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DOES EQUITY IN WAYS OF SHOWING LOVE MATTER FOR MARITAL SATISFACTION?²

The aim of this study was to test the predictions derived from the equity theory, social exchange principle and research dealing with marital climate about the relationship between equity in the ways of showing love between partners and marital satisfaction. The sample consisted of 302 Croatian married couples of different age (20-82 years) and from various urban/rural backgrounds. Marriage length varied between one month and 57 years. Along with asking about marital satisfaction, we administered The Ways of Showing Love Scale. Equity was assessed as a similarity between how much (in total and in every of the six specific ways) an individual shows love to his/her partner and his/her perception of how his/her partner shows love to him/her. According to equity theory, individuals who show and perceive a similar amount of love, no matter whether this amount is big or small, should be more satisfied with their relationship. Individuals who are underbenefited should be less satisfied, while individuals who are overbenefited should be somewhere in the middle. Results did not confirm this hypothesis. We found that both men and women with a high score on both showing and perceiving love are most satisfied with their marriage. Underbenefited and overbenefited individuals do not differ, and have somewhat lesser scores on marital satisfaction. Those with a low score on both showing and perceiving love are the least satisfied. The results suggest the importance of positive socio-emotional climate for marital satisfaction.

Keywords: equity theory, social exchange principle, marital satisfaction, ways of showing love, socio-emotional climate

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Introduction

According to social exchange theories, two things are important for people in intimate relationships: people care about how rewarding or punishing their relationships are, but they also care whether these relationships are fair and equitable (Hatfield, Rapson, & Aumer-Ryan, 2008). Social exchange theorists argue that all human relationships involve processes of exchanging activities that are rewarding for all involved. Rewards can be anything from commodities (e.g. money) to gratifying experiences (e.g. compliments, hugs) that we receive from others. Human interactions also encompass costs, which are punishing, undesirable experiences (e.g. criticism, cost of dinner on a date, or a black eye) (Miller, Perlman, & Brehm, 2007). Instead of labeling these rewards and costs, we can also call them benefits people receive from and contributions they put into a relationship. The main proposition of the theory is that people will look for, and stay in, relationships in which there is a maximum level of rewards (benefits) at a minimum level of costs (contributions). Researching how people exchange rewards and costs led to the formulation of interdependence theory (Kelley, 1979; Thibault & Kelley, 1959) and the conclusion that communication and exchanging resources are the processes through which relational partners become interdependent and committed to each other. Principles of social exchange are also the basis of Caryl Rusbult's (1980, 1983) investment model that explains why people stay or decide to leave a relationship. It is clear that this economical view of relationships can help explain a variety of relationship processes.

However, each of the two people that are in a close relationship (e.g. husband and wife or a pair of friends) puts into the relationship and reaps the rewards of that relationship. Walster, Walster, & Berscheid (1978) asked themselves how, in this complex situation, people decide whether they are getting what they deserve from a relationship. This led to the formulation of equity theory and a proposition that it is not enough to have high rewards and low costs, but we also have to perceive that we are getting a fair deal in comparison to our partner. In other words, people will perceive a relationship as equitable when the benefits they receive from the relationship are similar to the benefits they perceive their partner is receiving (Young & Hatfield, 2011). Applying propositions of Adams's (1965) social justice theory to intimate relationships, Walster et al. (1978) stated that people will be most satisfied in relationships in which there is proportional justice. Each partner should gain benefits from the relationship that are proportional to his or her contributions to it.

Theoretically, people can be in equitable relationships, or they can be under-benefited or over-benefited. A person is under-benefited if he or she contributes more but receives less than his or her partner. Someone will over-benefit

from a relationship if he or she is contributing less but receiving more than the partner. According to equity theory, all inequitable relationships cause distress that strains the relationship (Hatfield, Utne, & Traupmann, 1979; Walster et al., 1978). Under-benefited individuals feel sad, frustrated, angry and hurt because they receive less than their partner, and over-benefited individuals feel guilty because they are getting more than they feel they deserve (Guerrero, La Valley, & Farinelli, 2008; Sprecher, 1986). Studies that examined (in)equity in intimate relationships (Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985; Sprecher, 1988; vanYperen & Buunk, 1990, 1991; Walster et al., 1978) confirmed the prediction that individuals who reported under-benefit in their relationship were the most distressed, followed by over-benefited individuals (regardless of the high level of rewards they were receiving).

Many studies investigated the effect equity and fairness have on relationship satisfaction, commitment and stability. Lloyd, Cate, & Henton (1982) found that perceived equity was associated with higher relationship satisfaction among serious as well as casual daters. Sprecher (1988) also found equity to be important for relationship satisfaction, not just in dating relationships, but also for married couples. Further work on married couples showed that equity is tied to better marital quality for both men and women (DeMaris, 2007), and that husbands and wives who perceive equity or over-benefit are happier than those who perceive themselves as under-benefited (Buunk & Mutsaers, 1999; Guerrero et al., 2008). There is also a longitudinal study that found it was the perception of equity that led to more satisfaction over the course of a relationship, and not the other way around (vanYperen & Buunk, 1990). Also, married couples who reported their relationship as equitable seem to be more committed to their relationship than couples who feel their relationship is inequitable (Sabatelli & Cecil-Pigo, 1985). Not only are couples in equitable relationships more committed, their relationships are also characterized by more positive emotional experiences (Sprecher, 1986) and more social support (Sprecher, 1988). It also seems that being in an equitable relationship reduces the likelihood of relationship dissolution. For instance, several studies with couples and friends found that people in equitable relationships use more relational maintenance behavior than those in inequitable relationships (Canary & Stafford, 2001; Stafford & Canary, 1991, 2006). Equitable couples were especially likely to: make assurances such as talk about the couple's future, act cheerful, optimistic and compliment each other, engage in more routine, mundane talk and disclose more personal information. All this clearly supports predictions of equity theory.

However, in spite of compelling evidence that ties equity to various positive processes in relationships, studies that directly compared equity to the level of rewards and quality of outcomes people receive painted a different picture. Being under-benefited is mostly associated with lower satisfaction and negative

relational outcomes, but being over-benefited does not always lead to reduced satisfaction (Buunk & Mutsaers, 1999; Sprecher, 2001). There is also considerable evidence that a high level of rewards (that outweigh the costs) is a more important single predictor of relationship satisfaction than equity (Cate, Lloyd, & Henton, 1985; Cate, Lloyd, & Long, 1988; Lawrance & Byers, 1995; Michaels, Acock, & Edwards, 1986; Michaels, Edwards, & Acock, 1984; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986). In these studies, people were most satisfied in relationships in which they received the highest rewards, and as long as one's own benefits were high enough it did not matter what the costs were, or what the partner was getting out of the relationship. Greater importance of rewards over equitable exchange seems to be especially salient for married individuals. Fairness and equity seem to be more important in the beginning of the relationship and during the later phase of deterioration or decline of couple's interconnectedness, while married couples seem to be less bothered by momentary unfairness, confident that „it will all work out in the end“ (Hatfield et al., 2008). Also, equity is only a minor issue when people are content, but is more important when people are dissatisfied with their relationships (Holmes & Levinger, 1994) and married couples that decide to participate in research studies are usually relatively satisfied with their marriages.

Some authors took issue with the economic view of close, loving relationships and argued that exchange principles do not apply to intimate relationships (Clark & Mills, 1979; 1993). They made the distinction between exchange relationships (e.g. business partners) and communal relationships (e.g. marriage). In exchange relationships when we do someone a favor, we expect them to do something for us in return. In these relationships we don't like owing others so we repay favors quickly, and we monitor both our and the other's contributions making sure that the overall balance remains at zero (Miller et al., 2007). But when we are in an intimate relationship, we do not monitor every single contribution closely, because we are more concerned with the welfare of our partner. Clark & Mills (2011) emphasize that in communal relationships people are governed by responsiveness to each other needs and thus don't pay much attention to everyday tit-for-tat exchanges. Margaret Clark and her colleagues showed that when we like someone, or when we are dependent on someone, our exchanges will be guided by our concerns of the other's needs.

One other important question relates to cultural differences regarding the importance of equity for relationship satisfaction. Studies conducted in the United States indicate that couples consider social justice to be crucial, and considerations of equity have been found to determine who falls in love with whom, mate selection, sexual satisfaction, willingness for extramarital affairs (see Hatfield et al., 2008 for a review). But the notion of social justice in the U.S. is tied to the dominant view of U.S. capitalism – „the more time and energy you invest, the more you're entitled to“ (Aumer-Ryan, Hatfield, & Frey, 2007). Surprisingly little

studies have been conducted outside the US (with the exception of studies by Bram Buunk and Nico Van Yperen in the Netherlands), and there are even fewer studies conducted in collectivistic cultures of East Asia, or in countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Individualistic cultures (USA, Canada, Northern and Western Europe) emphasize personal goals (Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990) so it is not surprising that considerations of equity are so important. But in collectivistic cultures, which insist individual members to place their personal needs second to those of the group, we would not expect individuals to value equity and fairness so highly. So far, research findings indicate that equity is not as important in Korea (Westerman, Park, & Lee, 2007). Yum and Canary (2003) found that the link between equity and relationship commitment was strongest in the United States, followed by Spain, but there was no association between the two in China, Japan, South Korea and The Czech Republic. However, Aumer-Ryan et al. (2007) found participants from United States, Australia, United Kingdom, Phillipines, China, Malaysia, Sweden, and Germany all to value equity as being „important“ or „very important“ for relationships, and that participants from Hawaii (both European-American and Japanese) and from Jamaica were all the most satisfied when in equitable in comparison to inequitable relationships. Clearly, current findings are mixed, and further research is needed, especially in Eastern European countries. Countries of East Europe are especially interesting since they cannot be characterized as neither completely individualistic nor completely collectivistic. Their cultural heritage involves both set of values – from the years spent under socialism and the communist regime come the collectivistic values and individualistic values stem from the ancient Greek and roman influences and the recent switch to open markets and capitalism (Nisbett, Choi, Peng, & Norenzayan, 2001). It is especially interesting to investigate predictions of equity theory and social exchange theories in the Croatian culture, since Croatia is situated on the border between Central and East Europe.

Some studies conducted in Croatia so far have found that married couples are concerned with equity, at least with equity in the division of household labor and child care tasks (Bartolac, Kamenov & Petrak, 2011; Kamenov, Jelić, Tadinac, & Hromatko, 2007). In general, couples who share their tasks in an equitable manner are happier, more satisfied and more committed to their marriages (e.g. Canary & Stafford, 1992; Zimmerman, Haddock, Curreent, & Ziemba, 2003), and the aforementioned studies show that this is also the case for Croatian couples. However, equity could be more important in some domains than others. Division of household labor and child care seem to be especially important, since research findings in this area are the most robust (Mikula, 1998).

In this study we decided to focus on the associations between social exchange, equity and relationship satisfaction among Croatian married couples in the context of ways in which married couples show love to each other. Studies on emotional

climate in marriage have shown the importance of exchanging more positive than negative interactions between partners for their marital satisfaction (for a review, see Caughlin & Huston, 2006). Furthermore, it is the level of positive interactions that proved to be the most important for relationships well-being. With the same level of negative interactions, couples are more satisfied if the level of positive interactions is high than if the level of positive interactions is low (e.g. Huston & Vangelisti, 1991; Jelić, Kamenov, & Huić, 2012; Vangelisti & Huston, 1994). However, the question that remained to be answered is does equity in this exchange matter, or is it just the overall level of positive interactions that counts, no matter whether both partners contribute to it equally or not.

In order to measure how (in)equitable a relationship is studies mostly use a global measure of equity (e.g. „Are you getting a better, worse, or equally good deal from your relationship as your partner?“). In our study (in)equity was assessed indirectly, based on the level of showing love to one's partner, and the level of the perception of our partner's ways of showing love to us. Although this might seem somewhat unconventional, we argue that it is safe to assume that if one partner is showing more love than perceiving his/her spouse is showing back, then that partner is clearly worse off (under-benefited). If one partner perceives that he/she is receiving more love than he/she is showing, that partner is clearly better off (over-benefited). Furthermore, even if we are measuring equity indirectly, we are still making our inferences based on partners' perception – how they themselves see their own love acts and how they themselves see their partners love acts. In doing this we kept in accordance with equity theory propositions that emphasize the subjective perception and not reality to be the most important thing when deciding whether a relationship is equitable.

Investigating social exchange and equity in the context of ways of showing love is interesting because of several reasons. First, to the best of our knowledge no study so far, when examining social exchange and equity, used love acts as proxies for relationship contributions. Second, the scale used to investigate ways of showing love measures love acts through communal behavior, self-disclosure, sacrifice, verbal and physical affection, sexual activities, domestic work and practical help. It is roughly comparable to the multi-method measure of equity (Walster et al., 1978) and reflects all the areas involved in the marital give and take (emotional concerns like expressing love, showing affection verbally, physically and through sexual activities, showing concern for partners problems, responding to partners needs and day-to-day concerns like household responsibilities, financial help, sharing activities, remembering special occasions, etc.) which all proved to be most important for the perception of equity in the relationship (Smith & Schroeder, 1984). Third, whenever determining how equitable a relationship is, one must take into account both the general level of equity (the overall assessment of balance between two people's benefits and contributions), and the specific level of

equity (balance in a specific area). A relationship can be unbalanced and unfair in certain areas, but still be perceived as equitable in general (Guerrero, Andersen, & Afifi, 2011). The scale and design used in this study enables us to investigate effects of both the total number of ways of showing love, as well as the effects of specific ways of showing love.

In the present study we focus on two goals. The first goal is to examine whether married couples who perceive their relationship as equitable in overall levels of showing love also perceive equity in all the specific types of showing love. As predicted by equity theory, we expect to find that although the marriage as a whole seems to be equitable, that does not mean that there is equity in all the ways of showing love. We presume that showing love is to some extent gender specific, and that women will be more under-benefited than men when it comes to showing love through verbal affection and domestic work, and that men will feel more under-benefited than women when it comes to showing love through physical affection and chivalry, but that it will all level out in the end.

The other goal is to find out what matters more for marital satisfaction: equity in perceived and showed love or the absolute level of showing love between partners, regardless if both partners contribute equally. If we follow the propositions derived from equity theory, we would expect individuals who show and perceive a similar amount of love to be the most satisfied with their relationship, no matter whether this amount is big or small. Individuals who are under-benefited should be less satisfied, while individuals who are over-benefited should be somewhere in the middle. On the other hand, the main social exchange principle advocates for the importance of the overall ratio between rewards and costs, and presumes that a person is most satisfied in a relationship where the perceived level of rewards is higher than the level of costs, meaning that over-benefited individuals should be the most satisfied, and under-benefited the least. Finally, according to research on socio-emotional climate, as well as available studies that directly compared perception of equity to the overall level of rewards in relationships the level of positive interactions matters more than fairness, and individuals who show and perceive a high number of ways of showing love should be the most satisfied, and the individuals who show and perceive a low number of ways of showing love, although equitable, should be the least satisfied. Since our participants are married (in a long-lasting communal relationship) and live in a non-western country, and since we address showing love between partners and not, for example, division of labor, we expect to find the latter.

Method

Participants

A total of 604 men and women (302 married couples) from Croatia participated in the study. Age ranged from 20-82 years. Length of marriage varied between one month and 57 years. 80% of couples have kids. Half of our participants have high school degrees, and the other half hold college/university degrees. A little over a third of the sample (38.4%) lives in a large city (over 500.000 citizens), 8.3% live in a city (up to 500.000 citizens), 22.1% come from big towns (up to 100.000 citizens), 14.5% come from small towns (up to 10.000 citizens) and 16.8% live in a village/in the country. In 67% of couples both spouses are employed (dual-earner families). The most of participants estimated their socio-economic status as average.

Instruments

Happiness and satisfaction with marriage were assessed with a global, one-item measure each ("How happy are you in your marriage?" and "In general, how satisfied are you with your marriage?"). Participants responded on a 1 (not at all) to 9 (extremely) scale. Measures of happiness and satisfaction correlated highly for both men and women ($r_{\text{men}} = .87$; $r_{\text{women}} = .92$) so we decided to only use satisfaction as an outcome variable.

The Ways of Showing Love Scale, constructed for the purpose of this research, measures how men and women show love in romantic relationships. The items describe 40 specific, both expressive and instrumental, ways in which a person can show love to someone. It has two forms with the same content: (1) How do I show love to my partner?; (2) How does my partner show love to me?. For each item, participants answer how characteristic it is for them to show love in a certain way; or, in the other form of the scale, how characteristic it is for their spouse to show love in a certain way. Responses are given on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (not at all characteristic) to 5 (extremely characteristic). The scale is multidimensional, but it is also possible to use the total score as a measure of how many ways of showing love are characteristic for an individual. The overall score ranges from 40 to 200, and is highly reliable (overall $\alpha_{\text{me}} = .95$; overall $\alpha_{\text{partner}} = .94$). Specific dimensions together with their reliabilities are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Dimensions and reliabilities of Ways of showing love scale

Dimensions	Item	Number of items	α_{me}	$\alpha_{partner}$
Communal	"I try to fulfill his/her wishes"	8	.84	.90
Emotional Openness and Support	"I always find time for him/her"	9	.90	.94
Physical Affection	"with the way I look at him/her"	7	.91	.92
Verbal Affection	"I tell him I love him/her"	8	.87	.90
Domestic Work	"I cook what he/she likes"	3	.68	.75
Practical Help	"I drive him/her around where ever he/she needs to go"	5	.71	.75

Assessment of equity. Equity was assessed as a similarity between how much (in total and in every of the six specific ways) an individual shows love to his/her partner and his/her perception of how his/her partner shows love to him/her. Based on their results on both forms of the Ways of showing love scale participants were coded as: (1) „equitable with high rewards“ - both the individual result for showing love and the perception of the partner’s ways of showing love by the same individual over the median; (2) „equitable with low rewards“ - both the individual result for showing love and the perception of the partner’s ways of showing love by the same individual under the median; (3) „over-benefited“ - the individual result for showing love under the median and the perception of the partner’s ways of showing love for the same individual over the median; and (4) „under-benefited“ - the individual result for showing love over the median and the perception of the partner’s ways of showing love by the same individual under the median.

Procedure

We approached couples in their homes and ensured that husbands and wives filled out the questionnaire independently of each other. After completing the questionnaire they were instructed to seal them in an envelope provided by the researchers, without showing it to their spouse.

Results

Descriptives

Results presented in Table 2 suggest that our participants show love to their spouses in many different ways. Participants also perceive they receive a lot of love from their spouses. All the average results, both for self-perception and for perception of partner, are above the midpoint of the scale, with self-reports being somewhat higher than reports for spouses. These high results for showing love are in accordance with those for marital satisfaction, showing that the couples in our sample are, on average, highly satisfied with their marriage.

Expectedly, women are more inclined than men to show love by being emotionally open and supportive and through domestic work. At the same time, men are more inclined than women to show love with physical affection and by offering practical help. In addition to these, two more gender differences were found for perception of partner's ways of showing love: men perceive their wives to show love more by being communal and by verbally expressing their affection than vice versa.

When it comes to the total number of ways of showing love, a little over 70% of both men and women seem to be in equitable relationships (see Table 3). However, only half of those equitable relationships are characterized by a high level of rewards. About 11% of women and 14% of men feel over-benefited and about 15% of both women and men feel under-benefited when it comes to the overall showing love between partners. When we look at the specific dimensions of showing love, in between 70% and 80% of participants are in equitable relationships regarding communal behavior, emotional openness and support, physical and verbal affection. However, when we look at instrumental factors such as domestic work (e.g. showing love through cooking or doing housework) and practical help (e.g. showing love by running errands, driving around etc.) percentages go down. About 60% of men and women are in equitable relationships when it comes to practical help, whereas only 44% of both men and women are in equitable relationships when domestic work is concerned. Consequently, between 20% and 30% of both men and women fall into either the over-benefited or the under-benefited category on these two instrumental factors.

Table 2

Descriptives and gender differences in ways of showing love and marital satisfaction

	Gender	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>
How I show love to my partner				
Total ways of showing love	M	150.48	25.020	0.316
	W	149.73	25.515	
Communal Behavior	M	3.74	0.643	-0.504
	W	3.77	0.669	
Emotional Openness and Support	M	4.04	0.673	-4.250**
	W	4.27	0.672	
Physical Affection	M	3.91	0.840	4.975**
	W	3.55	0.959	
Verbal Affection	M	3.44	0.867	0.011
	W	3.44	0.909	
Domestic Work	M	3.30	0.996	-15.762***
	W	4.39	0.663	
Practical Help	M	3.88	0.720	11.532**
	W	3.13	0.872	
How my partner shows love to me – result refer to each genders' perception of the partners				
Total ways of showing love	M	144.31	30.870	1.905
	W	139.41	32.101	
Communal Behavior	M	3.6	0.815	3.567**
	W	3.35	0.866	
Emotional Openness and Support	M	4.06	0.809	3.728**
	W	3.79	0.910	
Physical Affection	M	3.46	1.004	-3.230**
	W	3.73	1.040	
Verbal Affection	M	3.34	0.995	2.088*
	W	3.17	0.975	
Domestic Work	M	4.35	0.677	20.687**
	W	2.91	1.005	
Practical Help	M	3.01	0.945	-8.760**
	W	3.65	0.848	
Satisfaction with marriage				
Marital satisfaction	M	7.51	1.611	2.548**
	W	7.13	1.885	

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 3

Percentages and gender differences in categories of equity ($N_{women} = 302$; $N_{men} = 302$)

Ways of showing love	Gender	Equitable high rewards	Equitable low rewards	Over-benefitted	Under-benefitted	χ^2
Total number of ways	M	38.2%	33.6%	14%	14.3%	n.s.
	W	37.1%	37.1%	11%	14.7%	
Communal behavior	M	37.2%	31.9%	13%	17.9%	n.s.
	W	38.1%	26.1%	14.7%	21.1%	
Emotional openness and support	M	40.9%	35.5%	10.3%	13.3%	n.s.
	W	39.1%	35.8%	13%	12%	
Physical affection	M	37.9%	32.2%	14%	15.9%	29.56***
	W	46.2%	24.4%	24.1%	5.4%	
Verbal affection	M	34.7%	34%	17.7%	13.6%	79.15***
	W	21.4%	47.2%	1%	30.4%	
Domestic work	M	25%	19.3%	25.9%	29.2%	n.s.
	W	25.1%	19.1%	27.4%	28.4%	
Practical help	M	30.9%	25.6%	21.6%	21.9%	n.s.
	W	33.4%	29.1%	18.1%	19.4%	

*** $p < .001$

Although there are gender differences in showing love, where showing love with domestic work is more characteristic of women, and showing love with practical help is more characteristic of men, we found no gender differences in distribution of equity categories for either instrumental factor of showing love ($\chi^2_{domestic\ work}(3, 600) = 0.18, n.s.$; $\chi^2_{practical\ help}(3, 600) = 2.39, n.s.$). Roughly the same number of men and women are in an equitable relationship with a high level of rewards, in an equitable relationship with a low level of rewards, under-benefitted and over-benefitted.

There were also no significant gender differences in distribution of equity categories for the total ways of showing love ($\chi^2(3, 600) = 1.63, n.s.$), communal behavior ($\chi^2(3, 600) = 2.87, n.s.$) or emotional openness and support ($\chi^2(3, 600) = 1.27, n.s.$). But we did find significant gender differences for both verbal and physical affection as ways of showing love. In line with our expectations women tend to feel

more over-benefited and men more under-benefited when it comes to physical affection, and the opposite is true for verbal affection.

Is overall equity tied with equity in all specific areas?

Our first research question was to assess whether partners who perceive that they are in an equitable relationship necessarily perceive equity in specific areas of showing love. In order to investigate this, we focused only on marriages that were considered equitable in terms of the overall number of ways of showing love and compared participants' self-reports on showing love with their perception of how their partner shows love to them on each specific dimension of showing love. Given some gender differences in typical ways of showing love, we did this separately for men and women. Furthermore, keeping in mind that some studies showed that individuals who give and receive a lot of rewards/positive interactions in their relationships are less concerned with equity, we performed separate analyses for equitable marriages with high level of rewards, and for equitable marriages with low level of rewards.

Results show that even in equitable marriages men and women can feel over-benefited or under-benefited in specific areas (e.g. specific dimensions of the ways of showing love). Being equitable in the ways of showing love is not about showing and receiving the same amount of love on all dimensions. As we can see in table 4, there are significant differences between showed and perceived love in almost every area, with husbands' perception mirroring the perception of wives. Men who are in equitable marriages with high level of rewards still feel under-benefited when it comes to showing love through physical affection and instrumentally by running errands and being chivalrous („practical help”). At the same time they feel over-benefited when it comes to self-disclosure and supportive behaviors and showing love instrumentally by engaging in domestic work (see Figure 1). Consequently, women who are in an overall equitable marriage feel under-benefited when it comes to emotional openness and support, verbal affection and domestic work, but over-benefited when it comes to physical affection and practical help (Figure 2). It seems that each spouse contributes to the relationship with certain specific ways of showing love, that in the end seem to level out.

We found a similar pattern of results for those in equitable marriage with low levels of rewards (Figures 1 and 2), but with somewhat larger differences between one's own ways of showing love and the perception of their partner's ways of showing love. The most obvious discrepancy is the one on domestic work, which reflects the perception of both men and women that wives show love to their husbands mostly by “keeping hearth and home”, while husbands don't use that area for showing love. However, two results obtained in this category of couples

differ from the pattern obtained for couples with high level of rewards. As we can see in Table 4, both husbands and wives perceive that they themselves show more love with communal behavior and displays of verbal affection than their partners show back to them. As these two ways of showing love can be considered as implicitly most related to the level of love in a relationship, it is not surprising that both spouses from couples with low level of rewards perceive themselves under-benefited in those areas.

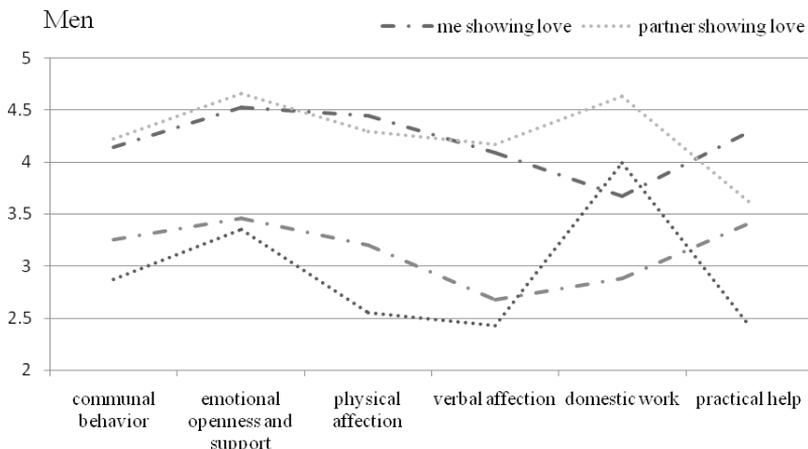


Figure 1. Profile of differences between characteristic ways of showing love and perception of partner's ways of showing love for husbands in equitable marriages with a high and low total ways of showing love

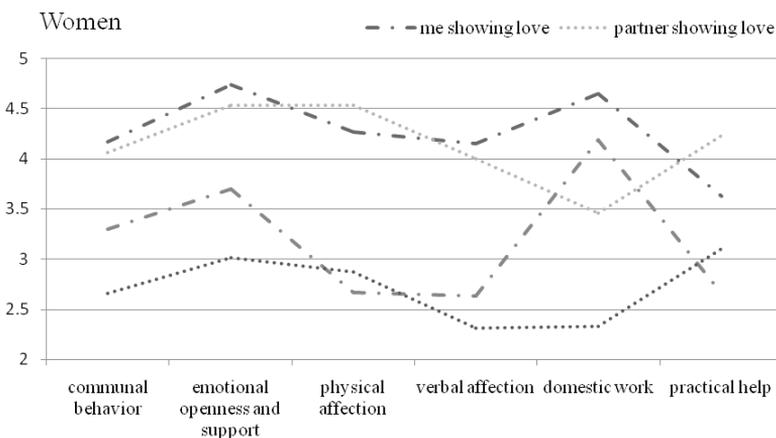


Figure 2. Profile of differences between characteristic ways of showing love and perception of partner's ways of showing love for wives in equitable marriages with a high and low total ways of showing love

Table 4

Paired samples t-test for husbands and wives in equitable marriages with a high/low level of showing love

Ways of showing love	Equitable with high rewards				Equitable with low rewards			
	Husbands		Wives		Husbands		Wives	
	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>
Communal Behavior	-1.727	114	1.850	110	5.183**	111	9.185**	110
Emotional Openness and Support	-4.171**	114	6.480**	110	1.697	111	10.234**	110
Physical Affection	3.101**	114	-4.696**	110	8.765**	111	-2.716**	110
Verbal Affection	-1.668	114	3.334**	110	3.814**	111	5.551**	110
Domestic Work	-10.408**	114	11.364**	110	-9.092**	111	16.039**	110
Practical Help	8.641**	114	-7.716**	110	11.046**	111	-4.818**	110

** $p < .01$

Equity and relationship satisfaction

Our second goal was to investigate the association between equity and marital satisfaction. We checked for differences between four categories of equity in relationships (equitable with high rewards, equitable with low rewards, under-benefited, over-benefited) in overall marriage satisfaction. We conducted the analyses for the total ways of showing love in marriage as well as for each specific dimension of showing love.³ Results of one-way analysis of variances are shown in Tables 5 and 6.

³ Given some already mentioned gender differences in ways of showing love we did first include gender as a second factor in the analysis of variance. Since there were no significant gender*equity interactions, for reasons of clarity, we decided to show only the one-way ANOVA results. Also, because of the temporal variation of the importance of equity (Hatfield, Rapson, and Aumer-Ryan, 2008), we included the length of marriage as a covariate. ANCOVA showed that all results are independent of length of marriage so we present only the ANOVA data.

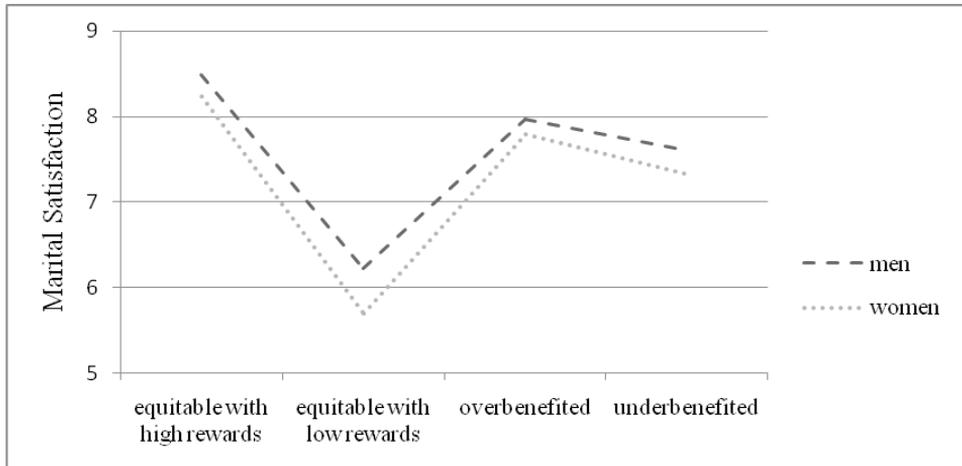


Figure 3. Differences between categories of equity in satisfaction with marriage for total ways of showing love

Table 5

Differences between categories of equity in satisfaction with marriage for total ways of showing love ($N_{men} = 302$; $N_{women} = 302$)

Gender	Categories of equity	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Post-hoc</i>
Men	1 - equitable with high rewards	8.49	0.64	53.38**	1-2**, 1-4**; 2-3**, 2-4**
	2 - equitable with low rewards	6.22	1.84		
	3 - overbenefited	7.97	0.79		
	4 - underbenefited	7.61	1.23		
Women	1 - equitable with high rewards	8.24	0.84	52.98**	1-2**, 1-4*; 2-3**, 2-4**
	2 - equitable with low rewards	5.70	2.19		
	3 - overbenefited	7.79	0.82		
	4 - underbenefited	7.33	1.16		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 6
Differences between categories of equity in satisfaction with marriage for different dimensions of showing love ($N_{men} = 302$; $N_{women} = 302$)

	Gender	Categories of equity	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>Post-hoc</i>
Communal behavior	Men	1 - equitable with high rewards	8.47	0.66	41.64**	1-2**; 1-4**; 2-3**; 2-4**
		2 - equitable with low rewards	6.34	1.92		
		3 - overbenefited	8.00	0.79		
		4 - underbenefited	7.30	1.33		
	Women	1 - equitable with high rewards	8.15	0.95	37.34**	1-2**; 1-4**; 2-3**; 2-4**
		2 - equitable with low rewards	5.67	2.32		
		3 - overbenefited	7.57	1.32		
		4 - underbenefited	6.77	1.80		
Emotional openness and support	Men	1 - equitable with high rewards	8.49	0.69	48.30**	1-2**; 1-4**; 2-3**; 2-4**
		2 - equitable with low rewards	6.31	1.86		
		3 - overbenefited	7.74	0.86		
		4 - underbenefited	7.59	1.13		
	Women	1 - equitable with high rewards	8.18	0.85	54.48**	1-2**; 1-4**; 2-3**; 2-4**
		2 - equitable with low rewards	5.63	2.09		
		3 - overbenefited	7.90	0.99		
		4 - underbenefited	7.15	1.67		
Physical affection	Men	1 - equitable with high rewards	8.44	0.67	46.26**	1-2**; 1-4**; 2-3**; 2-4**
		2 - equitable with low rewards	6.23	1.91		
		3 - overbenefited	8.05	0.73		
		4 - underbenefited	7.40	1.37		
	Women	1 - equitable with high rewards	8.12	0.93	62.55**	1-2**; 1-3**; 1-4**; 2-3**; 2-4**
		2 - equitable with low rewards	5.16	2.40		
		3 - overbenefited	7.29	1.13		
		4 - underbenefited	6.73	1.03		
Verbal affection	Men	1 - equitable with high rewards	8.40	0.72	43.51**	1-2**; 2-3**; 2-4**
		2 - equitable with low rewards	6.24	1.89		
		3 - overbenefited	8.00	0.84		
		4 - underbenefited	7.69	1.28		
	Women	1 - equitable with high rewards	8.28	0.84	30.53**	1-2**; 2-4**
		2 - equitable with low rewards	6.15	2.20		
		3 - overbenefited	7.00	1.00		
		4 - underbenefited	7.80	0.97		

Domestic work	Men	1 - equitable with high rewards	8.09	1.29	12.34**	1-2**; 1-4*; 2-3**; 2-4*
		2 - equitable with low rewards	6.53	2.12		
		3 - overbenefited	7.86	1.12		
		4 - underbenefited	7.32	1.54		
Domestic work	Women	1 - equitable with high rewards	7.99	0.98	18.28**	1-2**; 1-4**; 2-3**; 2-4**
		2 - equitable with low rewards	5.75	2.43		
		3 - overbenefited	7.47	1.54		
		4 - underbenefited	6.91	1.89		
Practical help	Men	1 - equitable with high rewards	8.37	0.77	23.99**	1-2**; 1-3*; 1-4*; 2-3**; 2-4**
		2 - equitable with low rewards	6.42	1.96		
		3 - overbenefited	7.53	1.38		
		4 - underbenefited	7.58	1.45		
Practical help	Women	1 - equitable with high rewards	7.99	1.03	24.96**	1-2**; 1-4**; 2-3*; 3-4*
		2 - equitable with low rewards	5.98	2.35		
		3 - overbenefited	7.81	1.16		
		4 - underbenefited	6.75	1.79		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

According to equity theory, those in equitable categories should be more satisfied than those in inequitable categories, with under-benefited individuals being the least satisfied. On the other hand, according to the general principle of social exchange theories that emphasizes the ratio of rewards and costs, we would expect those who receive the minimum level of rewards (e. g, under-benefited) to be the least satisfied and those who feel over-benefited to be the most satisfied. Finally, according to available studies and research on socio-emotional climate in marriage, it is couples where both partners show little or no love to their spouse that are the least satisfied in their relationships and marital satisfaction should rise with rewards coming from at least one partner and being highest for equitable marriages with high level of rewards. Our results, for the total ways of showing love (see Figure 3) and all the specific ways of showing love speak in favor of the third hypothesis.

Although in an equitable relationships, both men and women that are in relationships where showing love is low (e.g. equitable with low rewards) are the least satisfied with their marriages. At the same time, those in equitable relationships where there is a high level of rewards are the most satisfied. We found no significant differences between those in equitable relationships with a high level of showing love from both partners and those in inequitable over-benefited relationships, which speak against the equity theory predictions. Most surprisingly, we found no significant differences between those in over-benefited and under-benefited relationships. When it comes to marital satisfaction individuals who

are either under-benefited or over-benefited in terms of showing love (both the total number and all the specific love acts) are in between those whose marriages are characterized by a lot of showing love from both partners, and those whose marriages are characterized by a low level of love acts from both partners. These findings speak in favor of the marriage climate hypothesis.

Discussion

In this study we investigated equity in the ways of showing love in marriage. Our aim was also to test the predictions derived from the equity theory, social exchange principle and research dealing with marital climate about the relationship between equity and marital satisfaction.

Marriages that we investigated in this study seem to be fairly equitable, both in terms of the total number of love acts and the specific ways of showing love. Roughly in between of 60 and 80% of husbands and wives seem to be in equitable marriages. In between 11 and 15% of men and women seem to feel over-benefited and about the same percent feel under-benefited when it comes to the total number of ways of showing love in their marriages. When it comes to specific ways of showing love, numbers of those who perceive themselves as either over-benefited or under-benefited vary from 1% to 30% depending on the specific dimension of showing love. For example, only 5% of wives perceive they are showing love with hugs, kisses and sexual activities more than their husbands are. At the same time 16% of husbands perceive themselves as under-benefited in showing love by physical affection. This is in accordance with both gender stereotypes and the finding that showing love with physical affection (mainly sexual activities) is more characteristic for men than for women. But, it is interesting how, in spite of no significant gender differences in showing love by being verbally affectionate (e.g. saying „I love you“, writing love notes etc), there are gender differences in perception of equity. Only 1% of women feel they are over-benefited when it comes to verbal affection. At the same time, 30% of wives feel under-benefited in comparison to only 13.6% of husbands. This is in accordance with the stereotypical expectation that verbal affection is a woman's way of showing love. It seems that although both spouses show the same amount of love through verbal affection, women perceive themselves as under-benefited because they need more love to be shown this way.

The percentages of people in different categories of equity are comparable to other studies conducted in the United States. For example, Sprecher (1988) found 69.8% to be in equitable relationships, 13% to be under-benefited and 17% to be over-benefited. Furthermore, data from the Netherlands (Van Yperen & Buunk,

1990) suggest that around 60% of both men and women are in equitable marriages, whereas 13% of men and 25% of women feel under-benefited, and 25% of men and 17% of women perceive themselves to be over-benefited in their marriages.

Considering the methodological differences in assessing equity in our study and the aforementioned studies, it is especially noteworthy that our findings are comparable to other studies. The most widely used measure for assessing equity (also used in above mentioned studies) is Hatfield's Global measure of equity. By assessing equity indirectly and in terms of different love acts people use to show love to their married partners we took a big step away from the traditional way of assessing equity and still got roughly the same percentages of individuals in (in)equitable relationships. One criticism of equity research (especially when using the global measure of equity) is that usually the purpose of the study is not disguised which invites skepticism when interpreting the results due to social desirability (Erber & Erber, 2011). Assessing equity indirectly by asking each participant for self report and report for spouse on specific love acts in their marriage can therefore be considered to be one of the strengths of this research.

As our first goal we examined the equity theory proposition that the relationship as a whole can be perceived as equitable even if some parts of the relationships are inequitable. In order to test this we only examined marriages that were equitable in terms of the total number of ways of showing love, and checked whether in these marriages there is also equity in all specific ways of showing love. We found that, despite the overall equity in a marriage, there can be differences in giving and receiving love in certain specific dimensions of showing love. Our findings show the similar pattern for both husbands and wives, and for both equitable marriages characterized with a high level of rewards, as well as for equitable marriages characterized by a low level of rewards. Also, length of marriage did not play a significant role in these results. A relationship as a whole can still be equitable even if there isn't absolute equity in all parts of the relationship which is one of the equity theory principles (Walster et al., 1978).

Interestingly, even among equitable couples we found pretty large gender differences for instrumental factors of showing love – domestic work (e.g. cooking meals that the partner likes, doing housework) and practical help (e.g. running errands, driving the partner around, helping out financially, taking the partner out to dinner). Studies of fairness and equity in the division of household labor (e.g. Canary & Stafford, 1992) usually investigate various routine and periodic tasks that are roughly comparable to items we used to measure instrumental ways of showing love. These studies show that, although the division of household labor in marriages is neither equal nor equitable, with wives usually ending at the lower end of the equation for routine tasks and husbands for periodic tasks, spouses often perceive such division as fair (Himsel & Goldberg, 2003; Lennon & Rosenfield,

1994). Given the large gap that still exists between genders when it comes to housework and childcare it seems that neither women nor men expect complete equality in this area, which does not seem to have a large impact on the equity of the whole marriage.

Our second goal was to investigate the relationship between (in)equity in the ways of showing love and marital satisfaction. At the same time we wanted to directly contrast propositions derived from the equity theory, social exchange theory and research dealing with socio-emotional climate in marriage in order to see whether it is equity, ratio of rewards and costs in a relationship, or the overall level of rewards that is most important for marital satisfaction. In order to do so, we divided our equitable marriages into those characterized by a low level of rewards and those characterized by a high level of rewards, and compared both to under-benefited and over-benefited marriages.

According to our expectations and in line with the results of some other empirical studies (Cate, Lloyd, Henton, & Larson, 1982; Cate et al., 1988; Desmarais & Lerner, 1989; Sprecher, 2001), we found the level of rewards to be more important than equity. Men and women in our study were the most satisfied if they gave and received a high level of rewards and the least satisfied when they gave and received a low level of rewards. Therefore we failed to confirm the expectation of equity theory that individuals from inequitable relationships will be less satisfied than individuals from equitable relationships. Furthermore, equity theory would expect under-benefited individuals to be less satisfied than over-benefited individuals which was not the case in our study (except for women when it comes to showing love by being helpful and chivalrous). It seems that marital satisfaction remains relatively high if at least one partner contributes to the relationship with a high level of showing love (even if this makes the relationships inequitable). This finding compliments the importance of socio-emotional climate in marriage (Caughlin & Huston, 2006).

Therefore we can conclude that the above mentioned propositions of equity theory do not hold up, at least not for marriages characterized by a relatively high level of marital satisfaction, as previously suggested by Holmes and Levinger (1994). Couples who decide to participate in studies on marital satisfaction usually are the ones that are satisfied. Indeed, average result for marital satisfaction in our study was at the positive end of a nine degree scale ($M_{\text{men}} = 7.51, SD = 1.61; M_{\text{women}} = 7.13, SD_{\text{women}} = 1.89$). Coupled with the fact that the association of equity, level of rewards and marital satisfaction did not vary with the length of marriage we can conclude that men and women in our sample are happily married. Studies show that concerns of equity become more important when relationships are strained and in their decline phase (Hatfield et al., 2008), which is clearly not the case in this study. Individuals who are prospering in their relationships spend little time monitoring their exchanges and, even if they do notice imbalances they tend to

dismiss them. Only when dissatisfied with a relationship, people may perceive that they are under-benefited regardless what the truth is (Grote & Clark, 2001).

Studies that also found the level of rewards and not equity in itself to be more important for relationship satisfaction were mostly conducted with premarital and dating relationships (Cate, Lloyd, & Henton, 1985; Cate, Lloyd, & Long, 1988; Rusbult et al., 1986; Sprecher, 2001), or they just assessed equity in one part of the relationship (e.g. self-disclosure – Davidson, Balswick, & Halverson, 1983; the sexual component - Lawrence & Byers, 1995). To the best of our knowledge, our study is the first to find that rewards or the level of positive interactions are more important than equity while using a specific and comprehensive measure of showing love on married couples. Contributions that we investigated by this measure addressed communal behavior, sacrificing one's needs for the partner, being open and self-disclosing, being supportive of one's partner, sharing and talking about problems, positive communication that conveys love, physical acts (both sexual and non-sexual) that convey love, and doing things for the partner (with domestic work and by being helpful and chivalrous). All these ways of showing love clearly resemble the description of a communal relationship. According to Mills and Clark (2001) people in communal relationships are concerned with their partner's welfare, they want to satisfy their partner's needs even when they see no opportunity for personal gain, they do not make a clear distinction between their work and the work of their partner, and they feel good after they have done something for their partner. We already mentioned how people in communal relationships don't mind a little inequity. It is not that people in communal relationships are not concerned with fairness at all, but exchanges seem to take different forms, and involve more diverse rewards over a longer period of time (Clark, 1981).

Also, it is possible that people of different age, educational and rural/urban backgrounds value communal behavior differently and that might be reflected in their concerns about equity. Future studies should examine the role age, education, rural/urban background and socio-economic status play in individual's perception of marital equity.

Another possibility as to why we failed to confirm propositions of equity theory might lie in the fact that our study was conducted in Croatia, which in terms of its cultural values is different from the United States and Western European countries where most studies of equity and fairness were conducted. Studies conducted in collectivistic cultures (e.g. Korea) did not find people to be much concerned with equity (Westerman et al., 2007; Yum & Canary, 2003). Available studies indeed indicate that Croatians live more by collectivistic than individualistic values (Križanec, 2008; Triandis et al, 1995). They feel good when cooperating with others, they sacrifice their self-interests for those of the group, and in general say their happiness depends on the happiness of those around them (Šverko, 2009). Living by this set of values we would expect people not to count

every contribution and reward that happens in their relationship and not to be as concerned with equity as people in individualistic cultures are. This might even explain not finding any significant differences between those under-benefited and over-benefited in terms of showing love in marriage which is also contrary to what could be expected based on equity theory propositions. Furthermore, individuals differ in their communal or exchange orientation and those individual differences are also tied to how important they consider equity to be for relationships (Mills, Clark, Ford, & Johnson, 2004). There are also cultural differences in these orientations. VanYperen and Buunk (1991) found that Americans were higher in exchange orientation than the Dutch sample, and that in the American sample the relationship between equity and relationship satisfaction can be attributed to the exchange orientation. In the Dutch sample the relationship between equity and relationship satisfaction was not moderated by individual differences in exchange orientation. It would be interesting to investigate individual differences in communal and exchange orientations and how they can help explain the association between concerns with equity and marital satisfaction in Croatia and other countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The biggest drawback of our study was that we used a cross-sectional design, so our results can be interpreted bidirectionally. Couples can be highly satisfied with their marriages with this leading to showing a lot of love. Or, their satisfaction can stem from them showing a lot of love to each other. Probably, both explanations are true. The same can be said for those marriages that are characterized with a low level of rewards and under-benefited marriages where we observed the lowest satisfaction scores. Future studies should also take a longitudinal approach to investigate the processes behind perception of (in)equity and relationship satisfaction and other factors that can explain this link. Some longitudinal work done so far has suggested that feelings of (un)satisfaction come from perceiving (in)equity (Sprecher, 2001; VanYperen, & Buunk, 1990). However, although some authors suggest we only stay with those partners that provide sufficient profit (Rusbult, Arriaga, & Agnew, 2001), the level of rewards was not found to be predictive of relationship commitment or relationship break-up over time (Sprecher, 2001).

Conclusion

When it comes to showing love to one's partner Croatian marriages seem to be largely equitable. Most men and women put into their marriage as much as they perceive they are getting out of it. This is the case for the overall number of ways of showing love, and for specific dimensions of love acts. Also, in accordance with equity theory propositions, even when they are in equitable marriages husbands

and wives are not always in a fair situation with regard to specific dimensions of showing love. This is especially true for showing love through domestic work and practical help. Not in accordance with equity theory propositions, but in accordance with the findings on the socio-emotional climate in marriage, equity in showing love to one's partner is not as crucial for marital satisfaction as the level of showing love. Both men and women are the most satisfied when their marriages are characterized by a high level of rewards (a lot of showing love), and the least satisfied when their marriages, although still equitable, are characterized by a low level of rewards (less showing love). Moreover, marital satisfaction rises if at least one spouse is contributing to the marriage climate by insuring the high level of positive interactions. These findings are not surprising given the fact that we investigated happy marriages in which individuals are highly satisfied, and that the study was conducted in a culture characterized by more collectivistic than individualistic values. Overall, the data from this study suggest that the context has to be taken into account when investigating equity, because the importance of equity for satisfaction can then be discussed in regard to the type of relationships (e.g. long lasting communal relationship), the culture, as well as the type of measure and the area in which the equity was assessed.

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DA LI JE JEDNAKOST U POKAZIVANJU LJUBAVI VAŽNA ZA ZADOVOLJSTVO BRAKOM?

Sprovedeno istraživanje usmjerilo se na dva cilja. Prvi cilj bio je provjeriti znači li jednakost u ukupnom pokazivanju ljubavi u braku ujedno i jednako davanje i primanje ljubavi u svim specifičnim načinima pokazivanja ljubavi. Drugi cilj bio je utvrditi što je važnije za bračno zadovoljstvo: jednakost u pokazanoj i percipiranoj ljubavi ili apsolutni nivo izražavanja ljubavi u odnosu, nezavisno od toga doprinose li joj oba partnera podjednako. Prema teoriji jednakosti (engl. *equity theory*), osobe koje pokazuju svom partneru/ki ljubav u podjednakoj mjeri kao što i percipiraju da partner/ka pokazuje njima, će biti najzadovoljnije svojom vezom, nezavisno od toga da li je nivo izražene ljubavi veliki ili mali. Osobe koje se percipiraju uskraćeno u pokazivanju ljubavi će biti najmanje zadovoljne, dok će zadovoljstvo onih koji dobijaju više nego što pokazuju - biti osrednje. Prema principu socijalne razmjene (engl. *social exchange*), koji naglašava važnost odnosa dobitaka i ulaganja, najzadovoljnije bi trebale biti osobe koje dobijaju više nego što pružaju, a najmanje zadovoljne one koje pružaju više nego što dobijaju (uskraćene). No, istraživanja socio-emocionalne klime u vezi, pokazuju da je nivo pozitivnih interakcija važniji za zadovoljstvo, nego percipirana jednakost, te bi najmanje zadovoljni trebali biti parovi koji međusobno izražavaju malo ljubavi, čak iako to oba partnera čine podjednako. U istraživanju je učestovalo 302 hrvatskih bračnih parova. Starost ispitanika se kretala od 20 do 82 godine, a dužina braka varirala je od mjesec dana do 57 godina. Parovi su bili heterogeni po nivou obrazovanja i veličini mjesta stanovanja. Ispitano je globalno zadovoljstvo brakom i primijenjena Skala pokazivanja ljubavi na kojoj je svaki partner procijenio kako pokazuje ljubav svom supružniku, te kako supružnik pokazuje ljubav njemu/njoj. Skala se sastoji od 40 stavki koje opisuju različite specifične načine pokazivanja ljubavi, a koji se faktorski grupišu u 6 specifičnih dimenzija pokazivanja ljubavi: Uvažavanje želja i potreba partnera, Emocionalna otvorenost i podrška, Verbalno pokazivanje naklonosti, Fizičko pokazivanje naklonosti, Obavljanje poslova u domaćinstvu, Praktična pomoć (van kuće). Jednakost je operacionalizovana kao sličnost u nivou pokazivanja ljubavi prema partneru i percepciji njegovog/njezinog pokazivanja ljubavi (ukupno i na svakoj pojedinačnoj dimenziji). Ovakvo indirektno mjerenje jednakosti u odnosu predstavlja metodološki pomak kojim se pokušavaju izbjeći nedostaci direktnog ispitivanja globalne percepcije jednakosti među bračnim partnerima.

Rezultati su pokazali da u većini ispitanih parova (oko 70%) supružnici u podjednakoj mjeri pokazuju i primaju ljubav. U skladu s postavkama teorije jednakosti, jednakost u ukupnom pokazivanju ljubavi ne znači nužno i jednako davanje i primanje u svim specifičnim dimenzijama. U skladu s rodnim ulogama, muškarci više pokazuju ljubav kroz praktičnu pomoć (van kuće) i fizičkim izražavanjem naklonosti, dok žene to više čine kroz obavljanje poslova u domaćinstvu, te emocionalnu otvorenost i podršku.

Ostali rezultati, međutim, nisu potvrdili postavke teorije jednakosti. Pokazalo se da su i muškarci i žene najzadovoljniji brakom ako pokazuju i primaju ljubav u velikoj mjeri. Uskraćeni pojedinci i oni koji dobijaju više nego što pružaju su nešto manje zadovoljni brakom, ali se međusobno ne razlikuju. Najmanje su zadovoljni brakom oni parovi u kojima je prisutno malo pokazivanja ljubavi, nezavisno od toga što partneri pokazuju jedno drugome podjednako ljubavi, koliko i primaju. Dobijeni nalazi ukazuju kako je za zadovoljstvo bračnih partnera važnija pozitivna socio-emocionalna klima u odnosu, nego sama jednakost u pokazivanju i primanju ljubavi.

Ključne riječi: teorija jednakosti, princip socijalne razmjene, bračno zadovoljstvo, načini pokazivanja ljubavi, socio-emocionalna klima