To Do It or Not to Do It?

The Role of Communal Motivation in Sexual Decision Making

by

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Abstract
In long-term romantic relationships, sexual satisfaction and sexual frequency are key to maintaining relationship satisfaction and stability. However, very little research has investigated how couples actually make decisions about whether or not to engage in sex on a day-to-day basis. Across two studies, a hypothetical scenario study and a daily experience study, we found that sexual communal strength—the degree to which one is motivated to meet their partner’s sexual needs—predicts decreased motivation to avoid the costs to the self of engaging in sex, as well as increased motivation to accrue benefits to the partner of engaging in sex. In turn, this predicts greater willingness to engage in sex, as well as greater sexual and relationship satisfaction for both partners. Greater sexual communal strength influences the sexual decision making process, with positive consequences for both partners in the domain of sexuality, and in relationships more generally.
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1. Introduction

Sexuality is a key factor that shapes happiness in romantic relationships (see review by Impett, Muise, & Peragine, 2013). In both dating and married couples, those who report more frequent and higher quality sexual interactions with their partners also report greater relationship satisfaction and stability (Brezsnyak & Whisman, 2004; Regan, 2000; Sprecher, 2002; Yeh, Lorenz, Wickrama, Conger & Elder, 2006). At the same time, sex can be a highly contentious issue in romantic relationships (Byers & Lewis, 1988; Risch, Riley & Lawler, 2003). Indeed, conflict and disagreements related to sex are some of the most common reasons why couples seek marital counseling (Beck, 1995; Hawton, Catalan, & Fagg, 1991; Rosen, 2000), and cohabiting couples who are dissatisfied with the sexual aspects of their relationships are more likely to break up (Yabiku & Gager, 2009).

People in long-term relationships make decisions regarding their sex lives on a regular basis, such as whether to make or accept sexual advances, whether to engage in particular sexual activities, or whether to express interest in a romantic partner’s sexual fantasies (see review by Impett & Peplau, 2003). Given that satisfying sexual interactions are a key contributor to relationship happiness and success, it is important to understand how couples make sexual decisions, particularly when partners’ sexual interests diverge, as well as to determine how couples can deal with these conflicts in adaptive ways that enrich rather than detract from the quality of their relationship.

In the present research, we draw upon research and theory on communal relationships (Clark & Mills, 2012) to investigate decision-making processes in the specific domain of sexuality. We expected that when people are faced with decisions about whether or not to engage in sexual activity with a long-term partner, they engage in a process of
considering both the costs and benefits, much like they do when making decisions in other life domains (Joel, MacDonald & Plaks, in press). For example, when making decisions about engaging in sex when their own desire is low, people are likely to be motivated to pursue benefits and avoid costs, both for themselves and for their romantic partners. Our central prediction was that people who are communally motivated to meet a partner’s sexual needs (i.e., those high in sexual communal strength; see Muise, Impett, Desmarais, & Kogan, 2013) would place greater importance on benefits to their partner and less importance on costs to the self when making decisions about sexuality. In turn, we expected that this enhanced focus on benefits to the partner and diminished focus on costs to the self would translate into a greater willingness to engage in sex, as well as greater sexual and relationship satisfaction for both partners in the relationship. Further, we expected that people high in sexual communal strength would place a greater emphasis on benefits to their partner and less emphasis on costs to the self and reap the benefits of doing so even in situations in which their sexual interests conflict with those of their romantic partner—that is, in situations in which their partner wants to engage in sex, but their own personal desire for sex is low.

1.1 Sexual Decision Making

Although a great deal of research has documented the relationship benefits of engaging in more frequent sex (Call, Sprecher & Schwartz, 1995) or engaging in sex for particular types of motives (e.g., Cooper, Barber, Zhaoyang, & Talley, 2011; Impett, Peplau, Gable, 2005; Muise, Impett, & Desmarais, 2013), very little research has focused on how people in relationships make decisions about whether or not to engage in sex in the first place. For example, we know surprisingly little about how couples make decisions about
how frequently to engage in sex, whether to engage in sex on a particular occasion, or the particular sexual activities in which to engage. The bulk of the existing work on sexual decision making has focused on understanding the predictors of engaging in risky sexual behaviour (Bolton, McKay, & Schneider, 2010; Norris, Masters, & Zawacki, 2004), since this behaviour can have such severe health consequences. Other work on sexual decision making has focused on people’s decisions to engage in sex for the first time (termed sexual debut; Caputo, 2009) as well as decisions about whether or not to engage in sex outside of an established relationship (termed extradyadic sex; Buunk & Bakker, 1995). For example, research has shown that when deciding whether or not to engage in sex for the first time with a new partner, people take into account personal costs, such as the risk of acquiring sexually transmitted diseases, and personal benefits such as physical gratification (Oswalt, 2010). In another study, university students indicated that they considered motivations for having sex, such as feeling sexual aroused and being in love, as well as motivations to not have sex, such as fear of STDs and not feeling ready for the commitment (Patrick, Maggs, Cooper, & Lee, 2010). In this study, motivations to engage and to not engage in sex uniquely predicted sexual debut. Research has also shown that people are more likely to engage in an extramarital affair when the perceived costs, such as the financial costs of leaving one’s current relationship, are low, and the perceived benefits, such as the potential for sexual satisfaction or emotional intimacy in the new relationship, are high (Traes & Giesen, 2000).

The little research that has been conducted on more general sexual decision making—as opposed to decisions about whether or not to engage in sex in specific contexts (i.e., for the first time or in the context of an extra-dyadic affair)—also suggests the majority of college-age adults have experienced at least one situation where they felt
ambivalent about engaging in sex (O'Sullivan & Gaines, 1998). When people ultimately declined sex in these situations, they indicated costs of engaging in sexual activity, such as experiencing relational or intimacy issues, having low sexual desire, or feeling tired. However, participants who ultimately decided to engage in sex in situations in which they initially felt ambivalent did so for a variety of reasons including satisfying their own physical desires, maintaining intimacy, or avoiding disappointing their partner (O'Sullivan & Gaines, 1998). In ongoing romantic relationships, people tend to report higher sexual and relationship satisfaction when they rate their sex life as being characterized by more benefits and fewer costs (Lawrance & Byers, 1995). However, in this research, the focus is on overall ratings of how beneficial or costly a person perceives their sexual relationship, and not on which specific costs and benefits they are factoring into their sexual decisions, including the extent to which they are focusing on costs and benefits that would be accrued by either the self or the partner (Lawrance & Byers, 1995).

Fewer costs and greater benefits predict greater sexual frequency and satisfaction (Lawrance & Byers, 1995), and the existing work on sexual decision making suggests that, as with decision making in other domains (see Koehler & Harvey, 2004), decisions regarding whether to have sex are made by considering the relevant costs and benefits of having sex. However, no research has focused on what those specific costs and benefits are, and how people take these costs and benefits into account in making decisions in the sexual domain. Given the interdependent nature of established romantic relationships (Murray & Holmes, 2011), and that (most) sex is dyadic and necessarily presents costs and benefits to both partners, it is crucial to understand how people’s perceptions of the costs and benefits to their romantic partner of engaging in sex factor into their sexual decision making, and to
study the ways in which individuals consider the consequences to their partner of engaging in sex. Thus, in the present research we chose to investigate a specific type of sexual decision making. Specifically, this research investigates situations in which one’s own desire is low, but their sexual desire is high. We expected that the degree to which people are communally oriented toward meeting their partner’s needs is an important individual difference that will shape the relative importance that people place on benefits to the partner and costs to the self in making decisions about sexuality in these situations.

1.2 A Communal Approach to Sexual Relationships

One way researchers have characterized close relationships is based on a communal-exchange distinction (Clark & Mills, 1979; Clark & Mills, 2012; Mills & Clark, 1982). In communal relationships, individuals feel a sense of responsibility for meeting their partners’ needs and provide benefits to their partners non-contingently based on these needs. In contrast, in exchange relationships, benefits are given to a partner with the expectation that similar benefits will be returned. Although initial research documented broad differences between communal and exchange relationships, more recent work in this area has shown that across close relationships, people vary in the extent to which they feel responsible for meeting other people’s needs (Le, Impett, Kogan, Webster, & Cheng, 2013). Individual differences in the motivation to respond non-contingently to a specific partner’s needs are referred to as communal strength (Mills, Clark, Ford, & Johnson, 2004). A growing body of work has shown that people high in communal strength reap important relationship benefits, as do their partners. For example, communally motivated individuals tend to experience more intrinsic joy and satisfaction when making costly sacrifices (Kogan et al., 2010), and the partners of people who are higher in communal strength report
feeling more satisfied with their relationships (Mills et al., 2004).

More recently, researchers have applied theories of communal motivation to the specific domain of sexuality by examining individual differences in the motivation to be responsive to a romantic partner’s sexual needs, termed sexual communal strength (Muise, Impett, Kogan, & Desmaris, 2013). Individuals who are high in sexual communal strength have a strong focus on satisfying their romantic partner’s sexual needs and desires, they tend to be more partner-focused than self-focused in their motivations to engage in sex; they are more likely to report engaging in sex to pursue positive outcomes for their partner, such as ensuring their partner’s sexual pleasure and making them feel loved and desired. For example, qualitative research has shown that people who are communally oriented in the sexual domain indicate that they sometimes engage in sex when they are “not in the mood,” engage in activities that ensure mutual sexual pleasure, remain open-minded when it comes to trying new sexual activities, and openly communicate their own sexual needs and desires to their partner (Impett, 2013; Muise & Impett, 2012). This tendency to engage in sex when one’s own sexual desire is low is associated with greater relationship satisfaction and commitment (Impett & Peplau, 2002; O’Sullivan & Allgeier, 1998) and can increase relationship satisfaction (Burke & Young, 2012) as long as the situation is not sexually coercive (Katz & Tirone, 2010).

Although both men and women are motivated to meet their partner’s sexual needs, these motivations tend to manifest in qualitatively different ways. While men are much more likely report that they meet their partner’s sexual needs by ensuring mutual pleasure, women are more likely to report meeting their partner’s sexual needs by engaging in sex when they are not particularly “in the mood” (Impett & Peplau, 2003; Impett, 2013; Muise
& Impett, 2012). In addition, whereas men report having higher sexual communal strength than women, this gender difference is completely accounted for by the fact that men tend to report higher sexual desire on average than do women (Muise, Impett, Kogan & Desmarais, 2013).

Research is also beginning to reveal that being communally motivated to meet a partner’s sexual needs is associated with benefits for both partners in romantic relationships. For example, whereas people who are low in sexual communal strength experience declines in sexual desire over the course of time—as is relatively normative in romantic relationships (e.g., Impett, Strachman, Finkel, & Gable, 2008; see also review by Impett et al., 2013)—those who are high in sexual communal strength are more likely to sustain passion and desire over time (Muise, Impett, Kogan & Desmarais, 2013). This research further suggests that this boost in desire is due the tendency of people high in communal strength to engage in sex to ensure their partner’s pleasure and to promote intimacy in the relationship, rather than out of self-interested concerns. Further, the romantic partners of people high in sexual communal strength detect this increased responsiveness—they report that their partner is more responsive to meeting their sexual needs, and in turn, they feel more satisfied and committed to their relationships (Muise & Impett, under review). Thus far, the research on sexual communal strength has focused on the relationship benefits of being motivated to meet a partner’s needs once people have already made the decision to engage in sex with their partner, but none of this work has specifically investigated how people who are more versus less communally motivated make decisions about whether or not to engage in sex in the first place.
Applying previous research and theory on communal motivation to the domain of sexual decision making, we expected that people who are high in sexual communal strength would perceive engaging in sex—even in situations in which their desire for sex is relatively low—as both significantly less costly to the self and more beneficial to the partner than people who are less motivated to meet their partner’s needs. Communally oriented people should feel that sex is more beneficial to their partner, due to the fact that they rate that satisfying their partner’s needs is extremely important to them, and exert more effort to fulfill those needs (Clark, Dubash, & Mills, 1998). Communally motivated individuals are thus motivated to provide care to others because of the benefits that those around them will receive from that care. However, as a result of providing care to others, communally motivated people also tend to reap important benefits for the self, although this is not their primary motivation (Le, Impett, Kogan, Webster, & Cheng, 2012). In other words, communally motivated people tend to reap unanticipated personal benefits due to their tendency to care for others. Further, when they do engage in sex with a romantic partner, they often do so out of concerns for pleasing their partner and maintaining intimacy in their relationships (Muise, Impett, & Desmarais, 2013). In addition, we also expect that people high in communal strength will feel that engaging in sex is less costly to the self. This hypothesis is based on existing research showing that communally motivated people tend to be more committed to their relationships (Muise & Impett, under review), and people who are more committed to their relationships tend to be more willing to forgo their own self-interests to pursue activities that are best for their partner or relationship (Van Lange, Agnew, Harinck, & Steemers, 1997).
1.3 The Current Studies

We conducted two studies to examine how individual differences in the motivation to meet a partner’s sexual needs, when those needs are to engage in sex, shape the sexual decision making process in established romantic relationships. We tested the central prediction that—when faced with decisions about whether or not to engage in sexual activity with their romantic partner—people high in sexual communal strength would place less importance on the costs to themselves and greater importance on the potential benefits to their partner in making their decisions. In turn, we expected that an increased focus on the potential benefits of sex for one’s partner and a decreased focus on the costs to the self would translate into a greater willingness to engage in sex, as well as enhanced sexual and relationship satisfaction for both members of the couple. We tested these predictions in a hypothetical scenario study of individuals in long-term relationships which allowed us to set up a situation in which partners experience conflicting sexual interests (Study 1) and in a 21-day daily experience study of long-term couples which enabled us to test our predictions in a more naturalistic context (Study 2).

2. Study 1

In Study 1, we focused on situations in which being communally motivated to meet a partner’s sexual needs should be the most interesting and theoretically relevant—when partners experience conflicting sexual needs and desires. We expected that people who are high in sexual communal strength would be willing to engage in sex even in situations in which their partner has a high desire for sex but their own desire is low. To test this hypothesis, we asked participants to imagine themselves in a situation in which their
romantic partner really wanted to engage in sex, but they were tired and not in the mood. We predicted that people who are higher in sexual communal strength would perceive the situation of conflicting sexual interests as less costly to the self and more beneficial to the partner and in turn, would report being more willing to engage in sex with their partner. Further, we expected that people high in sexual communal strength would expect to feel more satisfied with the sexual experience and their relationship, and would view their decision as more beneficial to their relationship than people lower in sexual communal strength.

2.1 Method

2.1.1 Participants and Procedure

We recruited 346 participants from the United States through Amazon’s Mechanical Turk. We excluded 11 of these participants due to failed attention checks, thus our final sample included 335 participants (104 males, 224 females, 2 transgender, 5 prefer not to disclose). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 67 (\(M = 33.32, SD = 10.73\)). All of the participants were currently in a romantic relationship; 39% were married and 41% were cohabitating. Participants comprised a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds; 58% were European, 6% were African American, 5% were Asian, 7% were Latino or Mexican, 3% were Native American, 1% were Middle Eastern, and 20% self-identified as “other.” The study took approximately 30 minutes, and participants were compensated $1.00, in accordance with standard rates on Mechanical Turk (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011).

2.1.2 Measures

*Sexual communal strength* was assessed with six items adapted from Mills et al. (2004; see also Muise, Impett, Kogan, & Desmarais, 2013; see Appendix A). Participants
responded to questions such as “How high a priority for you is meeting the sexual needs of your partner?” \( (M = 5.48, SD = 1.03, \alpha = .82) \), on a 5-point scale from 0 \( (\text{not at all}) \) to 4 \( (\text{extremely}) \). **Communal strength** was assessed with the 10-item scale developed by Mills et al. (2004). Participants responded to questions such as “How far would you be willing to go to visit your romantic partner?” \( (M = 5.74, SD = .94, \alpha = .86) \) on a 5-point scale from 0 \( (\text{not at all}) \) to 4 \( (\text{extremely}) \). **Relationship satisfaction** was assessed with five items from the Investment Model scale (Rusbult et al., 1998). Items were rated using a 7-point scale \( (1 = \text{strongly disagree} \text{ to } 7 = \text{strongly agree}; M = 5.66, SD = 1.31, \alpha = .94) \).

After completing these measures, participants were asked to imagine themselves in the following scenario: “You and your partner just spent the night at home watching a movie. As you are heading to bed, your partner lets you know that they would like to have sex. You know that having sex tonight would really make your partner happy and make them feel loved and desired. You are feeling exhausted – you had a long stressful day at work and are not in the mood to have sex.” After reading this scenario, participants answered a series of questions, all on 7-point scales. They answered questions to assess **costs to the self** of engaging in sex (“How costly to you would it be to have sex with your partner?”; \( M = 2.53, SD = 1.55 \)), **benefits to the partner** of engaging in sex (“How beneficial to your partner do you think it would be to have sex with your partner?”; \( M = 5.32, SD = .88 \)) and **benefits to the self** of engaging in sex (“How beneficial to you do you think it would be to have sex with your partner?”; \( M = 4.37, SD = 1.49 \)). They then answered questions to assess their **willingness** to engage in sex (“How willing would you be to engage in sex with your romantic partner?”; \( M = 4.68, SD = 1.32 \)). All participants answered questions to assess their **relationship satisfaction** (“How satisfied do you think you would
feel with your relationship after making this decision?"; \( M = 5.70, SD = 1.27 \), as well as expected **harm versus benefit to the relationship** (“How beneficial versus harmful do you think that this decision would be for your relationship?”; \( M = 5.56, SD = 1.27 \)). Participants who indicated that they would choose to have sex with their romantic partner answered a question to assess their **sexual satisfaction** (“How satisfying do you think that this sexual experience would be?”; \( M = 5.33, SD = 1.47 \)). Finally, to ensure that participants could personally relate to the scenario, they answered the question “How difficult versus easy was it for you to imagine yourself in this situation?” (\( M = 5.84, SD = 1.52 \)) on a 7-point scale (1 = very difficult to 7 = very easy).

2.2 Results

2.2.1 Data Analytic Strategy

We analyzed the data using the statistical analysis program SPSS 20.0 (IBM SPSS, 2011). To test for multiple mediations with benefits to the partner and costs to the self, we used the INDIRECT macro developed by Preacher and Hayes (2008). This macro allows for the inclusion of two or more simultaneous mediators in one statistical model and tests the indirect pathways of each mediator separately, as well as with both of the mediators included together. We tested all indirect pathways using bootstrapping analyses and generated a 95% confidence interval with 5,000 simulated samples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). In order to simultaneously investigate the effects of benefits to the self, we used the MEDTHREE macro developed by Hayes, Preacher & Myer (2010). This macro allows for the testing of a process mediation model in which the first mediator directly predicts the second, which in turn, predicts the outcome variable of interest.
2.2.2 Sexual Communal Strength and the Costs and Benefits of Engaging in Sex

Our first hypothesis was that given a situation of conflicting sexual interests in their romantic relationship, people higher in sexual communal strength would perceive engaging in sex as more beneficial to their partner and less costly to themselves, as compared to those lower in sexual communal strength. Indeed, sexual communal strength was positively associated with perceived benefits to the partner of engaging in sex ($b = .21, SE = .05, p < .001$) and was negatively associated with costs to the self of engaging in sex ($b = -.44, SE = .08, p < .001$).

2.2.3 Sexual Communal Strength and Willingness to Engage in Sex

Our second hypothesis was that people higher in sexual communal strength would be more willing to have sex with their partner even when their own desire was low, and that this association would be mediated by their enhanced perceptions of benefits to the partner and diminished perceptions of costs to the self. As shown in Table 1, sexual communal strength was significantly associated with a greater willingness to engage in sex, and this association was simultaneously mediated by costs to the self and benefits to the partner. There was a significant indirect effect of both mediators together, as well as significant indirect effects of both costs to the self and benefits to the partner individually.

We also expected that engaging in sex would often have benefits for the self, which individuals would factor into their decision making process. To investigate the effects of benefits to the self, we ran a multiple step mediation model (see Figure 1), in which benefit to the partner was the first mediator, and benefits to the self was the second. As shown in Table 2, the indirect pathway of the mediation model, in which sexual communal strength predicts benefits to the partner, which predicts benefits to the self, which in turn, predicts
willingness to engage in sex is significant. This suggests that for people who are high in sexual communal strength, benefits to the partner lead to benefits to the self, which in turn leads to greater willingness to engage in sex.

### 2.2.4 Sexual Communal Strength and Feelings about Sexual Decisions

Finally, we expected that sexual communal strength would be positively associated with greater sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction and perceiving the decision to engage in sex even when one has low desire as more beneficial for the relationship, and that these links would also be simultaneously mediated by enhanced perceptions of benefits to the partner and diminished perceptions of costs to the self. Consistent with our expectations and shown in Table 1, sexual communal strength was significantly associated with greater sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction and perceived benefits to the relationship. Furthermore, when we entered perceptions of benefits to the partner and costs to the self into a simultaneous mediation model, the direct effects of sexual communal strength on all three relationship outcomes were reduced by including the mediators, but for all three relationship outcomes, remained statistically significant. Once again, there was an overall effect of both mediators together, and a significant indirect effect of both costs to the self and benefits to the partner on all three relationship outcomes individually, suggesting that perceived benefits to the partner and costs to the self each partially mediated the links between sexual communal strength and sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction and perceived benefits to the relationship of engaging in sex.

We also wanted to account for the fact that for most people, sex is also beneficial to the self. Thus, we re-ran our multi-step model (see Figure 1) with the other positive outcomes of engaging in sex too, specifically, sexual satisfaction, relationship satisfaction
and benefit versus harm to the relationship. These results replicate the results of the multi-step mediation model for willingness. As shown in Table 2, when each of relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction and benefits to the relationship, are entered as the outcome variable, the indirect pathway with benefits to the partner leading into benefits to the self remains highly significant. This finding replicates our early finding with willingness to engage in sex, suggesting that people who are high in sexual communal strength tend perceive engaging in sex as more beneficial to the self, which in turn leads to greater benefits to the self, which yields more positive outcomes for the self.

2.2.5 Ruling Out Alternative Explanations

We conducted additional analyses to rule out potential alternative explanations. First, we wanted to ensure that our findings are specific to communal strength in the specific the domain of sexuality. General communal strength was significantly associated with sexual communal strength \( (r = .57, p < .001)\), perceptions of costs to the self \( (r = -.20, p < .001)\), and perceptions of benefits to the partner \( (r = .19, p = .001)\). However, all of the effects reported above, including the effects in the tests of simultaneous mediators, remained significant when we controlled for general communal strength.

Second, we wanted to ensure that our findings were not due simply to people high in sexual communal strength being in more satisfying romantic relationships. Indeed, relationship satisfaction was significantly associated with sexual communal strength \( (r = .39, p < .001)\), as well as with perceptions of costs to the self \( (r = -.29, p < .001)\), and perceptions of benefits to the partner \( (r = .17, p = .002)\). Most importantly, however, all of the effects of sexual communal strength, including the results of our simultaneous mediation model, remained significant after controlling for relationship satisfaction.
Third, we wanted to address the fact that the scenario which we asked people to imagine may have been more difficult for some people to consider than it was for others. Specifically, people who typically have high levels of sexual desire and who have partners with chronically low levels of desire might have found it particularly difficult to imagine themselves in a situation in which their partner would like to engage in sex, but they would not. After controlling for the ease with which people were able to imagine this situation, all of the effects of sexual communal strength on the relationship outcomes as well as the mediations remained significant with one exception: the indirect effect from sexual communal strength to relationship satisfaction via benefits to the partner dropped to non-significance (CI\textsubscript{95%} [-.0003, .0810]). These results suggest that in all cases but one, the links between sexual communal strength and greater willingness to engage in sex, sexual satisfaction, and relationship satisfaction were in part due to perceiving sex as more beneficial to one’s partner and less costly to the self. Furthermore, none of these effects were accounted for by individual differences in general communal strength, relationship satisfaction, or ease of imagining oneself in the scenario.

Finally, men reported slightly higher levels of sexual communal strength ($M = 5.60, SD = .96$) than did women ($M = 5.41, SD = 1.06$), although this difference was not statistically significant, $t(326) = 2.57, p = .12$. Men did, however, report that engaging in sex in the scenario would be significantly less costly to the self ($M = 1.97, SD = 1.20$) than did women ($M = 2.81, SD = 1.61$), $t(322) = -4.77, p < .001$. Furthermore, women reported that imagining this scenario was easier ($M = 6.02, SD = 1.35$), than did men ($M = 5.43, SD = 1.78$), $t(325) = -3.31, p = .001$. However, there were no gender differences in perceptions of benefits to the partner of engaging in sex. Finally, none of our effects were significantly
moderated by gender, suggesting that while men and women may differ in mean levels of sexual communal strength and perceived costs of engaging in sex when they have lower desire than their partner, the effects of sexual communal strength on relationship and sexual outcomes did not differ between men and women.

2.3 Brief Discussion

In Study 1, we asked people to imagine a situation in which many long-term couples are likely to find themselves (Impett & Peplau, 2003) and in which individual differences in sexual communal strength are likely to be particularly relevant. Doing so allowed us to consider a situation in which partner’s interests truly conflicted and—in the absence of some kind of sexual “compromise”—one partner would need to give up what they wanted for the other. We found that people who were high in sexual communal strength were more willing to engage in sex, even in a situation in which their own personal desire for sex was low. In addition, people who are high in sexual communal strength expected to feel more sexually satisfied and reap greater relationship benefits as a result of their decision. These associations were mediated by enhanced perceptions of benefits to the partner and diminished perceptions of costs to the self, furthermore for people who are high in sexual communal strength, benefits to the partner were perceived to be more beneficial to the self. Finally, these effects were not attributable to differences in general communal strength, relationship quality or ease of imagining oneself in the scenario, and were found for both women and men.

3. Study 2

Our second study was designed extend the findings of Study 1 to a more naturalistic context by investigating how couples make decisions about engaging in sex with a long-
term romantic partner in daily life. To do so, we conducted a three-week daily experience study in which both partners in romantic relationships provided daily reports of their current relationship quality, the costs and benefits of engaging in sex, and on days when they engaged in sex, their feelings of sexual satisfaction. We expected that people high in sexual communal strength would be more motivated to pursue benefits for their partner and less motivated to avoid costs to the self, as compared to those who are less communally motivated. In turn, we expected that this enhanced partner focus and decreased self focus would translate into communally motivated people being more likely to engage in sex with their partner, as well as both partners reporting greater sexual and relationship satisfaction. In addition, based on the results from Study 1 and previous findings in the literature (Le et al., 2013), although we expected that being more motivated to meet a partner’s sexual needs will be beneficial to the self, we expected that people high in sexual communal strength would not be motivated by these benefits, but rather, that they would be motivated by the desire to provide benefits to their partners. Finally, we expected that the relationship benefits of sexual communal strength would exist above and beyond individual differences in general communal strength and global relationship satisfaction.

3.1 Method

3.1.1 Participants and Procedure

Participants were recruited through online postings and classroom visits at a small Canadian university and through online postings on the websites Kijiji and Craigslist in the Greater Toronto Area. To be eligible to participate, both members of the couple had to agree to take part in the study and be over the age of 18. Eligible couples also had to see
their partner several times a week and be sexually active. Interested participants who met the eligibility criteria emailed the researchers for more information about the study. After couples agreed to participate, each partner was emailed a unique link allowing them to access the online surveys.

A total of 101 couples (95 heterosexual, 5 lesbian, and 1 gay couple) ranging in age from 18 to 53 years ($M = 26$ years, $SD = 7$ years) participated in the study. Nearly half of the participants were cohabitating (29%), married (17%) or engaged (3%); the remaining participants were in a committed relationship, but not living together. Participants reported being in their current relationship for between 6 months and 22 years ($M = 4.45$ years, $SD = 3.76$ years) and identified as a diverse variety of ethnic backgrounds; 68% were White (Caucasian), 13% were Asian, 10% were Black (African-American), 5% were South Asian, 3% were Latin American, 3% were South East Asian and 1% were Arab/West Asian. The total percentage for all the ethnic backgrounds exceeds 100% because participants were able to select multiple ethnic identities.

On the first day of the study, participants completed a 30-minute background survey. Then, each day for 21 consecutive days, participants completed a 5 to 10-minute daily survey. Participants were asked to begin the study on the same day as their romantic partner and to refrain from discussing their responses with their partner until the completion of the study. Each participant was paid up to $40 CAD (in gift cards) for completing the background and daily surveys; payment was pro-rated based on the number of daily diaries completed.
3.1.2 Person-Level Measures

Participants completed several individual differences measures, all on 7-point scales. As in study 1, participants completed the 6-item measure of sexual communal strength (Muise, Impett, Kogan & Desmarais, 2013; \( M = 2.72, SD = .80, \alpha = .86 \)), the 10-item measure of communal strength (Mills et al., 2004; \( M = 3.16, SD = .86, \alpha = .85 \)) and Rusbult et al.’s 5-item measure of relationship satisfaction (\( M = 5.85, SD = 1.19, \alpha = .92 \)).

3.1.3 Daily-Level Measures

Because we were interested in the processes that led people to arrive at their decision about whether or not to have sex each day, participants were asked each day to rate both their motives for and against having sex. Specifically, in each daily survey, participants rated how motivated they were to engage in sex that day, how motivated they were NOT to engage in sex that day, whether or not they engaged in sex with their partner that day (yes/no), and, if so, their satisfaction with the sexual experience. Due to the heterogeneity of our sample, we left the definition of sex up to the participants. Participants also indicated whether or not they saw their partner, and their relationship satisfaction that day. We used measures with only a few items or a single item in the diary study to increase efficiency and minimize participant attrition (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003).

Relationship satisfaction was assessed with five items from the Investment Model scale (Rusbult et al., 1998). Items were rated using a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree; \( \alpha = .90, M = 5.67, SD = 1.27 \)). Regardless of whether participants engaged in sexual activity with their romantic partner, participants rated a series of items on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all important to 7 = extremely important) which were designed to
measure costs and benefits of engaging in sex. **Costs to the self** of engaging in sex were assessed with five items tapping people’s motivations not to have sex with their romantic partner: “I wanted to get more sleep (I was tired),” “I had other things to get done (e.g., work, household chores),” “I wanted to relax,” “I didn’t want to be tired tomorrow” and “I was not in the mood” ($\alpha = .93, M = 3.52, SD = 1.61$). **Benefits to the partner** of engaging in sex were assessed with three items tapping people’s motivations to have sex that centered around providing benefits to their romantic partner: “I wanted to make my partner happy,” “I wanted my partner to feel desired/loved/wanted” and “I wanted my partner to experience sexual pleasure” ($\alpha = .96, M = 4.88, SD = 1.87$). We also measured **benefits to the self** of engaging in sex by asking participants to rate six items about their reasons for wanting to have sex that were self-focused in nature, including: “I was in the mood to have sex/horny,” “I wanted to pursue my own sexual pleasure,” “I wanted to avoid feeling guilty,” “I did not want to feel sexually frustrated,” “I wanted to feel secure in my relationship” and “I wanted to make sure my partner is committed to me” ($\alpha = .89, M = 3.30, SD = 1.50$). Finally, on days when participants reported engaging in sex, they answered five questions from the Global Measure of Sexual Satisfaction (GMSEX; Lawrance & Byers, 1995) to measure their **sexual satisfaction**. Items were rated on 7-point bipolar scales: **bad-good, unpleasant-pleasant, negative-positive, unsatisfying-satisfying, worthless-valuable** ($\alpha = .92, M = 6.37, SD = .89$).

### 3.2 Results

#### 3.2.1 Data Analytic Strategy

We analyzed the data with multi-level modeling using mixed models in SPSS 20.0 (IBM SPSS, 2011). For the dichotomous outcome (whether or not the couple engaged in sex...
on a given day) we used the GENLINMIXED procedure (generalized linear mixed models). We tested a two-level cross model with random intercepts where persons are nested within dyads, and person and days are crossed to account for the fact that both partners completed the daily surveys on the same days (Kenny, Kashy & Cook, 2006). The Actor Partner Interdependence Model (APIM; Kenny et al., 2006) guided our analyses; models included both actor and partner variables entered simultaneously as predictors. To avoid confounding within- and between-person effects, we used techniques appropriate for a multilevel framework, partitioning all the level-1 predictors (i.e., costs and benefits of engaging in sex) into their within- and between-variance components, which were person-mean centered and aggregated respectively (Raudenbush, Bryk, Cheong, & Congdon, 2004; Zhang, Zyphur & Preacher, 2009). In our tests of mediation, since our predictor variable is at level 2 (i.e., sexual communal strength), we focused on the aggregates of the daily costs and benefits in our tests of mediation, following the guidelines for a multilevel 2-1-1 mediation outlined by Zhang et al. (2009). We used the Monte Carlo Method of Assessing Mediation (MCMAM; Selig & Preacher, 2008) with 20,000 resamples and 95% confidence intervals (CIs) to test the significance of the indirect effects. The indirect effect is significant if the confidence interval does not include zero. In our tests of mediation, both costs to the self and benefits to the partner of having sex were entered simultaneously.

3.2.2 Sexual Communal Strength and the Importance of Sexual Costs and Benefits

Our first hypothesis was that, compared to those lower in sexual communal strength, people higher in sexual communal strength would be less focused on costs to the self of engaging in sex and more focused on the benefits to the partner. Indeed, sexual communal strength was negatively associated with perceived costs to the self of engaging
in sex ($b = -.40, SE = .08, t = -4.72, p < .001$), and was positively associated with perceived benefits to the partner ($b = .41, SE = .09, t = 4.50, p < .001$). In other words, when making decisions about whether or not to engage in sex with their romantic partner, those high in communal strength were less concerned with avoiding costs to the self such as feeling tired or not being in the mood and were more concerned with providing benefits to their partner such as making them feel loved and desired.

### 3.2.3 Sexual Communal Strength and the Decision to Engage in Sex

Our second hypothesis was that people higher in sexual communal strength would be more likely than those lower in sexual communal strength to decide to have sex with their partner. As expected and shown in Table 3, people high in sexual communal strength were more likely to engage in sex with their partner. More specifically, for each unit increase in sexual communal strength, participants were 1.20 times as likely to indicate that they engaged in sex with their partner on a given day. We further expected that the reason why people high in sexual communal strength would be more likely to engage in sex would be due to their tendency to be less motivated to avoid the costs to the self and more motivated to incur the benefits to their partner of engaging in sex. As shown in Table 3, benefits to the partner mediated the link between sexual communal strength and the greater likelihood of engaging in sex. That is, an important reason why people high in sexual communal strength were relatively more likely than the less communally motivated to decide to engage in sex with their partner is because they placed a greater importance on providing benefits to their partner. However, even though sexual communal strength was associated with being less concerned with avoiding costs to the self and more concerned with accruing benefits to the partner, when they were entered as simultaneous
mediators, costs to the self was not significantly associated with the likelihood of engaging in sex \( b = -0.12, p = 0.11 \) and therefore did not significantly mediate the association between sexual communal strength and the likelihood of having sex.

### 3.2.4 Sexual Communal Strength and Feelings About Sexual Decisions

Our third set of hypotheses concerned how satisfied people would feel about their sexual experiences and with their relationship as a whole on days when they engaged in sex with their romantic partner. We predicted that, relative to those lower in sexual communal strength, people high in sexual communal strength would report feeling more satisfied with their sexual experiences and feeling more satisfied with their relationship. We also expected that the romantic partners of people high in sexual communal strength would also report feeling more satisfied with their sexual experiences and with their relationship as a whole. Indeed, as shown in Table 3, people high in sexual communal strength as well as their romantic partners reported experiencing greater daily sexual satisfaction and relationship satisfaction when they engaged in sex.

We further expected that the tendency of people high in sexual communal strength to weigh the costs to the self as less important and the benefits to the partner as more important would, in turn, influence both partner’s sexual and relationship quality on days when they engaged in sex with their partner. As shown in Table 3, the links between sexual communal strength and sexual and relationship satisfaction as reported by both partners in the couple were mediated by the tendency for people high in sexual communal strength to be less motivated by the costs to themselves and more motivated by the benefits to their partner when engaging in sex.
3.2.5 Ruling Out Alternative Explanations

To bolster our confidence in our effects, we conducted additional analyses to rule out several potential alternative explanations. First, we wanted to show that our findings were specific to communal motivation in the domain of sexuality, and rule out the possibility that our effects might be driven by individual differences in communal strength more generally. Sexual communal strength was significantly correlated with general communal strength ($r = .36, p < .001$), and relationship satisfaction ($r = .31, p < .001$), and people higher in general communal strength were less motivated by the costs to the self of engaging in sex ($r = -.20, p < .01$). Most importantly, however, after we controlled for general communal strength and relationship satisfaction, all of our effects remain significant.

Next, it was important for us to show that our effects between sexual communal strength and sexual and relationship benefits are being accounted for by people high in sexual communal strength being more likely to pursue benefits for their partner and less likely to avoid costs to themselves, and not because they are trying to pursue benefits for themselves. Sexual communal strength was not significantly correlated with pursuing benefits for the self ($r = -.003, p = .94$). Not surprisingly then, due to the lack of overlap between sexual communal strength and benefits to the self, all of our effects remained significant when we controlled for benefits to the self, and benefits to the self did not significantly mediate the associations between sexual communal strength and any of the daily outcomes. These findings suggest that people high in sexual communal strength are more likely to engage in sex and reap relational and sexual benefits from engaging in sex because they place greater importance on the benefits to their partner and less importance
on the costs to themselves, and not because they place greater importance on the benefits to themselves.

Finally, consistent with previous research (Muise, Impett, Kogan & Desmarais, 2013), men ($M = 3.96, SD = .82$) reported higher sexual communal strength than women ($M = 3.45, SD = .85, t(191) = 3.38, p = .001$). Further, women ($M = 3.74; SD = 1.66$) indicated that they were significantly more likely than men to avoid costs to the self of engaging in sex than did men ($M = 3.28, SD = 1.52), $t(2419) = -7.06 p < .001$). However, gender did not moderate any of our effects. These results suggest that sexual communal strength is associated with a greater desire to provide benefits to the partner and a lower desire to avoid costs to the self, and in turn with an increased likelihood of engaging in sex as well as increased sexual and relationship quality for both men and women.

### 3.3 Brief Discussion

Study 2 showed that when faced with the decision about whether or not to have sex with a romantic partner, individuals who are communally motivated to meet their partner’s sexual needs were less motivated to avoid costs to the self and more motivated to provide benefits to their romantic partner, and in turn were more likely to engage in sex with their partner, and when they did so, both partners reported increased relationship and sexual satisfaction. These effects were not accounted for by general communal strength, global relationship satisfaction or engaging in sex to pursue benefits for the self, and were consistent for both men and women.
4. General Discussion

In two studies using hypothetical scenarios and more naturalistic diary methods, we demonstrated that people who are communally motivated to meet their partner’s sexual needs felt that engaging in sex with their romantic partner was less costly to the self and more beneficial to their partner, even in situations in which their desire was low. In turn, perceiving sex as less costly to the self and more beneficial to the partner led communally oriented people to be more willing to engage in sex and to experience greater sexual and relationship satisfaction. We documented these effects using a hypothetical scenario that involved conflicting interests in Study 1, and in people’s day-to-day lives in Study 2. Therefore, consistent with previous research on sexual motivation (Muise, Impett & Desmarais, 2013), when people pursue sex to promote their partner’s welfare, their partner does in fact, report experiencing higher sexual and relationship satisfaction. Thus, one partner’s motivations to engage in sex shape not only their own sexual and relationship experiences, but their partner’s as well. This finding is particularly novel, because relatively little research has investigated the ways in which one partner’s motivations influence how the other partner feels about the relationship, in the domain of sexuality in particular. Importantly, none of these effects were accounted for by people’s general communal strength or global relationship satisfaction, nor by people’s motivation to pursue benefits for self.

4.1 Theoretical Contributions

The present research extends the existing work on sexual decision making in three key ways. First, previous research on sexual decision making has focused on how people make decisions about whether to engage in sex with a new partner (Caputo, 2009) or
reduce their sexual risk (Bolton, McKay, & Schneider, 2010). The current study is the first to consider people’s day-to-day sexual decisions in the context of ongoing romantic relationships. Second, decision making research (see Koehler & Harvey, 2004), including research on relationship and sexual decisions (Oswalt, 2010), has focused solely on how people weigh the cost and benefits to the self. Given that relationships are inherently dyadic, in the current study we considered the extent to which people take their romantic partner’s needs into account when making sexual decisions, as well as how the decision making process influences the satisfaction of both partners. Third, although sexual conflicts are among the most contentious and emotionally charged issues in romantic relationships (Risch et al., 2003; Sanford, 2003), very little research had investigated how couples navigate and deal with sexual conflicts (Rehman et. al., 2011). Our research suggests that even in situations of conflicting sexual interests, people who are communally motivated to meet their partner’s sexual needs feel that engaging in sex is both less costly to the self and more beneficial for their romantic partner, and in turn, feel more willing to engage in sex and feel more satisfied with their experiences.

The current research also makes several novel contributions to the literature on communal relationships. In particular, the studies provide additional support for the utility of applying theories of communal motivation to the sexual domain of relationships. Previous research on sexual communal strength has been focused on a person’s sexual motives once they have decided to pursue sex (Muise, Impett, Kogan & Desmarais, 2013). In the current research, we focus on the sexual decision making process, rather than on the outcome of this process and demonstrate that sexual communal strength is an important individual difference that shapes the way that people view and weigh the costs and benefits
of engaging in sex when making their decisions. We also demonstrate that the importance that people place on the costs to themselves and the benefits to their partner has implications for sexual and relationship satisfaction in long-term relationships. Furthermore, in Study 1, we showed that communally motivated individuals reap important benefits for the self, as is consistent with previous research on the unanticipated rewards of caring for others rather than being focused on what one can receive in return (Le et al., 2013). However, the results of Study 2 demonstrated that benefits to the self are not what motivate people high in sexual communal strength to engage in sex, as controlling for motivations to gain benefits for the self did not account for our effects.

4.2 Limitations and Future Directions

In the present studies, we showed how that being high in sexual communal strength promoted sexual and relationship satisfaction of both members of the couple, however, we did not address the factors that promote sexual communal strength in the first place. Research on communal motivation more generally suggests that self-disclosure is an important aspect of communal relationships (Clark & Mills, 2012), and, a recent study indicated that people who communicate, either verbally or non-verbally, with their partner during sex reported higher levels of sexual satisfaction (Babin, 2012). As such, one way to promote sexual communal strength in an ongoing relationship may be for partners to communicate about their sexual preferences. In addition, research suggests that expressing gratitude to a partner promotes communal strength (Lambert, Clark, Durtschi, Fincham, & Graham, 2010), and feelings of gratitude have also been shown to help couples maintain their relationships over time (Gordon, Impett, Kogan, Oveis, & Keltner, 2012). As such, another direction for future research is to consider if and how feelings of gratitude for a
partner might promote or increase people’s motivation to be responsive to their partner’s sexual needs.

Our research on sexual communal strength to date has focused primarily on meeting a partner’s need to engage in sex, however we did not consider other alternatives to sexual intercourse. For example, a low desire partner might initiate some sort of “sexual compromise” by offering to engage in other physically intimate activities to fulfill their partner’s needs. Furthermore, the present studies did not consider times in which it might be important for partners to be motivated to meet one another’s needs not to engage in sex. Thus, a relevant avenue for future research is to consider responsiveness to a partner’s sexual needs, when those needs are to not engage in sex. Given the well-documented gender differences in sexual desire (Smith et al., 2011) future research should also investigate if specific types of sexual decision making are more relevant to men or women. Communally motivated people should be more flexible and better able to respond to their partner’s changing needs over time (Clark et al., 2008), and in the sexual domain this may mean, at times, being relatively accepting of a partner’s desire to not engage in sex and not putting undue pressure on a partner to engage in sex when they are not in the mood. This may be particularly relevant at times when couples are experiencing important relationship transitions, such as following the birth of a child. Research shows that women’s desire is often much lower than men’s during this period and as a result both partners experience declines in sexual satisfaction (see review by Haugen et al., 2004). Future research would benefit from considering the role of sexual communal strength—including the ability to accept having sex with less frequency than is typical for the
couple—in shaping how couples manage conflicting sexual interests during the transition to parenthood.

Finally, it will also be important to consider some of the possible boundary conditions of the effects documented in this paper. Although we have shown that being motivated to meet a partner’s sexual needs is beneficial for both partners, we do not think that being motivated to meet a partner’s sexual needs to the exclusion of one’s own needs would be beneficial—for either partner in the relationship. Indeed, research on unmitigated communion (see Helgeson & Fritz, 1998) has shown that in situations when interpersonal conflict arises, individuals high in unmitigated communion tend to feel more negative and less positive affect (Nagurney, 2007). When individuals feel anxious about the degree to which they are deserving of their partner’s love and affection, they tend to focus excessively on the needs of their partner, which leads to inattention to self-focused needs (Clark, Graham, Williams & Lemay, 2008). Thus, we think it is important that individuals strike the right balance between being responsive to their partner’s needs and also knowing and asserting their own, and this balance will likely change over the course of the relationship and as couples undergo important relationship transitions.

4.3 Conclusions

In ongoing romantic relationships, satisfying sexual experiences play a critical role in maintaining healthy, happy relationships. However, couples will inevitably face situations in which their sexual interests differ. In these situations, we suggest that people weigh the costs and benefits of engaging in sex in order to make decisions about whether or not to engage in sex with their romantic partner, and that sexual communal strength is a
critical individual difference factor that shapes decision making in this important relationship domain.
References


Sourcebook for political communication research: Methods, measures, and analytical techniques. New York: Routledge.


Appendix A

Muise, Impett, Desmarais, & Kogan (2013)’s Sexual Communal Strength Scale

1. How far would you be willing to go to meet your partner’s sexual needs?
2. How readily can you put the sexual needs of your partner out of your thoughts?
3. How high a priority for you is meeting the sexual needs of your partner?
4. How easily could you accept not meeting your partner's sexual needs?
5. How likely are you to sacrifice your own needs to meet the sexual needs of your partner?
6. How happy do you feel when satisfying your partner’s sexual needs?
Table 1

Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects for Models with Costs to Self and Benefits to Partner
Mediating the Association Between Sexual Communal Strength and Relationship Outcomes in Study 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship Outcomes</th>
<th>Willingness to Have Sex</th>
<th>Sexual Satisfaction</th>
<th>Relationship Satisfaction</th>
<th>Benefit to Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Effect of Sexual Communal Strength</td>
<td>.58*** (.06)</td>
<td>.55*** (.08)</td>
<td>.50*** (.06)</td>
<td>.51*** (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Effect of Sexual Communal Strength</td>
<td>.37*** (.06)</td>
<td>.43*** (.08)</td>
<td>.35*** (.06)</td>
<td>.31*** (.07)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indirect Effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Costs to the Self</th>
<th>Benefits to the Partner</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[.07, .22]</td>
<td>[.04, .14]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[.01, .12]</td>
<td>[.04, .16]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[.04, .17]</td>
<td>[.01, .11]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[.05, .18]</td>
<td>[.05, .15]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$
Figure 1

Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects for Models with Benefits to Partner into Benefits to the Self

Mediating the Association Between Sexual Communal Strength and Willingness to Engage in Sex in Study 1
Table 2

*Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects for Models with Benefits to Partner into Benefits to the Self Mediating the Association Between Sexual Communal Strength and Relationship Outcomes in Study 1*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Willingness to Have Sex</th>
<th>Sexual Satisfaction</th>
<th>Relationship Satisfaction</th>
<th>Benefit to Relationship</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Effect of Sexual Communal Strength</td>
<td>.58*** (.06)</td>
<td>.55*** (.08)</td>
<td>.50*** (.06)</td>
<td>.51*** (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Effect of Sexual Communal Strength</td>
<td>.32*** (.05)</td>
<td>.34*** (.07)</td>
<td>.34*** (.06)</td>
<td>.29*** (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Effect of Benefits to the Partner and Benefits to the Self</td>
<td>[.18, .35]</td>
<td>[.12, .34]</td>
<td>[.08, .23]</td>
<td>[.15, .29]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$
Table 3

*Total, Direct, and Indirect Effects for Models with Costs to Self and Benefits to Partner Mediating the Association Between Sexual Communal Strength and Daily Outcomes in Study 2*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily Outcomes</th>
<th>Decision to Have Sex</th>
<th>Actor’s Sexual Satisfaction</th>
<th>Actor’s Relationship Quality</th>
<th>Partner’s Sexual Satisfaction</th>
<th>Partner’s Relationship Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Effect of Sexual Communal Strength</strong></td>
<td>.18* (.09)</td>
<td>.37*** (.06)</td>
<td>.20** (.07)</td>
<td>.16** (.06)</td>
<td>.16* (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Direct Effect of Sexual Communal Strength</strong></td>
<td>.12 (.16)</td>
<td>.21** (.07)</td>
<td>.08 (.07)</td>
<td>.04 (.07)</td>
<td>.09 (.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Indirect Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs to Self</td>
<td>[-.02, .15]</td>
<td>[.03, .11]</td>
<td>[.001, .07]</td>
<td>[.03, .12]</td>
<td>[.001, .06]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits to Partner</td>
<td>[.12, .35]</td>
<td>[.02, .12]</td>
<td>[.08, .24]</td>
<td>[.02, .12]</td>
<td>[.08, .23]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05, numbers outside parentheses are unstandardized coefficients; numbers inside parentheses are standard errors; numbers inside brackets are upper and lower limits of 95% confidence intervals from MCMAM mediation analyses.