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**Communal and Agentic Content in Social Cognition:  
A Dual Perspective Model**

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**Abstract**

We summarize and integrate a large body of research showing that agency and communion constitute two fundamental dimensions of content in social cognition. Agentic content refers to goal-achievement and task functioning (competence, assertiveness, decisiveness), whereas communal content refers to the maintenance of relationships and social functioning (benevolence, trustworthiness, morality). We present a *Dual Perspective Model of Agency and Communion* (DPM) developed to show that the two dimensions are differently linked to the basic perspectives in social interaction, that is, the actor versus the observer/recipient perspectives. We review numerous research confirming three general hypotheses of the DPM. First, communal content is primary among the fundamental dimensions. Second, in the observer/recipient perspective (perception of others), communal content receives more weight than agentic content. Third, in the actor perspective (self-perception), agentic content receives more weight than communal content. We then discuss the complex issues of relations of agency and communion to valence as well as associations between agency and communion. Although they are logically independent and their inferences are based on different cues, the two content dimensions of meaning frequently function as psychological alternatives in social cognition.

Key words: Agency, Communion, Fundamental Dimensions of Content, Big Two, Actor, Observer

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*A former Army pilot has been hailed a hero (...) after saving a hysterical party-goer from drowning in an icy river. Scots-born Captain Geoff Burvill, 66, spotted the woman near the freezing waters as he walked home from New Year celebrations at his local pub. And he didn't think twice at jumping to the 20-year-old's rescue as she lost her footing and fell into the shoulder-deep River Wensum, in Norfolk. (...) The brave pensioner held on to a rope and held out his other hand to the girl, called Sarah. He admitted: "I don't know how I did it. I got her to put her left arm around my shoulders, took my left hand off the rope and somehow managed to use all my strength to pull her out." Sarah has now made a full recovery.*

*Kenneth McGregor, Daily Record (Glasgow, Scotland), January 5, 2010*

There are few acts as unmistakably moral and altruistic as saving the life of another human being and few things more praiseworthy than to be recognized as a hero who does this. Yet such highly positive self-categorizations in terms of altruism and morality are scarce in heroes' own accounts of their deeds. If people who had risked their lives for saving others talk about their experiences at all, they usually focus on circumstances and efficiency-related aspects of their actions, just as the heroic Captain cited above. Although such acts are extremely beneficial for the victim, they can be construed in a way that ignores the positive consequences for the victim but rather focuses on the actor's competence and decisiveness. This example illustrates two points relevant for the present work. First, the same behavior can be interpreted both in terms of helpfulness and benevolence towards others and in terms of own competence and decisiveness. These different interpretations are feasible even if the behavior is highly prototypical for one of the two content areas. Second, whether such acts are construed in one or the other way depends on perspective, that is, whether the behavior is interpreted by the actor, the person performing the act in question (like the above rescuer who construes in terms of decisiveness and competence), or by the recipient/observer, the person receiving or watching the act in question (like the above victim who construes in terms of helpfulness and benevolence).

Starting from this example, we will elaborate on the idea that there are two broad classes of content universally present in the perception of the self, other persons, and social groups – *agentic* content, which refers to goal-achievement and task functioning (competence, assertiveness, decisiveness), and *communal* content, which refers to the maintenance of relationships and social functioning (helpfulness, benevolence, trustworthiness). These content dimensions have been called the *fundamental dimensions* (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2008; Fiske, Cuddy & Glick, 2007; Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt & Kashima, 2005; Peeters, 2008) or the *Big Two* (Paulhus & Trapnell, 2008). Although they received different names, both conceptual and empirical analyses suggest a substantial overlap between them. We will present examples of these content classes from various areas of psychology and will discuss their common core. Concluding this discussion, we will turn to the more philosophical question of why agency and communion are the fundamental content dimensions.

We will then slightly narrow our perspective by concentrating on the fundamental dimensions within social-psychological – or more specifically – social cognition research. We will show that the agency/communion framework is a useful conceptualization for everyday social cognition that has proved its importance with different methodological approaches.

After this analysis of social cognition, we will describe our *Dual Perspective Model of Agency and Communion* (DPM-AC; Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Abele & Bruckmüller, 2011; Wojciszke, 2005a; Wojciszke & Abele, 2008; Wojciszke, Baryła, Parzuchowski, Szymkow &

Abele, 2011). This model was developed to show that the two content dimensions of agency and communion are differently linked to the basic perspectives in social interaction, that is, the actor perspective versus the observer/recipient perspective or – stated differently – to self-perception versus perception of others. We review research on the three general hypotheses derived from the DPM: First, communal content is primary among the fundamental dimensions. Second, in the observer/recipient perspective, i.e., in the perception of others, communal content receives more weight than agentic content. And third, in the actor perspective, i.e., in self-perception, agentic content receives more weight than communal content.

In the remaining sections, we will discuss the association of agency and communion with valence and especially the complex issue of relations between agency and communion in ratings of traits, behaviors, self, other persons, and groups. To conclude, we will outline further research perspectives on the DPM and on the two fundamental content dimensions in general.

## 1. Two-fold Conceptualizations of Content

The idea that there are two basic types of content in human life is not new but can be traced back to ancient philosophical thinking (Markey, 2002). Bakan (1966) introduced the terms agency and communion to psychology and described them as the basic modalities of human existence.

*“I have adopted the terms “agency” and “communion” to characterize two fundamental modalities in the existence of living forms, agency for the existence of an organism as an individual, and communion for the participation of the individual in some larger organism of which the individual is part. Agency manifests itself in the formation of separations; communion in the lack of separation. Agency manifests itself in isolation, alienation and aloneness; communion in contact, openness, and union. Agency manifests itself in the urge to master; communion in non-contractual cooperation. Agency manifests itself in the repression of thought, feeling, and impulse; communion in the lack and removal of repression” (Bakan, 1966, pp. 14-15).*

During the last 60 years, researchers in many areas of psychology have postulated these two kinds of content under different names like agency vs. communion, intellectually vs. socially good-bad, masculinity vs. femininity, instrumentality vs. expressiveness, competence vs. morality, dominance vs. submissiveness, warmth vs. competence, and trust vs. autonomy, to name just a few (Abele, Cuddy, Judd & Yzerbyt, 2008; Erikson, 1950; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002; Gebauer, Wagner, Sedikides & Neberich, 2013; Helgeson & Fritz, 1999; Judd et al., 2005; Paulhus & John, 1998; Paulhus & Trapnell, 2008; Wiggins, 1979, 1991; Wojciszke, 2005a; Ybarra et al., 2008). Table 1 lists examples for some of these conceptualizations. We have compiled it such that the concepts in the left-hand column refer to the “agency” content, whereas the concepts in the right-hand column refer to the “communion” content.

### 1.1. Two-fold conceptualizations of content in social psychology

In his classical work on impression formation, Asch (1946) was less interested in conceptualizing basic content dimensions, but he nevertheless was the first to show that traits like “warm” or “honest” (communal traits) receive higher weights in forming impressions about others than traits like “intelligent” or “efficient” (agentic traits). Rosenberg, Nelson, and Vivekananthan (1968) addressed the content classification more directly. They asked their participants to sort 64 traits (including the traits that were used by Asch, 1946), such that traits that go together in persons they know should be assigned into the same category. Participants

could use as many categories as they wanted to. Subsequent multi-dimensional scaling of these assignments led to the two-dimensional configuration of socially good versus bad traits (examples: helpful vs. unsociable) versus intellectually good versus bad traits (examples: persistent vs. foolish), which are easily recognized as communion versus agency.

Whereas Rosenberg et al. (1968) developed their two dimensions from the analysis of trait sortings, other research resulted in similar content dimensions by analyzing differences between specific groups or targets. Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp (1974), for instance, were interested in gender stereotypes. They developed their Personal Attributes Questionnaire by asking participants to list “typical” male and female characteristics. The resulting “masculinity” dimension comprises items like “independent,” “acts as a leader,” or “makes decisions easily.” The resulting femininity dimension comprises items like “understanding,” “warm to others,” and “gentle.” “Femininity” resembles the “communion” domain and “masculinity” resembles the agency domain (see also Abele, 2003; Bem, 1974; Bi, Ybarra & Zhao, 2013; Eagly, 1987). Another example is research by Markus and Kitayama (1991), who were interested in cultural differences in construals of the self and of others. They distinguished between individualistic and collectivistic cultures (see also Hofstede, 1983). In individualistic cultures, people seek to maintain their independence from others by attending to the self. In collectivistic cultures, the emphasis is on attending to others and harmonious interdependence with them. An individualistic self-construal is characterized by traits like egocentric, separate, autonomous, and self-contained; a collectivistic self-construal is characterized by traits like sociocentric, collective, connected, and relational (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, pp. 226-227).

Still another methodological approach resulted in a Big Two content conceptualization. This was the Ohio group leadership research (Bass, 1990; Halpin & Winer, 1957; see also Bertolotti, Catellani, Douglas & Sutton, 2013). These researchers observed the behavior of group leaders in various contexts and came up with two factors that described respective behaviors. One was “consideration” and the other was “initiating structure.” Leadership behavior reflecting consideration was described as friendly, approachable, and looking out for the personal welfare of group members. Leadership behavior reflecting initiating structure was described as setting expectations, maintaining standards of performance, and asking the group members to follow rules and regulations. Again, the communion (consideration) versus agency (initiating structure) content is clearly discernible. In a similar vein, sociologists Parsons and Bales (1955) described group functioning. They suggested that groups function optimally if some members behave in an “instrumental” fashion, that is, are oriented at optimal goal fulfillment and the group’s standing in the larger social system, and other members behave in an “expressive” way, that is, care for coherence, solidarity, and harmony within the group.

Take as two further examples from social-psychological theorizing the approaches suggested by Reeder and Brewer (1979) and by Fiske and colleagues (Fiske et al., 2002; Fiske et al., 2007). Reeder and Brewer (1979) start from the fundamental dimensions – which they call competence versus morality – and argue that, depending on the dimension, dispositional attributes are differently processed and weighted when forming impressions about others. Fiske and colleagues (Fiske et al., 2002, 2007) argue that the fundamental dimensions, which they call competence and warmth, have emerged because of their functional meaning for the interaction between individuals and between groups. We will return to this approach later.

Finally, it should be noted that even Osgood’s (Osgood, Suci & Tannenbaum, 1957) broad approach to the measurement of meaning which resulted in the well-known three-dimensional semantic differential (potency, activity, evaluation) can be reduced to the two

most basic dimensions, i.e., evaluation (communion) and the combination of potency and activity (agency).

### **1.2. Two-fold conceptualizations of content in personality psychology**

Personality psychologists have long been concerned with identifying basic content dimensions in the sense of personality descriptors. At present, the “Big Five” conceptualization of personality (Goldberg, 1990; McCrae & Costa, 1987, 1996), i.e., neuroticism (anxiety, angry hostility, depression), extraversion (warmth, gregariousness, assertiveness), conscientiousness (competence, order, dutifulness), openness to experience (fantasy, aesthetics, feelings), and agreeableness (trust, straightforwardness, altruism) is the most prominent approach.

However, there are also influential “Big Two” conceptualizations in personality psychology, which often resulted from the search for supra-factors underlying more specific personality factors. Wiggins (1979, 1991), for instance, proposed an interpersonal circumplex that is built on the orthogonal dimensions of dominance vs. submissiveness and warmth vs. cold-heartedness. Other two-factor solutions similarly distinguish between a factor that comprises dynamic qualities and individual ascendancy and a second factor that includes attributes associated with social self-regulation (Hogan, 1983; Saucier, 2009). For example, Saucier (2009) found that across seven languages, the adjectives best representing the dynamism factor were active, brave, lively, bold and (representing the negative pole) timid, weak, and shy; the adjectives best representing the social self-regulation factor were honest, kind, gentle, generous, good, obedient, respectful, diligent, responsible, and unselfish. These dimensions can be (and have been) easily integrated into the agency – communion framework.

The Big Five can also be integrated into a Big Two framework (Blackburn, Renwick, Donnelly & Logan, 2004; Trapnell & Wiggins, 1990) with conscientiousness and emotional stability (as the opposite pole to neuroticism) being closely related to dominance/submissiveness (agency), whereas agreeableness – and sometimes openness – is more related to warmth/cold-heartedness (communion). The extraversion dimension is somewhat more complicated as it comprises both agency components (taking initiative in contacting others) and communion components (being warm and friendly). Interestingly, the Big Two solution seems to be more robust across languages than the Big Five solution (Saucier, 2009).

Another approach in personality psychology that is clearly linked to the agency/communion framework is work on self-presentation styles by Paulhus and colleagues (Paulhus & John, 1998; Paulhus & Trapnell, 2008). Self-presentation styles are motivated self-portrayals that convey a desired impression in others. Paulhus and colleagues showed that there are two broad classes of self-presentation. The “saint” self-presentational tendency is based on communal values and means presenting oneself as a warm-hearted, friendly, trustworthy, and honest person. In contrast, the “super-hero” self-presentational tendency is based on agentic values and means presenting oneself as a smart, decisive, and ambitious person.

It should be noted that the personality conceptualizations of the fundamental dimensions relate either to how an individual’s personality may be described (e.g., the Big Five) or to how an individual’s interpersonal behavior may be described (e.g., the interpersonal circumplex or the self-presentational tendencies). Personality descriptors and descriptors of interpersonal behavior need not be identical.

### **1.3. Two-fold conceptualizations of content in other fields of psychology**

Two-fold conceptualizations of content can also be found in further fields of psychology. The taxonomy of motives proposed by McAdams (1988; see also Murray, 1938; Winter, 1996) is an example. Without going into detail here, the taxonomy distinguishes between the intimacy motive (affiliation; communion) and the power motive (influence, uniqueness; agency). Recently, Hagemeyer and Neyer (2012) have labelled motivational orientations in couples as either agency or communion.

The basic content types are also evident in developmental psychology. For example, the development of trust (communion) and the development of autonomy and competence (agency) are viewed as basic developmental tasks (Erikson, 1950). Moreover, even the perception of facial expressions can be organized around the agency/communion framework, with dominance (agency) and trustworthiness (communion) being the principal components of face perception (Willis & Todorov, 2006).

#### **1.4. The common core**

Summarizing the above examples, various approaches developed in social psychology, personality psychology, and further fields of psychology have revealed two fundamental dimensions that can be integrated into the agency/communion framework. It is noteworthy that this convergence has emerged with a variety of methodological approaches, including lexical analyses, analyses of trait sortings and trait ratings, analyses of systematic differences between groups, and behavior observations.

We gave the idea of a common core of these different conceptualizations a comprehensive treatment in a normative study of a pool of 300 trait names that were selected to be representative of the concepts in Table 1 and also for markers of the Big Five (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Study 1). The traits were independently rated for agency and communion, masculinity and femininity, competence and morality, as well as for individualism and collectivism by one group of raters each. As can be seen in Table 2, all agency-relevant (communion-relevant) dimensions of meaning, i.e., masculinity (femininity), individualism (collectivism), and competence (morality), strongly correlated with each other. Because agency and communion are highly saturated with valence (see section 5.1.), partial correlations controlling for the traits' valence are presented below diagonals of Table 2. These partial correlations are somewhat lower, but the pattern remains the same. We further subjected these ratings to a factor-analysis and found a clear two-dimensional structure interpretable as agency and communion. It explained 90% of the ratings' variance. Hence, there is a common core between all these two-fold content conceptualizations that relates to their semantic understanding.

In our research, we prefer the terms "communion" and "agency" for these dimensions, for three reasons. First, we think that these names are broad enough to cover sub-components like morality and warmth in the case of communion, or competence/ability and dominance/assertiveness in the case of agency. Second, these names are frequently used in research on personality and motivation and retaining them in social cognition may facilitate communication between the different areas of psychology. Finally, both agency and communion are terms originally devised in scientific psychology and are less loaded with lay meaning than, for instance, "competence" or "morality." Hence, it might be easier to distinguish the scientific understanding of the constructs from more diverse (and diffuse) lay conceptualizations.

## **2. Why are there these two Classes of Content?**

After having shown that similar two-fold content conceptualizations underlie many theoretical approaches in social and personality psychology, as well as other fields of psychology, it has to be asked why there are these two classes of content. Attempts to answer this question, in turn, depend on the conceptualization of agency and communion.

On the one hand, agency and communion can be conceptualized as real qualities of behavior, especially in terms of covariation among behaviors, independent of behavioral interpretations or of social cognition. Research on leadership behavior (Bass, 1990; Halpin & Winer, 1957), for instance, suggests that leaders may show communal behavior (e.g., consideration) and agentic behavior (e.g., initiating structure) and that these two classes of behavior can be exactly described – and distinguished. On the other hand, agency and communion can be conceptualized as broad clusters of social cognition that exist in the mind of human observers, serving the interpretation of behaviors that are amenable to construal both in terms of agency and communion. Our initial example of the brave captain suggests that interpretations of one and the same behavior may vary considerably based on who interprets it.

However, the most compelling answer to the conceptual status of agency and communion is, of course, that they reflect both broad clusters of behavior and broad categories of social cognition. Categories of social cognition are based on real world experiences and, hence, there must be a correspondence between classes of behavior and classes of behavioral interpretations. This is the position of the lexical approach in personality psychology, i.e., the analysis of trait descriptors in natural languages. According to this approach, the degree of representation of an attribute in language corresponds to its importance in real-world transactions (Saucier, 2009). It is also the position of the functional approach in social cognition, according to which “perceiving is for doing” (Fiske, 1992) and the primary purpose of social perception is to guide people in their actions (Dunning, 2004). Or, stated differently, social cognition is an activity that enables people to understand each other and, thereby, interact successfully.

## **2.1. Ontological account**

From an ontological point of view, the duality of agentic and communal meaning reflects the dual nature of human existence and broad classes of behavior. This was the original position of Bakan (1966), for whom the two dimensions reflected “two modes of human existence”: as individual beings pursuing their own goals (agency) and as parts of indispensable social entities (communion). Similarly, Ybarra and colleagues (2008) noted that, throughout history, people had to face two core challenges: one, the need to gain social acceptance and to establish supportive social connections with others; and two, the need to attain competencies and status. The first challenge reflects the communion dimension, and the second challenge reflects the agency dimension. As discussed later (section 4.1.), these two challenges are reflected in human universals or practices shared by most cultures. The two life tasks or challenges are, of course, not independent. It is important for agency to be mitigated by communion and vice versa. Unmitigated agency – for instance “aggressiveness” as an extreme form of “dominance” – and unmitigated communion – for instance “dependency” as an extreme form of “kindness” – are harmful both for the self and for interacting others (cf. Frimer, Walker, Dunlop, Lee & Riches, 2011; Helgeson & Fritz, 1999).

Hogan’s (1983) socio-analytic theory may also be taken as an ontological approach to the basic content dimensions. He stated that the two primary human motives are “getting ahead” (agency) and “getting along” (communion). These basic motives transform into culturally shaped values that are again organized in the agency/communion framework (Paulhus & Trapnell, 2008). Presuming that agency and communion “exist” as broad classes

of behavior, social cognition – in order to be accurate and precisely reflect the social reality in which people navigate – should also be based on these broad classes of meaning.

## **2.2. Functional account**

A functional account of the two content dimensions adds to the ontological account by considering the function a certain behavior or a specific behavioral interpretation may serve. Behavior of group members, for instance, may facilitate group goal fulfillment and enhance the group's representation in the larger social system, and such behavior is "instrumental" (agentic; Parsons & Bales, 1955). Another broad class of group members' behavior serves the purpose of group cohesion and internal needs, and such behavior is "expressive" (communal; Parsons & Bales, 1955).

To be useful, social cognition – like every kind of cognition – should not only adequately reflect social reality, but also efficiently serve the perceiver's goals. As Susan Fiske and colleagues put it picturesquely, "Dark alleys and battle zones approximate the survival settings of ancestral encounters with strangers. Evolutionary pressures are reflected in social perception: on encountering others, people must determine, first, the intentions of the other person or group and, second, their ability to act on those intentions" (Fiske et al., 2007, p. 77). Inferences of beneficial or harmful intentions are made in communal terms, whereas inferences of abilities to act upon them are made in agentic terms.

This functional reasoning is reflected in the well-known Stereotype Content Model (SCM), which assumes that warmth and competence (communion and agency in our parlance) constitute the two basic dimensions of stereotype content because they reflect presumed intentions and capabilities of different groups and their members (Fiske et al., 2002; Cuddy et al., 2008). Others may be perceived as benevolent in their intentions (high communion), but incapable of pursuing them (low agency), or any other combination of competence/agency and warmth/communion. Although people generally presume that their perceptions of groups reflect social reality (i.e., who the group members really are), the SCM hypothesizes that group stereotypes instead reflect and maintain the system of inter-group relations. These relations involve status differences, as well as differences in terms of cooperation and competition. Agency/competence is the dimension for rationalizing status differences, that is, groups with high status are ascribed high agency, which justifies their elevated standing. Communion/warmth is the dimension for rationalizing differences in cooperation/competition with others, that is, groups perceived as friendly are ascribed high communion, which perpetuates cooperation. Research conducted in many countries has revealed a strong correlation between perceived status and agency ascriptions and a weaker correlation between perceived cooperativeness and communion ascription (Bruckmüller & Abele, 2010; Cuddy et al., 2008; Cuddy et al., 2009). Interestingly, the same links are discovered at the level of person perception, when status and cooperation are manipulated and the perceived behaviors are held constant. Individuals of high status are perceived as more competent than those of low status, and competing persons are perceived as less communal than those with whom the perceiver cooperates (Russell & Fiske, 2008).

## **3. The Relevance of Agency and Communion in Social Cognition**

We have shown that the fundamental dimensions are both broad classes of behavior and broad categories of social cognitions that have ontological meaning and functional value. In the remaining part of this chapter, we will narrow our perspective by focusing on social cognition. Many studies conducted in different countries have shown that the two types of content cover a wide range of social judgments assessed with different types of methods.

### 3.1. Autobiographical memory

Research on adults' autobiographical memory has identified two general classes of agentic and communal content with respect to early memories, memories of turning points, and memories of peak experiences (McAdams, Hoffman, Mansfield & Day, 1996). Agentic content covered topics of self-mastery, status, achievement/responsibility, and empowerment. Communal content covered themes of love/friendship, dialogue, care/help, and community. Participants high in power or achievement motivation reported more agentic content, and participants high in affiliation motivation reported more communal content. Not only adults, but also children at the age of 4 to 7 years, revealed the two themes of agency (being brave) and communion (being nice) in their autobiographical narratives (Ely, Mezli, Hadge & McCabe, 1998).

As the content of self-narrations is predictably related to a person's dominant motives, and as the latter strongly influence attention, memory, and interpretation of ongoing events (Woike & Bender, 2009), the themes of agency and communion provide coherence and continuity to a person's past, current experience, and future goals. Persons who construe themselves as agentic (e.g., rate their agentic traits as high) experience their agentic memories as subjectively more recent than their communal memories. Similarly, persons who construe themselves as communal (high ratings on communal traits) experience their communal memories as subjectively more recent than agentic ones. This "semantic congruence" between the subjective importance of agency or communion and the perceived temporal closeness of memories in that domain was shown by Gebauer, Haddock, Broemer, and von Hecker (2013). It explains why some past experiences can feel much closer in time than they really are (independently of mood congruence and self-enhancement strivings). It also explains the self-perpetuating nature of agency and communion in self-construal because temporally recent memories exert more influence on current interpretations and goal pursuit than temporally more distant memories (Peetz & Wilson, 2008).

### 3.2. Open-ended questions

Wojciszke (1994) asked his participants to recall episodes that had a clear positive or negative evaluative meaning for the target (either self or another person). A content-analysis showed that three-fourths of the episodes could be classified as related to communion or agency. Uchronski (2008) asked her participants to describe themselves with up to six characteristics, which were later content-analyzed. Once again, three-fourths of these characteristics could be reliably subsumed under either agency or communion. Interestingly, self-descriptions of young and middle aged adults include more agentic attributes than those of older adults, whereas self-descriptions with communal attributes increase with age (Diehl, Owen & Youngblade, 2004).

Abele and Bruckmüller (2011; Study 4) asked their participants to write free descriptions of an acquaintance. A content-analysis of these descriptions again showed that most (84%) of the listed attributes could reliably be assigned to either agency or communion. A further study by Abele and Bruckmüller (2013) assessed both self-descriptions and descriptions of a friend with open-ended questions. Again, 85% of the descriptions were covered by the two dimensions.

The two classes of content appear frequently in voters' open-ended commentaries on political candidates in various countries (e.g., the U.S.A., Kinder & Sears, 1985; or Poland, Wojciszke & Klusek, 1996) and trait descriptions along these dimensions (under the labels of competence and integrity) are strong predictors of approval ratings of the candidates (Bertolotti et al., 2013).

### 3.3. Trait Ratings

Wojciszke, Bazinska, and Jaworski (1998) asked their participants to provide overall evaluations of 20 well-known persons from their social environment, as well as to rate them on a number of agentic and communal traits. On average, the trait ratings explained 82% of the variance in global evaluations. In another study, participants evaluated their supervisors (Wojciszke & Abele, 2008), and two-thirds of the variance in these evaluations was explained by ratings of these supervisors' agency and communion (similarly, see Suitner & Maass, 2008).

The two classes of content also show up in cross-cultural research. Abele, Uchrowski, Suitner, and Wojciszke (2008c) asked participants in different countries to rate the extent to which 69 traits expressed agency and communion (based on definitions of these two dimensions provided to participants). Comparing the ratings across five languages (English, French, German, Italian, and Polish), we found very similar patterns, indicating a common understanding of these dimensions across languages. Ybarra and colleagues (2008) reported comparable findings for Asian languages.

Another line of support for the two basic content dimensions comes from the SCM (Fiske et al., 2002; Cuddy et al., 2008). The SCM states that stereotypes in many cases are not one-dimensional, ranging from negative to positive, but rather that they are expressed on two dimensions, a warmth (communion) dimension and a competence (agency) dimension (see above, Table 1). Group stereotypes are often "mixed," such that they are positive (negative) with respect to the warmth/communion dimension and negative (positive) with respect to the competence/agency dimension (cf., Becker & Asbrock, 2012). Studying both dimensions clarifies the frequent ambivalent valence of stereotypes (Aaker, Vohs & Mogilner, 2010; Carlsson, Björklund & Bäckström, 2012).

### 3.4. Social comparisons

Locke and Nekich (2000) showed that the agency/communion framework is also useful in social comparison research. They found that communal traits predicted feeling connected during comparisons, whereas agentic traits predicted feeling confident and comparing downward. The authors conclude that agency and communion shape social comparisons as they occur in daily life. Dem, Inman, and Argo (2011) also used the agency/communion framework. They found that agency-oriented consumers who were also high in self-monitoring spent more money when they shopped with a friend than when they shopped alone, whereas communion-oriented consumers (also high in self-monitoring) spent less when they shopped with a friend than when they shopped alone. Interestingly, the interaction of agency-communion orientation, the presence of a friend, and self-monitoring was reversed when the focal context was changed from "spending for the self" to "donating to a charity."

### 3.5. Face Ratings and Behavior Ratings

Most importantly, the fundamental dimensions do not only show up in ratings of traits, but they can also be revealed in observational data, i.e., ratings of faces and ratings of overt behavior. Todorov (2011) summarizes evidence that people are very fast in forming impressions from facial appearance and that these impressions can be reduced to the basic factors of communion (called trustworthiness) and agency (called dominance). Leising and Bleidorn (2011) asked their participants to rate (videotaped) interpersonal episodes of a large number of unknown persons on 35 adjective-pairs. The principal components analysis of these ratings revealed an agency factor and a communion factor (plus a weaker emotional stability factor). Both were relatively stable across observers and observational situations.

#### 4. The Dual Perspective Model of Agency and Communion

We now turn to our Dual Perspective Model of Agency and Communion (DPM-AC). In this model we take into account and extend both ontological and functional explanations of the fundamental dimensions discussed earlier. Most importantly, we take a systematic look at the convergences and differences in behavioral interpretations performed by actors (interpretation of own behavior, i.e., self-perception) versus observers (interpretation of others' behavior, i.e., other-perception).

The DPM-AC starts with the assertion that agency and communion have different value or *profitability* for the self versus for others. According to Peeters and colleagues (Peeters, 2001, 2008; Peeters & Czapinski, 1990; see also Beauvois & Dubois, 2009), the evaluative meaning of traits reflects their adaptive potential for humans in general. This adaptive potential may be defined from the perspective of the trait possessor, and traits adaptive for the trait possessor are *self-profitable*. They are directly and unconditionally profitable (in case of positive traits) or harmful (in case of negative ones) for the trait possessor. A trait's adaptive potential may also be defined, however, from the perspective of another person who observes the trait possessor or interacts with him/her. Traits adaptive in the perspective of another person have been called *other-profitable*. These traits are directly beneficial for other people when positive and directly harmful for them when negative.

We argue that traits belonging to the communion dimension tend to be other-profitable, because they inform the perceiver about attributes of the target that convey his/her benevolent vs. malevolent intentions (see also Fiske et al., 2002). Knowing that another person, for instance, is "trustworthy" means that we can infer his/her intentions. Agency traits, on the other hand, tend to be self-profitable, because they refer to attributes that allow trait possessors to effectively pursue their goals. Knowing about one's "smartness," for instance, helps to initiate effective action. In the above mentioned research by Abele and Wojciszke (2007; Study 1), we also measured self-profitability and other-profitability of the 300 traits. Specifically, a group of 20 participants rated each trait for the degree the trait was beneficial or harmful (in the long run) for a person showing this trait, on a scale ranging from -5 to 0 to 5. Sample traits rated as highly self-profitable are: thoughtful (4.60), intelligent (4.45), able (4.45), and active (4.30); traits rated as harmful for the self: stupid (-3.95), inept (-3.65), not self-reliant (-3.60), and pessimistic (-3.45). Another 20 persons rated each trait for the degree the trait was beneficial or harmful (in the long run) for persons surrounding and interacting with a person showing this trait. Sample traits rated as highly other-profitable are: appreciating others (4.50), honest (4.25), friendly (4.15), and understanding (4.15); traits rated as harmful for others: swindler (-4.80), merciless (-4.60), unfair (-4.25), and phony (-4.10). In accord with our reasoning, we found that the correlation between the agency scale and the self-profitability measures was  $r = .67$ , and the correlation between the communion scale and the other-profitability measures was  $r = .89$  (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007). Both these correlations are highly significant. Not in the context of the fundamental dimensions, but in a similar vein, other research has shown that self-profitable agentic traits are linked to self-serving decisions in social dilemmas (McClintock & Liebrand, 1988) and that other-profitable communal traits are linked to helping behavior (Graziano, Habashi, Sheese & Tobin, 2007).

The self-profitability vs. other-profitability approach taken by Peeters and colleagues, hence, suggests that the fundamental dimensions should be analyzed with respect to perspective. Social behavior and social cognition always involve two perspectives – the perspective of an actor who performs the act in question, that is the "self," and the perspective of an observer or recipient of the action in question, that is the "other." In social interactions,

perspectives may change quickly as people take turns and are at one time actors and at another time observers/recipients and then actors again and so forth. However, at a given moment, a person is either actor or observer/recipient, and in describing and interpreting behavior, he/she does this either from the perspective of the actor/self or the observer/recipient. We argue that the fundamental content dimensions of agency and communion are differentially linked to perspective, that is, actor versus observer/recipient (Abele & Brack, 2013; Abele & Bruckmüller, 2013; Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Wojciszke & Abele, 2008; Wojciszke et al., 2011).

Our model makes three key predictions:

(1) We predict that communal content is the primary of the two dimensions. From an evolutionary perspective, communion should be the primary dimension because social relationships are indispensable for human beings. As social groups can share resources and information, diffuse risk, and help to overcome stress or threat, it should be a selective advantage to possess communal traits necessary to build and maintain social relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Guisinger & Blatt, 1994; Ybarra et al., 2008). This primacy of communion should, among others, be evident in language and in information processing.

As the immediate goals of actors versus observers/recipients differ, actors and observers should also differ in their focus on agency versus communion.

(2) We predict that in the observer/recipient perspective, communal content is more relevant than agentic content. Observers and recipients aim at understanding what is being done and at avoiding harms or acquiring benefits which are brought about by the behavior of the actor. This goal results in an increased focus on other-profitable communal content.

(3) We predict that in the actor perspective, agentic content is more relevant than communal content. Actors want to pursue their goals, which results in increased focus on self-profitable agentic content.

#### **4.1. The primacy of communion**

There is evidence for a primacy of communion in language: In the above cited study by Abele and Wojciszke (2007; Study 1), the communion factor explained more than double the variance in trait ratings (66%) compared to the agency factor (23%). Similarly, Ybarra and colleagues (2008; Study 1) analyzed a list of 372 “human universals” (Brown, 1991) for their relatedness to agency and communion. Human universals are practices that are performed by most cultural groups, for instance, gossip, gift-giving, or self-control. Ybarra and colleagues (2008; Study 1) found that two thirds of these universals were related to agency and/or communion. Of the 216 universals related to only one dimension, 87% were rated as communal (examples: generosity admired, affection expressed and felt, empathy) and merely 13% were rated as agentic (examples: tools, mental maps, practice to improve skills). Moreover, Ybarra and colleagues (2008; Study 2) showed that people in different countries agree more on the prototypicality of communal traits than on the prototypicality of agentic traits. Abele and colleagues (2008c) also found that trait words’ communion ratings were more similar across five languages than trait words’ agency ratings. Wojciszke et al. (1998) reported that their participants’ communion ratings of various target persons showed higher intra-domain integration, that is, a simpler factorial structure, than these participants’ agency ratings. Abele and Bruckmüller (2011; Studies 2 and 3) found that despite extensive pretesting to ensure equivalence with regard to a number of relevant factors, participants still agreed more in their judgments of communal content than of agentic content.

Most important for the primacy of communion hypothesis are findings on information processing. If communal content is indeed primary compared to agentic content, then it

should be preferentially processed at early stages of information processing, namely selection, categorization, and forming inferences. This preferential processing should be evident as a speed advantage of communal compared to agentic content. As a first demonstration for faster selection, Ybarra, Chan, and Park (2001) showed for English trait words that communal content was recognized faster than agentic content in a lexical decision task. Abele and Bruckmüller (2011; Study 1) replicated the findings of Ybarra et al. (2001) for German trait words. De Lemus, Spears, Bukowski, Moya, and Lupiáñez (2013) recently replicated it for Spanish trait words. In their second study, Abele and Bruckmüller (2011) showed that communal trait words were not only recognized faster but were also categorized more quickly for valence (whether they are positive or negative) than agentic trait words. In their third study, Abele and Bruckmüller (2011) presented pretested behavior descriptions that could to the same extent lead to inferences of either agency or communion. They found that participants were faster in inferring communal meaning than agentic meaning (see also Bazinska & Wojciszke, 1996). Figure 1 summarizes the Abele and Bruckmüller (2011) findings. It is important to note that both positive and negative stimuli were used in these studies and that the findings are independent of valence, i.e., the processing advantage of communal information in selecting, categorizing, and inferring information held for both positive and negative stimuli. Finally, Abele and Bruckmüller (2011; Study 4) found that people not only describe others more in communal terms but that they also mention these communal terms earlier than they mention agentic ones.

Additional evidence for the primacy of communion may be taken from the correlation with self-profitability. Even if actors are mainly interested in agentic content because they want to efficiently pursue their goals, they also have to be interested in communal content because goal-pursuit seldom happens in a social vacuum and because benevolent relationships with others are central for human well-being and for survival. Hence, communal traits being other-profitable should also be somewhat self-profitable. Support for this reasoning comes from the above cited Abele and Wojciszke (2007; Study 1) research: The communion factor was strongly related to ratings of other-profitability ( $r = .89$ ) but also to ratings of self-profitability ( $r = .49$ ). However, the first-mentioned correlation is significantly higher, Fisher's  $z = 10.77$ ,  $p < .001$ . In contrast, the agency factor was only related to ratings of self-profitability ( $r = .67$ ), but not to ratings of other-profitability ( $r = -.12$ ,  $ns$ ).

To sum up, our first hypothesis of the primacy of communion was supported in studies of language, in research on preferential processing of communal content, and also in the finding that communion, but not agency, is both other-profitable and somewhat self-profitable.

#### **4.2. Agency and communion in the observer perspective.**

Our second hypothesis stated that in the observer/recipient perspective, communion is more relevant than agency. Supporting this reasoning, numerous studies have shown that a target's communal traits receive higher weight in forming an overall impression than his/her agentic traits. Wojciszke and colleagues (1998) showed that chronically accessible descriptors of others are more strongly related to communion than agency (see also Abele & Bruckmüller, 2011; Study 4) and that global impressions of real persons are better predicted from communal than agentic trait ascriptions – ratings of the two kinds of traits explained 53% and 29% of impressions' variance, respectively. Wojciszke et al. (1998, Study 4) asked their participants to form impressions of persons described with a single behavioral act amenable to both agentic and communal interpretations like "Bob defended an absent friend against groundless accusations, but he spoke in such an illogical and obscure way that he could not persuade anybody" (showing positive communion but negative agency). Varying the descriptions in a 2 (agency: positive – negative) x 2 (communion: positive – negative)

design yielded an interaction as depicted in Figure 2. Communal information influenced the overall impression to a much higher degree than agentic information (appropriate partial squared etas were .95 and .41). Moreover, communal information influenced whether the global impression was positive or negative, whereas agentic information only influenced the intensity of the positive or negative impression. The two types of information combined in a non-additive way, as the most negative impression resulted from the combination of negative communion and positive agency information. Ostensibly, agentic harm-doers are perceived as even more negative than non-agentic ones. Radkiewicz, Skarzynska, and Hamer (2013) recently reported similar findings for impressions of “generalized” others. They also found that impressions were most strongly influenced by judgments of generalized others’ communion and that impressions were most negative when a lack of communion was accompanied by high agency.

In a similar vein, Wojciszke and Abele (2008) found that the consequences of others’ behavior on evaluative impressions were stronger in the case of communal than agentic information. Moreover, a target’s negative or positive communal behaviors (such as moral transgressions or norm-maintenance behaviors) resulted in stronger emotional responses of the observer than the target’s negative or positive agentic behaviors (such as task accomplishments versus failures; Wojciszke, 2005b).

These findings suggest that the evaluative meaning of communal information is strong and stable, whereas the evaluative meaning of agentic information is much weaker and dependent on the accompanying communal information. Competence and assertiveness are positively evaluated in a decent person, but they are negatively evaluated in a villain. To conclude – information on communion provides the context for ascertaining evaluative implications of agency but not vice versa.

A similar conclusion can be drawn from research on observers’ emotions instigated by actors’ agentic and/or communal behavior. In one study, we asked separate groups of participants to recall a success, a failure, a moral act, or an immoral act of another person whom they either liked or disliked (Wojciszke & Szymkow, 2003). We reasoned that emotional reactions to others’ agentic behaviors (here: a success or a failure) should be completely determined by the relationship to the other person, i.e., whether she was liked or disliked. Emotional reactions to others’ communal behavior (here: a moral or an immoral act), on the other hand, should be more influenced by the behavior itself. We asked our participants to report the emotions they had experienced in the face of the recalled behaviors, and we later analyzed them both for their content and for their general negativity-positivity. Figure 3 shows the results for the general positivity/negativity ratings. Supporting our reasoning, emotional responses to others’ successes and failures (agency domain) depended solely on whether the other was liked or disliked. If the other was liked, then the emotional reaction to this person’s agency was positive in case of success and negative in case of failure. If the other was disliked, then the opposite emotional reaction emerged. In other words, positive attitudes towards others led to empathic responses to their outcomes— joy after a success and sorrow after a failure. Negative attitudes resulted in paradoxical responses – negative to a success (resentment) and positive to a failure (schadenfreude). These emotions function as responses restoring balance within cognitive units consisting of the perceiver, other persons and their outcomes – an idea developed elsewhere (Pietraszkiewicz & Wojciszke, 2013).

A different pattern of findings emerged for moral versus immoral acts, that is, in the communion domain. Negative communion always led to negative emotional reactions to both disliked and liked persons. Positive communion, on the other hand, led to positive emotions in case of a liked other and to ambivalent (hence, on average neutral) reactions when the other

was disliked. Again, the emotional reactions to other persons' communal behavior were much less context-specific than the emotional reactions to these persons' agentic behavior.

Wojciszke et al. (1998, Study 2) also found that when asked to form global evaluations of others, their Polish participants were more interested in gathering information on the others' communal than agentic traits. This finding was replicated and extended with samples coming from different cultures. De Bruin and Van Lange (2000), for instance, let their Dutch participants choose what kind of information they wanted to receive about another person with whom they would later interact. In 84% of the cases, participants wanted to see the communal information first and they also read the communal information more thoroughly than the agentic information. Ames and Bianchi (2008) found that agreeableness (which is related to the communion dimension, Wiggins, 1991) was the most commonly inferred trait when participants described various targets. Communal traits determine the resource value of another person's desired attributes more (Scholer & Higgins, 2008) and are also perceived as having more predictive power for the target's future behavior than agentic traits (De Bruin & Van Lange, 1999; Kenworthy & Tausch, 2008).

Finally, communal information, especially concerning morality, has a stronger impact on group perception and stereotypes than agentic information (Brambilla, Rusconi, Sacchi & Cherubini, 2011; Leach, Ellemers & Barreto, 2007). Perceived morality of in-groups is a major antecedent of members' identification with the group, their commitment and their pride of being a member of this group. Moreover, members view their in-groups as more honest and trustworthy (though not necessarily as more competent and efficient) than out-groups, and beliefs in one's in-group's moral superiority are central to in-groups' historical narratives (see Leach, Bilali & Pagliaro, 2013, for a review).

As the DPM draws on the functional logic of the perceiver's interests (information that is functional for goal attainment is processed more thoroughly), the model allows predictions about factors moderating the relative importance of agency and communion in the perception of others. Although communion is typically more important than agency, this should be constrained or even reversed in contexts where the agency of others becomes crucial for the observer's goals. If someone looks, for instance, for a good teacher who can help him/her to improve in a foreign language, then he/she will not only be interested in this person's friendliness and trustworthiness but also, of course, in this person's skills and efficiency. Or if a person is writing a paper together with a colleague, then he/she wants this colleague to be both trustworthy and smart. If, on the other hand, one happens to sit in a restaurant next to a person whom one will probably never see again, then this person's skills and efficiency are of less concern than this person's friendliness. Stated differently, in the observer perspective, we are always interested in other persons' communion and in certain cases we are also interested in their agency. A moderating factor for the interest in another's agency is the kind of relationship between actor and observer.

Supporting evidence for the moderating influence of the kind of relationship was reported by Wojciszke et al. (1998). They found that respondents preferred others' communal traits when they were looking for a person to whom they would tell a secret; however, they preferred agentic traits when they were looking for a good negotiator. Abele and Wojciszke (2007; Study 4) showed that both communion and especially agency traits were rated as more important for a close friend than for a more distant acquaintance. Cislak (2013) studied the influence of power on the preference for others' agency and communion. She found that having power led to an enhanced interest in others' agentic traits, whereas being in a submissive position resulted in an enhanced interest in others' communal traits.

However, even the relationship between subordinates and supervisors may vary from context to context and, consequently, the relative importance a subordinate assigns a supervisor's agency may also vary (Wojciszke & Abele, 2008). Drawing on Weber's (1922) classical work on bureaucracy, we hypothesized that the relevant context factor here may be whether an organization is bureaucratic or efficiency-oriented (business). In the latter type of organizations, employees are dependent on their supervisor's agency. The more agentic the supervisor, the higher the employees' potential outcomes – job security, salaries, promotions, fringe benefits. Hence, employees should base their evaluations of their supervisors more on agency than communion. In bureaucratic organizations, in contrast, employees' benefits do not depend on their productivity but rather on various bureaucratic criteria, such as the length of employment, formal qualifications, and the position in the organizational hierarchy. In this case, there is relatively low dependency of the employee on the supervisor, so our reasoning predicts that employees should base their evaluation more on the supervisor's communal than agentic traits. To test this hypothesis, we conducted a field study in which we assessed employees' attitudes towards their supervisors, as well as their impressions of the supervisors' communal and agentic characteristics. The evaluations were gathered in two organizations which were similar in terms of the type of work (both were in the finance sector), but one was a business firm and another was an administration institution. As can be seen from the series of analyses of regression presented in Table 3, in the bureaucratic institution, communion proved a stronger predictor of attitudes towards the supervisor than agency, but in the business organization, agency was the stronger predictor.

Abele and Brack (2013) tested whether the importance of others' agentic traits varies with kind of relationship. One of the distinctions they made was made between exchange relationships (for instance, a supervisor) and communal relationships (for instance, a close friend). Participants were asked to imagine these different kinds of relationships with others and then to indicate which traits the respective interaction partner should have. Supporting the primacy of communion, there was a general preference for communal traits in others. The single trait most often chosen was "trustworthy." Supporting the moderating influence of the kind of relationship, agentic traits were chosen more frequently in exchange relationships than in communal relationships, and communion traits were chosen more often in communal relationships than in exchange relationships (Study 2; see Figure 4). In another study, Abele and Brack (2013; Study 3) additionally measured their participants' interaction goals and found that people who endorsed mastery goals in an interaction chose more agency traits for their partner than people who endorsed well-being goals in the interaction (Study 3; see Figure 4).

Relationship researchers not concerned with the fundamental dimensions of agency and communion have also found evidence that fits the present reasoning. Cottrell, Neuberg, and Li (2007), for instance, showed that trustworthiness and cooperativeness are generally highly appreciated in other people – a finding which perfectly fits our argument of the primacy of communion. Characteristics like intelligence were differently appreciated across tasks, goals, and functions. Intelligence belongs to the agency dimension, so this finding accords nicely with our reasoning that the importance of agentic traits varies with the kind of relationship.

Yet another factor influencing the relevance of agency in the observer perspective is the domain in interpersonal attitudes. Drawing on previous work on sub-dimensions of interpersonal attitudes (Jamieson, Lydon & Zanna, 1987; Lydon, Jamieson & Zanna, 1988), we proposed a distinction between liking and respect as two attitudinal responses towards a person. We predicted that liking and respect are differently related to another person's agency and communion (Wojciszke, Abele & Baryla, 2009). Liking-disliking is a response reflecting

personal interests and preferences, such as fondness (loathing), attachment (dissociation), enjoyment (aversion), and so on. Respect-disrespect is a response that reflects high regard of and deference to a person. We predicted that liking is more influenced by a target's communion, whereas respect is more influenced by his/her agency. We supported our reasoning with different designs (correlational: observers rated a target's communal and agentic qualities; experimental: observers were provided with respective information), measures (assessments of affect versus behaviors), and samples (students, employees). As can be seen in Figure 5 (Wojciszke et al., 2009; Study 4), liking was more strongly influenced by communal than by agentic characteristics of the target, and respect was more strongly influenced by agentic than by communal characteristics of the target. Moreover, a mediation analysis of these data showed that the influence of communal information on liking was mediated by the perceived benevolence of the target, whereas the influence of agentic information on respect was mediated by the inferred status potential of the target. This nicely fits with the SCM (Fiske et al., 2002; Cuddy et al., 2008) and its predictions about the relations between warmth and cooperation and between competence and status.

To sum up, judgments in the observer/recipient perspective are typically dominated by communal content. However, in exchange relationships, an actor's agentic traits receive increased weight in the observer perspective – even though communion remains primary. Moreover, liking for a target is more influenced by this person's communion, whereas respect is more influenced by his/her agency. Finally, the interpretation of communal content seems to be less context-specific than the interpretation of agentic content.

### **4.3. Agency and communion in the actor perspective**

The basic prediction of the DPM concerning the actor perspective is the greater weight of agentic than communal content. As actors are interested in successfully pursuing their goals, they monitor and interpret their behavior in terms of self-profitable (if positive) or self-harming (if negative) agentic characteristics and they are especially interested in self-profitable agentic traits. Direct support for this reasoning comes from Abele and Wojciszke (2007, Study 3), who asked their participants to rate how much they wanted to attend psychological trainings aimed at development of agentic skills (time management and persuading an audience) or communal skills (giving social support and moral self-development). Results showed that respondents were willing to develop their agentic skills, but they generally refused to participate in trainings devoted to developing their communal virtues (although they wanted their peers to develop both kinds of skills). When asked to remember events that had influenced their self-esteem, people typically recall agentic behaviors (i.e., successes or failures). In contrast, when asked to remember events that had influenced their impressions of others, people typically recall communal behaviors (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Wojciszke, 2005a; Wojciszke & Abele, 2008). In a similar vein, own agentic acts of successes and failures result in stronger emotions than own communal acts of norm-maintenance or norm-breaking (Wojciszke, 2005b). Moreover, mere priming of the "self" leads to more agentic interpretations of behaviors which are construable in both agentic and communal terms, whereas priming the point of view of others leads to more communal interpretations of the same behaviors (Wojciszke, 1997). Abele and Bruckmüller (2013; Study 1) asked their participants to describe themselves and an acquaintance with up to eight characteristics. As predicted by the DPM, participants listed more agentic traits in their self-descriptions than in their descriptions of a friend, and they listed more communal traits for the friend than for themselves.

In a recent study we analyzed real encounters (Abele, Bruckmüller & Wojciszke, 2013). Two previously unacquainted persons interacted for some minutes and then rated their own behavior and the partner's behavior for a number of agentic and communal traits. We

predicted that one and the same behavior would be interpreted differently depending on the perspective. In the observer perspective, the other's behavior should be rated more extremely for communion than for agency and also more extremely for communion than in the actor perspective. We further predicted that actors would interpret their own behavior more in terms of agency than would observers. Note that, in this study, only the perspective (actor, observer) varied; the rated behavior was identical. As can be seen in Figure 6, these hypotheses were fully supported. Consistent with the "primacy of communion" hypothesis, participants overall rated communion higher than agency. However, this was especially the case for observers, whereas actors rated their behavior higher on agency than observers did.

Research on the predictive power of agency versus communion for an actor's behavior also showed a higher impact of agency than of communion. Abele (2003), for instance, found that self-assessed agency predicted a person's career success two years later, whereas self-assessed communion had neither an influence on career success nor on private-life related variables like getting married or becoming a parent. Abele and Spurk (2011) analyzed the same longitudinal sample, but now with a time frame of more than 10 years. Again, agency measured at career entry strongly predicted career success more than 10 years later. In this longer time frame, however, communion at career entry significantly, but weakly, predicted whether the participant had become a parent during the 10-years interval.

The higher weight of agency than communion in the actor perspective is also supported in research on self-esteem. In a series of studies, our participants rated themselves on a number of agentic and communal traits (from 7 to 20 each, always carefully balanced for favorability) and then indicated their self-esteem (Wojciszke et al., 2011; see also Abele, Rupperecht & Wojciszke, 2008). As can be seen in Table 4 (presenting results of one of those studies), when self-esteem was regressed on these self-ratings, agency always emerged as a significant and strong predictor of self-esteem, whereas communion was a weaker predictor that usually failed to reach significance.

The stronger effect of agency than communion on self-esteem emerged consistently over the studies, regardless of the participants' age and gender, despite variations in specific content of self-ascriptions, and across six measures of self-esteem (self-esteem as a trait or as a state, self-liking, self-competence, narcissism, and preference for own initials). This is not to say that self-ascribed communion does not relate to self-esteem at all. To estimate the strength of relations between self-ascriptions of agency and communion and self-esteem in a more comprehensive way, Wojciszke and colleagues (2011) performed a meta-analysis of the 8 pairs of relevant correlations obtained in their studies. The weighted average correlation between communion and self-esteem was small, but significant,  $r = .11$ ,  $z = 2.82$ ,  $p = .0024$ . However, this correlation was very weak and insignificant in most samples. The correlation of agency with self-esteem was much stronger on average,  $r = .49$ ,  $z = 15.15$ ,  $p < .0001$ , and it emerged consistently in all 8 samples.

Throughout this research, we put much effort to testing and eliminating numerous alternative explanations of the agency-over-communion effect in self-evaluations. The simplest explanation of why self-esteem is more related to agency than communion would be in terms of lower variability of the latter judgments. However, this appeared not to be the case – we found no significant differences in variability in any of the samples studied. We also did not find a curvilinear relation between communion and self-esteem in any of the studies. Yet another explanation could be that self-competence beliefs and general self-esteem are confounded. However, the basic pattern remained when the measure of self-esteem controlled for this possible confound (i.e., pertained to self-liking with control for self-competence) or involved no competence component, like the letter-preference measure used in one of the samples (see Table 4). Even subjective beliefs that communal qualities are more

important than agentic ones did not reverse the agency-over-communion pattern in self-evaluations. In one of the samples, we asked the participants to rate the subjective importance of 15 agentic and 15 communal traits and then divided the sample into two subgroups: (A) those regarding agentic traits as more important than communal ones and (B) those regarding the opposite. Agency proved a stronger predictor of self-esteem than communion both in subsample A (with standardized beta coefficients being .57 and -.02) and in subsample B (with standardized beta coefficients being .28 and .11).

In another study, we experimentally primed positive or negative information about agentic or communal behaviors and found that agency priming led to increases (positive information) or decreases (negative information) in self-esteem, whereas priming of positive or negative communal behaviors had no impact on self-esteem – although global evaluations of another person were influenced by priming of both communal and agentic information (Wojciszke & Sobiczewska, 2013).

Gebauer, Wagner et al. (2013) also found that self-rated agency was an overall stronger predictor of self-esteem than self-rated communion. Having access to a very large sample of participants from twelve European countries, these authors were able to uncover four moderators of the relative strength of these two predictors of self-esteem. The impact of agency was stronger (and the impact of communion was weaker) in relatively agentic countries (i.e., where the country mean of agency was higher than in other countries) as well as among non-religious individuals, men, and younger adults. Only in very specific subsamples (e.g., older religious women from Germany) did they find an inverted effect, that is, communion was a stronger predictor of self-esteem than agency.

The findings of a stronger association of agency with self-esteem than of communion with self-esteem summarized so far come from 12 different European countries, but it may be that these associations are typical only for individualistic cultures (Oyserman, Coon & Kimmelmeier, 2002) and for people with an independent self-construal (Oyserman & Lee, 2008). However, Wojciszke and Bialobrzaska (2013) found the agency-over-communion effect in samples coming from countries both regarded as extremely individualistic (Britain, The Netherlands, U.S.A.) and as extremely collectivistic (China, Colombia, Japan). Bi and colleagues (2013) reported findings for the association of masculinity (agency) and self-esteem in China. In their first study, conducted in Northern China, they revealed that the stronger association of self-esteem and masculinity/agency held both for global self-worth and for social and individual self-worth. However, in their second study, conducted in Southern China (which places particular weight on communal values), both agency and communion were predictors of self-worth.

Brambilla et al. (2011) were concerned with impression formation and have shown that the morality component (being honest, trustworthy, helpful) of communion has more influence than the sociability component (being warm-hearted, empathic, and friendly). We analyzed data from an ongoing research project for the possibility that self-esteem may also be more related to the morality than to the sociability component of communion (Abele & Hauke, 2013). In a German sample of 236 participants, we correlated self-esteem (as measured with the Rosenberg, 1965, scale) with items corresponding more to the sociability versus morality component of communion. As can be seen in Table 5, self-ratings of “trustworthy,” “honest,” and “helpful” as examples of the morality component were, in fact, significantly related to self-esteem, but “understanding” and “warm-hearted” as examples of the sociability component were also significantly related (but not “friendly”). Moreover, items from the agency domain (decisive, competent, assertive, persistent, efficient, industrious), showed stronger associations with self-esteem than the items from the communion domain. Interestingly, research on the association of the Big Five of personality with self-esteem has

also revealed that agreeableness (which is closely related to communion) is much less related to self-esteem than conscientiousness (which is more related to agency) and extraversion (which is related to both agency and communion; MacDonald, Saltzman & Leary, 2003).

In sum, in accord with the DPM, agency is a stronger predictor of self-esteem than communion – even if there are certain conditions like cultural norms (Bi et al., 2013) or a different self-centrality of communion (Gebauer, Wagner et al., 2013) under which communion becomes more important, and even if certain traits from the communion domain do correlate with self-esteem.

All studies cited so far revealed another consistent finding: When assessing their agentic and communal traits, most participants rate their communion significantly higher than their agency, even when the traits are balanced for favorability (self-ratings: Abele, 2003; Abele et al., 2008b; Abele et al., 2013; Gebauer, Wagner et al., 2013; Wojciszke et al., 2011; Ybarra, Park, Stanik & Lee, 2012; self-generated descriptions: Abele & Bruckmüller, 2013; Diehl et al., 2004; Uchronski, 2008, see also Table 4). Hence, there is a seeming contradiction: On the one hand, we find that agentic traits are more self-profitable than communal traits, that people strive more for agentic traits than communal ones, that they base their self-esteem more on agency than on communion, and that their behavior is also better predicted by agency than by communion. On the other hand, we find that people rate themselves higher on communion than agency. How may this seeming contradiction be resolved? We suggest two interpretations: self-presentational concerns and more pervasive agentic interpretations of own behavior.

Regarding self-presentational concerns, universal societal norms value self-presentations directed towards the “saint” (communal) extreme more highly than self-presentations directed towards the “super-hero” (agentic) extreme (Paulhus & John, 1998; Paulhus & Trapnell, 2008). For instance, people rate their own traits more positively than those of an “average college student” (Alicke, 1985; Alicke, Klotz, Breitenbecher, Yurak & Vredenburg, 1995; Eiser, Pahl & Prins, 2001), and this is especially the case with highly desirable traits (Alicke, 1985; Allison, Messick & Goethals, 1989). Communal traits are, on average, higher in desirability than agentic ones (Suitner & Maass, 2008). People realize that communal characteristics are more vital for their approval from others than their agentic ones and, consequently, tend to build, maintain, and repair their reputation mainly in the domain of communion. In line with this reasoning, Ybarra and colleagues (2012) found that the level of self-enhancement across two cultures (Korea, USA) was similar for communion, but different for agency. Most importantly, these authors found that, in both cultures, people wanted to repair their reputation more when they imagined others perceived them as lacking in communion compared to lacking in agency. This suggests that a lack of reputation in communion is a real threat that does not fit an individual’s self-view.

Regarding more pervasive agentic interpretations of own behavior, it should be remembered that one and the same act may be interpreted in both agentic and communal terms (see our initial example) and that actors tend to interpret their behavior more in terms of agency than communion. Hence, as behavior is less interpreted in terms of communion than agency, communal self-assessments may remain high and relatively unaffected by daily experiences. In line with this reasoning, previous research has shown that self-descriptions on the communion dimension are less malleable than self-descriptions on the agency dimension. Abele and colleagues (2008b), for instance, showed that experimentally-induced success (failure) experiences on different types of tasks led to an increase (decrease) in self-ascribed agency but no change in communion. Twenge (1997, 2001) conducted meta-analyses on changes in communal and agentic self-descriptions over time and found an increase of agency (especially for women), but little change in communion. We know about only one

experimental study that showed some malleability of communion: Uchrowski, Abele, and Bruckmüller (2012) asked their participants either to perform an empathy task (taking the perspective of a person whose video-taped interview was watched) or not to do so (watching the video without empathizing with the person) and found that empathizing led to an increase in self-assessed communion as well as to faster reaction times regarding own communal traits compared to the neutral condition.

To sum up, actors (self-perception) compared to observers (other-perception) regard their agency as more important; they base their self-esteem more on agency than on communion; and their behavior is better predicted by agency than by communion. All these findings are in accord with the predictions of the DPM. Nevertheless, actors also show a primacy of communion by rating their communion as higher than agency. We explain this seeming contradiction both by self-presentational processes and by the generally high level and high stability of communal self-construal.

#### **4.4. Reconceptualizing the actor-observer distinction**

In their seminal work, Jones and Nisbett (1971) introduced the actor–observer distinction into attribution research. They argued that actors tend to attribute the causes of their behavior to stimuli inherent in the situation (“E: external causes”; for instance, task difficulty, chance, the weather, the interacting partner, etc.), whereas observers tend to attribute behavior to stable dispositions of the actor (“I: internal causes”; such as ability, motivation, personality traits, attitudes, emotional states, etc.). This difference may be due to information differences (the actor has more information about the causes of her or his behavior than the observer), information processing differences produced by perceptual salience (the actor mainly attends to the on-going situation, whereas the observer mainly attends to the actor), and lay people’s “naïve psychology” (Heider, 1958), according to which observers overestimate the impact of personality traits in explaining actors’ behavior, whereas actors see situational constraints and contingencies and therefore rate the importance of personality traits in explaining their own behavior as lower.

The actor-observer difference hypothesis inspired many studies, which generated inconsistent findings. When Malle (2006) performed a meta-analysis of 173 studies published within 35 years after the Jones and Nisbett paper, the mean difference score between the observer and the actor (in I vs. E differences) was  $d = 0.095$ . Although significantly different from zero, this difference is extremely small and failed to appear in the majority (56%) of the analyzed studies. It is also amenable to many moderators, with valence of explained events being the most important one – attributions for negative events showed the predicted actor-observer asymmetry  $d = 0.24$ , whereas positive events yielded the reverse pattern,  $d = -0.15$ . Thus, when the originally postulated asymmetry appears at all, it is probably because of a self-serving bias – own positive outcomes are attributed to internal causes and own negative outcomes to external factors – rather than attribution differences between actors and observers. Moreover, further research by Malle (2004, 2011) suggests that lay explanations of behavior do not follow the simple distinction between internal and external causes. Furthermore, actors versus observers differ in the types of events they explain: experiences in the case of actors, and behaviors in the case of observers. The actor-observer asymmetry, hence, needs a reconceptualization; the currently proposed DPM provides one.

Whereas the original asymmetry proposed by Jones and Nisbett (1971) was quite narrow, as it focused solely on causal explanations, the DPM is much broader and encompasses virtually all operations involved in social information processing: chronic accessibility, information gathering, attention, interpretation, encoding, global evaluations, and emotional experiences. As the present review shows, differences between actors and

observers in these processes are numerous and far reaching. Our hypotheses are based on the assumption that actors and observers/recipients of an action differ in their current goals, which lead to divergent perceptions of the (same) interaction they participate in. The actor's current goals are mainly directed at goal-fulfillment, which necessitates monitoring action efficiency (how to get the action completed and the goal achieved). The observer's/recipients' current goals are mainly directed at understanding what is being done and whether it is good or bad for him/her or for others (why is the actor acting like this, what are his/her intentions and goals?). This divergence in current goals results in a host of actor–observer differences (see above) that could not be predicted either from the model of Jones and Nisbett (1971) or from other, more recent conceptualizations of the actor-observer asymmetry (e.g., Malle, 2004; Pronin, 2009).

### 5. Agency, Communion and Valence

In his classic study of 555 traits representative of person descriptors in English, Anderson (1968) found that most traits are clearly negative or positive and very few are void of evaluative meaning (similarly, Hager & Hasselhorn, 1994, for German; Lewicka, 1983, for Polish). As shown by Peabody (1967), descriptive and evaluative meanings of trait names are confounded in natural languages, so it is nearly impossible to describe a person without evaluating her. Describing someone as intelligent (dull), for instance, implies that this person deserves a positive (negative) evaluation. Why are evaluations so ubiquitous and how do they relate to agency and communion?

From a functional point of view, evaluations (like affects, emotions, or attitudes) are responses enabling an individual to distinguish between what is good and what is bad or “to discriminate between beneficial stimuli which are to be approached, and harmful stimuli, which are to be avoided” (Peeters, 1995, p. 124). The present DPM states that actors and observers differentially weight agency and communion content due to differences in self-profitability versus other-profitability. The valence of traits, therefore, should be predicted by both their self-profitability (how much they are harmful or beneficial for the actor) and by their other-profitability (how much they are harmful or beneficial for the observer/recipient). Wojciszke, Dowhyluk, and Jaworski (1998) had the three parameters (valence, self-profitability, other-profitability) independently rated for 200 trait names. As predicted, a linear regression analysis showed that other-profitability ( $\beta = .56$ ) and self-profitability ( $\beta = .43$ ) accounted for nearly all of the variance in the trait valence ratings (adjusted  $R^2 = .97$ ). Importantly, further potential predictors of trait valence (e.g., trait controllability, importance, behavioral range, and temporal or situational stability) simultaneously included in the regression failed to predict valence over and above the self- and other-profitability ratings.

These findings suggest that other-profitability may be even more strongly associated with valence than self-profitability – and this makes sense in light of the previously described “primacy of communion.” Hence, the communal meaning of traits should correlate more strongly with valence than their agentic meaning. Abele and Wojciszke (2007, who studied 300 Polish trait names; see Table 2) indeed found that valence correlated  $r = .68$  with agentic and  $r = .88$  with communal content. Similarly, Suitner and Maass (2008, who studied 130 Italian trait names) found that valence correlated  $r = .65$  with agentic and  $r = .93$  with communion content. Abele, Bruckmüller, and Uchronski (2009) had more than 1,000 German trait words rated for their degree of agency, communion, and valence. The agency–valence correlation was  $r = .49$ , whereas the communion–valence correlation was  $r = .77$ .

To sum up, both communion and agency are strongly correlated with valence, and, in various languages, these correlations are even stronger for communal content. This pattern is in line with the DPM reasoning, according to which communion is primary and communal

characteristics are both other-profitable and self-profitable, whereas agency is mainly self-profitable and only under certain conditions other-profitable, too. It follows that any discussion of the relation between the content dimensions must take these correlations with valence into account.

## **6. Relation between the two Content Dimensions**

Basically, agency and communion are orthogonal dimensions of social cognition, as they reflect different domains of human functioning and their perceptions are based on separate cues. Therefore, we first review evidence for the independence of the two dimensions. Although agency and communion are descriptively different, they nevertheless share evaluative meaning, as discussed in the preceding section. So we also present data showing an apparently positive relation between agency and communion. Finally, because the two types of content are frequently processed on different occasions and from different perspectives (actors vs. observers), they become dissociated in the perceiver's mind and appear as alternative meanings in social cognition. Hence, we review the evidence for negative relations between the two content dimensions.

In discussing these results, we will distinguish between the level of descriptors (like traits or behavior interpretations) and the level of impressions of whole social entities (like the self, other persons, and groups). Descriptors concern discrete characteristics of language or social objects that may be perceived and interpreted independently of the context or further object features (Semin & Fiedler, 1991). Impressions of social entities, on the other hand, integrate more detailed perceptions and contextual information and – most importantly – involve cognitive, affective, and motivational processes (e.g. self-enhancement or consistency strivings) that are usually absent at the level of descriptors.

### **6.1. Orthogonality**

At the level of descriptors, agency and communion can be treated as orthogonal, because they reflect separate features of behavior or clearly distinguishable behavioral interpretations. As discussed in sections 1 and 2, inferences of communal traits are based on harmful-beneficiary goals of the target person, whereas inferences of agency traits are based on the effectiveness and efficiency of goal attainment.

Agency and communion are also inferred from nonverbal and embodied cues, which are different for the two domains. High agency is inferred from behaviors associated with power and dominance, such as taking up more space, physically expanding, and occupying central or elevated positions, whereas low agency is inferred from contractive and closed postures (Cuddy, Wilmoth & Carney, 2012). Positive communion is inferred from the Duchenne (genuine) smile conveying warmth and positive interest, as well as from nonverbal “immediacy cues,” such as leaning forward, orienting the body to the other, and a relaxed posture (see Cuddy, Glick & Beninger, 2011, for a review). The embodied cues for communion include physical warmth (IJzerman & Semin, 2009) and culturally defined gestures, like putting one's hand over one's heart, which in some cultures conveys honesty and actually makes people more honest (Parzuchowski & Wojciszke, 2013). Yet other gestures (such as “giving a finger”), even if performed inadvertently, lead to inferences of hostility, that is, lack of communion (Chandler & Schwarz, 2009).

The orthogonality of agency and communion at the level of person impressions was shown by Cislak and Wojciszke (2008), who assumed that most people behave in ways both serving their own interests or not (agency) and serving the interests of others or not (communion). These two types of behavior vary independently over time, as Gerbasi and Prentice (2013) have recently shown. Specifically, we studied impression formation of a local

politician by describing two lines of his behavior. One was business-related and served (or counteracted) his own interests, and another was foundation-related and served (or counteracted) interests of others (inhabitants of a town, i.e., his constituency). The two lines of actions were counterbalanced such that the perceivers were always exposed to exactly the same behaviors (one serving self-interest, the other serving interest of others). As can be seen in Figure 7, behaviors serving (versus counteracting) self-interests led to higher (versus lower) inferences of agency, but the inferences of communion were the same. In contrast, behaviors serving (versus counteracting) the interests of others led to higher (versus lower) inferences of communion, but had no effect on inferences of agency. So, depending on whose interests are served by a behavior, either agentic or communal traits are inferred.

In correlational studies on social perception, the orthogonality of agency and communion is manifested by zero correlations between ratings of agentic and communal traits, as well as by a bi-dimensional factorial structure of such ratings. Both these findings are frequent in person perception (Wojciszke, 2005a; Wojciszke, Bazinska & Jaworski, 1998) and, especially, in group perception as evidenced by numerous studies inspired by the Stereotype Content Model (Cuddy et al., 2009; Fiske et al., 2002). The zero correlations also show up in self-ratings when established questionnaires are used, for instance the PAQ (Spence et al., 1974; Abele, 2003), an instrument specifically devised to measure the two dimensions. If people are asked to describe themselves on the agency and communion scales (comprising only positive items), the correlation between the scales is around zero (see Abele, 2003; Abele & Spurk, 2011). Similarly, scales developed to measure the concepts mentioned in Table 1 often were constructed such that they involved two independent subscales. Examples are the assessment of independent versus interdependent self-construal (Singelis, 1994) and the measurement of masculinity versus femininity (Bem, 1974).

## 6.2. Positive relations

Although agency and communion are basically orthogonal dimensions, in some cases they seem to be positively related. At the level of descriptors, this may be due to shared evaluative meaning. The already-mentioned studies on hundreds of traits in three languages (Polish, Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Italian, Suitner & Maass, 2008; German, Abele et al., 2009) all found positive correlations, i.e., the more a trait was saturated with communal meaning, the more it was also saturated with agentic meaning ( $r_s = .38, .49, .28$ ). However, both agentic and communal meaning of the traits are strongly related with valence, and when valence is controlled for, all three correlations become negative as shown in the next section. Therefore, the positive relation between the agentic and communal meaning of traits is entirely due to their valence. The classic results of Rosenberg et al. (1968) that the two dimensions of social good-bad and intellectual good-bad are positively correlated most probably reflect also their similarities in evaluative (but not descriptive) meaning.

At the level of impression formation, the positive correlation between agency and communion may be due to consistency strivings as postulated by cognitive consistency theories (Festinger, 1957) and found in numerous studies on attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Agentic and communal impressions of others may be expected to correlate positively when accompanied by well-developed attitudes towards these persons. In line with this expectation, we found a strong positive correlation between agency and communion ratings of participants' real supervisors ( $r = .61$ , Wojciszke & Abele, 2008), but only a weak correlation for perceptions of a fictitious stranger ( $r = .12$ , Wojciszke et al, 2009). Nevertheless, the issue of the conditions that produce positive correlations between agentic and communal perceptions of individuals requires further systematic research.

## 6.3. Negative Relations

Interestingly, traits and behavior descriptions may also correlate negatively, such that the more they denote agency, the less they denote communion and vice versa. When the two contents are independently rated for a large pool of traits, and the traits' valence is either held constant or partialled out, then negative correlations between the agency and communion ratings result. In Abele and Wojciszke (2007; Study 1; Polish), for instance, the correlation between ratings of traits' degrees of agency and communion – controlling for valence – was  $r_p = -.63$ . Similarly, Suitner and Maass (2008; Italian) found  $r_p = -.38$ , and Abele et al. (2009; German) obtained  $r_p = -.57$ . In a purely descriptive sense, then, agency and communion are negatively related.

Negative relations are also found for the interpretations of a single behavioral act. Wojciszke (1994, 1997) presented his participants behavioral acts that were pretested to represent two (agency, communion) by two (positive, negative) episodes (like: “due to excellent driving, the driver saved the life of a dog that suddenly ran into the street,” agency positive, communion positive; “under a smart pretext, a manager left a conference to avoid answering an inconvenient question,” agency positive, communion negative). Participants then evaluated the behavior and gave a rationale for this evaluation. These accounts were later rated by observers unaware of the experimental conditions for their degree of agency (here: competence) and communion (here: morality). It should be noted that valence was controlled in this design, as the behaviors were either positive or negative or ambivalent. Hence, negative correlations should result. Throughout all episodes, i.e., both the ambiguous ones (agency positive and communion negative or vice versa) and the consistent ones (both agency and communion positive or negative), the correlations of the agency and communion ratings were negative, ranging from  $r = -.54$  to  $r = -.87$ . Also, embodied cues for agency, such as taking an expanded posture, lead observers to infer not only high agency, but also low communion (Abele, Meier & Wildner, 2012).

Finally, in some restricted conditions, agency and communion tend to be negatively related at the level of person or group impressions, a phenomenon which Judd et al. (2005) called *the compensation effect*. According to these authors, it results from justice considerations: When individuals or groups are rated in pairs and one of them is rated as more agentic than the other, then the latter is rated as more communal – as if compensated for the relative lack of agency by a heightened ascription of communion (and vice versa). For example, the French are seen as more agentic than French-speaking Belgians, but Belgians are seen as more communal than the French (Yzerbyt, Provost & Corneille, 2005). Greeks are rated higher on warmth than Germans but lower on competence than Germans; and preschool teachers are rated higher on warmth but lower on competence than lawyers (Carlsson et al. 2012). Judgments of communion and agency are then negatively correlated. Although such correlations are relatively weak and not always significant (e.g. Carlsson et al., 2012; Judd et al., 2005; Kervyn, Yzerbyt, Demoulin & Judd, 2008), they nevertheless are of relevance, as they foster existing stereotypes. For example, Cuddy, Fiske, and Glick (2004) showed that in work contexts in which agency is the salient dimension, working mothers are viewed as less agentic than women who have no children, or men (fathers or not); but in home contexts where communion is the salient dimension, working mothers are seen as more communal than women who have no children (Cuddy et al., 2011).

The strongest support for the compensation effect comes from experiments in which participants received information on a target's standing on one dimension only and then were asked to infer the target's qualities on the other dimension. Targets described as highly agentic were inferred to be less communal and vice versa (Judd et al., 2005). Compensatory impressions are fostered by selective confirmation and communication to others (Kervyn, Yzerbyt, Judd & Nunes, 2009). This is demonstrated by work on the so-called innuendo

effect, which is an indirect or subtle implication within what has been expressed. Kervyn, Bergsieker, and Fiske (2012) demonstrated the innuendo effect by showing that when a speaker describes another person with clearly positive information on one dimension (e.g., communion) but completely omits information concerning the second dimension (i.e., agency), recipients of this information develop a negative impression of the target on the unmentioned dimension (and perceive the target as communal but not agentic). Presumably, information recipients take into account the unwritten rule of conversation “If you don’t have anything nice to say, don’t say anything at all.” The innuendo effect is stronger in contexts where the omitted information is expected, like information on agency in the context of work. However, the effect appears even when the omitted information is not contextually salient, such as information on agency in the context of leisure. This suggests that even if the target information concerns only one dimension, perceivers tend to deduce some hint concerning the second dimension. In more general terms, this line of research suggests that full-fledged impressions require information on both dimensions, and if one is lacking, it is inferred from the provided one.

It should be noted that the compensation effect as conceptualized by Judd et al. (2005) is not just a negative association of agency and communion. It is rather a motivational process driven by justice considerations. However, there is no research showing the compensation effect to be stronger after activation or priming of the justice motive, or among persons chronically stronger in this motive. Moreover, the negative relation between the agentic and communal content is found also at the level of personality traits or interpretations of single behavioral acts (as discussed at the outset of this section), where justice motives do not operate. This suggests that other explanations of the negative relation are needed, and we offer here a speculation based on the idea that agentic and communal content is typically processed on different occasions and, therefore, become dissociated in the perceiver’s mind and operate as psychological (though not semantic) alternatives.

From the point of view of our DPM and its main premise that actors and observers differ in their social perception goals, the discussion on relations between the two dimensions confirms the simple fact that behaviors are open to different interpretations. Moreover, it suggests that agency and communion provide not only different, but also alternative frames of reference in social cognition. Recall the Cislak and Wojciszke (2008) study (Figure 7): One and the same behavior was either interpreted as agentic or as communal (without having an influence on the ratings of the respective second dimension) depending on the interests it served. Or recall the innuendo studies (Kervyn et al., 2012): When a target’s high (low) agency (communion) was mentioned but not the other content dimension, then perceivers concluded the opposite on the other dimension. A study by Gebauer, Maio, and Pakizah (2013) is revealing in this context, too. They devised target descriptions consisting of trait pairs that varied in descriptive congruency (similar, i.e., belonging to the same dimension, e.g., distant-unsociable; dissimilar, belonging to different dimensions, e.g., kind-ironhearted, cruel-uncrafty) as well as evaluative congruency (both positive/negative; one positive, one negative). Ambivalence towards each target was measured. Independent of evaluative (in)congruence, descriptive (in)congruence also predicted ambivalence, as participants felt more ambivalent towards descriptively incongruent targets. Interestingly, although evaluative incongruence influenced the felt ambivalence via dissonant feelings (unpleasant tension when thinking about the target), descriptive incongruence’s effects on ambivalence were not mediated by such aversive feelings.

Why should people feel ambivalence toward a person who is both agentic and communal even if both qualities are positive? Why do they (sometimes) assume that somebody who is nice is also dumb, as Cuddy (2009) put it? Our tentative answer is that

agentic and communal characteristics get dissociated because we perceive them at different occasions. Numerous studies inspired by the DPM showed that agentic content is associated with the actor perspective, whereas communal content is associated with the observer/recipient perspective. As the perspectives tend to be mutually exclusive, the accompanying content may also become dissociated. Perceptions of high agency may inhibit the perception of high communion and vice versa. This dissociation may be more pronounced in the observer than actor perspective. As we have noted throughout this chapter, actors tend to see their behavior in agentic but also in communal terms. However, they seem to be – at least implicitly – aware of such dissociation and of alternative frames of reference in interpreting behavior: Impression management research (Holoien & Fiske, 2012) has revealed that when people want to appear agentic, they downplay their communal virtues, and when they want to appear communal, they downplay their agency.

To summarize, agency and communion are orthogonal dimensions of content. However, they sometimes seem to be positively related, because of their common variance with valence and because of attitudinal consistency forces. Moreover, they sometimes also seem negatively related, because the two contents are processed on different occasions and from the mutually exclusive perspectives of either an actor or an observer/recipient.

## **7. Concluding Remarks and Future Perspectives**

We presented the Dual Perspective Model that links the fundamental dimensions of content to the basic perspectives in social interaction. We have provided ample evidence for its three main hypotheses: the general primacy of communion, the higher weight given to communion in the observer perspective, and the higher weight given to agency in the actor perspective. We think that our model meets the standards for a good theory as defined in a recent article by Van Lange (2013), the so-called TAPAS approach, in which the first four letters are abbreviations for certain standards and the last “S” just means “standard”.

“T” stands for truth and testability, and we have shown that the hypotheses derived from the DPM are testable and that the empirical tests have supported its predictions. “A” stands for abstraction, i.e., concepts and principles underlying the phenomena studied. We think that the DPM provides clear and broad concepts, as the perspectives and content dimensions are both important and far reaching constructs that cover a wide range of phenomena. “P” means progress, i.e., a contribution beyond what was previously known. We think that the progress of the DPM lies not only in the new data it generated, but also in the integrative opportunity it offers for several models in social psychology. Social psychology has specialized in proposing precise micro-theories, which – laudably – are highly amenable to empirical scrutiny and verification. However, these theories are often impervious to mutual influences. This point is well illustrated by the numerous models using the two dimensions (under different names) discussed at the outset. We hope that the DPM and the research instigated by it will advance the field via integration. The final argument for a progressive character of the DPM is that it allows a reformulation of the venerable actor-observer distinction as a difference between an agent and a recipient, which livens up the classic perspective with new content and empirical prospects.

The second “A” in TAPAS stands for applicability, and we think that there are quite a few applied issues that may be addressed by means of the DPM: There are many instances in which actors and observers/recipients do not converge in their social judgments. They interpret the reasons for certain behaviors differently; they attend to different kinds of information; they evaluate information differently; they draw different conclusions from the same situation; and they may experience different emotions in the same situation. Sometimes, these differences are small and negligible, but they can also be large and have negative

consequences for further interactions. For example, knowing that observers attend more to communal information whereas actors attend more to agentic information might help to foster interpersonal understanding. Imagine an argument between friends: The actor wants to explain his/her point of view and tries to describe it in a competent and assertive manner. The observer, however, perceives that the actor is not friendly and empathic but rather rude and egocentric. Stated differently, the actor wants to be agentic for the sake of clarity, but the observer just notices a lack of communion. Understanding the different interpretation schemes involved in both perspectives might help to resolve the argument. As another example for the applied relevance, consider the following: Mother Theresa's actions in India were widely recognized as communal and serving interests of others, though they were not recognized as particularly efficient. Our model and data suggest that to be perceived as efficient, Mother Theresa should have also shown behaviors that served her own interests.

We are not aware of theoretical approaches that are directly related to our present theorizing, as the content models outlined in the introduction are either related to self-perception or to perception of others and/or groups. However, we think that there is an important link to construal level theory (Liberman & Trope, 1998; Liberman, Trope & Stephan, 2007). According to this theory, psychological distance determines whether actions are construed in more abstract (more distance) or more concrete (less distance) terms. Feasibility is a more concrete characteristic of actions, and desirability is a more abstract characteristic. The distinction between actor and observer is an instance of social distance that translates into psychological distance. Accordingly, it has been shown that decision making, for instance, differs with psychological distance – or in our terms with the perspective. Making decisions as an actor, i.e., in the perspective of the self, leads to a feasibility focus, whereas giving decision advice from outside, i.e., in the perspective of the observer, leads to a desirability focus (Lu, Xie & Xu, 2013). This analysis is compatible with the DPM: Feasibility may be more related to agentic content, and desirability may be more related to communal content. This reasoning is also in line with findings showing stronger correlations of valence with communion than with agency. Of course, we do not mean that the two approaches deal with exactly the same questions. Rather, we argue that it might be fruitful to think of psychological distance in terms of the fundamental content dimensions and to think about the perspective factor in terms of construal level.

There are a number of future research possibilities raised by the present approach. Besides a stronger link to construal level theory as outlined above, a link to research on embodiment (Barsalou, 1999; Niedenthal, Barsalou, Winkielman, Krauth-Gruber & Ric, 2005) seems worthwhile, because an increasing number of studies suggest that perceptions of agency and communion may be rooted in embodied cognition (IJzerman, Karremans, Thomsen & Schubert, 2013; Schubert, Schubert & Topolinski, 2013). Freddi, Tessier, Lacrampe, and Dru (2013), for instance, showed that the evaluation of traits was influenced by embodied cognition. Communion traits were judged more positively when moving towards the person than when moving away. Agency traits were rated more positively when moving upward than when moving downward.

Conversely, thinking about agency and communion might influence bodily experiences: A series of recent experiments showed that merely thinking about personality traits related to communion (but not agency) influences the physical experience of warmth (Szymkow, Chandler, IJzerman, Parzuchowski & Wojciszke, 2013). Specifically, the studies revealed that: (a) perceptions of ambient temperature are influenced by both positive and negative attributes within the communion but not agency dimension, (b) the effect is stronger when traits indicate sociability rather than the morality subdimension of communion,

and (c) communion activation affects temperature perceptions when the categories are used to think about either the self or other people.

Another important direction for further research could be the sub-differentiation of the Big Two. We have already argued that agency may be subdivided into a competence and an assertiveness component (Abele et al., 2008a) or a competence and energy to act component (Lachowicz-Tabaczek & Smiecinska, 2011). Communion may also be subdivided into a warmth/sociability versus a morality component, and recent research suggests that the morality component is more important for judging others and groups than the sociability component (Brambilla et al., 2011; Brambilla, Sacchi, Rusconi, Cherubini & Yzerbyt, 2012; Leach et al., 2007). In a recent study (Bruckmüller & Abele, 2013), we applied a multidimensional scaling procedure to trait words to examine whether the agency and communion dimensions form distinguishable sub-dimensions. We found that, in particular, the sub-dimensions of communion, i.e., morality and sociability, could be distinguished – especially for positive trait words. These sub-differentiations may lead to a still better understanding of the functions that agency and communion have in perceiving the self and others. Despite the possible nuances and subdivisions, we believe that large-scale distinctions and theorizing retain intellectual charm and bring conceptual insights which are hard to replace.

In this chapter, we have reviewed evidence for differences in social cognition and attitudes, but the DPM also allows some broader predictions concerning affective states and motivations. For example, the actor/agent position means the capacity to act and involves goal-attainment, whereas the observer/recipient position means being subjected to the actions of others. Therefore, it may be predicted that the agent experiences an increase in personal control and meaningfulness (accompanied by increases in positive affect and self-esteem), whereas the recipient experiences increased feelings of vulnerability (accompanied by decreases in positive affect and self-esteem). In a similar vein, it may be predicted that taking the agent perspective results in a general expansion – a heightened tendency to act, to contribute, to take control, which is accompanied by approaching obstacles as a challenge rather than a threat. On the other hand, the recipient position may result in a general contraction – a lowered tendency to act, to contribute, to take control, which is accompanied by perceiving obstacles as a threat rather than a challenge. However, testing these hypotheses would require another research program.

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Table 1.

*Examples for Twofold Content Conceptualizations in Different Fields of Psychology*

<b>Agentic content</b>	<b>Communal content</b>	<b>References</b>
<b><i>Intellectually good-bad</i></b> Traits having to do with intellectual activities (skillful, determined, foolish, dull).	<b><i>Socially good-bad</i></b> Traits having to do with social activities (warm, sociable, cold, unpopular).	Rosenberg, Nelson & Vivekananthan, 1968; Multidimensional scaling of trait names
<b><i>Masculinity</i></b> Traits that are ascribed to the male gender role (decisive, dominant, aggressive).	<b><i>Femininity</i></b> Traits that are ascribed to the female gender role (empathic, emotional, dependent).	Bem, 1974; Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1974; Eagly, 1987; Separate dimensions for gender stereotypes and the self-concept
<b><i>Independent self</i></b> Focus on individual's rights above duties, personal autonomy, and self-fulfillment (independent, unique).	<b><i>Interdependent self</i></b> Focus on group membership, sacrifice for the common good; priority given to group obligations (loyal, cooperative).	Hofstede, 1983; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1990; Separate dimensions describing self-construal
<b><i>Initiating structure</i></b> Leader defines roles, initiates actions, and defines how tasks are accomplished by the group.	<b><i>Consideration</i></b> Leader is concerned for the welfare of the members of the group.	Halpern & Winer, 1957; Bass, 1990; Leadership behavior
<b><i>Instrumentality</i></b> Instrumental behavior is oriented at goal fulfillment of the group as part of a larger social system.	<b><i>Expressiveness</i></b> Expressive behavior is directed at coherence, solidarity, and harmony within the group.	Parsons & Bales, 1955; Group functions
<b><i>Competence</i></b> Capabilities, skills, and efficiency in goal-attainment (efficient, dull).	<b><i>Morality</i></b> Information on how one's goals relate to well-being of others and moral norms (fair, disloyal).	Reeder & Brewer, 1979; Wojciszke, 2005a; Separate types of traits and behavioral information
<b><i>Competence of stereotyped groups</i></b> Follows from their high or low position in the status-power hierarchy (capable, efficient, intelligent, skillful).	<b><i>Warmth of stereotyped groups</i></b> Follows from their cooperation or competition with the own group (friendly, warm, sincere, trustworthy).	Fiske et al. (2002); Two dimensions of stereotype content
<b><i>Dominance</i></b> Dominance versus submissiveness. "Getting ahead"	<b><i>Warmth</i></b> Nurturance versus cold-heartedness. "Getting along"	Wiggins, 1979, 1991; Interpersonal circumplex; Hogan, 1983; socioanalytic theory
<b><i>Super-Hero</i></b> An egoistic bias, tendency to exaggerate one's social and intellectual status.	<b><i>Saint</i></b> A moralistic bias, tendency to deny deviant impulses.	Paulhus & John, 1998; Paulhus & Trapnell, 2008; Self-deceptive tendencies
<b><i>Power</i></b> Influence, uniqueness, power.	<b><i>Intimacy</i></b> Bonding, socializing, love.	McAdams, 1988; Content clustering in life stories
<b><i>Autonomy</i></b> Versus shame and doubt: Can I act on myself?	<b><i>Trust</i></b> Versus mistrust: can I trust others?	Erikson, 1950; Life tasks

Table 2.

*Correlations between Trait Content Dimensions Denoting Agency and Communion. Zero-order Correlations are above Diagonal, Partial Correlations Controlled for Trait Valence are below Diagonal (Based on Data of Abele & Wojciszke, 2007, Study 1)*

## (a) Agentic content

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Agency	-	.84	.85	.93
2. Masculinity	.68	-	.82	.90
3. Individualism	.72	.60	-	.84
4. Competence	.94	.64	.66	-

All correlations are significant at  $p < .001$

## (b) Communal content

	1.	2.	3.	4.
1. Communion	-	.82	.92	.91
2. Femininity	.42	-	.74	.77
3. Collectivism	.83	.35	-	.78
4. Morality	.62	.27	.42	-

All correlations are significant at  $p < .001$

Table 3

*Regression Analyses with Employees' Ratings of Their Supervisors' Agentic and Communal Traits as Predictors of Overall Evaluation in Two Organizations (Wojciszke & Abele, 2008, Study 2)*

	<i>B</i> ( $B_{ll} - B_{ul}$ )	$\beta$	F (model)	R <sup>2</sup> adj.
Bureaucratic organization	( <i>df</i> = 2, 78)		79.89***	.66
Communal	.32 (.24 .41)	.61***		
Agentic	.17 (.08 .27)	.29***		
Business organization	( <i>df</i> = 2, 76)		77.78***	.67
Communal	.22 (.10 .32)	.34***		
Agentic	.35 (.25 .46)	.57***		
Both organizations	( <i>df</i> = 4, 153)		79.71***	.67
Communal	.27 (.20 .33)	.47***		
Agentic	.27 (.20 .34)	.43***		
Communal x organization	.07 (.01 .12)	-.52*		
Agentic x organization	-.08 (-.13 -.01)	.49*		

Note: Each panel presents results of a separate regression analysis.

*B* unstandardized coefficient with a 95% confidence interval ( $B_{ll}$  = a lower limit;  $B_{ul}$  = an upper limit);  $\beta$  standardized coefficient.

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 4

Distributions of Agency and Communion Measures, and Regression of Self-esteem on Agency and Communion in Five Samples (Wojciszke, Baryla, Parzuchowski, Szymkow & Abele, 2011, Study 2).

Sample and dependent variable	Distribution		Regression		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	F (model)	Adj. $R^2$	$\beta$
1) Self-liking			54.42***	.39	
Agency (.90)	4.88	0.87			.63***
Communion (.88)	5.46	0.66			-.01
<i>t</i>	7.53***				
1) Self-competence			67.25***	.44	
Agency (.92)	4.88	0.87			.67***
Communion (.88)	5.46	0.66			.00
<i>t</i>	7.53***				
2) Implicit self-esteem			7.29**	.13	
Agency (.71)	37.73	21.41		.38***	
Communion (.79)	48.60	19.99			-.05
<i>t</i>	4.20***				
3) State self-esteem			19.88***	.30	
Agency (.87)	5.48	0.73			.61***
Communion (.88)	5.76	0.82			-.13
<i>t</i>	3.86***				
4) Narcissism			18.57***	.18	
Agency (.80)	5.12	0.76			.45***
Communion (.86)	5.52	0.82			-.06
<i>t</i>	5.54***				
5) Trait self-esteem			8.18***	.22	
Agency (.79)	5.76	0.71			.45**
Communion (.81)	6.32	0.72			.11
<i>t</i>	5.18***				

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 5

*Correlations of specific agency and communion traits with self-esteem (N = 236; Abele & Hauke, 2013)*

Communion	<i>r</i> with self-esteem	Agency	<i>r</i> with self-esteem
Trustworthy	.18*	Decisive	.37***
Helpful	.14*	Assertive	.34***
Honest	.17*	Persistent	.46***
Friendly	.13	Competent	.33***
Understanding	.15*	Industrious	.16*
Warm-hearted	.14*	Efficient	.30***

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

## Figure captions

Figure 1. Preferential processing of communal information (Based on data from Abele & Bruckmüller, 2011).

Figure 2. Global impressions as a function of the valence of communal and agentic behavioral information (Based on data from Wojciszke, Bazinska & Jaworski, 1998, Study 4),

Figure 3. Mean valence of emotions reported as responses to competence-related and moral acts committed by a person who was liked or disliked by the participants (Wojciszke & Szymkow, 2003, Study 1).

Figure 4. Preference for others' agency versus communion traits in dependence on the kind of relationship (based on data from Abele & Brack, 2013, Studies 2 and 3).

Figure 5. Influence of positive versus negative communal and positive versus negative agentic information on liking versus respect (Wojciszke, Abele, Baryla, 2009, Study 4).

Figure 6. Agency and communion ratings from the actor versus observer perspective (Abele, Bruckmüller & Wojciszke, 2013, Study 1).

Figure 7. Inferences of agency and communion as a function of the target's actions for interests of self-versus others (Cislak & Wojciszke, 2008).

Figure 1

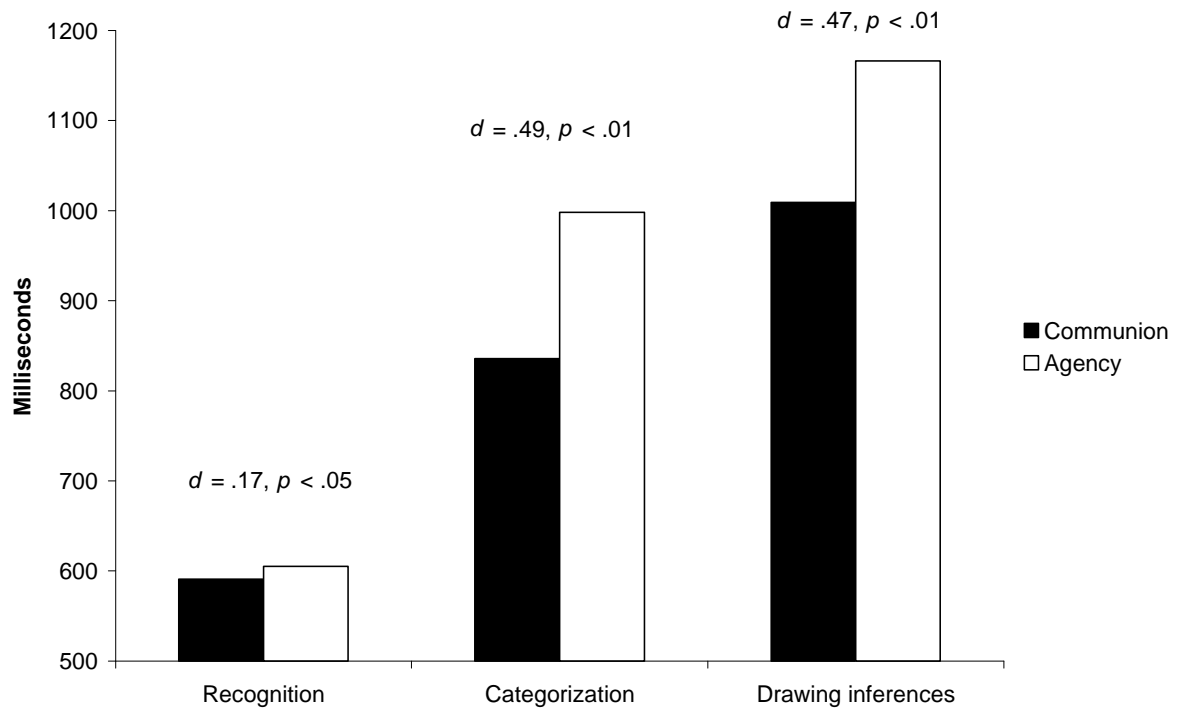


Figure 2

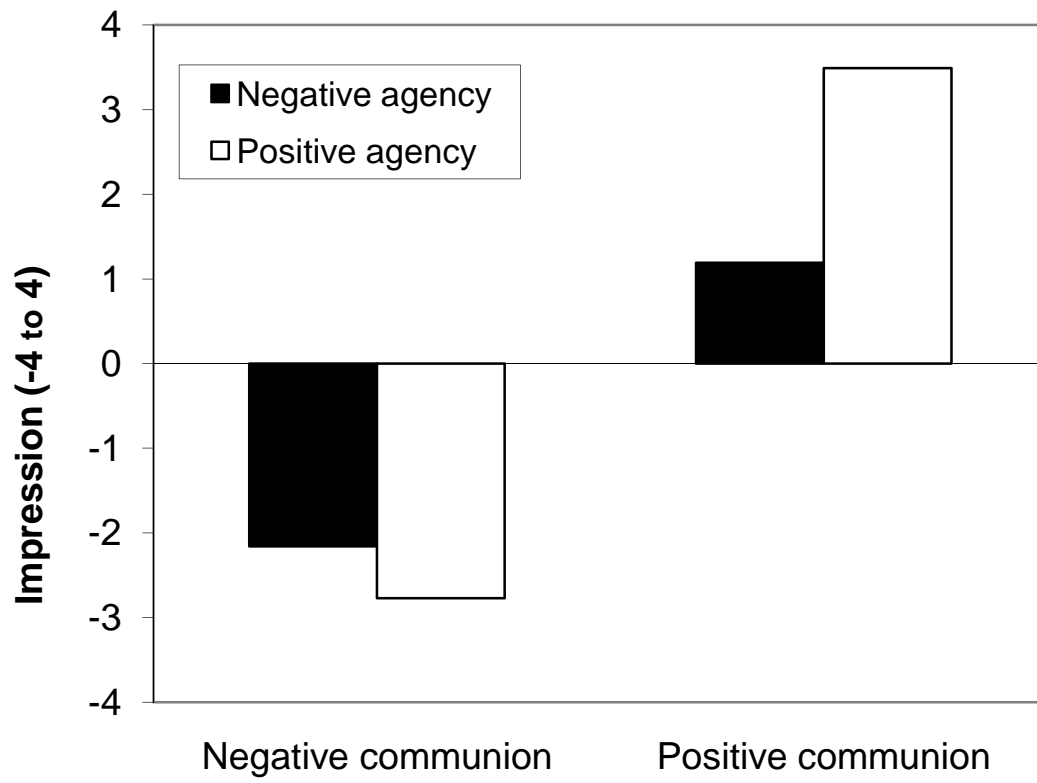


Figure 3

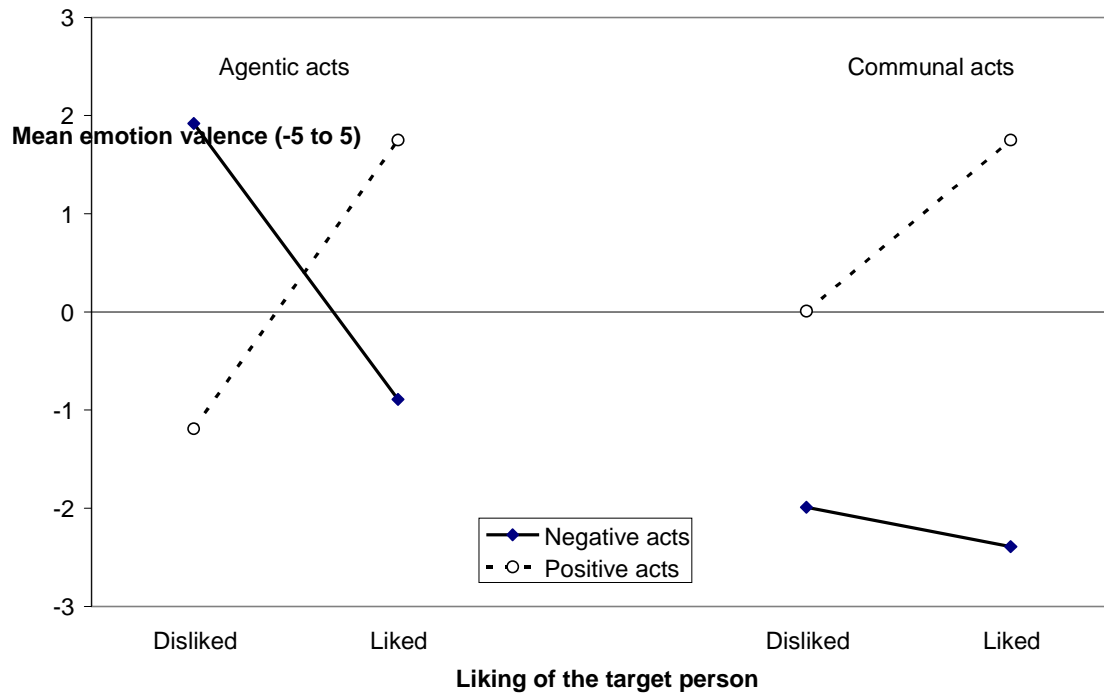


Figure 4

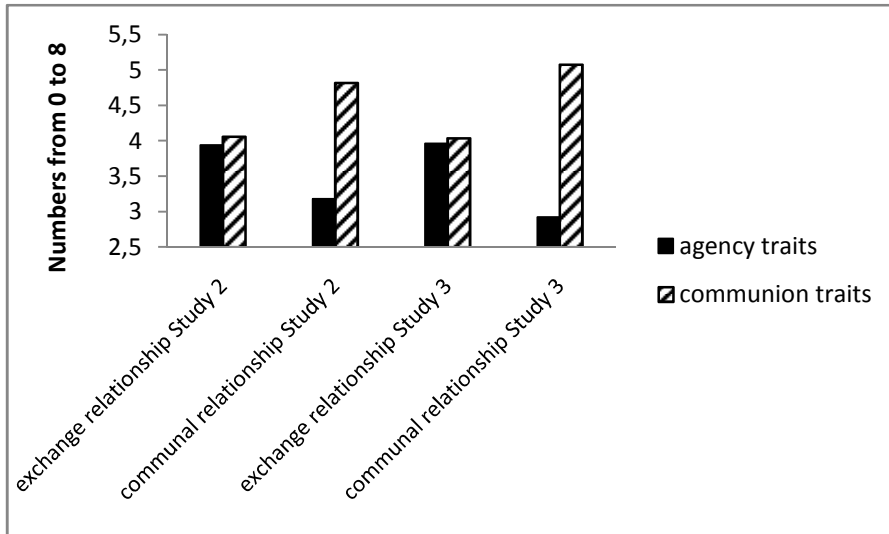


Figure 5

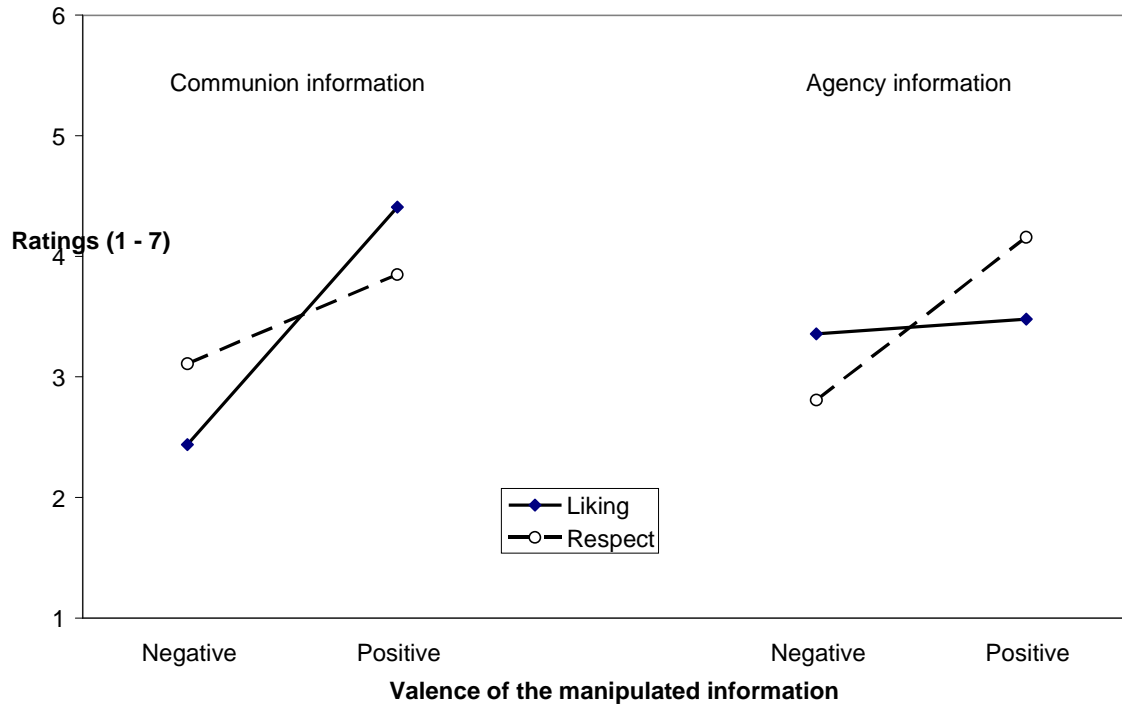


Figure 6

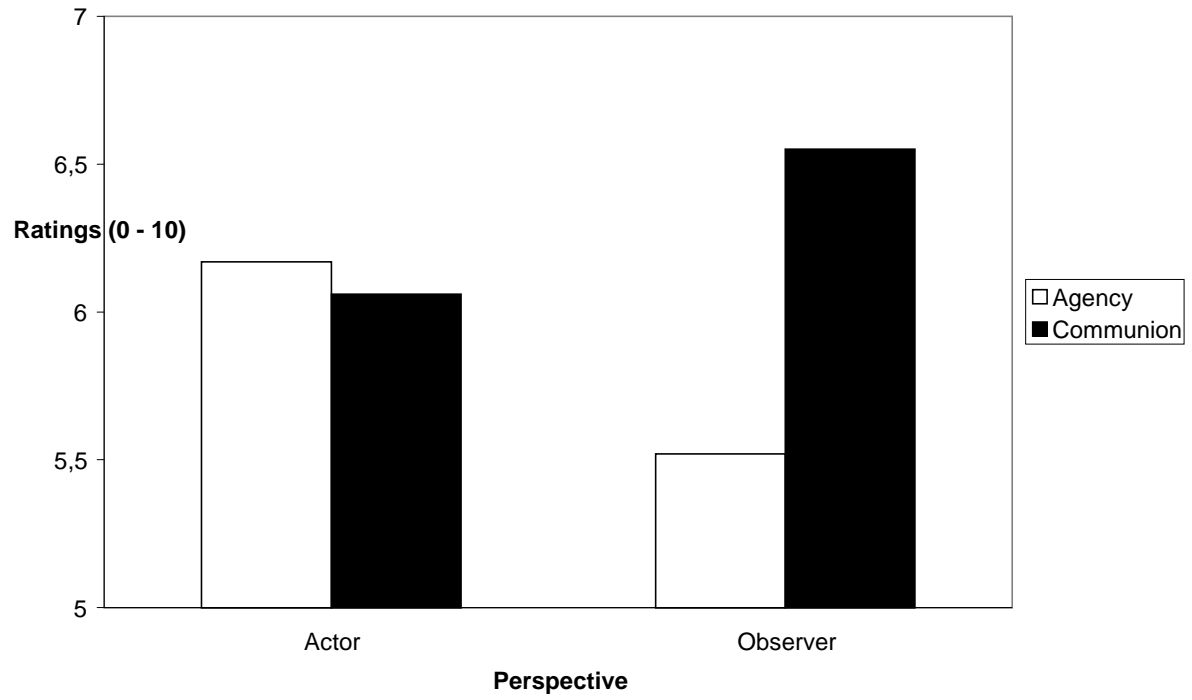


Figure 7

