Gender, entitlement, and obligation: role of agency and communion as mediators

Arya Adhikari
University at Albany, State University of New York, aadhikari@albany.edu

The University at Albany community has made this article openly available. Please share how this access benefits you.

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/legacy-etd

Part of the Psychology Commons

Recommended Citation
https://scholarsarchive.library.albany.edu/legacy-etd/2848

This Master's Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the The Graduate School at Scholars Archive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Legacy Theses & Dissertations (2009 - 2024) by an authorized administrator of Scholars Archive. Please see Terms of Use. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@albany.edu.
Gender, Entitlement, and Obligation:

Role of Agency and Communion as Mediators

by

Arya Adhikari

A Thesis

Submitted to the University at Albany, State University of New York

in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

College of Arts and Sciences

Department of Psychology

August 2022
Abstract

The aims of this study were to investigate whether there persists a gender difference between men and women regarding agency and communion, and whether agency and communion mediate the relationships between gender and two dependent variables of interest: entitlement and obligation. One hundred seventy-seven undergraduate students rated themselves on the following measures: Agency and Communion Scale (Roch, Ciancetta, and Mishra, 2019), Psychological Entitlement Scale (Campbell et al., 2004) and Felt Obligation Measure (Eisenberger et al., 2001), assessed on both the supervisor and organization level. Results suggested that women scored significantly higher than men in communion. Gender differences were not significant for scores on agency, entitlement, and obligation. Communion was positively related to entitlement, obligation felt towards supervisor, and obligation felt towards organization. Communion mediated the relationship between gender and entitlement yet did not mediate the relationship between gender and either type of obligation. Agency did not mediate the relationship between gender and entitlement. Agency also did not mediate the relationship between gender and obligation. The study results highlight that women persist on scoring higher on communion than men; that communion is essential in the context of examining both entitlement and obligation.

Keywords: agency, communion, entitlement, obligation
Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my thesis advisor and professor, Prof. Sylvia Roch. Prof. Roch has shown immense levels of patience throughout the process of me writing this thesis. She has corrected me and encouraged me well beyond what is expected from a thesis advisor. I am ever so grateful for her considerate temperament.

I would also like to thank Prof. Ho Kwan, my thesis committee and professor, for her guidance and encouragement throughout graduate school.

Wei Yang, who was involved in the validation survey for this research project, deserves a special thank you. Without him, this thesis would not be possible. Additionally, I am grateful to my cohort and all my classmates for showing huge levels of compassion and support towards me.

Finally, I must express my deepest gratitude to my parents and brother for providing me with relentless drive. I am grateful for my friends: Muso, Itasha, Parina and Paul for the unfailing support and joy they bring to my life.
Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................................ iii
Introduction ............................................................................................................................ 1
Literature Review and Hypotheses ........................................................................................ 5
  Social Role Theory: Agency, Communion and Gender ...................................................... 5
  Entitlement ......................................................................................................................... 7
    Entitlement, Agency, and Communion ........................................................................... 10
  Obligation .......................................................................................................................... 12
    Obligation and Gender: Role of Agency and Communion ........................................... 13
Method .................................................................................................................................. 17
Participants .......................................................................................................................... 17
Procedure .............................................................................................................................. 17
Measures .............................................................................................................................. 18
  Agency and Communion Scale (Roch, Ciancetta, and Mishra, 2019) .............................. 18
  Psychological Entitlement Scale (Campbell et al., 2004) ................................................. 19
  Felt Obligation Measure (Eisenberger et al., 2001) ......................................................... 19
Results ................................................................................................................................ 20
  Gender, Agency, and Communion ................................................................................... 20
  Relationship between Gender, Communion, and Agency, with Entitlement ................ 23
  Relationship between Gender, Communion, and Agency, with Obligation .................... 27
    Relationship between Gender, Communion, and Agency, with Obligation to Supervisor... 30
Discussion ............................................................................................................................ 34
  Additional Future Research ............................................................................................ 38
  Practical Implications ...................................................................................................... 39
Limitations ............................................................................................................................ 40
Conclusion ............................................................................................................................ 41
References ............................................................................................................................ 42
Introduction

Gender in research is often used as a proxy for important underlying variables (Berry et al., 2006; Cowen et al., 2021; Judge & Livingston, 2008; Lee et al., 2016). Gender is often explored as an independent variable in organizational research because it is often related to organizational relevant differences, including obligation and entitlement (Brummel, 2009; O’Neil et al., 1995; Schwartz et al., 2008). A variety of constructs have been developed to capture self-interest and other-oriented tendencies in the workplace (Brummel & Parker, 2015), but not much research exists that examines the beliefs about deservingness and owing represented by the constructs of entitlement and obligation, respectively. Obligation and entitlement are established and accepted as independent constructs (Brummel & Parker, 2015). Research has shown that these constructs are not mutually exclusive (Brummel, 2009; Brummel & Parker, 2015). Entitlement is an individual’s belief in deserving preferential treatment or reward without regard to performance (Major, 1987; Rose & Anastasio, 2014), and obligation is observed when, even when not coerced, individuals do or refrain from doing something because they feel bound, in this regard by promise, convention, or circumstances (Oyserman et al., 1998; Rotenberg, 1977; Stebbins, 2000). Both constructs are important for a number of workplace outcomes such as job engagement (Xu et al., 2020), organizational citizenship behavior (Ogunfowora et al., 2021), team cohesion and performance (Lu, 2022) among others.

Brummel and Parker (2015) investigated the relationship between age, gender and culture to entitlement and obligation. In their study, they looked at gender along with culture and age regarding obligation and entitlement in a two-dimensional model. They hypothesized and found that women were higher on both entitlement and obligation. However, their measure of entitlement is problematic because it does not map on to other measures of entitlement (Major,
created measures of both obligation and entitlement with little validity evidence. Only their results regarding obligation, indicating that women feel more obligation than men, are in line with previous research investigating gender effects (Thompson et al., 2020). The entitlement scale used by Brummel and Parker (2015) lacked comparison statements suggesting comparison between the individual taking the survey and others (Rose & Anastasio, 2014) which made the scale appear to be more of a self-esteem measure. It is critical to reexamine these findings regarding entitlement as researchers have repeatedly found that men score higher on entitlement than women (Major, 1987; McDermott et al., 2012; Orozco, 2011; Schwartz et al., 2008). Therefore, the first purpose of the research is to see if using a more traditional measurement of entitlement (Major, 1987) results in men being more entitled than women, along with feeling less obligation than women.

We are not completely sure why gender relates to entitlement or obligation (Brummel, 2009). Perhaps agency and communion can help to explain the relationship between gender and both entitlement and obligation. According to social role theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000), agency and communion represent one area where men and women largely differ (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Even though the gender to agency and communion relationships are well established (Eagly 1987; Eagly et al., 2000) as well as gender differences in obligation and entitlement (Korlat et al., 2021; Thompson et al., 2020), little to no evidence exists tying agency and communion to either obligation or entitlement. Agency encompasses qualities relevant for goal-attainment, such as assertiveness, competence or persistence, and communion encompasses qualities relevant for the establishment and maintenance of social relationships, such as being friendly, helpful, or fair (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014; Bakan, 1966).
Accounting for both agency and communion in tandem may give us a much more comprehensive idea behind the mechanisms of how entitlement and obligation play out regarding gender. Perhaps, communion and agency provide at least a partial explanation for the gender effect on both obligation and entitlement. Researchers have not explored whether agency and communion mediate the relationship between gender and both entitlement and obligation. However, previous research investigating related constructs suggest that this may be the case. The combination of social role theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000) and equity theory (Adams, 1963) can be used to provide a theoretical rational for why gender may relate to entitlement via a combination of agency and communion. Likewise, social exchange theory (Homans, 1961) along with social role theory (Eagly, 1987) can provide theoretical explanations for why communion and agency may mediate the relationship between gender and obligation. Understanding whether agency and communion mediate the relationship between gender and both entitlement and obligation is important for both research and practical purposes.

The second and the main purpose of the research, therefore, is to explore the role of agency and communion as potential explanatory constructs for the relationship between gender and both entitlement and obligation. As mentioned earlier, gender in research is used as a proxy for other important underlying variables (Eagly, 1987), and it would be remiss to not account for agency and communion’s role in determining levels of entitlement and obligation as little to no research exists that link these constructs to either felt obligation or entitlement. This research may contribute to understanding why gender plays a role in determining entitlement and obligation through assessing agency and communion. The aim for this research is to extend the understanding of the role of gender in regard to obligation and entitlement beyond social role theory (Eagly, 1987) by also incorporating social exchange theory (Homans, 1961) and equity
theory (Adams, 1963). By exploring and establishing how gender is important but by itself is incomplete in justifying differences observed in the entitlement and obligation we may be able to understand the causal mechanisms driving entitlement and felt obligation better through mediators like agency and communion.

In applied settings, this research may aid in choosing suitable organizational policies and practices in multiple ways. For example, if an organization wants to enhance felt obligation to increase job engagement (Xu et al., 2020) or to promote organizational citizenship behavior (OCB; Ogunfowora et al., 2021), a better understanding of why their employees have certain levels of job engagement or OCBs may help in determining more suitable policies to enhance desirable behavior.

Likewise, to decrease a sense of entitlement that may affect the workplace negatively, knowing how much employees are disposed to feelings of entitlement may allow supervisors to take steps to help prevent or mitigate decreased task satisfaction, increase satisfaction with supervisor and overall satisfaction (Dragova-Koleva, 2018) through suitable interventions that may decrease or regulate their sense of entitlement. Entitlement can also have a negative effect on affective commitment (Dragova-Koleva, 2018; Hochwarter, 2007). Knowing employees’ agency and communion disposition may be able to guide organizations in matching the organization’s culture and goals with the employees’, especially before high stakes situations such as personnel appointment and prior to making promotion decisions. Organizations can, therefore, use research findings to support the addition of certain constructs to their selection batteries, in reassessing team composition and in making promotion decisions among other potential applications, which may help to correct for or mitigate potential unsuitable organizational decisions.
Literature Review and Hypotheses

Social role theory (Eagly, 1987) is central to this research. Social role theory explains why sex differences are observed in society. The theory suggests that social roles are performed in accordance to how individuals have been socialized, individuals’ biosocial set of processes, and their compliance to role standards and societal expectations. Social role theory relates to gender by focusing on how gender roles are determined and that in turn relates to how agency and communion are present in the social context. Equity theory (Adams, 1963) ties in well with social role theory in exploring differences of levels of perceived deservedness amongst individuals, which will help in explaining the role of the construct of entitlement.

In addition to social role theory, social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961) is another theory central to this research. According to this theory, social exchanges pertain to tangible or intangible exchanges between at least two people with a focus on generating rewarding consequences. Social exchange theory places heavy emphasis on the norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960). These are crucial concepts in studying the construct of obligation.

Social Role Theory: Agency, Communion and Gender

Agency (goal-oriented) and communion (interpersonal orientation) are dispositions within individuals that enable them to effectively respond to situational demands (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Bakan, 1966; Hogan 1983). The agency construct is composed of variables relevant for goal-attainment, such as assertiveness, competence or persistence, and the communion construct is composed of variables relevant for the establishment and maintenance of social relationships, such as being friendly, helpful, or fair (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014; Hogan 1983).
Social role theory (Eagly, 1987) is a pivotal theory that is often used in Social Psychology (Brant, 2018) to explain mechanisms pertaining to sex differences in societal contexts. Social role theory implies that the reason behind differences and similarities in behavior in terms of different sexes lie in the societal stereotypes about sexes (Eagly, 1987). According to Eagly (1987), these stereotypes, or sex role beliefs, form as individuals observe male and female behavior and infer that the sexes possess conforming dispositions. For example, women filling caretaking roles in employment and at home conform to the sex stereotypes as women are presumed to be more communal, caring individuals and men fulfilling the breadwinner’s role, conforming to the capable leader ideal, as they are presumed to be more agentic.

According to Eagly (1987), at the core of social role theory lies an assumption that there is a primal reason why sex differences are observed, which is linked to men's size and strength and women's ability to reproduce and nurse children. These core characteristics interact with a society's circumstances and culture, and tasks are segregated on what is deemed more efficiently performed by one sex or the other. Sex roles are performed just as social roles are (e.g., parent, employee). Compliance to social roles with regard to socialization, biosocial set of processes, self-regulation to gender role standards, and social regulation to others' expectations about different sexes dictate role-related processes within a society.

As per social role theory, the idea that the origins of men's and women's social roles lie primarily in humans’ evolved physical sex differences, specifically men's size and strength and women's reproductive activities of gestating and nursing children. This leads to sex specific expectations. These expectations could be observed in instances when men are expected to be more goal-oriented and women are expected to be more interpersonally oriented (Eagly & Wood,
When social and physical variables interact, they produce a division of labor with regard to sex, leading sex differences to arise. Gender roles, or general expectations about women and men are then decided on depending on how they correspond to the division of labor (Eagly, Wood, & Diekman, 2000).

Consistent with social role theory, several studies have shown that men tended to be more agentic than women, whereas women tended to be more communal than men (e.g., Eagly, 1987; Hsu et al., 2021; Korlat et al., 2021). In a recent study, Hsu et al (2021) make the argument that although gender differences in agency and communion have been decreasing over time, their research shows that men are still overwhelmingly limited in communion. In contrast to previous findings, they found that the perception of women and men of others and of themselves were similar in agency, suggesting closing gender gaps in agentic traits. However, research still collectively indicates that men score higher on agency than women (e.g., Martin, 2021; Scheifele et al., 2021). Through this research I want to investigate if results from previous research studies and widely held assumptions regarding the relationship between gender and both agency and communion still hold true.

Hypothesis 1: Women score higher on communion on an average than men

Hypothesis 2: Men score higher on agency on an average than women

Entitlement

Even though social role theory has been used as the theoretical basis for explaining why men and women differ on communion and agency, another theoretical framework that may be helpful to understand why women and men may differ in entitlement is equity theory (Adams, 1963, 1965). Entitlement has been defined as an individual’s attitude about the right to expect from others regardless of their individual contributions (Major, 1989; McDermott et al., 2012;
Orozco, 2011). Equity theory utilizes the idea of comparing input to output. Individuals tend to take part in social comparison in which they compare their input to output ratios with that of others (Adams, 1963; 1965). They use these social comparisons for gaining information about themselves and others, which they then use for evaluating others and themselves. They form perceptions of balance or imbalance between themselves and similar others in terms of input and outcome. Individuals may work towards restoring self-perceived levels of deservedness within the system, which may result in a sense of entitlement (Byrne et al., 2010). In other contexts, several researchers have used equity theory to help explain entitlement in the workplace (e.g., Miller & Konopaske, 2014; O’Leary-Kelly et al., 2017). Miller and Konopaske’s (2014) study drew on equity theory framework to examine the degree to which exaggerated levels of self-interest predicted entitlement in the workplace. The results from the study indicated that individuals were likely to engage in negative behavior in the workplace if their perception of entitlement was violated.

According to Major (1987), women and men use different relative references in evaluating their existing outcomes or in estimating what they deserve or are entitled to receive. This relative reference could be attributed to felt levels of deservedness guided by both social role theory and equity theory. For example, men have been observed of feeling a greater sense of entitlement than women regarding pay and promotion (Desmarais & Curtis, 1997). Research on workplace benefits, marital and life satisfaction also suggests that women and men differ in their sense of entitlement (Callahan-Levy & Messe, 1979; Lenney, 1977; Major, 1987; Major et al., 1984). Women appear to feel entitled to less than men who have done comparable work (Major, 1987) and are also likely to attribute the same amount of work to lesser pay (Callahan-Levy and Messe, 1979; Crosby, 1982; Major et al., 1984). This could be about determining a fair
exchange with others or determining a fair exchange for themselves alone (Adams 1963; Major, 1987).

Major et al. (1984) conducted research regarding whether men and women attributed different levels of pay to their work. In their study, higher self-pay was observed for men where comparison standards were absent. When information for social comparison was absent, women's and men's self-pay correlated highly with what they thought that same-sex, but not opposite-sex, others would pay themselves. These findings suggested that the internal standards used by men are higher than those used by women. Researchers suggested that in the absence of salient comparison to others, men and women may base their judgments of what is fair pay for their work on internalized beliefs about the pay of others of their own sex (Desmarais & Curtis, 1997). The results from Desmarais et al. (1997) showed that men in comparison to women attributed the same work to be more valuable and attributed themselves of deserving more. This information is indicative of higher levels of entitlement in men in comparison to women. Thus, in line with equity theory, men’s and women’s comparison to others are based on the same gender, which according to social role theory, may differ in organizational contexts, with men’s contributions valued more highly (Major, 1989).

However, sex differences in masculinity and femininity may not be an adequate explanation for sex differences in self-pay discussed in the Major et al. (1984) study. In a study by Grubbs et al. (2014), participants were asked to do as much work as they thought fair for a given monetary outcome in the absence of social comparison information. Results showed that women worked longer, did more work, completed more correct work, and were more efficient than men, whether or not they were observed. These findings provided additional support for their hypothesis that women’s sense of personal entitlement with respect to pay is lower than
men's. However, support was also obtained for the hypothesis that women's sense of personal deservedness is more susceptible to interpersonal dynamic management and impression management concerns than men. Women felt the obligation to work longer (by 23 minutes) and more conscientiously, which the researchers attribute to women prioritizing upkeeping good interpersonal relationship with the experimenter. This is suggestive of the notion that women may be more likely than men to moderate their input-outcome ratios to meet interpersonal goals (Darley & Fazio, 1980). These interpersonal goals may be a function of the common finding that women score higher on communion than men.

On the other hand, Brummel et al. (2009) indicated women believe themselves to be more entitled than men. However, they have, in their measure, attempted to remove the negative qualities of entitlement, which then result in failing to cover the entire spectrum of differences in individual's levels of entitlement. Entitlement carries with it negative connotations, being associated with narcissism and narcissistic personality traits, which are deemed negative traits (Brummel, 2009). The measure of entitlement used in Brummel et al.’s research also does not stress the comparison with others that other measures of entitlement do. Perhaps, comparisons to others when deciding for their own level of deservedness would yield different results due to alterations in the reference point of measure.

Hypothesis 3: Women score lower on entitlement than men.

Entitlement, Agency, and Communion

Research shows that active and revenge entitlement is positively related to agency and negatively to communion (Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2016). Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al. (2016) stated that the shared core of the entitlement dimensions is a focus on self-interest at individual or group levels and a tendency to have expectations from others at individual or institutional
levels. There have also been numerous researchers who explored the relationship between entitlement and variables that fall under the agency umbrella such as individualism (Hong et al., 2017), independence (Rose, 2014), autonomy (Rose, 2014), competitiveness (Parker, 2018), dominance (Rosenblatt, 2012) among others. There have been negative correlations established between entitlement and variables that fall under communion such as other-oriented behavior (Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2016), cooperation (Zitek, 2021), compliance (George-Levi et al., 2016) and inconclusive correlation between entitlement and social support (George-Levi et al., 2021) among others. Research also shows that entitlement is negatively correlated with volunteering and charitable giving (Brummel, 2009) which are factors pertaining to communion; entitlement is also positively correlated with psychological entitlement (Campbell et al., 2004) and narcissism (Twenge et al., 2008), which are factors pertaining to agency. Żemojtel-Piotrowska (2016) used ideas of collectivism, self-esteem, egoism among others as their theoretical justification for why these relationships were observed.

Collectively, social role theory (Eagly, 1987) and equity theory (Adams, 1963) may be able to explain why there may be gender differences observed on entitlement via agency and communion. As mentioned earlier, agency encompasses qualities relevant for goal-attainment, such as assertiveness, competence, or persistence, which are self-interest driven qualities in nature (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014). These qualities may make an individual feel more entitled. The force that drives agency is the desire of some kind of output or reward, and entitlement may be likely to occur, as per equity theory, in cases where individuals perceive an imbalance between what they deserve and what they possess. Perhaps men feel more entitlement because they are higher on agency and thus focused on self-interest.
Communion, on the other hand encompasses qualities relevant for the establishment and maintenance of social relationships, such as being friendly, helpful, or fair which are other-oriented qualities in nature. These qualities may make an individual feel less entitled (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014). This may result due to a deviation from focus on self-interest. As mentioned earlier, Darley and Fazio (1980) found that women may be more likely than men to moderate their input-outcome ratios to meet interpersonal goals (Darley & Fazio, 1980) and that women overall tend to feel less entitlement (Desmarais & Curtis, 1997; Major et al., 1984). Perhaps, women feel less entitlement because they are more communal than men.

I aim to explore the following hypotheses based on the theoretical background presented above.

Hypothesis 4: Individuals who score higher on agency and lower on communion are likely to score higher on entitlement than individuals who score lower on agency and higher on communion.

Hypothesis 5: Agency mediates the relationship between gender and entitlement.

Hypothesis 6: Communion mediates the relationship between gender and entitlement.

**Obligation**

Felt obligation in an organizational setting refers to the belief employees hold of being obligated to care about the organization’s welfare and to help the organization reach its objectives (Eisenberger et al., 2001; Thompson et. al., 2020). Felt obligation is a key mechanism of the social exchange theory explanation for why employees reciprocate positive treatment from the organization with positive behaviors that benefit the organization (Blau, 1964).

Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) is deemed one of the fundamental theoretical perspectives in the field of Social Psychology (Brant, 2018). Social exchange is defined as the exchange of tangible or intangible activity between at least two people (that focuses on
generating rewarding behavior, repeating rewarded behavior, and taking part in value driven action (Homans, 1961). Social exchanges are not only anticipatory in nature but are also determined by looking back: to reciprocate and respond to past behavior (Blau, 1964).

Social exchange theory (SET) is often used as a key concept in studying the dynamics of a workplace, and it posits that human relations are formed based on subjective cost–benefit analysis (Homans, 1958). SET claims that social relationships are based on the trust that gestures of goodwill will be reciprocated and that relationships evolve over time into trusting, loyal, and mutual commitments for which the parties involved must abide by certain “rules” of exchange (Emerson, 1976), leading to the norm of reciprocity playing an important role in the theory (Brant, 2018).

Social exchange theory, with its inherent norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), forms the foundation for organizational researchers’ explanation for why employees perform organizational citizenship behavior (OCBs), why they maintain loyalty with an organization (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Scholl, 1981) and why they partake in formally unrewarded activities at the workplace (Organ, 1988; Rousseau, 1989). As mentioned earlier, the exchanges are guided by norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960), which supports the belief that favorable treatment will be reciprocated. Norm of reciprocity obliges the individual of return of favorable treatment.

**Obligation and Gender: Role of Agency and Communion**

Research shows that women tend to score higher on obligation than men (Brummel et al., 2009). The objective of the Brummel et al. (2009) study was to investigate obligation and entitlement through the lens of self-interested and other oriented natures. The use of this perspective is similar to the one being used in this study. However, agency-communion comprises of many more variables that may contribute to understanding the causation behind the
relationship between gender and obligation and, therefore, may be important to study than simply self-interested and other orientated natures. Brummel et al. (2009) mention that obligation has been related by previous researchers to other oriented factors such as empathy, helping behavior (Rushton, Chrisjon, & Fekken, 1981), and concern for others (Saucier, 2003). They also found obligation to be positively correlated to prosocial disposition, linked to activities such as volunteering and charitable giving.

Agency, on the other hand, with its key feature being independence and self-serving tendencies, is linked to serving others mostly in cases where it translates to self-gain (Berg, 2000). Furthermore, there exists research that explores the role between obligation and agency related variables such as individualism (Rotenberg, 1977), independence (Berg, 2000) and hierarchy legitimizing ideologies (Redford, 2016). There also exists research that explores the role between obligation and communion related variables, such as kinship-oriented values (Oyserman et al., 1998) and interdependence (Berg, 2000). Oyserman et al. (1998) in their study explored the implications of cultural accommodation, particularly collectivism and individualism on obligation, and found support for their hypothesis that collectivism would increase obligation to the in-group when identity was made salient. They also found support for their hypothesis that individualism would decrease social obligation. Thus, even though researchers have not yet directly explored the relationship between agency and communion with obligation, they have established relationships with constructs closely related to agency and communion with obligation.

Obligation is central to social exchange theory. However, gender role theory also may provide an explanation for why women may feel more obligation than men. Gender roles also dictate that women should be more helpful than men (Eagly, 1987). Women may feel more
obligated to engage in extra roles such as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) even when they experience relatively low levels of perceived organizational support (POS), whereas men may perform OCBs only when they experience relatively high levels of POS (Thompson et al., 2020). Thompson et al. (2020) in their study with accordance to social role theory (Eagly, 1987) expected to find that women felt more obligation, given that gender roles dictate that women should be more helpful than men. They found that women felt more obligation even at relatively low levels of POS than men. Felt obligation mediated the POS-OCB relationship, significantly, only for men, indicating that high levels of POS needed to be present for men to feel obligated to perform OCBs. Research such as this indicates women’s inclination to feel more obligated and having different ideas of exchange than men. Brummel (2009) indicated that high levels of other oriented-ness in women and high levels of self-interest in men may be the reason for discrepancies observed. Brummel (2009) found that obligation positively related to OCBs, and women were more predisposed to feel obligation.

Thus, social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961), along with social role, may suffice in collectively explaining why agency and may mediate the relationship between gender and felt obligation. Differences in agency and communion may result to difference in how reciprocity is practiced. Perhaps, individuals high on agency look at exchanges differently than individuals high on communion.

Agency, by definition, encompasses qualities relevant for goal attainment, such as assertiveness, competence or persistence that are self-interest driven qualities in nature (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014). These qualities may make an individual feel less obligated to contribute to anything other than their personal goal. Thus, given that men are more agentic than women
(Brown, 1969; Hsu et. al., 2021), perhaps agency can explain why men feel less obligation than women in social exchange context.

Communion, on the other hand encompasses qualities relevant for the establishment and maintenance of social relationships, such as being friendly, helpful, or fair, which are other-oriented qualities in nature which may make an individual feel obligated to contribute to a collective goal (Abele & Wojciszke, 2014). Thus, given that women are more communal than men (Gartzia, 2021; Moskowitz, 1994), perhaps communion can explain why men feel less obligation than women in social exchange contexts.

Hypothesis 7: Women score high on felt obligation than men.

Hypothesis 8: Individuals who score higher on communion and lower on agency are likely to score higher on felt obligation than individuals who score lower on communion and higher on agency.

Hypothesis 9: Agency mediates the relationship between gender and obligation

Hypothesis 10: Communion mediate the relationship between gender and obligation.
Method

Participants

Data were collected from a sample of 194 undergraduates (73 men, 118 women, and 3 neither or other) at the University at Albany, SUNY. Responses from 13 participants were dropped for responding incorrectly to both random response items present in the survey and 3 were dropped for input of non-binary gender. The final number of participants whose data were used for the analysis consisted of 178 undergraduate students (66 men, 112 women). Participants described their ethnic background as European (39.9%), African (17.4%), Mexican, South American, or Central American (10.7%), Asian (15.2%), and other (16.8%). Participants’ age ranged between 18 and 30 years old. Most participants were between 18 to 22 years (99%) and age range of 23 to 30 years accounted for a small percentage of the sample (1%). Students from varying work backgrounds with work experience ranging from 6 months to 15 years took part in the study, with majority of the sample (89.3%) falling in the 1 to 5 years of work experience category.

Procedure

Participants were asked to complete the research survey online and were offered either Psychology course credit or extra credit benefits for taking part in the study. The survey was administered using Qualtrics and consisted of measures assessed using Likert type scales with higher numbers indicating more agreement with the statement and lower numbers indicating disagreement with the statement. The survey also contained demographic questions e.g., gender, age and work experience. The data used for this study’s analyses are part of a larger data collection effort. To counter possible fatigue effects, participants were given the option to resume their survey session and input data in more than one session.
All participants ($N=178$) completed the questionnaires for gender, agency, communion, and entitlement. However, participants were randomly split to measure obligation. One hundred two participants (57%) completed the supervisor obligation questions and 76 participants (43%) completed the organization obligation questions. In summary, all participants filled out questionnaires pertaining to agency, communion, entitlement and one of the two forms of obligation.

**Measures**

*Agency and Communion Scale (Roch, Ciancetta, and Mishra, 2019)*

Agency was measured using six-items and communion was measured using five-items created by Roch, Ciancetta, and Mishra (2019) based on the Rudman and Glick’s (2001) Measure of Explicit Gender Beliefs. Rudman and Glick’s measure contained five communal traits (communal, cooperative, supportive, kinship-oriented, and connected) and six agentic traits (individualistic, competitive, independent, hierarchical, self-sufficient, and autonomous). Their measure required participants to indicate for each trait whether the trait was more likely to be true for either men or women. Roch et al. (2019) adopted these 11 traits and created an agentic and communal behavior at work measure. Participants were asked to “Think of your interactions with others at your workplace. Please indicate using the following scale to what extent you try to act in a way described by the words below. Below each word, we provide a definition”. For each of the 11 terms, participants rated to which extent they tend to act in manner described by each definition on a 7-point Likert type measure ranging from “very untrue of me” and “very true of me” at work. The behavioral descriptions were created by Roch et al. (2019). An example of a communal item’s description: “Communal: try to act in the interest of the group, even if it is not in your self-interest, go out of the way to help
others, and respect decisions made by your work group.” An example of an agentic item
description: “Competitive: try to do things better than others at work and tend to be determined
and focused on success when approaching work tasks.”

**Psychological Entitlement Scale (Campbell et al., 2004)**

Entitlement was measured using a 9 item Psychological Entitlement Scale (Campbell et al.,
2004) on a six-point Likert type scale with 1 being “Very untrue of me” and 6 being “Very
true of me”. Sample items from the nine-item Psychological Entitlement Scale (Campbell et al.,
2004) include: “I demand the best because I’m worth it”, “I honestly feel that I’m just more
deserving than others.” and “People like me deserve an extra break now and then.”.

**Felt Obligation Measure (Eisenberger et al., 2001)**

Obligation was measured using Eisenberger et al.’s (2001) seven item scale on a six-
point Likert type scale with 1 being “Very untrue of me” and 6 being “Very true of me”. The
obligation scale was administered based on two conditions: supervisor obligation and
organization obligation. The item wording was altered from supervisor to organization to capture
responses to the two conditions. Sample items from the Felt Obligation Measure include “It is an
objective of mine to support the goals of my supervisor/organization.”, “I believe in making an
effort to endorse the decisions made by my supervisor/organization.” and “I believe that it is
important for me to help my supervisor/organization.”
Results

The communion, entitlement, and both felt obligation measures had high reliability, above .70 (see Tables 1, 5, and 7). However, the initial reliability of the agentic measure was .52. Upon conducting an inter-item correlation analysis, it was observed that the “hierarchal” item from the scale was negatively related to the “autonomous” item ($r=-0.01$) in the scale. An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to check whether the items in the agency scale were loading on one construct, and all items except the “hierarchal” item loaded onto one construct. Removing the “hierarchal” item increased the reliability of the scale to .59. However, the omission of any other items except the hierarchal item did not increase the reliability of the measure. Therefore, the decision was made to omit “hierarchal” and use a 4-items scale with a .59 reliability.

To ensure that there was no multicollinearity, a Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between predictors: gender, agency and communion. The coefficients ($r$) were below .30, which suggested that the assumption of multicollinearity was not violated.

Gender, Agency, and Communion

Table 1 presents the relationships between gender, agency, communion, entitlement, and obligation with both the supervisor and the organization. As seen in Table 1, communion had a statistically significant positive relationship with gender ($r = .21, p < .01$), the only significant relationship with gender.
Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(-)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agency</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Communion</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>0.21**</td>
<td>0.16*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Entitlement</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>-0.22**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.86)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Organization</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.29*</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.91)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obligation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Supervisor</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.53**</td>
<td>-0.27**</td>
<td></td>
<td>(0.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obligation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$. Men were coded as 0 and women as 1. N= 178 for gender, agency, communion and entitlement. n= 91 for supervisor obligation and n= 74 for organization obligation.

Table 2 presents the results of independent t-tests where the mean scores for men and women for agency, communion, entitlement, supervisor obligation and organization obligation are presented. The values for gender, agency, communion, and entitlement are based on the entire sample. The values for each of obligation measures are based on approximately half of the total sample: supervisor obligation (57%) and organization obligation (43%).
Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations and Effect Sizes

| Variables              | Men   | Women  | t    | Cohen’s d | p
|------------------------|-------|--------|-------|-----------|---
|                        | M     | SD     | M     | SD       |    |    |
| Agency                 | 3.63  | .83    | 3.67  | 1.07     | -0.28 | 0.05 | 0.78 |
| Communion              | 4.24  | .91    | 4.58  | 0.88     | -2.40 | 0.39 | 0.02* |
| Entitlement            | 3.36  | .81    | 3.20  | 0.86     | 1.18  | 0.19 | 0.24 |
| Supervisor Obligation  | 4.58  | .90    | 4.68  | 0.90     | -0.50 | 0.11 | 0.77 |
| Organization Obligation| 4.36  | 1.02   | 4.38  | 0.85     | -0.08 | 0.02 | 0.93 |

Note. Cohen’s d statistic is reported to indicate the magnitude of the gender difference.

Independent samples t tests were used to determine the statistical significance of group differences. * indicates $p < .05$, ** indicates $p < .01$.

To investigate hypothesis 1 that states, “women score higher on communion on an average than men”, an independent t-test was performed. As per Table 2, women ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.88$) compared to men ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .91$) demonstrated statistically significant higher communion scores, $t(163) = -2.40$, $p = .02$ which suggests support for hypothesis 1.

To investigate hypothesis 2 that states, “men score higher on agency on an average than women”, an independent t-test was performed (see Table 2). There was no significant difference for agency scores, $t(163) = -0.28$, $p = .78$. Thus, hypothesis 2, was not supported.

Table 2 also presents the results investigating hypothesis 3 stating “women score lower on entitlement than men.” Men ($M = 3.36$, $SD = .81$) did not score significantly higher than women ($M = 3.20$, $SD = .86$) on entitlement. Thus, hypothesis 3 is not supported.
Relationship between Gender, Communion, and Agency, with Entitlement

To investigate hypothesis 4 stating “individuals who score higher on agency and lower on communion are likely to score higher on entitlement than individuals who score lower on agency and higher on communion.”, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted (see Table 3). In the model, agency, and communion (IVs) were tested for predicting entitlement (DV). The model was significant, $F(2,27) = 8.39, p < .01$, with agency and communion explaining 8.3% ($r^2 = .08$) of the variance in the outcome variable. Both agency ($B = 0.18, t = 2.80, p < .01$) and communion ($B = -0.25, t = -3.46.53, p < .01$) were significant predictors of entitlement.

As seen in Table 3, for every unit change in agency, we are going to observe a 0.18 unit statistically significant change in entitlement. An increase in agency will lead to a statistically significant increase in entitlement. For every unit change in communion, we are going to see a -0.25 unit statistically significant change in entitlement. A decrease in communion will lead to a statistically significant increase in entitlement. The above result indicated support for hypothesis 4.
Table 3

Regression results using entitlement as the criterion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>LL</th>
<th>UL</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>.365</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>10.11</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.18**</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communion</td>
<td>-0.26</td>
<td>-0.25**</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>-0.11</td>
<td>-3.46</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. β represents unstandardized regression weights. Beta indicates the standardized regression weights. SE indicates standard error of the regression. t indicates the value of coefficient divided by standard error. LL and UL indicate the lower and upper limits of a confidence interval, respectively. *indicates p < .05. **indicates p < .01.

For a mediation to take place between variables, the independent variable should be significantly related to the mediator variable and the mediator variable should be related to the dependent variable. Due to the lack of significant relationship between gender and agency (see Table 1), a mediation analysis testing for the effect of gender on entitlement via agency was not conducted. Hypothesis 5 stated that “agency mediates the relationship between gender and entitlement”. Hypothesis 5 was not supported.
To investigate hypothesis 6 stating “communion mediates the relationship between gender and entitlement” a simple mediation analysis was performed. Using PROCESS (Hayes, 2017), I explored the effects of gender on entitlement via communion (see Table 4). The outcome variable for analysis was entitlement. The predictor variable for the analysis was gender and the mediator variable for the analysis was communion.

As seen in Table 4, gender predicted communion and communion predicted entitlement, but gender did not. The indirect effect of gender on entitlement was found to be statistically significant (B= -0.07, 95% CI = [-0.16, -0.01]) when communion was the mediator variable, suggesting that hypothesis 6 was supported. I did not investigate the direct effect between gender and entitlement or between gender and obligation because Rucker et al. (2011)
recommend “… that the requirement for a significant total X - Y effect prior to examining indirect effects be abandoned” (p. 368).
Relationship between Gender, Communion, and Agency, with Obligation

As mentioned above, participants were split into two categories when measuring for obligation: participants who completed the organization obligation measure and participants who completed the supervisor obligation measure. Research supports the idea that individuals may identify supervisors and organization separately when analyzing factors within the workplace (Ouwerkerk et al., 2002; Smith et al., 1983). For example: organization citizenship behaviors (OCB) can be directed at other individuals (OCB-I), wherein the behavior is directed towards an individual, which can be a supervisor or a colleague. OCBs can also be directed at the organization (OCB-O), where the behavior is directed towards the institution and not any individuals particularly. Therefore, I did not assume that the results obtained on two forms of obligation could be reported as just one all-encompassing set of obligation results and report the results separately.

To ensure that there was no multicollinearity, a Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated to examine the relationship between predictors: gender, agency and communion. The coefficients (r) were below .30, which suggested that the assumption of multicollinearity was not violated (see Table 5 and Table 7).

Table 5 presents the relationships between gender, agency, communion, and organization obligation based on a portion (43%) of the total sample. As seen in Table 5, gender did not have a statistically significant relationship with any of the variables. Organization obligation had a statistically significant positive relationship with communion (r = .29, p < .05).
Table 5

Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(--   )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agency</td>
<td>3.59</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>(0.56)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Communion</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>(0.72)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Organization Obligation</td>
<td>4.40</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.29*</td>
<td>(0.91)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$.

To investigate obligation pertaining to organization, which is a part of hypothesis 7 stating “women score high on felt obligation than men” an independent t-test was performed (see Table 2). There was no significant effect for gender on organization obligation, $t(73) = -0.08, p = .93$. As per Table 5, contrary to hypothesis 7, gender was not significantly related to organization obligation.
Table 6

*Regression results using organization obligation as the criterion*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>LL</th>
<th>UL</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>.594</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.22</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>-0.01</td>
<td>.107</td>
<td>-0.22</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>-0.09</td>
<td>.931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communion</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>.013</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $\beta$ represents unstandardized regression weights. $\text{Beta}$ indicates the standardized regression weights. $SE$ indicates standard error of the regression. $t$ indicates the value of coefficient divided by its standard error. $LL$ and $UL$ indicate the lower and upper limits of a confidence interval, respectively. *indicates $p < .05$. **indicates $p < .01$.

To investigate obligation pertaining to organization, which is a part of hypothesis 8 stating “individuals who score higher on communion and lower on agency are likely to score higher on felt obligation than individuals who score lower on communion and higher on agency”, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted (see Table 6). In the model, agency, and communion (IVs) were tested for organization obligation (DV). The model was significant, $F(2,72) = 3.30, p < .05$, with agency and communion explaining 5.8% ($r^2 = .06$) of the variance in the outcome variable. Communion ($B = .29, t = 2.54, p < .05$) contributed significantly to the model while agency did not.

As per Table 6, higher score on communion leading to higher score on organization obligation indicates some support to hypothesis 8. As communion increases, we will observe statistically significant increase in organization obligation. However, the absence of a predicted
negative relationship showing higher score on agency leading to a lower score on organization obligation does not provide full support for hypothesis 8. Thus, Hypothesis 8 was only partially supported.

Hypothesis 9 stated that “agency mediates the relationship between gender and obligation”. The mediation analysis was not run for this hypothesis as gender (IV) was not related to agency (M), and agency (M) was not related organization obligation (DV) significantly. Therefore, hypothesis 9 was not supported.

Hypothesis 10 stated “communion mediates the relationship between gender and obligation”. The mediation analysis was not run for this hypothesis as gender (IV) was not related to communion (M). Therefore, hypothesis 10 was not supported.

**Relationship between Gender, Communion, and Agency, with Obligation to Supervisor**

Table 7 presents the relationships between gender, agency, communion, and supervisor obligation based on a portion (51%) of the total sample. As seen in Table 7, gender did not have a statistically significant relationship with any of the variables. Supervisor obligation had a statistically significant positive relationship with communion ($r = .53, p < .01$).
Table 7

Means, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities, and Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Gender</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(--   )</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Agency</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>(0.62)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Communion</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>5.75</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.28**</td>
<td>(0.77)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Supervisor Obligation</td>
<td>4.63</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>6.00</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.53**</td>
<td>(0.93)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$.

To investigate obligation pertaining to supervisor, which is a part of hypothesis 7 stating “women score high on felt obligation than men” an independent t-test was performed (see Table 2). There was no significant effect for gender on supervisor obligation, $t(87) = -0.50, p = .77$, despite women ($M = 4.68, SD = 0.90$) scoring higher than men ($M = 4.58, SD = .90$). Contrary to hypothesis 7 (see Table 2), gender was not significantly related to supervisor obligation. These results suggest that hypothesis 7 pertaining to supervisor obligation was not supported.
Table 8
Regression results using supervisor obligation as the criterion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Beta</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>LL</th>
<th>UL</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>.472</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>4.77</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.085</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communion</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.52**</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. β represents unstandardized regression weights. Beta indicates the standardized regression weights. SE indicates standard error of the regression. t indicates the value of coefficient divided by its standard error. LL and UL indicate the lower and upper limits of a confidence interval, respectively. *indicates p < .05. **indicates p < .01.

To investigate obligation pertaining to supervisor, as suggested by hypothesis 8 stating “individuals who score higher on communion and lower on agency are likely to score higher on felt obligation than individuals who score lower on communion and higher on agency”, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted (see Table 8). In the model, agency, and communion (IVs) were tested for supervisor obligation (DV). The model was significant, $F(2,86) = 16.82, p < .01$, with agency and communion explaining 26.4% ($r^2 = .26$) of the variance in the outcome variable. Communion ($B = .52, t=5.64, p < .01$) contributed significantly to the model while agency did not.

As per Table 8, higher score on communion leading to higher score on supervisor obligation indicates some support to hypothesis 8. For every unit change in communion, we are
going to observe a .53 unit statistically significant change in supervisor obligation. As
communion increases, we will observe statistically significant increase in supervisor obligation.
However, the absence of an expected negative relationship showing higher score on agency
leading to a lower score on supervisor obligation does not support hypothesis 8. Thus,
hypothesis 8 was only partially supported.

Hypothesis 9 stated that “agency mediates the relationship between gender and
obligation”. The mediation analysis was not run for this hypothesis as gender (IV) did not
significantly relate to agency (M), and agency (M) did not significantly relate to supervisor
obligation (DV) s. Therefore, the part of hypothesis 9 pertaining to obligation felt towards supervisor was not supported.

Hypothesis 10 stated that “communion mediates the relationship between gender and
obligation”. The mediation analysis was not run for this hypothesis as gender (IV) did not
significantly relate to communion (M). Therefore, the part of hypothesis 10 pertaining to
obligation felt towards supervisor was not supported.

In summary, hypothesis 1, which stated, “women score higher on communion on an
average than men”, hypothesis 4, which stated, “individuals who score higher on agency and
lower on communion are likely to score higher on entitlement than individuals who score lower
on agency and higher on communion” and hypothesis 6, which stated, “communion mediates the
relationship between gender and entitlement.” were supported. Hypothesis 8, which stated,
“individuals who score higher on communion and lower on agency are likely to score higher on
felt obligation than individuals who score lower on communion and higher on agency.” was
partially supported as it was observed that individuals who scored higher on communion were
likely to score higher on felt obligation. Hypotheses 2, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 10 were not supported.
Discussion

This research highlighted a few crucial findings and a few concerns. There were a few findings that were in line with previous research and a few that challenged the existing findings. Findings concerning relationships of communion and agency with gender warrant attention as both expected and unexpected relationships, respectively, were observed. Likewise, relationships of gender with entitlement and obligation are worth noting.

First, the phenomenon of women being more communal than men persists, which is in line with previous research (e.g., Eagly, 1987; Hsu et al., 2021; Korlat et al., 2021). The persistence of this phenomenon may be attributed to the unchanged biological dispositions of women, specifically concerning childbearing and child rearing responsibilities. As mentioned in the social role theory (Eagly, 1987), the division of labor between genders takes place with regard to the most suitable role each gender can fulfill. Some gender roles over time have become fluid and deemed suitable to be shared between genders (e.g., income generating responsibility) rendering gender identification through roles difficult. However, some role differences persist between genders because of the untransferable nature of the role (e.g., childbearing and nursing) bound by biological characteristics. This argument, however, does not imply that men and women have equally shared all roles that can be interchangeably between genders. For example, women are expected to join the workforce and make a career for themselves, but this does not take away from them the expectations to fulfill a homemaker’s role (e.g., cooking and cleaning). Thus, it may be the case that women’s roles have expanded but men’s roles have not.

Agency, on the other hand, seems to not be dictated by gender, which is in line with some the recent research (e.g., Gartzia, 2021; Hsu et. al., 2021). There are a few plausible explanations
why these results were observed. Women are now, more than ever, integrated in the workforce. Therefore, to assimilate in a workplace, higher agency is required. Along with that, women empowerment (e.g., getting an education, holding a job) and changes in policies regarding women’s rights over the years may have increased the disposition of agency in women. This argument is in line with the Moskowitz (1994) study that indicated that women who worked showed higher level of agency. However, it should be noted that the sample of participants consisted of college age women. It may be that older men and women, who were raised with more traditional social roles may not have similar levels of agency.

Unfortunately, another plausible explanation for the lack of a gender difference in agency is the lack of reliability of the agency measure. The initial reliability of the agency scale was .52 and the improved measure only had a reliability .59. A scale with low reliability indicates increased discrepancy between the true score estimate and the observed score. Thus, it is unknown if the results would have been the same if the agency measure had higher reliability.

Second, much like agency, men did not score significantly higher than women on entitlement. Past research (e.g., Callahan-Levy & Messe, 1979; Crosby, 1982; Major et al.,1984) repeatedly showed how entitlement was significantly high in men. This phenomenon may be shifting. With the increase in social awareness in terms of inequality between men and women, the society, on a large scale is much more aware than before. Perhaps, an increase in informal education (e.g., through the media, social media and the internet) has affected men and women, such that men consciously try to curb entitlement, being aware of their privileges, and women consciously try and enhance their entitlement in order to compensate for known or perceived inequalities. Brummel et al. (2009) in their study also found that women were more entitled. As mentioned earlier, Brummel et al. (2009)’s measure did not match more traditional measures of
entitlement (e.g., Campbell et al., 2004) that incorporated items of comparison to others, which was used in this study. However, despite the exclusion of wordings indicating comparison to others in the scale items, it is of interest that the results were similar for both studies.

Third, having higher agency did not mean a lower sense of obligation. The absence of relationship between agency and obligation in this study, contrary to observations in previous research (e.g., Rotenberg, 1977) perhaps signals the need for more research. An alternate explanation is that agency simply is not relevant to social exchange theory and thus not relevant to felt obligation, an explanation supported by the multiple regression results. In other words, the lack of relationship between obligation and agency (Table 1, Table 6 and Table 8) may also be attributed to a possible lack of importance agency plays in social exchanges. Communion is directly related to other-oriented behavior, which theoretically ties in much closer to social exchange theory than agency. When evaluating agency, the role of self-directed behavior is explored, however, the concept does not mention self-directed behavior taking away from other-oriented behavior. Table 1 shows that agency and communion are not significantly negatively related. However, the lack of relationship between agency and felt obligation may also be a result of low reliability of the agency measure. It is also worth noting that given that only approximately half of the participants responded to either organization or supervisor obligation, it may have resulted to low power in the obligation analysis.

Fourth, even though gender did not have a direct effect on entitlement, it did have an indirect effect on entitlement via communion. Communion persists to be high in women and higher communion leads to lowering entitlement. However, strong effect of communion on entitlement may be indicative factors other than gender relating to communion. In other words,
there may be other factors in addition to gender that influence communion, which may be consequently leading to entitlement.

Lastly, entitlement was significantly negatively related to supervisor obligation but not to organization obligation. Perhaps, the constructs of entitlement and supervisor obligation are conceptually more strongly tied to self-assessments about what that individual deserves and owes, compared to organizational obligation. However, there needs to be more research investigating the relationship between entitlement and felt obligation to the supervisor.

Furthermore, it is also of interest that the multiple regression results for entitlement and obligation were different. Even though communion was significantly related to both entitlement and both types of obligation, agency was only significantly related to entitlement. These results provide further indication that entitlement and felt obligation are distinct constructs. More research would be useful in providing an explanation for why agency is relevant for entitlement. Nevertheless, these results add to our understanding of the distinction between entitlement and obligation.
Additional Future Research

The relationship between agency and gender may require further investigation. Perhaps there are differences in how agency is observed between genders with regard to age, occupation type, occupational level, nationality, among others. For example: in occupations demanding more masculine traits (e.g., the military) than feminine, agency level differences between genders may be less apparent. Levels in agency may be less apparent between genders when looking at high position-level employees. Perhaps, in societies where individuals are more abiding of traditional social roles, the difference between genders is more apparent. Therefore, it is important to conduct future research that examines relationship between gender and agency in different contexts.

Communion strongly predicted entitlement, however, gender did not. Future researchers may focus on what other independent factors other than gender could possibly be predicting communion. It may also be worth extensively mapping on each component of the construct of communion to entitlement. Findings from conducting extensive research in the future regarding communion may be used in formulating training modules that are highly specific and consequently efficient. The relationship between gender and communion was not apparent in obligation cases where the samples were smaller than the entitlement cases. It would probably be worthwhile to conduct future research where both types of obligation are tested with larger samples.

Recent research on entitlement has focused on differentiating between different types of entitlement (Langerud, 2020; George-Levi et al., 2021). Perhaps, it is worth researching how agency and communion relates to different types of entitlement, such as active and passive entitlement. Research shows that passive entitlement compared to active entitlement may result
in more negative outcomes (George-Levi et al., 2021). Identifying the variables within the agency and communion constructs and figuring out how they map on to different types of entitlement may be beneficial to organizations. Perhaps, conducting more research on gender differences pertaining to different types of entitlement may provide some insight into gender specific mechanisms within the organization.

**Practical Implications**

The findings from this study are indicative of how women may perform in the workplace. Women were more communal than men at a significant level. As per other findings in this study, this is indicative of two things: women are likely to be feel less entitlement and are likely to feel more obligation in the workplace. These findings can be used to support the arguments that challenge the unequal and unfair treatment of women (e.g., difference in wages, promotion prospects) in the workplace compared to men.

Organizations thrive when the culture and the values of organizations matches the values and beliefs of the individual. Knowing how employees fare on agency and communion may aid in organizations to decide whether the candidate is likely to be a good fit in the organization when appointing new personnel. For example: if an organization seldomly requires individuals to work interdependently, (e.g., salesmen), high levels of communion may not be as essential as it would be for an organization that requires individuals to work in cohesion (e.g., assembly line). It may be important for the organization to match its needs with suitable employees. Inclusion of assessment of agency and communion in a selection battery may benefit the organization.

In the same light, organizations can use the assessment results to make promotion related decisions and other decisions that follow. If the position for which the candidate is being considered (e.g., a salesman being promoted to a manager) requires more communion related
qualities to be suitable for that position, an agency and communion assessment may reveal the level of disposition for these latent variables, which can then be used to make training related decisions. Communion enhancing training could also be implemented to enhance the qualities in an existing deserving employee to prepare them for promotion.

Training employees to be more communal may also lead to a decreased sense of entitlement, in addition to an increased sense of obligation to the organization. The levels of entitlement and felt obligation may have a direct effect on workplace outcomes such as job engagement and organizational citizenship behavior, as mentioned earlier. Therefore, it may be beneficial that employees be trained, and their communion be enhanced, in order to observe positive workplace related outcomes.

Limitations

Although a reliability score of .59 is not acceptable, it could not be increased given the measure. Agency may be better captured with a measure with higher reliability. There was one item “hierarchal” that loaded onto agency negatively, which resulted to loss of reliability. This was corrected for by removing the item which led to an increment in reliability. There were two other items “competitive” and “individualistic” that had a factor loading of less than a preferred 0.4 which may have also contributed to the low reliability of the scale. However, removing these items did not increase the reliability of the agency measure. A low reliability scale is problematic because difference in observations cannot be attributed to what is assumed to be true variances in scores of that population but may be errors caused by an unreliable measurement.

Another possible limitation may be attributed to relatively smaller sample groups for the obligation cases, in comparison to entitlement cases. Splitting the total sample between two types of obligation, which resulted to smaller sample sizes, caused the power to decrease in the
analyses involving obligation. As mentioned earlier, the effect of gender on communion when the entire sample was included in the mediation (in entitlement case) indicated that gender had a significant effect on communion. Perhaps, the small sample sizes of the spilt obligation cases influenced the results regarding a possible mediation between gender and obligation via communion. In the future, it is worth examining whether increasing sample sizes for both the cases would lead to a different result.

Another limitation could be one pertaining to the sample. Undergraduate students majoring in Psychology took part in the online survey. This may have resulted in possible response bias from ‘non-naive ’participants. Possible response bias may also result through responses that reflect social desirability and/or authentic responses as these were students filling out a survey distributed through the university that they were attending mostly for course credit.

**Conclusion**

The results from this research have highlighted a few crucial findings and raised a few questions. First, the gender difference in terms of communion seems to be a persisting phenomenon. Second, communion seems to be a crucial construct that needs to be considered when studying both entitlement and obligation, given its relationship with both DVs. Third, having higher agency may not lead to lowering of obligation and apparently the gender difference in agency observed in previous research no longer is the case, at least among the college age population.
References


doi:10.1300/J015V06N03_02.


