Unfair allocation in a competitive setting: A self-presentational perspective

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The experiments were conducted to clarify the factors affecting unfair allocation under the competition between two groups. Thirty-eight male undergraduates participated as subjects in Experiment 1 and twenty-seven in Experiment 2. In Experiment 1, each subject was told that he would be an allocator and that it would be informed in one of the four ways; only to the in-group, only to the out-group, to both, or to neither group. The subjects were asked to allocate rewards between the in-group and the out-group performer according to equity, but they allocated more rewards to the in-group performer in spite of equal performance when they were to be identified by the in-group members. Information about identification by the out-group members did not affect allocation. In Experiment 2, the subjects received information concerning the group to which each performer belonged. Being asked to use equity, the subjects leveled the rewards in unequal performance when the in-group performer did poorly. When he did well, the subjects made an equitable allocation. In both experiments, the subjects made fair performance ratings.

Key words: injustice, equity, self-presentation, membership, anonymity.

Greenberg and Cohen (1982) proposed that justice in allocation has two aspects: Justice as a goal and justice as an instrument for some goal. Preceding studies emphasized justice as a goal; some of those experiments studied on the reaction when the recipients perceived themselves treated in an unfair manner and on the manner how they restored justice, and others attempted to identify and describe the justice norms and to determine the conditions under which they were applied.

As for justice as an instrument, it has attracted relatively little attention. Since justice in allocation and broader allocation issues cannot be understood well without study on injustice, it is necessary to study behaviors for some goal other than justice in allocative situations; how participants will use justice effectively in order to attain a goal to which justice is instrumental, and, further, how they will behave to attain a goal when justice is ineffective in attaining that goal. In the latter case, how will individuals seek the goal, following or violating justice? The present study focussed on an allocator's unfair be-

havior in a case in which self-presentation was a goal but could not be accomplished by justice. Two experiments were carried out to reveal how the subjects behaved in allocative situations and to clarify the factors which caused individuals to select the goal and affected their allocation.

According to Schneider (1981, p. 25), self-presentation is "the manipulation of information about the self by an actor". Jones and Pittman (1982) offered a taxonomy of five classes of self-presentational strategies; ingratiation, intimidation, self-promotion, exemplification, and supplication. There is an evidence that exemplification, which is an attempt to achieve the attribution of moral worthiness, is involved in allocative situations. The public-private variation is often used in the allocation studies concerning self-presentation.

An example of this approach is provided by Reis and Gruen (1976). In their study, subjects made equitable allocation when the experimenter who was presumed to expect equity was aware of allocation, but made equal allocation when the co-workers who were presumed

to expect equality were aware of allocation. They considered that the subjects allocated rewards according to the anticipation of the observer(s) in order to gain social approval of a fair person. Similarly, Kidder, Bellettire, and Cohen (1977) reported that subjects distributed rewards in accordance with the expectation that they should select a justice norm which conformed to the sex-role stereotypes; male subjects should select equity while female should select equality. Moreover, Rivera and Tedeschi (1976) found that overpaid subjects reported satisfaction when the "bogus pipeline procedure" (Jones & Sigall, 1971) was introduced, and expressed distress when it was not introduced. This is interpretable from self-presentational perspective: The subjects publicly expressed distress with overpayment in the case that their false reports could not be detected because of social approval that they could gain by pretending to be a fair person. To the contrary, the subjects reported their private feeling of satisfaction in the case that their false reports could be detected because they could not pretend to be a fair person and gain social approval.

Experiment 1

In the above examples, justice is instrumental to a goal of self-presentation, that is, exemplification in those cases. The present study introduced the setting in which justice was ineffective in a goal of exemplification. In the experiment, the subjects were given two opinions, together with the explanation that one of them was written by the in-group performer and the other by the out-group performer. They evaluated the opinions and then allocated rewards to the performers according to their evaluation. Allocation was made public, but the opinions and the evaluation were kept secret. In this setting, unlike the above examples, justice was expected to be unuseful to

exemplification: Subjects could not show that they were fair because other participants knew allocation, but neither opinions nor evaluation. Instead, ingratiation could be a goal in this case; it is one of self-presentational strategies that Jones and Pittman (1982) offered and an illicit attempt to achieve the attribution of likability. Then, subjects were expected to use excessive money as an instrument to effective ingratiation.

According to Jones and Pittman (1982, p. 237), incentive values are an underlying determinant of ingratiation: It is "the importance of being liked by a particular target" and "varies directly with the dependence of the actor on the target". In the above experiments, however, the public-private manipulation was executed without taking into account who observed behaviors, or, if such an account was taken, the incentive values of the observers were supposed to be equal. The present study changed group membership of observers under a competitive situation between two groups in order to vary incentive values of observers. In-group members of subjects were assumed to have relatively higher incentive values than out-group members: In-group members were on the side of subjects and dependent on them, but in contrast, out-group members were on the opponent side and were not dependent on subjects. Thus, the variation of group membership would affect goal selections of subjects. Subjects would select the goal of ingratiation with in-group members when they were to identify subjects as the allocator in their group. But subjects would neither choose ingratiation with out-group members nor be prevented from ingratiation with in-group members when out-group members were to do so.

Experiment 1 was a 2 (identification by in-group members) $\times$ 2 (identification by out-group members) factorial design with one control condition (no information on identification). Hypotheses were as fol-

lows.

Hypothesis 1. Subjects will allocate more rewards to the in-group performer at the expense of the out-group performer when the identity of the subjects as the allocator will be known to in-group members.

Hypothesis 2. Whether or not out-group members will know that the subjects are the allocator will have no effect on allocation.

Method

Subjects. Subjects were 38 male Kyoto University undergraduates.

Dependent variable. Dependent variable was the portion of monetary rewards allocated to the in-group performer. Total amount was 700 yen.

Supplementary measurements. The stimulus opinions were rated on five 6-point SD scales; superior-inferior, good-bad, high-low, likable-dislikable, and large-small. The preliminary test suggested that they were on the same dimension, which could be considered to be evaluative dimension.

Stimulus opinions. Two opinions about the university entrance examination system were prepared to be given as the opinions expressed by the performers. They were rated equal in the preliminary test: There was no significant difference between the total points of the above five scales for two opinions. One opinion was used as the opinion of the in-group performer, and the other as the opinion of the out-group performer, the assignment was random among the subjects.

Procedure. The experiment was usually conducted with groups of three subjects and three confederates. It was noted that the subjects did not know each other and that the subjects and the confederates did not each other. But when three subjects could not be recruited in a session, confederate(s) participated in that session to give the impression that there were six persons like regular sessions. Participants were informed that the study was about group productivity and that competitions would

be introduced between two groups. Then, participants were divided into two groups ostensibly at random although the groups were actually divided into the subjects' group and the confederates' group. Participants were told that the competition consisted of two parts, first part and final part, and that each group would work separately in the first part. After this explanation, the confederates' group was guided to another room.

Subjects were instructed as follows: In the first part of the competition, each performer of your group will compete with a performer from the opponent group as an individual group performer, while your group as a whole in the final part. In both parts, monetary rewards will be awarded on the basis of the relative performance. To be fair, rewards will be divided by one of you in the first part, and by the experimenters (male) in the final part. Allocators will be also paid 350 yen for their work. You will be designated as either an allocator or a performer. Likewise, the opponent group members will be assigned to an allocator or performers. Thus, the performers in each group will work on an assigned task, and each allocator will first evaluate performance of your group performer and one of the opponent group performer, and then, divide rewards of 700 yen according to his evaluation.

Then, each subject was seated in separate booths. There was an identification card on each subject's desk, which stated that he was Person-B, thus, all subjects were called Person-B. Ostensibly according to the card, the experimenter handed out the envelopes. There was a message in them stating that they had been assigned to an allocator, and that the subjects should perform an intervening task. The task was to rewrite a passage of a Japanese novel with using *katakana* letter. Therefore, all subjects served actually as an allocator, though one believed that he was only one allocator chosen at random

in his group. Subjects were told that the allocator would perform the intervening task, while the performers would perform the task of expressing their opinion about the university entrance examination system. Subjects worked ten minutes for the intervening task.

After that ten minutes, subjects were asked to put the sheets into the envelope. The female assistant collected the envelopes and left the room with disguising attitude as if she went coping the sheets. While waiting for her, subjects were told that monetary rewards would be paid by the accountant according to the allocators' decisions after the first competition. At this point, the independent variable manipulation was introduced. Subjects in a session were randomly assigned to one of the five conditions. Subjects in the experimental condition received one of four instructions as follows:

1. After the final competition, the identity of the allocator in your group will be known to the members of both groups.
2. After the final competition, the identity of the allocator in your group will be known to your group members but not to the opponent group members.
3. After the final competition, the identity of the allocator in your group will be known to the opponent group members but not to your group members.
4. The identity of the allocator in your group will be known to the members of neither group.

Subjects in the control condition received no instruction about the public identification of the allocator. In all conditions, subjects were told as follows: Other members in your group, the experimenter, and the assistant will know the allocation but will know neither the opinions nor the evaluation by the allocator in your group.

Several minutes later, the assistant returned to the room with envelopes. Subjects were informed that copies of each group performer's opinions, rating sheets, and a written instruction were put into

Table 1
Amounts of the rewards allocated to the in-group performer in Experiment 1

	Identification				Control
	Both	In	Out	Neither	
<i>M</i>	414.3	442.9	300.0	314.3	320.0
<i>SD</i>	89.9	97.6	57.7	37.8	91.9

the envelope for the allocator, and that an intervening task sheets were put into the envelopes for the performers. In addition to the written instruction, the experimenter emphasized allocation following equity. Subjects spent ten minutes rating and dividing. On completing the task, subjects were asked to put the sheets into the envelope, and the experimenter collected the envelopes.

At this point, the experiment was actually over: The final competition was not introduced. Subjects were debriefed and thanked for their cooperation. Monetary rewards were not paid subjects for their work. Instead, subjects were given small presents, and asked not to tell other people the content of the experiment.

Results

Allocation. Table 1 shows means and *SDs* of the rewards allocated to the in-group performer. An ANOVA of 2×2 with one control revealed that the subjects allocated significantly more money to the in-group performer when the in-group members were expected to identify the allocator in their group ($p < .001$), but that whether or not the out-group members were expected to identify the allocator in the subjects' group had no effect on allocation (Table 2).

Further, Duncan test divided the five conditions into two sets ($p < .05$): One was consisted of the conditions in which the allocator was expected to be identified only by the in-group members or by the members of both groups; the other was consisted of the conditions in which the allocator was expected to be identified

Table 2
Result of ANOVA (allocation) in Experiment 1

Source of variation	df	SS	MS	F
Between cell	4	123 661.6		
Control vs. all others	1	16 875.9	16 875.9	2.648
A (In-group members)	1	103 214.3	103 214.3	16.197***
B (Out-group members)	1	3 214.3	3 214.3	0.504
AB	1	357.1	357.1	0.056
Within cell	33	210 285.8	6 372.3	

*** $p < .001$.

Table 3
Rating points to the opinions of the in-group and
the out-group performer in Experiment 1

Opinion		Identification				Control
		Both	In	Out	Neither	
In-group performer	<i>M</i>	19.3	20.4	19.3	18.9	19.1
	<i>SD</i>	3.8	1.9	3.1	3.5	2.5
Out-group performer	<i>M</i>	18.4	19.7	20.9	20.7	18.8
	<i>SD</i>	4.5	2.9	2.8	1.6	3.5

Rating points range from 5 to 30. Higher points indicate higher evaluation.

only by the out-group members or by the members of neither group, or in which the subjects received no information about the allocator's identity.

Ratings. The sum of the rating points on the five scales was calculated (Table 3), and the points to the out-group performer were subtracted from the points to the in-group performer. An ANOVA of 2×2 with one control was performed, but no significant difference was found.

Discussion

A significant difference was found in allocation of rewards. This difference shows that allocation was unfair at least in one condition because the stimulus opinions were prepared to be rated equally and the both verbal and written instructions emphasized the use of equity. Further, Duncan test divided the conditions into two sets: In one set, the allocator was to be identified by the in-group members; in the other set, the allocator's iden-

tity was not to be revealed to the in-group members or the subjects received no information at all about the public revelation of the allocator's identity. That is, the rewards to the in-group performer were equal to those in the control condition when the in-group members were not to identify the allocator, but the rewards were more than the control condition when they were to do so. The above results show that the subjects made unfair allocations when the in-group members were expected to identify the subjects as the allocator but they made fair allocations when they were not and, furthermore, that whether or not the out-group members were expected to identify the allocator was irrelevant to fairness of allocation. Thus, the results supported *Hypothesis 1* and *Hypothesis 2*.

However, no difference was found in the ratings by the subjects about the quality of the opinions on the university entrance examination system. Since the

opinions should be rated equally, this results suggest that the subjects made fair rating privately.

These results can be interpreted in terms of self-presentation. The subjects were fair with respect to their ratings of the opinions, though they took account of group membership, that is, who were to identify them as the allocator, when they allocated the rewards. They attempted to ingratiate themselves with the in-group members who had high incentive values when these individuals were expected to identify the allocator, and unfairly bestowed excessive money in order to please the in-group performer and/or to show his superiority and their loyalty to the group. However, the subjects neither had to behave in this manner nor were prevented from ingratiation with the in-group members when the out-group members with low incentive values were to identify them as the allocator. Thus, identification by the in-group members had effect on allocation, but identification by the out-group members did not.

Experiment 2

In Experiment 1, identification by in-group members affected allocation and led the subjects to unfair allocation, but identification by out-group members did not. Therefore, group membership was assumed to have determined the incentive values of the observers to the subjects and affected their decisions. Likewise, performer's group membership was supposed to determine incentive values of performers and affect allocation.

Experiment 2 manipulated performer's group membership in the setting in which two opinions should be rated unequally, in contrast to the equal performance setting in Experiment 1. The papers were handed on which the group membership of the performer was written together with their opinion to be rated beforehand by the assistant.

In the Experiment 1, the subjects unfairly allocated more than half of the rewards to the in-group performer when the in-group members were to identify the allocator in spite of the equal performance setting. The allocation was considered to be ingratiation by money. Then, in the unequal performance setting, subjects were expected to make different allocations in order to achieve the attribution of likability from incentive in-group members, according to which group's performer expressed the better opinion. When the in-group performer did well, subjects were expected to make an equitable or fair allocation of rewards: It was to give more than half of rewards to the in-group performer and to be useful to being liked by in-group members. However, when the in-group performer did poorly, subjects were expected to make an unfair allocation: Fair allocation was to give less than half of rewards to the in-group performer and to be useless to being liked by in-group members. Therefore, subjects would allocate not less than half of rewards to the in-group performer.

Experiment 2 was a 1×3 factorial design that manipulated performers' group membership. Hypotheses were as follows.

Hypothesis 1. When the in-group performer expresses the better opinion than that of the out-group performer, subjects are expected to make fair allocation.

Hypothesis 2. When the in-group performer expresses the worse opinion than that of the out-group performer, subjects are expected to make unfair allocation, that is, allocate not less than half of rewards to the in-group performer.

Method

Subjects. Subjects were 27 male Kyoto University undergraduates.

Stimulus opinions. Two opinions about the university entrance examination system were prepared as the opinions written by the performers. They were rated unequal on the five 6-point SD scales that

were identical to those in Experiment 1. They were called Opinion-H and Opinion-L: The former was the opinion that had been rated relatively better on the scales in the preliminary test; the latter was the one rated relatively worse.

Dependent variable. Dependent variable was the portion of monetary rewards allocated to Opinion-H out of 700 yen.

Supplementary measurements. The stimulus opinions were rated on the five 6-point SD scales that were the same as those in Experiment 1.

Procedure. Procedure was identical to that of Experiment 1 except the following two points: First, the independent variable was manipulated by writing the performer's group membership with each of the two opinions. One condition was that Opinion-H was labeled the in-grouper's opinion and Opinion-L was the out-grouper's opinion (the H condition), the other was the reverse (the L condition). In the control condition, Opinion-H was labeled Opinion-1, and Opinion-L was Opinion-2. The second difference was the additional instruction that both groups' members had an opportunity to identify the allocator in the subjects' group after the final competition.

Results

Allocation. Table 4 shows means and SDs of the rewards allocated to Opinion-H. A significant difference was found by a 1×3 ANOVA ($p < .05$) (Table 5). A t test showed that the rewards in the control condition was significantly more than those in the L condition ($p < .05$) but that there was no difference between the control and the H condition. Moreover, a t test showed that the mean in the L condition was not significantly more than half of the total rewards.

Ratings. The sum of the rating points on the five scales was calculated (Table 6), and the points to Opinion-L were subtracted from the points to Opinion-H. A 1×3 ANOVA was performed, but no

Table 4
Amounts of the rewards allocated to
Opinion-H in Experiment 2

Condition	High	Low	Control
<i>M</i>	488.7	366.7	477.8
<i>SD</i>	50.0	141.4	66.7

Table 5
Result of ANOVA (allocation)
in Experiment 2

Source of variation	<i>df</i>	SS	MS	<i>F</i>
Total	26	282 963.0		
A	2	67 407.4	33 703.7	3.753*
S/A	24	215 555.6	8 981.5	

* $p < .05$.

Table 6
Rating points to Opinion-H and
Opinion-L in Experiment 2

		Condition		
		High	Low	Control
Opinion-H	<i>M</i>	21.9	22.6	20.7
	<i>SD</i>	1.5	3.4	3.6
Opinion-L	<i>M</i>	15.7	16.4	15.7
	<i>SD</i>	2.5	2.8	3.6

Rating points range from 5 to 30. Higher points indicate higher evaluation.

significant difference was found.

Discussion

A significant difference was found in the allocation of rewards. This difference means that unfair allocation must have existed at least in one condition because the amount of the rewards was always paid for Opinion-H through all conditions. Further, a t test showed that there was a significant difference between the control condition and the L condition but not between the control and the H condition. These results show that the allocation was unfair in the L condition but fair in the H condition. The subjects in the L con-

dition allocated the excessive rewards to the in-group performer. However, there is a limit to the excessive largess of the subjects because the rewards in the L condition was not significantly more than half of the total rewards to be distributed. Thus, these results supported both *Hypothesis 1* and *Hypothesis 2*. No difference was found in the opinion ratings; the subjects were assumed to make fair ratings in all conditions.

The results in the L condition are interpretable in terms of self-presentation: The subjects were considered to be fair in private ratings but unfair in public allocation. In the L condition, equitable allocation was supposed to lead the subjects to give less than half of the money to the in-group performer. Consequently, the subjects unfairly allocated the rewards, that is, they allocated equally to avoid disapproval from the in-group members. The allocation was assumed to be insufficient ingratiation: The subjects gave half of the rewards to the in-group performer, but not more than that.

On the other hand, the subjects in the H condition were considered to behave fairly in both ratings and allocation. Their behaviors may be also interpreted from self-presentational perspective. The subjects made equitable allocation because such allocations were supposed to bring the desirable result, that is, more than half of the rewards to the in-group member and, thus, they might help to win the favor of the in-group members.

In both conditions, the subjects did not care how the out-group members would feel about the fact that the subjects made the allocations undesirable for the out-group members, that is, that they gave half or less of the rewards to the out-group performer.

General Discussion

The factors varied in Experiment 1 and in Experiment 2 affected the public allo-

cation which was to be revealed later to the other participants, but not the private ratings which were not to be revealed. Since only the public behaviors were affected, the allocations were considered to be self-presentational behaviors. Moreover, the significant differences in allocation mean that the allocations were unfair. The results agree with Reis (1981) in that self-presentation is relevant to justice in allocation. The present study, however, differs from that of Reis (1981). In his study, self-presentation was discussed with regard to fair behaviors, while in this study it was discussed with regard to unfair behaviors. Further, the present study differs from the preceding justice studies concerning self-presentation (e.g., Reis & Gruen, 1976) in the experimental setting. Past studies constructed the one-group or non-group situations, but this study introduced a competitive situation between two groups. The study showed that group membership affected allocation in the competitive situation.

In Experiment 1, the subjects gave the excessive and unfair rewards to the in-group performer when they were told that the in-group members would identify the allocator. In Experiment 2, the subjects unfairly evened up the rewards when the in-group performer expressed the worse opinion.

Group membership was considered to have determined the incentive values of the participants, that is, the in-group members had higher incentive values than the out-group members. It is supposed that in both experiments the in-group members became friendly with each other through cooperation for a group victory and that allocation disadvantageous to the in-group performer hurt the good terms and brought disapproval of a betrayer from the in-group members. The subjects attempted to ingratiate themselves with the in-group members in order to avoid the disapproval and to give the impression that they had been loyal to their

group. Reis (1981) discussed the importance of presenting oneself as a fair person to oneself. So, the subjects might attempt to present themselves as a loyal member to themselves. On the other hand, the out-group members were assumed to have relatively little incentive values. In both experiments, the out-group members could not prevent unfair allocations disadvantageous to their group performer: The subjects favored the in-group performer although both groups' members were told to identify them as the allocator later. The results of the study show that incentive values of targets should be considered in the self-presentational studies, even though the preceding researches have not paid much attention to this factor.

However, group membership did not always evoke unfair allocation or ingratiation. In Experiment 2, the subjects gave the unfairly excessive rewards to the in-group performer, but did not allocate more than half of the total rewards when his opinion was worse. When it was better, the subjects made equitable allocation and did not enlarge the degree of difference of the rewards. This suggests that there was a limit to injustice for self-presentation: The subjects neither ignored relative performance completely nor always favored the in-group performer. Rather, they made allocations suitable for self-presentation, if it was possible in that situation, with taking account of relative performance.

It is possible to interpret the allocations in this study as fair ones; if group membership was also regarded to be an input in Experiment 1, and if equity in the H condition and equality in the L condition were judged appropriate in Experiment 2. However, the study regarded only equity as fair, limited input to performance, and stressed equity and the nature of input in both verbal and written instructions. So, the allocations in this study can rightly be regarded as unfair.

Moreover, the results of the study could

be interpreted in terms of in-group bias. In-group bias researches so far revealed that supervisors distributed more rewards to in-group members at the expense of out-group members; supervisors made those biased allocation to establish their positive social identities (cf. Brewer, 1979). The results might be considered in-group bias phenomena because the subjects allocated the excessive rewards to the in-group performer. However, they should be interpreted rather as self-presentational behaviors; if they had been merely in-group bias phenomena, the opinion ratings also would have been changed to establish positive social identities. Instead, it was not the private ratings but only the public allocations that were distorted.

The present study suggests that justice is a neither sole nor dominant goal in allocative situations. Greenberg and Leventhal (1976) showed that allocators under pressure to raise productivity ignored equity. According to Equity theory (Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1973, p. 153; Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978, p. 16), "should individuals perceive that they can maximize their outcome by behaving inequitably, they will do so". Further, Leventhal, Karuza, and Fry (1980, p. 198) stated that "an individual may often give little thought to questions of fairness".

These suggest that unfair behaviors should be studied more, and that behaviors in allocative situations should be studied independently of justice. However, allocation researches so far have focussed on individual perceptions, motivations, and behaviors for justice. In contrast, there has been little focus on social structures in which allocative situations are embedded and in which situational contexts are formed. Thus, social factors have been often varied fragmentarily. For example, the justice norms were either implicitly or explicitly settled by the experimenter (e.g., Reis & Gruzen, 1976), but not by the participants themselves.

Whether the participants felt the norm fair and appropriate is doubtful.

In order to study behaviors in allocative situations as well as justice, it is necessary to regard justice issues as a part of broader problems of allocation or social exchange. That is, allocative situations are organized by individuals and groups which are assigned to the different roles respectively, communicate with each other, and pursue their own goals. This kind of approach will lead us to thorough understandings of allocation issues.

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