

## **Socially induced affect and the “Big Two”: Interactive effects of agency and communion on affect contagion and countercontagion**

Psychologists have long shown that people can “catch” moods and emotions of those they interact with. Being around happy friends can cheer us up in minutes, whereas running into a grumpy neighbor may dampen our mood for the rest of the day. This widely observed phenomenon – of the feelings of a receiver being influenced by those of a sender – is often referred to as *affect contagion* or *the social induction of affect*.

Initially researchers thought that affect contagion occurs in all interactions without exception. Recent findings, however, have challenged this view by showing that exposure to dislikeable senders may not result in concordant affective reactions or even lead to the induction of discordant ones. This inspired many scientists to search for the factors responsible for concordant *versus* discordant reactions to the sender’s emotional expressions. For instance, Martin Bruder and his colleagues proposed the *reliability hypothesis* which holds that receivers are likely to converge with affect expressed by warm and competent senders and diverge from affect expressed by cold and incompetent senders. The evidence for this hypothesis, however, is incomplete. Although research confirms that the sender’s warmth (also referred to as *communion*) may promote concordant reactions to his or her emotional displays, the role of the sender’s competence (also referred to as *agency*) seems to be more complex than the reliability hypothesis assumes. Thus, in the proposed project, we aim to directly test this hypothesis. Based on the Model of Agency and Communion developed by Andrea Abele and Bogdan Wojciszke, we expect that agency and communion interact in influencing the social induction of affect. In other words, we argue that the sender’s competence may either foster or hinder concordant affective reactions to the sender’s emotional displays depending on his/her warmth.

To the best of our knowledge, previous research on socially induced affect ignored the fact that agency and communion may interact and analyzed their effects separately. Therefore, to address this limitation, we will run a series of experiments in which we will manipulate agentic and communal traits of the sender simultaneously. Prior to these experiments, we will create a new measure of momentary emotions to ensure that participants’ affective states will be measured precisely and adequately. Once the measure is ready, we will use it in five experimental studies that will test our hypotheses. We will present participants with short descriptions of the senders and expose them to videos showing the senders’ emotional displays. We will also measure participants’ affective reactions to these videos.

The proposed project will shed new light on the role of agency in the social induction of affect and facilitate research in this area by providing researchers with a new validated tool to measure happiness, sadness, anger and fear.