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Distributive Justice Norms and Family Work: What Is Perceived as Ideal, What Is Applied, and What Predicts Perceived Fairness?

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Members of married couples rated how ideal communal, exchange, and equality rules were for their marriages. They also reported on whether they and their spouses followed each norm in general in their marriages and in the domains of housework and child care. Both men and women considered a communal norm to be more ideal than the other norms and reported that they and their spouse followed a communal norm to a greater extent than an exchange or equality rule, both in general and in the domains of housework and child care. In addition, links between reports of actual division of labor in each domain, as well as reports of norm use, and perceived fairness of the division of family work were examined. Greater inequalities in the division of labor were linked to decreased perceptions of fairness. Controlling for reports of division of labor, women's reports of the self and of the spouse following a communal norm were linked with increased perceptions of fairness as were women's reports of the spouse following an equality rule. In contrast, and again after controlling for reports of division of labor, women's reports of the self following an exchange rule and men's reports of the self and of the spouse following an exchange rule were associated with greater perceived unfairness *of the division of family work.*

KEY WORDS: justice norms; perceived fairness; division of family work; communal norm; exchange norm; equality.

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Researchers in the field of social justice have long been interested in what norms or rules govern the giving and receiving of benefits in close relationships generally (Deutsch, 1985; Steil and Markowski, 1989; and see Clark and Chrisman, 1994 for a review) and in dividing up housework and child care in particular (Benin and Agnostinelli, 1988; Berheide, 1984; Berk, 1985; Hiller and Philliber, 1986; Mikula *et al.*, 1997b; Major, 1993; Thompson, 1991). The present research addresses these issues, this time from the perspective of a distinction between communal and exchange relationships (Clark and Mills, 1979, 1993; Mills and Clark, 1982).

Communal and Exchange Relationships

Two decades ago Clark and Mills (1979) drew a qualitative distinction between communal and exchange relationships. In communal relationships members feel a responsibility for the welfare of the other and give benefits to meet the other's needs or to demonstrate a concern for the welfare of the other. In such relationships, benefits are given without the expectation of repayments and receipt of a benefit does not create a debt on the part of the recipient. Clark and Mills have pointed out that friendships, romantic relationships and family relationships often, but not always, exemplify communal relationships. Further, they have noted, communal relationships have a quantitative aspect. That is, they can vary in strength from weak to strong, with strength referring to the degree of responsibility that the person feels for meeting the other's needs on a communal basis (Mills and Clark, 1982; Clark and Mills, 1993). The communal relationships people have with their children, for example, typically are stronger than the communal relationships those people have with their friends.

Exchange relationships, in contrast, involve people giving benefits with the expectation of receiving comparable benefits in return or in response to comparable benefits received in the past. In exchange relationships, the giving of a benefit does create a debt, such that the recipient owes the donor a comparable benefit. Clark and Mills (1979) noted that relationships with strangers, acquaintances and people with whom we do business often exemplify exchange relationships.

To date, the majority of research supporting the communal/exchange distinction has taken the form of laboratory research in which manipulations of desire for a communal or an exchange relationship have been used or in which behavior between friends has been contrasted with that between strangers. Results have shown that when an exchange relationship is desired or exists (but not when a communal relationship is desired or exists), being repaid for a benefit given increases attraction (Clark and Mills, 1979) and

decreases perceptions of exploitation (Clark and Waddell, 1981); people keep track of individual inputs into tasks for which there will be a reward (Clark, 1984; Clark *et al.,* 1989); and people welcome repayments for benefits given (Clark and Mills, 1979). In contrast, when a communal relationship is desired or exists (but not when an exchange relationship is desired or exists), repayments for benefits given and requests for repayments for benefits received decrease attraction (Clark and Mills, 1979; Clark and Waddell, 1981); people keep track of one another's needs (Clark *et al.,* 1986, 1989); people keep track of whether the other is attending to their needs (Clark *et al.,* 1998); people are especially prone to help (Clark *et al.,* 1987); people are especially prone to respond more positively to another's expression of emotion (Clark *et al.,* 1987; Clark and Taraban, 1991); people's moods improve after helping (Williamson and Clark, 1989, 1992) and people's moods deteriorate after refusing to help (Williamson *et al.,* 1996).

Applying the Distinction to Giving and Receiving Benefits and Allocating Responsibilities in Marriages

What norm—communal or exchange—will be considered best for marriage? To what norm will people strive to adhere in marriage? We began this research with clear hypotheses regarding the answers to these questions. Specifically, Hypothesis 1: People would view a communal norm, dictating that each member of the marriage should be responsive to the other person's needs to the best of his or her ability without expecting repayment, as ideal. In contrast, Hypothesis 2: People would view an exchange norm, dictating that benefits should be given with the expectation of receiving comparable benefits in return, as not very ideal. In Hypothesis 3, moreover, we predicted that people would report actually striving toward a communal ideal, but would not report striving toward an exchange norm.

Theoretically, we expected that people would perceive a communal norm as ideal for their marriages, would strive toward it, and would perceive most fairness when they succeeded simply because we believe people have basic needs to be (and to feel) cared for and to nurture others. The communal norm calls for just the sorts of behaviors that should foster a sense that things are as they should be. Moreover, mutual adoption of and adherence to a communal norm should provide people with an enduring sense of security—security that the other really will "be there" for them should they need that other's support even if they do not need it now.

Two sets of empirical findings also supported our predictions that a communal norm would be seen as ideal, would be striven toward, and would be related to a sense of fairness in the relationship. First, Clark and

Mills' program of research on the communal/exchange distinction has shown that when people are led to desire a communal relationship with another, attraction is higher when the other adheres to this norm than when the other does not (Clark and Mills, 1979; Clark and Waddell, 1981) and also that adhering to this norm when relationships such as friendships or romantic relationships are desired improves people's moods (Williamson and Clark, 1989, 1992; Williamson *et al.,* 1996). Second, Jones and Vaughan (1990) have reported that within best friendships, communal orientation is positively associated with relationship satisfaction.

In contrast, theoretically, we expected that adhering to an exchange norm would be seen as *not* ideal, would *not* be striven toward, and would *not* foster a sense of fairness in the relationship. Adhering to such a norm cannot insure a person's needs will be met adequately and cannot lead to nurturing others. After all, if people feel they are receiving benefits from the other only because they have benefited the other in the past or because the other desires a benefit in the future, they cannot attribute the receipt of such benefits to an enduring sense that the other cares for them. Thus, an exchange rule cannot afford the same sense of security that a communal rule can. If one is incapacitated in any way, there is nothing in an exchange rule that calls for continued responsiveness to one's needs by the other. Consequently, even though we suspect that people sometimes do appeal to and follow an exchange norm, we believe that it is seen neither as ideal, nor as a rule toward which one *should* strive.

We also had an empirical basis for our predictions that an exchange norm would not be seen as ideal, would not be striven toward, and would not be related to high perceived fairness. Specifically, a number of researchers have reported evidence of high exchange orientation being associated with low satisfaction in marriages and close friendships (Buunk and VanYperen, 1991; Murstein *et al.,* 1977, for marriages; Murstein and MacDonald, 1983; Milardo and Murstein, 1979; and Murstein and Azar, 1986; but note that Murstein *et al.,* 1977, did not find this for close friendships).

Another Frequently Investigated Norm—Equality

The focus of Clark, Mills and their colleagues' work has been on communal and exchange norms. However, many other possible standards for giving and receiving benefits in relationships have been discussed in the wider literature (see Clark and Chrisman, 1994). One in particular, equality, has often been endorsed and examined as a standard that might apply to our closest relationships—including marriages and cohabiting couples (see, for instance, Mikula *et al.,* 1997a; Steil and Turetsky, 1987; Steil

and Markowski, 1989). Because equality has been discussed often in the literature on division of responsibilities and benefits in marriages, we felt we ought to present our views regarding how it relates to existing theoretical work on communal and exchange norms and include it in the present empirical investigation of norm use in marriages.

From our perspective, dividing benefits equally or dividing responsibilities equally per se is not, on the face of it, easily categorized as communal or exchange behavior. Neither do we see equality as a standard that constitutes a clear *alternative* to a communal or exchange standard. Rather, we believe that dividing benefits and costs equally can be consistent with a communal norm or it can be consistent with an exchange norm, depending upon what has motivated the use of a standard of equality in the first place. Let us explain.

Consider situations in which an equality standard is consistent with a communal norm. Dividing benefits or responsibilities equally is clearly consistent with a communal norm when two persons in a relationship have equal needs for a benefit or equal needs to avoid and/or ability to take on a responsibility. For instance, spouses might perceive that they have an equal desire and need to visit their respective families of origin. Given limited time and resources and a desire to travel together, they might work out a system in which they, as a couple, visit each family an equal number of times each year. Such an agreement, when motivated by a consideration of each spouse's needs and an implicit judgment that those needs are equal, is consistent with a communal norm. Alternatively, spouses may perceive that they have equal needs to avoid grocery shopping. Therefore they may therefore split the chore equally—taking turns going to the store. Again, such an agreement, when motivated by a consideration of each spouse's needs and an implicit judgment that those needs are equal, is consistent with a communal norm.

Another situation in which use of an equality standard can be considered consistent with an overriding judgment that a communal norm is ideal for marriages is when a spouse is receiving fewer benefits and/or taking on greater responsibilities given what would be optimal according to a communal norm. In such a situation, that spouse may appeal to a standard of equality in an effort to move the situation closer to what would be dictated by a communal norm. Such an effort at remediation is also consistent with a communal norm being considered ideal for marriages. (However, having to insist on equality should be less satisfying in a marriage than equality coming about as a natural consequence of each spouse being concerned with the other's needs, as well as with his or her own needs.)

How does our view of equality fit with Deutsch's (1975, 1985) theoretical view that dividing benefits and responsibilities equally is something done when one's goal is to demonstrate the solidarity of a relationship? Although

we are in agreement with Deutsch that dividing benefits and responsibilities equally often increases a sense of solidarity in marriage, our view differs from Deutsch's in that we think this is true *only* when dividing benefits or costs equally is consistent with an overriding communal norm. In other words, we believe that use of an equality norm promotes solidarity *only* when the two peoples' needs to obtain the benefits or to avoid the costs are also seen as equal. *If needs are not equal,* following a communal norm should promote greater cohesion than will adhering to an equality norm.

It follows then from our perspective that equality should not be perceived to be the ideal norm in such relationships because use of an equality standard can be inconsistent with a communal norm. Indeed, in a situation in which to follow an equality standard would violate the communal norm, insistence on equality may even be perceived as consistent with an exchange norm and as an indication that an exchange norm is preferred.

This sort of situation may occur when needs for benefits or needs to avoid responsibilities are unequal. Consider the following example: Spouses are equally close to their families of origin and the wife's mother is facing a life-threatening illness. All members of the husband's family are perfectly healthy. In such a circumstance, the wife would seem to have a legitimately greater need to visit her family than the husband would to visit his. Given limited family resources, for the husband to insist on an equal number of visits to each family of origin, would violate a communal norm. As we believe the communal norm is primary, we would expect that in such a circumstance most people would consider following a communal norm and violating an equality standard to be preferable. We would expect that in such a situation following a communal norm would be associated with greater relationship quality and following an equality norm with less relationship quality.

Based on our reasoning that applying a norm of equality can sometimes be compatible with a communal norm, but sometimes not compatible with such a norm, our specific prediction regarding use of an equality norm for the present research was Hypothesis 4: Judgments of how ideal an equality standard is and how much a person strives to live up to it would fall somewhere between judgments of a communal norm (which ought to be higher) and judgments of an exchange norm (which ought to be lower).

Applying the Distinction to Dividing Housework and Child Care in the Home

We have just argued and hypothesized that a communal norm ought to be perceived as ideal for marriages, that people ought to strive to adhere to that norm in marriages, and that use of a communal norm ought to be

associated with greater perceived fairness. At the same time, we do not wish to argue that people always succeed in this regard. People do not always live up to ideals. Spouses neglect one another's needs at times. Moreover, when they are negligent, they may resort, often temporarily we suspect, to other possible distributive justice norms such as exchange or equality. As Clark and Chrisman (1994) have argued, one reason why researchers can find evidence for the use of many different distributive justice norms in relationships such as marriages is that, when it comes right down to day-to-day behavior in intimate relationships, people often violate the very norm that they consider to be ideal and toward which they generally strive.

Thus, we felt it important not only to ask for judgments about how ideal communal, exchange, and equality norms were for marriages and whether people strove to attain them in their marriages, but also to inquire to what extent they felt these norms were applicable to and actually used in allocating quite specific tasks. The specific domains we chose to investigate in this regard were the divisions of housework and child care—domains that have long been of interest to justice researchers. It has been well established that women do a disproportionately large share of such family work (Benin and Agnostinelli, 1988; Berk, 1985; Pleck, 1985; Shelton and John, 1996; Yogev, 1981) even when women work (Berk, 1985; Miller and Garrison, 1984; Pleck, 1985). Given the evidence of objective imbalances in this particular area, might the pattern of norm use for dividing these specific responsibilities differ from the pattern of ideal endorsements of communal, exchange, and equality norms? Although we have stated our belief that people do not always live up to their ideals, we did not think they would cease striving to do so altogether (unless the relationship were seriously distressed). We, therefore, predicted the pattern of norm use for dividing family work would match the pattern of ideal endorsements of communal, exchange, and equality norms. When asked about division of responsibilities for housework and child care, again based on the reasoning above, we predicted (Hypothesis 5) that our participants would report that both they and their spouse generally followed a communal norm to a greater extent than an exchange norm with regard to allocating family work, with reports of following a standard of equality falling in between.

We also thought there would be predictable links between reported norm use and perceptions of fairness. In particular we predicted (Hypothesis 6) that greater reports of following a communal norm in dividing the housework and child care would be linked to increases in perceived fairness of the division of housework and child care (after controlling for the actual division of labor). The basis of this prediction is simply our

expectation that people believe communal norms are ideal, combined with our assumption that if they perceive that they and their partners are living up to a communal norm, they will, in turn, perceive the resulting division of labor to be fair because it is a division that meets their particular set of needs.

We further predicted (Hypothesis 7) that greater reports of following an exchange norm in dividing the housework and child care would be linked to less perceived fairness of the division of housework and child care (after controlling for the actual division of labor). The basis of this prediction is our assumption that people do not perceive use of exchange norms for purposes of dividing family work to be ideal and to be something they normally strive toward. Rather, we suspect people turn to an exchange norm for purposes of dividing household chores and child care when they are dissatisfied with the division of labor in the household, because it does not meet their needs. Thus, reports of striving to follow exchange norms in the domains of housework and child care should be linked to less perceived fairness because, a perceived lack of fairness, we suspect, may drive the use of this norm in the first place.

We did not make a prediction regarding how reports of following an equality standard would link to perceived fairness. As we have already discussed, following a standard of equality, on the face of it, tells us little about what motivated members of the couple to use that standard. They may use an equality standard because they perceive their needs to be equal or because using such a standard remediates past injustices. In those cases, endorsement of an equality standard ought to be linked to perceived fairness. However, couples may also report following an equality standard because the wife (typically) is dissatisfied with an unequal division of labor in the home and has urged the use of an equality norm to remedy the situation. In that case, reports of striving to follow an equality standard in the domains of housework and child care might be linked to less perceived fairness because a perceived lack of fairness may drive the use of an equality standard in the first place.

METHOD

Participants

The data for this study were drawn from the second wave of a longitudinal study of married couples across the transition to first parenthood. One hundred twenty-one married couples were assessed when their baby was 6 months old. Before the birth, couples had been married an average

of 4 years (SD = 3.2), with a range of 0 to 16 years, and the mean ages of women and men were 31 and 32 years, respectively. Couple members were mostly Caucasian (women = 113, men = 109), with a few Asian Americans (women = 3, men = 1), African Americans (women = 1, men = 4), Arab Americans (men = 2), Hispanic Americans (men = 1), and members of other ethnic groups (women = 6, men = 4).

Overall, participants were well educated: 10% of the women and 6% of the men had completed their education after several years of high school or had obtained a high school or vocational school degree; 51% of the women and 44% of the men had completed their education with a college degree; and 41% of the women and 47% of the men had achieved a graduate degree.

At 6 months after the baby was born, 40% of the women and 87% of the men worked full-time, 34% of the women and 7% of the men worked part-time, and 26% of the women and 6% of the men were not employed. We asked our participants to identify their salary and family income range, instead of their actual salary and family income. Mean salary range for working women was $11,000–25,000 and for working men was $36,000–50,000. Mean family income range was $51,000–75,000.

The primary method of recruitment was from prenatal childbirth education classes in three local urban hospitals. Other participants were recruited through the electronic bulletin boards at two universities.

Procedure

All participants received identical questionnaires 6 months after the birth of their first child and were instructed not to discuss them with their spouses until they had completed them. One hundred forty-two couples initially agreed to participate in the study; 93% of these couples returned the questionnaires and completed the phone interviews before the birth. Of those couples, 91% completed the after-birth assessment. Of the 12 couples who did not continue, 2 couples experienced miscarriages, 3 couples separated, 6 declined to participate, and 1 couple had moved out of the area and could not be reached.

Measures

Prototypical Norms as Ideal and as Actually Followed in General

Prototypes of the three justice norms (communal, exchange, and equality) were presented in short paragraphs in the questionnaire. The or-

der in which the prototypes were presented was counterbalanced to control for order effects in responding. The prototype descriptions appear in Appendix A. Participants were first asked to rate how *ideal* each prototype was for their marriage by indicating the extent to which they agreed with the following statement: "This is the way marital relationships ideally should operate." Next, they were asked to rate the extent to which self and spouse actually followed each prototype *in general* by indicating the extent to which they agreed with the following statements: "This is the way I (or my wife/husband) personally behave(s) in the relationship." Agreement with all three statements was rated on 5-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Indicators of Following Norms for Division of Household Tasks and Child Care

To assess the extent to which couples followed the three justice norms with respect to division of household tasks and child care, we constructed two specific statements for communal, exchange, and equality—one for self and one for spouse. An example of a statement indicating that self follows a communal norm was, "In dividing the housework (or child care), I try to pay attention to my spouse's needs, whenever reasonable." An example of a statement indicating that the spouse follows a communal norm was, "In dividing the housework (or child care), my spouse tries to pay attention to my needs, whenever reasonable." Norm use was measured separately for division of housework and division of child care. The complete list of six specific statements for norms used in division of housework and in division of child care appears in Appendix B. These statements were presented to the respondents in the following order: self-communal, spouse-equality; self-exchange, spouse-exchange, self-equality, and spouse-communal.

Participants were given the following instructions: "When you think about the overall amount of housework (or child care) you have done and the amount your spouse has done during the last two months, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?" Each statement for self and spouse was rated on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) with a neutral midpoint (3). Participants were also given the answer option, "I don't think about it this way." When conducting the analyses in the study, we recoded the option. "I don't think about it this way" to be the same as *strongly disagree* for two reasons. First, during the prebirth interviews, when we asked our participants to rate

their agreement with these statements of norm use, they viewed the two answer options mentioned above as essentially the same thing. Second, to make full and balanced comparisons with respect to norm use for housework and child care, we wanted to have complete data from all participants.

Division of Household Tasks and Child Care

Participants were asked who performed five household tasks during the last 2 months: grocery shopping, preparing the meals, doing the laundry, cleaning the house, and organizing the social activities in the family. We asked about these household tasks because most of them involve demanding, repetitive, regular daily or weekly activity—activity that is likely to increase substantially after a first child is born.

With respect to child care, we inquired about who performed the following eight tasks during the last 2 months: day feeding, night feeding, changing diapers, bathing, taking the baby to the doctor, soothing, caring for baby when sick, organizing the child care arrangements. At 6 months after the birth, participants rated the amount of each housework and child care task they had performed relative to their spouse during the immediately preceding 2 months, using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*spouse mostly*), 2 (*spouse more*), 3 (*both equally*), 4 (*you more*), to 5 (*you mostly*). To reduce the amount of data for simplicity of presentation, we decided to combine the household tasks and the child care tasks into two separate scales, each containing items that were internally consistent. Further, to compute the alpha coefficients for division of housework and child care, we recoded the points on this scale for men's ratings so that they would correspond in meaning to that for women. The alpha coefficient for the five household tasks was .77. The alpha coefficient for the eight child care tasks was .86.

Perceived Fairness of Division of Housework and Child Care

Next, participants were asked how fair they thought the division of each of the five household tasks was and how fair the division of each of the eight child care tasks was. Responses to the fairness questions were rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not very*) to 5 (*very*). Again, to reduce the amount of data, we created two separate scales, one for perceived fairness of allocating housework and one for perceived fairness of allocating child care. The 5-item scale for perceived fairness of the division

of housework showed an adequate alpha coefficient .80, as did the 8-item scale for perceived fairness of division of child care (.81).

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics Pertaining to Division of Family Work

We first report the descriptive statistics for women and men with respect to actual division of housework and child care. We examined whether there were gender differences in division of family work for the sample as a whole and for three groups of couples—one group in which the wife and husband worked full-time, one group in which the wife worked part-time and the husband full-time, and one group in which the wife was not employed outside the home and the husband worked full-time. Regarding division of family work, a repeated measures MANOVA with one within-group factor (gender—because couple members' observations are not independent) and one between-group factor (wife's employment status) yielded a significant main effect for gender, $F(2, 117) = 230.7, p < 0.001$, qualified by a significant Gender × Employment Status interaction, $F(2, 117) = 8.2, p < 0.001$. Overall, wives performed a greater amount of the housework, $F(2, 118) = 81.1, p < 0.001$, and child care, $F(2, 118) = 70.0, p < .001$, than their husbands. Further, this gender difference in division of family work was qualified by the fact that women who were not employed outside the home were assuming more of the household labor than were women who worked full-time, $F(2, 118) = 2.9, p < 0.06$, and that women who were at home performed more of the child care than women who worked full- or part-time, $F(2, 118) = 3.6, p < 0.05$. Nonetheless, women who worked full-time still did more of the housework, $t(47) = 5.1, p < 0.001$, and the child care $t(47) = 7.7, p < 0.001$, than their husbands, as did women who worked part-time—for housework, $t(41) = 8.9, p < 0.001$, and for child care, $t(41) = 16.0, p < 0.001$. In sum, although all of the women in the sample did more of the family work than their husbands, the magnitude of this effect was moderated by employment status, with at-home wives assuming a greater share of the family work than either full- or part-time working wives.

Comparisons Among Mean Endorsements of Justice Norms

Table I shows the degree to which participants endorsed the various justice norms as ideal for marriage and how strongly they and their spouse

Table I. Mean Endorsement of Justice Norms[a]

	Communal norm	Exchange norm	Equality norm
Women			
Ideal	4.0_a (1.36)	1.5_b (0.70)	2.6_c (1.33)
General			
Self	3.6_a (1.24)	1.5_b (0.74)	2.5_c (1.28)
Spouse	3.6_a (1.29)	1.5_b (0.72)	2.4_c (1.27)
Specific-division of housework			
Self	4.2_a (0.92)	2.4_b (1.40)	3.4_c (1.40)
Spouse	3.7_a (1.02)	2.3_b (1.30)	3.6^a (1.30)
Specific-division of child care			
Self	4.1_a (1.03)	2.4_b (1.50)	3.3_c (1.47)
Spouse	4.0_a (0.92)	2.3_b (1.35)	3.6_c (1.40)
Men			
Ideal	3.9_a (1.28)	1.5_b (0.72)	2.3_c (1.27)
General			
Self	3.6_a (1.17)	1.5_b (0.74)	2.3_c (1.27)
Spouse	3.6_a (1.14)	1.7_b (0.85)	2.3_c (1.28)
Specific-division of housework			
Self	4.2_a (0.90)	2.6_b (1.29)	3.5_c (1.30)
Spouse	4.0_a (0.96)	2.7_b (1.32)	3.8_a (1.13)
Specific-division of child care			
Self	4.2_a (0.94)	2.7_b (1.43)	3.4_c (1.34)
Spouse	3.9_a (1.17)	2.6_b (1.48)	3.8_a (1.26)

[a]Ideal refers to endorsement of norm as ideal for marriage. General refers to agreement that self and spouse follow the norm in general. Norms were rated on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale. Standard deviations are in parentheses. n = 121 women and 121 men. Means or percentages in rows with different subscripts differ by at least $p < 0.01$.

followed these norms in general and with respect to division of housework and child care. Our data-analytic strategy was, first, to conduct a repeated measures MANOVA for each set of comparisons (3) made; the results of which are reported in this section. Then we conducted paired t-test analyses for each set of three comparisons. To control for Type 1 error, the Bonferroni correction procedure was used (dividing the cutoff alpha level by 3, the number of tests run). The subsequent alpha level was set at $p < 0.017$, two-tailed. Due to the large number of comparative statistics obtained, we do not report them in the text. However, the full set of statistics is available upon request.

Our results provide considerable support for the hypotheses we set forth. Hypotheses 1 and 2 were as follows: On average, a communal norm would be perceived as ideal and as more ideal for marriages than an exchange norm. Hypothesis 3: On average, couple members would report that they and their spouse actually follow a communal norm in general and that

they do so to a greater extent than they and their spouse actually follow an exchange norm. Hypothesis 4: On average, judgments of how ideal an equality standard is and of how much a person actually follows it would fall between judgments of a communal norm (which ought to be higher) and judgments of an exchange norm (which ought to be lower).

Strong support was obtained for these predictions. In Table I, we see the pattern of mean endorsements of the justice norms as ideal for marriage and as actually followed in the relationship. Both men and women rated the communal prototype as significantly more ideal for their marriages than an equality standard which, in turn, was viewed as significantly more ideal than an exchange norm, $F(2, 119) = 228.3, p < 0.001$ for women; $F(2, 119) = 235.6, p < 0.001$ for men. They also reported that they generally followed a communal norm in their marital relationship to a significantly greater extent than they adhered to equality and next to exchange, $F(2, 119) = 71.4$, $p < 0.001$ for women; $F(2, 119) = 201.6, p < 0.001$ for men. Similarly, both men and women said that their spouses acted according to a communal norm more than they followed equality, then exchange, $F(2, 118) = 168.3$, $p < 0.001$ for women; $F(2, 119) = 138.1, p < 0.001$.

Hypothesis 5 was that on average, our participants would report that both they and their spouse actually follow a communal norm to a greater extent than an exchange norm in allocating family work, with reports of actually following a standard of equality falling in between. This hypothesis also received support. Both men and women reported that they adhered to a communal norm more than to an equality norm, followed by an exchange norm in dividing the housework, $F(2, 119) = 71.4, p < 0.001$ for women; $F(2, 119) = 63.9, p < 0.001$ for men, and in allocating child care tasks, $F(2, 119) = 64.0, p < 0.001$ for women; $F(2, 119) = 59.4, p < 0.001$ for men. Likewise, they reported that their spouses more strongly followed a communal norm than equality or exchange rules in housework distribution, $F(2, 119) = 54.4, p < 0.001$ for women; $F(2, 119) = 46.9, p < 0.001$ for men, and in carrying out the child care responsibilities, $F(2, 119) = 80.0, p < 0.001$ for women; $F(2, 119) = 42.2, p < 0.001$ for men. Note, however, that women's ratings for spouse following communal and equality norms were similar and moderately high with respect to housework. Likewise, men reported similar, moderately high ratings for spouse following communal and equality norms with respect to housework and child care tasks.

Although we did not predict gender differences in adherence to the norms, we tested for within-couple gender effects in members' reports of the extent to which they endorsed and followed each type of norm. Using a repeated-measures MANOVA, with gender as the within-subjects factor, we did not find any significant effects.

Associations Between Justice Norms and Perceived Fairness of Division of Housework and Child Care

Finally, let us turn to our last set of hypotheses, those dealing with perceptions of fairness of division of family work. Hypothesis 6: Greater reports of adherence to a communal norm by self and spouse would be associated with increases in perceived fairness of family work distribution (after controlling for the actual division of housework and child care) and Hypothesis 7: Greater reports of adherence to an exchange norm by self and spouse would be linked with less perceived fairness of division of housework and child care (after controlling for actual division of family labor).

Table II shows hierarchical regression data pertaining to links between norm use and perceived fairness of housework and child care, controlling for the actual division of family work. Note that we present only those standardized regression coefficients for which both norm use and perceived fairness correspond to the same domain (e.g., either to division of housework or to division of child care) because these are the values that are relevant to our hypotheses. Under each norm in Table II, Steps 1 and 2 indicate the values of each independent variable (division of labor and norm use, respectively) in the *final* equation, along with the relevant R^2 of the final equation and the significant R^2-change associated with norm use in the second step of the equation.

The data show considerable support for our prediction pertaining to links between adherence to a communal norm and perceived fairness, but only with respect to women. Women reported that the less housework they did ($\mathbf{b} = -.21, p < 0.05$) and the more strongly they followed a communal norm in dividing the housework ($\mathbf{b} = .30, p < 0.001$), the more fair they perceived the housework distribution, $F(2, 118) = 9.0, p < 0.001$. Similarly, independent of child care distribution ($\mathbf{b} = -.09$, ns), the more women followed a communal norm in allocating child care tasks ($\mathbf{b} = .19. p < 0.05$), the more fair they perceived the division of child care in the home, $F(2, 117) = 2.9, p = 0.05$. Further, controlling for actual divisions of housework and child care (which were not significant), women indicated that the more their spouses followed a communal norm in dividing the family work, the more fair they thought the allocation of household chores ($\mathbf{b} = .35, p < 0.001$), $F(2, 118) = 11.5, p < 0.001$, and child care tasks ($\mathbf{b} = .42, p < 0.001$), $F(2, 117) = 12.3, p < 0.001$.

By contrast, men's reports of self and spouse adhering to a communal norm did not significantly predict the level of perceived fairness of division of family work over and above that accounted for by the actual division of labor in the home ($\mathbf{b} = .36, p < 0.001$ for housework distribution and $\mathbf{b} = .38, p < 0.001$ for division of child care).

Table II. Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Justice Norms Predicting Perceived Fairness of Housework and Child Care Distribution[a]

	Women		Men	
	Fairness of housework	Fairness of child care	Fairness of housework	Fairness of child care
Communal Norm				
1. Amount of housework done by the self	-.21[b]	—	.36[d]	—
2. Self follows communal norm–housework	.30[c]	—	-.06	—
	R^2 = .13 $^2R^2$ = .09[d]		R^2 = .13 $^2R^2$ = .00	
1. Amount of housework done by the self	-.15	—	.36[d]	—
2. Spouse follows communal norm–housework	.35[d]	—	-.10	—
	R^2 = .16 $^2R^2$ = .12[d]		R^2 = .13 $^2R^2$ = .01	
1. Amount of child care done by the self	—	-.09	—	.38[d]
2. Self follows communal norm–housework	—	.19[b]	—	.10
		R^2 = .04 $^2R^2$ = .04[b]		R^2 = .14 $^2R^2$ = .01
1. Amount of child care done by the self	—	.01	—	.38[d]
2. Spouse follows communal norm–child care	—	.42[d]	—	.10
		R^2 = .17 $^2R^2$ = .16[d]		R^2 = .14 $^2R^2$ = .01
Exchange Norm				
1. Amount of housework done by the self	-.21[b]	—	.36[d]	—
2. Self follows exchange norm–housework	-.18[b]	—	-.20[b]	—
	R^2 = .08 $^2R^2$ = .04[b]		R^2 = .17 $^2R^2$ = .04[b]	
1. Amount of housework done by the self	-.22[b]	—	.38[d]	—
2. Spouse follows exchange norm–housework	-.08	—	-.24[b]	—
	R^2 = .04 $^2R^2$ = .01		R^2 = .19 $^2R^2$ = .06[c]	
1. Amount of child care done by the self	—	-.14	—	.41[d]
2. Self follows exchange norm–child care	—	-.16	—	-.22[c]
		R^2 = .03 $^2R^2$ = .02		R^2 = .19 $^2R^2$ = .05[c]

Table II. Continued

	Women		Men	
	Fairness of housework	Fairness of child care	Fairness of housework	Fairness of child care
1. Amount of child care done by the self	—	-.12	—	.45[d]
2. Spouse follows exchange norm-housework	—	-.06	—	-.28[c]
		R^2 = .01 $^2R^2$ = .00		R^2 = .22 $^2R^2$ = .07[c]
Equality Norm				
1. Amount of housework done by the self	-.21[b]	—	.36[d]	—
2. Self follows equality norm-housework	.02	—	-.07	—
	R^2 = .04 $^2R^2$ = .00		R^2 = .13 $^2R^2$ = .01	
1. Amount of housework done by the self	-.18[b]	—	.36[d]	—
2. Spouse follows equality norm-housework	.24[c]	—	.04	—
	R^2 = .10 $^2R^2$ = .06[c]		R^2 = .13 $^2R^2$ = .00	
1. Amount of child care done by the self	—	-.12	—	.37[d]
2. Self follows equality norm-child care	—	.06	—	.01
		R^2 = .01 $^2R^2$ = .00		R^2 = .14 $^2R^2$ = .00
1. Amount of child care done by the self	—	-.12	—	.37[d]
2. Spouse follows communal norm-child care	—	.29[c]	—	.04
		R^2 = .09 $^2R^2$ = .07[c]		R^2 = .14 $^2R^2$ = .00

[a]Sample size for each analysis was 120–121. Values in Step 1 and 2 represent values obtained when Steps 1 and 2 are combined in the final equation. R^2 represents the total amount of variance accounted for by Steps 1 and 2 in the final equation. $^2R^2$ represents the variance accounted for by Step 2 in the final equation. Division of housework was rated on a 1 (*spouse mostly*) to 5 (*you mostly*) scale, with 3 (*both equally*) as the midpoint. Following each justice norm for self and for spouse was rated on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale.
[b]$p < 0.05$.
[c]$p < 0.01$.
[d]$p < 0.001$.

The next hypothesis, that following an exchange norm would be related to less perceived fairness in family work distribution for women and men, also received support. Women reported that the more housework they

did (**b** = –.21, $p < 0.05$) and the more they followed an exchange norm in dividing the housework (**b** = –.18, $p < 0.05$), the more *unfair* they viewed the division of housework, $F(2, 118) = 5.0$, $p < 0.01$. Similarly, men indicated that the less housework they did (**b** = .36, $p < 0.001$) and the more they followed an exchange norm (**b** = .38, $p < .001$), the less fair they thought the division of housework, $F(2, 118) = 12.3$, $p < 0.001$. Likewise, controlling for division of housework (**b** = .38, $p < 0.001$), men reported that the more their spouse followed an exchange norm, the more *unfair* they perceived the division of housework, $F(2, 118) = 13.7$, $p < 0.001$. This pattern of response for men and division of housework also held for men and division of child care. The less child care men did (**b** = .41, $p < 0.001$) and the more men followed an exchange norm (**b** = –.22, $p < 0.01$), the less fair they viewed the allocation of child care tasks, $F(2, 116) = 13.8$, $p < 0.001$. Further, the less child care men did (**b** = .45, $p < 0.001$) and the more their spouse acted in an exchange manner in dividing child care (**b** = –.28, $p < 0.001$), the more *unfair* they judged the division of child care to be, $F(2, 116) = 16.3$, $p < 0.001$.

We made no prediction about the relation between following an equality standard and perceived fairness of division of family work. However, we found several significant associations between reports of the spouse adhering to an equality standard and perceived fairness of housework and child care distribution for women. Women reported that the less housework they did (**b** = –.21, $p < 0.05$) and the more their spouse tried to share the housework equally (**b** = .24, $p < 0.01$), the more fair they thought the division of housework, $F(2, 118) = 6.7$, $p < 0.01$. Similarly, women indicated that, independent of the division of child care tasks (**b** = –.12, ns), the more their spouses tried to assume an equal responsibility for child care (**b** = .19, $p < 0.01$), the greater their sense of perceived fairness of division of child care, $F(2, 117) = 5.5$, $p < 0.01$.

By contrast, men's reports of self or spouse adhering to an equality standard did not significantly predict the level of perceived fairness of division of family work over and above that accounted for by the actual division of labor in the home (**b** = .36, $p < 0.001$ for housework distribution and **b** = .37, $p < 0.001$ for division of child care).

DISCUSSION

The pattern of results obtained confirms many of our hypotheses. It also yields some intriguing, unpredicted, results as well.

How do most people feel about a communal norm for their marriages? Our first predictions were that our participants would rate a communal

norm as ideal for their marriages and that people would report striving to live up to that ideal in their marriages. Both hypotheses were supported by the data that appear in Table I. On a 5-point scale with higher numbers indicating greater judgments that a norm is ideal, the communal norm received average ratings of 4.0 from women and 3.9 from men—ratings that were on the ideal end of our scale and were the highest ratings any of the norms received. In addition, on average, participants reported that both they and their spouses strove to live up to this communal norm.

Is an exchange norm perceived as less ideal than a communal norm? Is an exchange norm striven toward to a lesser extent than a communal norm? We also predicted that an exchange norm would, on average, be perceived as significantly less ideal than a communal norm for marriages and that it would be followed significantly less than a communal norm. As expected, both men and women rated an exchange norm ($\bar{x}$s = 1.5 for men and women) as not very ideal and as significantly *less* ideal than they rated a communal norm. It was also the case that both men and women reported that both they and their spouses strove to follow an exchange norm significantly less often than they and their spouses strove to follow a communal norm.

What about equality? We have argued that an equality standard is sometimes compatible with a communal standard and sometimes not. Based on these arguments we predicted that judgments of how ideal an equality norm is and of how often a person strives to live up to it would fall between judgments of a communal norm (which ought to be higher) and judgments of an exchange norm (which ought to be lower). Our results in Table I clearly support this prediction. Both women and men rated an equality norm as significantly less ideal than a communal norm and as significantly more ideal than an exchange norm. Both men and women also reported that they and that their spouses strove to live up to an equality norm significantly more often than an exchange norm and significantly less often than a communal norm.

Applying norms to housework and child care. We went beyond exploring reports of what norms our participants and their spouses reported following generally, to explore their reports of following communal, exchange, and equality norms in the specific domains of housework and child care. We did this to see if the same results would obtain when we asked very specific questions about domains in which past research has indicated objective inequities exist. As expected, we obtained the same general pattern of results. Mean endorsements of a communal norm for the self and for the spouse for both men and women were higher than mean endorsements of an equality norm which, in turn, were greater than mean endorsements of an exchange norm. In almost all cases the differences in means were

statistically significant. However, in three cases, all involving whether one's spouse tended to follow a communal and an equality norm in dividing up family work, the mean for following a communal norm was not statistically significantly greater than the mean for following an equality norm. That is, comparisons of women's ratings of their spouses following a communal versus an equality rule for purposes of dividing housework and comparisons of men's reports that their spouses followed a communal relative to an equality rule for purposes of dividing housework and for purposes of dividing child care did not reach statistical significance. It seems that our participants, having access to their own internal motivations, were more confident that they were striving to follow a communal rule rather than an equality rule than they were that their spouses were striving to follow a communal rule rather than an equality rule.

Finally, in light of the fact that the pattern of mean endorsements in Table I favored a communal norm in almost all respects, we considered the extent to which reports of agreement with these norms, particularly with respect to communal rules, might have been influenced by social desirability tendencies. As far as ideal endorsements of the norms are concerned, we explicitly were asking what norm our participants personally felt was the most socially desirable from their own perspective. We acknowledge that what they believe to be most desirable *may* be distinct from what they believe the experimenter finds most desirable *and* simultaneously that it is logically possible that they may be trying to please the experimenter. However, we believe that the conjunction of these two things highly unlikely.

Reports of the actual division of household labor. Not surprising in light of prior literature (Belsky and Pensky, 1988; Shelton and John, 1996), our results replicate the frequently reported findings that wives assume a disproportionately large share of both housework and child care (and that this is the case regardless of wives' employment status). Beyond that, and also not surprising, wives' reports of how much household work they did were negatively related to their perceptions of the fairness of the division of this labor, whereas husbands' reports of how much housework and child care they did were positively related to their perceptions of the fairness of the division of this work. In other words, spouses agree that when the division of housework and child care is more nearly equal between husband and wife, the division is more fair.

Links between endorsing norms and perceiving fairness in the division of family work. An additional important question addressed in this work was whether there would be any links between reports of using communal, exchange, and equality norms and perceptions of fairness in dividing family work, *controlling for reports of the actual division of family work.* We pre-

dicted that there would be. We expected that application of a communal norm would be positively associated with perceived fairness, whereas application of an exchange norm would be negatively associated with perceived fairness.

These predictions were based on our assumptions regarding how people come to apply communal and exchange norms to their relationships in the first place. As we already have asserted and provided evidence for, people feel a communal norm is ideal for marriages and that an exchange norm is not ideal for marriages. Moreover, we believe people often strive to meet the communal ideal. In turn, to the extent to which members of a couple feel that they and their spouse have succeeded in living up to this ideal, they perceive the division of household work to be fair. This should occur even if the division of work is unequal because the needs of the two spouses may well be unequal.

We do not, however, assume that people will be perfectly motivated nor perfectly capable of meeting each others' needs all the time and we do believe it is inevitable in any relationship that some needs will be neglected. Moreover, if needs are neglected sufficiently often and especially if spouses' trust that the other truly cares about their needs is low (as may be the case when people are insecure), people may shift to an exchange norm. It is our suspicion that perceptions of unfairness (in the form of needs having been neglected) may be what drives the use (and therefore the endorsement) of an exchange norm in the first place. In turn, use of an exchange norm (involving as it does record keeping) in combination with the fact that people inevitably have greater access to their own contributions to household tasks and to child care than to their spouse's contribution, should exacerbate perceptions of unfairness. Thus, both because perceptions of unfairness may lead to use of an exchange norm and because use of an exchange norm is likely to exacerbate perceptions of unfairness, we predicted that endorsement of exchange norms for purposes of dividing family work would be positively linked with perceptions of unfairness.

These hypotheses received considerable support. Consider links between endorsement of a communal norm and perceived fairness first. After controlling for the actual division of family work, women's endorsements that they followed a communal norm in dividing housework and child care and that their spouse followed a communal norm in dividing housework and child care were all positively and significantly associated with perceived fairness. In other words, for women, use of a communal norm was associated with reports of greater fairness in the domain of family work. On the other hand, after controlling for the actual division of family work, there were no links between men's perceptions of themselves and their spouses

following communal rules and perceived fairness of division of family work. A simple explanation for this is that men typically do not feel their needs are neglected in the domains of housework and child care and that, as a result, they simply do not often think about fairness in these areas. This observation is consistent with the notion that underbenefiting *un*fairness is more easily recognized and leads to more distress than overbenefiting *un*fairness (Walster *et al.,* 1978). A lack of thinking about a communal norm being violated and about issues of fairness among most of our male participants may account for the overall lack of any empirical association between judgments of these two things for our male participants.

Next consider links between endorsements of an exchange norm for purposes of dividing housework and child care and perceptions of fairness. Here, too, our hypotheses received some support. After controlling for reports of the actual division of labor, wives' reports of the self following an exchange norm for housework distribution and husbands' reports of themselves and of their spouses following exchange norms for dividing housework and allocating child care tasks were all negatively linked to the perceived fairness of the division of housework. These results support our reasoning that either perceived unfairness may drive use of an exchange norm in the first place and/or that use of an exchange norm generates perceptions of unfairness.

We did not observe negative associations, after controlling for the actual division of child care, between women's reports of themselves and their spouses using an exchange norm in the child care domain and perceived unfairness of the division of labor in that domain. At this point we do not feel confident in interpreting why our predictions were not supported by women's self-reports in this domain.

Again, what about equality? We did not make à priori predictions about how our participants' reports of themselves and of their spouses following an equality rule would relate to perceived fairness. In fact, for women only, reports of the spouse following an equality rule in dividing both housework and child care, controlling for the actual division of labor, were positively associated with perceived fairness. We speculate that this occurs because women whose spouses are seen as striving to divide housework and child care equally also see those spouses as caring more about their needs. In other words, such women, relative to other women, may perceive that their spouses recognize the extra burden that women typically carry in doing family work and wish to ease that burden. If this is the case, then a plausible explanation for why these same patterns did not emerge for men's perception of fairness is simply that men do not ordinarily perform a disproportionately large share of the family work so a wife being perceived as following an equality rule in this domain is not seen as being

especially attentive to the husband's needs. In other words, women, but not men, may interpret a spouse following an equality norm as a spouse who cares about their needs.

Again, we considered whether social desirability could have produced the pattern of links between norm use and perceived fairness we observed in Table II. We acknowledge that reports of the extent to which oneself and one's spouse actually strive to live up to a communal norm may have been influenced by a desire to present oneself in a socially desirable manner, as may reports of how fair the division of family work in one's marriage is. However, at this point, we think it is very unlikely that social desirability accounts for the overall pattern of results in Table II, for a number of reasons. First, we suspect it is likely that *all* the norms about which we had our participants make judgments—exchange and equality, as well as a communal norm—seemed socially desirable. If so, a desire to present oneself in a socially desirable manner should have inflated reports of adherence to *all* these norms and the patterns shown in Table II would not be affected. Beyond this point, we note that our participants were not directly asked to rate how fair they perceived each norm to be, nor were they directly asked to compare the fairness of these norms with one another. Neither were they aware we were planning to link their reports of norm use with their judgments of the fairness of the division of family work in their marriages. These facts, combined with the fact that the surveys these participants filled out were quite long, suggest to us that our participants did not even think about how their ratings of the three justice norms ought to relate to their ratings of the fairness of their division of family work in order for them to appear in the most socially desirable light. Still, the issue of how a desire to present oneself in a favorable light may influence reports of adherence to justice norms and reports of fairness in marriage remains, in our view, an issue worthy of further empirical investigation.

Summary

In sum, we found clear evidence that communal rules are perceived as more ideal than exchange rules (and that an equality rule falls in the middle). Further, we found clear evidence that spouses perceive themselves as following communal rules to a greater extent than exchange or equality rules. Finally, it appears that perceiving oneself and one's spouse to be following communal rules and perceiving one's spouse to be following an equality rule are associated with increased perceived fairness of family work distribution *for women*. By contrast, for both women and men, perceiving

oneself and one's spouse to be following exchange rules is associated with decreased perceived fairness.

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APPENDIX A

Ideal Prototypes for Justice Norms

Communal Norm

The way marital relationships *ideally* should operate is that each person should pay attention to the other person's needs. Each person should benefit the other in response to the other's needs when the other has a real need which he or she cannot meet him or herself. Each person should do this to the best of his or her ability so long as the personal costs are reasonable. When one person does something for the other, the other should not owe the giver anything.

Exchange Norm

The way marital relationships *ideally* should operate is that each person should benefit the other with the expectation of receiving a benefit of similar value in return. After receiving a benefit, members should feel obligated to give the other a benefit of comparable value. Members of the relationship ought to keep track of benefits given and received in order to keep them in balance.

Equality Standard

The way marital relationships *ideally* should operate is that each person should get the same number of benefits from the relationship. If one member starts receiving more benefits than the other, both members should

work to get the relationship back into balance. When giving and accepting benefits, the overall level of equality of benefits should be kept in mind.

APPENDIX B

Indicators of Following Justice Norms for Division of Housework and Child Care[3]

Communal Norm

Self. In dividing the household (or child care) tasks, I try to pay attention to my spouse's needs, whenever reasonable.

Spouse. In dividing the household (or child care) tasks, my spouse tries to pay attention to my needs, whenever reasonable.

Exchange Norm

Self. In dividing the household (or child care) tasks, whenever my spouse does some tasks, I try to do a comparable amount.

Spouse. In dividing the household (or child care) tasks, whenever I do some tasks, my spouse tries to do a comparable amount.

Equality Standard

Self. In dividing the household (or child care) tasks, I try to share the housework (or child care) equally with my spouse.

Spouse. In dividing the household (or child care) tasks, my spouse tries to share the housework (or child care) equally with me.

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[3]Each statement for self and spouse was asked separately for household tasks and for child care tasks and was rated on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) scale.

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