

Planning a family activity:
Distributing responsibilities for tasks

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Abstract

This paper explores the underlying role and gender-boundness and division of specific tasks for a pleasant, co-operative event. Year 9 adolescents and adults were asked to plan an unexpected party for a teenager, and allocate party chores to up to four helpers, comprised of family members and a friend. The allocation of different chores to adolescents and adults in this specific situation provides a window on their perceptions of roles and of the appropriateness of tasks that can be assigned to others.

Findings from two separate party planning exercises, requiring abstract and specific allocations, revealed that adolescents and adults had clear understandings of what could and could not be delegated according to perceptions of the roles of the different helpers across ages and genders. Parents took up traditional responsibilities but did not involve themselves in the planning aspects of the party. Adolescents also excluded parents from assisting them with their plans, and from the party preparation. All had strict ideas about what a non-family friend could be asked to do. Findings are interpreted in relation to concepts of roles and responsibility.

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Introduction

"You can't ask a friend to do that!" was the response of a 14 year old when planning a party and organising helpers to assist with a number of chores (Chalmers & Lawrence, 1993). This teenager had a clear sense of what a friend could be asked to do, operating on a personal understanding of roles and responsibilities for herself and others. This study sought to identify how people of different ages assign responsibility for everyday chores in order to better understand the implicit rules under which they operate. The chores were related to a specific, common everyday event of organising a party that was as familiar to adolescents as adults. By asking subjects of different ages to assign chores to themselves and others, we focus on their understanding of role-related responsibilities. We sought to investigate their sense of role and gender-appropriate distributions of work in two ways, first we asked them to assign chores to adolescents and adults in an abstract task. We then particularised their assignment in a specific context. This provided us with two separate levels of information to enable us to explore allocation of responsibilities on the same task.

Psychological research generally has neglected the area of development of processes that allow a person to function appropriately in their lives and activities (Goodnow & Collins, 1990, Rogoff & Lave, 1984, Rogoff, 1990). While this neglect is now being addressed with studies on everyday cognition (Rogoff & Lave, 1984), parents' understanding of development (Goodnow & Collins, 1990), and planning (Chalmers & Lawrence, 1993; Friedman, Scholnick & Cocking, 1987) the area of how people develop an understanding of roles and responsibilities in everyday contexts is still relatively unexplored (Warton & Goodnow, 1991).

When we think about roles, it is generally in terms of a person's job or purpose in a situation and reflects the attitudes, values, and behavior ascribed by others as appropriate for that job or situation (Nye & Gecas, 1976). A particular role involves obligations and expectations with the responsibility of being accountable for one's actions. While the legal interpretations of responsibility involve the ability to attribute blame for actions (Hart, 1968; Hart & Honorinterpretations of roles and responsibility are somewhat different (Hamilton, 1978). For example, from an organisational perspective, roles involve a distinctive place or office with specific duties attached. From this perspective responsibility can be seen as providing for the welfare of others or the purposes of the organisation, as well as the responsibility for the performance of duties and doing what is necessary to fulfil them.

Another perspective on responsibility from a social context comes from studies which have traditionally focused on judgements about blame and intentions (Hook, 1989; Piaget, 1965). While these studies have been useful to explore the development of levels of cognitive reasoning, they have been limited because they have not considered the context, social position and relationships to others (Emler, 1991; Hamilton, 1978; Goodnow & Warton, 1992). Goodnow and Warton (1992) propose that in order to examine responsibility the norms that are expected to apply in particular kinds of relationships should be considered, along with the ways in which it is appropriate or inappropriate to act towards others. To explore questions on development of responsibility, they argue that the norms, relationships and actions should be

examined with participants of different ages and social positions so that social experience and not just logical capacities are being investigated. The task they devised to explore adolescents' understanding of responsibilities and obligations involved more than two actors, allowed for questions about the transfer of responsibility between siblings, and identified appropriate and inappropriate procedures to transfer responsibility (Goodnow & Warton, 1992, p 92). The task we devised involved a total of four actors and allowed for identification of chores that were appropriate or inappropriate to assign to helpers.

This study grew out of research on everyday planning and organisation involving interviews and a planning task (Chalmers & Lawrence, 1993). Participants of different ages were asked to plan an unexpected party, part of which involved the allocation of chores to different helpers to ensure that all the chores and activities were completed prior to the start of the party. This provided a way to identify the role-relatedness of the party chores where roles were dependent on age and gender. The adults and adolescents in these two studies allocated the chores in a number of similar ways. Both adults and adolescents agreed that some chores should be allocated to the teenager, for example, chores that involved planning the party. They also agreed some chores could appropriately be assigned to the mother, for example, shopping and food preparation chores, while other chores allocated to the father involved travelling, for example, to pick up costumes or the takeaway food. A number of chores were not consistently allocated to teenagers or adults, and were identified as chores that could be shared. These were either allocated to both the adult and teenager, or to an adult or a teenager. For example, the chores of returning books to the

library or picking up the stereo were sometimes allocated to teenagers, or included in the father's travel chores. While there was general agreement on allocation for many of these chores, differences were identified in the allocation of chores according to age and gender (Chalmers & Lawrence, 1993a). The patterns of these allocations and participants' anecdotal comments when working on the planning task indicated that they allocated chores not only for the efficiency of the plan as would be expected, but on some personal understanding of roles and responsibilities.

Goode (1982), in his sociological study of the family, noted that divisions of labour were not based on the criteria of efficient execution of the task but on traditions, status and gender. He particularly noted that there was a general regularity in the division of labour in all societies according to gender. While ownership of individual tasks was observed to vary for different cultures and societies, for example, tending the crops could be a female work in one society, and male work in another, every society allocated or assigned a range of tasks to females, another set of tasks to males, and yet another that could be performed by either gender. For all tasks, and particularly for those that could be performed by either gender, he noted that they were not assigned on rational judgements of capacity, biology or equity, but on criteria that had more to do with status. He argued that no society allowed men and women to freely choose whatever tasks they wanted to do, and might be able to do, on the basis of efficiency, convenience and capacity alone. While Goode's (1982) sociological perspective indicates that gender differences in the allocation of tasks within a particular social or cultural setting should be expected, it does not provide an indication of the specific allocations of particular tasks according to gender, or an indication of tasks

considered appropriate for people of different ages.

Household and family tasks have been shown to be distributed differently to different family members (Goodnow, 1988; Goodnow & Burns, 1985; Goodnow & Delaney, 1989; Nye, 1976; Rogoff, Sellers, Pirrotta, Fox & White, 1975). While some gender differences were observed in the distribution of some tasks, much of the distribution was based on the age and status of those involved, the perceived ownership of the task, the 'moveability' of the task to others, and the perceived purpose of distributing the task in the first instance. The studies by Goodnow and colleagues on the distribution of household chores found a

distinction between "self-care" and "other-care" as the basis of allocation rather than gender appropriateness. For the everyday chores identified in the studies there was a clear identification of responsibility according to the ownership of the task. Those who caused the task were expected to fix it, or if the task involved self-care then these tasks were seen as less likely to be assigned to others. In effect they became attached to the person concerned and hence there was little likelihood that others would be asked to carry out that task or chore. They also found that there were generational differences with adults distributing more chores to themselves or their spouse, rather than to the children of the household, seeing themselves as more competent or efficient (Goodnow, 1988; Goodnow & Burns, 1985; Goodnow & Delaney, 1989; Warton & Goodnow, 1991).

In hypothetical problem-solving and planning tasks (eg Hayes-Roth & Hayes-Roth, 1979; Volet, Lawrence & Dodds, 1986) it is commonly assumed that the pieces of the plans or problem space can be moved around and rearranged without consideration of the impact of general social rules and expectations (Goodnow, 1987). While the party planning task (Chalmers & Lawrence, 1993) was hypothetical, the participants clearly demonstrated by their allocation of chores to different helpers that the pieces of their plan were not able to be freely moved around. One woman when allocating the father to a chore said "Dad can wash the car, it won't hurt him to do that" indicated that there were chores that could be allocated to individuals on bases other than likes, but there were limits to how far these could be pushed (Chalmers, 1988).

Goodnow (1987) argued that events, activities and people often assume a "fixedness", a term borrowed from Dunker (1945), which prevents them from being moved around freely so that the problem can be carried out efficiently. While this "fixedness" may result from the objective features of the task, for example not being able to drive a car may reduce a number of options, it is more likely that a person's perceptions of movability and immovability have a far greater impact on what they might do when making decisions and plans (Goodnow, 1987). If we are to understand ways in which people plan, make decisions and function in their community, it is important to identify the social constraints that operate and the conditions that place limits on people's ability to carry out everyday tasks efficiently and effectively. One such social constraint is perceptions of roles and responsibility. The extent that people and tasks can be considered as pieces that are moveable, immovable or negotiable, depends on the perceptions of roles and responsibility a person holds. The extent that these views are shared by others within the same community provides us with a way of understanding and identifying ways in which people operate in their everyday

lives.

This paper extends from the planning research to focus specifically on allocations of everyday chores in the context of

planning a party. Greater realism was added to the hypothetical

task by situating the task in the participant's own home and neighbourhood. A party allocation package was developed to explore the allocation of chores to different helpers by participants of different ages and gender in order to identify their perceptions of appropriate roles and responsibilities within that social group. This was done in two ways. The task was designed to identify how people distribute a number of responsibilities in an abstract, and then in a specific task. These two approaches provide a double focus on ways in which people distribute responsibilities and enabled us to explore how the same role-bound chores were distributed in the abstract ratings and their moveability (Goodnow, 1987) within the specific constraints of a game-like task.

Method

Participants

A total of 300 adolescents and adults participated in the study. Of these, 216 were adolescents with ages ranging from 13.8 years to 16.9 years. They were drawn from 2 senior high schools in the northern metropolitan area of Perth. Sixty-eight students attended a private girls school, and 148 students attended a mixed gender government senior high school in an upper-middle class area, a total of 80 male and 136 female students.

The 84 adults ages ranged from 22.4 years to 62 years with a mean age of 40.67 years, 34 being male and 50 female. The adults were drawn from two places of employment in the metropolitan area of Perth. Seventy adults were employed as general staff in a large educational institution. They worked in wide range of occupational positions, for example gardening, maintenance, clerical, word processing, computer programming, library and administrative duties. Fourteen adults were drawn from a service company which provided a number of testing services. They were employed in varied positions ranging from managerial, clerical and laboratory duties.

Procedure

Adults at the educational institution were contacted at their place of employment by mail. The envelope contained an

introductory letter to explain the purpose of the study and the party allocation materials. Participants were selected from the internal phone book which indicated employees' position and location with equal numbers of male and female from equivalent positions contacted. If they did not wish to participate they were asked to return the envelope. This was then forwarded on to another person of the same gender and comparable position. Completed materials were returned through the mail. Employees at the service company were contacted through their manager who distributed the packages to all staff employed at the company. Completed materials were returned in centrally located envelopes which were then forwarded to the experimenter.

The students were contacted at their schools and completed the party allocation task in their tutorial class time. The task was administered in the final week of term by their tutor teacher and did not replace any regularly scheduled classes or lessons. The teachers agreed to participate and supervise the administration of the task. Instructions for the administration of the questionnaire was provided to all teachers. Teachers encouraged the students to complete it thoughtfully and gave them the option of not participating. Comments from the teachers indicated that students who did participate enjoyed the task and that it provided the basis of interesting discussions later in the period.

The party allocation materials consisted of 3 parts, the scenario, the abstract ratings of assigning helpers to the chores, and the specific allocations of helpers to the chores. **The Scenario** The first part provided the scenario for the following sections. It consisted of a story box which informed the participant that they were to plan an unexpected teenager's party for the following evening. They were responsible for the planning and organisation of the party but that they had three helpers who could be called on to assist. This was followed by a list of 20 chores that had to be organised as part of the party planning. These included party chores such as inviting the guests and buying the food, and usual weekend activities such as playing sport and returning library books. The scenario and list of chores was taken from materials developed for a study on planning (Chalmers & Lawrence, 1993). The party and chores were set in the participants' own home and neighbourhood.

Who Gets Which Jobs. This second section required the participants to rate if they would assign the given chore to each

of the four helpers, remembering that they were taking the position of one of the helpers. This abstract allocation of chores was made for each of the four helpers, the father, the mother, the friend of the teenager, and the teenager. Depending on the participants' age they either took on the role of the teenager or one of the parents, a mother or father according to their gender. Participants indicated if they would ask each of the four helpers to do that chore by marking twenty tables, one for each chore. They did this by placing a cross in a box for each helper, for each chore, which was headed Definitely No, Probably No, Probably Yes, or Definitely Yes. The chore, Preparing Lunch was used as an example to explain the procedure and so was not used in any analyses. For each chore participants could indicate that a number of the helpers could be asked to do the chore. For example, the chore Rearranging the party room, could be crossed Definitely Yes for both the teenager and friend, and Probably Yes for the father and mother.

Party Job Sheet. Specific allocations of helpers to the chores were identified in the final section of the party allocation task. Participants were required to allocate the chores to helpers on a Party Job Sheet. This consisted of two columns, one with the chores listed down the page, and a narrower one for the participants to place up to four sticky-backed spots. A key at the top of the page indicated that a different coloured spot represented a different helper. For example, yellow represented the teenager and blue represented the mother. A sheet of sticky backed spots with 4 rows of 4 different colours was attached to the final page of each set of materials. Using the spots, participants were asked to indicate who they would allocate to each of the chores by allocating up to four helpers. There were 15 possible combinations for allocation of the 4 helpers for each of the chores. These were recoded into three categories, Adults Only if either one or both adults were assigned, Shared if at least one adult and one teenager were assigned, and Teenager Only if one or both teenagers were assigned to the chore. The gender of the individual helpers are not identified in these categories. These categories of helpers were identified as being representative indicators of allocation of helpers in the planning studies, as were chores that were identified as teenager only, mother only, father only and shared chores (Chalmers, 1988; Chalmers & Lawrence, 1993a). These groupings of chores and helpers will be retained in this study to enable comparisons between the different studies and as a way of identifying age and gender differences in their allocation of responsibilities to others.

There were four versions of adult and four versions of adolescent party allocation materials. The different versions varied the order of the helpers, and the order of the chores for the second section Who Gets Which Jobs? There were no effects for order of helpers or order of chores so the results of the different versions were combined.

Results

The results are organised in two parts. The first part examines participants' abstract ratings of role-related appropriateness of chores for the 19 chores to the four helpers in relation to their age and gender. The second part examines the task-specific allocations of the party job sheet in relation to participants' age and gender. The adolescent participants are referred to as students in the results section to avoid confusion between the teenager helper and the adolescent participant.

Task 1: Who Gets Which Jobs?

Adolescent and adults' age and gender related abstract allocations

The individual allocations to each of the 4 helpers for the 4 possible designations (Definitely No (0), Probably No (1), Probably Yes (2), and Definitely Yes (3)) were used to investigate age and gender effects of the three groups of chores, the teenager, adult and shared chores. These categories of chores were identified in the Chalmers and Lawrence (1993a; 1993) planning and allocation studies.

A series of 2 age by 2 gender MANOVAs were computed on the teenager, adult and shared chores where the effects involving allocations to the 4 helpers was investigated. The contrasts carried out were comparisons between Mother Vs Father, Teenagers Vs Adults, and Teenager Vs Friend. Each contrast was analysed for gender, age and allocation effects. There were a large number of significant age and gender effects for the different groups of chores therefore individual analyses will not be reported. However, all results for the univariate analyses reported in the following sections for each of the contrasts and effects are significant, $p < .05$. (Note 2)

Teenager Chores

There were significant multivariate effects for age by gender by helpers $F(21, 259) 2.33, p < .001$, gender by helpers, $F(21, 259) 2.82, p < .001$, age by helper, $F(21, 259) 7.20, p < .001$, and by helpers, $F(21, 259) 93.88, p < .001$.

All participants regardless of age agreed that choosing the party theme, inviting the guests, planning the costumes, cleaning the teenager's room, cleaning the party room, deciding on decorations and picking up the sports' gear were teenage chores. All participants assigned the teenager to these chores more than they assigned an adult. If an adult was assigned, the mother was assigned more than the father. The only teenager chore with the father assigned more than the mother was in picking up the sports gear from a friend's house nearby. Gender differences were also found with the male students assigning the friend more to chores than female students, and male adults assigning the teenagers to chores more than they assigned the mother and father.

For all these chores, the teenagers were assigned more than adults, and the teenager was assigned more than the teenager's friend. While both the teenager and friend were assigned to the chores more than adults, the students assigned the friend to

these chores more than they assigned adults to the chores.

Interestingly, the students rarely assigned adults to the party planning chores, such as planning the theme, costumes and decorations or inviting the guests. Although adults also confirmed this was a teenage chore they did assign adults to these chores more than the teenagers did. Conversely, the students assigned adults to the cleaning chores (teenager's and party room) and picking up the sports gear more than the adults assigned themselves.

Adult Chores

There were significant multivariate effects for age by gender by helpers $F(21, 251) 1.96, p < .01$, gender by helpers, $F(21, 251) 1.86, p < .01$, age by helper, $F(21, 259) 4.56, p < .001$, and by helpers, $F(21, 251) 78.39, p < .001$.

All participants regardless of age identified picking up the takeaway food, picking up the costumes, and picking up the pet as well as shopping at the supermarket, making sweets and getting the teenager to sport as adult chores by assigning adults to these chores more than they assigned teenagers. The chores of picking up the takeaway food and costumes from Fremantle, and getting the teenager to sport were assigned to the father more than the mother. The chores of buying drinks and nibbles from the supermarket, making sweets and picking up the pet from the vet were assigned to the mother more than the father. Returning the books to the library, while an adult chore, was not allocated consistently to the mother or father. Participants, regardless

of age, assigned the adult chores according to their gender with males assigning more of these chores to the father, and females assigning more of these chores to the mother.

While the chores were clearly assigned as a father or mother chore, the students consistently assigned chores to the mother more than male adults did. The students also assigned adults to chores more than adults assigned themselves. Conversely adults assigned teenagers to the chores more than students assigned teenagers. The teenager continued to be assigned to a chore more than the friend.

Shared Chores

There were significant multivariate effects for age by gender by helpers $F(15, 282) 2.62, p < .001$, gender by helpers, $F(15, 282) 3.17, p < .001$, age by helper, $F(15, 282) 2.51, p < .01$, and by helpers, $F(15, 282) 32.80, p < .001$.

Participants identified rearranging the party room, picking up the stereo, setting out the glasses and plates, setting out the drinks and nibbles and washing the car as shared chores. The chores of picking up the stereo and washing the car were assigned to the father more than the mother. The chores of setting out the glasses and plates and setting out the drinks and nibbles were assigned to the mother more than the father. Males assigned these setting out chores to the mother more than females did, and male students assigned these to mothers more than male adults. Female students assigned more chores to the teenager than did male students, and male students assigned the friend to the chores more than female students. Male adults assigned these chores to the teenager and friend, while female adults assigned the mother to the chores. The female adults and students assigned washing the car to the father, and male students and female adults assigned this to both the teenager and friend more than adult males and student females. Again while the chores were assigned as a father or mother chores, male students consistently assigned chores to the mother more than male adults assigned the mother to the chores.

The participants assigned the chores of rearranging the party room, picking up the stereo and setting out the drinks and nibbles chores to the teenager and friend. Adults assigned teenagers to the chores more than students assigned teenagers. The teenager continued to be assigned to the shared chores more than the friend.

In summary, there is agreement between all participants that certain chores can appropriately be assigned to either adults or teenagers. The party planning chores and cleaning chores are the responsibility of the teenagers. Adult responsibilities primarily involved chores that had a component of travel, for example, to pick up costumes, takeaway food, groceries, pets, and get the teenager to sport. Students assigned the teenagers more and the adults less to the teenager chores. The adults, however, assigned the adults more to the teenager chores than did the students. This was reversed for the adult chores, where students assigned the adults more and the teenager less than adults did. Shared chores were distributed with less agreement. The general pattern found for these chores was for the person in charge of the planning to assign the task to helpers of their own age, so that students assigned these chores to teenagers and adults assigned them more to adults. Gender differences observed were that males, regardless of age, assigned chores to the teenagers more than did females, and male students assigned more chores to the friend than either female students or adults. Students assigned tasks to the mother more than either male adults, even when the chore was a 'father chore'. It is evident

that there is a shared understanding between people of different

ages and gender of the appropriateness of assigning different people to a number of varied chores. It is also evident that a number of differences exist between adults and adolescents, and males and females allocation of responsibilities in this abstract task.

In order to obtain a finer sense of age and gender appropriateness for these same chores we analysed the Definitely Yes responses specifically. These responses provide strong indications of abstract views of the appropriateness of assigning responsibility to people of different ages and social position.

Each of the 19 chores in this section crossed to indicate the participants would Definitely Yes ask the helper to do that job were recoded as 0,1 data and a multiple response analysis was carried out. Based on this analysis, adult chores that were assigned to the mother were buying food at the supermarket, and making sweets, while adult chores assigned to the father were picking up the take-away food, picking up the costumes from Fremantle, picking up the family pet from the vet, and getting the teenager to sport. The remaining tasks of rearranging the party room, setting out glasses and plates, setting out the drinks and nibbles, picking up the stereo and washing the car

were assigned to both adults and teenagers as shared chores. The percentage responses for all participants who indicated they would definitely allocate the chores to the four helpers are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 About Here

The trends from the planning study (Chalmers & Lawrence, 1993a) persisted in this reflective abstract allocation. The trend of allocating the friend less than the teenager was highlighted in this analysis with the friend being definitely allocated only for teenager tasks and then less than the teenager. The adult chores demonstrate gender appropriate allocation patterns. The mother is assigned the food preparation chores and the father the travelling chores.

Having identified the chores and the frequency in which people indicated their willingness to assign the chores to 4 helpers in an abstract task, a second task required the participants to specifically allocate the helpers to the chores. A general consistency between the two tasks was expected but that allocations may differ as a result of the participants working firstly in an abstract task requiring ratings, and then in a specific task requiring the allocation of helpers for each of the chores.

Task 2: Party Job Sheet

In the second activity the participants were required to allocate 18 chores to any or all of the four helpers. These chores were the same as in the previous task but with the two cleaning chores combined into one. They indicated their allocations using sticky coloured spots of four different colours. Chores were coded as Adults Only , Teenager Only and Shared . The gender of the individual helpers was not identified in this coding.

Adolescent and adults' age and gender related specific allocations

The distribution of tasks as either adult or teenager chores reflects those found in Task 1. While some variations are

evident when the participants actually assigned helpers to the

chores, there continued to be general agreement by both the adults and students on what they considered adult, teenager and

shared chores. There were differences between male and female students' allocation of chores, but there were no differences between male and female adults' allocation for these chores.

Adult and student allocations were examined to identify if adults and students allocated the chores differently to Adult Only, Teenager Only and Shared. Chores in which at least 50% of both adults and students assigned to Teenagers Only were deciding on a theme, inviting the guests, planning the costumes, deciding on decorations, cleaning the party and teenager's room and picking up the sports gear. Chores in which at least 50% of both adults and students assigned to Adults Only were picking up the takeaway food, buying food at the supermarket, making sweets, picking up the costumes from Fremantle, picking up the family pet from the vet, getting the teenager to sport and returning the library books. The remaining tasks of rearranging the party room, setting out glasses and plates, setting out the drinks and nibbles, and picking up the stereo were assigned to both adults and teenagers and are identified as Shared chores.

Chi-square analyses of both the adult and student allocation of helpers for each of the chores found that male and female adults did not differ in their allocations for the 18 items allocated, $p > .05$. The male and female students, however, did differ in their allocation of helpers to chores. All differences described in the following section are significant for Pearson Product Moment and Likelihood Ratio, $p < .05$.

For female students the chores deciding on a theme, picking up the takeaways and the stereo, getting the teenager to sport, washing the car, and returning books to the library were allocated to adults only, or shared with adults and teenagers. Male students were more likely to assign teenagers only, or shared with the adult but not to allocate to adults only. For the chores inviting the guests, cleaning up the teenager's and party room, setting out the glasses and plates, deciding on decorations and setting out the drinks and nibbles, the female students were less likely to assign adults only, but to share the task with adults and teenagers or allocate it to teenagers only. The male students on the other hand allocated these more to adults and less to teenagers than did the female students.

While the male and female adults allocated the chores in similar ways, indicating they shared common agreement of role appropriate allocations, male and female students did not. The female students differed from the male students in their allocations of the chores by including adults to participate in the chores or allocating adults only to chores. However, the female students had a very clear sense that the chores involving party planning and preparation were not adult chores. The male students

allocated the friend to the chores that they assigned had allocated to themselves. This meant that when the male students allocated the chore to the teenager, they also allocated the friend to accompany the teenager. This pattern was not evident in the female students' allocations.

Cluster groupings of specific allocations

A cluster analysis was carried out on the Party Job Sheet Allocations. This provided an additional way of determining if the adolescents and adults were in agreement in their age and gender related division of chores by their specific responsibilities. Their allocations revealed that these participants formed five clusters in which allocations were

consistent overall.

The clusters consisted of subjects of mixed ages and genders (Appendix 1). Four groups were similar in composition in terms of age, gender and the presence of mother, father and number of children in their own families. One cluster group, Group 5 however differed from the other groups in terms of their younger mean age (195.39 months), higher proportion of females (85% of the group), and a higher proportion of both parents in their home, 83% with a male parent and 93% with a female parent.

Group 5 was not different when the students only from each cluster group were compared. The students of all clusters were of similar age and number of parents in the home. The only difference to persist was gender, with 85 % of this group female, compared with 55 - 70% female in the other groups.

The clusters were identified using allocated chores to the adults only, teenager only and shared chores for the 18 chores. These differences are tabulated in Table 2.

Table 2 About Here

As shown, the Teenager Only chores that did not differ for any of the clusters were Inviting the guests, planning the costumes and deciding on decorations. Deciding a theme was identified as a Teenager Only chore for all but cluster group 5 who made it a Shared chore. Cleaning up the teenagerUs and party rooms was allocated as a teenager only chore for all but group 3, which allocated it as a Shared chore with more than 50% of the

participants involving adults in the chore, either alone or shared with a teenager

Adults Only chores as assigned by all cluster groups were pick up the takeaway food, buying food from the supermarket, going to Fremantle to pick up costumes and picking up the pet from the vet. The chore of getting the teenager to sport was allocated to adults only for all but cluster 3 group who made it a shared chore more than the other groups did. Preparing sweets was also allocated as an adults only chore for all but group 4 who made it a Shared chore. This chore was more often allocated as a shared chore than were the other adult only chores. Returning the books to the library was allocated to adults by all groups other than group 4 which allocated it to the teenagers only. This chore though primarily adult was allocated to adults only or teenagers only, but not as a Shared chore.

Shared chores were setting out glasses and plates, and drinks and nibbles, rearranging the party, picking up the stereo, setting out drinks and nibbles, and picking up the sports' gear with no clear allocation to any group of helpers. Groups 3 and 4 allocated adults to the chores of setting out the glasses, picking up the stereo nearby and picking up the sports gear while Group 1 allocated these same chores to teenagers. Group 5 had no clear allocation of chores for three of the six shared chores with setting out the glasses, drinks and nibbles and rearranging the party room, but with a higher percentage of these chores allocated as to both adults and teenagers.

Group 5 consistently included adults in the chores more than the other cluster groups. The four groups demonstrated variation in their allocations to the different chores with the result that the chore was allocated as an adult or teenager chore. Group 5 differed in their allocations by sharing the chores with adults

or allocating to adult only. This group was largely comprised of

young females who demonstrated that their perceptions of roles and responsibilities of adults and teenagers differed from the other groups when working on a party task such as this.

In summary, there was a general consistency with participants allocating many of the same chores to helpers. Regardless of the abstract or specific nature of the task, there was agreement that the chores involving planning of the party were the domain of the teenager. Chores that involved travel or preparation of food were adult chores. The shared chores were allocated

differently between the abstract and specific tasks, and by adult and teenager participants.

Gender differences were evident in the allocation of responsibility for chores. Fathers were allocated chores involving travel, and mothers chores involving shopping and food preparation. These allocations were made by both adults and teenagers indicating a shared perception of gender appropriate roles. Male students allocated chores to the teenager and the friend more than female students and adults. The friend was allocated to chores less than any of the helpers by all participants, and was only allocated to chores if the teenager was first allocated.

Discussion

We examined age and gender-boundness of role-related responsibilities for chores and moveability in two ways. First, participants abstractly rated their assignment of helpers to the chores, and second they specifically allocated helpers to the same chores. This provided us with two separate levels of information to enable us to explore allocation of responsibilities on the same task.

There was a general consistency with participants allocating many of the same chores to helpers. Regardless of the abstract or specific nature of the task, there was agreement that the chores involving planning of the party were the domain of the teenager. Chores that involved travel or preparation of food were adult chores. The shared chores were allocated differently between the abstract and specific tasks, and between adult and teenager participants. It is in the allocation of responsibility for these chores that we are likely to find the "moveable" pieces that can be flexibly assigned to any or a combination of helpers.

The adult and teenager chores were "fixed" to specific helpers. This immovability of chores can be explained in part by the objective features of the task (Goodnow, 1987). Teenagers cannot drive to the costume store, or to the vet to pick up the pet. However, they can return library books, make sweets and get themselves to sport as they were situated nearby, yet these chores were consistently allocated to adults by both adults and adolescents. They had assumed an immovability that cannot readily be explained by the features of the task. Similarly the teenager chores were planning the party and cleaning the rooms. The teenagers rarely allocated adults to these chores. Adults

did involve themselves somewhat in the planning chores, but only as participant with the teenager, not on their own. The adults and adolescents may have attached an ownership to the planning chores as the party was being held for a teenager, therefore the teenager should be responsible for the planning of it. The cleaning of the teenager's room was clearly the teenager's responsibility. Goodnow and Delaney's study (1989) found that tasks involving self-care ("your mess, your job") were seen as the responsibility of the person who caused or owned the job and were not likely to be allocated to someone else. This principle would seem to apply to cleaning the teenager's room, but does not explain why the teenager would also be assigned to cleaning the party room. This occurred in the abstract rating task when they were separate tasks, and also in the specific task when they were combined into one chore.

Shared chores were those allocated to adults only, teenagers only or shared by both adults and teenagers. These chores can be seen as moveable as they can be assigned to either adults or teenagers and so are the chores likely to be allocated on the basis of efficiency, availability, or preferences. The chores of setting out the glasses and plates, drinks and nibbles and rearranging the party room were assigned to adults and/or teenagers. These chores did not assume an ownership which implies responsibility, but seemed to be allocated to whoever was the most appropriate person available at the time. The Goodnow and Delaney (1989) study similarly identified a group of chores that could reasonably be allocated to others. These chores did not violate the principles of ownership or cause, for example chores such as setting the table or feeding the pet were chores in which the whole family assumed joint responsibility, and were therefore more likely to be carried out with less fuss. The shared chores for planning the party would seem to hold a similar sense of joint responsibility for the participants.

For all the chores, the friend was rarely allocated chores on his/her own. If he/she was allocated to chores it was in was in the company of the teenager. This was demonstrated in the abstract rating task where participants definitely allocated the friend to chores less than they definitely allocated the other helpers. The specific task also confirmed this, with the friend only allocated to same chores as the teenager. The responsibility for chores does not seem to extend to people outside of the family unit in this task. In the Chalmers and Lawrence (1993a) study the teenage friend was seen as a

companion for the teenager but was not expected to be responsible for any of the chores. It would seem that the friend has been allocated a similar role in this study. The male adolescents identified the role of the friend differently than the adults or female adolescents by consistently allocating the friend and teenager to the same chores. This was particularly evident in the specific allocation task. The opening statement "You can't ask a friend to do that!" seems as appropriate for this study as from the study it originated. It would seem that the role assigned to the friend was to accompany the teenager, both as an assistant and a companion, rather than as a helper in their own right with the accompanying responsibilities that go with a chore.

Gender differences were evident in the allocation of responsibility for chores. Fathers were allocated chores involving travel, and mothers chores involving shopping and food preparation. These allocations were made by both adults and teenagers indicating a shared perception of gender-appropriate roles. The participants were drawn from middle class socio-economic groups and therefore it is likely that a large proportion of the households have more than one car, yet all agreed that the father should be allocated the travelling chores. The other adult chores may indicate why the father, and not the mother was allocated travelling chores. The mother's chores were shopping, preparing food and picking up the pet. These chores fit the traditional nurturing, or food gathering roles of women described by Goode (1982). Goodnow and Delaney (1989) found some chores were more likely to be asked of the mother rather than the father, with male household chores involving washing the car, mowing the lawn and general gardening and female chores involving shopping, sewing and cleaning. If people do hold gender-appropriate understandings of chores then the mother is more likely to be allocated the household chores involving cooking and shopping. If people also hold an understanding of equity for allocation of work then the father is likely to be allocated the chores that do not violate their sense of gender-appropriateness, and allows for the fair apportioning of chores to all the helpers, particularly when time is short and all helpers must participate in order to accomplish the task of preparing for the party.

The allocation of chores to others was largely influenced by who was responsible for the organisation of the overall party. In this allocation task, the person completing the ratings and specific allocations was responsible for organising the party. Their understanding of responsibility was reflected with the participants allocating more chores to themselves. It seems clear that those who are responsible for the overall organisation of the task feel they need to carry out more of the work

themselves. This was true for all the participants regardless of age or gender. While all participants allocated themselves more chores, they also allocated more of the other chores to the helpers of their own age. This was most evident for allocations to the Shared chores. Male adults, however, assigned chores to

themselves or the teenagers rather than to their spouse.

The party allocation task has been useful in two ways. Firstly it allowed for identification of allocation of chores common to a specific task, that of planning a party. Many of the studies on household chores ask the participants to consider what chores can be allocated to others, and who owns particular tasks in the general context of the family (Goodnow & Delaney, 1989; Goodnow, 1988; Goodnow & Warton, 1992). This task provides for the participants to be responsible for the organisation of the party and as such changes their social position. They are personally responsible and must allocate chores to people who they believe can best carry them out. They need to consider the appropriateness of the chores to the helpers to avoid the chores not being completed satisfactorily, or not being able or willingly done by the person allocated. The agreement of all participants on the age and gender appropriate chores indicates that providing a similar context and responsibility for organisation is a useful way of examining perceptions of appropriate roles and responsibilities within a social group.

The second strength of the party allocation task was in the provision of the two levels of specificity on the task. The first level was the abstract ratings of allocations. The second level was the specific allocations of the same chores. This provided two ways to examine perceptions of the appropriateness of allocating different chores to people of different ages and gender. The similarities between the two levels of tasks indicate that the perceptions held are generally consistent. However, the variations in the allocations between the two levels demonstrate the usefulness of providing a number of different approaches to exploring perceptions as they may change in different contexts.

It has been demonstrated that chores and people gain a fixedness which prevents them from being freely moved around for the completion of the task of planning a party. Allocations of responsibility for the different chores were made on the basis of age and gender. Certain chores were identified as appropriate for adults, and others were identified as appropriate for

teenagers. Within the respective age divisions, chores were also identified as appropriate for males or females. These chores in effect became immovable. The chores which were not perceived as immovable were allocated differently to adults and teenagers by both adults and adolescents. Instead of there being 19 chores that could be freely assigned, only six chores were found to be moveable. Studies on planning and decision making within a social setting have commonly assumed that the pieces of plan and problem spaces can be freely moved around to achieve goals or purposes established by the participant, or by the researcher (Goodnow, 1987; Freidman, Scholnick and Cocking, 1987). The results of this study demonstrate that when the pieces of a plan or decision making involves people, then perceptions of roles and responsibilities will impact on the process.

It is important that we further explore the ways in which certain tasks become the responsibility of some people and not others. If we are to understand the ways that people plan and make decisions, it is important to identify the social constraints that operate and the conditions that place limits on people's ability to carry out everyday tasks efficiently and effectively.

Note 1. This study was developed while Dr Jeanette Lawrence was a visiting fellow at Edith Cowan University.

Note 2. Full details of the study and results can be obtained from the authors.

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Appendix 1

Age by gender composition of the cluster groups

Group 1 comprised of 52 students, 24 male and 28 female and 26 adults, 11 male and 15 female, in all a total of 78 participants.
Group 2 comprised of 51 students, 23 male and 28 female and 21 adults, 8 male and 13 female, in all a total of 72 participants.
Group 3 comprised of 23 students, 12 male and 11 female and 8 adults, 2 male and 6 female, in all a total of 31 participants.
Group 4 comprised of 23 students, 7 male and 16 female and 6

adults, 2 male and 4 female, in all a total of 29 participants. Group 5 comprised of 54 students, 8 male and 46 female and 5 adults, 1 male and 4 female, in all a total of 59 participants.

The Groups 1, 2, 3, & 4 were similar in composition in terms of age, gender and male and female parents in the home. They had an mean age ranging from 243.59 to 269.29 months, approximately 40% were male and 50 % female and a similar proportion of participants had a male and female parent in the home, (with approximately 70% with a male parent and 70% with a female parent). Group 5 members differed from the other groups in terms of their younger mean age (195.39 months), higher proportion of females (85% of the group), and they had a higher proportion of both parents in their home, 83% with a male parent and 93% with a female parent.

When compared with the students only from the different cluster groups, age and parents in the home did not differ, the only difference to persist was gender, with 85 % of this group female, compared with 55 - 70% female in the other groups.

Table 1: Multiple responses of all participants who would Definitely Yes ask these helpers to do each of the 19 chores

CHORE	Father	Mother	Friend	Teenager
Teenager Chores				
Choose party theme	4.4	10.7	33.4	51.5
Plan costumes	3.2	13.1	34.3	49.4
Decide on decorations	5.8	15.4	30.8	48.0
Inviting the guests	4.7	9.2	25.7	60.5
Clean teenager's room	3.7	13.9	8.6	73.8
Clean the party room	11.4	27.4	20.2	41.0
Pick up sports gear	22.0	16.3	16.9	44.7
Adult Chores				
Father				
Pick up takeaway food	63.5	28.5	3.4	4.6
Pick up costumes	59.9	32.4	3.5	4.1
Get teenager to sport	58.5	28.7	1.2	11.6
Washing the car	47.5	58.9	16.0	27.6
Pick up pet from vet	55.9	38.9	0.3	4.9
Adult Chores				
Mother				
Shop at supermarket	27.7	56.6	5.9	10.1
Making sweets	7.0	64.0	9.2	19.8
Shared Chores				
Rearrange party room	23.9	16.7	22.0	37.4
Pick up stereo nearby	36.0	9.5	21.5	32.9
Set out glasses, plates	11.0	34.1	21.0	33.9
Set out drinks, nibbles	8.4	27.2	26.7	37.7
Return library books	26.9	30.2	13.8	29.1

Table 2: Cluster groupings for allocations to the Party Job Sheet, Task 2 for each of the 19 chores

CHOREGroup 1Group 2Group 3Group 4Group 5Teenager ChoresChoose
party themeAdultAdultAdultAdultSharedInvite the
guestsTeenTeenTeenTeenTeenPlan costumesTeenTeenTeenTeenTeenDecide
on decorationsTeenTeenTeenTeenTeenClean 2 roomsTeenTeen-
TeenTeenAdult Chores Pick up
costumesAdultAdultAdultAdultAdultPick up takeaway
foodAdultAdultAdultAdultAdultShop at
supermarketAdultAdultAdultAdultAdultMake
sweetsAdultAdultAdultSharedAdultGet teenager to sportAdultAdult-
AdultAdultPick up pet from vetAdultAdultAdultAdultAdultReturn
library booksAdultAdultAdultTeenAdultShared ChoresSet out
glasses, platesTeenAdultAdultAdult-Rearrange party room--Shared--
Pick up stereo nearbyTeenTeen AdultAdult AdultSet out drinks,
nibblesTeenAdultAdultTeen-Pick up sports
gearTeenTeenAdultAdultAdultWash the carAdult-TeenTeen AdultTotal
of chores allocatedAdult Only (Adult)8910810Teenager Only
(Teen)97584Shared Chores (Shared)--111No Clear Indication (-
)12213

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