



Perspective taking can increase stereotyping: The role of apparent stereotype confirmation

Jeanine L. Skorinko ^{a,*}, Stacey A. Sinclair ^b

^a Worcester Polytechnic Institute, USA

^b Princeton University, USA

HIGHLIGHTS

- We examine whether apparent stereotypicality of a target and perspective taking influence stereotyping.
- Perspective taking with a stereotype-consistent target increased stereotyping.
- Perspective taking with an ambiguous target decreased stereotyping.
- These effects occurred for elderly and overweight targets.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 12 March 2011

Revised 23 July 2012

Available online 3 August 2012

Keywords:

Perspective taking

Stereotyping

Outgroup member

Stereotype reduction

ABSTRACT

Previous research has demonstrated that taking the perspective of an outgroup member reduces the likelihood of stereotyping that person and their group (e.g., Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Vescio, Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003). In the present research, we hypothesized and found that the effect of perspective taking on stereotyping depends on the apparent stereotypicality of the target. In Experiment 1, participants who took the perspective of an elderly person who was ambiguously stereotypic were less likely to engage in stereotyping than non-perspective takers. But, participants who took the perspective of a clearly stereotype-consistent outgroup member were more apt to engage in stereotyping than non-perspective takers. Experiment 2 suggests that increased stereotyping occurs because people use stereotypes as a basis for perspective taking when they are highly salient. Negatively-valenced but stereotype-irrelevant information does not have a similar effect on subsequent judgments (Experiment 3). Experiment 4 extended the findings to a different stigmatized group, overweight individuals.

© 2012 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Given the negative outcomes that can result from stereotyping (Schneider, 2003), many researchers have sought to discover methods to reduce it (Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2000; Pettigrew, 1998; Stangor, Lynch, Duan, & Glass, 1992; Stangor, Sechrist, & Jost, 2001; Wegner, 1992). One such method is taking the perspective of an outgroup member; a solid body of research has demonstrated that doing so can reduce stereotyping and negative evaluations of outgroup members (Batson, Chang, Orr, & Rowland, 2002; Batson et al., 1997; Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008; Pettigrew, 1997; Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Vescio et al., 2003). In one study, for example, participants wrote less stereotypic day in the life essay about an elderly man when instructed to take his perspective compared to those given neutral instructions (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000).

Although existing research suggests that perspective taking is a fruitful strategy for reducing stereotyping, these benefits may be more limited than is assumed. For instance, Vorauer, Martens, and Sasaki (2009) found that the effect of perspective taking depended on perceivers' prejudice in a counter-intuitive way. Low-prejudiced individuals taking the perspective of outgroup members treated them less favorably than ingroup members; in comparison, low-prejudiced individuals treated outgroup members more favorably than ingroup members when not perspective taking. High-prejudiced perspective takers in this series of experiments showed no effect of perspective taking or the typical benefits that come with taking another person's perspective. In addition, a recent field experiment investigating conflict resolution found that people encouraged to take the perspective of an outgroup experienced increased intolerance compared to those in a control condition (Paluck, 2010). Finally, Galinsky et al. (2008) found that perspective takers were more likely to adopt behaviors stereotypically associated with an outgroup target than non-perspective takers (see also Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007). Though this was presumed to generally

* Corresponding author at: 100 Institute Rd., Worcester Polytechnic Institute, Department of Social Science and Policy Studies, Worcester, MA 01609, USA.

E-mail address: skorinko@wpi.edu (J.L. Skorinko).

improve social coordination across groups, it also might hinder social interaction if perspective takers adopt negative stereotypic behaviors, such as aggression.

In addition, research examining the impact of perspective taking on stereotyping has been largely limited to targets who do not necessarily confirm group stereotypes (e.g., an elderly man sitting on a bench; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Galinsky et al., 2008). This is problematic for several reasons. Individuals who appear to confirm negative stereotypes of their groups may be more vulnerable to negative treatment than their less stereotypic peers (e.g., Maddox, 2004; Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 2001). Thus, interventions aimed at reducing stereotyping should extend to this group. Additionally, even if one is uninterested in improving evaluations of apparently stereotype-confirming individuals, it is important to determine how taking the perspective of such individuals impacts evaluations of their group as a whole.

We are aware of only one experiment in which both target stereotypicality and perspective taking were manipulated (Vescio et al., 2003). Stereotypicality was manipulated by informing participants that they were about to hear a radio interview with an African American male named Jamal who was attending college on a football (stereotype-confirming) or academic (stereotype-disconfirming) scholarship. The experiment found that perspective taking improved attitudes toward African-Americans, irrespective of the apparent stereotypicality of Jamal. However, in all experimental conditions the relatively subtle stereotypicality manipulation was followed by a rich, audiotaped interview in which Jamal recounted struggles acclimating to college and experiences on campus he thought reflected the bias of his peers and teachers. While this design is optimal for creating empathy toward Jamal, irrespective of his road to college, such a degree of self-revelatory information does not characterize the kinds of situations and interactions in which stereotyping is thought to occur most often (for a review see Fiske & Neuberg, 1990). In addition, this work focused on the effect of perspective taking and stereotypicality on prejudiced attitudes; the effect of these factors may be different in the case of stereotyping, the focus of the current paper.

In fact, our reading of the current literature suggests that perspective taking with an outgroup member who clearly appears to confirm group stereotypes may actually increase stereotyping of both the individual and his or her group. It is generally argued that taking the perspective of another shapes beliefs because individuals use the self as the basis for estimating the thoughts and feelings of others. This causes the self and the other to become psychologically intertwined, leading perceivers to view the other in more “self-like” ways (Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996; Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000) and/or the self in more “other-like” ways (Galinsky et al., 2008; Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007; Laurent & Myers, 2011).

The former outcome is most often invoked as the explanation for why perspective taking with outgroup members reduces stereotyping. That is, using the self to generate an outgroup member's perspective increases perceived overlap between the self and the outgroup member and, thus, the positivity normally afforded to the self is extended to the target (Davis et al., 1996; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Laurent & Myers, 2011). For example, according to this theoretical stance, young people who take the perspective of an elderly man in an ambiguous context, such as sitting on a park bench, will use their own thoughts and feelings when trying to discern his. Doing so leads them to see the elderly man as more similar to themselves and consequently assume his other characteristics and experiences coincide with their own characteristics and experiences rather than the stereotypes of the elderly. Prominent theoretical accounts contend that such use of the self to simulate the minds of others is an automatic tendency that people are especially apt to use when the behaviors and intentions of others are unspecified or ambiguous (see Epley & Waytz, 2010 for a recent review).

However, it is also argued that stereotypes may provide an automatic basis for simulating others' minds when the stereotypes are highly salient and relevant (Epley & Waytz, 2010). To the extent this is the case, the process by which perspective taking is thought to shape evaluations of outgroup members should have a dramatically different outcome. In this case, outgroup perspective taking may increase stereotyping because individuals' use of stereotypes as the basis for estimating the thoughts and feelings of others psychologically entwines the stereotype and the outgroup target further, further extending this stereotypicality to the target. For example, according to this stance, young people who take the perspective of a clearly stereotypic elderly man, such as an ailing one sitting in a hospital bed, may be struck by his age and frailty and be more apt to assume that his other characteristics and experiences coincide with stereotypes of his group.

The current research

The current research seeks to test this hypothesis. In Experiment 1, we manipulate the degree to which the target of perspective taking appears to confirm stereotypes versus does not clearly confirm stereotypes of their group. Our interpretation of the relevant literature suggests that perspective taking with an ambiguously stereotyped elderly person should decrease stereotyping relative to not doing so, but taking the perspective of a clearly stereotype-consistent elderly person should increase stereotyping relative to not doing so. Experiments 2 and 3 provide evidence that the effect of target stereotypicality on the relationship between perspective taking and stereotyping is a product of the salience of stereotypic information. In these experiments the target of perspective taking is ambiguously stereotyped; however, prior to viewing the person, participants are either primed with stereotypes of the elderly, control words, or negative words. Participants should display greater stereotyping subsequent to perspective taking, compared to a non-perspective taking condition, when relevant stereotypes are previously made highly salient. This is presumed to occur because, in this case, the stereotype provides a basis for surmising the thoughts and experiences of the outgroup target. In Experiment 4, we extend the findings to a different group (i.e., the overweight) and examine prejudiced attitudes as well to see if they are affected in the same manner as stereotyping. Across experiments, we use a range of stereotyping indices (i.e., day in the life essays, indirect measures of stereotype accessibility, behavioral measures) in order to demonstrate the robustness of our findings.

Method

Participants

Although 103 people participated in this experiment for credit toward a course requirement, six participants did not write about the elderly man as instructed and were excluded from the analysis. Thus, 97 participants (58 females, 38 males, 1 who did not report; 66 Whites, 31 Ethnic minorities) served as our final sample.

Procedure

Participants learned that the experiment examined different language processing skills and they would perform unrelated verbal and mathematical tasks. An experimenter began by giving participants a packet containing instructions and a photograph of an elderly man. To keep the experimenters blind to the conditions, each packet had a blank cover sheet. Prior to viewing the photograph, participants were instructed to write a day in the life essay about the depicted elderly man. Half the participants were instructed to write the day in the life essay (i.e., “In this task, we are interested in your ability to construct life-event details from visual information alone. Please

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10468579>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10468579>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)