

Beyond the Overall Balance: The Significance of Particular Tasks and Procedures for Perceptions of Fairness in Distributions of Household Work

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This paper outlines an approach to perceptions of fairness that extends beyond the usual emphasis on the overall balance of what each person does. The emphasis falls instead on perceptions of fairness associated with particular tasks and particular procedures (ways of achieving a task division or a redistribution of tasks). The approach is illustrated by the summarized results of a series of studies. Results are discussed in terms of research questions that might now be taken further and in terms of expectations that appear to underlie perceptions of fairness: in particular, ideas about the ownership of tasks and about behaviors appropriate in family relationships.

KEY WORDS: justice; household work; close relationships.

Within analyses of justice and fairness in relation to family work, the most often used approach has been to ask whether adults in couple relationships regard unequal divisions of effort or time as fair or unfair. The present paper outlines an approach that emphasizes instead perceptions associated with particular tasks or particular procedures. The approach is illustrated by results from a series of studies.

This approach is prompted by (i) results stemming from research on the impact of overall imbalance and (ii) indications in past research of the significance of specific tasks and procedures.

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Fairness in Relation to Overall Balance

There are a number of studies asking whether adults in couple relationships regard unequal divisions of time or effort as fair or unfair (for reviews, see England and Farkas, 1986; Mikula *et al.*, 1997a; Reichle, 1996; Steil, 1994). The surprise result has been that both males and women often regard unequal divisions as fair (for reviews of this particular result, see Baxter and Western, in press; Mikula *et al.*, 1997a; Thompson, 1991).

To account for that result, a variety of factors have been explored. These range from underlying ideologies of gender (e.g., Benin and Agostinelli, 1988) to attributions of responsibility for the inequality (e.g., Mikula, 1993; Reichle, 1996; Reichle and Montada, 1994), and the nature of the social comparisons made when appraising a distribution of work (e.g., Thompson, 1991).

An alternate direction of research turns instead to the possibility that perceptions of fairness may be strongly tied to the distribution of particular tasks and to the use of particular procedures.

The Significance of Particular Tasks

Some results already point to the importance of particular tasks for perceptions of fairness. At least among women, for example, perceptions of fairness are correlated with the extent to which men take a share of traditionally "female" tasks (Baxter and Western, in press; Benin and Agostinelli, 1998; Robinson and Spitze, 1992).

The bases for such links, however, are not yet clear. The significance of men taking on traditionally "female" tasks, for instance, may stem from these actions occurring at times when help is especially needed. This form of sharing might also be perceived by women as implying a valued set of attitudes, as indicating flexibility, a willingness to be involved, or some degree of respect for "women's work."

One way to locate possible bases is to start from proposals about why tasks differ from one another. This is, for example, the heart of the proposal that tasks vary in the "arrangements and rules" that are expected to apply to them (Mikula *et al.*, 1997b). Perceptions of fairness or unfairness, that proposal suggests, would then depend on whether these underlying expectations are respected or violated.

The challenge is to locate expectations related to particular tasks. One such expectation, this paper proposes, is the view that task performance should respect the "ownership" of tasks. More specifically, people should

do “their own work,” especially when ownership stems from having been the cause of work needing to be done.

This focus on expectations about ownership has several bases. One stems from pilot interviews with adults, asking about resented aspects of housework. That question generated frequent mentions of a problem that might generically be called “other people’s dirty socks” (being left to clean up or take care of a task that someone else has generated).

A further basis stems from two studies involving children’s work. One of these points to the early recognition of an ownership principle. Children were asked to rate the attractiveness, as a friend, of peers who stayed to clean up their share of a joint game, left before doing so, or volunteered to help even though they had not played. Even at the age of 4 years, children were able to verbalize the principle, “they both played, they should both clean up” (Shure, 1968).

The other report on children’s work points to parents as endorsing, at an early age, a similar ownership principle. White and Brinkerhoff (1981) asked parents in Nebraska what tasks they expected their children to do at various ages. Expected first were tasks described by White and Brinkerhoff as “self-care”: jobs such as putting away their own toys or their own clothes. Only at a later age were children expected to take on tasks that went beyond self-care (e.g., helping to set or clear a table). The two kinds of tasks, however, are not necessarily different in difficulty or in the extent to which they are likely to be willingly undertaken. The impression left by White and Brinkerhoff’s data is that self-care tasks—tasks that attract the possessive “your own”—have some moral priority and may accordingly be particularly likely to attract perceptions of fairness or unfairness.

In effect, work that is “one’s own,” especially when ownership stems from having generated the need for the work to be done, may well be regarded as not easily movable to other family members. Leaving this work for others, or attempting to do so, may readily give rise to the perception that the distribution is unfair, unless it is accompanied by some special procedures or justifications. That is the opening proposal for the first set of studies to be summarized.

The Significance of Particular Procedures

As Mikula *et al.* (1997a) pointed out, it is not only the distributional aspects of household work that may be relevant to perceptions of justice and fairness in family work. Procedural aspects may also matter, just as they matter for judgments about justice in other content areas (e.g., Lind and Tyler, 1988).

As with the characteristics of tasks, the challenge is to locate particular procedures that matter and the bases for their doing so. Where household work is concerned, for example, it has been suggested that procedures matter because they influence the sense that one's work is acknowledged or appreciated (Blair and Johnson, 1992), that one has had an opportunity to voice an opinion or influence the way a decision about work distributions is made (e.g., Major, 1993), or that an appropriate justification has been offered for expecting that work will be done or not done (e.g., Thompson, 1991).

What particular work procedures are likely to give rise to such feelings and to perceptions of fairness or unfairness? A variety of procedures might be considered, procedures with regard to rewards for work or to ways of keeping track of each person's contributions. The emphasis in the present paper is on procedures related to everyday occasions of making requests, declining work, or monitoring delegated work. That concentration has the advantage of expanding our understanding of a particular feature of tasks (perceptions of ownership). It is also in line with the daily reality of household work patterns.

In daily life, for example, a parent may ask one child to do a job that is usually done by a sibling. What justifications for making such requests, or for a child's resistance, are regarded as fair? In daily life also, the person who usually does a particular job may ask another family member to take over that task, again not permanently but on a one-time basis. What particular ways of making a request or of checking that the work is done are regarded as fair? What is regarded as a fair allocation of blame if the task is then not done and how are these allocations affected by the procedures followed?

These questions about procedures provide the starting point for the second set of studies summarized in the present paper.

Aspects of Method

Three points about method may be noted in advance of describing the series of studies. The first has to do with the attention given to task distributions between parents and children, between siblings, and between adults in couple relationships. As Mikula *et al.* (1997b) have pointed out, the study of work divisions need not be restricted to adults in couple relationships (they have in fact capitalized on this point by considering students who share households but are not in couple relationships). The attention given to several age groups in the present series has three bases: (i) If the goal is to account for the distribution of family work, then we

need to acknowledge that adults are not the only family members to be considered. (ii) Analyses at more than one age level help build up a picture of how expectations are established. (iii) Expectations understood or taught at an early age, and maintained through adulthood, may be especially resistant to change.

The second feature has to do with the requests for comments not only on a current pattern but also on possible redistributions. That approach reflects in part the recognition that task distributions are not fixed. Instead, they change over the life cycle (Reichle, 1996) or, even more fluidly, from day to day as circumstances change (e.g., Finch and Mason, 1993; Goodnow and Bowes, 1994). This aspect of method reflects also the view that people may be more able to verbalize their underlying principles when asked to comment on a possible redistribution rather than on an ongoing everyday practice.

The third feature has to do with the request not only for ratings of fairness but also for episodes where a sense of injustice or resentment has occurred. Ratings tell us about the strength of any sense of unfairness. Episodes, as Mikula and his colleagues have demonstrated, help bring out the nature and the bases of that perception (Mikula, 1993; Mikula *et al.*, 1990).

A final point has to do with the choice of studies to report. The studies summarized in the present paper are part of a larger project concerned with the nature, bases, and consequences of family work distributions (cf. Goodnow, 1996; Goodnow and Bowes, 1994; Goodnow *et al.*, 1991; Grusec *et al.*, 1996). Abstracted for the present paper are studies directly concerned with perceptions of justice or fairness, the topic for this special issue. None of these studies is described in detail. The aim instead is to bring out a set of concepts and methods that have been turned into research formats and that offer some new directions for research in this area.

DATA SET A: DIFFERENTIATIONS AMONG TASKS—OWNERSHIP AND MOVABILITY

Presented first is a summary of data establishing that people (adults and children) do make distinctions between tasks on the bases of ownership and movability. Raised next are the questions: Under what circumstances are people's "own" jobs ever moved? Why does ownership matter so much? With one exception, the samples in these studies are monolingual, English-speaking Australians. The exception is a study that directly varied cultural background (Bowes *et al.*, 1997). Again with one exception, the samples were recruited by way of requests sent home from the schools. The exception was the sample recruited for the first study in the series (Goodnow

and Delaney, 1989). For this study, the aid of a market survey company was sought in order to gain diversity in socioeconomic background (parents who respond to school requests tend to be more often from the middle-class than otherwise). All informants were interviewed, using a mixture of structured and open-ended questions.

Degrees of Movability

The first data came from a study of what mothers regard as reasonable requests to make of their 9- to 11-year-old children (Goodnow and Delaney, 1989). The contrast is between self-care and other-care jobs. Mothers ($N = 45$) were asked: "Would you, except on a very occasional basis, ask one child to make another's bed, or to put away the toys or books that the other child had used? Would you ask one child to take over the job of setting or clearing the table?" The tasks chosen were tasks that each child usually carried out as his or her own jobs. The other child was a named sibling close in age to the usual owner of the task.

The results were clearcut. None of the mothers said they would ask another child to take over a self-care job, except under special circumstances. They would instead either insist that the first child do the job (41%), or do it themselves (59%). In contrast, the majority (57%) said that they would ask another child to take over an other-care job. Most of the remainder would insist that the first child do "their job" (41%), with only 2% taking over the job themselves.

Two kinds of reasons were offered for avoiding a shift in self-care jobs. The first was that shifting a self-care job would not be "right." "Mark sleeps in his bed, Mark makes it," in one mother's words. The other was that the request would be objected to on the grounds that "it isn't my bed," "it's not my stuff," "I didn't have it out" (Goodnow and Delaney, 1989; Goodnow and Warton, 1991).

The second kind of reason suggests that children also regard attempts to shift self-care tasks as unjust. That suggestion was confirmed in a study with 8-, 11-, and 14-year-olds ($n = 30, 30, \text{ and } 44$, respectively, in these three groups) (Warton and Goodnow, 1991). Children were given a vignette describing a situation where two children had played a game, one had left, and a parent asked the remaining child to put away all the pieces of the game. The percentages of children regarding this request as "not fair" were 93, 80, and 61%, respectively, for the three age groups. "They both played, they should both clean up," was the rationale that the majority offered. The minority who regarded the parent's request as "fair" usually qualified

that judgment by taking the view that fairness would prevail in the long run: the other would do more next time.

These first pieces of data have to do with arrangements between parents and children. Do adults bring similar expectations to the divisions of work between partners? The data on this score comes from Goodnow and Bowes's (1994) study of 50 couples who divide household work in nongendered ways. Goodnow and Bowes isolated five ways of distributing various household tasks. These were (i) man's specialty, (ii) woman's specialty, (iii) fluid shifts (the job moved back and forth depending on circumstances or mood), (iv) "off the list" (the job was either eliminated, e.g., nobody ironed, or passed over to someone outside the household, e.g., paid help or a laundry service), and (v) "to each their own" (e.g., each person irons his or her own things). Various tasks were then inspected to see what was the dominant mode.

For the task of cooking, for example, the percentage of couples using these five ways as the most frequent mode of distribution was 30, 27, 41, 0, and 2%. For the task of vacuuming, the respective percentages were 20, 38, 24, 18, and 0%. In contrast, the percentages for ironing were 10, 12, 10, 37, and 31%. The percentages for taking care of cars (predominantly washing or cleaning) showed a similar swing toward either removing the task from the distribution between partners or distributing on the basis of "to each their own" (each partner looked after his or her own car or, in the case of the couple owning only one car, the job went to the person who drove it most or who left it in a state that called for washing, cleaning, or taking it in for service). The respective percentages were 5, 10, 12, 42, and 31%. Such direct causation tasks, it should be noted, seem to have their special status even outside couple relationships. Within a sample of Austrian students sharing household space, for example, the care of cars and the washing of dishes were expected to be done on the basis of an "individual responsibility" rule (Mikula *et al.*, 1997b).

Under What Circumstances Are People's "Own" Jobs Moved to Others?

For all the perceived need to be responsible for what is one's "own," it would be a strange family unit, or a strange close relationship, if people took responsibility only for what they regarded as their "own space" or their "own stuff." How then do people make the shift from a self-focused view of what is fair to a larger vision of social responsibility?

Mothers describe themselves as primarily pointing to reciprocity (e.g., "they would do it for you") and to what is expected in "a family" (e.g., "we're a family and in a family people do things for each other") (Goodnow

and Delaney, 1989; Goodnow and Warton, 1991). The adults in Goodnow and Bowes's (1994) sample described themselves as acting out of a sense of what a close relationship involves. Because they care about the quality of their relationship, they respond to a request or they volunteer on occasion to do the other's ironing or car-care. These actions are undertaken, however, with the clear understanding that they are "gifts" or a response to need. They are by no means to be expected as routine activities or to be asked for too often.

Direct judgments about the fairness of various justifications for going beyond work that one has oneself caused are now being explored in ongoing research by Bowes *et al.* (1997). The starting point is a vignette in which a child is asked by a parent to clean up all the pieces left on a table after a game shared with a sibling. Bowes and her colleagues have assembled a set of replies that a child might make in response to a parent's request (e.g., "I didn't take them out," "I'll do my half," "It's not my job," "I'll do it after I finish my homework"). Assembled also is a set of replies that mothers might make in the face of a child's objections, with these rated by both children and parents for their frequency of occurrence and for their fairness.

My comments are limited to children's judgments about the fairness of the mother's replies (the full set of results is still being analyzed). Children were asked only if a reply was fair or not. For a group of Australian children ages 10 years (no significant age differences), mothers' replies in terms of need ("I'm tired and I need your help") were regarded by 90% as fair. Replies phrased in terms of equality were also judged by most to be fair "X" [the sibling] will do the other half" (97%); "X will do all next time" (87%); and "you do half, I'll do half" (76%). The reply, "you are part of the family," was also rated by the majority as fair (76%). In contrast, references to the mother's authority ("I asked you") received less approval (29%). So also did several references to the characteristics of the child: "you are the best" (41%); "you are the eldest" (34%); "you are a boy/girl" (16%).

This study has now been extended to include a sample of 240 children in Beijing. That extension was prompted by Chinese psychologists taking the view that the emphasis on equality reflected the individualist orientation of Western families. For this extension, the research format needed some modification (the preponderance of one-child families meant that the child who left the scene had to become a friend). The data to date do indeed display a different order of ratings. Compared with the Australian group, there is an equally strong endorsement of the fairness of parents' references to need, a weaker endorsement of equality arguments, and a stronger en-

dorsement of references to a child's being part of a family and being male or female.

The results suggest that social groups may differ in the particular justifications that are regarded by children as fair when it comes to doing work that is over and above what they themselves have generated. Needed now is a further specification of such differences and their bases.

Why Does Ownership Matter So Much?

To help answer this question, we have turned predominantly to people's reports of occasions when they felt negatively or positively about various arrangements of family work, and their statements about why they felt as they did (reports by mothers in the study by Goodnow and Delaney, 1989; reports by adult partners in the study by Goodnow and Bowes, 1994).

Mothers' descriptions of "low moments" (occasions of feeling that work arrangements are not going well) serve to bring out a point common to the two sets of reports. This is the significance of the implied relationship. Mothers' low moments turn out to have attached to them a series of "favorite sayings." The sayings themselves are varied. They take the form, for example, of telling children that "this is a house, not a hotel, restaurant, delicatessen, laundromat," etc., that their parents are "not running a taxi service," that their mothers are "not maids or servants," or that "the maid has gone on strike this week" (Goodnow and Delaney, 1989; Goodnow and Warton, 1991). The repeated theme, however, is that this is not a commercial relationship. Do not mistake what I do for you, voluntarily, with the service you get when you pay for something. The work may be identical but the relationship is not.

For children who have little direct experience with paying for services or with maids and hotels, that message may be far from clear. Mothers nonetheless labor at making explicit the point that what matters is not simply the work that is done but the relationship that the work, and its recognition, implies.

DATA SET B: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF PROCEDURES

The studies outlined in this section used as a base situations where one person has asked another to do for them a job that the asker usually does and will continue to do at a later time. Two issues are considered. The first has to do with whether these requests are expected to be accompanied by procedures that acknowledge the original ownership (e.g., is the

original owner expected to check that the job has been done?). The second has to do with what the distribution of blame should be if the job is not done and with whether the perceived fairness of allocations of blame is altered by the procedures followed.

The Fairness of Procedures

The first approach to this issue was by way of a question asked of 8-, 11-, and 14-year-olds: "Think of a time when you have asked a brother or sister [naming the sibling closest in age] to do for you a job that you normally do, and they agree. Is it fair that you are expected to check up, to see that the job is done?" The majority agreed that this expectation was fair: 70% at age 8 ($n = 30$), 80% at age 11 ($n = 30$), and 66% at age 14 ($n = 44$) (Goodnow and Warton, 1991).

The second approach asked for ratings of various ways to exercise this kind of responsibility. If you were the one who agreed to take on a task, how would you feel about the asker watching while you work, pointing out bits that need improving before you have finished the job, or checking but pretending that he or she is not doing so? All three procedures are disliked, with the ratings showing a descending order of disapproval (Goodnow and Warton, 1992: sample consists of 66 adolescents, 14–18 years; no age differences).

Within the same study, the interviewers also asked for examples of ways of proceeding that were "easy to take" or "reasonable" as against ways that were "annoying." Examples were requested for ways of describing what needed to be done, ways of reminding, and ways of checking that a job had been done, together with reasons for a way of proceeding being regarded in a positive or a negative light.

The description of poor ways to proceed serves to make the main point. In a variety of ways, the complaints are about the failure to receive respect. Poor ways to offer a reminder, for example, are ways that involve a heavy hand (e.g., the other nags or orders), ignore the other's timing or priorities (e.g., "I have other things to do first"), or imply a negative attribution (e.g., "they act as if you're stupid enough to forget it"). These three sources of resentment were mentioned, respectively, by 56, 22, and 22% of the sample (Goodnow and Warton, 1992, p. 101). In similar fashion, lengthy descriptions of what the job involves were resented because they violate expectations about timing (e.g., "you've agreed and then they tell you"), ignore the other's autonomy (e.g., "I have my own way of doing things"), are unnecessarily detailed (e.g. "every step from start to end"), or imply a negative attribution (e.g., "they act as if you didn't know"). These

four sources of resentment were mentioned, respectively, by 16, 19, 21, and 44% of the sample (Goodnow and Warton, 1991, p. 101). "Respect" may be an especially sensitive issue among adolescents. The general point, however, is that it is again not the work itself that is the problem but the failure to stay within the norms of the relationship expected to apply between an asker and an acceptor, especially within a family.

Procedures and the Allocation of Blame

Any analysis of procedures needs to ask: What do various ways of proceeding affect? They may, for example influence the level of satisfaction with the amounts of work allocated to each person, with a co-worker, or with a relationship. Possible also is an influence on what is regarded as a fair allocation of blame if a task is not done.

The first approach to this issue again began with a single question, asked of 8-, 11-, and 14-year-olds. "You have asked X [a brother or a sister] to do for you a job that you normally do. The job doesn't get done. Is it fair that you get into trouble?" The percentages saying "not fair" were 90, 80, and 70%, respectively, for the three age groups ($n = 30, 30,$ and $44,$ respectively, in the three groups). The reason offered by the majority of children was that the other person "had agreed." The minority, accepting blame, commented that this was fair "because it's still my job" (Warton and Goodnow, 1991, p. 163).

A second study allowed three kinds of allocation to be made. The options were to allocate all the blame to one person or the other, half to each, or more to one than to the other. Four counters were provided to make the allocations concrete (Goodnow and Warton, 1996).

This allocation was first asked for with no further information provided. Under these conditions, the favored allocations were equal blame to both (2:2) and less blame to the asker (1:3). (Distributions in the form of 2:2, 1:3, 0:4, 3:1, and 4:0—units to the asker placed first—were made, respectively, by 38, 30, 11, 20, and 1% of the sample: $n = 66,$ collapsed across 14- and 18-year-olds, given no age differences.)

That pattern of allocation was substantially unchanged when information was added about one procedure: the asker pointed out that the job was easy to forget. Two other procedures, however, did change the picture. In one, the asker left a reminder. In the other, the asker went over "the tricky bits" of the job so that possible difficulties were anticipated. When either of these procedures was followed, equality allocations dropped below 20% and the favored allocations were those giving less blame to the asker than to the acceptor. To take giving a reminder as an example, the respec-

tive percentages of subjects choosing the five possible allocations were now 14, 45, 40, 15, and 6%. In the words of one 14-year-old, "you do that much, you're practically doing the job yourself" (Goodnow and Warton, 1996, p. 177). In effect, the procedures that matter, that prompt a distribution that departs from equality of blame, are those that make the nonperformance of a job less excusable, altering the possible attributions of accountability.

DISCUSSION

This paper began with an interest in the significance, for perceptions of fairness in relation to household work, of particular tasks and particular procedures. It began also with an interest in some particular methods that might serve to bring out the nature and bases of people's perceptions. At this point, it is appropriate to ask what has been learned with regard to these concerns and what future questions or directions are now indicated.

The Significance of Particular Tasks

The starting proposal was that the performance or nonperformance of specific tasks would influence perceptions of fairness by way of the extent to which underlying expectations were respected or violated. The underlying expectation given most attention was the view that people should do "their own work," especially when ownership is based on having caused a problem or generated the need for work to be done.

That proposal is well supported. It is now reasonable to consider other bases to perceptions of ownership and to ask how far these alter the extent to which people regard as unfair attempts to shift "their" tasks to others. People may be seen, for example, as owning tasks that arise in their "own space," tasks that were "assigned to them in the first place," or tasks thought to be theirs by virtue of gender or status: men's work, women's work, children's job. These several bases to ownership may not be identical in their links to the perceived fairness of abandoning a task or turning it over to other people.

Indicated also is attention to features of tasks other than perceived ownership. The extent to which tasks are liked or disliked, for example, is a further promising candidate for exploration as an influence on perceptions of fairness. Adults are known to distinguish among tasks in terms of the extent to which they are felt to be "labor" or "leisure" (Berk and Berk, 1979). What may then be critical for perceptions of fairness is the balance of tasks in each of those two categories. Adults may, for example, regard

as fair a work pattern in which “neither of us gets stuck with all the jobs we both dislike” (Goodnow and Bowes, 1994, p. 105). The valued outcome then becomes one of avoiding such worst-scenarios, making any finer balance of effort or time unimportant for the perception of fairness.

The Significance of Particular Procedures

The starting proposal was that household work would be no exception to the significance of procedures as well as final distributions. That proposal is supported. The results are very much in line with arguments to the effect that procedures matter because they influence the extent to which people feel that they are treated with respect (e.g., Lind and Tyler, 1988; Mikula, 1993) or are regarded as members in good standing within a group (e.g., Tyler and Lind, 1992).

In addition, the results point to the significance of some particular procedures, especially relevant to household work situations. These procedures have to do with ways to make requests, decline work, respond to a declined request, or monitor delegated work.

Like perceived ownership, however, these identified procedures are unlikely to be the whole story. A case in point is a definition of fairness in terms of a procedure labeled by Goodnow and Bowes (1994, pp. 105-107) as “one up, both up.” When one partner is working, the expectation is that the other should also work, or should at least not be “doing leisure” (visibly relaxing while the other is busy, especially if this busyness has not been chosen). In Goodnow and Bowes’s (1994) sample of 50 couples who share work on nongendered lines, 65% of the people interviewed stated that not following this procedure either led to problems or would do so if it occurred.

The procedure of one up/both up clearly has affective significance for many, but not all, people. Still to be determined, however, are the bases for the significance of this procedure and for individual differences in the significance assigned to it. For those who regard one up/both up as significant, this procedure may maintain the sense of acting as a unit, the sense of a relationship between equals rather than between a more and a less privileged partner. One up/both up also avoids the potential awkwardness of keeping close track of who has done what in recent times. As long as people work together, keeping track presents no problem. For the minority who do not rate one up/both up as a significant procedure, the explanation may lie in their aiming at equality over a longer period of time or the conviction that the busyness of one’s partner is chosen and requires no immediate participation or matching action. Again, the step of establishing

that an aspect of performance is significant brings with it the challenge of next determining the bases to that significance.

The Value of Particular Methods

The several studies confirm first of all the value of asking for episodes that illustrate occasions of fairness or unfairness, in addition to requesting ratings of fairness of already identified distributions or procedures. Exploring "the experience of injustice" (Mikula, 1993) is clearly a valuable route into understanding the ways in which people categorize occasions of injustice and the bases to their perceptions of unfairness.

The several studies also confirm the value of considering work distributions among people other than those involved in couple relationships. The broadening emphasized has taken the form of including distributions between other family members (between parents and children, for example, or between siblings), together with perceptions of fairness by children, adolescents, and adults.

Extending the age range, however, is not the only way to extend the usual sampling of adults in couple relationships. The broader question takes the form: What comparisons or contrasts across samples are likely to be most informative? Mikula *et al.* (1977a), for example, have compared cohabiting couples with adults sharing household space without close relationships. Goodnow and Warton (1992) have asked 18-year-olds (first-year University students) whether they expect the same delegation procedures to be followed at home as in paid work settings.

In both of these types of contrast the aim is one of linking perceptions of fairness to some feature of relationships. To take such analyses further, one useful step would be the location of ways to separate the contributions of two features to relationships: the closeness of the relationship and the expectation that the relationship will be long-term. Being in a family, for example, combines both features. The relationship is close, placing some affectional constraints on what one does. The relationship is also long-term. That feature may alter the anticipation of what might happen on a later occasion. In the words of a 14-year-old, "next time round, you may be the one that wants a favor" (Goodnow and Warton, 1999, p. 102). It may also influence the degree of tolerance for short-term inequality. Mothers who have given up paid work to take primary care of a preschool child, for example, have been noted by Backett (1982) as carefully pointing out that the imbalance of work, in relation to that contributed by their partner, is temporary.

Finally, the several studies confirm the value of asking about possible redistributions of work, especially on an everyday basis. Work divisions are often thought of either as static or as changed only on rare occasions, with the expectation of long-term effects and the accompaniment of interpersonal drama or conflict (e.g., the move away from an unequal to an equal pattern or from a gendered to a nongendered distribution: cf. Haas, 1982; Goodnow and Bowes, 1994; Kluwer *et al.*, 1997; Scanzoni and Scanzoni, 1976).

Without a great deal of interpersonal drama, however, changes also occur over historical time (e.g., Bittman, 1991), over the life course (e.g., Reichle, 1996), and from day to day (e.g., Finch and Mason, 1993; Goodnow and Bowes, 1994). These redistributions of work now offer a promising base for exploring the impact of perceptions of fairness on the occurrence of change, supplementing the past emphasis on large and contested changes.

Some Remaining Large Questions

One of these has to do with how expectations about specific tasks or procedures come to be established or maintained. The present results suggest that many of these expectations are established well before adulthood. Contributing to this early establishment are probably several factors. One particular contributor, however, is likely to be the nature of everyday practices. Each time that a parent or a teacher asks, "Who had this stuff out?" for example, is a reminder to children that the person who is the cause of work needing to be done is expected to take some share in the work being done. The use and the impact of such everyday routines are not as yet well explored, although their importance for social learning is accepted (cf. Fiske, 1991; Goodnow *et al.*, 1995). Nonetheless, these routines, especially when they are followed by most of the people in a social group, offer a highly promising route for exploring how perceptions of fairness come to be related to particular tasks and particular procedures.

The second large question that remains has to do with the possibility that expectations about the importance of particular tasks and procedures are linked to one another. Empirically, the people who feel most strongly about a principle such as "your mess, your job" may also be the people who feel most strongly about intrusive checking procedures or procedures such as "one up, both up." To date, what has been isolated is a set of perceptions but not their interconnections.

As a base for laying out some possible hypotheses about interconnections, one might start from the position that people expect task performances and task procedures to be in line with the kind of relationship that is in place or is hoped for. One potentially useful model along those lines

has been offered by Clark (1984, 1994). Her distinction between communal and exchange relationships specifies several norms relevant to the way work is expected to proceed. In communal relationships, for example, people are in general expected to be responsive to each other's needs. More specifically, they are expected to avoid behaviors that suggest a relationship of exchange: e.g., by offering money in return for favors, offering a symmetrical tit-for-tat return for what has been received, or keeping close track of each person's contributions.

Fiske's theory of four relationship types offers a further conceptual base (e.g., Fiske, 1991, 1992; Fiske and Tetlock, in press). One of these four types is again a close or communal relationship. Again, people are expected to avoid acting in ways that place people in one relationship category when another is expected. When a close relationship is expected, for example, disapproval follows any task distribution or procedure that implies a relationship based on authority ranking (a hierarchical relationship), direct exchange (e.g., my hours on a task matched with your hours on the same or similar tasks), or market pricing (e.g., the provision of money as a return for labor).

Neither of these theories of relationships has yet to be linked closely to perceptions of fairness in relation to divisions of household work. Both offer, however, a potential base for bringing together the significance of the several aspects of work considered in the present paper and perhaps for linking these as well to perceptions of fairness in relation to the overall balance of work distributions. How that conceptual unification might proceed, and the particular studies that it could give rise to, are some of the current challenges to be faced in the continuing analysis of perceptions of fairness in relation to household work.

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