

Evidence for the Effectiveness of Manipulations of Communal and Exchange Relationships

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This study examined the effectiveness of manipulations of desire for communal and exchange relationships that have been used in several studies. In these past studies, to create desire for communal relationships subjects have been exposed to an attractive target person who, they discover, is single, new at the university, and anxious to meet new people. To create desire for exchange relationships subjects have been exposed to the same attractive target who, they discover, is married and has been at the university for two years. In the present study, half of the subjects were exposed to the communal manipulation and half to the exchange manipulation. In addition, to examine whether the effectiveness of the manipulations depends upon the confederate being physically attractive, half the subjects were exposed to an attractive and half to an unattractive target. Following these manipulations subjects' desire to follow communal and exchange norms in their relationship with the other was measured. The results supported the effectiveness of the relationship manipulations and demonstrated their impact does not depend upon the confederate being attractive. Attractiveness did have a marginally significant main effect such that high attractiveness created greater preference for following communal relative to exchange norms.

Recently we have drawn a distinction between communal and exchange relationships and have reported evidence supporting that distinction (Clark & Mills, 1979; Mills & Clark, 1982). In communal relationships, often exemplified by friendships and romantic relationships, people feel a special responsibility for one another's welfare. They give benefits in response to the other's needs or to please the other. In exchange relationships, often exemplified by acquaintances and business relationships, people feel no special responsibility for the other's welfare. They give benefits with the expectation of receiving comparable benefits in return or in response to benefits previously received.

In manipulating desired relationship type in many of these studies (e.g., Clark, 1984; Clark & Mills, 1979; Clark, Mills, & Powell, 1986; Clark & Waddell, 1985), we have assumed that our college student subjects will typically have the time and freedom available to form new communal relationships. We

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have further assumed that when an attractive target person is perceived as also available and motivated to form new relationships, subjects will prefer a communal to an exchange relationship with that other. However, when the attractive target is perceived as unavailable for a communal relationship, we have assumed an exchange relationship will be expected or preferred instead.

To operationalize these assumptions, we have typically selected freshmen or sophomores as subjects. Then we have selected a physically attractive confederate and have varied what is said about that confederate. Subjects in our communal conditions have been told that the confederate is single, new at the university, and has signed up as a result of being anxious to meet new people. Subjects in our exchange conditions have been told that the confederate is married, has been at the university for some time, and has signed up for the study because his or her spouse can pick him or her up after the study.

We have evidence that these manipulations produce the expected anticipation of communal versus exchange relationships in that subjects exposed to them make judgments or behave in ways clearly predicted on the basis of the communal/exchange distinction. For example, (1) subjects exposed to the exchange, but not those exposed to the communal, manipulation like the other more if the other specifically repays them for benefits than if the other does not (Clark & Mills, 1979; Clark & Waddell, 1985); (2) subjects exposed to the exchange manipulation keep track of individual inputs into joint tasks for which there will be a reward—something that is necessary if rewards are to be divided according to who did what but not if they are divided according to needs—to a greater extent than those exposed to the communal manipulation (Clark, 1984); and (3) subjects exposed to the communal manipulation will keep track of the other's needs when the other cannot repay them in kind and even when they cannot help the other to a greater extent than those exposed to the exchange manipulation (Clark et al., 1986).

Nonetheless, the impact of our manipulations on subjects' explicit expressions of desire to follow communal versus exchange norms has never been examined. Thus, in this study the effect of our relationship manipulations on such expressions was examined.

Prior studies also do not tell us whether high target physical attractiveness is important to create desire for a communal relationship. In past studies, attractiveness has always been kept at a high level. In this study it was varied independently of the relationship manipulations. This permitted an assessment of whether the effectiveness of our manipulations depends upon target attractiveness and whether attractiveness would have a main effect on desired relationship norms.

Why our manipulations should influence desired relationship norms. Before describing the specifics of the study it is worth discussing why the manipulations should influence desired relationship norms. One reason is that the communal manipulation suggests that the other has more time and freedom from obligations in other relationships than does the exchange manipulation. Communal obligations to attend and respond to the other's needs as they arise are not easily limited to one or two transactions and these relationships typically

are expected to persist over time (Mills & Clark, 1982). Thus the communal manipulation by virtue of increasing the other's perceived time and freedom should increase perceptions that the other may want a communal relationship. In turn, the subject's expectation of being able to form such a relationship may be increased. If the other has limited time and freedom, an exchange relationship may be preferred instead because exchange obligations may be limited to a single transaction or just a few (Mills & Clark, 1982).¹ In addition it is probably important that the communal manipulation conveys that the other is motivated to form new relationships. This may be essential to anticipating being able to form a communal relationship with the other. If the other does not seem interested in new relationships as the communal manipulation implies, an exchange relationship may be expected or preferred. Finally, the manipulations may work in part by influencing how similar the subject feels to the target. Our student subjects may perceive themselves as more similar to the single target described in the communal manipulation than to the married target described in the exchange manipulation. Greater perceived similarity may be associated with a greater likelihood subjects will feel that they and the target can understand and respond to one another's needs and desires and consequently to a greater desire to follow communal than exchange norms.

Why a target's physical attractiveness may influence desired relationship norms. Next consider why a target's physical attractiveness might influence what norms subjects will wish to follow in a relationship and, potentially, the effectiveness of our manipulations. First, when considering whether a target is the type of person whom one wants to respond to one's needs, it makes sense to take into account whether the target is likely to be "responsive," "sensitive," "kind," and "nurturant." People perceive physically attractive people to be more likely than physically unattractive people to possess each of these traits (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972; Miller, 1970) and perceptions that the other possesses these traits may be associated with increased desire to follow communal norms. Thus attractiveness may be associated with increased desire to follow communal norms. In contrast, because these traits should be unimportant to a target's ability to follow exchange norms, attractiveness should not influence desire to follow exchange norms.

A second reason target attractiveness may increase preference for following communal over exchange norms is that the target's attractiveness may reflect positively (or negatively) on the person in a communal relationship, whereas it may not reflect on the other in an exchange relationship. This may occur because communal relationships necessitate getting to know another well, letting the other get to know oneself well, and some anticipation that the relationship will endure over time. These things are not necessary in an exchange relationship. Consequently observers may be more likely to perceive members of communal than members of exchange relationships to be a "unit" and to draw inferences about one member based on attributes of the other. People may know this and take it into account when choosing what relationship norms to follow in their

relationship with another. Studies by Sigall and Landy (1973) and Bar-Tal and Saxe (1976) offer some support for this idea. They reveal that the physical attractiveness of a male's opposite-sex companion reflects upon judgments of the male himself if the relationship is perceived to be an intimate one but not if the male and female are merely seen together. Moreover, males seem to be quite aware of this fact (Sigall & Landy, 1973).

Finally, past studies have clearly shown that physical attractiveness is a powerful determinant of with whom one wishes to form a romantic relationship (e.g., Brislin & Lewis, 1968; Walster, Aronson, Abrahams, & Rotterman, 1966) and to whom one is willing to disclose personal information (Brundage, Derlega, & Cash, 1977). Although these studies do not suggest why attractiveness should influence desire to follow communal norms, they provide still more reason to suspect a target's attractiveness will influence expressions of desire to follow communal relative to exchange norms with that target.

A note of caution about the effect of physical attractiveness. Although these studies do suggest a target's attractiveness will influence desire to follow communal norms, some studies show that subjects' own attractiveness moderates the effect of target attractiveness. For instance, in two studies reported by Berscheid, Dion, Walster, & Walster (1971), although there was an overall tendency for subjects to prefer attractive to unattractive dates, within this tendency the more attractive the subject the higher in attractiveness were the dates he or she chose. Other studies provide additional evidence for such a "matching" effect (e.g., Cash & Derlega, 1978; Folkes, 1982; Murstein, 1972). Taken together these studies indicate that subjects whose own attractiveness is low may be less likely to reject unattractive targets as potential communal relations than will subjects whose own attractiveness is high.²

Specific predictions regarding the effects of physical attractiveness. In manipulating desired relationship type in the past we have kept the target's attractiveness high. In this study we examined whether target attractiveness might influence the effectiveness of our manipulations as well as whether it might have an independent effect on desired relationship norms. We predicted that the impact of attractiveness on desired relationship norms would take one of two forms: (1) First, the relationship and attractiveness manipulations might interact. Subjects might have a high desire to follow communal relative to exchange norms only when exposed to both an attractive target and the communal manipulation. Desire to follow communal relative to exchange norms might be lower and equal in the remaining conditions. (2) Alternatively, the effects of our manipulations and of target attractiveness might be independent. Both high availability and high attractiveness might independently increase desire to follow communal rather than exchange norms. Finally, it was expected that subjects low in physical attractiveness might be less likely than those high in physical attractiveness to reject the idea of a communal relationship with an attractive target.

METHOD

Overview

Subjects were exposed to manipulations of desire for a communal or an exchange relationship with a target. The target's attractiveness was independently varied. Then subjects rated the degree to which they would follow communal and exchange norms (as expressed in 14 statements) in a relationship with the target. They also selected the type of relationship they would most like to have with the target from a list of some typically communal and exchange relationships.

Subjects

In all, 47 college students participated in this study. Each was randomly assigned to the (1) communal/high attractive condition (7 males, 5 females), (2) communal/low attractive condition (8 males, 4 females), (3) exchange/high attractive condition (7 males, 4 females) or (4) exchange/low attractive condition (8 males, 4 females).

Stimulus Materials

Prior to beginning the study, six photographs of attractive (3 female, 3 male) and six of unattractive (3 female, 3 male) stimulus persons who were college students or college-aged volunteers were selected to represent the target person. Each photograph was rated by nine judges (4 males and 5 females) on a 7-point scale from 1 (extremely unattractive) to 7 (extremely attractive). The reliability of their ratings was adequate ($r = .91$). The three unattractive females and three unattractive males received mean ratings of 2.48 and 2.97, respectively. The three attractive females and three attractive males received mean ratings of 5.52 and 5.74, respectively. A two-way (target attractiveness \times target sex) analysis of variance revealed a significant effect of target attractiveness $F(1, 8) = 93.58, p < .001$, no effect of target sex $F(1, 8) = 2.98, n.s.$, and no interaction between target sex and target attractiveness $F(1, 8) = 2.25, n.s.$

Procedure

Subjects signed up for an "Impression Formation Study" along with an opposite-sex subject (whose name the experimenter had placed on the sign-up sheet). Upon arrival each subject was told the other had arrived, had heard an explanation of the study, and was waiting in another room to begin.

The study was described as dealing with how people form impressions of others. It would have three parts. First, the participants would exchange Polaroid pictures and questionnaires each had filled out. Next, they would meet and have a 20-minute discussion. Finally, they would be separated and fill out more questionnaires asking about how they formed their impression of the other.

At this point the experimenter took a Polaroid picture of the subject and had him or her fill out a questionnaire asking, among other things, for marital status, time spent at the university, and the reason for signing up for this particular study. The experimenter collected this information, put it in an envelope to give to the other, and gave the subject an envelope containing the "other's" picture and questionnaire. The "other's" materials included the manipulation and the target's picture.

Subjects were given a picture of either an attractive or an unattractive opposite-sex other.³ In the communal conditions the other's questionnaire indicated he or she was single, new at the university and had signed up because he or she was anxious to meet new people. In the exchange conditions the other's questionnaire indicated he or she was married, had been at the university for two years, and had signed up because the study would end at a time at which the other's spouse could pick the other up.

Next the subject was given the questionnaire to measure "prediscussion" impressions of the other. This form included (1) four statements, agreement with which would indicate desire for a communal relationship (these asked if the subject would enjoy responding to the other's needs, would like doing things just to please the other, would want to do things to please the other, and would like the other to respond to the subject's own needs); (2) three statements, *disagreement* with which would indicate desire for a communal relationship (these asked if the other was the sort of person to whom the subject would definitely *not* tell their troubles, if the subject wouldn't be any more sensitive to the other's than to just anyone's needs, and if it would be best for the subject not to get involved taking care of the other's needs); (3) four statements, agreement with which would indicate desire for an exchange relationship (these asked if the subject received something valuable from the other whether he or she would immediately return something comparable, if the other helped the subject whether the subject would feel the other had to be paid back immediately, whether in a relationship with the other it would be best to keep things as "even" as possible, and if the subject gave something of value to the other whether the subject would expect the other to return it soon afterwards); and (4) three statements, *disagreement* with which would indicate desire for an exchange relationship (these asked if the subject wouldn't bother to keep track of benefits given to the other, whether the subject would resent it if the other did the subject a favor and then asked for a repayment, and if the other offered the subject a repayment for something the subject had done whether the subject would refuse).

In addition, subjects were asked to choose *one* of the following relationships as the type they would most like to have with the other: (1) a friendship (communal), (2) a romantic relationship (communal), (3) an acquaintanceship (exchange), (4) a businesslike relationship (exchange), or (5) no contact at all.

After filling out this questionnaire subjects were checked for suspicion and

debriefed. A total of 4 subjects, one in each condition, indicated suspicion. Their data were not included in any of the analyses. Finally, following the experiment we had nine judges rate each subject's photograph on a 7-point scale from 1 (extremely unattractive) to 7 (extremely attractive).

RESULTS

The primary measure was the sum of each subject's answers to the seven communal items (with the appropriate three ratings reversed) minus the sum of his or her answers to the seven exchange questions (with the appropriate three ratings reversed). The higher a subject's score on this measure the greater the desire for a communal relative to an exchange relationship. Means on this measure in each condition are shown in Table 1. The means were higher in the communal than in the exchange conditions and in the attractive than in the unattractive target person conditions.

A three-way ANOVA on this data (subject sex \times relationship manipulation \times attractiveness) revealed a main effect of relationship manipulation, $F(1, 35) = 5.61$, $p < .05$; a marginal effect of attractiveness, $F(1, 35) = 3.14$, $p < .09$; no effect of sex, $F(1, 35) = 0.00$, n.s.; and no interaction between the relationship manipulation and attractiveness, $F(1, 35) = .80$, n.s. None of the remaining, less theoretically important, interactions reached significance.

Two additional three-way ANOVAS (subject sex \times relationship manipulation \times attractiveness) were performed on the subjects' communal and on their exchange scores separately. The analysis on the communal scores revealed no significant effects. However, the main effect for attractiveness approached significance, $F(1, 35) = 3.7$, $p < .07$, such that attractive targets tended to elicit higher communal scores than did unattractive targets. The analysis of the exchange scores revealed a significant effect only for the relationship manipulation, $F(1, 35) = 5.61$, $p < .05$, such that scores were higher in the exchange than in the communal conditions. The interaction between relationship type and attractiveness for exchange scores in isolation also approached significance, $F(1, 35) = 3.63$, $p < .07$, indicating that although scores tended to be higher in the exchange than in the communal manipulation conditions regardless of target attractiveness, this effect was more pronounced when the target was unattractive. Also, the interaction between sex and attractiveness approached significance, $F(1, 35) = 3.89$, $p < .06$, such that the effect of the relationship manipulations on desire to follow exchange norms tended to be greater for female than for male subjects. None of the remaining effects was significant.

To assess the impact of subjects' own attractiveness on our measures, we correlated judges' mean ratings of each subject's own attractiveness with the primary dependent measure (communal score-exchange score) separately for attractive targets ($r = +.10$) and for unattractive targets ($r = -.35$). Although neither correlation was significantly different from zero, they were significantly different from one another, $z = 4.30$, $p < .01$.

TABLE 1 Difference Scores (Communal-Exchange) and Percentages of Subjects Choosing a Communal Relationship as a Function of Target Attractiveness and Relationship Manipulation

		<i>Manipulation</i>	
		<i>Exchange</i>	<i>Communal</i>
Target attractiveness	Communal-Exchange Index	-7.8	-1.6
	Percentage choosing a communal relationship	27.3	50.0
	Communal-Exchange Index	-2.4	+1.8
	Percentage choosing a communal relationship	40.0	63.6

A second measure of desire for a communal versus an exchange relationship is whether subjects choose a type of relationship believed to be typically communal in nature (friendship or romantic relationship) or a type believed to be typically exchange in nature (acquaintanceship or businesslike relationship) as their preferred relationship with the other. The percentages of subjects choosing a communal relationship in each condition are shown in Table 1. Because no subject chose the "romantic partner" option, these percentages represent subjects who said they wished to have a "friendship" with the other.⁴ Moreover, because no subject chose the "no relationship desired" option, the inverses of these percentages represent the percentages of subjects choosing a typical exchange relationship. The chosen exchange relationship was always "acquaintanceship," with the exception of one subject in the exchange/high attractiveness condition who chose a "businesslike" relationship.

As can be seen from the table, the results on our secondary measure paralleled the results obtained on our primary dependent measure. That is, subjects showed a greater tendency to prefer "communal" over "exchange" relationships when exposed to the communal rather than to the exchange manipulation and when exposed to the attractive rather than the unattractive target. A logistical regression analysis was performed on this frequency data. It yielded no significant main or interaction effects. The improvement chi-square for adding the relationship manipulation variable to the constant model did approach significance $2\Delta\chi^2 = 2.43$, $p < .13$, suggesting that the manipulations did produce their intended effects. However, further adding the attractiveness variable and then the interaction between the attractiveness and relationship

manipulations to the model did not result in significant improvement chi-squares $2\Delta\chi^2 = .782$, $p < .39$, $2\Delta\chi^2 = 0.00$, $p = 1.00$, respectively. Thus the data from our secondary measure were weak. Nonetheless, the patterns of data revealed by the two measures were very similar, suggesting that the trends on the secondary measure were not due to chance.

DISCUSSION

The significant results on our preference for following communal relative to exchange norms difference measure taken together with the more marginal, but parallel, results on our secondary measure provide clear support for the effectiveness of our exchange and communal relationship manipulations. When taken together with prior evidence that these manipulations produce types of behavior and judgments that are theoretically predicted on the basis of the communal/exchange distinction (Clark, 1984; Clark & Mills, 1979; Clark et al., in press, Clark & Waddell, 1985), this conclusion stands on still firmer ground.

The results of our separate analyses of expression of desire to follow communal and of desire to follow exchange norms might be taken as an indication that the manipulations work primarily by influencing desire to follow exchange norms rather than communal norms. However, a consideration of the entire pattern of results in this program of research suggests that would be an incorrect conclusion. Recent studies (Clark et al., 1986; Clark, Ouellette, Powell, & Milberg, in press) have clearly shown that subjects exposed to the communal manipulation are more likely to help the other and to check on the other's needs than are subjects exposed to the exchange manipulation. These findings indicate that the manipulations influence desire to follow communal as well as exchange norms. Moreover, in the present study communal scores did tend to be greater in the communal than in the exchange conditions. In light of the entire pattern of findings in this program of research, I suspect the weakness of the present results on the separate communal measure has to do with the self-report nature of the measure. In this study, unlike the others in which desire to follow communal norms following the communal manipulation was clearly demonstrated, the subjects knew their desire to be responsive to others' needs and to accept aid from others was being measured. Because social norms clearly call for such behavior, it is possible that individual differences in subjects' desire to present themselves in a desirable manner may have contributed error to our measurement making it difficult to detect effects on the communal measure.

Effects of Target Attractiveness

Beyond assessing the effectiveness of our relationship manipulations, the present study also allowed us to assess whether or not their effectiveness depends upon the confederate being attractive. Within the range of attractiveness represented in the present study, there is no evidence that they are so dependent. However, the attractiveness variable produced a marginal main effect on our

primary dependent measure such that high target attractiveness increased desire for following communal over exchange norms. Similar, but very slight, tendencies were observed on the secondary measure as well. The individual analyses on communal and exchange components of the primary measure suggest that this effect is primarily due to attractiveness increasing desire for a communal relationship, which is what one would expect given our earlier discussion of why attractiveness may influence the norms one wishes to follow in a relationship with another.

It is worth pointing out that although the relationship manipulations and target attractiveness did not interact, in a practical sense it may still be important to keep the confederate's attractiveness at least moderately high when using these manipulations. To create a preference for a communal rather than an exchange relationship with another it is possible that some threshold of desire for a communal relationship must be passed. Although the communal manipulation may always move subjects toward that threshold, it may not always cause the threshold to be surpassed. Given that target attractiveness tended to increase desire for following communal relative to exchange norms, it may be a factor that sometimes causes such a threshold to be surpassed. Thus, *if* this model is correct, target attractiveness may indeed often be an important determinant of the effectiveness of the relationship manipulations.⁵

The effects of attractiveness were quite weak. This weakness might have been due to attractive, but not unattractive, subjects, rejecting the idea of a communal relationship with an unattractive target. The fact that when target attractiveness was low there was a $-.35$ correlation between subject attractiveness and our dependent measure supports this reasoning. In other words when target attractiveness was low, the less attractive the subject the more he or she tended to be open to the idea of a communal relationship with that target. In contrast, when target attractiveness was high there was a very slight tendency for subjects' attractiveness to be positively associated with desire for a communal relationship. Had our target seemed less anxious for and open to new relationships, the latter tendency may well have been stronger, possibly indicating a reluctance on unattractive subjects' part to pursue a communal relationship with an attractive other.

Concluding Comments

In summary, this study met its primary goal of providing evidence for the effectiveness of relationship manipulations we have often used in past studies. In addition the study provides some suggestive evidence regarding the impact of both target and subject attractiveness on desired relationship norms. Target attractiveness tends to increase desire for a communal relative to an exchange relationship, and its effects do not appear to interact with the relationship manipulation. However, the effect of target attractiveness appears to be modified by subjects' own attractiveness.

NOTES

¹Long-term exchange relationships are possible as well (Mills & Clark, 1982). The point being made here is simply that exchange relationships can relatively easily be limited to a few transactions, something that is not true for communal relationships.

²Ordinarily, unattractive subjects may also be less likely than attractive subjects to seek out others who are high in attractiveness for communal relationships because they fear rejection. However, this may not occur when attractive subjects are exposed to our communal relationship manipulation. This manipulation makes it clear that the other is quite anxious to meet new people—something that ordinarily may not be true of attractive others. Unattractive as well as attractive others may be willing to try for a communal relationship with an attractive confederate after exposure to this manipulation.

³Care was taken that each attractive and each unattractive photo was as evenly represented in the two relevant conditions as possible. Of course, given the greater number of male relative to female subjects, the female pictures were more heavily utilized than the male pictures. The photographs were numbered 1, 2, 3 (unattractive males); 4, 5, 6 (unattractive females); 7, 8, 9 (attractive males); and 10, 11, 12 (attractive females). In the communal/low attractive and the exchange/low attractive condition photographs 1, 2, and 3 were shown once, 4 was shown twice, and 5 & 6 were shown three times. In the communal/high attractive and the exchange/high attractive condition photographs 7 and 8 were shown once, 9 was shown twice in the communal and once in the exchange condition, 10 and 12 were shown twice, and 11 was shown three times. (These counts include just those subjects who were not suspicious).

⁴Subjects may have avoided saying they desired a romantic relationship with the other because the other was perceived to be more likely to be available for a new friendship than a new romantic relationship and they did not wish to risk admitting that they might want a romantic relationship.

⁵Using the same threshold idea one might argue that keeping the attractiveness of a confederate low might be important to the effectiveness of our exchange manipulation. However, past studies in which the attractiveness of the confederate was kept high and in which subjects exposed to the exchange manipulation did follow exchange norms argues against this.

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