



Resisting perspective-taking: Glorification of the national group elicits non-compliance with perspective-taking instructions[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Perspective-taking is often used to reduce prejudice towards disadvantaged or stigmatized outgroups. We took a different tack and tested the idea that the instruction to take another's perspective may induce reactance and (therefore) non-compliance amongst those who are prejudiced (i.e., those who glorify their national ingroup). Two studies showed that, amongst Australian glorifiers, the mere instruction to take the perspective of an asylum seeker elicited non-compliance. Study 1 ($N = 117$) and Study 2 ($N = 330$) demonstrated that glorifiers perceived asylum seekers as a realistic threat to Australian interests, indirectly promoting non-compliance with the perspective-taking instruction through prejudice against asylum seekers and psychological reactance against the perspective-taking instruction. Both studies indicated that, when instructed to take the perspective of an asylum seeker, reactance led glorifiers to respond from their *own* perspective. Study 2 also provides an experimental test of hypotheses by manipulating glorification. The findings highlight (1) that perspective-taking can elicit active resistance amongst those who glorify their national group and (2) the role of mode of identification as a point of origin in understanding the division in public attitudes towards refugees.

1. Introduction

Are the effects of perspective-taking uniformly positive? Recent research suggests not. Perspective-taking can backfire, promoting more hostile attitudes, because it elicits a concern about being negatively judged (Vorauer & Sasaki, 2009), a desire to protect one's ingroup identity (e.g., Tarrant, Calitri, & Weston, 2012; Zebel, Doosje, & Spears, 2009), or threatens the goal of the perspective-taker (Mooijman & Stern, 2016; Pierce, Kilduff, Galinsky, & Sivanathan, 2013). We suggest that the existing literature has not fully considered the conditions under which the instruction to take the perspective of a disadvantaged minority group may be resisted. Specifically, we suggest that people who are already pre-disposed to be prejudiced (by virtue of their nationalistic identity content and feelings of threat) may respond very differently to the instruction to take perspective. Our approach therefore differs from existing approaches by examining threat and prejudice as parts of the process leading to resistance, rather than as outcomes of the method per se. We conduct our tests in the context of prejudice directed towards people who seek asylum in Australia.

1.1. Perspective-taking and mode of identification

Perspective-taking is a method that encourages an individual to imagine the suffering of a disadvantaged or stigmatized outgroup member (e.g., Batson, Eklund, Chermok, Hoyt, & Ortiz, 2007; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Perspective-taking has been shown to have positive effects on a variety of social behaviors and towards a number of stigmatized groups. It can increase helping behavior (e.g., Batson et al., 2003; Batson et al., 2007) and can reduce negative stereotypes about older adults (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000), prejudice towards outgroups (Shih, Wang, Trahan Bucher, & Stotzer, 2009; Vescio, Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003), stigma about drug addicts (Batson, Chang, Orr, & Rowland, 2002), people with AIDS, the homeless, and murderers (Batson et al., 1997). Perspective-taking can also influence the targets' emotions and reduce anger at disadvantaged group members (Berndsen & McGarty, 2012).

Although perspective-taking can promote positive attitudes and behavior, other research has demonstrated that it can backfire to produce more hostile attitudes towards the targets of perspective-taking

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(Vorauer, 2013). For example, Bruneau and Saxe (2012) showed that when members of a non-dominant group (Mexican immigrants) are asked to take the perspective of a dominant group with whom they will interact (white Americans), attitudes towards the latter become less positive compared to those who are not engaged in perspective-taking. Elsewhere, Mooijman and Stern (2016) showed that perspective-taking backfires when people imagine an experience that threatens their motivations. Other research suggests that perspective-taking is more likely to backfire amongst people who highly identify with the ingroup when they feel that it threatens their group identity (Tarrant et al., 2012; Zebel et al., 2009).

Whilst this existing research (Tarrant et al., 2012; Zebel et al., 2009) demonstrates the moderating role of social identification in structuring the effects of perspective-taking, it is yet to consider the specific meaning or content associated with social identity per se. Consistent with this point, Pierce et al. (2013) demonstrated that the effects of perspective-taking depend critically on the broader context in which that perspective is taken. When the broader context is cooperative, it promotes pro-sociality; however, when the context is competitive, it triggers competition (see also Epley, Caruso, & Bazerman, 2006).

The current research builds on these findings in two key ways. First, we take up the idea that social identities can have variable content and meanings that are intimately linked to intergroup relations (Livingstone & Haslam, 2008). We conceive these differences in identity content in the terms developed by Roccas, Klar, and Liviatan (2006). They distinguished between two different, but related, *modes of national identification*: glorification and attachment. People who *glorify* their group are devoted to their nation, their national policies (Parker, 2010), and their symbols (Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, Halevy, & Eidelson, 2008). Such unconditional devotion to the nation leads to rejecting any form of criticism about the ingroup and explains glorifiers' beliefs that the ingroup is superior compared to other ethnic or national groups (Roccas et al., 2006). People who glorify their ingroup are more likely to be prejudiced, intolerant and hostile towards such groups because those groups are perceived as inferior (Berndsen & Gausel, 2015; Roccas et al., 2008; see also Penic, Elcheroth & Reicher, 2015).

Conversely, *attached identification* involves an affective dedication and commitment to all group members (Morgan, Wisneski, & Skitka, 2011; Roccas et al., 2006). However, such feelings of attachment may be accompanied by a critical attitude towards the ingroup's immoral behavior against outgroups (e.g., Berndsen & Gausel, 2015; Leidner, Castano, Zaiser, & Giner-Sorolla, 2010; Roccas et al., 2006; Roccas & Berlin, 2016). In such a situation, attached identifiers acknowledge responsibility for the harm perpetrated by their group, and this can be followed by actions that aim to recompense aggrieved outgroup members (Roccas et al., 2006). Thus, for attached identifiers the meaning of their national identity does not preclude inclusion of other, perhaps less prototypical, group members (Pehrson, Vignoles, & Brown, 2009).¹

Roccas et al. argued that a unidimensional approach to national identification obscures qualitative differences between people who glorify their nation and people who are attached to their nation. We therefore extend on the findings implicating social identification as a contextually important variable (Tarrant et al., 2012; Zebel et al., 2009) to consider the role of mode of identification (glorification v attachment) in understanding the diverging effects of perspective taking. We suggest that doing so is important because people do not experience the instruction to take perspective as a blank slate (see Reicher, 2004; Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967). Rather, people enter the laboratory with qualitatively different versions of national identity, diverging perceptions of the nature of the intergroup threat, and *these* a

¹ For a discussion of how attachment connects with related concepts (patriotism, genuine patriotism, conventional patriotism, and constructive patriotism) and how glorification connects with related concepts (pseudo patriotism, nationalism, and blind patriotism), please refer to Roccas et al. (2006).

priori views are likely to be implicated in diverging outcomes of perspective taking. However, to date, the existing literature considers threat and prejudice as *outcomes* of perspective taking. The second innovation here, therefore, is to consider threat and prejudice (stemming from modes of identification) as part of the process that explains why people resist the instruction to take perspective (or not).

1.2. Glorification activates threat and prejudice: resisting perspective-taking

How might the two modes of identification shape engagement with taking the perspective of people who seek asylum? Part of the answer to this question lies in the very different ways in which national identifiers perceive threat and differences in levels of hostility to minority groups. In contrast to attached identifiers, glorifiers are likely to feel *already* threatened by, and prejudiced towards, people who seek asylum (Berndsen & Gausel, 2015; Penic, Elcheroth, & Reicher, 2016; Roccas et al., 2008). Asylum seekers are often portrayed in the global and national media as a threat to national security. For example, conservative leaders have warned that the United States is putting its national security at risk because “there is no possible way to verify the identity and credibility of Syrian refugees which creates a grave national security threat” to the United States (Jessen, 2015, p.1). Similar discourse exists in Australia (Kelly & Maley, 2017) and Britain (Nardelli, 2015). National security threats are considered *realistic threats*; that is, threats to one's physical or economic wellbeing (Stephan & Renfro, 2002). We suggest that perceptions of asylum seekers as a realistic threat will be associated with glorification of the national ingroup because glorification is associated with an increased focus on national security (Leidner et al., 2010).

Moreover, a number of studies have found that appraisals of realistic threat can increase prejudice (e.g., Bizman & Yinon, 2001; Butz & Yogeeswaran, 2011; Riek, Mania, & Gaertner, 2006; Stephan & Renfro, 2002). If this is the case, then we expect that ingroup glorification will be associated with greater realistic threat and (therefore) heightened prejudice towards asylum seekers (see Pedersen, Attwell, & Heveli, 2005). Conversely, attached identification will be negatively associated with perceptions of realistic threat because attached identification is associated with greater inclusion of minority group members (Pehrson et al., 2009) and a reduced focus on national security concerns (Leidner et al., 2010).²

Building on the idea that, together, glorification induces threat and prejudice, we propose that these forces will combine to promote an active resistance to engagement in perspective taking. Successful perspective-taking explicitly requires the participant to immerse themselves in the experiences of another person or group. As such, it reduces boundaries between the self and the other (e.g., Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996). However, in the context of a realistic threat, the very idea of a self-other overlap with a threatening ‘other’ can make the threatening other (asylum seeker) even more threatening to the self (perspective-taker). Indeed, Sassenrath, Hodges, and Pfattheicher (2016) speculated that trying to take the perspective of a threatening individual implies *a threat to the self*. As outlined above, this is especially likely to be the case for those who glorify their national ingroup; where perspective-taking involves a threat to the self, one may resist the overlap of the self with the other (Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005).

² Although we focus here on the idea that glorification elicits threat and (therefore) prejudice we acknowledge that the reverse may also be true whereby glorification elicits prejudice and (therefore) threat (see Bahns, 2017 who showed that existing prejudice causes threat perceptions that help to justify prejudice). Adjudicating between these alternative causal orders is not a central focus here but we provide the details of those alternative models for completeness. Herein we report the tests of our theoretically preferred model (identification → threat → prejudice) but we report the reverse causal pattern (identification → prejudice → threat) as well as a model in which threat and prejudice are dual (simultaneous) mediators in the supplementary analyses.

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