

**I** *This chapter describes the use of communal norms that dictate noncontingent responsiveness to a partner's needs and advances propositions about the mechanisms that promote their development.*

## Adherence to Communal Norms: What It Means, When It Occurs, and Some Thoughts on How It Develops

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This chapter deals with communal norms governing the giving and acceptance of benefits in relationships. We define benefits as something of value one person intentionally gives to another person, such as gifts, services, compliments, instructions, and emotional support. This definition excludes rewards derived from relationships that one person does not intentionally give to the other, such as the pride a person might feel at being seen in public with an attractive partner.

Communal norms dictate noncontingent, need-based giving and accepting of benefits. They apply to select relationships up to implicit cost levels that vary by relationship. From the perspective of potential donors of benefits, communal norms dictate concern for the welfare of one's partner and benefiting that partner in response to his or her needs without requiring repayments. From the perspective of potential recipients of benefits, communal norms call for being open about needs, seeking benefits when they are needed, and accepting needed help without believing one must repay that help.

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## The Difference Between Communal and Exchange Relationships

Qualitative and quantitative distinctions between communal and exchange relationships have been advanced. Following is a brief overview of the history of these constructs.

**The Original, Qualitative Distinction.** In an early article, Clark and Mills (1979) argued that in communal relationships, people feel a desire or obligation to be responsive to one another's needs. In these relationships, people give benefits in response to needs without expecting repayment. In many other relationships, people prefer to operate on what Clark and Mills (1979) called an exchange basis: they give benefits expecting to receive comparable benefits in return.

In the original experimental studies supporting the distinction, students at a university were assigned randomly to a communal or an exchange condition. Those assigned to the communal condition were led to desire a friendship or romantic relationship with an attractive confederate by having that confederate indicate an interest in and eagerness to form new relationships at college. For those assigned to the exchange condition, the same confederate conveyed that he or she was married, busy, and uninterested in forming new relationships.

Participants in these studies reacted positively to the confederate's behaviors that conformed to exchange rules if they had been led to desire an exchange relationship. They reacted negatively to exactly the same behaviors if they had been led to desire a communal relationship. For instance, after helping a confederate, students led to desire an exchange relationship with her liked her better if she repaid them than if she did not. In contrast, those led to desire a communal relationship liked the confederate more if she did not repay than if she did repay (Clark and Mills, 1979). Like repayments, requests for repayments of favors done also elicited increased liking when an exchange relationship was desired, but decreased liking when a communal relationship was desired (Clark and Mills, 1979). Finally, people having or desiring exchange relationships were found to keep track of individual inputs into joint tasks for which there would be rewards (Clark, 1984; Clark, Mills, and Corcoran, 1989). People having or desiring communal relationships did not, and sometimes even bent over backwards to avoid keeping track of such inputs (Clark, 1984). Presumably, avoidance of record keeping is a signal to the other that one desires a communal relationship.

Adherence to communal norms occurs more frequently (and is reacted to more positively) in certain relationships than in others. Later experimental studies showed that people led to desire a communal relationship behave in more helpful ways and respond more positively to a confederate's noncontingent, supportive behaviors and bids for help than do those led to desire an exchange relationship. For instance, those led to desire a communal rather than an exchange relationship were more likely to keep track

of the other's needs (Clark, Mills, and Corcoran, 1989; Clark, Mills, and Powell, 1986), help the other (Clark, Ouellette, Powell, and Milberg, 1987), and respond positively to the other's expression of emotion (Clark and Taraban, 1991). They also were more likely to show improvements in their moods after having helped their partners (Williamson and Clark, 1989, 1992) and drops in moods after having refused requests for help (Williamson, Pegalis, Behan, and Clark, 1996). Those led to desire communal relationships also are more likely to monitor whether the other keeps track of their needs than were those led to desire exchange relationships (Clark, Dubash, and Mills, 1998).

Finally, it has been shown that people in exchange relationships may respond negatively to communal behaviors or expectations on the other's part. For instance, when exchange, but not communal, relationships are desired, another person's expression of sadness reduces liking for that person (Clark and Taraban, 1991), and choosing to help the other can cause moods to drop (Williamson and Clark, 1989, 1992). It also is notable that when exchange relationships are desired, refusing to help one's partner actually results in improvements in moods (Williamson and others, 1996).

**A Quantitative Dimension of Communal Relationships.** Although work on communal and exchange relationships began with a qualitative distinction, Clark and Mills (1993; Mills and Clark, 1982) soon pointed out that there is a quantitative dimension of strength to communal relationships as well. Communal strength refers to the degree of responsibility for another person's welfare that a relationship partner assumes.

Some communal relationships are very strong. In such relationships, the person feels tremendous responsibility for the partner's welfare and goes to great costs in terms of money, time, and self-sacrifice to benefit the other in response to the other's needs. Most parents' relationships with their children exemplify very strong communal relationships.

In weaker communal relationships, people take on less responsibility for one another's welfare and incur fewer costs to benefit the other. People who describe one another as friends, for instance, take on some responsibility for one another's welfare, but it tends to be far less than that they assume for their children. Still other communal relationships are very weak. Members of such relationships meet each other's needs only when the cost is quite small. For instance, neighbors might take in a person's mail and strangers might tell one another the time on a noncontingent basis, but that is about all.

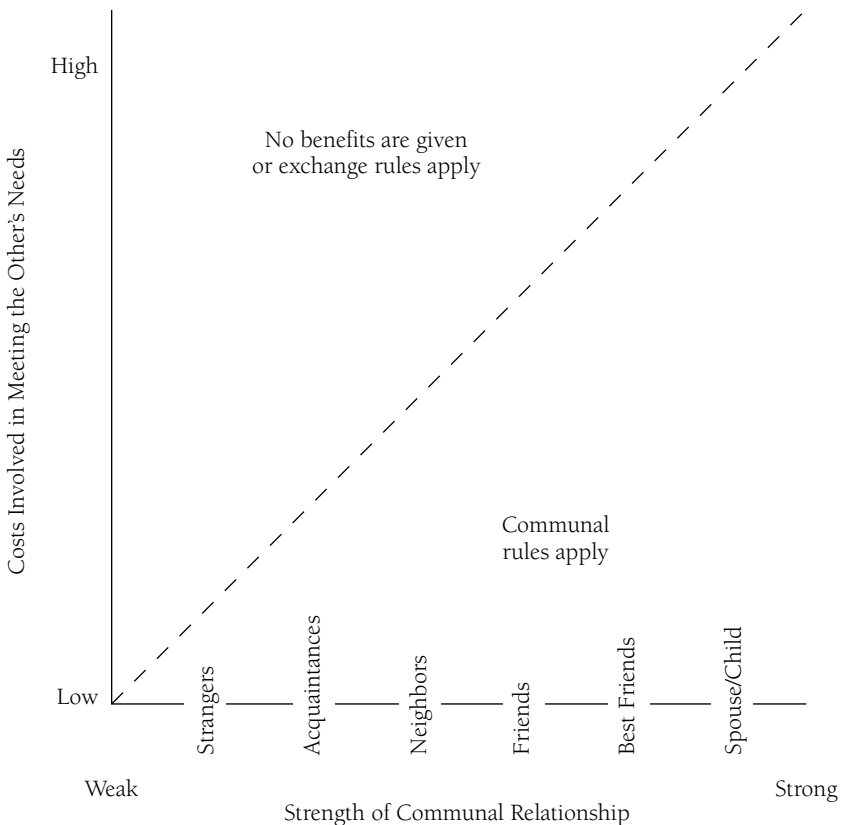
The qualitative distinction between communal and exchange relationships and the quantitative dimension of communal relationships are depicted in Figure 1.1. The strength of one hypothetical person's communal relationships is depicted along the *x*-axis and runs from weak to very strong communal relationships. The degree of cost that a person is willing to incur to benefit a partner is depicted along the *y*-axis and runs from low to high. The dotted line running diagonally through the graph depicts an implicit boundary line. It splits situations according to whether a communal norm

will be seen as appropriate. Situations falling below the line are those in which adherence to communal norms is appropriate. Situations falling above the line are those in which benefits will not be given or will be given on a noncommunal basis (for example, on an exchange basis).

Imagine, for instance, a person's interactions with her best friend. Within moderate cost boundaries, she does lots of things for that friend on a communal basis. She takes the friend to lunch, listens to her emotional concerns, and buys her a birthday present, and she pays for her own plane flight to attend her friend's wedding. However, she does not consider providing her friend with a house, car, or college tuition. These benefits cross the cost line, which is shown explicitly in Figure 1.1 and felt implicitly in relationships.

As Figure 1.1 makes clear, it is possible to have both a communal and exchange relationship with the same partner, dependent on the costs

**Figure 1.1. Application of Communal Norms as a Function of the Communal Strength of a Relationship and the Cost of Benefits**



*Note:* Placement of relationships along the x-axis is for illustrative purposes only. The ordering of types of relationships will vary between individuals.

involved in providing benefits. (Note that the order of relationships along the  $x$ -axis and the exact shape and height of the implicit boundary line determining when communal norms are applicable will vary among persons.)

Communal relationships can be symmetrical or asymmetrical in terms of the degree of responsibility members assume for one another. Friendships and romantic relationships tend to be symmetrical, with members assuming the equivalent degrees of responsibility. Parent-child relationships (especially with young children) tend to be asymmetrical. Parents assume far more responsibility for the needs of the child than vice versa.

**What the Distinction Is Not.** The distinction between communal and other relationships is not one between long-term and short-term relationships (Clark and Mills, 1993). A communal relationship can have a short or long duration. For instance, a person might inform a stranger of the time on a communal basis. Friendships, family relationships, and marriages, in contrast, often operate on a communal basis for years. Exchange relationships also may be short or long term. Cab drivers have short exchange relationships with passengers. Employers often have long exchange relationships with employees.

The distinction between communal and other relationships also is not one between altruistic and nonaltruistic relationships. People can be motivated to adopt a communal norm for relatively selfish or relatively unselfish motives. A relatively unselfish motive for adopting a communal norm is empathy with another's plight. A relatively selfish motive for adopting a communal norm is a desire to form new friendships because one is lonely. People also may be motivated to follow an exchange norm, again for relatively selfish or unselfish reasons. A selfish motive for adopting an exchange norm with a store owner is that one wishes to acquire a particular product. A relatively unselfish motive for following an exchange norm is that one does not wish to exploit a person who has been the source of benefits.

## **Recent Theorizing and Empirical Work**

Our initial empirical work focused on demonstrating that communal norms were distinct from exchange norms and that adherence to each was dependent on relationship context. In early work, we made no distinction between norms judged to be ideal for a particular type of relationship and day-to-day adherence to the norms.

More recently, we have distinguished between norms that are considered ideal for purposes of giving and receiving benefits in relationships such as marriage and friendships, and actual day-to-day behavior within these relationships (Clark and Chrisman, 1994; Clark and Grote, 1998; Grote and Clark, 1998; Clark, Graham, and Grote, forthcoming). More specifically, we focused on normatively strong communal relationships, such as marriages, dating relationships, and close friendships. We asked: Do people believe that communal norms are ideal for these relationships? If so, what predicts people's ability to live up to communal norms? What happens when they

fail to adhere to communal norms in these relationships? Is failure to adhere to communal norms harmful to these relationships?

**Preference for Communal Norms in Close Relationships.** Recent research supports the notion that within Western culture, following communal norms is perceived to be best for marriages, dating relationships, and friendships. When members of married couples were presented with prototypes of communal, exchange, equity, and equality norms and were asked which norms are ideal for their marriages, they overwhelmingly endorsed a communal norm. This occurred whether they were asked shortly prior to marriage, two years later, or twenty years later (Grote and Clark, 1998; Clark, Graham, and Grote, forthcoming). Exchange and equity norms were considered not at all ideal, and ratings of an equality norm fell either between those for a communal norm and exchange and equity norms (for younger respondents) or close to ratings of exchange and equity norms (for older respondents). Similar findings were obtained for college students who rated norms for dating relationships and friendships (Clark and Grote, 2001).

Why is a communal norm considered ideal for marriages, dating relationships, and friendships? The easiest answer is to explain what is wrong with alternative norms.

First, consider the possibility of each person acting in a self-interested manner. This approach individuates persons and carries no implications that one person cares for the other. A person who needs help is responsible for finding it. Thus, felt security should be low. Furthermore, a person who gives help only for self-interested reasons is not afforded a sense of nurturing his or her partner. Without having a sense of mutual caring, feelings of intimacy, as Reis and Shaver (1988) define the term, should be low. To make matters worse, adherence to a self-interest rule allows for exploitation. Persons with more power, perhaps because they have more attractive relationship alternatives, are in a position to demand that partners be more responsive to their needs than they are to the partners' needs.

Of course, one may ask why achieving a sense of ongoing caring, nurturance, intimacy, and security within a relationship is important. The answer is that these are the things that make a relationship a safe haven (Collins and Feeney, 2000) and provide people with an ongoing sense of social support (Cohen and Syme, 1985; Cutrona, Suhr, and MacFarlane, 1990). Having a trusting, caring relationship with another also frees a person from feeling too great a need to be self-concerned or self-focused, because someone else is looking after that person. In good times, each partner can focus on the other and reach out and strive toward new goals. In bad times, each partner can retreat to the safe haven of the relationship for comfort and care. In both situations, a communally based relationship should be calming and thus should promote mental and physical health.

What about adhering to an exchange, equity, or equality rule in friendships, romantic relationships, and marriage? Is doing so better than self-interest? Is doing so as good as adhering to a communal norm? Adherence

to any of these norms is better than simply pursuing self-interest because each rules out exploitation. At the same time, adherence to these norms cannot provide the same sense of nurturance, being cared for, and security as can adherence to a communal norm because in each case, benefits are given and accepted contingently.

Not only does adherence to a communal norm prevent exploitation and provide security, but it is cognitively feasible to attend to a partner's needs and strive to meet them. In contrast, competently following norms such as exchange, equity, or equality seems to us to be a cognitively overwhelming task. People who interact frequently, in varied domains and over time, give and receive many diverse benefits. It would be extremely effortful even to try to keep careful track of them all as they occur and accumulate. Beyond that, balancing them according to an exchange, equity, or equality rule requires placing them all on the same value scale before computing equity, equality, or the equivalence of specific exchanges. These are calculations that, we believe, people simply cannot do and, in the best of circumstances, do not even attempt to do.

**Applying Communal Norms in Close Relationships.** It is not surprising that communal norms are considered ideal for friendships, dating relationships, and marital relationships. However, one might ask whether it is truly realistic to expect that people will attend to one another's needs in these relationships and respond to those needs.

Evidence collected by Clark, Graham, and Grote (forthcoming) suggests that at least in marriages, people do perceive communal norms to be realistic (albeit less realistic than they are ideal) and, importantly, as more realistic than norms such as exchange, equity, or equality. Couples, both just prior to marriage and approximately two years after marriage, report that both they and their spouse actively strive to adhere to a communal norm in their relationship. Not only that, but unlike other sorts of costs of being married, costs incurred in meeting one's spouse's needs are associated with higher marital satisfaction (Clark and Grote, 1998). Finally, even twenty years into marriages, both husbands and wives report that a communal norm is a reasonable norm to follow in practice (Clark, Graham, and Grote, forthcoming). We also have collected evidence that college students report that following communal norms is more realistic than following exchange, equity, or equality norms in friendships and dating relationships (Clark and Grote, 2001).

**Skills and Fortitudes Necessary for Communal Norms.** There are at least two distinct sets of social skills and fortitudes necessary for following a communal norm effectively. One allows for responding to one's partner's needs effectively and the other for eliciting a partner's attention to one's own needs.

Skills and fortitudes necessary to respond effectively to a partner's needs include having the ability to draw out one's partner's worries and emotional states (Miller, Berg, and Archer, 1983; Purvis, Dabbs, and Hopper, 1984) and empathic accuracy (Ickes, 1993). Many studies support

the idea that understanding a spouse's thoughts, beliefs, and feelings is linked with good marital adjustment (Christensen and Wallace, 1976; Noller, 1980, 1981; Guthrie and Noller, 1988; Gottman and Porterfield, 1981). Another skill important to meeting a partner's needs is knowing when and how to offer help such that it will not threaten the potential recipient's self-esteem or make the potential recipient feel indebted, and will be accepted.

Some of these abilities require learning, practice, and intelligence (for example, the ability to draw a partner out, empathic accuracy, and the provision of emotional support). The keys to others may lie more in emotional fortitudes. A person may wish to express empathy or offer help but fail to do so out of fear of appearing awkward or being rejected. One's history of personal relationships in general and one's history within a particular relationship provide explanations for a lack of emotional fortitude in providing help. If one's past partners (or current partner) have not been open to accepting, then the person is likely to be reluctant to offer care. A lack of fortitude may also stem from temporary factors. People who are stressed or in a bad mood may not feel they have the energy to help or may be especially likely to anticipate that negative outcomes will be associated with helping (Clark and Waddell, 1983).

Next, consider skills and fortitudes necessary for eliciting needed support from one's partner. In this regard, freely expressing one's own need states to the partner through self-disclosure and emotional expression should be important. After all, a partner cannot respond to needs without knowing what they are. Given this, it is not surprising that self-disclosure has been found to increase positive affect (Vittengl and Holt, 2000) and liking (Collins and Miller, 1994) and satisfaction in dating relationships (Fitzpatrick and Sollie, 1999), marriages (Meeks, Hendrick, and Hendrick, 1998), and sibling relationships (Howe and others, 2000). Of course, one ought also to be able to ask outright for help and accept it when it is offered. Perhaps less obvious, possessing the ability to say no to requests that interfere with one's needs ought to be crucial to the partner's attentiveness and responsiveness. It should also be important that over time, one demonstrates that one does not exaggerate needs or constantly seek help when it is not needed (Mills and Clark, 1986). This understanding ought to increase a partner's sense that the other is appropriately, and not overly, dependent on him or her.

Although help-seeking skills might seem easy, they require certain emotional fortitudes to enact. In particular, exercising all these skills probably requires having the sense that one's partner truly cares for one and will indeed meet one's needs to the best of his or her ability. Otherwise, self-disclosure, emotional expression, and asking for help seem inadvisable. Under such circumstances, one risks being rebuffed or rejected, or evaluated negatively. The partner may even use information to mock or exploit one. Negative assertion on one's own behalf may also be frightening, as it too may provide a basis for rejection. Thus, it may seem best not to seek help and not to assert oneself. However, in that case, keeping the relationship on



a communal basis becomes difficult. For just these reasons, we believe a sense of trust and security in relationships is key to following communal norms.

**Giving and Receiving Benefits in Close Relationships.** If all goes well, members of relationships who believe a communal norm is ideal for that relationship strive to adhere to that ideal—sometimes succeeding and sometimes failing, but even in the face of failure not losing faith in the value of the effort. However, this is not the only pattern of norm use found in marriages, friendships, and dating relationships.

In a second possible pattern, partners strive to adhere to a communal norm over time, but that striving is punctuated by repeated lapses into exchange norms or self-interest, followed by a return to communal norms. The lapses may result when a person's needs are unmet and resulting feelings that to get something from the partner, the relationship must operate on an exchange basis. Alternatively, a person's lapses may result from the person's own failing to meet the partner's needs, fearing that the partner will abandon communal norms and defensively abandoning those norms first. Returns may be triggered by those stresses passing, finding exchange norms too unwieldy, and a resurfacing underlying belief that communal norms are best for the relationship.

A third possible pattern may begin with efforts to live up to communal norms, followed by a more permanent falling away from communal norms in reaction to stressors. Adherence to exchange norms or self-interest follows. This may occur when stresses do not pass or when persons do not have very strong underlying beliefs that communal norms are realistic. Ultimately, if strong barriers to leaving the relationship are not present, such partners may terminate the relationship. In the face of strong barriers, the partners may stay together, albeit unhappily.

**Who Will Follow Which Pattern?** Predicting which pattern members of a relationship will follow is tricky, but we can speculate on factors that put relationship partners at risk for abandoning a communal norm. One factor is how well one's partner objectively meets one's needs. In a mutual communal relationship, should a partner repeatedly fail to meet the legitimate needs of the other without good excuses, then the other has good reasons not to trust the partner and good reason to switch to contingent norms, watching out for the self, or leaving the relationship altogether.

A second set of relevant factors includes the individual personality traits people bring to the relationship. People with certain personality traits may be more likely than others to perceive that their needs have been neglected and to react by abandoning efforts to adhere to communal norms. Chronic differences in interpersonal trust as captured in the concept of differences in attachment styles (Hazan and Shaver, 1987; Simpson and Rholes, 1998) or in the notion of individual differences in communal orientation (Clark, Ouellette, Powell, and Milberg, 1987) ought to be crucial in this regard. Those who trust that others are good and are concerned

about their needs ought to be comfortable adopting and adhering to communal norms and resilient in the face of violations of such norms.

The third set of factors that may predict what pattern relationship partners follow are individual differences in tendencies to use relationship-protecting interpersonal processes. People who tend to relate their partner's faults to virtues (Murray and Holmes, 1993, 1999) and hold positive illusions about their partner (Murray and Holmes, 1997; Murray, Holmes, and Griffin, 1996) may be buffered against abandoning communal strivings when faced with evidence that a partner has neglected one or more of their needs.

### **Empirical Evidence for Our Model**

A straightforward implication of our theorizing is that adherence to contingent record-keeping norms ought to be negatively correlated with relationship satisfaction. Two existing studies support this. Murstein, Cerreto, and MacDonald (1977) measured the exchange orientation of one member of a married couple with a scale including items such as, "If I do dishes three times a week, I expect my spouse to do them three times a week." They also administered a marital adjustment scale to research participants. Among both men and women, an exchange orientation toward marriage was negatively correlated with marital adjustment. Later, Buunk and VanYperen (1991) reported similar results. They administered a modified version of the prior exchange orientation scale and a relationship satisfaction measure to spouses. Again, exchange orientation was negatively related to relationship satisfaction. These authors also observed that among people high in exchange orientation (but not among those low in exchange orientation), relationship satisfaction was lower if they also perceived themselves to be either underbenefited or overbenefited relative to their partner.

Of course, these findings do not tell us whether using contingent, record-keeping rules in marriages led to distress, or, as we would predict, whether distress led to use of contingent record-keeping norms. However, a recent longitudinal study of marriages addresses that question (Grote and Clark, 2001). In this study, married couples filled out surveys three times: during the wife's first pregnancy, when the child was about six months old, and when the child was about one year old. Three measures of the perceived fairness of the division of household labor and of marital distress were also collected.

At all points, husbands and wives, when explicitly asked about fairness, agreed that the division of household labor was unfair, with wives performing more work, even when both partners were employed full time. According to our model, such inequities do not necessarily lead to conflicts because they do not necessarily indicate a wife's needs are not being met. Thus, we would not necessarily expect prompted judgments of unfairness to lead to conflict. But we do expect that distress and conflict (which we

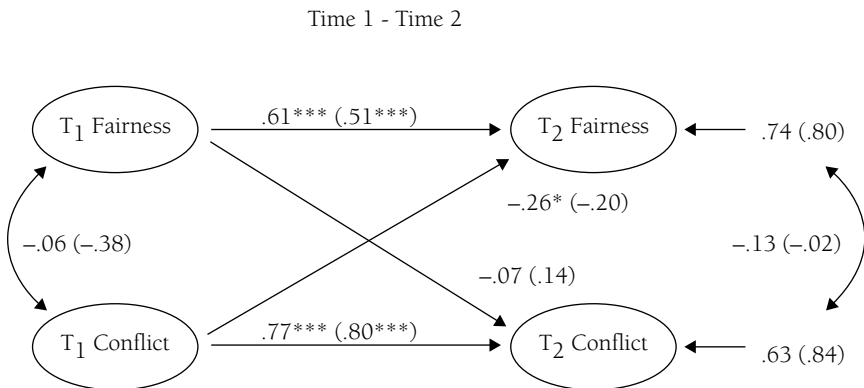
took as an index of needs not being met) will trigger record keeping and, as a consequence, increased judgments of unfairness.

Supporting these ideas, a path analysis using Time 1 and Time 2 data indicated that conflict at Time 1 predicted significant increases in perceived unfairness at Time 2 (controlling for perceived unfairness at Time 1). Also consistent with our model, perceived unfairness at Time 1 did not predict increases in conflict at Time 2 (controlling for conflict at Time 1). The results are shown in Figure 1.2.

Interestingly, path analyses of the Time 2 and Time 3 data indicated that once conflict led to perceived unfairness (at Time 2), then perceived unfairness predicted later conflict (at Time 3). We suggest this occurred because over the stressful transition to parenthood, at least a portion of these couples switched to noncommunal, contingent, record-keeping standards of household chores. When unfairness became salient, a focus on that unfairness increased conflict.

People can go wrong in relationships not just by following exchange norms (or self-interest) rules in relationships that are, ideally, communal. They can also apply communal norms in relationships that typically are exchange relationships (for example, acquaintanceships and business partners). The literature on adult close relationships suggests that this does occur. People sometimes self-disclose too much and too intimate information about themselves in relationships that, from the perspective of the

**Figure 1.2. Standardized Parameters for a Structural Model Predicting Time 2 Perceived Fairness of Division of Housework and Time 2 Marital Conflict**



*Note:* Bidirectional arrows show the correlation between Time 1 predictors or the correlation between the error terms of the Time 2 criterion variables.  $n = 178$  wives and 176 husbands. Values not in parentheses are for wives. Values in parentheses are for husbands.

$T =$  time.

\* $p < .05$ .

\*\*\* $p < .001$ .

other, are not of sufficient communal strength to justify such disclosure. Liking for such people drops (Kaplan, Firestone, Degnore, and Morre, 1974), and they are often seen as maladjusted (Chaiken and Derlega, 1974). To cite another example, Helgeson (1993; Helgeson and Fritz, 1996) identified a trait called unmitigated communion, which in part refers to persons who are overly concerned with and attentive to partners' needs, sometimes even with nonintimate partners who do not expect or desire a strong communal relationship. Such persons may neglect their own needs and compromise their health.

### **Acquiring Knowledge of Communal Norms**

Developmental differences are evident in the understanding and application of norms. Further, different patterns emerge for communal norms and other norms.

**Coming to Understand and Use Communal Norms.** The earliest relationship most children experience is that with a parent. Most parents feel a strong communal responsibility for their child and repeatedly (and over many years) respond to that child's needs without expectation of being repaid. Thus, most young children should begin acquiring an understanding of communal rules very early by learning they can count on at least one other's noncontingent responsiveness (Clark, 1984).

Indeed, the basis for the child's first communal relationships may be biological. Human infants are helpless and dependent on others' care to survive. Most developmental psychologists agree that an attachment system has evolved to facilitate such caregiving (Bowlby, 1988; Bugental, 2000). Included in the system are innate behaviors such as crying that communicate needs to the primary caregiver and serve to bring him or her into contact with the infant. The physical ability to seek out the caregiver when distressed serves to keep the caregiver proximal. Caregiver responses to infant distress are also part of the system. When the infant displays distress, caregivers respond with empathy and assistance. For the child, the system provides safety and nurturance. By keeping the child safe and fostering his or her passage to adulthood, the parents ensure that their genes survive (Bugental, 2000).

A second literature that also suggests a biological basis for communal norms concerns empathy. Some researchers suggest that children are born not just with proclivities that allow them to elicit care from adults but also with proclivities toward caring for others (Campos, Campos, and Barrett, 1989; Eisenberg, 1989; Hoffman, 1981). For example, Hoffman (1981, 1984) makes a case that even infants have the capacity to experience empathic distress. They will cry on hearing other infants' cries (Sagi and Hoffman, 1976). Very young children have also been observed to give objects that comfort them (for example, a blanket) to others who are distressed (Hoffman, 1984).

Biological bases for following a norm of care in relationships with others are only a beginning, of course. A fuller understanding of communal

norms must await the acquisition of greater cognitive and physical abilities. As the child grows and is able to meet the needs of family members, family members begin expecting just that. Children often are given chores that benefit others (for example, clearing a table, fetching an object). As they perform these chores (with the caveat that they are not paid or bribed for doing so), they learn about the mutual responsibility that is a part of many adult communal relationships.

Of course, there are other important means of acquiring these norms than attachment processes and explicit teaching. Children may learn communal behavior by identifying with or modeling themselves after adults or older children.

As children move out of the home, not only parents but also teachers, religious leaders, and other adults begin explicitly to teach communal rules to those children and expect them to follow these norms. Books and television programs often give instructions about what friendship and family relationships entail and what makes them different from other relationships. It is from such ubiquitous sources that, we believe, virtually all children, regardless of the nature of their early experiences within families, learn the ideal norms for such relationships. In contrast, it is, we suspect, diversity in personal experiences in families of origin (and perhaps in some other early relationships as well) that accounts for differences in abilities and fortitudes to live up to these norms.

Peer relationships also should be important contexts for learning about communal norms. Early friendships are based largely on proximity and similarity rather than on mutual communal orientation (Selman, 1980). Nonetheless, early friendships provide contexts in which children learn to meet others' needs noncontingently. Parents, teachers, and guidance counselors are likely to urge their children to attend to friends' needs and desires. Moreover, peers themselves selectively play with others who meet their needs, thereby reinforcing communal behaviors.

Still, communal relationships do not exist in their adult form until children internalize communal norms and become adept at inferring others' needs and acting in responsive ways based on their understanding and acceptance of those needs (Reis and Shaver, 1988; Reis and Patrick, 1996). This requires perspective-taking skills that do not emerge until at least preadolescence and explains why it is not until children are eleven or twelve years old that their friendships fit the adult definition of such a relationship. Children at this age become close to a few peers to whom they self-disclose and feel intimate, while they remain friendly with a larger group of peers. Among a group of intimates, members infer and meet one another's needs based on mutual understandings. This fits with Diaz and Berndt's (1982) report that eighth graders know their friends much better (in terms of the intimate details of their lives) than do fourth graders and with Damon's (1983) finding that although young children define their relationships in terms of similarities or the number of interactions they have

with others, adolescents say their relationships are grounded in loyalty and intimacy.

**Coming to Understand Other Norms.** Although parent-child relationships are largely communal, parents also teach their children that other norms apply in other relationships. Parents and other adults teach their children about exchange relationships through example. For instance, parents pay for restaurant meals but not for meals at relatives' homes.

Initially, a very young child cannot explore the concept of exchange norms due to limits on the child's ability to participate directly in an exchange relationship. As the child moves out of the home and begins to use money, he or she learns about exchange relationships through participating in them.

Interactions with peers also contribute to understanding exchange relationships. Whereas relationships with good friends may be largely communal in nature, peers on the edge of friendship networks may behave in accordance with exchange norms. They may be willing to provide benefits to the child only if promised something comparable in return. They are likely to pay little attention to the child's needs, choosing to interact with the child only when they want something and have something to offer in exchange.

Of course, following an exchange norm is not the only alternative means of giving and receiving benefits in relationships. Another possibility is that people simply behave according to self-interest. Children learn this from observing others' interactions, interacting with exploitative peers, and direct teaching.

**Different Norms and Different Situations.** When do children clearly differentiate between norms and apply them selectively in different relationship contexts? Much of how this is accomplished is implied in what we have already discussed. That is, children are likely to apply norms selectively in the contexts in which they were learned. In addition, receiving consistent care within the family of origin and experiencing consistently good close peer relationships as well as consistent experiences within exchange relationship contexts is likely to result in a greater ability to make clear and appropriate distinctions between situations in which distinct norms apply.

## Development of Distributive Justice Norms

A brief overview of empirical research on the development and application of distributive justice norms follows.

**Children's Use of Distributive Justice Norms.** There is little literature explicitly focusing on the developmental course of the acquisition of distributive justice norms. Most relevant studies are from the 1970s. Authors at that time tended to assume that one rule is used at a time and that rules changed and became more complex as cognitive abilities became more complex. Relationship context was ignored.

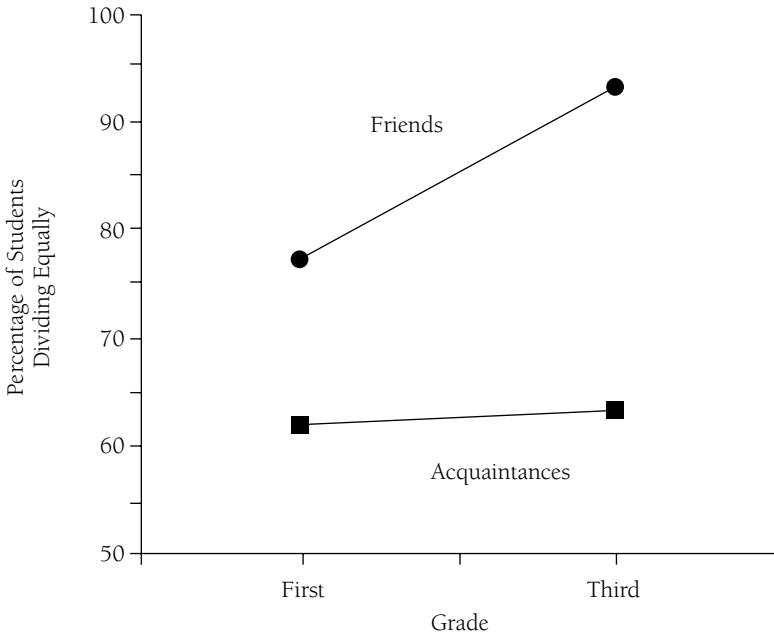
Hook (1978), for example, was interested in discovering how children allocate rewards earned jointly with another child. He studied five-, nine-, and thirteen-year-old children who worked on a task, saw another child's completed work on the same task, and were given a joint reward to divide between themselves. The child participant completed 25 percent, 50 percent, or 75 percent of the total work. Five-year-olds kept most of the money for themselves, regardless of work done (self-interest), nine-year-olds gave more money to the person who did more (ordinal equity), and thirteen-year-olds did the same but followed a norm of proportional equity. Hook pointed out that this sequence closely paralleled (and was probably dependent on) children's understanding of proportionality. Other researchers proposed similar sequences. Although the exact stages proposed varied a bit, these researchers all suggested that children used different rules at different stages of development and that progression through the stages was linked to the development of cognitive abilities (see, for instance, Damon, 1975; Enright and others, 1984; Lerner, 1974; Leventhal and Anderson, 1970; Leventhal, Popp, and Sawyer, 1973). In this early work, relationship context was considered irrelevant. Research on children's use of distributive justice norms came to a virtual standstill in the mid-1980s.

More than a decade later, Sigelman and Waitzman (1991) and Pataki, Shapiro, and Clark (1994) suggested that children do consider context when deciding what distributive justice norms to apply, arguing that children must learn to distinguish communal from exchange relationships. Pataki, Shapiro, and Clark (1994) reported a study that focused on first and third graders' use of distributive justice norms when working with a friend and when working with a school acquaintance. Their results suggest that young elementary school students do distinguish communal from other relationships.

In this experiment, first and third graders worked with a peer (a friend or an acquaintance) in searching a picture for hidden objects. Each child was told that the partners would take turns searching for hidden objects and that the pair would receive a reward based on the total number of objects found. Each child expected to be the one to divide the reward. Each child thought the partner had taken the first turn and could see that the partner had found three objects. The experimenter let the child search for objects until he or she had circled five. Then the experimenter gave the child eight tokens (redeemable for stickers) to divide and two envelopes (one for each child) in which to put them.

The results, shown in Figure 1.3, reveal that even first and third graders distinguish friends from acquaintances when making such allocations. In both grades, children were more likely to divide the tokens evenly (as opposed to equitably) if their partner was a friend than if the partner was an acquaintance. In the third grade, the likelihood of dividing equally among friends increased significantly, with no increase in the acquaintance condition. These results show that even young children consider relationship context when distributing benefits. For most first graders and even

**Figure 1.3. Percentage of Students Dividing Tokens Equally as a Function of Relationship Type and Grade**



more third graders, their friend's need for stickers was considered equivalent to their own; acquaintances' needs were less likely to be considered.

**Applying Communal Norms Effectively.** Our focus has been on how children learn and apply the ideal of noncontingent responsiveness to needs in friendships, romantic relationships, and family relationships while simultaneously learning and applying other distributive justice norms in relationships with strangers and acquaintances.

More recently, work with adults has addressed what happens when norms are violated in relationship contexts that most people believe should be communal. Do people shift to self-interest or exchange norms? Might there be individual differences in people's propensity to do this? A focus on issues such as this leads us to consider a wider developmental literature. We are particularly interested in literature that hints who may be especially adept at following communal norms within relationships for which most people judge them to be ideal and who may be especially vulnerable to abandoning the use of communal norms in such relationships.

There exists little, if any, developmental literature focusing specifically on the issue of abandoning communal norms in friendships, romantic relationships, or family relationships when one's needs are neglected. Nor is there a developmental literature on the issue of inappropriately applying communal norms in relationships that most people agree ought to be



exchange relationships. However, there are extensive developmental literatures on attachment, abuse, prosocial behavior, and child temperament. These literatures provide important guides to the antecedents of effective and appropriate application of communal and contingent record-keeping norms versus ineffective or inappropriate use of such norms.

Consider possible developmental antecedents to being able to apply communal norms effectively to adult relationships. The most obvious relevant literatures in this regard are those on attachment (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall, 1978; Bowlby, 1988; Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy, 1985), prosocial behavior (Eisenberg and Fabes, 1998), and peer relationships (Rubin, Bukowski, and Parker, 1998). Attachment researchers, for instance, have long theorized and have provided ample evidence that having a sensitive, responsive primary caretaker is likely to result in a child who is securely attached. Such a child is presumed to have a positive view of self as worthy of communal care and also positive models of close others as caring and responsive. Surely having (versus lacking) such positive cognitive models must make it easier to express emotions to, self-disclose to, seek help from, and accept help from friends, romantic partners, and family members when such expressions are appropriate. So too does it seem likely that having the cognitive structures associated with secure attachment makes it easier to be responsive to the needs of others (Iannotti and others, 1992; Kestenbaum, Farber, and Sroufe, 1989; Waters, Hay, and Richters, 1986).

Developmentalists in the area of prosocial behavior (which is often synonymous with being noncontingently responsive to another's needs or adherence to communal norm) also provide insights into the antecedents of being especially adept at following communal norms. Eisenberg and Fabes (1998), for instance, note that parents who teach children to cope with their own negative emotions in constructive ways tend to have children who react to others' distress in prosocial ways rather than reacting with distress reactions (Eisenberg and others, 1994). Parental modeling of prosocial behavior promotes such behavior (Rosenhan, 1970; Clary and Miller, 1986), as do direct parental exhortations to be prosocial, especially if the positive emotional consequences of helping are emphasized and children are not forced to help (McGrath, Wilson, and Frassetto, 1995). From our perspective, however, the applicability of this literature for understanding the effective acquisition and application of communal norms is limited by the fact that the recipients of the prosocial behavior in most of these studies are either strangers or people with whom the research participant would be expected to have a weak communal relationship. We do not yet have a clear picture of how children come to be more responsive to some persons' needs than to others, and we do not know if the antecedents of prosocial behavior within weak versus strong communal relationships are different.

Peer relationships also play a large role in children's lives and should be an important arena in which skills in developing and maintaining mutual, equal strength, communal relationships are developed and honed.

Not surprisingly, cooperative, friendly, sociable, and sensitive children are better able to form friendships than others (Coie, Dodge, and Coppotelli, 1982). Disruptiveness, physical aggression, and verbal threats, particularly in the absence of positive social skills, are likely to lead to rejection (Dodge, 1983; Coie and Kupersmidt, 1983). Immature behavior can lead other children to neglect (rather than to reject) a child, which may interfere with that child's developing communal skills by limiting the amount of practice available in friendships (Rubin, Chen, and Hymel, 1993).

Leaving skills at following communal norms aside, and turning to factors that may lead one to be especially likely to abandon strivings toward adherence to communal norms in the face of a partner's neglect of one's needs, leads us to look at the developmental literature in a slightly different way. For instance, consider work on child abuse by Rogosch, Cicchetti, and Aber (1995) and by Rieder and Cicchetti (1989). These researchers provide evidence that early maltreatment may result in neurophysiological changes in children that heighten their later sensitivity to negative affect and negative stimuli, even in situations in which maltreatment is no longer an issue. Maltreated children, just like other children, are likely to learn that a communal norm is ideal for giving and receiving benefits in intimate relationships in adulthood. Moreover, they might strive just as hard as anyone else to follow it. However, might they as a result of their early maltreatment be especially sensitive to a partner's (inevitable) neglect of needs? Might they be among those especially likely to abandon communal norms and move toward contingent record-keeping norms or self-interest in such a circumstance? It seems likely. A similar (and not unrelated) argument can be made with regard to the potential impact of the negative cognitive models of self and others. Attachment researchers have proposed that individuals whose parents have not been consistently responsive to their needs (specifically, insecure children) develop and carry these models with them over time. That is, insecurity ought to predict heightened tendencies to abandon communal norms in the face of real or imagined neglect of one's needs by a partner.

Indeed, perhaps heightened sensitivity and reactivity to neglect of needs (and our hypothesized subsequent abandonment of communal norms) are caused not just by poor parental treatment of children. An early history of rejection by peers may also account for some of it. Fitting with this speculation are observations that rejected children are more disposed than others to interpret ambiguous negative events as evidence of malevolent intent on the part of others (Crick and Dodge, 1994; Dodge and Frame, 1982; Quiggle, Garber, Panak, and Dodge, 1992; Sancilio, Plumert, and Hartup, 1989).

Finally, consider possible antecedents of inappropriate application of communal norms in relationships most people believe ought to be exchange relationships. Here again, the attachment literature seems relevant. Anxious-resistant or anxious-avoidant attachment presumably results from having had primary caretakers who were inconsistent in responding to one's needs as an infant (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, and Wall, 1978). This presumably

results in children who are not yet ready to give up on counting on others for care but are simultaneously fearful that others will not care about their needs. They react, in part, by being more clingy than other children, and adult attachment researchers suggest that such people are more likely to fall in love at first sight and fall in love more often than others (Hazan and Shaver, 1987). Might these people be especially likely to apply communal norms early and inappropriately in relationships? We think so. Sadly, these same persons, being insecure, might simultaneously be among the first to abandon communal rules in contexts in which they are appropriate if threatened with signs that their needs have been neglected.

## Conclusion

We have reviewed theoretical and empirical work on adults' use of communal norms and have speculated on their developmental antecedents. The truth remains, however, that the fields of adult social psychology and social development remain largely separate and that longitudinal studies linking child social behavior to adult social behavior are rare. Much of what we set forth regarding likely links between these two fields is speculative. Moreover, there are aspects of adults' use of distributive justice norms for which there is no completed empirical work with adults, let alone complementary developmental research. Clearly, much work remains to be done.

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