (1978) attempts were made to examine whether equitable marriages were more stable, and this was done by interviewing newlyweds and following them up a year later. It was found that immediately after their marriage, overbenefitted and equitably treated men and women were confident that their marriage would last, and only the underbenefitted were willing to entertain any doubts. One year later, however, both the overbenefitted *and* the underbenefitted had begun to worry that their relationship might not be a stable one. As one might expect, the underbenefitted were especially sceptical that things would last.

One source of instability, then, comes from within. Another may come from without. Hatfield *et al.* (1979) speculated that inequitable relationships may be fragile relationships for yet a second reason: Men and women who feel they are not getting their just deserts from one affair, may be especially likely to risk exploring a fleeting, or even a more permanent, love affair. To test this notion, they re-analysed some data collected by Berscheid *et al.* (1973) from a large sample of *Psychology Today* readers and formed support for the idea that equitable relations are more stable because couples in such relationships are extremely reluctant to rush into extramarital affairs. Both overbenefitted and equitably treated men and women were very reluctant to experiment with extramarital sex (on the average, they waited 12-15 years before chancing an extramarital involvement with someone else), while deprived men and women began exploring extramarital sex far earlier — only 9-11 years after marriage. Overbenefitted and equitably treated men and women had the fewest extramarital encounters (0-1); the deprived had the most extramarital liaisons (1-3). Again it would seem, then, that equitable relations are likely to be more stable than inequitable ones — since *both* partners are motivated to be faithful.

Future Directions

In general, it would seem that Equity theory does provide a convenient paradigm for examining romantic and marital relationships. The sparse data

which do exist provide at least suggestive evidence that Equity principles do operate in determining the choice of a mate and how partners get along, day-to-day and thereafter.

Clearly more, and more careful, research is needed in the whole area to resolve important outstanding issues; and when this is done it may well be found that both Equity theorists and their critics have been at least partially right — love relationships have both unique characteristics and important similarities to other kinds of relationship. Instead of merely continuing the debate, however, it may be more fruitful to change the focus of investigations and examine questions such as the following.¹

1. What sorts of *people* are especially concerned with equity? What kinds of people keep a careful, methodical count of who does what for whom, when? What kinds of people just drift along assuming that things will balance out somehow? Who is intensely upset by overbenefit — racked by guilt and shame? Who really only cares if they themselves are underbenefitted? Who becomes upset when they detect even a short-term inequity? Who takes a far longer perspective?

2. Under what *conditions* are people especially concerned with equity? Foucault (1978), for example, argues that in different eras there are different reigning paradigms: e.g. in one era, morality is seen as the proper guide to behaviour; whilst in other, more rationalistic eras, logic is critical. Was morality the reigning paradigm of the nineteenth century, and are rationalistic, economic principles seen as the proper guide for behaviour now?

We are hopeful that intimacy researchers will soon be on the way to finding out answers to these questions.

Acknowledgement

Research reported here was supported in part by National Institutes of Health Biomedical Research Grant and in part by HEW-AoA Grant #90-A-1230 for multidisciplinary research on Aging Women, awarded to the Faye McBeath Institute on Aging and Adult Life, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1977-1979.