

GENDER SCHEME AND PERSONAL ENTITLEMENT: PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS (1)

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INTRODUCTION

In several groups, it is frequent to hear complaints about unjustly treated one or some of their members feel. Sometimes, our investments (time, dedication, effort, ability and experience) do not match with the obtained results (money, prestige, status, power or friendships).

In the complex process of interpersonal relationships, the differences between expectations, outcomes and rewards point out the importance of the subjective evaluation of the outcomes, instead of its objective status, in determining the feeling of justice or injustice.

All these processes will have large consequences on labor, social, and close relationships.

JUSTICE PERCEPTION IN FAMILIAR RELATIONSHIPS

Distributive Justice: Background

At the core of the concept of justice lies philosophical, ethical and political discussions. The main ideas are related to the universality of justice concept and the different material principles of justice. The relevant qualities according to which goods are justly distributed have been "merit", "contract", "utility" and "equality" (Aristotle, Hobbes, Mill and Marx).

An understanding of these themes is important, both to establish a historical framework and continuity for our present concerns, and to point to sources for their future development. Much of the current philosophical debates turns on ahistorical principles of distributive justice. But the justice of a distribution at any time is solely a function of the extent to which individuals deserve what they hold through gift, voluntary labor, or transfer from another.

Psychological research areas in justice perception

Psychological research has pointed out different justice norms: Equity, Equality and Need, used by women and men to evaluate their behaviors.

Equity, as the main justice rule, is based in the existence of some proportionality between the investments and the obtained results (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; Homans, 1961; Adams, 1965). Equity principles have mainly been applied in labor relationships, most of the literature being concentrated on the influence that the different reward systems have on the labor performance and to a minor degree on job satisfaction (Barberá, et al., 1990). These theories consider that the experience of inequity acts as a drive whose motivational properties activate behavior trying to solve the unjust situation. Mark & Folger (1984) have categorized three types of responses depending on the direction: 1) to change the system, 2) to change the personal attitude towards it or 3) the modification of the result that one has been deprived. Major (1987) has pointed out that these three possible responses can be present in the same situation.

Lately these models have been applied to many other social interchange situations, such as expectancies what might be an adequate distribution in a relationship as teacher/pupil, parent/child, therapist/patient (Walster et al., 1978).

During the last years, psychological studies have directly investigated the role of moral evaluation processes of fairness in intimate relationships (Austin & Tobiasen, 1982; Rubin, 1973; Morris, 1971).

Gender Differences in Justice Perception

Research relative to the effects that the variables sex and gender have on the distributive justice is relatively recent and it comes from very scattered theoretical and methodological grounds (Crosby, 1982). Some psychological literature agree when they say that in general the allocation behavior of women is more generous and follows what we can call "egalitarian criterios" while men guide their actions preferably according to "equity principles".

Recently, experimental results (Major, 1982, 1987, 1990) have showed that gender differences only appear when two conditions are present.

1) Personal implication of the subject who try to solve the allocation dilemma.

2) This gender difference is especially pronounced when the allocator believes that she or he has performed better than the partner.

Several differences explanations have been proposed to explain gender differences in justice behavior (Major & Deux, 1982; Kahn & Gaedder, 1985). In general, these can be categorized as explanations based on 1) assumed gender preferences for justice rules; 2) assumed gender differences in values, and 3) assumed gender differences in feeling of personal entitlement or deservingness.

Current Situation and Theoretical discussion in relation to close relationships

As we said before, experimental results have pointed out that gender differences in normative justice rules only appear when the subject has been implicated in the allocation of rewards (Mikula, 1980; Mills & Clark, 1982; Clark et al., 1987). There is now an interesting theoretical discussion about if social exchange principles are or are not valid for the analysis of close relationships. Some people support that is is not possible because of the private nature of these kind of relations (Morris, 1971; Rubin, 1971). However, other people support that, even if the topic of fairness in close relationships is a relatively complex orientation framework (Walster et al., 1978; Hatfield et al., 1979).

Taking into account some empirical evidence reported from Experimental and Clinical Psychology (Beck & Shaw, 1977; Ellis, 1977), our personal point of view supports that it is possible to enclose intimate relationship analysis in a framework of social exchange. We also think that the specific nature of these social exchanges needs the inclusion of new motivational and emotional considerations (Clark, 1988; Brockner & Adsit, 1986).

THE AIM OF THE WORK

The study of gender differences in the personal entitlement perception in relation to intimate relationships is the main aim of this work. At the present moment the process of data collection has been finished, and we are now with the statistical elaboration and without empirical results. For this reason, we are going to develop the general hypothesis and specific goals, as well as the social and psychological implications of the research.

General hypothesis and specific goals

Socialization process is discriminating for women and unequal for women and men relationships. This will facilitate the appearance of gender differences in the subjective perception of personal relations, at least at three different levels:

a) expectations in relation to the personal entitlement. Women develop lower expectatives than men do.

b) gender-roles comparisons. Women use comparatively lower standards than men in the social comparison process.

c) different marital satisfaction levels. Women generally expect less from the relation than men do, in relation to the previous expectancy level.

This hypothesis is supported by two theoretical ideas about psychological analysis of justice (Deutsch, 1975):

1) The justice perception is a subjective process, close to personal background and social conditioners.

2) The justice perception is always the result of a social comparative process, in which different comparative standards are implied.

This general hypothesis can be specified in several goals, such as:

- Which is the perception that women and men have about "Family Power".

- Which is the perception that women and men have about "Domestic Task Allocations".

- To analyse gender comparisons in "Justice Perception and Personal Entitlement".

- Marital Satisfaction levels in women and men.

- To establish the relationships between power family perception and domestic task allocations with personal entitlement and marital satisfaction levels.

- To study the relations between distributive justice perception and marital satisfaction levels.

We are working with four experimental variables:

- **Family power:** the decision making process in relation to: education & bringing up children; home expenses & investments; family central figure percep-

tion; autonomy/dependence in the couples relationship.

- **Domestic task allocation** in relation to: family income; social re-cognition of the work; spending time with children, sharing housework, doing plumbing, car repairs and controlling expenses.

- **Distributive justice perception** in relation to: personal entitlement from couple and children; social comparison entitlement from couple and children; viability entitlement from couple and children.

- **Marital satisfaction level** in relation to: decision making process; intimate relationships; social relationships; solving problems.

Sample, Questionnaire and Methodological Desing

The sample is composed by 100 women & 100 men who are living or have lived as couples, and with children in Primary School (9-10 year old).

These people have answered 40 questions about their personal perception in relation to family power, domestic task allocation, distributive justice, and satisfaction level.

We have used a multivariate design in relation to the four experimental variables.

SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

First Situation

Family justice perception is similar for women and men, when the objective situation is unequal.

Social Consequences:

- * high levels of social conformity
- * gender roles rigidity _____ less flexibility to social changes and gender segregation

Family Consequences:

- * difficulty in solving problems and conflict situations: partners, children, etc.
- * high levels of family incommunications

Personal Consequences:

- 1) Cognitive aspects _____ causal attributions as defensive mechanisms.
- 2) Clinical aspects:
 - * depression increasing
 - * high levels of personal insecurity in a different situation

Second Situation

Women feel unfairly treated when the objective situation is unequal.

Social Consequences:

- * social conflict _____ gender equality reivindication
- * more flexibility in social roles
- * social change increases and new group constitutions

Family Consequences:

- * facility for solving problems and decision making
- * high levels of communication
- * trying to find new ways to relationships (divorce, separation, new family agreements)

Personal Consequences:

- 1) Cognitive aspects:
 - * new gestalt. Changes in social viability and normative comparison
 - * consciousness about women social discrimination
- 2) Clinical aspects:
 - * culpability increasing levels
 - * high levels of loneliness
 - * individual margination

NOTES

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