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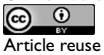

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Behavioral and Valuation Contingency: Why the Same Dispositions Lead to Different Social Evaluations Across Contexts

Michael Dufner[1]*, Stathis Grapsas[2]*, and Richard Rau[3,4]

Abstract

Studies have linked personality dispositions to important social evaluations, such as how much power individuals are granted, or how much they are liked. Yet, these links are not always consistent and seem to depend on the social context. We zeroed in on this issue, testing two mutually non-exclusive hypotheses on how the context might moderate the effects of personality dispositions on perceptions of power and likability in newly formed groups. The *behavior contingency* hypothesis posits that the context moderates the extent to which a disposition is expressed in behavior. The *valuation contingency* hypothesis posits that the context moderates the extent to which disposition-specific behavior is valued. In a round-robin study, we found support for both hypotheses with regard to perceptions of power (but not with regard to likability). The findings reveal the importance of behavior expression and valuation in the processes underlying personality-situation interactions in power hierarchies.

Keywords

person perception, personality, power, interpersonal processes, likability, round robin

When new groups are formed, some people seem innately able to gain power (Zaccaro, 2007) and some become spontaneously liked (Wortman & Wood, 2011). But why so? Identifying the dispositional antecedents of social evaluations is among the major tasks of social-personality psychology (Back et al., 2011; Kenny, 1994; Ozer & Benet-Martinez, 2006), and evaluations of power and likability are particularly relevant for research and applied settings (Wojciszke et al., 2009).

The traits that underlie individuals' dispositional tendencies to gain power and likability can be mapped on the two fundamental dimensions of social life, agency, and communion (Bakan, 1966). Agency describes the tendency to get ahead socially: to gain power and influence (Hogan, 1982). Highly agentic persons are described as assertive, self-confident, or determined (Abele et al., 2008), and many personality predictors of power in face-to-face groups (Grosz et al., 2020), such as extraversion or grandiose narcissism, have been described as agentic traits (Campbell & Foster, 2011; McCrae & Costa, 1989). Communion, in contrast, describes the tendency to get along with others: to become liked and included (Hogan, 1982). Highly communal persons are described as polite, helpful, or trustworthy (Abele et al., 2008), and past research indicates that traits characterized by high communion (McCrae & Costa, 1989), such as agreeableness (de Vries et al., 2020) or altruism (Sandstrom & Cillessen, 2006), predict being liked.

Despite this general pattern, the links between personality and social evaluations appear to vary across contexts (Carlson & Lawless DesJardins, 2015; Küfner et al., 2013; Lawless DesJardins et al., 2015; Wood & Harms, 2017). The present study aims to uncover why, through an experimental design. We propose that the social context moderates a chain of processes that link personality to social evaluations. According to dynamic relationship models of personality (e.g., Back et al., 2011; Brunswik, 1956; Funder, 1995), people express their personality dispositions via observable behavioral cues, which are then used by interaction partners to form social evaluations (Figure 1, continuous arrows). Studies indicate that agentic

[1]Witten/Herdecke University, Germany
[2]Utrecht University, The Netherlands
[3]HMU Health and Medical University Potsdam, Germany
[4]University of Münster, Germany

*Shared first authorship

Corresponding Author:
Michael Dufner, Witten/Herdecke University, Alfred-Herrhausen-Straße 50, D-58448 Witten, Germany.
Email: Michael.Dufner@uni-wh.de

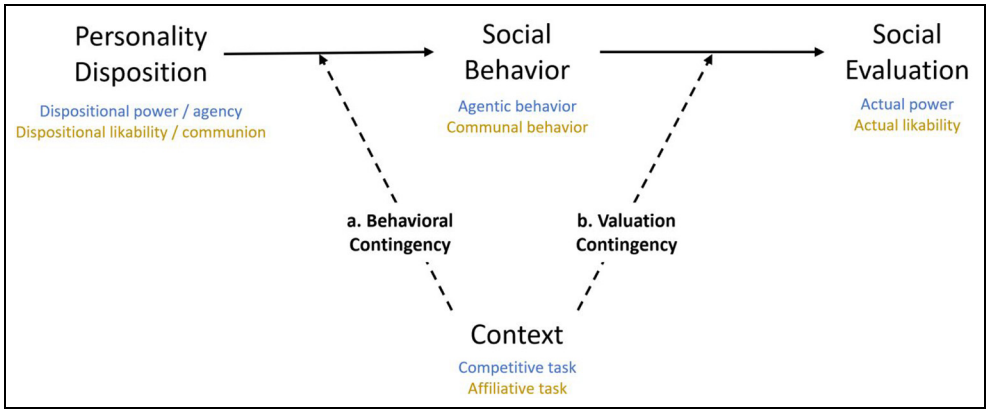

Figure 1. *Illustration of Study Hypotheses*

Note. Personality dispositions of actors are assumed to generate corresponding social behaviors. Observers are assumed to use these behaviors for social evaluations. The context is assumed to moderate the strength of these relations in two non-mutually exclusive ways: when social behaviors are conducive to the goals of the context, actors may be more likely to engage in these behaviors (path a: behavioral contingency hypothesis), and/or observers may be more likely to pick up on these behaviors and base upon them their social evaluations (path b: valuation contingency hypothesis).

behaviors, such as displays of dominance or confidence, mediate the effect of personality on evaluations of power (Anderson, Brion, et al., 2012) whereas communal behaviors, such as displays of warmth and friendliness, mediate the effect of personality on evaluations of likability (Leckelt et al., 2015).

What moderating role could the context play? As shown in Figure 1 and proposed by existing conceptual models (Back et al., 2018; Grosz et al., 2020), the context could moderate the path leading from dispositions to behavior, the one leading from behavior to social evaluations, or both. Concerning the first possibility, interactionist models in personality and organizational psychology (Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Murray, 1938; Tett et al., 2013) argue that the social context influences how much people behaviorally express their dispositional tendencies (Figure 1, moderation path a). Contextual cues may increase or decrease the likelihood of a certain personality disposition being expressed via behavior, whether this is based on conditioning principles, activation of motivation, or mental representations of situational characteristics (Blum et al., 2018; Fleeson & Noftle, 2008; Szücs et al., 2023; Wallace & Baumeister, 2002). Thus, people scoring high on a given disposition (e.g., agency) may be more likely to express it in behavior (e.g., assertiveness, dominance) in a congruent (e.g., social influence) than in a less congruent (e.g., affiliative) social context. We term this possibility the *behavioral contingency hypothesis*.

Concerning the path leading from behavior to social evaluations, it could be that the social evaluations evoked by a certain type of behavior vary across social contexts (Figure 1, moderation path b). For example, in a context where affiliation is crucial, communal behaviors might be valued much more than in a social influence context. Hence, the same behaviors would be valued differently in different contexts (as argued by Leckelt et al., 2015; Wood & Harms, 2017; Lawless DesJardins et al., 2015). We term this possibility the *valuation contingency hypothesis*.

The Present Study

In the present laboratory study, we examined the entire process leading from dispositions via behavior to social evaluations. We experimentally varied the situational context and tested the behavioral and valuation contingency hypotheses.

As personality predictors, we first assessed participants' dispositional tendencies to attain power and likability, as well as their dispositional level of agency and communion. We combined self- and informant-reports to derive consensus estimates of these personality predictors (McAbee & Connelly, 2016). We then assigned participants to small groups that met twice, once interacting in a social influence and once in an affiliative context (in randomized order).

We video-observed participants' agentic and communal behavior during the sessions and collected round-robin ratings of actual power and likability in the groups. Testing the behavioral contingency hypothesis, we examined whether the dispositional tendency to attain power as well as dispositional agency would be more strongly related to agentic behavior in a social influence than in an affiliative context. Conversely, we also examined whether dispositional likability and communion would be more strongly related to communal behavior in an affiliative than in a social influence context. Testing the valuation contingency hypothesis, we examined whether agentic behavior would be more strongly related to actual power in an agentic than in an affiliative context. Conversely, we also examined

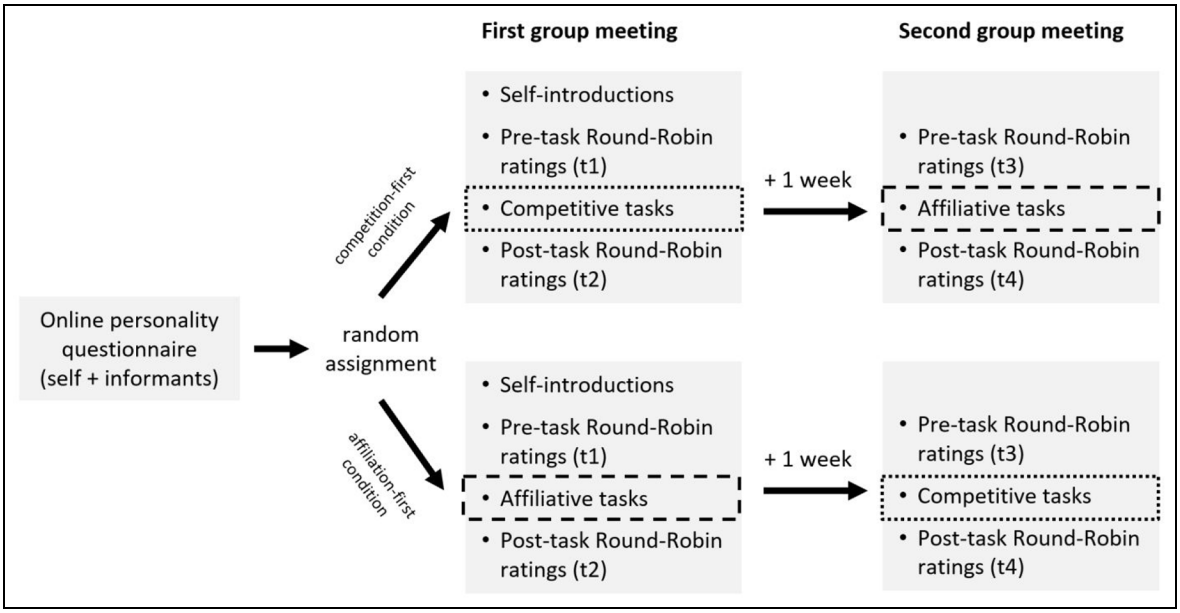

Figure 2. *Study Timeline (Dotted vs. Dashed Boxes Highlight Social Influence vs. Affiliative Contexts)*

whether communal behavior would be more strongly related to actual likability in a communal than in a social influence context.

Method

We did not preregister our study design, hypotheses, or analysis plans. We openly provide our data and code at https://osf.io/preprints/psyarxiv/dkunw_v2. Data collection was part of a larger study Dufner et al. (2024), approved by the Witten/Herdecke University ethics committee. A detailed description of the study design and a comprehensive list of measures are found in the study codebook (https://osf.io/dv2eb). Only the study parts and measures that are relevant to the current research questions are described here.

The study included 256 participants (78% female, 21% male, 2% did not specify their gender), aged 18–35 years (M = 24.6, SD = 4.38). Most of them were university students (79%). Psychology students were excluded due to potential familiarity with the measures. Participants were compensated with 70€. Ten participants did not attend the second laboratory session but were kept in the analyses with their missing values being handled by a full information maximum likelihood estimator.

The sample size was determined by the available financial resources. We therefore conducted a post hoc power analysis (Supplemental Figure S1). A sample of N = 256 yields statistical power of .80 in a one-sided test at α = .05 for standardized regression paths of β = .27 in a structural equation model (SEM) such as ours (Christopher Westland, 2010).

Procedure and Measures

The procedure is illustrated in Figure 2. Details on measures and on the laboratory tasks are presented in Table 1.

Personality Assessment. Personality dispositions of power, likability, agency, and communion were assessed with validated scales online before the laboratory sessions, via self and informant reports. To collect informant reports, we requested participants to invite at least three persons (M = 3.23, SD = 1.13) who knew them well. Informants (60% friends, 14% romantic partners, 10% siblings, 16% other/no information) were not allowed to participate as targets. Per measure, we averaged participants' self-reports and the mean of their informants' responses into a total score (for descriptive statistics, reliabilities, inter-informant agreement and self-informant correlations, see Supplemental Table S1).

Laboratory Sessions. Participants attended laboratory group sessions in which we observed their behavior and collected round-robin assessments. During the sessions, participants interacted with each other in randomly composed same-sex groups consisting of four to six previously unacquainted persons (12 groups consisting of four, 20 groups of five, and 18 groups of six persons). Each group took part in two laboratory group sessions, a social influence and an affiliative one, involving three tasks each. The two sessions were 7 days apart from each other, and their ordering was balanced (51% of participants first attended the social influence session).

At the beginning of the social influence session, participants received the following instruction: *Each task is about*

Table 1. *Description of Measures and Laboratory Tasks*

Study part	Construct	Assessment	Description	No. items	Sample items	Rating scale	Reference (if applicable)
Online personality assessment	Dispositional power	Sense of Power Scale	Indexes the perceived capacity to exert influence across social relationships.	8	"In my relationships with others, I think I have a great deal of power"	1 = disagree strongly, to 7 = agree strongly	Anderson, John, & Keltner (2012)
Online personality assessment	Dispositional likability	Sense of Likability Scale	Indexes participants' perceived capacity to form bonds and be liked across social relationships.	8	"When I am new in a group, I quickly find people with whom I am on the same wavelength"	1 = disagree strongly, to 6 = agree strongly	Schliebener et al. (2023)
Online personality assessment	Dispositional agency	Agentic Adjectives	Description of targets using agentic adjectives.	5	"ambitious" "controlling" "clever" "dominant" "leader figure"	1 = not agree at all, to 6 = agree completely	Gebauer et al. (2013)
Online personality assessment	Dispositional communion	Communal Adjectives	Description of targets using communal adjectives.	5	"warmhearted" "compassionate" "honest" "understanding" "caring"	1 = not agree at all, to 6 = agree completely	Gebauer et al. (2013)
Social influence group session	Social influence task	Landing on the Moon Task	Participants were instructed to imagine being a member of a space crew stranded on the moon. Members had to rank 15 items that they could take on a 200-mile trip in terms of their importance for the crew's survival (torch, water, etc.). They first had some time to create a rank ordering for themselves, they should then discuss the issue with the other group members, and finally come to a common rank ordering.	-	-	-	Robins & Beer (2001)
Social influence group session	Social influence task	Morality Ranking	A fictitious story with several people was presented, and participants should, again as a group, rank these persons in terms of how morally good they behaved.	-	-	-	Rau et al. (2019)
Social Influence group session	Social influence task	Debate Task	Participants were randomly assigned a position toward reforming the law on organ donation (in favor/opposed), which they should defend.	-	-	-	-

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Study part	Construct	Assessment	Description	No. items	Sample items	Rating scale	Reference (if applicable)
Affiliative group session	Intragroup affiliation task	Get-to-know Task	Participants received a pile of cards. Each participant had to draw a card and answer a personal question that was on it.	-	-	-	-
Affiliative group session	Intragroup affiliation task	Self-disclosure Task	Each participant was requested to reveal two funny or bizarre things about themselves, only one of which was true. The other participants should then guess which one is true.	-	-	-	-
Affiliative group session	Intragroup affiliation task	Group Logo Task	Participants were requested to create a logo that would represent them as a group (i.e., that represents what connects the group and makes it unique).	-	-	-	-
Both group sessions	Agentic behavior codings	Interpersonal Adjectives List	Four observers (randomly assigned per session) rated participants' agentic behavior using two adjectives from the high agency and two adjectives from the low agency octants.	4	"assertive" "confident" "shy" (reversed) "insecure" (reversed)	1 = disagree strongly, to 6 = agree strongly	Jacobs & Scholl (2005)
Both group sessions	Communal behavior codings	Interpersonal Adjectives List	Four observers (randomly assigned per session) rated participants' communal behavior using two adjectives from the high communion and two adjectives from the low communion octants.	4	"empathic" "warm," "hostile" (reversed) "ruthless" (reversed)	1 = disagree strongly, to 6 = agree strongly	Jacobs & Scholl (2005)
Before and after each session	Social evaluations of power	Groupmate Power Ratings	Before and after each session, participants completed round-robin ratings of each of their groupmates' degree of power.	3	"This person has a lot of power and influence on our group" "This person has a high status (respect, prominence) within our group" "This person would be a good leader of our group"	1 = disagree strongly, to 6 = agree strongly	-
Before and after each session	Social evaluations of likability	Groupmate Likability Ratings	Before and after each session, participants completed round-robin ratings of each of their groupmates' likability.	3	"I like this person" "I get along well with this person" "I find this person pleasant"	1 = disagree strongly, to 6 = agree strongly	-

(continued)

Table 1 (continued)

Study part	Construct	Assessment	Description	No. items	Sample items	Rating scale	Reference (if applicable)
After each session	Manipulation check for power salience of group session	Power Salience Rating	After each session, participants indicated to what extent the session offered a lot of opportunities for influencing others.	1	"The previous situations generally offered the possibility of influencing others."	1 = disagree strongly, to 6 = agree strongly	-
After each session	Manipulation check for affiliation salience of group session	Affiliation Salience Rating	After each session, participants indicated to what extent the session offered a lot of opportunities for making friends.	1	"The previous situations generally offered the opportunity to make friends with others."	1 = disagree strongly, to 6 = agree strongly	-

convincing the group of your own position. It is therefore a matter of exerting as much influence as possible on others. Participants also learned that after each task, they would anonymously nominate the person who exerted the most influence on the group (these nominations were not analyzed in the current research). This rationale builds on the structural properties of the constructs, as agentic traits like power follow a zero-sum logic—where one person's gain in influence typically comes at the expense of others' (Sadler & Woody, 2003; Schauf et al., 2023)—making a social influence social influence context well suited to revealing underlying dispositional differences in agency. To make the affiliative nature of the communal session salient, at its beginning participants were informed that each task was *about getting to know each other better*. The rationale underlying this approach was due to the non-zero sum nature of communion (Sadler & Woody, 2003; Schauf et al., 2023): creating a relatively weak situation (Cooper & Withey, 2009) that involves natural group interaction would be well-suited for capturing genuine individual differences in communal behavior.

Behavior Codings. Participants were filmed by four unobtrusive video cameras during the group sessions. Eight external observers (four observers randomly assigned per context) rated participants' agentic and communal behavior (descriptive statistics and reliabilities for behavior codings in Supplemental Table S2). For our analyses, we group-mean centered these variables to account for between-group variation in behavior.

Social Evaluations. Before and after each session was completed, participants completed round-robin ratings of their groupmates' power and likability. Per groupmate, participants responded to three items indexing power and three items indexing likability. We averaged responses per perceiver-target dyad into a total score at each measurement occasion.

We then decomposed these scores into the perceiver, target, and relationship components using the *TripleR* package (Schönbrodt et al., 2012). For analyzing the personality predictors, it is a precondition that participants agreed at least to some extent about the degree of each group member's power and likability. This means that the proportions of standardized target variance for a given social evaluation should exceed the threshold of .10 (Kenny, 1994). This criterion was met for power ratings at all measurement occasions (range: .22–.52). For likability, this criterion was only modest (range: .06–.21) and did not exceed the threshold of .10 at one measurement occasion. This finding mirrors previous reports of limited target variance for ratings of communal attributes in a low-acquaintance setting (e.g., Rau et al., 2019, 2022) and reflects an important caveat that warrants caution, especially when interpreting the effects of predictors on likability at the final time point in the competition-first condition. Detailed descriptive statistics

Table 2. *Interpersonal Perception Components by Context and Context-Order*

Session order	Construct	Task	Pre- vs. post-task	Perceiver variance	Target variance	Relationship variance (incl. error variance)	*M*	*SD*	α	Target effect pre-post stability
Social Influence first	Likability	Social Influence	pre	.24	.10	.67	4.26	.83	.90	.63
			post	.19	.13	.68	4.21	.97	.94	
		Affiliation	pre	.19	.10	.71	4.19	.89	.94	.85
			post	.33	.06	.61	4.52	.90	.92	
	Power	Social Influence	pre	.22	.22	.56	3.55	.83	.84	.44
			post	.08	.49	.43	3.85	1.06	.88	
		Affiliation	pre	.08	.45	.47	3.79	.97	.86	.92
			post	.13	.39	.48	3.96	.91	.89	
Affiliation first	Likability	Social Influence	pre	.34	.20	.46	4.34	.96	.93	.85
			post	.32	.21	.47	4.29	1.01	.94	
		Affiliation	pre	.30	.15	.55	4.16	.89	.91	.64
			post	.32	.19	.49	4.53	.98	.93	
	Power	Social Influence	pre	.16	.34	.50	3.73	.99	.87	.80
			post	.06	.52	.42	3.93	1.15	.85	
		Affiliation	pre	.09	.31	.60	3.48	.95	.86	.72
			post	.15	.39	.46	3,77	1.02	.87	

Note. Standardized variance components are reported.

on the social valuation data by measurement occasion can be found in Table 2.

A correlation matrix of all measured variables is presented in Supplemental Table S3.

Manipulation Checks. After each session, participants indicated how salient power/social influence and affiliation with others were in the session.

Data Analysis

We tested our hypotheses through SEM using *lavaan* (Rosseel, 2012) in *R* (R Development Core Team, 2008). SEM allowed us to establish the measures' psychometric properties (i.e., unidimensionality, measurement invariance) and examine their structural relations (i.e., effects of behavioral and valuation contingency) within a common framework. We first set up a baseline model, which established a fair balance between model fit and parsimony in its measurement part while having a saturated structural part (i.e., all latent variables allowed to correlate freely). For variables that had been assessed repeatedly, we then modeled regression paths according to the temporal order in which the variables had been assessed (i.e., latent variables measured at time *t* regressed on all latent variables measured at time *t-1*). Modeling the competition-first and the affiliation-first conditions separately in multigroup SEM allowed us to model the sequence in which the assessments took place, while also accounting for its potential effects on results. We tested our hypotheses via model comparisons that examined the effects of constraining context-congruent versus context-incongruent paths to be equal. There were thus eight possible significance tests for our central hypotheses. To avoid the risk of false positive results, we used a significance threshold of $p < .01$.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Manipulation Checks. Participants perceived that social influence was more salient in the social influence ($M = 5.01$, $SD = 0.93$) than in the affiliative session ($M = 3.48$, $SD = 1.21$; $t[250] = 16.67$; $d = 1.42$), whereas making friends was more salient in the affiliative ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 0.90$) than in the social influence session ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.06$, $t[250] = 14.94$; $d = 1.13$). Thus, our manipulation of the session content was successful.

Baseline Model. The baseline models we established as a precondition before testing our hypotheses imposed several constraints for parsimony (see Supplement section "Baseline Model Construction" and Supplemental Figures S2 and S3 for a detailed description of this process). We included measurement invariance constraints (i.e., fixed loadings), which ensured that the latent variables captured the same individual differences across groups and timepoints. Given the very high number of constraints, these models fit the observed data acceptably well; χ^2(df) = 3409 (2018); comparative fit index (CFI) = .909; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .052; standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .070 (for the model with dispositional agency and communion as personality variables), and χ^2(df) = 2935 (1544); CFI = .905; RMSEA = .059; SRMR = .072 (for the model with dispositional power and likability as personality variables). Furthermore, since our sample size seemed somewhat

borderline to estimate a highly parametrized model such as this, we verified that the same substantive results would be found in a drastically simplified statistical approach in which all variables were first scored by averaging across the respective indicators and then used as manifest variables in a path-analysis (see Supplemental Table S4).

Primary Analyses

Our multigroup structural equation modeling (SEMs) covered both the power and the likability domains simultaneously, which had the advantage that it ruled out the alternative explanation that effects were merely driven by global positivity, rather than domain-specific evaluations (Rau et al., 2021). For comprehensibility, however, we will present the relevant results regarding the two content domains separately. (A full illustration of the model including all relevant path coefficients is shown in Supplemental Figures S4 and S5.) In the following, we first discuss behavioral contingency and valuation contingency in the power domain, then in the likability domain.

Power. Figure 3, when read from left to right, shows how dispositional power (Panel A) and dispositional agency (Panel B) predicted agentic behavior during the two group sessions, and how this behavior contributed to changes in evaluations of people's power over the course of the study. The effects found for the competition-first and affiliation-first conditions are displayed above and below the horizontal lines, respectively. As shown in Figure 3, participants' dispositional power and agency each predicted agentic behavior in three out of four instances, and agentic behavior in turn contributed to evaluations of power in all instances.

Behavioral Contingency. Findings for dispositional power supported the behavioral contingency hypothesis. A model in which coefficients could vary across the two groups fit the data significantly better than a model in which coefficients were set equal across groups, $\Delta\chi^2(\text{df}) = 9.54(2)$, $p = .008$). As seen in Figure 3 (Panel A), this effect was mainly driven by the paths from dispositional power to agentic behavior at the second timepoint differing between the contexts (social influence session: $\beta = .30$ vs. affiliative session: $\beta = -.05$).

The hypothesis was also supported for dispositional agency. A model in which coefficients could vary across the two groups fit the data significantly better than a model in which coefficients were set equal across groups, $\Delta\chi^2(\text{df}) = 10.01(2)$, $p = .007$). Again, the effect was mainly driven by the second timepoint (Figure 3, Panel B) where the coefficient was much larger for the social influence session ($\beta = .33$) than for the affiliative session ($\beta = -.01$). Given that the difference of effects at the first timepoint in fact went in the opposite direction than expected, we verified that the model comparison was still significant when not considering this timepoint, $\Delta\chi^2(\text{df}) = 9.97(1)$, $p = .002$.

Taken together, the results supported the behavioral contingency hypothesis in the power domain. Dispositional power and agency predicted agentic behavior more strongly when the context was social influence, rather than affiliative—and this was particularly the case when participants met for the second time.

Valuation Contingency. The valuation contingency hypothesis was supported when dispositional power was used as the personality predictor. A model in which coefficients could vary between the two groups fit the data significantly better than a model in which coefficients were set equal across groups, $\Delta\chi^2(\text{df}) = 16.13(2)$, $p < .001$). Paths were descriptively larger in the group that was in the congruent context than the one in the incongruent context at the first timepoint (social influence session: $\beta = .65$, affiliative session: $\beta = .45$) and at the second timepoint (social influence session: $\beta = .52$, affiliative session: $\beta = .16$; Figure 3, Panel A).

A very similar picture emerged for dispositional agency. A model in which coefficients could vary between the two groups fit the data significantly better than a model in which coefficients were set equal across groups, $\Delta\chi^2(\text{df}) = 14.85(2)$, $p < .001$). The paths were again descriptively larger in the group that was in the congruent context than for the one in the incongruent context at the first timepoint (social influence session: $\beta = .64$, affiliative session: $\beta = .44$) and at the second timepoint (social influence session: $\beta = .48$, affiliative session: $\beta = .14$; Figure 3, Panel B).

Taken together, these results support the valuation contingency hypothesis in the power domain. Agentic behavior predicted peer-evaluated power more strongly when the context was related to social influence, rather than to affiliation.

From Dispositions to Social Evaluations. As a result of behavioral and valuation contingency, dispositional power overall contributed more to actual (i.e., peer-assigned) power in a social influence context (standardized total effect = .29, $p = .001$) than in an affiliative context (standardized total effect = .10; $p = .117$), independent of context-order. This effect was partly mediated by agentic behavior in the social influence context (standardized indirect effects = .18, $p_{\text{bootstrapped}} = .007$), but not in the affiliative context (standardized indirect effects = .01, $p_{\text{bootstrapped}} = .852$). The same pattern emerged for dispositional agency (standardized total effects = .27, $p = .019$ and = .12, $p = .050$; standardized indirect effects = .17, $p_{\text{bootstrapped}} = .024$, and = .03, $p_{\text{bootstrapped}} = .154$ in the social influence vs. affiliative context, respectively).

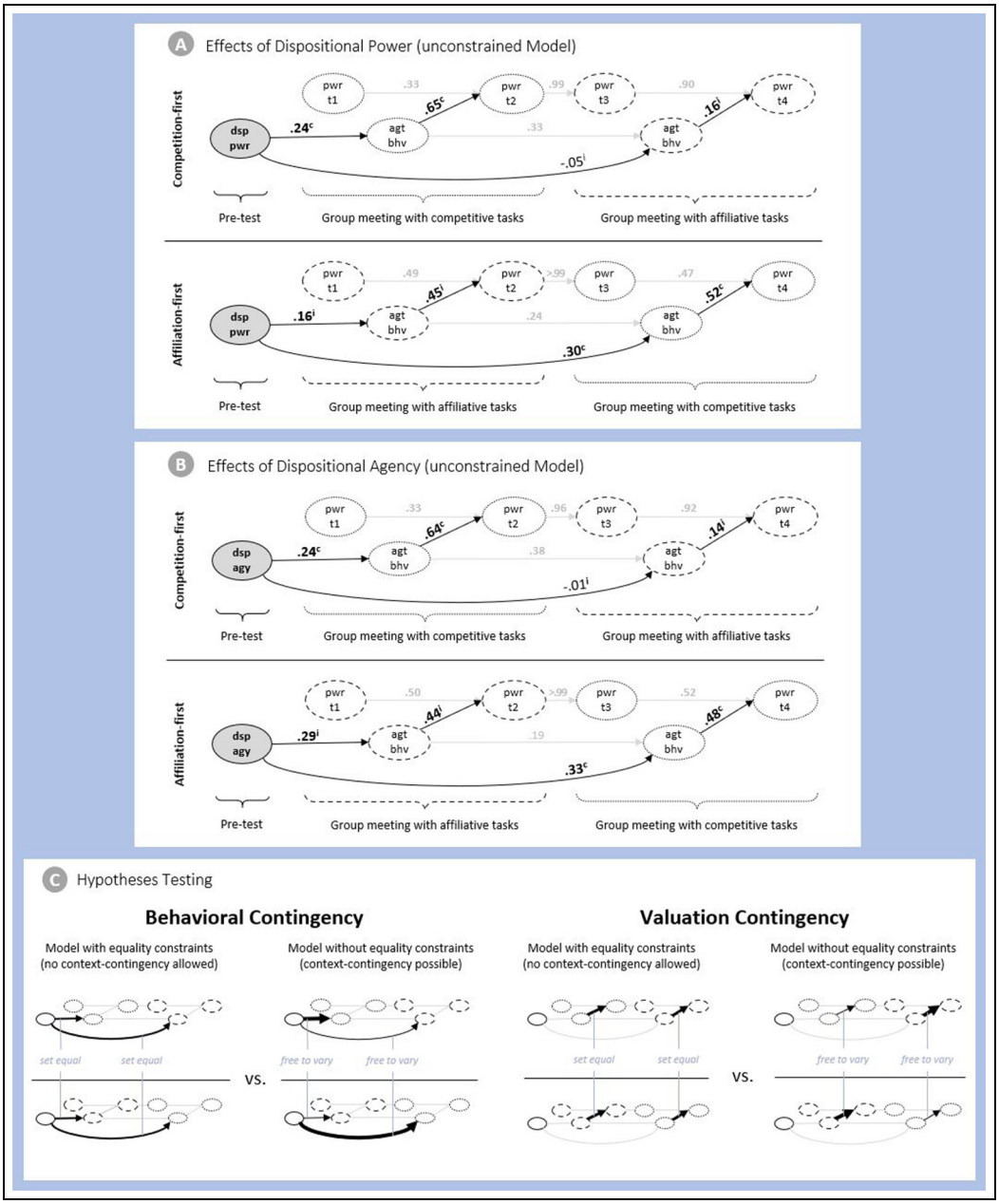

Figure 3. *Effects of Personality on Social Behavior and Social Evaluations in the Power Domain*

Note. Panels A and B display how latent social evaluations of power (pwr) were modeled to be driven by the targets' social behaviors (agt bhv) which were again modeled to be driven by their personality, specifically by dispositional power (dsp pwr; Panel A) and by dispositional agency (dsp agy; Panel B). Variables displayed as dotted versus dashed circles were measured in group sessions involving social influence versus affiliative tasks, respectively. Effects in a congruent context are marked with a^c, effects in an incongruent context are marked with an^i. All coefficients are standardized and those printed in boldface differ from zero ($p < .05$); direct paths from personality variables on reputation variables are omitted for clarity; Panel C illustrates schematically which model comparisons were conducted to test the different substantive hypotheses. These tests were based on the unstandardized coefficients.

Likability. Figure 4, when read from left to right, shows how dispositional likability (Panel A) and dispositional communion (Panel B) were related to communal behavior during the two group sessions and how this behavior contributed to changes in evaluations of people's likability over the course of the study. As seen in the figure, participants' dispositional likability and communion predicted communal behavior in none of the sessions in either condition, and

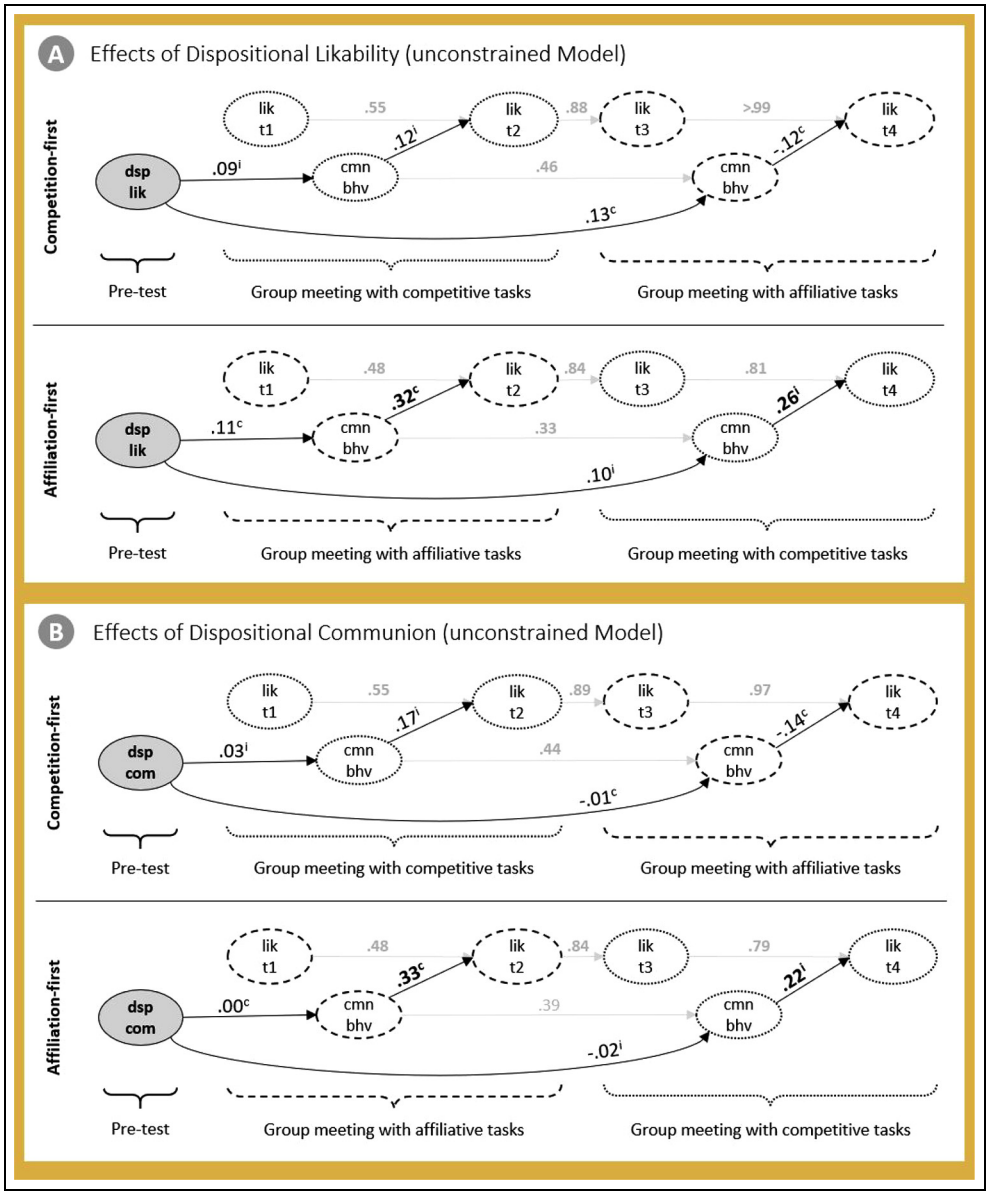

Figure 4. *Effects of Personality on Social Behavior and Social Evaluations in the Likability Domain*

Note. Panels A and B display how latent social evaluations of likability (lik) were modeled to be driven by the targets' social behaviors (cmn bhv) which were again modeled to be driven by their personality, specifically by dispositional likability (dsp lik; Panel A) and by dispositional communion (dsp cmn; Panel B). Variables displayed as dotted versus dashed circles were measured in group sessions involving social influence versus affiliative tasks, respectively. Effects in a congruent context are marked with a ^{c}, effects in an incongruent context are marked with an ^{i}. All coefficients are standardized and those printed in boldface are significantly different form zero ($p < .05$); direct paths from personality variables on reputation variables are omitted for clarity.

communal behavior contributed to actual likability only when teams had first interacted in an affiliative and then in a social influence context.

Behavioral Contingency. The behavioral contingency hypothesis was not supported for dispositional likability. The coefficients linking dispositional likability and communal behavior were descriptively slightly larger in the affiliative than in the social influence context (Figure 4, Panel A). However, a model in which coefficients could vary between the two groups did not fit the data significantly better than a model in which coefficients were set equal across groups, $\Delta\chi^2(\text{df}) = 0.01(2)$, $p = .997$.

When dispositional communion was used as a personality predictor, all effects were close to zero and the pattern of results did not align with the behavior contingency hypothesis (Figure 4, Panel B). Hence, no significance test was necessary to reject the hypothesis.

In a follow-up analysis, we explored potential differences in these results when dispositional likability and communion were measured solely by informant reports rather than a composite of self- and informant reports. Given the high evaluativeness of these constructs, self-reports might be distorted by self-enhancement tendencies (Vazire, 2010) such that excluding self-reports may increase validity. Indeed, informant-only versions seemed somewhat more predictive of communal behavior (average informant-only betas = .21 and .07 as opposed to self-informant betas of .11 and .00 for likeability and communion, respectively). Importantly, however, these effects were descriptively smaller rather than larger in the affiliative compared with the social influence sessions. Hence, although informant-reports appeared perhaps better suitable to predict communal behavior, this was not particularly the case in an affiliative context, such that again no significance test was necessary to reject the behavioral contingency hypothesis.

Valuation Contingency. The valuation contingency hypothesis was not supported. Regardless of whether dispositional likability or dispositional communion was used as a personality predictor, the effect of communal behavior on evaluations of likability were descriptively larger in the affiliative than in the social influence session at the first timepoint, yet at the second timepoint, the effects were descriptively even smaller in the affiliative than in the social influence session (see Figure 4). Because the descriptive pattern of coefficients diverges from the prediction of the evaluation contingency hypothesis, significance testing was again not necessary to reject the hypothesis.

Cross-Domain Effects. Although we did not have any a priori hypotheses regarding potential cross-domain effects (e.g., dispositional agency or power predicting communal behavior, agentic behavior predicting likability), we inspected the unconstrained full model for such effects but did not find any that were statistically significant at the .05 alpha-level (see Supplemental Figures S4 and S5 for detailed results including cross-domain effects).

Discussion

Through an experimental study, we investigated how the social context moderates the relations of personality dispositions with behaviors (behavioral contingency hypothesis), and of behaviors with social evaluations of power and likability (valuation contingency hypothesis). In the power domain, we found support for the behavior contingency hypothesis, as dispositional power and agency predicted agentic behavior more strongly in the social influence than in the affiliative context. We also found support for the valuation contingency hypothesis, with agentic behavior being more strongly associated with evaluations of power in the congruent (i.e., social influence) context than in the incongruent (i.e., affiliative) context. Together, these results suggest that the extent to which stable dispositions give rise to agentic behaviors systematically varies across contexts, and that agentic behaviors become differently valued across contexts.

Why was the evidence for the behavior contingency hypothesis clearer for the second timepoint than for the first? Whenever new groups are formed, competition for power arises spontaneously (Magee & Galinsky, 2009). Accordingly, the situation was likely always to some extent power-relevant, even when the context was affiliative. This means that at the first timepoint individuals high in dispositional power and agency—at least partially—expressed these traits through agentic behavior. In contrast, those lower in power and agency tended to adopt more submissive roles, displaying lower levels of agentic behavior. At the second timepoint, only the groups that had previously interacted in an affiliative context entered a context that was highly trait-relevant (i.e., one focusing on social influence). Independently of any general group-formation processes that occurred at the first timepoint, the context likely triggered additional specific trait-relevant behavior. In contrast, when groups had first interacted in the social influence context, the highly trait-relevant situation had already occurred. When they subsequently entered an affiliative context, the context was too trait-irrelevant to trigger additional specific trait-relevant behavior. An implication of this pattern would be that even if one has observed individuals in existing groups before, novel information about their dispositional tendencies can be gained by observing them in a highly trait-activating context.

We did not find evidence supporting the behavior or valuation contingency hypotheses in predicting likability. Given that all involved variables were approximately normally distributed (see Supplemental Figures S6 to S8) and that the variances of the variables in the liking domain were similar to the ones in the power domain (see Table 2 and Supplemental Tables S1 and S2), it was unlikely that ceiling effects or variance restrictions accounted for these null associations. Instead, the absence of a link of communion-related dispositions with communal behaviors and likability was possibly due to the communal behavior items we used, two of which exhibited cross-loadings with agentic behavior. Although SEM allowed us to account for cross-loadings—ensuring that the communion factor remained conceptually distinct and uncontaminated by agentic content—it would have been preferable to assess communal behavior using a larger set of items that loaded exclusively on the communion factor, ideally aligning with those used to measure dispositional communion. Furthermore, it is possible that more explicitly communal instructions—such as "make friends with the other group members" or "try to be liked by them"—might have elicited stronger effects. Concerning the link between communal behavior and likability, we detected a positive link that was context-invariant. At the same time, however, consensus was very

low, which means that group members hardly agreed on whom they liked. As also reported in many other studies (Kenny, 1994; Rau et al., 2019), much more variance lied at the (dyadic) relationship level than at the level of the target effect and therefore a more promising avenue for future research might be to test whether the context moderates the effect of communal behavior on liking in dyadic settings.

Implications and Future Research

In line with dynamic relationship models of personality (e.g., Back et al., 2011; Brunswik, 1956; Funder, 1995), the present findings indicate that personality dispositions affect social evaluations via observable social behavior. Yet, at the same time, they also suggest that the situational context plays an important moderating role in this process. Interactionist models (e.g., Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Murray, 1938; Tett et al., 2013) have traditionally focused on contextual moderators, yet empirical research had not clarified which parts of the personality-behavior-evaluation process they affect. Our study addresses this important theoretical issue. The present findings indicate that the context can affect both the extent to which personality dispositions manifest in behavior and the extent to which behavior leads to a given social outcome.

There may also be implications for organizational psychology. To identify applicants or employees with power potential, employers could design trait-activating interview settings that include power-relevant tasks. For example, they could pose workplace dilemmas that test applicants' initiative and leadership; or ask applicants to propose solutions, persuade, delegate tasks, and lead a group of future colleagues toward predetermined organizational goals. Furthermore, our results suggest that merely identifying individuals who are generally apt to gain power in novel groups might not suffice when recruiting leaders. Instead, employers could additionally examine (a) whether the work environment adequately activates trait-related behavior (behavior contingency) and (b) whether interaction partners will value the trait-related behavior (valuation contingency). If neither is the case, employers could change the situational requirements at work to make the job more trait-activating, and/or change the incentive structure to make the trait-related behavior more valued. Yet, before firm practical conclusions are drawn, future research should systematically investigate to what extent the principles we detected in the lab can be extrapolated to naturally occurring situations, such as boardroom discussions or staff meetings.

Moreover, our study yields practical implications for leadership and assertiveness training programs. These programs usually focus on strengthening participants' agentic behavior, with the goal of improving participants' ability to exert power (Speed et al., 2018). Based on our findings, training participants to identify how much agentic behavior fits a target context may further enhance the effectiveness of these programs.

From a practical application side, it is certainly worth knowing what kind of situations may reveal individual differences in dispositional power or agency the most. The present findings indicated that explicitly telling people to compete is suitable in this regard, and the tasks we used in our research might therefore be used in research and applied settings. Whether other contexts exist that are even more trait-activating (e.g., giving slightly less explicit instructions, or even more extreme ones) should be addressed by future research.

Future research should also investigate the principles of behavior and valuation contingency to examine other social outcomes. For example, dating success, perceptions of trustworthiness and intelligence, and politicians' electoral success partly result from a process leading from personality dispositions via observable behavior to these outcomes. In these and many other cases, the behavior and valuation contingency hypotheses could be applied to investigate the moderating role of context. Even cross-cultural differences could be viewed through the lens of behavior and valuation contingency, given that cultural norms might affect both how dispositional factors are expressed in behavior (behavior contingency; Church, 2016) and how much a specific trait-related behavior is valued by society (valuation contingency; McAdams & Pals, 2006). Finally, given the existence of gender norms surrounding agentic and communal behavior (Eagly & Wood, 2012), future research could examine whether the processes described in this study differ between males and females.

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ORCID iDs

Michael Dufner https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8354-6193
Stathis Grapsas https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3837-9701
Richard Rau https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1490-8584

Supplemental Material

The supplemental material is available in the online version of the article.

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Author Biographies

Michael Dufner is a full professor at Witten/Herdecke University. His research focuses on accuracy and biases in self- and social perception and their relations to personality and social outcomes. He also studies motivation and affect, with an emphasis on emotional reactivity.

Dr. Stathis Grapsas is an assistant professor at the Department of Youth and Family of Utrecht University, the Netherlands. He studies how people's personalities and belief systems serve their goals for social status and inclusion, and how status and inclusion goals can foster or hinder young people's potential to flourish and contribute to society.

Dr. Richard Rau works as a postdoctoral researcher at the Health and Medical University Potsdam, Germany. His research on accuracy and bias in interpersonal perception emphasizes methodological innovation and rigor. He teaches social and personality psychology, psychological assessment, and quantitative methods.

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