Honors Scholar Theses

Honors Scholar Program

A Pilot Test on the Role of Power in Mate Choice

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Abstract

To test two competing theories, social role and sexual strategies, a study was proposed to have participants evaluate dating profiles that varied in agency, communion, and status. Power was also manipulated to test for effects on likelihood to date an individual. To test methods used for the proposed study, a pilot study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of a power prime task, a manipulation check for the power prime task, the attractiveness of 24 pictures, and an analysis of 12 profiles. The study found that power priming with analogies did not significantly lead to participants feeling powerful. This finding was also connected to the manipulation check, which may not have been effective. The profiles created were mostly found to be agentic or communal. Participants' ratings of the 12 female pictures showed they were statistically similar and ratings for the 12 male pictures were significantly different. These results partially demonstrated the potential for re-use of these stimuli in the proposed study.

A Pilot Test on the Role of Power in Mate Choice

Psychologists have long debated the causes for human mating behavior. This topic has interested psychologists for decades because of personal interests, political implications, popular discussions, and the unending desire to find the answer to, "Why doesn't he/she like me?" (Smith & Konik, 2011). The literature on this topic has been divided into two major viewpoints: evolutionary and social. Both evolutionary psychologists and social psychologists attempt to describe the distal causes for the existence of sex differences in mating behaviors. From findings such as men desiring almost three times more mates than women (Schmitt, 2002) to women's history of being at-home caretakers, both sub-disciplines have attempted to tackle the answers. Evolutionary psychologists believe that mate choice results from years of mating behaviors that have survived through natural and sexual selection (Buss & Schmitt 2012). Social psychologists argue that mating behaviors are a result of years of socialization and divisions of labor (Eagly 1987; Eagly & Wood 2012). To date, both evolutionary and social psychologists provide evidence for and against each other's theories. Neither social psychology's social role theory (Eagly 1987; Eagly & Wood 2012) nor evolutionary psychology's sexual strategies theory (Buss & Schmitt, 1993), however, has determined the effects of agency, communion, or power in mate choice. Agency and communion are two motives for behavior adopted widely by social psychologists. Power is a concept mentioned in evolutionary and social theories when discussing the possibility that power might have led to a distinction in behaviors but testing this possibility has not been difficult. The proposed study looks to evaluate the links between agency, communion, and power on mate choice, and the current study served as a manipulation check of materials to be used in the proposed study. As such, a discussion about both sexual strategies

theory and social role theory is presented as well as a summary of power and its effects on behavior.

Evolutionary Psychology

Evolutionary psychology is the study of evolved behaviors that are unconscious and passed on through reproduction. These behaviors can range from finding mates, altruism, consumption, sexual aggression, and dreaming (Smith & Konik, 2011). Evolutionary psychology research seeks to explain how behaviors that occur because evolutionary pressure from natural selection lead to the continued persistence of such behavior (Buss and Schmitt 1993; Trivers 1972). The proposed study will examine the evolutionary claims and research on human mate choice and attraction, and will look at what behavioral patterns are evident when choosing a mate.

The major tenet in evolutionary psychology is that behavior depends on hidden psychological mechanisms that have evolved over time and its interaction with the environment (e.g., social or ecological factors; Buss & Schmitt, 1993). No behaviors, however, are "genetically determined" as all behavior must interact with the environment before it is manifested. Psychological mechanisms that lead to such behavior are constantly flexible, activating and combining with the environment to produce the variability evident in human behavior (Buss & Schmitt, 2011). In discussing mate choice behavior, evolutionary psychologists propose two major strategies: increasing the number of offspring or increasing parental investment for offspring (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Trivers,1978).

Sexual Strategies Theory

Sexual Strategies Theory (SST) by Buss and Schmitt (1993) has been a leading theory in understanding human sexual behavior. Their theory posits that men and women have two mating

strategies: long- and short-term. Long-term mating strategies highlight resource control and genetic fitness in order to successfully raise a child. Short-term strategies focus on maximizing the quantity and/or quality of offspring. Regardless of the strategy, Buss and Schmitt propose that strategies are highly context dependent. They also argue that men and women have developed different preferences of strategy for mate choice. The major tenets of their theory highlight that men are more likely to utilize short-term mating strategies in order to increase the likelihood of passing on their genes. For women, long-term mating strategies are utilized more often in order to secure resources to foster their young, given that women are more invested in their offspring because they give birth to the child.

When men use a short-term strategy, they are expected to lower their qualitative standards (e.g., attractiveness, intelligence, age) and amount of time invested in a relationship in order to increase the number of partners they have access to. Men can achieve these goals by looking for signs of promiscuity and fertility, namely by looking for physical signs in a woman's body, seeking social information about a woman's sex life, and discerning behavior that might suggest readiness for sex. Buss and Schmitt (1993) argue that men who are short-term sexual strategists will have evolved means to detect the signs allowing them to meet multiple women. Analogous to the evolved mate selection mechanisms are evolved mechanisms in eating, such that the people who were able to detect non-deadly foods to eat were the ones more likely to survive and pass on their knowledge and preferences to kin. Likewise, men who are able to detect fertile and sexually willing women may be able to help produce children who have the same abilities.

Empirical tests of these hypotheses stemmed from a survey asking undergraduates questions regarding: length of time before intercourse with a person, number of partners desired

over a lifetime, and desire for a long versus short-term mate. Men in these studies desired a

short-term mate more than women while there was no difference in desire for a long-term mate.

Men were also willing to accept intercourse with a woman earlier in the relationship and

expected to have more partners in a lifetime. Another study found that when people were

approached by strangers on a university campus, men were more likely than women to agree to

have sex with a stranger (Clark & Hatfield, 1989). Buss and Schmitt (1993) also looked at men's

preferences for promiscuity, low sex drive, prudishness, and lack of sexual experience and

compared the means for each trait. They found men desired promiscuity in short-term but not

long-term mates and desired lack of sexual experience in long-term but not short-term mates. In

both long- and short-term mates, men did not desire low sex drive or prudishness. Men were also

found to rate physical attractiveness as more desirable in long- and short-term mates while rating

physical unattractiveness as undesirable in long or short-term mates.

When considering long-term strategies, the researchers argued that men should adopt

them in order to maximize a woman's reproductive fitness, allow more confidence in paternity,

lead to more viable offspring, and allow a division of labor for childcare. Buss and Schmitt

(1993) further suggest that uncertainty in paternity and maximizing a woman's reproductive

fitness are problems that are resolved by evolved mechanisms such as sexual jealousy, the ability

to identify faithful and unfaithful characteristics, as well as a heightened ability to predict health

through physical attractiveness. Evidence for their claims included both psychological and

physiological testing. For sexual jealousy, the researchers found men and women asymmetrically

concerned about physical and emotional infidelity. Men were found to self-report more concern

for physical infidelity as well as have increased heart rate, skin conductance, and facial frowning

when imaging physical infidelity by their long-term partner. Women were not found to have the physiological or psychological responses men had to physical infidelity.

While women are expected under SST to be more likely to adopt a long-term mating strategy, adopting a short-term strategy is still plausible. Buss and Schmitt's (1993) theory states that women who undergo a short-term strategy will likely benefit from immediate resource extraction, a means to evaluate long-term mate value, and gaining increased protection. Comparably, adopting a long-term strategy would allow a woman long-term material advantage for herself and her children, acquisition of social and economic benefits to aid in her children's future reproduction, and possible genetic advantages if the aforementioned benefits were heritable.

For women, adopting short-term mating strategies allow for a quick way to gather resources given that men are willing to exchange their resources for sex. To test their hypothesis, Buss and Schmitt (1993) looked at whether women were more discerning of men who had desires to spend more on short-term relationships, as well as not be frugal or stingy. When rating the qualities needed for a short-term relationship with a man, women rated those who were more likely to give in the early stages of the relationship and were not stingy as desirable. The researchers also hypothesized that women should regard men in relationships as less desirable since that would reduce the possibility of the man being a long-term mate. When surveyed, both men and women showed little desirability in wanting a mate that was already in a relationship, with women rating it slightly less desirable. Women also rated promiscuity as less desirable while rating physical strength as a desirable quality of a short-term mate, suggesting that women may be considering the long-term mate value of a mate while in a short-term relationship.

Another quality when considering a long-term mate is parental investment. Buss and Schmitt (1993) argue that women should be able to detect certain cues that suggest how well a man can provide resources to her and her offspring. To test their hypothesis, several countries were surveyed to rate the desirability of traits suggesting good future or current financial potential (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Schmitt 2005). Their results showed that women in all countries valued the financial potential of men, suggesting that they are more concerned about their mate's resource acquisition potential than men. In concert with their findings were results showing that women did not find traits suggesting poor resource allocation to be desirable. Further studies by Buss and Schmitt (1993) looked at their data to see if relative economic equality between men and women would nullify the desire for a high financial prospects mate in women. Their results showed that regardless of the amount of money a woman made in the United States, there was still a desire to find a mate who made more money. In contrast, men's preferences for women did not depend on their financial status.

In sum, sexual strategies theory highlights that men and women have evolved distinct behavioral patterns to detect and solve the temporally dependent problems associated with long- or short-term mating strategies. By suggesting that men and women have evolved mechanisms to deal with mating problems, the theory seeks to provide a biological and empirical foundation for behaviors such as a desire for a mate to have strong financial potential. While certain traits are culturally independent (e.g., chastity), many other traits were found consistently across cultures. Using that generalizability, SST suggests there is evidence for the possibility that humans have evolved these preferences, instead of being taught them, in order to pass on their genes. Furthermore, the distinct strategies men and women prefer to secure mates suggests they are sexually dimorphic, with men predicted to use more short-term strategies and women to use

more long-term strategies. SST posits that men's ability to rapidly inseminate women led to more evolved behaviors addressing short-term than long-term mating strategies. Women, on the other hand, are more likely to pursue a long-term mating strategy because they can only be impregnated once and thus search for a mate who can provide parental investment and resources (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

Social Role Theory

Social role theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Eagly, 1987) is a social-biological theory arguing that behaviors are a result of proximal and distal factors such as social interactions and hormonal development, respectively. In full, the theory states that sex differences in behavior are results of socialization, stereotypes about gender roles, and the interaction between physical differences between men and women within a culture's decision to address those differences (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Socialization is defined as the process where individuals' expectations are shaped by cultural norms (Zelezny, Chua, & Aldrich, 2000). Gender stereotypes are beliefs that behaviors are consistent and universal to a certain sex after just a few observations of either sex's behavior. The major biological differences between men and women are men's size and strength and women's reproductive abilities. These differences interact with the local economy, social structure, and ecology to create a division of labor between men and women.

Eagly (1987) argues that the division of labor ultimately came from the physical differences between men and women. By having to carry a child until birth, women had limited activities they could do. This limitation led women to have fewer opportunities to do tasks that require locomotion, speed, or long distances away from home (e.g., hunting, war). Men, unlike women, did not have reproductive constraints and were able to excel in these activities. This difference in opportunity reinforced the notion of a division of labor. These divisions, although

based on biological differences, are affected by cultural variations in how people divide their

labor between men and women. In the modern day, these physical differences have diminished in

their influence over a division of labor even though a division still exists.

This existing division also has its roots in the history of men and women's rights.

Throughout most of Western and Eastern history, a majority of power has been given to men,

leading to men having more decision-making authority and a majority of the resource access.

These two factors facilitated men's control over the social and economic ecology. In recent

Western history, the amount of men in powerful roles has lowered slightly, allowing women to

fill some of those roles. This development has been credited to three changes: lower birthrates,

the lack of need for breast feeding and a decreased reliance on strength and size for economic

productivity. Regardless, sex differences in labor remain. The authors argue this segregation

exists because there is still a social structure favoring men in positions of power, what they

consider a middle-level cause for sex-differentiated behavior (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Other middle-level causes for sex-differentiated behavior include gender role

assignments, or putting people into roles based on but not necessarily related to their sex. Eagly

and Wood (2012) argue that gender roles form from inferences made by observations of male

and female behavior. For example, consistently seeing women in the household leads to a

conclusion that women are meant to be caretakers. This generalization leads to a belief that there

are inherent reasons for why women are caretakers. These observations are acquired in early

childhood and continue to be exacerbated in adolescence (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Miller,

Trautner, & Ruble, 2006). Furthermore, researchers have argued that women and men also

diverge in two ways: agency and communion (Eagly & Wood, 1984). Agency is described as

having traits and behaviors that are assertive, whereas communion is described as having traits

and behaviors that facilitate interpersonal relationships (Bakan, 1966; Eagly, 1987; McAdams,

2002). Those who have agency are described as agentic (i.e., an assertive person) and those who

have communion are described as communal (i.e., a compassionate person). This discrepancy

has led to men being in agentic jobs and women being in communal jobs (Cejka & Eagly, 1999;

Glick, 1999).

Agentic jobs are also more likely to have positions where authority and income levels are

higher, resulting in men with jobs where they can gain more influence. These jobs solidify

gender roles and develop beliefs in acceptable and unacceptable behaviors relevant to one's

gender role (e.g., men are supposed to be CEOs). Men and women then act in accordance to their

gender roles, determined by the positions they are funneled into by society. As they stay in those

positions, they continually practice not only their occupational roles but also their gender roles,

leading to a perpetuation in a division of labor that is perceived to be fair. The continued practice

of gender roles is also reflected in biology, particularly hormonal fluctuation and its effects on

people's decisions and behaviors considerably (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Hormonal fluctuation is considered a major component to understanding gender

differences in behaviors because hormones existing today have been shaped from solutions to

challenges in the past (Eagly & Wood, 2010). Hormonal activation has been documented to

affect masculine and feminine behaviors even within a sociocultural context. For example,

testosterone is active during interactions where people find the need to be competitive, whereas

oxytocin would be activated during interactions where people find the need to bond and feel

close to others. Of course, the behaviors during interactions that occur at any given moment are

also dependent on another factor besides hormonal fluctuation: gender identity.

Gender identity is whether an individual identifies as male or female. This identity is affected by gender roles in that those who fall into one role or the other may also identify with that respective gender (e.g., a construction worker identifying as masculine). Self-regulatory behaviors help keep this identity fairly stable. For example, those who identify with a feminine self-concept are more likely to seek behaviors that are related to interpersonal relationship building. By seeing if behaviors match self-identity, people are able to gauge whether they should continue the behavior or reduce its frequency (e.g., Carver & Scheier, 2008). These behaviors also fluctuate based on peer feedback of a person's consistency with their gender role. This effect is particularly evident in workplaces, where women and men are liked or disliked based on how similar their leadership style matches their gender role (Carli, 2001; Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; Shackelford, Wood, & Worchel, 1996).

Eagly and Wood (1995) suggest that gender roles determine mating behavior as well. They claim that differences in mate choice are a result of economic and social ecologies. If men and women are in a society where resource control, positions of authority, and high status positions are in favor of men, then they are more likely to perpetuate a gender hierarchy than in countries where men and women have equal opportunity. In a re-analysis of the Buss et al.'s (1991) 37 culture-study on mate preferences, Eagly and Wood (1995) found null results in countries where men and women had greater equality. Thus, the researchers concluded that attraction to another mate may be better explained by the complementary roles they hold (e.g., men are given more opportunities to be providers so they are the ones who end up providing women with resources for childcare) than from reproductive strategies passed on from centuries of courtship.

Power and mate choice

Power is defined by Galinsky, Gruenfeld, and Magee (2003) as "the ability to control resources, own and others', without social interference" (pg. 454). While more definitions of power are available (see Fiske & Dépret, 1996; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Pratto, Lee, & Pitpitan, 2011), the current study uses this definition to evaluate the role it plays in mate choice.

In a study looking at the relationship between power and sex associations, Bargh et al. (1995) primed male participants to think about power and found that men who were primed with power and were more physically attracted to women than if men who were not primed. This attraction was found only for men who were also likely to sexually aggress women.

In another study looking at power priming techniques, Galinsky et al. (2003) found that people could be primed to be either high or low power. This discrimination allowed the researchers to find that those who were primed with high power were more likely to take action than those who were primed with low power or not primed at all.

Prior studies investigating power contributed to the current study by suggesting that power can affect decision-making and may activate thoughts related to attraction (Bargh et al. 1995; Galinsky et al. 2003). Given these two effects, it is possible power can play a role in the assessment of attractiveness.

The Proposed Study

Sexual strategies theory and social role theory are both theories explaining the differences in human mating behavior (Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Eagly & Wood, 2012). These two approaches to understanding preferences for romantic partners reach widely divergent conclusions. On one hand, evolutionary psychology theories posit that humans have evolved psychological

mechanisms that emerged long ago and assisted in survival (Buss & Schmitt, 2011); these theories assert that the mechanisms continue to influence behavior today. On the other hand, socialization theories contend that such differences are culturally adapted and performed like a role (Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000). In particular, Eagly, Wood, and Diekman (2000) argued that people's behaviors are a result of cultural and social standards, influences, and beliefs. According to this social role model, gender differences emerge because males and females are socialized to value different trait dimensions, with males taking agentic (masculine, goal driven) and females taking communal roles (feminine, caretaking) roles (Eagly, 1987). Eagly and Wood (2009) argued that gender differences in mate preferences could be explained by these factors.

However much evolutionary and socialization perspectives have diverged in contemporary scholarship, it is possible that they could converge (Smith & Konik, 2011). To date, no research has examined mate choice when potential mates vary in agency and communion (as per the social role model); research has also not examined whether the level of power that perceivers have may explain the gender difference. As human mating is a universal activity, there is continuing research on finding the mechanisms which humans choose their mates. Moreover, because close kin ties such as happy marriages have been shown to correlate with increased quality of life (Wood, Goesling, & Avellar, 2007), finding factors that can help create better relationships can help to achieve a valuable applied end, as well.

The proposed (i.e., future) study seeks to further the findings of both theories by looking at how power can be a proximal cause for mate choice as well as how agency and communion affect mate choice. These two factors can help answer questions testing the strength of sexual strategies or social role theory by seeing how which theory predicts the results. As such, the following are proposed hypotheses for the study:

Proposed Hypothesis 1: Men will be more likely than women to report they would be willing enter a short-term relationship with the target profile, regardless of condition.

Proposed Hypothesis 2: Men in the low power condition will say no to a long-term relationship with a high power woman target more than men in the high power condition.

Proposed Hypothesis 3: Men in the high power condition will prefer low power communal women to any other woman.

Proposed Hypothesis 4: Women in the low power condition will accept short-term relationships with high power agentic males compared to low power male targets.

Proposed Hypothesis 5: Women in the low power condition will accept long-term relationships with high power communal males compared to low power male targets.

Proposed Hypothesis 6: Women in the high power condition will accept long-term relationships with high power male targets compared to low power male targets.

Proposed Hypothesis 7: Women in the high power condition will say no to short-term relationships with male targets.

The Current Study

To test the current study's hypotheses, a sound methodology must be created. The current study was a pilot for developing such methods and materials. This study explored the creation of a power prime easily accessible to participants and researchers, a collection profile pictures, the creation of agentic and communal personality profiles, and tested measures to accurately rate behavior. Given these conditions, the study's hypotheses were:

Pretest Hypothesis 1a: Participants in the high-power condition would complete more incomplete words as high-power words compared to participants in the low-power condition.

Pretest Hypothesis 1b: Participants in the low-power condition would complete more incomplete words as low-power words compared to participants in the high-power condition.

Pretest Hypothesis 2: There would be no significant difference in physical attractiveness ratings for the 12 target photographs in each condition. We expected that female participants would perceive all photographs of male targets as equally physically attractive and male participants would perceive all photographs of female targets as equally attractive.

Pretest Hypothesis 3a: Agentic targets will be perceived as more agentic than communal targets.

Pretest Hypothesis 3b: Communal targets will be perceived as more communal than agentic targets.

Method

Participants

Participants were 53 heterosexual undergraduates (40 women and 13 men) who participated for experimental credit in an introductory psychology course. They were recruited using an online participant pool website. Participant age ranged from 18 to 22. Four participants were removed from the study because of experimenter error, and data from one participant was removed because he was not heterosexual. Data from 48 participants were included in analyses. Participants were presented with a consent form and allowed time to ask questions before the experiment started. They were hidden from the study's true intentions and told they were going to complete two experiments: a word comprehension task and judging personality profiles. The deception was necessary so that the participants would not skew their judgments of the profiles knowing about the power prime. Demographic information was also collected at the beginning of the experiment.

Materials

      The experiment was created using Qualtrics software (www.qualtrics.com) and consisted

of 12 personality profiles created by the experimenter, 24 images (12 male, 12 female), the

words used for power priming, and the fill-in words created for the manipulation check.

      Photographs. The pictures found for the experiment were all collected from a stock

image website after typing in "white man smiling" and "white woman smiling." 24 photos were

chosen to be piloted for their attractiveness. All pictures chosen were Caucasian people because

the majority of the participants available were Caucasian and the experimenter was not looking

to address race or ethnicity in this study. The pictures were all modified to be headshots of

people smiling. All pictures were in color. These consistencies were made in order to control for

physical attractiveness to the faces rather than bodies of the people. See Appendix A for all 24

photographs.

      Profiles. The experimenter created the profiles to pilot in this experiment. They were

created following the McAdams (2002) agency and communion coding of biographies. Of the

twelve profiles created, four were created to be agentic, four to be communal, and four were

filler and not necessarily agentic or communal. The agentic and communal profiles also varied in

terms of power and status, with half of the profiles being written to represent a high power

individual and the other half with a profile of a low power individual. Varying the people's roles

in the profiles created indications of power.

      The profiles were also kept similar to ensure there were no blatant inconsistencies. All

agentic and communal target profiles included a college degree and an occupation requiring a

college degree. The filler profiles did not indicate a college degree explicitly though some jobs

required them. All profiles were approximately the same in character length and also included

hobbies that were indicative of their agentic or communal personality. See Appendix B for the profiles.

After creation, the profiles were paired randomly with either twelve male pictures or twelve female pictures. This randomized pairing was done to lower the chance that the participants were rating the people based on the picture and not on their personality profiles. The pairs of pictures and profiles were randomized by numbering each picture 1 to 12 and each profile 1 to 12 and then using www.random.org to generate two random numbers between 1 and 12 twice, making a pair. This process was completed multiples different times to create eight (four male, four female) sets of profile and picture pairs. Each set contained 12 profiles with 2 pictures. The reason the pictures and profiles were not completely randomized is because there were 12! combinations possible, making the eight sets created representative of the millions of possible sets.

Anagrams. The experimenter created 18 anagrams for the power manipulation task. The words were adapted from the Bargh, Raymond, Pryor and Strack (1995) study. These words were used in order to prime the participant and helped provide the cover story of a word processing task. Each participant saw twelve words depending on their condition. The words for both conditions are in Appendix D.

Word Fill-ins. The experimenter created 12 word fill-ins for the power manipulation check. These words were chosen for their ambiguity in being completed as a high-power, low-power, or neutral word. For example, participants would see _ _ G H T and could fill in the first two letters with "F I" to create FIGHT, a high-power word. Depending on the condition, participants should complete more word fill-ins that correspond to their condition (e.g., more-

high power words in the high-power condition). All words were created with the aid of a

dictionary. The complete list of words can be found in Appendix E.

Measures

Participants were asked demographic information regarding their parents' income and

education, their religion, political views, major, residency, sexual orientation, ethnicity, and age.

When rating the profiles, they were asked to rate the person in the profile's physical

attractiveness, various personality traits adopted from LaCroix and Craig (2011), and likelihood

to have intimate relations with the person.

To measure physical attractiveness, participants were asked to rate the profile's picture

on a bipolar-adjective scale of 1 (*not at all physically attractive*) to 10 (*extremely physically*

attractive). In a separate measure, participants were asked to indicate their agreement to the

following statements: "*If this person asked me to have sex, I would agree,*" "*I would be*

interested in having a person like this for a short-term relationship partner (i.e., a fling)," and "*I*

would be interested in having a person like this for a long-term relationship partner." These

statements were rated on a 1 (*completely disagree*) to 7 (*completely agree*) scale. To measure the

perceived agency and communion of the profiles, the participants rated the profiles on 18 traits:

professional, *intelligent, educated, ambitious, credible, competent, successful, independent,*

friendly, works well with others, pleasant, considerate, likable, cooperative, responsible,

dominant, kind, and *expressive*. These traits were rated to on 1 (*does not describe this person at*

all) to 7 (*completely describes this person*) and participants rated themselves on the traits at the

end of the survey.

After rating all the profiles, the participants were asked various questions about their use

of dating websites. Participants indicated "yes" or "no" to "*Have you ever visited a dating*

website?" and "*Have any of your friends ever used a dating website?*" as well as "*Have any of your family members ever used a dating website?*" If participants answered "*yes*" to having visited a dating website, they were also asked "*How would you rate your experience*" and chose "*very negative,*" "*negative,*" "*neutral,*" "*positive,*" or "*very positive.*" They were also be asked "*How likely is it that you would use a dating website in the future?*" and chose "*very unlikely,*" "*unlikely,*" "*undecided,*" "*likely,*" or "*very likely.*"

Social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto et al., 1994) was also measured. Responses were also recorded on a 1 (very negative) to 7 (very positive) scale to represent the degree of positive or negative feeling towards a statement. SDO is used to measure attitudes towards issues on social equality. Items 9-16 are reverse coded. SDO correlates negatively with attitudes towards women's rights, concern for others, communality, tolerance, and altruism. See Appendix C for a full list.

Procedure

The experiment involved two conditions for power, high and a low, and four conditions for profile sets. Participants came in groups of 3 or 4 into individual rooms with a computer where they took the online survey. Participants were told that they would be taking a survey that consisted of two separate experiments: a word comprehension task and a person perception task. They were randomly assigned by the experimenter to which survey they would get. Males and females were given different surveys in order to ensure they judged profiles of the opposite sex. Before starting the survey, they were given a consent form and the chance to ask the experimenter any questions before starting. Afterwards, they were told to log in to their e-mail to receive the survey.

The survey began by taking demographic information from the participant. The participant then read, "*For the first part of this study, we are interested in cognitive word processing. First you will be asked to solve 12 anagrams. An anagram is a mix of letters that create a word. For example, **BTOTLE** is an anagram for **BOTTLE**. Please complete the anagrams as quickly as possible.*" Following these instructions, the participant completed 12 anagrams and was given two chances for each anagram before the word was revealed to them. For example, if the participant could not complete the anagram "*mgthiy*" the first time, they would be told, "*Your answer is incorrect. Please try to solve the following anagram one more time,*" and subsequently, "*The anagram is: mighty*" if they did not get it right the second time. All anagrams were presented randomly to all participants via Qualtrics' randomizer. The types of anagrams the participants saw depended on their power condition (i.e., high or low).

Following the anagrams, the participants were given these instructions: "*Please complete this next section by filling in the blanks to create a word. For example _ _ _ L E can be completed to become STYLE or GUILE. Please use the first word that comes to mind.*" They were then randomly presented with one of eight fill-in words until they completed each one. After completing the last word, they moved on to the next portion of the survey.

The participants were now told, "*For this portion of the study, we are interested in dating websites and how people use these sites to search for potential partners. Please answer the following questions.*" The participants then filled out the dating website measures such as "*Have you ever used a dating website?*"

The last portion of the survey told participants,

"*Now you will be shown a series of profiles similar to those on many popular dating sites. Before reading these profiles, please imagine that you are currently single and you are*

browsing a dating website. You will be shown 12 profiles one at a time. We are interested in your

perceptions of these individuals. Please complete all questions evaluating each profile before

proceeding to the next profile."

This section of the survey randomly presented the participants to one of four sets of

profiles. Each set contained 12 profiles and each profile was presented at a random order.

On every profile a participant saw, they were first presented with a picture and

description of the target. Participants then answered relationship questions about the target, such

as "*If this person asked me to have sex, I would agree.*" The relationship questions and the

profile were presented on a single screen, with the following screen being a presentation of the

profile along with 3 randomized likability/competency traits to rate. Each profile had 6 pages

with 3 traits on each page. This entire rating process was repeated 12 times.

Following the last profile, participants were asked to rate themselves on the

competency/likability measures and ended with a SDO measure.

At the end of the survey, participants were thanked and debriefed about the nature of the

study and queried for knowledge of the power prime. No participants said they knew that the

power prime and the personality profiles were related.

Analyses

Data was analyzed using SPSS version 20 (IBM Corporation, 2011) after creating

composite variables for the power manipulation check and agency and communion ratings. The

composite variable created for the power manipulation check summed up the number of word

completions that were coded as high power, low power, and neutral. Another variable was

created to be the average rating for agentic terms and communal terms, leading to two variables

"agentic" and "communal."

Independent samples *t*-tests was used to compare the high-power and low-power participants on number of word completions that were high-power words and low-power words. A paired-samples t-test was used to compare each participants' rating of the profiles on the agency and communion scores. A repeated measures ANOVA was used to look at the ratings of attractiveness for target pictures.

Results

Manipulation Check

Participants were instructed to complete a series of words that had their first few letters removed (e.g., _ _ G H T). The amount of high-power words completed by participants in the high-power condition was compared to the number of high-power words completed by participants in the low-power condition. Another analysis was done to compare the number of low-power words completed by participants in the high and low-power condition. Participants in the high-power condition completed a similar number of high-power words ($M = 1.12$, $SD = 1.11$) compared to participants in the low-power condition ($M = .72$, $SD = .89$). The independent-samples *t*-test was not significant, $p = .47$. Participants in the high-power condition also completed a similar number of low-power words ($M = 1.12$, $SD = 1.12$) compared to participants in the low-power condition ($M = 1.04$, $SD = .86$). The independent-samples *t*-test was not significant, $p = .90$, which indicated that the power manipulation was ineffective.

Physical Attractiveness

Using a repeated measures ANOVA with sphericity assumed, the attractiveness ratings of the female pictures overall were not found to be significantly different, $F(11, 110) = 1.51$, $p = .14$. However, participants rated picture 3 as more attractive ($M = 7.73$, $SD = 1.01$) than picture 2

($M = 5.82$, $SD = 1.72$, $p = .006$), picture 4 ($M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.69$, $p = .002$), and picture 7 ($M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.50$, $p = .001$).

In a repeated measures ANOVA with sphericity assumed, the attractiveness ratings of the male pictures were all significantly different, $F(11, 407) = 26.448$, $p < .000$. Picture 6 ($M = 7.42$, $SD = 2.26$) was found to be the most attractive and was significantly more attractive than all pictures except picture 7 ($M = 6.71$, $SD = 2.02$, $p = .104$) and picture 9 ($M = 6.82$, $SD = 2.09$, $p = .111$).

Agency and Communion

Paired *t*-tests results indicated that all but two profiles were seen as significantly more communal or more agentic. Profiles 4's agentic score ($M = 5.80$, $SD = .74$) and communal score ($M = 5.87$, $SD = .83$) were not significantly different ($p = .47$) from each other. Profile 5's agentic score ($M = 5.42$, $SD = .83$) and communal score ($M = 5.42$, $SD = .82$) were also not significantly different ($p = .95$) from each other. Profile 1 was rated as more agentic ($M = 6.05$, $SD = .64$) than communal ($M = 5.31$, $SD = .80$, $p = .000$). Profile 2 was rated as more agentic ($M = 6.08$, $SD = .66$) than communal ($M = 5.30$, $SD = .98$, $p = .000$). Profile 3 was rated as more communal ($M = 6.14$, $SD = .78$) than agentic ($M = 5.82$, $SD = .74$, $p = .002$). Profile 6 was rated as more agentic ($M = 5.76$, $SD = .75$) than communal ($M = 5.34$, $SD = .84$, $p = .000$). Profile 7 was rated as more communal ($M = 5.93$, $SD = .78$) than agentic ($M = 5.05$, $SD = .91$, $p = .000$). Profile 8 was rated as more communal ($M = 6.12$, $SD = .67$) than agentic ($M = 5.42$, $SD = .89$, $p = .000$). Profiles 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, and 8 indicate significant differences in agency and communion which suggests that they are effective in describing an agentic or communal person.

Discussion

The goals of the current study were to test measures and methods to see if they would be effective in looking at the relationship between agency, communion, and power on mate choice. The results suggested that hypotheses that the participants would complete significantly different amounts of low or high-power words based on their condition was not supported. The hypothesis that the target pictures would be rated as equally attractive was partially supported. The results also suggested that the hypotheses that the profiles would be perceived as more agentic or communal were partially supported.

The results of the experiment did not support our hypothesis that those in the high or low power condition would create more high or low power words, respectively. These results show that the power manipulation did not work and another manipulation like Galinsky et al.'s (2003) or Bargh et al.'s (1995) may have been a better priming technique.

The experiment also did not support our hypothesis that the male would be rated as equally attractive, though it did support our hypothesis that women would be rated as equally attractive. The pictures of the male targets were rated as significantly different suggesting that new pictures be chosen for the next experiment. However, pictures 6, 7, and 9 were found to be statistically similar and in the range desired for the proposed study. The pictures of the female targets, on the other hand, were found to be statistically similar if grouped together. When using a paired *t*-test to analyze the pictures in pairs, picture 3 was more attractive than 2, 4, and 7, suggesting picture 3 may be too attractive. When taken out of the analysis, the 11 pictures of the female targets were more statistically similar. These results suggest that picture 3 of the female targets can be included but finding another picture may be better suited for similarity purposes.

Our hypotheses that the communal profiles would be rated as communal and the agentic profiles would be rated as agentic were supported except for profiles 4 and 5, which were rated as statistically similar. These findings suggest that participants perceived most profiles as communal or agentic, regardless of condition. The profiles that were perceived as communal and agentic were in line with the proposed differences, such that those that were expected to be more communal were rated as communal.

Our results added support for social role theory's claims that individuals can be perceived as agentic or communal (Eagly, 1987). Though small, there was also some support for sexual strategies theory's claim that men would agree to have sex more often than women, but there were not enough male participants to make a definitive conclusion (Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

Limitations

Limitations in this experiment included the sample population, the power priming methodology, the source of the pictures, the creation of the profiles, and the randomization of the pictures to the profiles. The sample population was a limitation because undergraduates at a northeastern university were not representative of the general population. Furthermore, this population was not the ideal population for this study, as the pictures and profiles were meant for an older (25 to 30) audience. These limitations reduce the generalizability of the study such that older participants may have rated the pictures and profiles differently. The power priming methodology was a major limitation for this study because it did not successfully manipulate power. This limitation suggests a new power priming methodology, such as one by Galinsky et al. (2003) in order to determine whether power affects mate choice. The pictures used in the experiment may also be a limitation, particularly the pictures of the male targets. The pictures of the male targets were seen as mostly different from each other, with means ranging from 3.3 to

7.4. This range of attractiveness is limiting because it reduces the amount of control over the

targets. Despite this possible limitation, none of the agentic/communal profiles were correlated

with these attractiveness ratings, suggesting evidence for the profiles' reliability. Despite the

differences in physical attractiveness in the pictures of the male targets, both pictures of male and

female targets were limitations because they came from a stock photo website. By being from a

stock photo website, the realism of the profile is reduced, especially if a participant predicts it is

not a realistic photograph. This limitation in realism can lead to biased answering of the

relationship questions because it would diminish how seriously the participants would view the

profile. Another profile limitation was the creation of the profiles. The experimenter being the

sole create of the profile was problematic even though the profiles followed McAdams (2002)

agency and communion descriptions. While the profiles were made to be as similar as possible

while being different, the fact that only one person created them can lead a homogeneity that was

not evident. Indeed, one participant noted that the profiles all sounded the same, suggesting that

more diversity in profile creation may be needed. Finally, the presentation of these profiles could

have been more randomized, such that each picture should have randomly been associated with a

profile, nullifying the possibility that it was the picture that affected the relationship

questionnaire results. Due to a major limitation in the software used, this randomization process

could not occur.

The current study's findings suggest that a project of this magnitude is certainly possible,

given the proper power manipulation and picture stimuli. The current study proved to be a

notable pilot for further study on how being communal or agentic can affect decisions about

mate choice. Given that agency and communion are more related to social roles than to

evolutionary pressures, a continuation of this research can offer insight into which theories are

effective predictors of mate choice. Given that the current study is a pilot of stimuli and methodology, the predictions are limited only to the future continuance of this project.

Future directions for this study include a stronger power manipulation and manipulation check, a set male target pictures that are more similarly attractive, and online distribution of this study to the target audience. Since most of the profiles were rated as communal or agentic, future studies can use the same profiles with pictures varying in age, leading to a study that will be more generalizable to different populations. The online dating study paradigm may also be more acceptable as technology is increasingly integrated into people's lives. In fact, even amongst undergraduates there were some who had used a dating website before. This paradigm mimics modern methods for studying mate choice, and a more comprehensive future study could incorporate more dynamic personality indicators that mimic a true dating website.

Given the results, the proposed study would need to be improved further to be viable. With the aforementioned improvements in the methodology and stimuli, the proposed study would contribute to the literature by untying the link between the physical attractiveness of an individual and their attractiveness as a future short or long term mate. Though limited in predictive ability, we found that agency/communion was correlated with judgments of long-term but not short-term relationships. This finding could be further expanded by the more comprehensive proposed study and causal links may be found to see if mate choice depends more on a person's physical traits or personality and behavioral traits. In an attempt to close the gap between evolutionary psychology and social psychology, the proposed study has potential in providing evidence for a combined theoretical model of mate choice.

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Appendix A

Female Pictures:

1. 2. 3. 4. 5.

6. 7. 8. 9.

10. 11. 12.

Male Pictures:

1.   2.   3.   4.   5.

6.   7.   8.   9.   10.

11.   12.

Appendix B

Profiles:

High Power Agentic 1

I have a bachelor's degree in business management, and I am a business consultant manager. I recently accepted a contract with a stock company due to an award in exceptional business risk management. Outside of work I serve as the fiscal manager for my town's financial Board of Directors and often host leadership workshops for my colleagues and friends. I enjoy rafting, traveling, weight lifting and rock climbing.

High Power Agentic 2

I majored in economics in college and currently work as a financial advisor for a large investing firm. I work with individuals as well as corporations to provide advice and help manage their investments. I also oversee several other financial advisors and provide training for new employees. In addition, I run a financial planning workshop in my community. For fun, I like going out on the town and attend professional sports events. I've started running recently, and right now I'm training for a marathon. I also enjoy cycling and swimming.

High Power Communal 1

I graduated with a bachelor's in social work, and I currently run an international non-profit organization working to build community centers. I recently mobilized over one hundred volunteers and worked with them to help build a school in a low income district. In my spare time, I direct the activities of our town's local soup kitchen and recruit as well as organize community outreach events. For fun, I enjoy spending a night with good friends or with family. We often play basketball or ultimate Frisbee, and frequently go on vacations together.

High Power Communal 2

Getting my allied health degree helped me achieve one of my life goals to be a community health leader. I recently became the co-director for the local health clinic and am organizing a high school volunteer workshop on health care management. I enjoy helping other people live well and working with like-minded individuals. It's a great experience getting to work with people and hearing all their stories. When I am off work, I like to play soccer with friends at the local park. I also volunteer at the Boys and Girls Club.

Low Power Agentic 1

I am a sales associate for a local wireless phone company. I just earned the top sales award for the second month in a row and am due for a raise because of my performance. I have a bachelor's degree in marketing and see myself owning my own store in the future. When I am not at the shop I try to spend time attending leadership workshops to improve my skills. For fun I like to play tennis with a friend or two, go hiking or mountain biking, and watch movies.

Low Power Agentic 2

I am a certified public accountant and am part of a team of CPAs for my town. I really love numbers, and I graduated with a degree in finance. I really enjoy this job because it's rewarding to see other people smile when they learn about all the tax money they can get back. In the future, I might start my own firm but for now I don't mind working here. When I am not at work I like to hang out at home with a movie or go the bar with friends.

Low Power Communal 1

I am the kind of person that enjoys hanging out with my friends and coworkers. We like to go camping and play soccer together. When I am not hanging out with my friends, I am working as a caretaker for senior citizens. I graduated with a B.A. in psychology which has been very useful in my social interactions with seniors. It is fulfilling to know I am helping them, and they are like

family to me. I am also very close with my parents and siblings and try to spend a lot of time with them.

Low Power Communal 2

Contrary to common beliefs, I find being a social worker a lot of fun. It is rewarding to see the people who honestly feel like they were helped by me. I have always volunteered with services that helped people directly, whether it was mentally or physically, and now being around them is even better. I may not get paid much, but it's rewarding. When I need my own time, I usually spend it with friends, since my family is far away. I love good conversation and playing sports.

Filler 1

I am a freelance playwright. I often write plays about comedies and dramas, but I also write tragedy or romance plays as well. I love theater and am currently writing a romance play for a local troupe. When I am not writing, I like to go swimming or play basketball with friends. I sometimes find the time to volunteer and tutor aspiring actors in the local schools in my neighborhood. I dream of Broadway like most playwrights, but I have a feeling I'm destined for stardom!

Filler 2

My life revolves around interior design! I own a small business and work with customers to help them find the perfect décor for their home. After work I usually spend time at the local bar or go bowling with friends. I'm in a league. During the weekends, I like to spend time with my cousin. We enjoy traveling. I recently finished a home design workshop, and I aspire to one day fill a street with homes and shops designed by yours truly.

Filler 3

I currently teach English at a local public high school and find it incredibly rewarding and fun! I have taught kids of various ages and run the community outreach program after school. Though I knew I was going to be a high school teacher, I never thought that the job would be so complex. There requires a fine balance between knowing what I want and what the world expects. However, it's all been a learning experience. When I am not teaching, I spend time running, kayaking, and playing soccer with friends.

Filler 4

I am a car salesperson and always found talking to my customers an enjoyable experience. It is good to know that I can be of service and help people drive away with their perfect car! I have always been a people person but also enjoy time alone. I often go to the gym to lift weights or swim in the pool and sometimes I spend a few hours at the local bar to catch up with friends. One weekend a month, I volunteer at the local soup kitchen.

Appendix C

Social Dominance Orientation Scale (Pratto et al., 1994)

"Which of the following objects or statements do you have a positive or negative feeling towards? Beneath each object or statement, select a number from '1' to '7' which represents the degree of your positive or negative feeling."

Response scale is (1) very negative, (2) negative, (3) slightly negative, (4) neither positive nor negative, (5) slightly positive, (6) positive, and (7) very positive. Items 9-16 should be reverse-coded.

1. Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups.
2. In getting what you want, it is sometimes necessary to use force against other groups.
3. It's OK if some groups have more of a chance in life than others.
4. To get ahead in life, it is sometimes necessary to step on other groups.
5. If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems.
6. It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom.
7. Inferior groups should stay in their place.
8. Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place.
9. It would be good if groups could be equal.
10. Group equality should be our ideal.
11. All groups should be given an equal chance in life.
12. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups.
13. Increased social equality.
14. We should have fewer problems if we treated people more equally.
15. We should strive to make incomes as equal as possible.
16. No one group should dominate in society.

Items 9-16 are reverse coded.

Appendix D

6 high power words = *mighty, strong, tough, authority, executive, control*

6 low power words = *weak, feeble, vulnerable, flimsy, lame, puny*

6 filler words = *building, chalk, clock, coffee, house, block*

Anagrams for high power words = *tmhiyg, ogrsnt, gohut, rtahyuiot, cieteuvxe, tlcnoro*

Anagrams for low power words = *ekaw, befele, nbvelrelua, ylmfsi, aelm, yupn*

Anagrams for filler words = *dgblinu, hkcla, oklcc, fefcoe, sheou, lcbok*

Appendix E

HIGH POWER

- BrUTE/flUTE/chUTE/glUTE/acUTE/roUTE

- AsSERT/DeSERT/InSERT

- FiGHT/MiGHT/RiGHT/NiGHT

- LeADER/ReADER/BlADER/ShADER/GrADER

- PuNCH/LuNCH/BeNCH/LyNCH/MuNCH

- PoWER/CoWER/SeWER/MoWER/DoWER/FeWER

LOW POWER

- frAIL/brAIL/emAIL/quAIL/trAIL

- subMIT/herMIT/comMIT/perMIT

- miNOR/hoNOR/doNOR/maNOR

- soRRY/woRRY/beRRY/meRRY

- exILE/agILE/whILE/smILE

- yiELD/wiELD/fiELD