

DESCRIPTION FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC (IN ENGLISH)

The question how people form judgments of themselves and others is a core topic of (social) psychology. Social cognition research addressing such questions can be concerned with the underlying *processes* (e.g., *How do we form first impressions? How are stereotypes formed and maintained?*) as well as with the *content* involved in these processes (e.g., *Which traits or behaviors matter most in impression formation? What is the content of common stereotypes?*). Research from various subfields of psychology has often answered the second type of questions by describing two basic content dimensions that structure perceptions of the self (e.g., Paulhus & Trapnell, 2008), of other people (e.g., Peeters & Czapinski, 1990), and of social groups (e.g., Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). Cross-cultural research demonstrates the ubiquity of these two content dimensions across languages (Abele, Uchrowski, Suitner, & Wojciszke, 2008; Ybarra et al., 2008). Indeed, these dimensions appear to be so ubiquitous and so fundamental in psychology that they are sometimes referred to as the “Big Two” (Paulhus & Trapnell, 2008).

The overarching goal of the proposed line of studies is to further the understanding of *agency* and *communion* (also often referred to as *competence* and *warmth* or the “Big Two”), two fundamental dimensions that structure perception and judgment of the self, other people, and social groups. Communion reflects the need for connection and positive relations with others and comprises the sub-facets *warmth* and *morality*. Agency reflects the need to assert the self and to pursue own goals, comprising the sub-facets of *assertiveness* and *competence*. Despite an extensive literature on these Big Two dimensions, little attention has been devoted to the structure of their cognitive representation – even though there are some empirical indications that they might be structured differently, and even though such differences in structure would have a number of important consequences for both theory and research practice. With this project, we aim to fill this gap. We specifically predict that communion is represented as a more homogeneous and conceptually denser construct than agency (H1). We further propose that, as a result, lay people have different implicit personality theories for agency and communion; more specifically, we predict that communion is represented in a more categorical/ bipolar fashion than agency (H2). That is, we propose that lay people tend to judge communion in an either-or fashion (somebody is either a good person or a bad person). To test these hypotheses, we propose a multi-step research project triangulating a range of different research methods. Specifically, we combine re-analyses of previous data (a meta-analysis of reliability coefficients and structural equation modeling of large-scale survey data) with a series of controlled self-replicating experiments (N=1600) employing innovative methods, such as spatial arrangement. Conducting parallel studies in Poland and Germany will allow us to gauge the generalizability of findings across languages. In sum, this project will enhance understanding of the Big Two dimensions, it will explain some seemingly contradictory previous findings in Big Two research, and will continue and expand a fruitful collaboration between Polish and German researchers