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Serving Two Masters – What Kind of Resistance to Influence Allows Maintaining a Positive Image?

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Abstract

Research on social influence proves that an important motive of compliance is the need for a positive evaluation from others. However, there is little knowledge of how people responding to social influence in a resistant way are assessed. This study including 187 people concerns the evaluation of communion and agency of people (protagonists of the story) who, in a situation of unwanted social influence, reacted either with consent or presented one of three types of resistance: reactance, scepticism or inertia. The results showed that the evaluation of the protagonist's agency was highest when s/he reacted to persuasion with reactance, and lowest for those who behaved compliantly. However, the assessment of the communion of the same behaviours was completely opposite. Such substantial asymmetries between the evaluation of communion and agency of the protagonists reacting in different ways to attempts to influence were noted for each of the types of behaviour except for inertia. In this one case, the evaluation of communion and agency of the protagonist turned out to be almost identical. The results are reflected in terms of self-presentation, politeness theory and the importance of norms in evoking submission to social influence.

Keywords

resistance to social influence, agency, communion, social perception, reactance, inertia, scepticism, self-presentation



In a world with abundant influences and influential experts, there is an increasing number of situations in which people do not want to be influenced by others, to undertake actions they are coerced into, to agree with an opinion which is forced upon them, to take advice, to accept reasoning or even to consent to somebody's request. Nevertheless, influence is rarely rejected in a direct way, which is documented by a series of experiments based on the Asch or Milgram paradigm, along with their contemporary replications (e.g., Burger, 2009; Doliński et al., 2017; Kundu & Cummins, 2013; Mermillod, Marchand, Lepage, Begue, & Dambrun, 2015; Mori & Arai, 2010) and by data concerning the level of efficiency of some techniques of influence (e.g., 90% obedience when the *disrupt-then-reframe* technique is combined with the *foot-in-the-door* technique – Fennis, Das, & Pruyne, 2004). The scale of obedience is considerably larger than that of resistance.

The reasons for these findings can be found in the social nature of human life, in our crucial needs: maintaining bonds with others, obtaining acceptance and positive thinking about oneself (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Doliński, 2005). The costs of resistance to others can be corroborated by the results of numerous studies conducted by, for example, Cacioppo's research team (Cacioppo & Hawkey, 2014; Cacioppo et al., 2013) concerning isolation, rejection and social exclusion and also by studies which analyse the consequences of whistle-blowing (Bjørkelo, 2013; Jackson et al., 2010). In less dramatic situations, resistance or even mere refusal infringe upon rules of politeness and require some sort of justification, which is why compliance can simply be easier (Bohns, 2016; Bohns & Flynn, 2010; Flynn & Lake, 2008). A high cost of resistance against influence finds confirmation in the research on brain structure activity by means of neuroimaging /fMRI/ (Berns et al., 2005).

According to self-determination theory, autonomy, independence and control over the situation constitute an exceptionally important aspect of the self (Deci & Ryan, 1985), being also personal traits that are highly valued in others. For example, external observers evaluated people resisting to perform a morally dubious task more positively in comparison to those who were obedient (Monin, Sawyer, & Marquez, 2008).

Studies undertaken in this field, which are considerably less numerous than those regarding the efficiency of techniques of influence, have focused on various areas in which resistance can be manifested and operationalised in various ways. Arguably, resistance to influence can be related both to characteristics evaluated in a positive way and to those that produce much worse associations. It was noted that obedience is manifested or hidden for strategic purposes, i.e., to make an impression on the environment or to protect a sense of identity (Baer, Hinkle, Smith, & Fenton, 1980; Lee, 2013; Nail & MacDonald, 2007). Resistance to influence can bring substantial losses. However, just like compliance it can also generate some gains in terms of image. Taking into consideration mechanisms of social perception, it is important by whom and in what dimensions an individual resisting influence is evaluated: image losses in one dimension may be compensated in another.

The present study investigated social perception of different types of resistance to social influence. On the basis of Knowles and Riner's concept (2007) developing the previous

theses by Knowles and Linn (2004a, 2004b), we examined the ratings of people who, in a situation of unwanted influence, comply or show resistance in the form of reactance, scepticism or inertia in the agency and communion dimension (Wojciszke, 2010).

Resistance to Influence

In psychology the term resistance is understood in several ways, depending on the context in which it is discussed. Most of them (including therapy, interpersonal impact, education, rebellion, disobedience, organizational behaviour) have been analysed by Pasikowski (2014a, 2014b, 2016). These meanings of the term are not radically different. Even though the boundaries of their definitions are fuzzy, they are connected by one core (Knowles & Linn, 2004a, p. 4), which is reluctance and internal resistance (not necessarily the type of actions described as “opposing”), being the result of a negative cognitive or emotional evaluation of the situation, the person exerting the influence, actions, ideas, objects, or options into which an individual is forced. They are all connected by slightly different dispositional, but similar situational factors (research review in: Miron & Brehm, 2006; Rains, 2013; Rudnicki, 2009; Silvia, 2006; Steindl, Jonas, Sittenthaler, Traut-Mat-tausch, & Greenberg, 2015).

In light of the above, it seems justified to define resistance in relation to social influence, as suggested by Sagarin and Miller Henningsen: “it is an active or passive process, which reduces the interaction with a potential source of influence, i.e. both intentional pressure, the application of techniques of exerting influence and unintentional pressure, e.g. the mere presence or behavioral role model of others” (Sagarin & Miller Henningsen, 2017, p. 437).

In the context of resistance, reaction to changes, disobedience and succumbing to group pressure are most frequently examined. These are slightly different phenomena and the negative response to social influence causing such types of behaviour cannot be explained away by referring to the theory of reactance, if, after Dowd (1993), it can be treated not only as a motivational state, but also as a relatively constant disposition to react with resistance to perceived attempts at restriction of freedom of choice and a threat to freedom in general (Dowd, 1993; Thomas Dowd, Wallbrown, Sanders, & Yesenosky, 1994). Apart from reactance, there may be other kinds of resistance based on other motivations related to its expression and experience.

Three different types of resistance are specified in the concept by Knowles and Linn (2004b) and Riner (Knowles & Riner, 2007), which is referred to in this study in appreciation of its elegant simplicity. Recent years have seen the publication of a few relevant works referring to the main issues presented by them (Cialdini et al., 2011; Forsell & Åström, 2012; Grzyb & Doliński, 2017; Guéguen, 2016; Petrova & Cialdini, 2011), since it is different from other currently existing typologies of resistance (Coetsee, 1999; Fransen, Verlegh, Kirmani, & Smit, 2015; Lapointe & Rivard, 2005; Nail, Di Domenico, & MacDonald, 2013; Zuwerink Jacks & Cameron, 2003). Its difference lies in the fact that it offers the possibility of broad practical application by providing ways of “disarming”

resistance of various natures by using techniques appropriate to its type¹. According to Knowles and Riner (2007), reactance, scepticism and inertia are the three possible resistance responses to social influence.

Resistance directed at the very situation of influence or the person exerting the influence is seen as reactance, as defined by Brehm's approach (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). Additionally, the subject of this type of resistance can also be the fact that "myself" and not another person is the addressee of the influence. Resistance can be induced also by the very message. This type of resistance can be called scepticism and consists of questioning the content of the appeal or request: its credibility, validity, rationality, purposefulness or logic. Resistance that is related to the expected results, in the form of unwillingness to change behaviour and the desire to postpone the issue, is called inertia.

People who respond to attempts of influence by means of reactant resistance, most frequently demonstrate it directly, often with anger. Those who react with scepticism – discuss, consider, analyse, evaluate, and point out the disadvantages of a proposition or request. Resistance in the form of inertia is least powerfully expressed – neither the validity of the influence nor its subject is questioned, yet the activity that is compatible with the intention of the influence does not ensue. Sometimes, it may conceal the strategy of stalling for time in the hope that the problem created by the order/request/suggestion will disappear by itself and the whole situation will be resolved.

Differences between types of resistance specified by Knowles and Riner (2007) concern neither the intensity of the experience (Coetsee, 1999; Fransen et al., 2015) nor the openness of its manifestation (overview of various related approaches: Nail et al., 2013), but rather the motivation of an individual and the object of resistance. They can also be perceived differently depending on the environment. On the one hand, behaviour resulting from reactance undermines the constant element of social co-existence, i.e., mutual exertion of influence and rules of politeness. On the other, it is a demonstration of striving for independence. Scepticism displays the ability to see the complexity of matters but also nit-picking, conceitedness and scorn for others. Resistant inertia, in turn, can be useful in a non-confrontational (or even a clever/diplomatic) defence of the precious *status quo*; on the other hand, it can impede development and be associated with idleness and apathy. Thus the social perception of people displaying reactance, scepticism or inertia may depend on which aspect will attract most attention. Evidently, the positive and negative aspects of these types of reactions to social influence engage the dimensions of agency and communion.

Agency and Communion

The concept of two basic dimensions of social perception, defined as communion and agency, has been germinating in the scientific psychological thought for a long time. There are many terminologies: *good-evil socially* and *good-evil intellectually* (Rosenberg, Nelson,

¹ They are not, however, the subject of interest of the present study. In Polish, they are discussed by Gałkowska (2012) in reference to the activities of the Security Service (SB) towards secret informers.

& Vivekananthan, 1968); *communion* and *agency* (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Bakan, 1966; Helgeson, 1994); *warmth* and *competence* (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002); *self-profitability* and *other-profitability* (Peeters, 2008); *morality* and *competence* (Lewicka, 1993; Reeder, 1985; Wojciszke, 1994 – the foregoing overview after: Abele, Cuddy, Judd, & Yzerbyt, 2008; and Wojciszke & Baryła, 2006). These constructs have a lot in common – the first variant is manifested in such characteristics as: warm, friendly, honest, cold, untruthful, etc.; the other refers to characteristics such as: competent, ambitious, intelligent, indecisive, passive (Abele et al., 2008, p. 1063). Contemporary understanding of the terms *communion* and *agency* refers them to various areas of human activity. Unlike communion, agency concerns mostly individuals, whereas communion applies to whole groups.

By definition, the dimensions of agency and communion are independent. Nevertheless, the results obtained from research practice show their negative but also positive correlation. A positive relation occurs, for example, when evaluating a person, *the halo effect* takes place and other positive characteristics will be assigned based on only one positive feature (e.g. Wojciszke & Baryła, 2006, p. 25–26). Nonetheless, the existence of a negative relation is confirmed by ambivalent stereotypes found in many studies, for example, stereotypes pertaining to women: “caring” but “naive” (Glick & Fiske, 1996), people of old age: “endearing” but “ailing” (Cuddy, Norton, & Fiske, 2005) or specific nations, for example, a “smart” but “untrustworthy” Asian (Lin, Kwan, Cheung, & Fiske, 2005)².

If different people or groups are compared, the attribution of characteristics of both dimensions can be compensatory. Judd, James-Hawkins, Yzerbyt, and Kashima (2005) proved that by becoming familiar with a list of behaviours showing high or low competences of members of two groups and, subsequently, by evaluating them according to both dimensions (competence and warmth), respondents assigned competence characteristics according to manipulation, but at the same time the more competent group was evaluated as less warm than the low competency group. A similar effect was obtained when manipulation concerned the dimension of warmth where the compensatory evaluation was related to competence.

Sometimes it is not worth showing one’s positive communal qualities, for example, compassion and inclination to help, if there is a suspicion that the request for help is manipulative. The label of a person susceptible to being abused, or even duped, is related to the evaluation of that person as naive, which raises doubts about their cleverness/intelligence. Consequently, care for the image of competence can motivate people to show resistance to social influence.

Data on self-presentation are also compatible with these findings: Czerniak (2009) points to the far-reaching analogy between agency and communion categories of evaluating people and the two most popular strategies of self-presentation – ingratiation and self-promotion – directed at presenting the two most desirable images: a clever and nice/good person, stressing that the self-presenter often faces the dilemma of a choice between them.

² A broader study of the correlation between the saturation of words in a natural language with aspects of agency and communion can be found in Wojciszke, 2010, pp. 51–56.

In her research, she showed that presenting the so-called “say-no attitude” (operationalised as criticising, complaining and displaying pessimism) creates, in the eyes of the audience, an image of a person more clever than nice, and simultaneously rather more clever and definitely less nice in comparison to an actor presenting the “say-yes attitude.” Undoubtedly, resistance is also a “say-no attitude”, and therefore analogical consequences related to image can be expected when comparing a resistant person to a submissive individual.

The objective of this study was to investigate the evaluation of consenting and resisting behaviour (in particular, the three types of resistance as identified by Knowles and Riner, 2007) in response to social influence. More specifically, our research focused on the social perception of persons who, as protagonists of the story featuring a situation of influence, responded with reactance, skepticism or inertia, or consented, if unwillingly, to a proposition addressed to them. The protagonists were subject to evaluation with regard to agency and communion, i.e., the two key dimensions of social perception (Wojciszke, 2010).

It was assumed that a version of the story would differentiate the evaluation of the protagonist with regard to agency and communion. In particular, the following findings were expected:

- H1 A higher evaluation of the agency of “resistant” protagonists compared to those who agree/yield to influence;
- H1 a) in reactions of resistance: the highest evaluation of agency for sceptical protagonists, and the lowest for the inertial ones. The expression of scepticism appears to be more controlled and balanced in comparison to reactance which is often motivated by anger. The leading role of emotions instead of reason is more closely connected with communion than agency (Wojciszke, 2010).
- H2 A lower evaluation of communion in resistant protagonists than in those who agree/yield to influence;
- H2 a) in reactions of resistance: the lowest evaluation of communion for protagonists who responded with reactance, and the highest for those who displayed inertia.
- H3 Higher evaluation of agency than communion for resistance reactions (scepticism and reactance), while in the case of consent/yielding to influence, the opposite was expected: higher evaluation of communion than agency. With regard to inertia, the evaluation of which was difficult to predict, no hypothesis was formulated.

Method

Participants

One hundred eighty-seven students of the Andrzej Frycz Modrzewski Krakow University and Rzeszow University of Technology took part in the survey (151 women and 36 men), age range: 17-43 years ($M = 21.92$; $SD = 3.56$).

Materials and Procedure

The research subjects were presented with a story in which the protagonist, described as “not being a fan of a healthy lifestyle”, is given a personalised plan of diet and exercises by his acquaintance. The protagonist had not asked for this plan but is forcefully persuaded to implement it. Depending on the version (the main independent variable), the reaction of the protagonist expressed one of the three forms of resistance: reactance, scepticism or inertia but also consent in order to not offend the acquaintance. In addition, the study controlled the influence of the gender of the research subject and of the protagonist. Each respondent was presented with only one version of the story³. Subsequently, they evaluated the protagonist according to 36 adjectives (17 for agency, 17 for communion and 2 neutral, which were not taken into account). The adjectives were chosen from the list of traits found in Wojciszke (2010, pp. 344-353)⁴. The respondent determined whether, in her opinion, the protagonist had a given trait within the following range of answers: *definitely NOT*, *rather NOT*, *hard to say*, *basically YES*, *definitely YES*. These categories were assigned the values of -2, -1, 0, 1 and 2 respectively. In the case of negative traits, the scoring was reversed, and therefore the respondents’ denial of a negative trait added positively to the indicator of a given dimension. Finally, the indicators of agency and communion were separately summed up and divided by 17 to calculate the average from all items assigned to a given dimension, to obtain for each respondent two results which reflected their evaluation of the protagonist of the story according to the two aspects (2 dependent variables).

Results

The collected data was analysed using variance analysis with repeated measurements⁵. The role of the inter-group factor was played by the version of the story that illustrated reaction to influence (reactance, scepticism, inertia or consent). The repeated measurements are 2 aspects of the evaluation of the protagonist of the story (agency and communion). In this way, 8 conditions were distinguished (4 versions of the story × 2 aspects of evaluation), for

³ Their content and details of their preparation may be found in the supplementary materials.

⁴ A list of adjectives and a brief description of the procedure for their selection are given in the supplementary materials.

⁵ After the examination of dependent variables (evaluation of agency and communion) by means of the Shapiro-Wilk test, it was found that they deviate considerably from normal distribution $W = .97, p < .001$ for agency and $W = .98, p = .014$ for communion. However, the shape of histograms and acceptable indications of skewness (agency: -0.15, communion: -0.43) and kurtosis (agency: -0.97, communion: -0.20), but also resistance of the variance analysis method to deviations from the original assumptions were the reason for why the parametric data analysis method was finally used. First, three-factor variance analyses were conducted in the 4x2x2 arrangement (a version of the story x sex of the protagonist x sex of the subject) for the agency variable and the communion variable. Since only one factor, i.e., version, proved to differentiate the results, while the sex of the protagonist and the subject did not have any primary, considerable or interactional impact. As a result, they were no longer taken into account. When examining the distributions, no extreme cases were found; only two outliers were noted - in variable: communion it was decided not to eliminate them from further analysis.

which the descriptive statistics in the form of averages and standard deviations are presented in Table 1.

The performed variance analysis showed insignificant main effects of the story version, $F(3, 183) = 2.44, p = .066, \eta^2 = .038$ and the repeated measurement, $F(1, 183) = 2.30, p = .131, \eta^2 = .012$. However, the interactional effect of the story version and repeated measurement is crucial for the verification of the hypotheses. The effect proved to be statistically significant, $F(3, 183) = 68.02, p < .001, \eta^2 = .527$, which is shown in Figure 1. All analyses assumed a 95% level of confidence.

Contrast analyses showed significant differences in the evaluation of the protagonist manifesting each of the resistance reactions vs. consenting reactions in the agency domain

Table 1

The Average Ratings of the Protagonist’s Agency and Communion Depending on Her/His Response to the Social Influence (Version)

Version	Agency		Communion	
	M	SD	M	SD
consent	-0.55	0.46	0.85	0.53
inertia	0.26	0.60	0.37	0.37
reactance	0.60	0.65	-0.21	0.49
scepticism	0.47	0.57	0.16	0.60

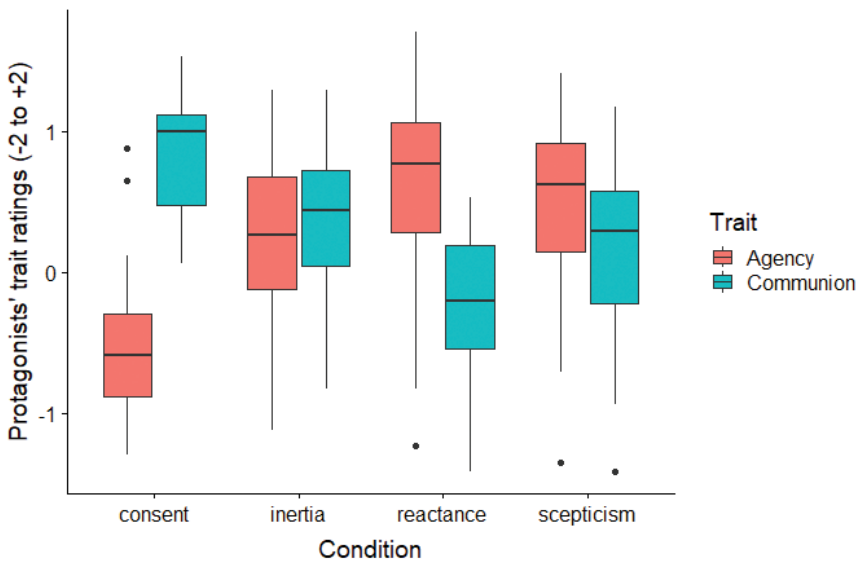


Figure 1. The perceived agency and communion of the protagonist depending on his/her response to the social influence

(higher agency for resistance reactions). A significantly lower evaluation of agency in the case of consent in comparison with a higher evaluation of this dimension for an inertial response, $F(1, 183) = 44.96, p < .001$; with a sceptical response, $F(1, 184) = 73.31, p < .001$, and the highest score of agency with reactance reaction, $F(1, 183) = 91.11, p < .001$, confirm hypothesis H1. A significantly lower evaluation of agency in the case of inertial behaviour in comparison with the highest evaluation of this aspect for reactant response, $F(1, 183) = 8.34, p = .004$, was also noted. However, there was no significant diversification between the agency of protagonists showing reactance and scepticism (an insignificantly higher agency was assigned to a reactant person), $F(1, 183) = 0.81, p = .369$, and between inertial and sceptical responses, $F(1, 183) = 3.83, p = .052$ (higher agency was assigned to a sceptical protagonist – the results close to statistical significance). In conclusion, the results are only partially compatible with H1a) hypothesis – with regard to the relatively lower evaluation of the agency in inertial protagonists compared to other reactions of resistance.

Contrasts analyses also showed significant differences in the evaluation of the protagonist manifesting each of the resistance reactions vs. consenting reactions in the communion aspect (higher communion for consent). A significantly higher evaluation of communion in the case of consent in comparison with the lower evaluation of: inertial response, $F(1, 183) = 20.80, p < .001$, sceptical $F(1, 184) = 41.42, p < .001$, and reactant behaviour, $F(1, 183) = 100.68, p < .001$, confirm hypothesis H2. A significantly lower evaluation of communion in the case of reactance in comparison with each form of resistant responses was also noted; The assessment of communion of the person manifesting scepticism ($M = 0.16, SD = 0.60$) was significantly higher than in the case of reactance $F(1, 183) = 12.61, p < .001$, and also significantly lower than the evaluation of an inertial protagonist, $F(1, 183) = 24.97, p < .001$. Among the persons who reacted to the attempts of influence with resistance, the highest level of communion was attributed to those who behaved in an inertial way ($M = 0.36, SD = 0.37$). The results of contrast analyses show that hypothesis H2a) is confirmed in this study.

Finally, contrast analyses were applied to look for differences between the two aspects (agency and communion) of the evaluation for each version. It was found that only for inertia there were no significant differences, $F(1, 183) = 0.85, p = .357$. Significantly higher evaluations of agency than communion were found for reactance, $F(1, 183) = 52.53, p < .001$, and scepticism, $F(1, 183) = 8.52, p = .004$, while for consent – significantly higher evaluations of communion than agency, $F(1, 183) = 143.67, p < .001$, i.e., according to the assumptions of H3.

As shown above, the main effect of the version factor in the applied model of analysis proved to be insignificant since it takes into account the joint evaluation in terms of agency and communion. As seen in the chart, agency and communion constitute almost a mirror image of themselves so, if treated jointly, they mutually eliminate the diversification. Only the analysis of the interaction between the story version and an aspect of evaluation (agency/communion), supported by the analysis of contrasts, showed differences in the evaluation of protagonists reacting by way of reactance, scepticism, inertia or consent,

with regard to every aspect of the evaluation. It may be concluded that the version of the story differentiates the evaluation of the protagonist, if every aspect of evaluation is considered individually. This can be proven by additionally performing two separate one-factor analyses, where the independent variable is the version of the story, while the dependent variable is only agency or only communion. In both cases the relevant main effects are obtained: for agency, $F(3, 183) = 36.65, p < .001, \eta^2 = .375$, while for communion, $F(3, 183) = 34.91, p < .001, \eta^2 = .364$, the description of which is unnecessary since it would repeat the conclusion of the analysis of interaction, which has already been discussed.

Discussion

The obtained results confirmed the assumptions about different social perceptions of showing various reactions to social influence. The protagonist of the story, persuaded by an acquaintance to adopt a diet and a schedule of exercises, was evaluated in a different way depending on whether they consented unwillingly or showed resistance.

Reactant behaviors turned out to be perceived as the most agency related, skeptical -only slightly less so. The evaluation of inertial behaviour in the agency domain was significantly lower than that of the other two reactions of resistance, but was still significantly higher than the ratings obtained for consenting behaviour.

These results can be related to the perception of activeness on the part of a subject of influence and directness of the manifestation of his unwillingness or objection to persuasion, which is compatible with, for example, Coetsee's approach who, specifically in the dimension of activeness, describes various reactions to the introduction of changes in an organisation (Coetsee, 1999). The assessment of agency is dominated not only by the perceived activeness of the subject of influence but also by the factor of their control over the situation; the high position of reactance (active objection) and scepticism (an attempt to persuade the agent of influence that the offer has some weaknesses) lend support to the argument. Moreover, control over a situation is strictly connected to a relation of power, and powerholders are usually highly evaluated with regard to agency/competences (Anderson, Hildreth, & Howland, 2015). Resistance in the form of inertia concludes, in a sense, the episode of influence and terminates its exertion; now the influenced person regains control over the situation, which is not the case for consent, as described in the research.

Also Koestner et al. (1999) showed that people who are inclined toward reactive autonomy interpret attempts to persuade them as a threat to their self-determination. Also it seems probable that observers of such interactions attach importance to the degree to which the person being watched holds control over the situation.

In the realm of communion, the consenting subject received the highest rating, while reactant behaviour scored the least points. The top score of consent is almost self-explanatory. An interesting case is presented by inertial reaction to unwanted influence, which appears to be communion-related. Arguably, the lack of a directly expressed objection enables the perception of the actor as being respectful of the rules of politeness towards others

and being considerate of their well-being. According to politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987) inertial reaction allows the agent (persuader) to save face as no personal conviction is being expressed by the subject. In turn, scepticism could infringe on the rules of politeness since doubts expressed about a person's proposition suggest unreliability or the incompetence of the proposer and may lead to shaming him. Since it is only an indirectly expressed suggestion, the evaluation of a sceptical reaction in the communion dimension yields a significantly higher score than an outright objection, which is characteristic of reactance. It seems that the lowest score of a reactance protagonist in the realm of communion results from the contravention of the norm of reciprocity - the force of which was frequently emphasised in establishing compliance (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Schultz, Nolan, Cialdini, Goldstein, & Griskevicius, 2007).

The results obtained in our research indicate a lack of significant differences between the evaluation of skeptical and inertial reactions to social influence (in terms of both communion and agency). Admittedly, Knowles and Riner (2007) make a marked distinction between them; however, they refer mainly to the motivation lying at their root. Apparently, this distinction is of little importance in terms of social perception.

The study has shown a marked asymmetry between the perception of agency and communion with regard to particular types of resistance to influence and consent to undertake actions compatible with the persuader's intentions. The more a given behaviour was perceived as communion-related, the lower score it obtained in the agency dimension. This is demonstrated in the present study, and especially in the scores for the reaction of consent to social influence. Its low rating in the agency dimension could have many reasons.

In the story presented to respondents the status of its protagonists was similar and the points of emphasis were placed on reluctance on the part of the subject of influence (*thinks that it is a very bad idea*). Consent can be interpreted in this regard as unnecessary submissiveness since there are no grounds to think that it is employed to obtain some benefit. Therefore consent can be perceived as weakness, irrationality, a mistake or lack of control over the situation. Still there are some benefits, if only in terms of a comfortable social interaction and a good rapport. Although this benefit is reaped by the agent of influence, the norm of reciprocity, which is fundamental to the existence of communion, is satisfied.

A strong asymmetry also concerns reactance, which is highly rated as being agency-related but scores very poorly in relation to communion. A possible explanation with respect to communion was discussed earlier; the explanation of its high score for agency, apart from such factors as activeness and power, could be that people who behave in this way focus on their own needs and interests which they actively protect. Possibly, some inconsistencies obtained in the results of research on self-presentational aspects of reactance, as discussed by, *inter alia*, Nail, Van Leeuwen, and Powell (1996), can be attributed to the lack of consideration for the variation in the obtained effects between the two dimensions of social perception.

There is a strong effect of negativity in evaluating the morality of other people, i.e., negative items of information are considered more diagnostic, more important and sought

after in comparison to positive ones. The effect is not found, however, with reference to competence-related traits (Czapiński, 1988; Wojciszke, 2002) where an opposite effect – that of positivity – is mentioned (Wojciszke, 2002). Consequently, when striving to be positively perceived the best course of action is to hide personal moral vices that might harm the communion and to promote intellectual values. Inertia and scepticism, among all the strategies of resistance, come closest to these recommendations. Inertia gives protection against social condemnation because it stops short of explicit refusal. Although inertia may look like avoidance, it helps protect individual interest, without infringing upon the interests of others. The present study indicates that it is a relatively low-risk strategy. Among all the forms of resistance, inertial behaviour produces the smallest loss in one's communion-related rating. Another advantage of inertia is the possibility of stopping further attempts to exert influence upon an individual, thus exercising non-invasive control over the situation. The advantage of scepticism is, in turn, its intellectual, rational nature, which may result in the evaluation of a sceptical person as a clever person (cf. Czerniak, 2009). Even if the intentions of a person reacting sceptically are, to some extent, directed against the sender it cannot be ruled out that they serve the common purpose of preserving collective interest and that the benefits may not only be obtained by the sceptically reacting person but also by other people (i.e., other possible addressees of the request directed at the sceptic which, as a consequence of the argumentation, will have to be made more sensible or simply withdrawn).

The least profitable strategy in terms of image in the communion dimension is reactance, which received the highest score in the agency domain. Resistance, as mentioned above, is not a frequently expressed reaction, except in teenage rebellion (Oleszkowicz, 2006), as it exposes an individual to social disapproval and rejection and is related to numerous costs. Scepticism, in turn, entails costs related to the intellectual effort necessary to generate content-related arguments for the rejection of the offer made by the agent of influence. In social terms, a sceptic bears the risk of becoming perceived as a person who splits hairs, plays the wise guy, etc. Inertial reaction can bring costs related to being insincere towards the person trying to exert social influence; however, it was proven that it does not entail unfavourable social reception in terms of competence or morality (it is surprisingly equivalent in both domains); however, it does not contribute to achieving a very high rating.

As demonstrated in the present study, the discrepancies between the evaluation of reactions in the domains of communion and agency, as well as the fact that social costs related to a lower rating in one are compensated by gains in the other – are compatible with the previous findings about the relationship between the two domains. Peeters (2008), using the terms *other- vs. self-profitability*, raises the issue of extremity/moderation of traits. Apart from the fact that extremities tend to be rated negatively, while moderate traits – positively, when moving along this continuum, there is a curious shift between the dimensions: for example, a negative trait pertaining to an individual benefit: *extravagant* or *passive*, when mitigated, becomes a positive trait regarding the benefit of others: *generous* or

peaceful. A similar negative trait pertaining to the benefit of others, i.e., *stingy* or *aggressive*, when mitigated, becomes a positive one regarding an individual benefit: *thrifty* or *forceful*. Conversely, positive traits of moderate intensity, in their extreme manifestation, become negative, but in a complementary dimension. Thus between the extremes in one dimension there is a sort of intermediary link with a complementary dimension.

Our results seem to be compliant with the above statements: between the rejection of influence (disadvantageous to communion) and submission to it (disadvantageous to agency), there seems to be a place for inertial “basically yes, but not just yet.” Also the specialist literature on the subject of social influence (Nail et al., 2013) indicates that in the studies performed so far there has been no attempt to consider compromise as an indirect reaction between various forms of acceptance and rejection of influence, such as independent behaviours, anti- or non-conformist or reactant ones. In this perspective, inertial reaction to influence seems to perform such an indirect function of compromise. The results of research discussed thus far in this paper warrant the following answer to the question brought forward in the title: inertia is identified as a type of resistance against social influence that is least harmful to the image of those reluctant to yield to influence.

Given the paucity of sources published on the subject, our research performs an exploratory function. The stories presented to the respondents described a relatively “weak” situation of influence: the influence was direct but unconnected with a relation of power, was exerted by an acquaintance - a person familiar enough to visit the subject of influence; however, the protagonists were not related by strong interpersonal bonds and the influence concerned an issue of little importance to the influenced party (the request was neither pro- nor anti-social), although potentially positive in nature (the implementation of the program of exercises and a diet). We assumed that if differences emerged in the evaluation of people who consent and who oppose in a ‘weak’ scenario of influence like ours, in cases of stronger influence we would obtain differences of degree rather than of quality. Nevertheless, the area of study requires further research that might develop along the following lines: the use of requests and instructions of a pro- and anti-social nature (to manipulate the force of coercion thus presenting a varying degree of justification to resistance); adoption of the influenced person’s perspective (unlike in the present study – that of an observer) and focusing research on inclinations to choose a specific strategy of resistance or consent in response to factor manipulation. Another worthwhile research task would be to diversify the descriptions of the stories with a view to bringing out the respective interests of the sender and the receiver of influence.

An important limitation of our study is the fact that only fictionally described protagonists were assessed instead of people who act in real life. Accordingly, in the next investigations it would be worth focusing on the actual behaviour of people who resist influence and on those witnessing such behavior.

In addition to outlining the direction of further research, the findings can also have a practical application: knowing that the assessment of people with different responses to so-

cial influence is compensatory in nature - lowering it in one dimension entails raising it in another one - can help, for example, in solving self-presentation dilemmas, in encouraging people to resist negative influences, and can be useful in projecting a more effective impact on others in the areas of positive social importance (health, education, etc.).

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Competing Interests

The authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Data Availability

The data analyzed in this paper are freely available via the PsychArchives repository. For further information see the "Supplementary Materials" section.

Supplementary Materials

Data and codebook of this study are accessible via the PsychArchives repository.

Index of Supplementary Materials

Galkowska, A., Czerniak, A., Czapliński, S., & Stach, R. (2018). Supplementary materials to "Serving Two Masters – What Kind of Resistance to Influence Allows Maintaining a Positive Image?". *PsychOpen*. <https://doi.org/10.23668/psycharchives.2343>

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