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# Gender stereotypes and self-characterizations in Germany and Nigeria: A cross-cultural comparison

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## Abstract

Studies on the content of gender stereotypes have been conducted primarily in the United States, while research in other, particularly non-Western, countries is scarce. In this research, we assessed and compared the content of gender stereotypes and self-characterizations in Germany—a Western European country—and Nigeria—a West African country. We asked 403 Germans and Nigerians to rate three target groups (either men in general, women in general, or themselves) on 74 agentic and communal characteristics. We found that Nigerian women were rated as more agentic and more communal than German women, while German men were rated as more communal than Nigerian men, but similarly on agency. On self-characterizations, Nigerian men rated themselves as more communal than German men, but again similarly on agency; Nigerian women rated themselves as more agentic and more communal than German women. Within-country comparisons showed that in Germany, men compared to women were perceived as more agentic but similarly communal when rated by others (and similarly agentic and communal when rating themselves). In Nigeria, men and women were perceived as similarly agentic, but women were perceived as more communal than men (by both others and when rating themselves). Further analysis on individual agentic and communal characteristics, however, showed important differences in stereotypes and self-characterizations of men and women in both countries that were obscured when looking at overall agency and communion. Our results show that gender stereotyping of oneself and others is complex and highlights the impact of culture on people's perceptions of gender.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Despite women's increased participation in the workforce worldwide, gender equality has not yet been achieved. Women's salaries are lower than those of men, they receive fewer promotions, and their presence at the top levels of organizations is scarce (Davidson & Burke, 2016). Many research studies suggest that gender stereotypes are a major reason for this inequality (for overviews see Eagly & Karau, 2002;

Ellemers, 2018; Heilman, 2012). Specifically, when gender stereotypes conflict with characteristics thought to be needed to succeed in a position or career path, they can result in biased evaluations and hiring decisions (Heilman, 1983; March et al., 2016).

Gender stereotypes are overgeneralized perceptions about women and men (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000). Stereotypically, women are perceived to possess communal characteristics—such as being warm or understanding—more than men, while men are perceived to possess

[Corrections made on 3 March 2022, after first online publication: The abstract has been corrected in this version.]

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agentic characteristics—such as leadership ability or dominance—more than women (Eagly et al., 2020; Haines et al., 2016; Hentschel et al., 2019). These stereotypes are usually inferred from perceiving men and women in distinct gender roles (Koenig & Eagly, 2014; March et al., 2016). Although gender stereotypes are relatively stable, they are dependent on cultural context and can change if gender roles in a country change (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Steffen, 1984). Furthermore, gender stereotypes can also be self-fulfilling and impact the way in which people perceive themselves (Barreto et al., 2009). This internalization of gender stereotypes results in differential self-characterizations of men and women (Wood & Eagly, 2009). Corresponding with stereotypes about their gender, men tend to describe themselves as somewhat more agentic than women, and women tend to describe themselves as more communal than men (Hentschel et al., 2019).

Generally, men are perceived as more fitting for leadership positions and things-oriented careers—such as jobs in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM)—than women because these positions are perceived to require predominantly agentic attributes (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, 2012). Likewise, because many care-oriented positions and household responsibilities are perceived to require communal attributes, women are perceived as more fitting for these positions than men (Croft et al., 2015). Such (lack of) fit perceptions resulting from gender stereotypes can lead to biased evaluations, hiring, and promotion decisions (Heilman, 2012). They can also influence men's and women's decisions to enter and remain in certain careers or positions, thus, affecting the continuing gender imbalance in career prospects and social status (Heilman, 1983; Latrofa et al., 2010).

Cultural context influences how people perceive others and themselves (Abele et al., 2016; Hofstede, 2001; Williams & Best, 1990). However, to date, much of the research on gender stereotypes and self-characterizations has been conducted in western countries such as the United States (U.S.) and Western Europe (Eagly et al., 2020; Haines et al., 2016; Hentschel et al., 2019; Hernandez Bark et al., 2014). Despite significant cultural differences, findings and implications of these studies are sometimes generalized, not only to other western countries but also to countries with different cultural settings (Ifegbesan, 2010). Such generalizations may not necessarily be valid, especially in developing countries, which have different social and cultural ideologies (Williams & Best, 1990). Moreover, despite rising levels of intercultural exchange between western and non-western countries, we lack research comparing stereotypes cross-culturally. Hence, it is crucial to investigate if and how the content of gender stereotypes differs between western and non-western cultures.

To our knowledge, the most recent cross-cultural study assessing gender stereotypes in western and non-western (particularly African) cultures is over three decades old (Williams & Best, 1990). However, societal gender roles have changed as is evident in women's greater participation in the workforce worldwide (Ortiz-Ospina et al., 2018). Because gender stereotypes result from seeing men and women in distinct social roles, these changes in gender roles may have affected the content of gender stereotypes (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). In addition, increased globalization fosters contact and interaction between different (especially western and non-western) cultures (Arnett, 2002),

increasing the need to understand if and how perceptions of men and women differ across these contexts. Thus, there is a necessity for an updated cross-cultural investigation of gender stereotypes and self-characterizations. Our study aims to address these gaps and investigate the content of gender stereotypes and self-characterizations in Germany and Nigeria—two highly visible and influential countries in their respective regions and with growing levels of migration and intercultural exchange between them.

With this paper, we aim to make several contributions to the current literature on gender stereotypes and self-characterizations. First, we address the need for a current cross-cultural comparison between western and non-western cultures (Williams & Best, 1990). Second, we address calls for stereotype research in non-western countries (e.g., Bosak et al., 2018). To do so, we do not only compare the content of gender stereotypes and self-characterizations between Germany and Nigeria, but we also investigate the stereotype content within each country. Finally, we measure gender stereotypes about men and women simultaneously with self-characterizations. Hence, we are able to get a complete picture of gender stereotype content in Germany and Nigeria and can find out whether gender stereotypes and self-characterizations are parallel or diverge from each other. Our research fills a gap in intercultural and gender research and can provide a basis for future research and theory on gender stereotyping and its consequences.

## 1.1 | Gender roles and socio-economic differences in Germany and Nigeria

Social role theory (Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Steffen, 1984) proposes that people infer gender stereotypes from the distinct roles that men and women occupy in a society. Specifically, if men or women are visible in distinct social roles that are thought to require different characteristics—e.g., leadership and caregiving—people would infer that men possess different characteristics from women (Koenig & Eagly, 2014). However, if men and women occupy the same societal roles, people would infer that they possess similar characteristics (Bosak et al., 2018). In addition, research shows that people's demographic characteristics such as age, marital status, level of education or country of origin can influence which gender stereotypes individuals hold (Akotia & Anum, 2012; Diaz & Sellami, 2014; Spence & Hahn, 1997; Williams & Best, 1990). Thus, to understand gender stereotypes and self-characterizations in Germany and Nigeria, we need to understand both countries' social and cultural contexts—that is, how they differ in key demographic indicators.

Table 1 presents a summary of relevant demographic and labor force statistics for Germany and Nigeria. Nigeria has a larger labor force and a larger and younger population than Germany, while women have higher labor participation rates and hold more political seats in Germany than in Nigeria. Germany also has a higher global gender gap rank, indicating greater gender equality compared to Nigeria (World Economic Forum, 2021).

Nevertheless, both Germany and Nigeria show visible gender segregation at work: women tend to occupy more people and

**TABLE 1** Demographic and economic indicators from Germany and Nigeria

	Germany	Nigeria
Total population	> 80 million	> 200 million
Age distribution (2018)		
Age below 15 years	14%	44%
Age between 15 and 65 years	65%	54%
Number of children per woman (2018)	1.6	5.4
Total labor force (2020)	43 million	61 million
Labor force participation (2019)		
Men	68%	61%
Women	57%	49%
Seats held by women in senate (2020)	36%	7%
Seats held by women in house of representatives (2020)	31%	6%
Global gender gap report rank (2021)*	11 (of 156)	139 (of 156)

Note: Demographic and economic indicators are estimates based on Gramlich (2020), International Labour Organization (n.d.), Inter-Parliamentary Union (n.d.), Pelcher (2019), World Bank (2019a, 2019b, 2019c, 2020), and World Economic Forum (2021). Years behind the indicators denote year for which statistics were available.

\*The global gender gap report measures women's disadvantage compared to men in 156 countries on indicators such as economic opportunity and participation, educational attainment, health, and survival as well as political empowerment. A lower rank on the global gender gap report indicates that women are more greatly disadvantaged.

service-oriented jobs like hospitality or childcare, while men tend to occupy more managerial, technical, and political positions (National Bureau of Statistics, 2017; Statistisches Bundesamt, 2019). In Germany, women outperform men in educational attainments (Klesment & Van Bavel, 2015) and are at times supported by gender quotas (Schultheis, 2018). However, German women still perform more family care duties than men (Jurczyk et al., 2019). In Nigeria, women also perform more family care duties and the bulk of domestic work, but their labor market participation and financial contribution to the household income has significantly increased in the last decade (Yusuff & Ajiboye, 2014). That being said, a lower percentage of Nigerian compared to German women work in traditionally male-dominated professions like politics or STEM fields (National Bureau of Statistics, 2017; Statistisches Bundesamt, 2019). When Nigerian women venture into traditionally male-typed fields they may experience open backlash, cyberbullying, and be confronted with degrading statements (Uduh, 2019).

These key socio-economic statistics indicate traditional gender roles are more prevalent in Nigeria than in Germany. The question remains whether more traditional gender roles also predict more traditional stereotypes about men and women, and more stereotypical self-perceptions in Nigeria than in Germany.

## 1.2 | Cross-cultural differences in gender stereotypes

Often referred to as the “Big Two”, agency and communion have long been used to describe gender stereotypes (Bakan, 1966), with

agency primarily associated with men and communion primarily associated with women (Eagly et al., 2020; Haines et al., 2016; Hentschel et al., 2019). As described above, social role theory proposes that gender stereotypes stem from the distribution of men and women in distinct roles (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). Indeed, because of distinct gender roles and different divisions of labor between women and men, the manifestation of gender stereotypes can differ depending on the country (Schein, 2001; Williams & Best, 1990). This means that findings from the U.S. or Western Europe cannot—and should not—simply be transferred to other countries (Koenig & Eagly, 2014; Steinmetz et al., 2014).

A limited number of studies have investigated gender stereotypes in different cultures (e.g., Diaz & Sellami, 2014; Lopez-Zafra & Garcia-Retamero, 2011; Schein, 2001; Wilde & Diekman, 2005; Williams & Best, 1990). Cross-cultural studies on gender stereotypes tend to compare either European countries and the U.S., or Western European countries and the U.S. with countries in Asia (e.g., Schein, 2001; Steinmetz et al., 2014). To date, few studies have examined gender stereotyping in African countries (Bosak et al., 2018). Thus, we know relatively little about gender stereotypes in African countries such as Nigeria, and we know even less about how these compare to gender stereotypes in Western countries such as Germany.

With the exception of Williams and Best (1990), no study that we are aware of has compared gender stereotypes in Germany and Nigeria. Williams and Best (1990) investigated gender stereotypes in 25 countries and found that differences in the perception of men and women were larger between cultures than between genders. They also found European countries (e.g., Germany, but also other

countries like Finland and the Netherlands) had more—what they called—modern ideologies while African and Asian countries (e.g., Nigeria, but also other countries like Malaysia, Japan, and India) had more traditional ideologies. They define modern ideologies as a higher fluidity in the perception of men and women, while traditional ideologies were defined as a clear distinction between what it means to be a man versus a woman (Williams & Best, 1990).

Insights about how the German and Nigerian cultures differ may inform our understanding of gender stereotypes and self-characterizations. Although not specifically focusing on gender stereotypes, Hofstede (2001) identified six dimensions on which cultures can differ (i.e., high/low Power Distance Index, Individualism/Collectivism, Masculinity/Femininity, high/low Uncertainty Avoidance Index, Long/Short-Term Orientation, Indulgence/Restraint). Three of these cultural dimensions seem to aid the understanding of gender stereotypes. First, Power Distance refers to the extent that a society accepts that some people have more power than others, that is, that power is distributed unequally. Nigeria has a higher Power Distance than Germany meaning that people in Nigeria are more accepting of power differences. They may, thus, also be more accepting of power differences between men and women and make a greater distinction between the genders. Second, Individualism/Collectivism refers to the extent to which people value personal versus communal or group goals. Germany is categorized as more individualistic, while Nigeria is categorized as more collectivistic on the Hofstede index. Collectivistic societies like Nigeria promote group ideologies, such as tribal or family values, bonding, harmony, and loyalty (all communal traits). Due to the emphasis of the Nigerian culture of thinking in terms of 'we' rather than 'I'—which is more common in individualistic cultures (i.e., Germany)—Nigerians may thus perceive men and women as more communal than Germans. Third, Masculinity/Femininity refers to the extent that stereotypically masculine (agentic) values like achievement or assertiveness versus stereotypically feminine (communal) values like cooperation or modesty are valued in a given culture. Both Germany and Nigeria are categorized as comparatively masculine cultures and Germans and Nigerians may therefore perceive men and women as similarly agentic. Thus, we hypothesize:

**Hypothesis 1** Nigerians will rate both men and women higher on communion than Germans, but Nigerians and Germans will rate both men and women similarly on agency.

### 1.3 | Cross-cultural differences in self-characterizations

People do not only ascribe gender stereotypes to others, but stereotypes can be internalized and applied to self (Wood & Eagly, 2009). In their seminal work on the development of gender differences, Wood and Eagly (2002, 2012) argue that sex differences are bio-socially constructed. This means that sex differences are the result of both biological differences between women and men (women's

reproductive capacity and men's greater strength) and economic and social structures in different cultures. The interaction of both biological and social factors result in distinct gender identities of women and men which include distinct self-characterizations.

Research suggests that men's and women's self-characterizations often parallel gender stereotypes. For example, in studies conducted in the U.S., women have been found to perceive themselves as more communal than men perceive themselves (e.g., Hentschel et al., 2019; Spence & Buckner, 2000). The pattern for agency self-characterizations is somewhat more diverse: Some studies find men to perceive themselves as more agentic than women (Diehl et al., 2004; Powell & Butterfield, 2015), some studies find no differences in agency self-characterizations (Twenge, 1997b), and yet other studies find that gender differences in self-characterizations depend on the type of agency being considered (Hentschel et al., 2019; Spence & Buckner, 2000).

To our knowledge, there are no studies which compare stereotype-based self-characterizations of people in Germany and Nigeria. Similarly to gender stereotypes, self-characterizations stem at least in part from societal gender roles (Wood & Eagly, 2012) and research often finds parallels (albeit not complete parallels) between gender stereotypes and self-characterizations of women and men (e.g., Hentschel et al., 2019; Spence & Buckner, 2000). Building on these arguments and findings, we hypothesize that German's and Nigerian's self-characterizations will differ in the same way that gender stereotypes differ.

**Hypothesis 2** Both male and female Nigerians will rate themselves higher on communion than Germans, but Nigerians and Germans will rate themselves similarly on agency.

### 1.4 | Gender stereotypes and self-characterizations in Germany

A few studies have investigated gender stereotypes in Germany and compared them with stereotypes in other cultures. For example, two cross-cultural studies compared gender stereotypes of the past (1950), present (time of the study), and future (2050) in Germany versus the U.S. (Wilde & Diekmann, 2005) and in Germany versus Spain (Lopez-Zafra & Garcia-Retamero, 2011). Results of both studies indicated that between the past and present conditions, gender roles were perceived to converge over time in Germany and that there would be a significant increase in masculine (agentic) traits of women in the future, but this effect was smaller in Germany than in the U.S. or in Spain. In addition, a recent study compared perceived agency and communion in male-dominated (e.g., firefighters) and female-dominated (e.g., nursing) careers between Germany and Japan (Steinmetz et al., 2014). They found that with no job information, German (and Japanese) women were perceived as less agentic than men, but when the job information was provided, women were perceived as equally agentic as men in male-dominated jobs. In addition, with no job information, German men were perceived as less communal than women, but men were perceived as equally communal as

women in female-dominated jobs as well as when no job information was provided. In another study, Asbrock (2010) found that German men were perceived as more agentic and more competent than women, but women were perceived as more communal than men. Because traditional gender roles are still widespread in Germany (with women being primary family caretakers and make up the majority in people-oriented positions such as nursing and kindergarten teaching), we expect to replicate Asbrock's findings.

**Hypothesis 3a** Germans will rate German men as more agentic than German women and German women as more communal than German men.

With regard to stereotypical self-characterizations, studies conducted in Germany are scant. The only study with a German sample we are aware of that also investigated self-characterizations did not explicitly focus on gender but mentions in a footnote that no differences in agency self-characterizations between women and men were found (Abele et al., 2016). However, the authors do not elaborate on these findings. Men and women's similar self-characterizations of agency may result from women's higher representation in formerly male-dominated fields and positions (Haaf, 2020), but this warrants replication and more detailed exploration. Due to the internalization of stereotypes (Wood & Eagly, 2009) and men's low representation in traditionally female-dominated fields and positions (Destatis, 2014), we expect men to perceive themselves as less communal than women.

**Hypothesis 3b** German women will rate themselves as similarly agentic but more communal than German men.

## 1.5 | Gender stereotypes and self-characterizations in Nigeria

We are not aware of any recent studies that investigated gender stereotypes and self-characterizations in Nigeria. However, Bosak et al., (2018) investigated gender stereotypes in Ghana—an African country with similar culture and history as Nigeria. Specifically, the authors investigated dynamic stereotypes of Ghanaian men and women in the past, present and future similar to the above-mentioned gender stereotype studies in Germany (Lopez-Zafra & Garcia-Retamero, 2011; Wilde & Diekmann, 2005). They found that Ghanaian men were perceived as more agentic and less communal than Ghanaian women. They did, however, find that people believed Ghanaian men would eventually increase in communion and Ghanaian women would eventually increase in agency in the future (2050). As Nigeria and Ghana may have similar gender roles (Ferrant & Hamel, 2018; Tsikata, 2015), these findings indicate that Nigerian men may also be perceived as more agentic and less communal than Nigerian women. If those stereotypes are internalized by Nigerian men and women (Wood & Eagly, 2009), self-characterizations are likely to parallel this pattern.

**Hypothesis 4a** Nigerians will rate Nigerian men as more agentic than Nigerian women and Nigerian women as more communal than Nigerian men.

**Hypothesis 4b** Nigerian women will rate themselves as less agentic but more communal than Nigerian men.

## 2 | METHOD

### 2.1 | Design and participants

The hypotheses were tested using a 2 (country: Germany, Nigeria) × 2 (participant gender: male, female) × 3 (target group: men in general, women in general, self) experimental between-subjects design with a total sample of 403 participants.

#### 2.1.1 | Sample 1: Germany

Data was collected from 217 adult citizens (60% women)—age range 18 to 65 years old ( $M_{\text{age}} = 38$  years,  $SD = 10.6$ ). Of these, 33% had a secondary school certificate (German equivalents are Hauptschulabschluss, Realschulabschluss, Fachhochschulreife, and Abitur), 64% had a university/technical college degree, and 4% a PhD or similar graduate degree and higher. Participants' relationship status included being married (40%), single (34%), being in a long-term relationship (21%), widowed (0.5%), and others (e.g., divorced or separated; 5%). In addition, 37% indicated they had children and 63% of participants said they were employed.

#### 2.1.2 | Sample 2: Nigeria

Data was collected from 186 adult citizens (71% women)—age range 18 to 65 years old ( $M_{\text{age}} = 28$  years,  $SD = 7.5$ ). Of these, 68% had a university/technical college degree, 26% had a PhD or similar graduate degree or higher, and 7% had a secondary school certificate. Participants' relationship status included being married (19%), single (78%), in a long-term relationship (0.5%), widowed (1%), and others (e.g., divorced or separated; 1%). In addition, 20% indicated they had children and 57% of participants said they were employed. The Nigerian sample was, thus, somewhat younger (in line with the general Nigerian population), slightly better educated, and less often in a relationship than the German sample.

### 2.2 | Procedure and materials

We adopted a mix of recruitment methods, and all participants were told that we were interested in the perceptions of different groups of people. The German sample was collected in two waves. In the first wave, using snowballing, a student recruited German

participants via direct emails and asked them to share the survey link with other suitable people (Cohen & Arieli, 2011; Wheeler et al., 2014). In the second wave, the recruitment of participants took place via German and Nigerian non-governmental organizations, health care facilities, psychology associations, as well as on several social media platforms. We informed potential participants that at the end of the survey, they could enter a lottery for ten 5€ gift cards (Germany) or that one in ten people would be selected at random for 1000-naira cash (2.50€; Nigeria). In the survey, we asked participants to rate either “women in general,” “men in general” or “themselves” on a list of characteristics. In Nigeria, we administered the survey material in the official language, English. In Germany, we translated the survey and characteristics into German following official guidelines for translations and back-translation (Brislin, 1980; Gjersing et al., 2010). German translations of characteristics can be found in the supplementary materials.

To ensure the accuracy of the survey, we asked participants whether they had responded honestly to all of the questions (and assured them that their answer to this question would not have any repercussions on their lottery chances). Two participants in Nigeria and five in Germany indicated that they had not filled out the survey honestly and were subsequently excluded from the analyses. We opted for an honesty check rather than attention checks, due to concerns of creating reactance in participants or excluding certain types of people (Vanette, 2017).

## 2.3 | Measures

Agency and communion were assessed with the 74-item measure by Hentschel et al. (2019). Specifically, participants were presented with 46 agentic characteristics combined into an agency scale (e.g., assertive, competent, independent;  $\alpha_{\text{Germany}} = .93$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{Nigeria}} = .90$ ) and 28 communal characteristics combined into a communion scale (e.g., communicative, understanding, emotional;  $\alpha_{\text{Germany, Nigeria}} = .93$ ). Participants were asked to rate how much each of the characteristics described “men in general”, “women in general” or “themselves”. Responses ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).<sup>1</sup> In addition, following Spence and Buckner (2000), we present analyses of the individual agency and communion items to see how individual characteristics deviate from the pattern of the overall communion and agency scales.

<sup>1</sup>Using this measure, we attempted to investigate not only agency and communion overall but also investigate stereotype and self-characterization differences in the subdimensions of agency (instrumental competence, leadership competence, assertiveness, independence) and communion (concern for others, sociability, emotional sensitivity), which Hentschel et al., (2019) identified in the U.S. context. While some Cronbach alpha values were acceptable in both countries, other Cronbach alpha values of intended subdimensions were low either in both countries or one of them: Instrumental competence ( $\alpha_{\text{Germany}} = .79$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{Nigeria}} = .77$ ), leadership competence ( $\alpha_{\text{Germany}} = .65$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{Nigeria}} = .53$ ), assertiveness ( $\alpha_{\text{Germany}} = .64$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{Nigeria}} = .68$ ), independence ( $\alpha_{\text{Germany}} = .53$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{Nigeria}} = .66$ ), concern for others ( $\alpha_{\text{Germany}} = .85$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{Nigeria}} = .82$ ), sociability ( $\alpha_{\text{Germany}} = .72$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{Nigeria}} = .65$ ), and emotional sensitivity ( $\alpha_{\text{Germany}} = .73$ ;  $\alpha_{\text{Nigeria}} = .49$ ). Therefore, we opted to not use these communality and agency subdimensions in this research and only present analyses for the overall agency and communion scales.

## 3 | RESULTS

### 3.1 | Preliminary analysis

As people's age, marital status, and educational attainment may influence their perceptions (Diaz & Sellami, 2014; Spence & Hahn, 1997), we conducted a preliminary analysis investigating the influence of these variables. To investigate whether gender stereotypes and self-characterizations differ by age, we divided our sample into two age groups (39 years and younger, 40 years and older) using 40 years old as a midlife indicator (see Hentschel et al., 2020; Ng & Feldman, 2008). For education, we divided our sample into two education groups (those who had not completed higher education, and those who had graduated from a university or attained a higher degree). Finally, for marital status, we divided our sample into two groups (those who indicated that they were single and all others who indicated they were married, in a long-term relationship, divorced or separated). We conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with country, rater gender, target group, and either rater age group, education group or marital group as independent variables. Results indicated no main or interaction effects involving age, educational attainment, or marital status. Thus, we merged all age, education, and marital groups and present our findings without controlling for these variables.

### 3.2 | Main analyses

We conducted a between-subjects MANOVA with country (Germany, Nigeria), participant gender (men, women), and target group (men in general, women in general, self) as independent variables as well as agency and communion as dependent variables. We found significant main effects for country, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .948$ ,  $F(2, 390) = 10.74$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .052$ , target group, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .757$ ,  $F(4, 780) = 29.06$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .130$ , but not for participant gender, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .993$ ,  $F(2, 390) = 1.41$ ,  $p = .245$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .007$ . Interaction effects were also significant for country  $\times$  target group, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .602$ ,  $F(4, 780) = 56.30$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .224$ , participant gender  $\times$  target group, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .970$ ,  $F(4, 780) = 3.01$ ,  $p = .018$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .015$ , and the three-way interaction of country  $\times$  target group  $\times$  participant gender, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .957$ ,  $F(4, 780) = 4.32$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .022$ . The interaction of country  $\times$  participant gender was not significant, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .997$ ,  $F(2, 390) = .650$ ,  $p = .523$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .003$ . The MANOVA findings of the individual agency and communion scales are presented in Table 2 and were followed up by post hoc tests (Fisher's LSD) to compare means between the different conditions. The means, standard deviations, and post hoc comparison results for all conditions are presented in Tables 3 and 4, indicating whether the means in different conditions differ significantly.

In the following, we will present the results for the individual hypotheses tests.

**TABLE 2** Results of 2 (country: Germany, Nigeria) × 2 (participant gender: men, women) × 3 (target group: men, women, self) MANOVA on Agency and Communion

	Agency	Communion
Country	$F(1, 391) = 11.37, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .028$	$F(1, 391) = 20.35, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .049$
Target group	$F(2, 391) = 2.69, p = .069, \eta_p^2 = .014$	$F(2, 391) = 33.30, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .146$
Participant gender	$F(1, 391) = .05, p = .828, \eta_p^2 = .000$	$F(1, 391) = 2.30, p = .130, \eta_p^2 = .006$
Country × target group	$F(2, 391) = 3.12, p = .045, \eta_p^2 = .016$	$F(2, 391) = 96.13, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .330$
Country × participant gender	$F(1, 391) = .24, p = .623, \eta_p^2 = .001$	$F(1, 391) = 1.28, p = .259, \eta_p^2 = .003$
Target group × participant gender	$F(2, 391) = 4.76, p = .009, \eta_p^2 = .024$	$F(2, 391) = 3.74, p = .025, \eta_p^2 = .019$
Country × target group × participant gender	$F(2, 391) = 1.68, p = .187, \eta_p^2 = .009$	$F(2, 391) = 8.57, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .042$

Note:  $N = 403$  raters (Nigeria = 186; Germany = 217).

**TABLE 3** Means (Standard Deviations) and LSD comparisons of stereotypes about men in general and women in general on agency and communion in Germany and Nigeria

		Mean values		LSD comparisons		
		Germany	Nigeria	Germany vs. Nigeria	Germany Men vs. women	Nigeria Men vs. women
Agency	Men	4.95 (0.69)	4.89 (0.65)	$p = .889$	$p < .001$	$p = .891$
	Women	4.62 (0.61)	5.06 (0.56)	$p < .001$		
Communion	Men	5.06 (0.58)	4.17 (0.68)	$p < .001$	$p = .958$	$p < .001$
	Women	5.09 (0.58)	5.41 (0.66)	$p = .013$		

Note:  $N = 274$  other-raters rating men in general and women in general (Germany = 146; Nigeria = 128). Ratings were given on 7-point scales ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*. Higher means indicate that agency or communion are thought to be more characteristic of the target group.

**Results for Hypothesis 1.** Nigerians will rate both men and women higher on communion than Germans, but Nigerians and Germans will rate both men and women similarly on agency.

Fisher's LSD comparisons for agency (see Table 3) revealed that Germans and Nigerians rated men in general as similarly agentic ( $p = .889$ ), while Nigerians rated women in general as more agentic ( $p < .001$ ) than Germans rated women.

Fisher's LSD comparisons for communion (see Table 3) revealed that Germans rated men as more communal ( $p < .001$ ) than Nigerians rated men, while Nigerians rated women in general as more communal ( $p = .013$ ) than Germans rated women.

**Results for Hypothesis 2** Nigerians compared to Germans (both men and women) will rate themselves similarly on agency, while Nigerians will rate themselves (both men and women) higher on communion compared to Germans.

Fisher's LSD comparisons for agency (see Table 4) revealed that German and Nigerian men rated themselves as similarly agentic ( $p = .695$ ), while Nigerian women rated themselves as more agentic than German women rated themselves ( $p = .006$ ).

Fisher's LSD comparisons for communion (see Table 4) revealed that Nigerian men rated themselves as more communal than German men rated themselves ( $p < .001$ ) and Nigerian women rated themselves as more communal than German women rated themselves ( $p < .001$ ).

**Results for Hypothesis 3a.** Germans will rate German men as more agentic than German women and German women as more communal than German men.

Fisher's LSD comparisons (see Table 3) revealed that Germans generally rated men as more agentic than they rated women ( $p < .001$ ), but that they rated men and women to be similarly communal ( $p = .958$ ).

**Results for Hypothesis 3b.** German women will rate themselves as similarly agentic but more communal than German men.

Fisher's LSD comparisons (see Table 4) showed that German men and German women rated themselves as equally agentic ( $p = .148$ ) as well as equally communal ( $p = .088$ ).

**Results for Hypothesis 4a.** Nigerians will rate Nigerian men as more agentic than Nigerian women and Nigerian women as more communal than Nigerian men.

Fisher's LSD comparisons (see Table 3) showed no difference in Nigerians' ratings of men's and women's agency ( $p = .891$ ). However, Nigerians rated women as more communal than men ( $p < .001$ ).

**Results for Hypothesis 4b.** Nigerian women will rate themselves as less agentic but more communal than Nigerian men.

In contrast to our hypothesis, Fisher's LSD comparisons (see Table 4) showed no difference in self-characterizations of agency for men and women in Nigeria. However, in line with our hypothesis,



TABLE 4 Means and Standard Deviations of men's and women's self-characterizations on agency and communion in Germany and Nigeria

	LSD comparisons					
	Mean values					
	Germany		Nigeria		Within country	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Germany	Nigeria
Agency	4.84 (0.54)	4.63 (0.47)	4.91 (0.62)	5.01 (0.60)	Men vs. women	Men vs. women
Communion	4.06 (0.55)	3.82 (0.49)	5.05 (0.60)	5.56 (0.56)	$p = .148$	$p = .535$
					$p = .088$	$p = .002$
					$p = .006$	$p = .001$
					$p < .001$	$p < .001$

Note:  $N = 129$  self-raters (Germany:  $n = 71$ ; Nigeria:  $n = 58$ ). Ratings were given on 7-point scales ranging from 1 = not at all to 7 = very much. Higher means indicate that agency or communion are thought to be more characteristic of self by the different groups of self-raters.

Nigerian women rated themselves as more communal than Nigerian men rated themselves ( $p = .002$ ).

### 3.3 | Exploratory analysis of individual agency and communion characteristics

In an exploratory analysis, we set out to investigate if certain agency and communion characteristics deviate from the overall pattern found above. This is important as other research shows that only investigating overall agency and communion may obscure important differences in gender stereotypes and self-characterizations (e.g., Abele et al., 2016; Hentschel et al., 2019). Thus, following other authors, we took a closer look at the individual agency and communion characteristics (Spence & Buckner, 2000). To do so, we conducted an additional 2 (country: Germany, Nigeria)  $\times$  2 (participant gender: men, women)  $\times$  3 (target group: men in general, women in general, self) MANOVA inserting all 74 individual agency and communion characteristics as our dependent variables.

We again found significant main effects for country, Wilks'  $\Lambda = 313$ ,  $F(74, 318) = 9.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .687$ , target group, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .195$ ,  $F(148, 636) = 5.43$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .558$ , and participant gender, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .734$ ,  $F(74, 318) = 1.56$ ,  $p = .005$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .266$ . We also found significant interaction effects for country  $\times$  target group, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .166$ ,  $F(148, 636) = 6.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .592$ , participant gender  $\times$  target group, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .524$ ,  $F(148, 636) = 1.64$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .276$ , country  $\times$  participant gender, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .747$ ,  $F(74, 318) = 1.45$ ,  $p = .015$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .253$ , and a significant three-way interaction of country  $\times$  target group  $\times$  participant gender, Wilks'  $\Lambda = .489$ ,  $F(148, 636) = 1.85$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .301$ . These findings show that ratings depended on the specific characteristic being assessed.

Means and standard deviations for the individual characteristics of German and Nigerian men's and women's ratings of men, women and themselves can be found in the supplementary materials. Below, we present tables that summarize comparisons of individual characteristics between male and female Germans' and Nigerians' ratings of men versus women in general. In Table 5, ratings of both German and Nigerian *male* raters rating men versus women in general are presented; in Table 6, ratings of both German and Nigerian *female* raters rating men versus women in general are presented. In Table 7, ratings of female versus male *self-raters* in both countries are presented. We see that there is both agreement and disagreement about how women compared to men are generally viewed in both countries. We ask readers to refer to the tables for detailed information, but will summarize several themes that emerged.

Based on the results presented in Table 5, it is clear that German and Nigerian men rate men in general either higher than women or similar to women on almost all agency characteristics. Further, male raters in both Nigeria and Germany rate men and women in general similarly for characteristics related to competence and achievement-orientation (e.g., ambitious, desiring responsibility). Male raters in Germany and Nigeria also rate men in general as less influenced by emotions compared to women (e.g., as more able to separate feelings

TABLE 5 Nigerian and German male raters' ratings of men in general versus women in general on individual agency and communion characteristics

	Men rated higher than women		Men and women rated similarly		Women rated higher than men	
	Nigeria	Germany	Nigeria	Germany	Nigeria	Germany
<i>Agentic characteristics</i>						
Differing gender stereotypes in both countries	Active, Authoritative, Conscientious, Dominant, Forceful, High need for power	Analytical, Bold, Consistent, Decisive, Direct, Emotionally stable, Logical, Objective, Relaxed, Reliable, Steady	Analytical, Bold, Competitive, Consistent, Decisive, Direct, Emotionally stable, Logical, Objective, Relaxed, Reliable, Steady	Active, Authoritative, Conscientious, Dominant, Forceful		Competitive, High need for power
Similar gender stereotypes in both countries	Able to separate feelings from hurt, Firm, Independent, Risk-taking, Speedy recovery from emotional disturbance		Achievement-oriented, Ambitious, Assertive, Competent, Desires responsibility, Effective, High self-regard, Intelligent, Leadership ability, Organized, Persistent, Productive, Self-confident, Self-controlled, Self-reliant, Skilled in business matters, Sophisticated, Stands up under pressure, Strong, Task-oriented, Vigorous, Well-informed			
<i>Communal characteristics</i>						
Differing gender stereotypes in both countries	Collaborative, Generous, Good natured, Modest, Sincere	Generous, Good natured, Modest, Sentimental, Sincere	Affectionate, Compassionate, Relationship-oriented, Sensitive, Sympathetic, Warm		Affectionate, Collaborative, Compassionate, Relationship-oriented, Sensitive, Sympathetic, Warm	Sentimental
Similar gender stereotypes in both countries		Aware of other's feelings, Cheerful, Communicative, Gentle, Helpful, Humanitarian values, Intuitive, Kind, Likeable, Neat, People-oriented, Sociable, Understanding			Emotional, Talkative, Tender	

Note: Results based on Fisher's LSD comparisons between male raters' mean ratings of men in general versus male raters' mean ratings of women in general in both Nigeria and Germany. All within country differences significant at  $p < .05$ .

**TABLE 6** Nigerian and German female raters' ratings of men in general versus women in general

	Men rated higher than women		Men and women rated similarly		Women rated higher than men	
	Nigeria	Germany	Nigeria	Germany	Nigeria	Germany
<i>Agentic characteristics</i>						
Differing gender stereotypes in both countries	Authoritative, Bold, Dominant, Forceful, High need for power, Risk-taking	Able to separate ideas, Direct, Emotionally stable, Feelings not easily hurt, Firm, High self-regard, Logical, Relaxed, Reliable	Able to separate feelings from ideas, Competitive, Direct, Feelings not easily hurt, Firm, High self-regard, Relaxed	Authoritative, Bold, Competent, Conscientious, Consistent, Dominant, Effective, Forceful, Intelligent, Leadership ability, Organized, Productive, Risk-taking, Self-controlled, Sophisticated, Task-oriented, Well-informed	Competent, Conscientious, Consistent, Effective, Emotionally stable, Intelligent, Leadership ability, Logical, Organized, Productive, Reliable, Self-controlled, Sophisticated, Task-oriented, Well-informed	Competitive, High need for power
Similar gender stereotypes in both countries			Achievement-oriented, Active, Ambitious, Analytical, Assertive, Decisive, Desires responsibility, Independent, Objective, Persistent, Self-confident, Self-reliant, Speedy recovery from emotional disturbance, Stands up under pressure, Steady, Strong, Vigorous		Skilled in business matters	
<i>Communal characteristics</i>						
Differing gender stereotypes in both countries		Cheerful, Sincere	Cheerful	Affectionate, Aware of other's feelings, Collaborative, Communicative, Compassionate, Emotionally, Generous, Good natured, Helpful, Humanitarian values, Kind, Modest, Neat, People-oriented, Relationship-oriented, Sensitive, Sympathetic, Talkative, Understanding, Warm	Affectionate, Aware of other's feelings, Collaborative, Communicative, Compassionate, Emotionally, Generous, Good natured, Helpful, Humanitarian values, Kind, Modest, Neat, People-oriented, Relationship-oriented, Sensitive, Sincere, Sympathetic, Talkative, Understanding, Warm	
Similar gender stereotypes in both countries			Likeable, Sociable		Gentle, Intuitive, Sentimental, Tender	

Note: Results based on Fisher's LSD comparisons between female raters' mean ratings of men in general versus female raters' mean ratings of women in general in both Nigeria and Germany. All within-country differences significant at  $p < .05$ .

TABLE 7 Nigerian and German participant's self-ratings

	Men rate themselves higher than women		Men and women rate themselves similarly		Women rate themselves higher than men	
	Nigeria	Germany	Nigeria	Germany	Nigeria	Germany
<i>Agentic characteristics</i>						
Differing self-characterizations in both countries	Authoritative, Forceful, High need for power	Effective, Emotionally stable, Leadership ability, Organized	Effective, Emotionally stable, Leadership ability, Organized	Authoritative, Forceful, High need for power, Intelligent, Reliable, Self-controlled	Intelligent, Reliable, Self-controlled	
Similar self-characterizations in both countries			Able to separate feelings from ideas, Achievement-oriented, Active, Ambitious, Analytical, Assertive, Bold, Competent, Competitive, Conscientious, Consistent, Decisive, Desires responsibility, Direct, Dominant, Feelings not easily hurt, Firm, High self-regard, Independent, Logical, Objective, Persistent, Productive, Relaxed, Risk-taking, Self-confident, Self-reliant, Skilled in business matters, Sophisticated, Speedy recovery from emotional disturbance, Stands up under pressure, Steady, Strong, Task-oriented, Vigorous, Well-informed			
<i>Communal characteristics</i>						
Differing self-characterizations in both countries		Generous, Intuitive, Modest	Generous, Intuitive, Modest	Cheerful, Emotional, Humanitarian values, Sincere, Sympathetic	Cheerful, Emotional, Humanitarian values, Sincere, Sympathetic	
Similar self-characterizations in both countries			Affectionate, Aware of other's feelings, Collaborative, Communicative, Compassionate, Gentle, Good natured, Helpful, Kind, Likeable, Neat, People-oriented, Relationship-oriented, Sentimental, Sociable, Talkative, Tender, Understanding, Warm			

Note: Results based on Fisher's LSD comparisons between men's versus women's self-ratings in both Nigeria and Germany. All within-country differences significant at  $p < .05$ .

from ideas, their feelings not being easily hurt and as being speedy in their recovery from emotional disturbance).

German male raters and Nigerian male raters, however, also differ in their stereotypical perceptions of some agency attributes. For instance, male raters in Nigeria rate men in general higher for characteristics related to dominance than women in general, but rate men and women similarly for characteristics related to analytical skill and decisiveness. These results are reversed for ratings by male raters in Germany—they rate men higher on characteristics related to analytical skill and decisiveness compared to women, but rate men and women similarly for attributes related to dominance. With regard to communal characteristics, we see that male raters in both Nigeria and Germany rate men and women similarly for characteristics related to people-orientation. However, male raters in Germany rate women as more communal than men for only a few characteristics (e.g., being emotional, sentimental) and men as more communal than women for other characteristics (e.g., collaborative, generous). In contrast, Nigerian male raters rate women higher for communal characteristics related to compassion and warmth but do not generally rate men higher than women for any communal characteristics.

From the results presented in Table 6, it is clear that German and Nigerian females hold some of the same gender stereotypes as their male counterparts, but also differ from them in important ways. Both German and Nigerian female raters perceive men and women in general similarly for characteristics related to achievement-orientation and independence. Just like Nigerian male raters, Nigerian female raters rate men higher than women for characteristics related to dominance. Also, just like German male raters, German female raters view men as less influenced by emotions compared to women (whereas Nigerian female raters perceive men and women to be more similar in this regard). However, when it comes to characteristics related to dominance, German women rate men and women similarly. In addition, for characteristics related to competence, German women also rate men and women similarly, while Nigerian women rate women as higher than men for competence related characteristics. Curiously, both German male raters and German female raters rate women as more competitive and as having a higher need for power than men. Finally, on almost all communal characteristics, German women rate men and women similarly with only a few exceptions (e.g., women as more sentimental but men as more cheerful). Additionally, Nigerian women rate women as higher than men for almost all communal characteristics.

We also compared Germans' and Nigerians' self-ratings on the individual characteristics of agency and communion (see Table 7). Men compared to women in Germany and Nigeria describe themselves similarly for the majority of the measured agency characteristics. However, while German men and women perceive themselves similarly for characteristics related to authoritative, Nigerian men rate themselves higher than Nigerian women rate themselves for those characteristics. Contrarily, German men rate themselves higher than German women for leadership ability (as well as for a few other characteristics such as emotional stability), whereas Nigerian

men and women perceive themselves similarly for these same characteristics (and Nigerian women actually rate themselves higher for intelligence, self-control, and reliability than Nigerian men do). For a majority of the measured communality characteristics, men and women in both countries also describe themselves similarly. The few exceptions are that German women rate themselves as less generous, intuitive, and modest than German men do, while Nigerian women rate themselves as higher for characteristics related to sensitivity, emotionality, and cheerfulness than Nigerian men do.

## 4 | DISCUSSION

In this study, we investigated the current gender stereotypes and self-characterizations of women and men in Germany and Nigeria. To do so, we conducted an experimental study in which we asked both Germans and Nigerians to rate either men in general, women in general, or themselves on agency and communion. The most striking findings were: (1) Women were perceived as more agentic and more communal, while men were perceived as similarly agentic but as less communal in Nigeria than in Germany. (2) Nigerian compared to German women described themselves as both more agentic and more communal; Nigerian compared to German men also described themselves as more communal but similarly agentic. (3) In Germany, men were perceived as more agentic compared to women but both men and women were perceived to be similarly communal. The self-characterizations of German men and women did not differ on agency or communion. (4) In Nigeria, men and women were perceived to be similarly agentic but women were perceived to be more communal than men. Nigerian men and women also described themselves to be similarly agentic, but women described themselves to be more communal than men. (5) Although we found these overall differences in ratings of agency and communion, we also detected important differences when individual agency and communion characteristics were considered.

### 4.1 | Cross-cultural gender stereotypes and self-characterizations

In the following, we elaborate on and discuss the main findings. First, the finding that Nigerian men were perceived as less communal than German men is curious. Even more interesting is that we found the reverse pattern in self-characterizations with Nigerian men describing themselves to be more (not less) communal than German men. The Nigerian culture has been found to be more collectivistic compared to the German culture (Hofstede, 2001), that is, it is more group-focused and places greater emphasis on striving for common values and goals. We assumed that this collectivistic orientation would translate into Nigerian men being perceived as more communal than German men. However, only when it came to self-characterizations did we see higher ratings in Nigerian compared to German men. Why did we not see this

same pattern in stereotypes about Nigerian versus German men? One explanation may be that gender roles for German men have changed substantially in the last decade. For example, today, it is expected of German fathers to take parental leave (albeit it is often shorter than for mothers; Geisler & Kreyenfeld, 2011) and partake in household chores (Schober, 2014). Thus, German men are increasingly visible in their role as family caretaker, which might have led Germans to ascribe more communal characteristics to German men than Nigerians to Nigerian men.

Contrary to stereotypes about Nigerian versus German men, Nigerian women were perceived to be more communal than German women and also viewed themselves as more communal. These high communion ratings of Nigerian women may be attributed to the heightened societal pressure to conform to gender norms and social roles within the country such as being a wife and mother before all else (Yusuff & Ajiboye, 2014). Thus, Nigerian women are highly visible as family caretakers in addition to working in positions that require communal attributes such as teaching and nursing (National Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Although German women are also visible in these roles and positions, the emphasis on the traditional female gender role is bigger and less permeable in Nigerian culture (Yusuff & Ajiboye, 2014), which may explain Nigerian women's greater communion ascriptions.

Intriguingly, Nigerian women were also perceived as more agentic than German women and perceived themselves as more agentic than German women do. Perhaps, Nigerian women's high agency ratings stem from Nigeria being a formerly matriarchal society in precolonial times, with women holding various political positions (for a review, see Fayomi & Ajayi, 2015). Though the number of women holding high-status positions decreased under and after colonial influence, several women can once more be seen in highly visible top positions—particularly in the last few decades—for example, Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the newly appointed Director General of the World Trade Organisation (WTO, 2021). This increase of representation of women and their visibility in the last decades together with having a historical background as a matriarchal society, might contribute to the higher agency characterizations and self-characterizations of Nigerian compared to German women.

## 4.2 | Gender stereotypes and self-characterizations in Germany

German men were perceived as more agentic than German women, while both men and women were perceived to be equally communal. There were also no differences in how men and women described themselves with regard to agency or communion. These findings may seem surprising. We know from recent gender stereotyping studies conducted in the U.S. that women are recurrently described as more communal and largely view themselves as more communal than men (Haines et al., 2016; Hentschel et al., 2019; Spence & Buckner, 2000). With regard to agency, there are fewer differences in gender stereotypes and men's and women's self-characterizations—though differences are still present (Haines et al., 2016; Hentschel et al., 2019;

Spence & Buckner, 2000; Twenge, 1997a, 1997b). However, our findings are in line with results from Steinmetz et al., (2014) who also conducted their stereotyping study in Germany. Although only investigating gender stereotypes without including self-characterizations, the authors found men were perceived as more agentic than women. Further they also found—as we did—that men and women were perceived as similarly communal. This provides additional strength to the argument that cultural context is important when considering gender stereotypes and self-characterizations of men and women.

The fact that we did not find differences in women's and men's agency and communion self-characterizations is in line with a footnote finding on self-descriptions from Abele et al. (2016). Due to the above-described changes in men's family roles as well as a relatively high level of gender equality in Germany (World Economic Forum, 2021), German men and women may be socialized in less gender-stereotypical ways, resulting in reduced gender differences in self-characterizations.

## 4.3 | Gender stereotypes and self-characterizations in Nigeria

In Nigeria, we found men and women were perceived as equally agentic, but women were perceived as more communal than men. Self-characterizations mirrored this pattern. Our findings on the lack of differences in perceptions between men's and women's agency are in contrast with findings in Nigeria from three decades ago (Williams & Best, 1990) when Nigerian men were perceived as more agentic (or masculine) than women. Our findings also differ from gender stereotypes in Ghana—a country with similar culture and gender roles as Nigeria (Bosak et al., 2018). Potential explanations for men and women being perceived as equally agentic in Nigeria may be differing levels of gender equality (Tayo-Olajubutu, 2014), a higher level of cultural masculinity in Nigeria than in Ghana (which is a cultural preference for people to be agentic; Hofstede, 2001), and the visibility of prominent women in society (Ajayi et al., 2020). In line with these arguments, several meta-analyses by Twenge (1997b, 2001) suggest that increasing numbers of women in paid work, could lead to reduced differences in women's and men's agentic self-characterizations.

Yusuff and Ajiboye (2014) may provide an explanation for why despite similar agency perceptions, gender stereotypes about women's higher communion persist in Nigeria. Yusuff and Ajiboye (2014) distinguish between—what the authors termed—'contemporary gender roles' and 'traditional gender roles' in Nigeria. While contemporary gender roles refer to women's financial independence and economic involvement (e.g., labor force participation—agency), traditional gender roles refer to cultural values and norms that are sacrosanct in many Nigerian tribal groups (e.g., first being a wife and mother). Hence, contemporary gender roles may evolve with society (i.e., Nigerian women's high agency), but women still have to uphold the conservative values (i.e., high communion) which are often entwined with patriarchy.

#### 4.4 | Diversity in stereotypes and self-characterizations in individual agency and communion characteristics

Despite the important overall patterns in stereotyping we observed, it is important to note that not all individual agency and communion characteristics were perceived in the same way. The fact that there are differences in gender stereotypes and self-characterizations depending on the type of agency or communion considered is important and in line with previous research (Abele et al., 2016; Hentschel et al., 2019; Spence & Buckner, 2000). These findings indicate that researchers are well advised to consider in detail which stereotypical characteristics are of relevance in the studies they are conducting.

#### 4.5 | Implications for research and practice

Our research extends the limited body of empirical knowledge on (1) gender stereotypes and self-characterizations in nonwestern countries (particularly Africa), and (2) cross-cultural gender stereotypes and self-characterizations as called for by Bosak et al. (2018), Hentschel et al. (2019), Smith (2013) as well as Williams and Best (1990). People's gender stereotypes and self-characterizations are often influenced by both social and cultural norms. Developing countries are often considered to have more traditional views of men and women than Western countries (that is, men as highly agentic and women as highly communal), but our findings show that these views are not always accurate.

Measurements or subdimensions of agency and communion have been operationalized in a variety of ways (e.g., Abele et al., 2016; Carrier et al., 2014; Hentschel et al., 2019). Our research showed that subdimensions of agency and communion that work well in describing gender stereotypes in one country may not be easily transferable to other countries. Specifically, we found the agency and communion subdimensions from the U.S. based work of Hentschel and colleagues (2019) may not be the most significant stereotype dimensions in the German or Nigerian context. While the analysis of individual characteristics helped us to exploratively investigate more fine-grained stereotypes and self-characterizations in Nigeria and Germany, we believe that future research could investigate which dominant agency and communion subdimensions may be important in Nigeria as well as Germany (see also Abele et al., 2016). Such knowledge can inform research that investigates consequences of gender stereotypes and stereotypical self-characterizations and how they may lead to gender bias and gender differences in (career) choices.

Our study also has important implications for practice. As of 2017, there were over 9 million people with a migration background in Germany (with African migrants being amongst the top 3, mostly from Nigeria, Eritrea and Somalia; Destatis, 2019), and 9 million African migrants living across Europe, ranging from highly skilled expatriates to refugees. Due to increasing globalization and a high influx of migrants in countries such as Germany, our findings on gender

stereotypes and self-characterizations in Nigeria may be useful in a number of ways and contexts—such as fine-tuning integration policies. For example, highlighting differing gender stereotype content for Germans and Nigerians may help to create adaptive integration policies that consider the gender, cultural and social differences of both migrants (like Nigerians) and host communities (like Germany) and encourage bilateral understanding.

#### 4.6 | Limitations and future directions

Like all research studies, our study has limitations. For one, our Nigerian sample was relatively young compared to our German sample. However, the age distribution matches the country's demographics with 44% of the population aged below 15 years and 54% aged between 15 and 65 years (World Bank, 2019b). In addition, participants both in Nigeria and Germany were relatively highly educated. Although our preliminary analysis suggests that education level did not play a detectable role in shaping people's stereotypes and self-characterizations, we acknowledge that high educational levels may result in more egalitarian and less traditional perceptions (Akotia & Anum, 2012). Further, in both countries, data collection was carried out in urban areas, on people who have access to the internet. This may also have affected the results as urban regions are often perceived as more egalitarian and modern. In addition, we cannot rule out that there may be larger differences in stereotypes than what we discovered. Our sample size might have been too low to detect small effects - and may have obscured differences in gender stereotypes at least for some characteristics. For example, as you can see in the supplementary materials (available online), German women rate women in general ( $M = 5.48$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ) as more relationship-oriented than men in general ( $M = 5.03$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ), but this difference is not significant. Thus, there needs to be some caution in generalizing the study results, but we believe that the general pattern of results is not completely dependent on age, educational level, or region, as those were quite similar in both countries. Nonetheless, future research should tackle this sampling issue and directly include potentially varying demographic characteristics in its research designs.

Nigeria is a diverse multilingual, multicultural country and is also the most populous country in Africa as well as an important global player. However, despite its influence particularly on other African countries (Ochieng-Springer, 2011), findings from Nigeria cannot simply be generalized to all African countries and used as a reference for gender stereotypes on the African continent. Moreover, different countries even on the same continent have diverse norms, cultures, and likely diverging perceptions of gender stereotypes. Hence, it is relevant to investigate gender stereotypes and self-characterizations in a wider variety of non-Western countries, in which research is currently still scarce.

Finally, the analysis of individual agency and communion characteristics may help other researchers in developing a gender stereotyping scale that can be applicable cross-nationally. Future research

may also tackle stereotype measurement with an approach similar to implicit leadership research (Braun et al., 2017; Offermann et al., 1994). If a similar qualitative method to derive measurement scales were to be used in both countries, we may have uncovered stereotypes that may be obscured by the use of established scales.

## 4.7 | Conclusion

In this article, we investigated gender stereotypes and self-characterizations comparing Germany and Nigeria. Our results highlight the importance of cross-cultural comparisons of the content of gender stereotypes and self-characterizations. Our findings are novel, as developing countries have previously been considered to have strong gender-stereotypical perceptions of men and women. In our research, we show that this assumption does not always hold. We encourage researchers to engage in further cross-cultural research using other non-western samples to deepen our understanding of the effects of culture on gender stereotypes and men's and women's self-characterizations.

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## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

We have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

## ETHICAL APPROVAL

We comply with the guidelines of the 7th edition Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (APA). All data were collected anonymously in both countries. In the case where we asked participants to leave identifiable data (e-mail addresses), we requested their consent. We reported all information honestly.

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors in this paper have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional Supporting Information may be found online in the Supporting Information section.

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