



## Two motivations for two dimensions of mind

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### HIGHLIGHTS

- Four studies examine how different motivations affect focus on outgroups' minds.
- Affiliation versus effectance drives focus on agency versus experience.
- These motivations also drive attribution of moral rights and responsibilities.
- These motivations drive preferential focus on trustworthiness versus dominance.

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### ABSTRACT

Effective social interaction requires people to consider the minds of others. The present research suggests that different motivations systematically elicit attention to different components of mind. Four experiments manipulate either motivation for action prediction (effectance motivation) or motivation for affiliation and ask participants to evaluate the minds of outgroups. Experiments 1–2 feature hypothetical outgroups, while Experiment 3 targets Americans' relationship with China and also demonstrates consequences for moral judgment. Experiment 4 targets Americans' relationship with Iran and demonstrates consequences for moral and dispositional attribution toward groups. The findings reveal that effectance motivation relative to affiliation motivation triggers preferential focus toward *agency* (i.e., capacities for planning, thinking, intending), relative to *experience* (i.e., capacities for emotion and feeling). These results show that group mind judgments are determined not just by the features of the group but also by the motivations of the perceiver.

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### Introduction

As social animals, humans constantly must determine whether potential interaction partners are friendly or threatening (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007). We seek affiliation with friends, whereas we monitor and anticipate the actions of our enemies. The motivation for affiliation and the motivation for action prediction and understanding (i.e., effectance motivation; White, 1959) are major determinants of mind attribution, the attribution of another entity's mental states, including emotion, intention, and thought (Waytz, Gray, Epley, & Wegner, 2010).

The need for affiliation drives mind attribution because understanding others' minds facilitates coordination, cooperation, and communication (Baron-Cohen, 1995; Epley, Akalis, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2008; Epley & Waytz, 2010; Humphrey, 1976; Tomasello, Carpenter, Call, Behne, & Moll, 2005). Interpersonal liking correlates with mind attribution (Kozak, Marsh, & Wegner, 2006), and people attribute particular mental

states preferentially to ingroup members versus outgroup members (Harris & Fiske, 2006; Leyens et al., 2000).

Likewise, effectance motivation also requires a robust understanding of minds. Numerous studies have demonstrated that motivation to attain mastery increases mind attribution—when people are motivated to gain control and predictability, they often do so by anthropomorphizing God or seeing human agents as especially mentalistic (Gray & Wegner, 2010; Kay, Moscovitch, & Laurin, 2010; Morewedge, 2009; Waytz et al., 2010).

Although affiliation and effectance alike have been established as major determinants of mind attribution, the present research examines whether these motivations differentially affect people's preferential focus on different dimensions of mind. Prior work shows that people represent mind in terms of both *agency* (i.e., planning, intention) and *experience* (i.e., emotion, feeling), and these perceptions are tied to the attribution of moral responsibilities and rights, respectively (Gray, Gray, & Wegner, 2007; Gray & Wegner, 2009). We examine people's preferential focus on these dimensions (i.e., their prioritization of these dimensions) rather than their attribution of mind for two primary reasons. The first is simply that existing work has not examined preferential focus, creating a gap in the literature we wish to fill. Second,

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existing work shows that attributions of agency and experience are highly intercorrelated and are affected similarly by affiliation and effectance (Epley et al., 2008; Kozak et al., 2006; Waytz et al., 2010; Waytz, Morewedge, et al., 2010); yet we expect different motivations to yield more separable effects in terms of preferential focus on different dimensions of mind.

Specifically, we test the hypothesis that affiliation motivation and effectance motivation differentially lead people to focus on experience and agency, respectively. Attending to another entity's emotions and feelings, critical components of *experience*, may support cooperation and connection in the service of social affiliation (Schutte et al., 2001). By contrast, establishing plans, forming intentions, and setting goals represent critical components of *agency*—and these are precisely the capacities on which one would focus if motivated to predict action.

Four experiments explore the links between effectance and affiliation motivations and agency and experience in evaluations of *outgroups*. Outgroups serve as an ideal and important target as they can elicit both motivational aims—in some circumstances, people seek an allegiance with an outgroup through pacts or treaties, whereas in other contexts people must strategically monitor and predict the actions (i.e., attacks) of an outgroup directed toward the ingroup. Although previous research suggests that people typically fail to consider the minds of outgroups (Goff, Eberhardt, Williams, & Jackson, 2008; Harris & Fiske, 2006; Leyens et al., 2000; Struch & Schwartz, 1998), the present research attempts to demonstrate conditions under which consideration of outgroups' mental states occurs. Experiments 1–2 test the basic hypothesis that effectance and affiliative motivations increase preferential focus on agency versus experience, respectively. Experiment 3 explores how these patterns of focus influence attributions of moral responsibilities and rights, and Experiment 4 examines how these patterns influence attributions of dominance and trustworthiness.

## Experiment 1

Experiment 1 tests the hypothesis that effectance elicits preferential focus on agency, whereas affiliation elicits preferential focus on experience.

### Method

#### Participants

Seventy-seven U.S. residents (32 female, 1 unreported,  $M_{\text{age}} = 29.66$ ) completed the study online via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk).<sup>2</sup>

#### Procedure

Participants answered questions about an enemy country, after being randomly assigned to one of two conditions designed to elicit motivation for *effectance* or *affiliation*.

#### Effectance vs. affiliation manipulation

The manipulation was as follows with differences between conditions in bold:

We would like you to imagine that you are part of a government agency tasked with **making accurate predictions about what this country will do next (establishing affiliation with this enemy country)**. That is, imagine your task is to establish **the ability to predict and understand the actions of the country, for strategic purposes (a positive social connection with the country, to establish an allegiance)**. Below are a number of capacities that the

country may or may not possess. For each capacity, rate how important it is for you to consider these capacities in order to achieve your goal of **making accurate predictions about what the country will do next (forming a positive social connection with the country)**. You will do this by ranking these capacities for MOST relevant to achieving your goal of **action prediction (affiliation)** to LEAST relevant to achieving your goal of **action prediction (affiliation)**.

In both conditions, participants ranked six mental states of that country most important to achieving their goal (1 = *most important*, 6 = *least important*): three pertained to agency (*doing things on purpose, goals, and planned actions*), and three pertained to experience (*emotion, feelings, and experiencing pain and pleasure*) (order randomized). Averaging the rank of the three agency items and the three experience items produced *agency* and *experience* composites. We predicted that participants would rank agency as more important in the effectance condition and experience as more important in the affiliation condition.

### Results and discussion

A 2 (motivation: effectance vs. affiliation)  $\times$  2 (mind dimension: agency vs. experience) ANOVA revealed a main effect of mind dimension,  $F(1, 75) = 64.83, p < .0001, \eta_p^2 = .46$ . Both conditions judged agency ( $M = 2.71, SD = 0.91$ ) to be more relevant than experience ( $M = 4.29, SD = 0.91$ ) (lower numbers reflect greater importance), broadly consistent with work showing that people see groups as possessing more agency than experience (Knobe & Prinz, 2008).

More important for our hypothesis, a motivation  $\times$  mind dimension interaction emerged,  $F(1, 75) = 9.41, p < .01, \eta_p^2 = .11$  (a nonparametric analysis revealed the same result<sup>3</sup>). Participants judged agency to be more important for effectance versus affiliation and experience to be more important for affiliation than effectance ( $ts(75) = 3.07, ps = .003, ds = .71$ ) (see Table 1 for all descriptive statistics). These results suggest people do not consider both dimensions of mind equally across contexts. Instead, people preferentially focus on *agency* more so when motivated to predict an enemy's behavior, whereas affiliation motives comparatively shift people's focus toward *experience*.

## Experiment 2

Experiment 1 demonstrates that effectance motivation versus affiliation motivation increases preferential focus on information about agency versus experience. Experiment 2 replicates this finding in a different context, showing once again that effectance motivation comparatively increases considerations of agency in outgroups, whereas affiliation motivation comparatively increases considerations of experience in outgroups.

### Method

#### Participants

Two hundred twenty-four U.S. residents (95 female, 6 unreported,  $M_{\text{age}} = 32.31$ ) completed the study as in Experiment 1.

#### Procedure

Experiment 1 was identical to Experiment 2 with the following exception: participants in both the effectance and affiliation conditions

<sup>3</sup> Although Freedman's test can compare ranks of two types of items from multiple individuals, it cannot test for the interaction between mind dimension and condition. We therefore rely on a new rank-based nonparametric method (Wu, 2013) that estimates the probability of a randomly chosen participant from each condition (effectance vs. affiliation) to rate a randomly chosen component of agency as more important than a component of experience. A probability greater than 0.5 indicates that, on average, participants in this condition rate a given component of agency as more important than a given component of experience. A difference in this probability across the two conditions indicates an interaction between condition and mind dimension.

<sup>2</sup> Sample size was based on previously conducted studies of a similar nature, and increased in subsequent experiments to ensure proper power. Looking at results did not influence collection of additional data in these studies.

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