

Perceived Perspective Taking: When Others Walk in Our Shoes

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A great deal of psychological research has investigated the influence of perspective taking on individuals, indicating that perspective taking increases the extent to which people like, feel a sense of self–other overlap with, and help those whose perspective they take. However, previous investigations of the topic have been limited to the study of the perspective taker, rather than the individual whose perspective has been taken. The purpose of the current work is to begin to fill this large gap in the literature by examining the consequences of believing that another individual is taking one’s perspective, a phenomenon we refer to as *perceived perspective taking*. Over a series of 6 experiments, we demonstrate that perceiving that one’s perspective has been taken confers many of the same interpersonal benefits as taking another’s perspective. Specifically, our data suggest that believing that another person has successfully taken one’s perspective results in an increased liking for, a greater sense of self–other overlap with, and more help provided to that person. Consistent with predictions, we find that one’s self–other overlap with the perspective taker and the amount of empathy one perceives the perspective taker to feel operate in tandem to mediate the link between perceived perspective taking and liking for the perspective taker. Further, a mediational path from perceived perspective taking to helping behavior through liking is supported. Future directions are discussed, along with implications for theory and application in domains such as intergroup relations, conflict resolution, and political campaigning.

Keywords: perspective taking, self–other overlap, similarity, prosocial behavior, empathy

You know, there’s a lot of talk in this country about the federal deficit. But I think we should talk more about our empathy deficit—the ability to put ourselves in someone else’s shoes; to see the world through the eyes of those who are different from us—the child who’s hungry, the steelworker who’s been laid-off, the family who lost the entire life they built together when the storm came to town.

—Barack Obama, 2006

I feel your pain.

—Bill Clinton, 1992

Although Barack Obama’s victory over challenger Mitt Romney in the 2012 U.S. Presidential elections can be attributed to many causes, some pundits have cited the large “empathy gap” between the two candidates as one of the central reasons for a decisive Obama win (Ali, 2012; Birckhead, 2012). Consistent with this suggestion, polls from the contest showed that when voters were asked to consider which candidate was “more in touch with people like them” or “understood the economic problems of regular

people,” Obama won by a wide margin (Associated Press, 2012; Cillizza & Blake, 2012; Frommer, 2012). All savvy politicians try to persuade voters that they understand their circumstances, but none was more proficient at it than the 42nd President of the United States, Bill Clinton. Particularly when he was on the road campaigning, Clinton was a master at peering deeply into the souls of voters and convincing them that he could see the world from their point of view. He understood their fears, their anxieties, their dreams for a better future—and most memorably, he felt their pain, almost as if he were vicariously experiencing it himself.

A great deal of social psychological research has shown that when another person takes our perspective—trying to see the world through our eyes—he or she is more likely to see us, our point of view, and the groups to which we belong in a significantly more positive light (for recent reviews, see Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005; Hodges, Clark, & Myers, 2011). Thus, perspective taking research to date might imply that, provided Obama and Clinton did truly put themselves in the shoes of voters, these candidates in turn held more positive attitudes toward the everyday American than did their opponents. There are dozens of scholarly research articles on perspective taking, which collectively illuminate the various causes, consequences, and mediating mechanisms underlying the process of mentally stepping into another’s shoes (e.g., Batson, Polycarpou, et al., 1997; Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Maner et al., 2002; Vescio, Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003). However, what is remarkable about the extant research is that its focus has been entirely limited to understanding the psychology of the perspective-taker. But what of the individuals whose shoes the perspective takers are filling, such as the voters described above? That is, why were President Obama’s speeches—and those four simple words spoken by Bill

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Clinton—so effective at creating such a strong feeling of connection to the candidates in the voters' minds?

In the current investigation, we argue that the processes at play in the above political contexts emerge more broadly in everyday interpersonal exchanges. The central purpose of the current work is to begin to fill this surprisingly large gap in the literature by examining the consequences of believing that another person is taking one's perspective, which we refer to as *perceived perspective taking*. To our knowledge, the present investigation is the first to demonstrate empirically that being on the receiving end of another person's perspective taking leads to a number of outcomes that have previously been observed in perspective takers, including perceptions of self–other overlap, increased liking, and greater prosocial behavior toward one's counterpart.

Perspective Taking: When I Walk in Your Shoes

Perspective taking involves actively considering a particular situation—or the world more generally—from another person's point of view (Batson & Shaw, 1991; Stotland, 1969). There has been an explosion of research in recent years demonstrating a whole host of benefits that result from taking the perspective of others. For example, taking the perspective of another person increases liking of, compassion toward, and help provided to the target of the perspective taking (e.g., Batson, Polycarpou, et al., 1997; Davis, 1983; Davis et al., 1996; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Maner et al., 2002; but see Caruso, Epley, & Bazerman, 2006; Epley, Caruso, & Bazerman, 2006; Vorauer, Martens, & Sasaki, 2009; Vorauer & Sucharyna, 2013). In addition, perspective taking has been shown to help facilitate social interactions, yielding smoother and more coordinated interpersonal exchanges (e.g., Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Galinsky et al., 2005; Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin, & White, 2008; Neale & Bazerman, 1983). These and other beneficial effects of perspective taking on the perspective taker's attitudes and actions have also been found to generalize beyond a specific target. For example, perspective taking reduces stereotyping and prejudice not only toward the particular target whose perspective is taken but also more broadly toward the target's group (e.g., Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Vescio et al., 2003).

Research points to both affective and cognitive mechanisms (independently or in combination) as accounting for the positive effects of perspective taking. On the affective side, perspective taking not only tends to lead to greater liking of the target but also to empathic feelings toward the target. Although empathy has been defined a multitude of ways, the perspective taking literature—especially work by Batson and colleagues—suggests that empathy is an other-oriented affective response that corresponds to the circumstances with which another person is dealing (Batson, Fultz, & Schoenrade, 1987; Batson, Polycarpou, et al., 1997). For example, if another person's well-being is threatened or that person is under duress, perspective taking intensifies feelings of sympathy and compassion toward that individual as well as feelings of distress and sorrow for that individual. This has also been referred to as empathic concern (Batson, 1991), which typically leads perspective takers to treat the suffering individual in more sympathetic and compassionate ways, such as providing help to him or her (Batson, Polycarpou, et al., 1997; Batson, Sager, et al., 1997; Dovidio, Allen, & Schroeder, 1990).

In addition to these affective processes, stepping into another person's shoes also tends to activate a powerful cognitive process: The merging of the perspective taker and the target in the perspective taker's mind. A great deal of social psychological evidence outside the domain of perspective taking reveals the malleability and expansiveness of the self-concept, showing how the perceived dividing line between the self and others can be blurred in a person's perceptions (e.g., Ackerman, Goldstein, Shapiro, & Bargh, 2009; Ames 2004a, 2004b; Ames, Jenkins, Banaji, & Mitchell, 2008; Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991; Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997; Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007; Goldstein & Hays, 2011; Gunia, Sivanathan, & Galinsky, 2009; Maner et al., 2002; Monin, Norton, Cooper, & Hogg, 2004; Norton, Monin, Cooper, & Hogg, 2003). Cialdini et al. (1997) argued that taking the perspective of a target leads the perspective taker to experience a heightened sense of shared and interconnected personal identities, in which the perspective taker comes to incorporate the self within the boundaries of the other (see also Maner et al., 2002). This work converges convincingly with research conducted by Davis and colleagues, who suggested that as a result of the perspective-taking process, mental representations of the self and the target come to share more common elements, creating a sense of similarity and shared identity with the target (Davis et al., 1996).

Building on this work, Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000) argued that the increases in self–other overlap that follow from taking another's perspective are the result of seeing the target individual as more “self-like”; they found that those asked to take the perspective of a member of a stereotyped group later evaluated that group's attributes as more similar to their own. Consistent with these findings, taking another's perspective engages neural regions associated with self-relevant processing (Ames et al., 2008). Additional research has demonstrated that the increased perception of self–other overlap and shared identity that perspective taking elicits is caused not only by perspective takers projecting their attitudes and attributes onto the target (see also Ames, 2004a, 2004b; Epley, Keysar, Van Boven, & Gilovich, 2004) but also by the converse: perspective takers incorporating attitudes and attributes of the targets into their own self-concepts. In line with this idea, Goldstein and Cialdini (2007) showed that perspective taking leads individuals to see themselves as possessing characteristics exhibited by the target. Galinsky, Wang, and Ku (2008) found convergent evidence suggesting that perspective takers adopt the attributes and behaviors stereotypical of the target's group, regardless of the valence of those stereotypes (see also Laurent & Myers, 2011). Taken together, the extant literature has demonstrated clearly that walking in the shoes of a target individual tends to foster not only increased liking for the target but also a greater sense of self–other overlap (e.g., similarity, shared identity, relationship closeness) with the target in the perspective taker's mind.

Perceived Perspective Taking: When You Walk in My Shoes

Although scholars have learned a great deal about the antecedents, consequences, and drivers of perspective taking over the years, the focus of that work has been largely restricted to the psychology of the perspective taker. In contrast, little is known about the resulting attitudes and behaviors of the targets

of perspective taking. In one notable exception, Long and Andrews (1990) found that spouses' marital adjustment was predicted by both how often spouses reported taking the perspective of their partner as well as their perception of how often their partner took their own perspective. Although this is suggestive of our hypothesis—that believing someone has taken one's perspective can positively influence one's relationship with that individual—the study was correlational, limiting the conclusions we can draw from it. For example, it is unclear whether any third variables—including partner personality traits not directly related to perspective taking—could explain the effect. Moreover, the study cannot account for the possibility of reverse causation—that is, that participants who are experiencing greater marital adjustment are more likely to perceive their partner in a more positive light in any number of domains, including in the domain of perspective taking.

A small number of other studies do not measure perceived perspective taking directly but do examine dyad members' outcomes in a joint task in which one member takes the perspective of the other. For example, Galinsky, Maddux, et al. (2008) found that in a negotiation involving two participants, secretly instructing one participant to take the perspective of the other not only led to greater joint gains and solutions that benefitted both parties, but the other party—the one whose perspective was taken—expressed greater satisfaction with how they were treated in the negotiation. The researchers also found in a separate correlational study, in which no perspective taking instructions were given, that individuals' dispositional tendencies to take the perspective of others was a significant and positive predictor of reaching a successful deal in the negotiation. Neale and Bazerman (1983) also measured negotiators' dispositional tendencies to perspective take and reached a similar conclusion when correlating those tendencies with the outcomes of the negotiation.

Despite some evidence to the contrary (see Vorauer et al., 2009; Vorauer & Sucharyna, 2013), studies like the ones conducted by Galinsky, Maddux, et al. (2008), Neale and Bazerman (1983), and Long and Andrews (1990) clearly demonstrate that there are many potential benefits associated with taking the perspective of other dyad members and that those benefits are often enjoyed by both parties (see also Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson, & Galinsky, 2011). However, these studies' ability to inform researchers about how individuals react to perceiving that their perspective has been taken is quite limited. In addition to the obvious limitations of correlational studies described briefly above, even the experimental work cannot—nor was it ever intended to—differentiate between the outcomes of taking another's perspective (the traditional research on perspective taking) versus perceiving that one's perspective is being taken (the current research). For example, Galinsky, Maddux, et al. (2008) argued that having one negotiator take the perspective of his or her counterpart would result in the positive outcomes described above because perspective-taking allows such negotiators to better understand the interests of their counterpart, putting them in a better position to discover efficient, but otherwise hidden, solutions.

Therefore, it is possible that all the positive outcomes observed in previous research were due to the perspective taker understanding the target's interests better or simply being more clever about how to resolve differences in interest, as opposed

to the counterpart perceiving that his or her perspective was being taken. Although it is certainly possible that perceived perspective taking played a role in the positive outcomes of the negotiation, the independent role of perceived perspective taking is unknown because the counterparts in the Galinsky, Maddux, et al. (2008) and Neale and Bazerman (1983) research neither were made aware that their partners were instructed to take their perspective (in the experimental studies) nor did they know their counterparts' perspective taking tendencies (in the dispositional studies). Moreover, neither set of studies measured the extent to which negotiators felt their perspective was being taken, so it is impossible to parse out how much the outcomes were a result of perspective taking, perceived perspective taking, or a combination of both. Finally, because that research was primarily interested in negotiation outcomes, it is unclear what effect perspective taking had on the negotiators' perceptions of one another and of their relationship.

In contrast, the current investigation seeks to isolate the effect of perceived perspective taking to better understand how believing that one's interaction partner has walked in one's shoes influences one's perception of, relationship with, and behaviors directed toward that person. We argue that the experience of knowing that someone has taken our perspective shares a fundamental commonality with perspective taking itself: Both phenomena involve the temporary but psychologically powerful merging of two minds. Therefore, just as when we take another person's perspective, being aware that another individual is taking off his or her shoes, stepping into ours, and inhabiting our mind should cause us to develop a greater affinity for that person. Moreover, these enhanced positive feelings for the perspective taker should, in turn, increase the likelihood that we will engage in prosocial behavior toward the perspective taker.

There are at least two central mechanisms that should drive this boost in positive feelings toward perspective takers. As we alluded to in the political quotations from Obama and Clinton, the first driver is the targets' perception that the perspective taker feels empathy for them. Targets are likely to have a lay belief (perhaps due to their own previous experiences as perspective takers) that the process of mentally adopting their point of view has led their perspective taker to gain a better appreciation of the difficult circumstances they are encountering, and in turn, feel more empathic concern for them (e.g., Batson et al., 1996; Hodges, Kiel, Kramer, Veach, & Villanueva, 2010; Krebs, 1975). Because believing another individual is concerned about one's well-being generally increases positive feelings toward that individual (e.g., Newcomb, 1956), the perception that perspective takers experience greater empathy for the target compared to nonperspective takers should lead targets to like perspective takers more than nonperspective takers.

We believe the second driver of positive attitudes toward perspective takers is somewhat less obvious: The effect should also be due to an enhanced sense of self–other overlap between the self and the perspective taker. There are two central literatures that support this assertion. First, as we described earlier, the perspective taking literature shows that taking the perspective of others is not just a metaphorical merging of the minds. Rather, it is also a psychological merging of the minds that leads to a perception of merged identity, as perspective takers try to enter the targets' minds to better understand the world through their point of view

(e.g., Ames et al., 2008; Cialdini et al., 1997; Davis et al., 1996; Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007; Maner et al., 2002). Although being on the receiving end of perspective taking is obviously different from actively taking another's perspective, the two phenomena are similar in the recognition that two minds have merged, sharing the same psychological space. When the target learns that another person is stepping in his shoes, seeing the world through his eyes, and inheriting his circumstances, the target is likely to perceive that "he is me," thus amplifying the perception of self–other overlap.

Work by Heider (1958) and others provides another literature supporting the notion that perceived perspective taking should result in a greater sense of self–other overlap with the perspective taker. Heider proposed that when two people have something in common, they develop a connection that he termed a unit relationship—that is, a dyadic relationship characterized by mutual attraction in which the individuals become grouped as a unit based on their similarity. Consistent with Heider's theory, a great deal of research shows that perceived similarity—even in seemingly meaningless domains, ranging from birthdates to clothing to names (e.g., Finch & Cialdini, 1989; Garner, 2005; Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007; Koole, Dijksterhuis, & van Knippenberg, 2001; Tajfel, Flament, Billig, & Bundy, 1971)—increases positive attitudes toward other individuals. Researchers have observed comparable effects with shared experiences, including sharing circumstances and sharing the same physical space (e.g., Arkin & Burger, 1980; Burger, Soroka, Gonzago, Murphy, & Somervell, 2001; Goldstein, Cialdini, & Griskevicius, 2008). According to Heider, the more rare the commonality, the stronger the unit relationship tends to be. Thus, the affinity that two people feel for one another is most powerful when they share something—a personal attribute, an experience, or a belief—that is not shared by many others. In line with this supposition, Burger and colleagues found that individuals who believed they shared a rare (vs. common) fingerprint type with another person were more likely to feel positively toward, and to help, that person (Burger, Messian, Patel, del Prado, & Anderson, 2004). Thus, targets of perspective taking should believe that the two have shared an otherwise uncommon experience by virtue of the perspective taker having lived through (i.e., mentally simulated) the targets' unique situation. This newfound commonality—that the two have shared the same personal experience—should, in turn, engender a unit relationship characterized by an enhanced sense of self–other overlap with, and liking for, the perspective taker.

Based on these two psychological mechanisms, our theorizing suggests that these effects should primarily occur in cases in which one's counterpart is perceived to be successful at taking one's perspective. If one's counterpart is perceived to have tried but failed to see things from one's point of view, we would expect neither of the mechanisms described above—perceived empathy or increased self–other overlap—to emerge, therefore reducing the likelihood that one would experience increased liking or prosocial behavior toward that individual. Certainly target individuals who perceive that their counterpart could not ultimately take their perspective would not perceive their counterpart to have greater empathy for them due to this failure. Moreover, because a failed attempt to perspective take would neither result in a merging of minds nor in a shared unique

experience, we would not expect to see an increased perception of self–other overlap, either.

Present Research

In the current investigation, we hypothesize that having one's perspective taken will result in many of the same outcomes that have been observed in prior research focused on the psychology of the perspective taker. Specifically, we predict that perceiving that another person has taken one's perspective will lead to greater liking for that individual. Furthermore, we anticipate this increased affinity for the perspective taker will be mediated by both the perception that the perspective taker feels empathy for the target and an augmented sense of self–other overlap between the target and the perspective taker. We also expect the enhanced feelings of liking toward the perspective taker to drive an increased propensity to help the perspective taker. However, these effects may be moderated by how successful the target perceives perspective taking efforts to be. If the perspective taker is perceived as unable to successfully step into the shoes of the target for whatever reason, an attempt to perspective take may not yield the same benefits or may even backfire.

The present research is theoretically important because it begins to fill a wide gap in the literature, which has, to date, examined perspective taking as a decidedly one-sided psychological phenomenon. To obtain a complete picture of how perspective taking affects feelings, perceptions, and interactions among individuals, we believe it is important to broaden the area of examination to include those whose perspectives are being taken.

To test these hypotheses, we conducted six experiments and a pilot study. The first experiment is an especially conservative test of our hypotheses in that it examines the effects of participants learning that another individual has taken their perspective (vs. remaining objective) because the researchers purportedly instructed that individual to do so. We then present three more experiments with greater ecological validity in which another individual has (ostensibly) freely chosen to take the participant's perspective without being instructed to do so. These experiments help rule out confounds, increase generalizability, and examine not just participants' perceptions but their behaviors toward their counterpart as well. We then follow up those experiments with two experiments examining how participants' perception that the counterpart not only tried but actually succeeded (vs. failed) in taking their perspective is crucial to the positive effects of perceived perspective taking.

Experiment 1

In the first experiment, we examined whether believing that another person has taken one's perspective results in increased liking for that person. In addition, we investigated whether this enhanced sense of liking is driven by both the amount of empathy one perceives the perspective taker to feel as well as the extent to which one feels a sense of self–other overlap with that person. As we noted above, in the current experiment we took a conservative approach to testing our hypotheses in that we informed participants that the researchers randomly assigned their counterpart to either take the perspective of the participant or remain objective (as

opposed to conveying that the counterpart freely chose to engage in one behavior or the other).

Method

Participants. The participants were 190 Amazon Mechanical Turk users (109 men, 80 women, and one unreported sex).¹ Age ranged from 18 to 74, with a mean age of 31.31 years ($SD = 12.07$). Participants received \$1 for their participation in the online study and were entered into a lottery for a \$10 Amazon gift card.

Procedure. Participants were led to believe they would be interacting in an online study about first impressions with another participant; in actuality, their counterpart was not real. After being prompted to type in their own initials, participants learned that their supposed counterpart was identified as “R.B.” Participants then engaged in several innocuous “getting to know you” tasks, in line with the cover story that they were participating in a study on first impressions. These tasks included sending a short greeting to R.B. and answering three questions about themselves (e.g., “Do you prefer salty or sweet foods?”). They also received R.B.’s supposed responses to three different questions (e.g., “Do you prefer writing with a pen or a pencil?”), as well as R.B.’s ostensible greeting to them (“Nice to meet you!”).

Next, participants began the main task, for which there were two roles—reader and writer. All participants were informed that they were randomly assigned to be the writer (in reality, all participants were assigned to be the writer) and then they were asked to write about a time when a boss had treated them unfairly. Participants were instructed to describe the experience in detail, recounting what happened and how they felt as a result. This level of detail was desirable so that they would believe R.B. could reasonably imagine the event unfolding from their perspective. If participants reported that they had never had a job in which they had a boss ($N = 11$), they were instead instructed to write about a time when anyone had treated them unfairly. After participants finished writing, they were shown a copy of what they had written, and it was then purportedly sent to R.B. Typical responses ranged from being fired without reasonable cause, a boss overreacting to a participant taking a sick day, or a boss assigning extra work outside the participant’s job description (e.g., a mailroom worker being asked to organize his boss’s home closet).

Next, participants received a copy of the instructions that were ostensibly given to R.B. for this reading task, which was the central manipulation in the experiment. Participants were randomly assigned to learn that R.B. was instructed either to take the writer’s perspective or to remain objective. The wording of these instructions was created based on previous perspective taking work and the instructions that are typically given to perspective takers (and those individuals in the control conditions; e.g., *Batson, Sager, et al., 1997; Davis et al., 1996; Galinsky, Maddux, et al., 2008; Vescio et al., 2003*).

In the perceived perspective taking condition, participants learned that R.B. received the following instructions: “As you read what [participant initials inserted here] wrote, please mentally walk in his or her shoes, imagining the event as if it were actually happening to you. You should concentrate on the way [participant initials] feels about what has happened by imagining that you are actually him or her.” In the control (objective) condition, participants learned that R.B. had received the following instructions:

“As you read what [participant initials] wrote, please take a neutral perspective, being as objective as possible about the event.”

Participants then received R.B.’s response to the following question: “Please write about your experience reading the story.” In the perceived perspective taking condition, R.B.’s response was: “I could really put myself in your shoes in that situation.” In the control condition, R.B.’s response was: “I made sure to read your story objectively.”

Participants then completed the focal dependent variables and some manipulation check items, were probed for suspicion, were debriefed, and were compensated.

Dependent variables.

Liking. To test our hypothesis that perceived perspective taking results in more positive attitudes toward the perspective taker, participants answered how much they liked R.B. on a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Self–other overlap. To measure self–other overlap we created a composite measure of several items used in prior research (e.g., *Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992; Davis et al., 1996; Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008; Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007*). The items consisted of nine questions: Eight were perceived similarity, bond, closeness, tie, link, close association, connection, and shared identity, each on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*); e.g., “To what extent do you feel you are similar to this person?” “To what extent do you feel a bond with this person?”. The ninth item was the Inclusion of Other in the Self Scale (IOS; *Aron et al., 1992*). The IOS consists of a set of seven Venn diagrams with varying degrees of overlap. This scale instructs participants to mark the set of circles that best represents their relationship with someone else under the presumption that those with higher degrees of self–other overlap will choose the circles with greater intersection. The endpoints of this scale are 1 (*two nonoverlapping circles*) and 7 (*two nearly completely overlapping circles*). Cronbach’s alpha indicated very high reliability of these self–other overlap items ($\alpha = .955$).

Perceived empathy for the participant. To assess the extent to which participants believed that the counterpart experienced empathy for the participant, participants were asked, “To what extent do you think R.B. empathized with you when reading about your experience?” The scale ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Manipulation check. Participants completed several manipulation check items (e.g., “When reading your story, was R.B. randomly assigned to take your perspective or remain objective?”).

Results

Liking. A univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that participants in the perceived perspective taking condition liked R.B. significantly more ($M = 5.24, SD = 1.25$) than did partici-

¹ The number of participants reported in each of the six experiments represents the final number included in the analysis after excluding participants for either failing to follow directions (e.g., not writing anything at all or writing about a completely irrelevant event), expressing suspicion that their partner was fictitious at the start of the study (e.g., “u r a fake,” “are you a real person that is not a computer generated thing?”), or answering the manipulation check incorrectly. When analyses were performed without excluding a single participant, p -values increased, but due to the small number of excluded cases, still over 90% of statistically significant differences remained significant at the $p < .05$ level.

pants in the control condition ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 1.30$), $F(1, 188) = 11.96$, $p = .001$.

Self–other overlap. As predicted, the measure for self–other overlap was also significantly higher in the perceived perspective taking condition ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.34$) than in the control condition ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.27$), $F(1, 186) = 9.445$, $p = .002$.

Perceived empathy for the participant. In line with expectations, participants in the perceived perspective taking condition rated R.B. as having empathized with them significantly more ($M = 5.27$, $SD = 1.56$) than did participants in the control condition ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.70$), $F(1, 188) = 46.66$, $p < .001$.

Mediation findings. We hypothesized that participants' increased liking for R.B. would be driven by two mediators: (a) the extent to which they perceived R.B. empathized with them and (b) self–other overlap with R.B. Thus, in a parallel multiple mediation model using bootstrapping with 1,000 samples and a 95% confidence interval, we tested (a) the total indirect effect of condition on liking through perceived empathy and self–other overlap, (b) the specific indirect effect of condition on liking through perceived empathy, and (c) the specific indirect effect of condition on liking through self–other overlap. This and subsequent parallel multiple mediation analyses were conducted using the PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2012; see also Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

The total indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through perceived empathy and self–other overlap was statistically significant (see Table 1 for all indirect effects). The specific indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through perceived empathy was statistically significant (i.e., perceived empathy significantly mediated the relationship): Perceived perspective taking was positively associated with empathy ($\beta = 1.65$, $p < .001$), and more perceived empathy was associated with more liking ($\beta = .16$, $p = .0024$; see Figure 1). The specific indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through self–other overlap was also statistically significant: Perceived perspective taking was positively associated with self–other overlap ($\beta = .59$, $p = .0024$), and more self–other overlap was associated with more liking ($\beta = .53$, $p < .001$; see Figure 1). Thus, the effect of condition on liking was significantly mediated by both self–other overlap and perceived empathy for the participant.

Discussion

Consistent with predictions, the results of Experiment 1 revealed that participants had greater affinity for their counterpart when they believed he or she was randomly assigned to take their perspective (as opposed to remaining objective). Moreover, those

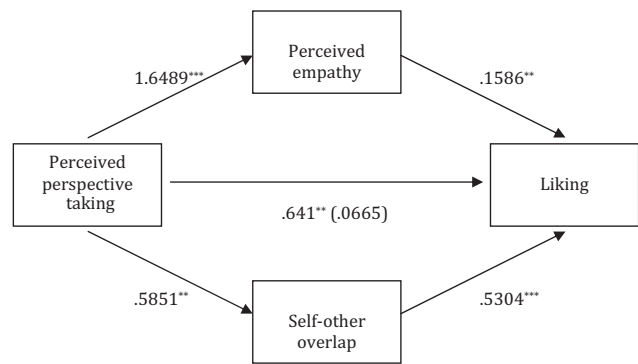


Figure 1. The estimated multiple mediation model representing the relationship between perceived perspective taking and liking as mediated by perceived empathy for the participant and self–other overlap in Experiment 1. The numbers represent unstandardized regression coefficients. The number in parentheses represents the direct effect of perceived perspective taking on liking. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

in the perceived perspective taking condition reported greater self–other overlap with the counterpart and were more likely to believe their counterpart had empathy for them. Finally, perceived empathy and self–other overlap mediated the relationship between perceived perspective taking and liking in a parallel multiple mediation model. Thus, consistent with expectations, Experiment 1 reveals that the experience of having one's perspective taken is not trivial, and the extant research has overlooked an important component of the perspective taking experience.

Experiment 2

In Experiment 1, we provided a relatively conservative test of our hypothesis that knowing an individual has taken one's perspective results in enhanced liking for that individual. This is a conservative test because participants were led to believe that their partner was *randomly assigned* to take their perspective (or remain objective) by the researchers. However, with the exception of marriage therapy or other forms of conflict resolution mediations, there are few instances in which people are specifically instructed or ordered to take the perspective of others; instead, individuals typically choose whether to do so without any external pressure. Thus, to create a more ecologically valid interpersonal scenario, Experiment 2 and all subsequent experiments using this general experimental paradigm tested how participants would react if they learned that R.B. had freely chosen to take their perspective or not.

In addition, we note that Experiment 1 used a control condition quite common in perspective taking research in which the participant is asked to remain objective while thinking about the target's situation (Batson, Sager, et al., 1997; Davis et al., 1996; Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008; Vescio et al., 2003). However, as we move to an experimental paradigm where the ostensible counterpart can freely choose how to read the story, one potential concern about this type of control condition could be that control participants might make negative inferences about their counterpart because he or she freely chose to stay objective while reading their personal stories. If so, this could decrease positive sentiment toward the counterpart, which could potentially account for any differences

Table 1
Indirect Effects of Perceived Perspective Taking on Liking Through Self–Other Overlap and Perceived Empathy for the Participant in Experiment 1

Mediator	Bootstrap estimate	SE	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Perceived empathy	.2615	.0998	.0632	.4657
Self–other overlap	.3103	.1039	.1354	.5463
Total indirect effect	.5718	.1411	.2732	.8591

Note. CI = confidence interval.

found between the control and perceived perspective taking conditions. Therefore, to show that any positive outcomes demonstrated by perceived perspective taking are not simply due to participants' negative reaction to their counterpart remaining objective, Experiment 2 tests the perceived perspective taking condition against a different control condition—one in which control participants were not given any information about the mindset of their counterpart as he or she read their story.

Method

Participants. The participants were 219 Amazon Mechanical Turk users (108 men, 111 women). Age ranged from 18 to 67, with a mean age of 32.77 years ($SD = 10.53$). Participants received \$1 for their participation and were entered into a lottery for a \$10 Amazon gift card.

Procedure. As in Experiment 1, after completing the “getting to know you” filler tasks, participants wrote about a time that their boss had treated them unfairly. However, rather than subsequently being told that R.B. was assigned to read their story in a particular way, participants in the perceived perspective taking condition received the following statement: “We asked R.B. to write a short sentence to you regarding R.B.’s experience while reading your story. Below is R.B.’s response.” This was followed by the ostensible instructions given to R.B. (“Please write about your experience reading the story.”) as well as R.B.’s purported response (“I put myself in your shoes while reading your story.”). Participants in the control condition received a different statement: “We asked R.B. to confirm that he or she was able to read your story. Below is R.B.’s response,” which was followed by the ostensible instructions given to R.B. (“Please confirm you were able to read the story.”) as well as R.B.’s purported response (“Yes, I was able to read your story”). Therefore, in this control condition, participants were given no information about the nature of R.B.’s mindset while reading their story.

Participants then completed the focal dependent measures and manipulation check and were probed for suspicion before being debriefed and compensated. The central manipulation check item was the following question: “Which of the following did R.B. say about reading your story?” This question was accompanied by three answer choices (“I put myself in your shoes while reading your story,” “Yes, I was able to read your story,” “Don’t know/don’t remember”).

Dependent variables. We maintained the same attitudinal and perceptual measures used in Experiment 1; specifically, we included liking, self–other overlap (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .961$), and perceived empathy.

Results

Liking. Replicating Experiment 1, participants in the perceived perspective taking condition liked R.B. ($M = 5.26$, $SD = 1.19$) significantly more than did those in the control condition ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 0.91$), $F(1, 217) = 14.49$, $p < .001$.

Self–other overlap. Also replicating the previous experiment, participants in the perceived perspective taking condition reported significantly greater self–other overlap with R.B. ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.38$) than did those in the control condition ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.18$), $F(1, 216) = 17.392$, $p < .001$.

Perceived empathy for the participant. Participants in the perceived perspective taking condition also reported that R.B. empathized with them significantly more ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.67$) than did participants in the control condition ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 1.49$), $F(1, 217) = 27.34$, $p < .001$.

Mediation findings. We sought to show that the effect of perceived perspective taking on liking in Experiment 2 was mediated by two mechanisms: (a) perceived empathy for the participant and (b) self–other overlap. Although we had already demonstrated this earlier, we sought to conceptually replicate the mediation findings from Experiment 1 because Experiment 2 was different in a number of respects (e.g., level of R.B.’s choice to take participants’ perspective or not, different control conditions).

We used the same methods from Experiment 1 to assess mediation in the current experiment. The total indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through perceived empathy and self–other overlap was statistically significant (see Table 2). The specific indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through perceived empathy was statistically significant (i.e., perceived empathy significantly mediated the relationship). Perceived perspective taking was positively associated with perceived empathy ($\beta = 1.25$, $p < .001$), and more perceived empathy was associated with more liking ($\beta = .23$, $p < .001$; see Figure 2).

The specific indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through self–other overlap was statistically significant (see Table 2). Perceived perspective taking was positively associated with self–other overlap ($\beta = .82$, $p < .001$), and more self–other overlap was associated with more liking ($\beta = .36$, $p < .001$). In sum, these results, which conceptually replicated the mediation findings from Experiment 1, were consistent with our hypothesis that perceived perspective taking increased liking of R.B. through both self–other overlap with R.B. and the perception that R.B. empathized with the participant.

Discussion

Experiment 2 replicated and extended Experiment 1. First, Experiment 2 showed the same positive influence of having one’s perspective taken and the same set of mediators (self–other overlap and perceived empathy) as accounting for this relationship. However, this was done in a more ecologically valid context than the prior experiment by revealing to the participants that their counterpart had chosen to engage in perspective taking without any external prodding. Second, it provided even more convincing evidence of the positive effects of perceived perspective taking by utilizing a control condition that conveyed no information about

Table 2
Indirect Effects of Perceived Perspective Taking on Liking Through Self–Other Overlap and Perceived Empathy for the Participant in Experiment 2

Mediator	Bootstrap estimate	SE	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Perceived empathy	.2915	.0712	.1774	.4677
Self–other overlap	.2919	.0756	.1675	.4722
Total indirect effect	.5834	.1070	.3917	.8161

Note. CI = confidence interval.

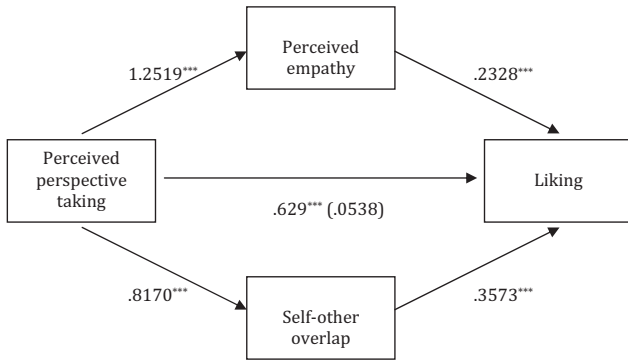


Figure 2. The estimated multiple mediation model representing the relationship between perceived perspective taking and liking as mediated by self–other overlap and perceived empathy for the participant in Experiment 2. The numbers represent unstandardized regression coefficients. The number in parentheses represents the direct effect of perceived perspective taking on liking. *** $p < .001$.

the mental lens through which the counterpart read the participant's story.

One potential alternative explanation for the effects we observed in Experiments 1 and 2 might be that participants felt more positive about their counterpart in the perceived perspective taking conditions because people simply like those who take other people's perspectives compared to those who do not take other people's perspectives. To rule out this possibility, we conducted a pilot study. In this study, participants were led to believe they were third-party observers to two individuals who engaged in the same procedure we employed in Experiment 2. If the results from our first two experiments can be explained by the idea that participants rated the counterpart more positively simply because people prefer those who take others' perspectives to those who do not, then a third party observer in this pilot study should also feel more positive about the perspective taker relative to the nonperspective taker. However, if the effects we observed in the prior two experiments are due to the counterpart specifically taking the participants' perspectives, we would expect to see no differences between conditions in this pilot study.

The participants were 189 Amazon Mechanical Turk users (127 men, 60 women, and two unreported). This sample size was chosen to closely mirror the sample sizes of the first two experiments so there would be sufficient power to detect any meaningful differences between the two conditions. Age ranged from 18 to 70, with a mean age of 30.97 years ($SD = 9.54$). Participants received \$0.50 for their participation in the online study. Under the cover story of investigating interpersonal perceptions, participants were told that two other mTurk workers had engaged in the reader-writer task used in Experiments 1 and 2 and that the experimenters were interested in their evaluations of the reader. Both the reader and the writer were, in fact, fictitious. They then learned that the reader wrote a response to the writer. Both the question prompts and the free response answers were the same as those used in Experiment 2 ("I put myself in your shoes while reading your story" or "Yes, I was able to read your story"); however, in the current study the participant was not the recipient of the response

but, rather, a third party observer of the reader's response to a writer.

Next, participants were asked to respond to the self–other overlap items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .960$) and liking item from Experiments 1 and 2, but the questions were rephrased to ask participants (the third-party observers in this case) how they personally felt about the reader.

The results revealed that those in the perceived perspective taking condition showed no greater liking for the reader ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 1.11$) than those in the control condition ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 0.82$), $F(1, 186) = 0.29$, $p = .59$. Similarly, those in the perceived perspective taking condition reported no greater self–other overlap with the reader ($M = 2.92$, $SD = 1.44$) than those in the control condition ($M = 2.78$, $SD = 1.28$), $F(1, 184) = 0.46$, $p = .50$. These results are inconsistent with the possibility that participants make positive inferences about perspective takers relative to nonperspective takers simply because they have more positive information about the former than the latter. Moreover, taken together, the results of Experiments 1 and 2 and the accompanied pilot study are consistent with our supposition that the positive psychological effects of perceived perspective taking occur primarily when a counterpart is perceived to take one's own—rather than someone else's—perspective.

Experiment 3

We had three central aims of Experiment 3. First, note that in Experiments 1 and 2 we instructed participants to write about an experience that was necessarily dyadic (i.e., being treated unfairly by someone else). Therefore, the perceived perspective taking effect may have been strengthened by participants' implicit assumption that R.B. took their perspective and distinctly did not take the other party's perspective. In Experiment 3, we avoided this potential issue by changing the writing instructions to focus on an experience that was not necessarily dyadic. In this case, participants were instructed to write about a stressful experience, recounting specifically what happened and what made it so stressful. Thus, the focus was on participants' perspectives themselves rather than a discrepancy between the participants' perspectives and those of a boss or another individual with whom participants had a conflict.

Second, because Experiments 1 and 2 previously established that perceived perspective taking positively affects a number of perceptions of, and attitudes toward, the counterpart, in this experiment we shifted focus to behavioral rather than attitudinal or perceptual outcomes of perceived perspective taking. Our key dependent measure in Experiment 3 was participants' generosity toward the counterpart.

Third, in both Experiments 1 and 2, participants received a supposed free response from R.B. regarding his or her experience reading the story. Because participants believed that R.B. generated the specific response, their perception of R.B.'s choice of words may have colored their opinions of their counterpart. In the present experiment, we avoided this possibility by converting R.B.'s choice of whether to perspective take or to remain objective into a multiple-choice response, the outcome of which was reported to the participants by the researchers.

Method

Participants. The participants were 104 students (16 men, 88 women) recruited from a database maintained at the University of California, Los Angeles. Age ranged from 18 to 38, and the average age was 20.54 years ($SD = 2.91$). Participants performed the study online in exchange for \$2.

Procedure. The methods in the current experiment were similar to the previous experiments in many respects. As in the previous experiments, after completing the “getting to know you” filler tasks, we manipulated whether participants were led to believe that the ostensible counterpart took their perspective. However, participants in the current experiment received the following instructions: “Write a paragraph about a stressful experience you’ve had in the last week or two. Try to take us through that experience, recounting what happened and what made it so stressful.” Given the college student sample, the most typical responses involved studying for exams, a personal rather than interpersonal anxiety. Participants were also explicitly told that R.B. could choose between perspective taking and remaining objective: “One of the choices that R.B. gets to make is whether to read your story from your perspective—that is, take a walk in your shoes and imagine what it was like to be you on that day—or to read it carefully but remain objective.” After a delay, participants were then told: “R.B. has chosen to take your perspective while reading your story” or “R.B. has chosen to remain objective while reading your story.”

The central dependent measure was how much money participants gave to their ostensible counterpart in a dictator game, a common measure of generosity used in perspective taking research (e.g., Gummerum & Hanoch, 2012; Zak, Stanton, & Ahmadi, 2007) and research on prosocial behavior more broadly (e.g., Keysar, Converse, Wang, & Epley, 2008). Participants were told that because they worked harder than R.B. (i.e., they had to write, whereas R.B. simply had to read), they were being granted an additional monetary bonus of a dollar; however, they could choose to grant R.B. whatever portion of that bonus they desired (from 0% to 100% in 1% increments) using a slider.

Participants then completed the central manipulation check (“When reading your story, did R.B. take your perspective or read objectively?”) and were probed for suspicion before being debriefed and compensated.

Results

We examined how much of the \$1 bonus money participants chose to share with R.B. We looked at this in two ways. First, we ran a univariate ANOVA comparing perceived perspective taking and control conditions, with percentage of the dollar shared as the outcome measure. Participants in the perceived perspective taking condition shared significantly more with R.B. ($M = 33.76$, $SD = 23.57$) than did participants in the control condition ($M = 21.36$, $SD = 28.03$), $F(1, 102) = 5.99$, $p = .016$ (see Figure 3). Second, we converted the sharing measure into a binary outcome. Specifically, we compared the number of participants in each condition who chose to donate anything at all to R.B. (as opposed to keeping the full dollar for themselves). A chi-square test revealed that participants in the perceived perspective taking condition were significantly more likely to donate at least part of their bonus to

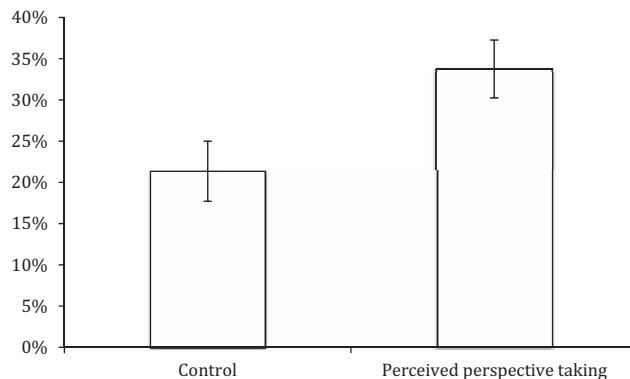


Figure 3. Percentage of the participant’s bonus donated to the counterpart by condition in the dictator game in Experiment 3. Error bars represent standard error.

R.B. (74.07%) than were those in the control condition (48.00%), $\chi^2(1, N = 104) = 7.46$, $p = .006$.

Discussion

The first two experiments showed that believing that another individual has taken one’s perspective leads one to experience a whole host of positive attitudes toward and perceptions of that individual. Experiment 3 adds to these findings by showing that being the target of perspective taking also leads one to engage in more prosocial behavior toward that individual. That is, compared to those in the control condition, participants who were informed that their counterpart took their perspective gave more of their own money to their counterpart.

Experiment 4

We had two central aims in Experiment 4. The first was to conceptually replicate the prosocial behavior findings from Experiment 3, but with a different behavioral outcome to demonstrate generalizability beyond the specific measure of generosity that we used for that experiment (i.e., the dictator game). The second aim was to replicate and extend the mediation analyses from Experiments 1 and 2 to demonstrate that perceived empathy and self-other overlap account for increased liking in the perceived perspective taking condition and that liking in turn drives increased prosocial behavior toward the perspective taker. The hypothesized link between liking and the prosocial behavior measure is in line with a great deal of prior work indicating that people are more likely to help those they like (for reviews, see Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004, and Cialdini & Trost, 1998).

Method

Participants. The participants were 187 Amazon Mechanical Turk users (85 men, 101 women, and one unreported sex). Age ranged from 19 to 66, with a mean age of 36.98 years ($SD = 18.93$). Participants received \$1.30 for their participation and were entered into a lottery for a \$10 Amazon gift card.

Procedure. As in the other experiments, participants engaged with the ostensible partner R.B. After completing the “getting to know you” filler tasks, participants believed they were randomly assigned to be a writer, while their counterpart was assigned to be a reader. Having established that the benefits of perceived perspective taking generalize over two different types of writing experiences, we returned to the Experiments 1 and 2 writing instructions for this experiment—that is, participants were asked to write about a time that they had been treated unfairly by a boss. For the key manipulation, participants again believed that R.B. had chosen to read their story in a particular way; as in Experiment 2, they saw a screenshot of R.B.’s free response answer to the following prompt: “Please write about your experience reading the story.” In the perceived perspective taking condition, R. B.’s response was: “I could really put myself in your shoes in that situation,” whereas in the objective condition, the response was: “I made sure to read your story objectively.”

As in all prior studies, participants then completed key dependent measures, completed manipulation check items, and were probed for suspicion, debriefed, and compensated. The central manipulation check item was: “Which of the following did R.B. say about his or her experience reading your story?” This was followed by three answer choices (“I could really put myself in your shoes in that situation,” “I made sure to read your story objectively,” “Don’t know/don’t remember”).

Dependent variables.

Attitudinal and perceptual measures. Participants were asked to respond to the same attitudinal and perceptual measures from the earlier experiments, namely, liking, self–other overlap (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .963$), and perceived empathy.

Prosocial behavior measure. We created a new prosocial behavior measure in which participants believed they would be playing a game against R.B. Participants were informed that the winner of the game would be entered into a \$10 lottery and that, based on previous data, whichever opponent goes first in the game tends to win 61% of the time. Next, participants were asked to decide whether they or R.B. would go first in the game. Selecting R.B. to go first in this situation, therefore, is used as a proxy for prosocial behavior in that participants are increasing the odds of their counterpart winning a prize at their own expense. In contrast, choosing themselves to go first signals a lack of prosociality toward their counterpart in favor of self-interest.

Results

Prosocial behavior. A chi-square test showed that our new measure of prosocial behavior (choosing who would go first for an advantage in a game) conceptually replicated the prosocial behavior finding from Experiment 3. Participants in the perceived perspective taking condition were significantly more likely to allow R.B. to go first (61.80%) than were those in the control condition (38.78%), $\chi^2(1, N = 187) = 9.89, p = .002$ (see Figure 4).

Liking. Consistent with Experiments 1–3, participants in the perceived perspective taking condition reported significantly greater liking for R.B. ($M = 5.46, SD = 1.13$) compared to participants in the control condition ($M = 4.79, SD = 1.05$), $F(1, 185) = 17.98, p < .001$.

Self–other overlap. Also consistent with Experiments 1–3, participants in the perceived perspective taking condition reported

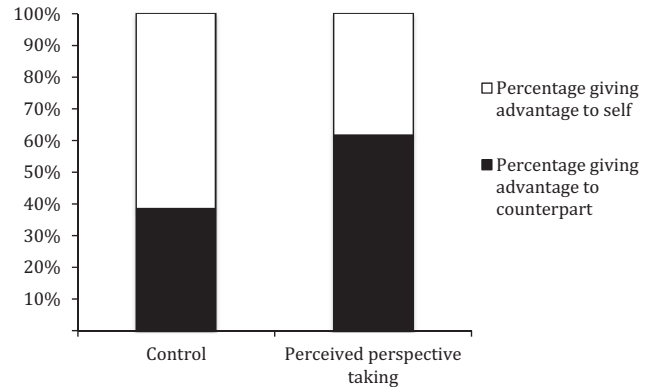


Figure 4. Percentage of participants choosing to give an advantage in the game to themselves or the counterpart by condition in Experiment 4.

significantly greater self–other overlap ($M = 3.88, SD = 1.58$) than did participants in the control condition ($M = 3.05, SD = 1.19$), $F(1, 184) = 16.542, p < .001$.

Perceived empathy for the participant. Corroborating previous findings, participants in the perceived perspective taking condition rated R.B. as having empathized with them significantly more ($M = 5.78, SD = 1.43$) than did participants in the control condition ($M = 3.89, SD = 1.49$), $F(1, 184) = 77.47, p < .001$.

Path model analysis. We used Mplus to test the path model shown in Figure 5. In the path model, perceived empathy and self–other overlap are again parallel mediators between perceived perspective taking and liking (as demonstrated in Experiments 1 and 2), and liking further serves as a mediator between the first part of the path and prosocial behavior. The indirect effect from perceived perspective taking to liking through each of the proposed mediators (i.e., perceived empathy and self–other overlap) was created by multiplying the coefficient representing the path from perceived perspective taking to the respective mediator and the coefficient representing the path from the respective mediator to liking. The indirect effects from perceived perspective taking to prosocial behavior through each of the proposed mediators and liking was created by multiplying the indirect effect coefficients described above by the coefficient representing the path between liking and prosocial behavior. We then used bootstrapping with 1,000 samples and a 95% confidence interval to evaluate these effects.

Replicating our mediation work in the earlier experiments, the indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through perceived empathy was statistically significant (see Table 3). Perceived perspective taking was positively associated with perceived empathy ($\beta = 1.89, p < .001$), and more perceived empathy was associated with more liking ($\beta = .42, p < .001$). Incorporating the behavioral measure, greater liking was associated with increased prosocial behavior ($\beta = .30, p = .001$), and the path from perceived perspective taking through perceived empathy and liking to prosocial behavior was significant ($\beta = .23, p = .003$).

The indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through self–other overlap was also statistically significant (see Table 3). Perceived perspective taking was positively associated with self–other overlap ($\beta = .83, p < .001$), and more self–other

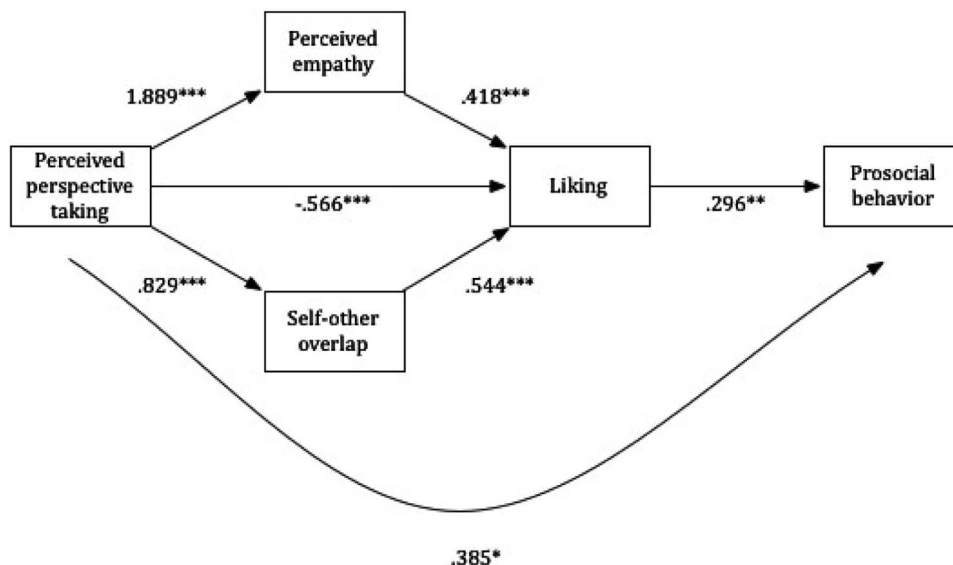


Figure 5. Path diagram of effects of perceived perspective taking, self–other overlap, perceived empathy for the participant, and liking on prosocial behavior in Experiment 4. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

overlap was associated with more liking ($\beta = .54, p < .001$). Incorporating the behavioral measure, greater liking was associated with increased prosocial behavior ($\beta = .30, p = .001$), and the path from perceived perspective taking through self–other overlap and liking to prosocial behavior was significant ($\beta = .13, p = .009$).

In summary, we found evidence for the proposed meditational model: The two paths from perceived perspective taking to prosocial behavior through each of the proposed mediators and liking were significant.

Discussion

Experiment 4 integrates the attitudinal and perceptual findings from Experiments 1 and 2 with the behavioral finding in Experiment 3 to suggest psychological mechanisms guiding the path from perceived perspective taking to prosocial behavior. Consistent with the results of the first two experiments, we found that perceived perspective taking leads to more liking, self–other overlap, and perceived empathy. We also conceptually replicated our prosocial behavior finding from Experiment 3 with a different behavioral measure of generosity, demonstrating that perceived

perspective taking leads to greater generosity toward one’s counterpart. Finally, we proposed and tested a meditational path for this process. Results from a path analysis indicated that both perceived empathy and self–other overlap significantly mediated the relationship between perceived perspective taking and liking for the counterpart, which in turn predicts prosocial behavior toward the counterpart.

Experiment 5

To this point, we have examined perceived perspective taking by manipulating whether participants are led to believe that their interaction partner has figuratively walked in their shoes. But one unanswered question is whether the effects we have observed in the first four experiments are the result of the counterpart *trying* to take their perspective or *actually succeeding* in taking their perspective. In other words, it is not clear to this point whether participants are reacting positively to the belief that their counterpart has been able to successfully mentally adopt their point of view or simply that participants appreciate the *effort* that their counterpart has put in to at least try to understand their point of view.

Table 3

Indirect Effects of the Path Model in Experiment 4

Effect	Bootstrap estimate	SE	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through perceived empathy	.790	.121	.582	1.057
Indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through self–other overlap	.451	.115	.236	.687
Indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on prosocial behavior through perceived empathy and liking	.234	.079	.089	.396
Indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on prosocial behavior through self–other overlap and liking	.134	.051	.055	.256
Total indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through empathy and self–other overlap	1.241	.204	.848	1.632
Total indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on prosocial behavior through other paths	.368	.123	.142	.624

Note. CI = confidence interval.

We argue that these effects should primarily occur in cases in which one's counterpart is perceived to be successful at taking one's perspective. If their counterpart could not ultimately take their perspective, this failure would naturally reduce the likelihood that the counterpart would develop empathy for them. Moreover, the counterpart would not have successfully created a merging of minds or shared a unique experience due to this failure, limiting the emergence of self–other overlap. As a result of a lack of perceived empathy and self–other overlap, we would not expect to find increased liking or prosocial behavior toward that individual. We conducted Experiment 5 to investigate this question.

Method

Participants. The participants were 227 Amazon Mechanical Turk users (116 men, 109 women, and two unreported sex). Age ranged from 18 to 69, with a mean age of 34.12 years ($SD = 12.44$). Participants received \$1 for their participation in the online study.

Procedure. As in prior experiments, participants engaged with the ostensible partner R.B. and completed some “getting to know you” tasks. Next, participants completed the writing task from earlier experiments in which they described a time that a boss had treated them unfairly. After the story was purportedly sent to R.B., participants saw R.B.'s answer to three questions. The first two were R.B.'s supposed answers to two innocuous filler questions (“Was your partner's story clearly written?” and “Was your partner's story interesting to read?”), which we included to avoid demand characteristics and divert the focus away from perspective taking exclusively. The third question asked of R.B. was “Were you able to take your partner's perspective while reading their story?” In the tried-and-succeeded condition, R. B. said that they tried to take their partner's perspective and succeeded (“I tried to take their perspective, and I could really put myself in their shoes”). In the tried-and-failed condition, R. B. said that they tried to take their partner's perspective but failed (“I tried to take their perspective, but I just couldn't put myself in their shoes”). Participants then completed all focal dependent measures from prior experiments and a manipulation check, were probed for suspicion, were debriefed, and were compensated.

Dependent variables.

Attitudinal and perceptual measures. Participants were asked to respond to the same attitudinal and perceptual measures from the earlier experiments, namely, liking, self–other overlap (Cronbach's $\alpha = .963$), and perceived empathy.

Behavioral measures. Participants also completed the prosocial behavior measure from Experiment 4 (selecting who should go first in a game where first movers are more likely to win).

Results

Liking. Consistent with predictions, a univariate ANOVA revealed that participants in the tried-and-succeeded condition liked R.B. significantly more ($M = 5.74$, $SD = 1.03$) than did participants in the tried-and-failed condition ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 1.12$), $F(1, 225) = 42.10$, $p < .001$.

Self–other overlap. As expected, self–other overlap was significantly higher in the tried-and-succeeded condition ($M = 4.06$, $SD = 1.31$) than in the tried-and-failed condition ($M = 2.87$, $SD = 1.19$), $F(1, 222) = 50.563$, $p < .001$.

Perceived empathy for the participant. In line with expectations, participants in the tried-and-succeeded condition rated R.B. as having empathized with them significantly more ($M = 5.67$, $SD = 1.15$) than did participants in the tried-and-failed condition ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 1.48$), $F(1, 224) = 199.41$, $p < .001$.

Prosocial behavior. As anticipated, participants in the tried-and-succeeded condition were significantly more likely to allow R.B. to go first in the game (52.14%)—conferring an advantage in the lottery game—than were those in the tried-and-failed condition (32.73%), $\chi^2(1, N = 227) = 8.73$, $p = .003$.

Path model analysis. As in prior experiments, perceived empathy and self–other overlap are parallel multiple mediators between perceived perspective taking and liking, and the paths from perceived perspective taking to prosocial behavior through each of the mediators and liking are significant.

Replicating our mediation work in the earlier experiments, the indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through perceived empathy was statistically significant (see Table 4). Perceived perspective taking was positively associated with perceived empathy ($\beta = 2.48$, $p < .001$), and more perceived empathy was associated with more liking ($\beta = .37$, $p < .001$). Incorporating the prosocial behavioral measure (advantaging the counterpart in the game), greater liking was significantly associated with increased prosocial behavior ($\beta = .25$, $p = .002$), and the path from perceived perspective taking through perceived empathy and liking to prosocial behavior was significant ($\beta = .23$, $p = .012$).

The indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through self–other overlap was also statistically significant (see Table 4). Perceived perspective taking was positively associated with self–other overlap ($\beta = 1.19$, $p < .001$), and more self–other

Table 4
Indirect Effects of the Path Model in Experiment 5

Effect	Bootstrap estimate	SE	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through perceived empathy	.920	.158	.627	1.234
Indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through self–other overlap	.581	.104	.394	.809
Indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on prosocial behavior through perceived empathy and liking	.230	.091	.062	.411
Indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on prosocial behavior through self–other overlap and liking	.146	.054	.049	.261
Total indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on liking through perceived empathy and self–other overlap	1.500	.224	1.070	1.948
Total indirect effect of perceived perspective taking on prosocial behavior through other paths	.376	.141	.108	.648

Note. CI = confidence interval.

overlap was associated with more liking ($\beta = .49, p < .001$). Incorporating the behavioral measure, greater liking was associated with increased prosocial behavior ($\beta = .25, p = .002$), and the path from perceived perspective taking through self–other overlap and liking to prosocial behavior was significant ($\beta = .15, p = .007$; see Figure 6).

Discussion

In Experiments 1–4, we demonstrated the positive effects of perceived perspective taking, but in each case we compared a combination of effort and success in perspective taking to a control condition that included neither. Experiment 5 disentangled this effect and illustrated that effort in perspective taking alone does not produce the effects observed in Experiments 1–4; rather, perspective taking efforts must be perceived as successful for targets to experience enhanced self–other overlap, liking, and the other effects we have observed in our prior experiments.

Experiment 6

We conducted our final experiment with several purposes in mind. First, all of our previous experiments used the same basic paradigm, one that involved an interpersonal (albeit anonymous) interaction and a very explicit declaration from the interaction partner that he or she had taken the participant's perspective (or not). In the current experiment we move to a different paradigm—namely, one in which undergraduate student participants read an interview with a potential candidate for student council. We manipulated whether the candidate indicated that he was taking the perspective of students who had to deal with fee increases. In the perspective taking statement condition, the candidate stated that he was able to take the perspective of students who are struggling financially with tuition and college expenses. In the control condition, he simply did not make any comments about taking their

perspective. Using this context also allowed us to branch out from perceived perspective taking in dyads to a more diffuse kind of perceived perspective taking in which the perspective taker indicates he or she has taken the point of view of a group of people rather than one individual in particular.

Another advantage of moving the experimental paradigm to this context is to take interpersonal liking out of the equation. One could potentially argue that in the previous experiments participants might be inferring that those who are able to successfully take their perspective simply like them more than those who do not take their perspective and that the results we have observed could at least partially be due to reciprocal liking on the part of participants (i.e., “I like those who like me”). In the current experiment, the political candidate knows nothing about the participants and does not interact with them; therefore, participants cannot infer that the candidate likes them personally. Nonetheless, we added a measure of the extent to which participants believe the candidate would personally like them to see if there was any difference as a function of perspective taking condition that could account for the pattern of data.

Another major purpose of the current experiment was to expand on the findings of the previous experiment. Specifically, Experiment 5 showed that participants viewed their interaction partner more positively when the partner tried and succeeded to take their perspective than when the partner tried and failed. In the current experiment we sought to examine this issue more subtly and in a more ecologically valid way. Rather than simply having the candidate openly state his success or failure to take the perspective of his fellow students, participants in the present experiment had to infer success or failure on his part. To achieve this, participants learned that the student council candidate came either from a middle-class background or an extremely wealthy background. Thus, in the experimental conditions in which the candidate stated that he took the struggling students' perspective, the manipulation

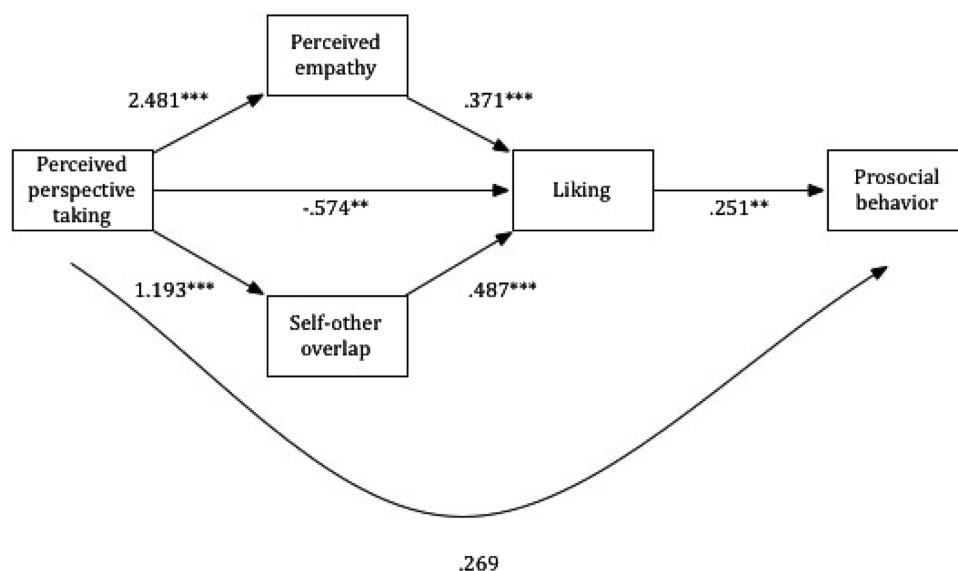


Figure 6. Path diagram of effects of perceived perspective taking, self–other overlap, perceived empathy for the participant, and liking on prosocial behavior in Experiment 5. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

of succeeding versus failing was embedded in the candidate's background and experiences.

Specifically, we expected to conceptually replicate our previous effects with the middle-class candidate, as participants are unlikely to question a middle-class candidate's ability to take the perspective of students struggling financially. Therefore, participants should be more likely to vote for a middle-class candidate who states that he can take their perspective than one who does not, an effect that should once again be driven by increased self-other overlap and perceived empathy. However, making such a claim should backfire for the wealthy candidate. Because a wealthy candidate is unlikely to be affected by this particular issue (financial strain), his claim to see things from the point of view of the struggling students is likely to prompt participants to assess his ability to take this perspective. Realizing that he is unlikely to have this ability, we anticipated that this inferred failure should lead to a backfire effect, wherein participants should be *less* likely to vote for the wealthy candidate when he states that he can take their perspective compared to when he does not make such a statement.

Method

Participants. The participants were 343 University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) undergraduates (107 men, 234 women, and two unreported sex). Age ranged from 16 to 58, with a mean age of 21.86 years ($SD = 4.96$). Participants received \$2 for their participation in the online study.

Procedure. Participants were told that they would be evaluating a candidate planning to run for student council president in the following academic year based on an excerpt from a campus newspaper interview with him and a brief profile. They next read the profile, which indicated that the candidate had either a middle-class or wealthy background. Immediately after, they read his answers to two interview questions, the second of which involved his opinions on student fee increases, a major topic in student elections at this particular campus.

In the control condition, the candidate simply said, "Keeping student fees low is one of my top concerns. I really want to help students who are struggling." In the perspective taking statement condition, the candidate stated, "Keeping student fees low is one of my top concerns. Believe me, I can totally put myself in my fellow students' shoes: I completely understand how emotionally taxing the fee increases have made things—the stress and worry of adding more hours at work, having to take on extra loans, worrying about being able to pay those loans back some day, and stuff like that takes a real psychological toll on you. I can really feel their pain and want to help students who are struggling."

Therefore, this study followed a 2 (candidate wealth: middle class vs. wealthy) \times 2 (presence of perspective taking statement: perspective taking statement vs. no statement control) between-participants design.

Following the manipulation, participants completed several dependent measures and two manipulation checks (memory of candidate wealth and memory of whether the candidate made the perspective taking statement), were probed for suspicion, were debriefed, and were compensated.

Dependent variables. The focal dependent variable in this study was how likely participants would be to vote for the candidate, from 1 (*not at all likely*) to 7 (*very likely*). We also assessed

how much self-other overlap they felt with the candidate using the same measures from prior studies (Cronbach's $\alpha = .958$). In order to parallel our prior perceived empathy measure with this new nondyadic form of perspective taking, we also examined how much participants perceived that the candidate had empathized with his fellow students using the question: "To what extent do you believe the candidate empathizes with UCLA students?" We also examined participants' perceptions of the candidates' ability to take the perspective of UCLA students by combining the responses of two questions: "To what extent do you believe the candidate has the ability to take the perspective of UCLA students?" and "To what extent do you agree with the following statement?: The candidate would have a hard time taking the perspective of UCLA students" (reverse scored). The two items had a Cronbach's alpha of .807. Finally, we asked participants: "How much do you think the candidate would like you personally?" to ensure that the mechanism underlying any positive attitudes toward the candidate was not simply a perception that the candidate liked them more. The responses to these questions ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*).

Results

Perceived ability to take perspective of students. To verify that our manipulation of perceived ability to take the students' perspective was successful, we first examined the extent to which participants thought the candidate had the ability to take his fellow students' perspective as a function of condition. There were significant main effects both for candidate wealth, $F(1, 336) = 183.54, p < .001$, and for perspective taking statement condition, $F(1, 336) = 5.20, p = .023$. This was qualified by the predicted interaction between candidate wealth and perspective taking statement condition, $F(1, 336) = 8.38, p = .004$. Simple effects tests revealed that, as predicted, among participants evaluating the wealthy candidate, those in the perspective taking statement condition thought that the candidate was less able to take the students' perspective ($M = 3.16, SD = 1.47$) than did those in the control condition ($M = 3.83, SD = 1.23$), $F(1, 336) = 13.63, p < .001$. Among students who evaluated the middle-class candidate, there was no significant difference in the perceived ability of the candidate to take the students' perspectives between the perspective taking statement condition ($M = 5.31, SD = 1.03$) and control conditions ($M = 5.23, SD = 1.04$), $F(1, 336) = 0.19, p = .67$.

Voting. There was a significant main effect only for candidate wealth, $F(1, 339) = 76.19, p < .001$. However, this was qualified by the predicted interaction between candidate wealth and perspective taking statement condition, $F(1, 339) = 11.69, p = .001$ (Figure 7). Simple effects tests revealed that, consistent with predictions, participants evaluating the middle-class candidate expressed a higher likelihood to vote for him when he said he took the students' perspective ($M = 4.78, SD = 1.17$) than when he did not ($M = 4.36, SD = 1.36$), $F(1, 339) = 4.16, p = .042$. However, in line with our theorizing that this relationship would only emerge when someone is believed to have the ability to take one's perspective, participants evaluating the wealthy candidate expressed a *lower* likelihood to vote for the candidate when he said he took the students' perspective ($M = 3.02, SD = 1.38$) than when he did not ($M = 3.59, SD = 1.42$), $F(1, 339) = 7.85, p = .005$.

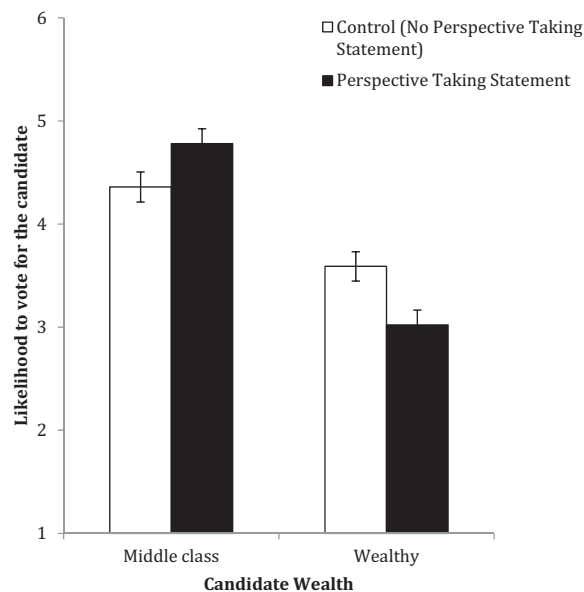


Figure 7. The impact of perspective taking statement condition and candidate wealth condition on likelihood to vote for the candidate in Experiment 6. Error bars represent standard error.

Self–other overlap. There was a main effect of candidate wealth, $F(1, 336) = 127.890, p < .001$ and a marginally significant main effect of perspective taking statement condition, $F(1, 336) = 2.88, p = .091$. However, this was qualified by the predicted interaction between candidate wealth and perspective taking statement condition, $F(1, 336) = 5.38, p = .021$. Simple effects tests revealed that, as anticipated, participants evaluating the middle-class candidate indicated more self–other overlap with the candidate when he said he took the students’ perspective ($M = 3.93, SD = 1.08$) than when he did not ($M = 3.45, SD = 1.22$), $F(1, 336) = 7.92, p = .005$. In contrast, there was no significant difference in self–other overlap between participants evaluating a wealthy candidate who said he took students’ perspectives ($M = 2.30, SD = 0.90$) and participants evaluating a wealthy candidate who did not ($M = 2.38, SD = 1.17$).

Perceived empathy for fellow students. There was a significant main effect for candidate wealth, $F(1, 339) = 143.87, p < .001$, but not for perspective taking statement condition, $F(1, 339) = 0.039, p = .84$. This was qualified by a significant interaction between candidate wealth and perspective taking statement condition on perceived empathy, $F(1, 339) = 4.56, p = .033$. Among participants who evaluated the middle-class candidate, perceived empathy was marginally greater when the candidate said he took the students’ perspective ($M = 5.33, SD = 0.97$) than when he did not ($M = 5.01, SD = 1.13$), $F(1, 339) = 2.68, p = .10$. Additionally, among participants who evaluated the wealthy candidate, there was nonsignificant trend toward less perceived empathy for participants to perceive less empathy when the candidate said he took the students’ perspective ($M = 3.41, SD = 1.41$) than when he did not ($M = 3.67, SD = 1.46$), $F(1, 339) = 1.90, p = .17$.

Moderated mediation. We were interested in whether, as in prior studies, self–other overlap and perceived empathy mediated

the effect of the perspective taking statement condition on positive outcomes, in this case, voting. Additionally, we wanted to test this mediation at each level of the moderator, candidate wealth. We ran a moderated mediation to test this effect using the PROCESS macro for SPSS, implemented with 1,000 bootstrapped samples and a 95% confidence interval as before (Hayes, 2012; see also Preacher & Hayes, 2008).

Consistent with hypotheses, there was significant moderated mediation such that the relationship between the perspective taking statement condition and likelihood to vote was mediated by self–other overlap and perceived empathy, but only at certain levels of candidate wealth. Specifically, in line with our previous experiments, when the candidate was middle class, the relationship between the perspective taking statement manipulation and the participants’ likelihood to vote for the candidate was mediated by both perceived empathy and self–other overlap. However, when the candidate was wealthy, neither perceived empathy nor self–other overlap was a significant mediator (see Table 5).

Perception that the candidate would like the participant.

As a somewhat unrelated test to those we described above, we also sought to directly rule out a potential alternative explanation for our effects: that participants simply respond more favorably to those who take their perspective because they assume perspective takers like them more than nonperspective takers do. There was a significant main effect of candidate wealth, $F(1, 339) = 19.016, p < .001$, but no significant main effect of perspective taking statement condition and no significant interaction between candidate wealth and perspective taking statement condition on the perception that the candidate would like the participant, $F(1, 339) = 0.120, p = .729$ and, $F(1, 339) = 1.026, p = .312$, respectively. Therefore, we did not find evidence that targets develop more positive attitudes toward perspective takers simply because they think the perspective taker likes them.

Discussion

Experiment 6 broadened the scope of our investigation to a new context—the political arena—in which perceived perspective taking processes commonly occur, as was evidenced in the quotations that opened the article. Despite changes in the domain, a shift from dyadic to diffuse perspective taking, and the way in which per-

Table 5

Indirect Effects of Perspective Taking Statement on Likelihood to Vote Through Self–Other Overlap and Perceived Empathy for Students at Each Level of the Moderator (Candidate Wealth) in Experiment 6

Mediator	Bootstrap estimate	SE	95% CI lower	95% CI upper
Perceived empathy: Middle-class candidate	.1012	.0554	.0027	.2174
Perceived empathy: Wealthy candidate	–.0938	.0760	–.2684	.0429
Self–other overlap: Middle class candidate	.2764	.1104	.0621	.5119
Self–other overlap: Wealthy candidate	–.0430	.0900	–.2353	.1124

Note. CI = confidence interval.

spective taking was communicated to the audience, perceived perspective taking continued to have positive effects on our focal outcomes. However, these effects, including likelihood to vote for the candidate, were moderated by candidate wealth. Specifically, participants reported being more likely to vote for a middle class candidate who said he took the students' perspective than one who did not, an effect mediated (once again) by perceived empathy and self–other overlap. But we found evidence of a backfire effect in the likelihood of voting when the wealthy candidate said he took the students' perspective compared to when he did not. Consistent with this finding, the experiment also revealed that the wealthy candidate claiming to see things from the struggling students' point of view was seen as having less ability to take their perspective than one who did not make such a claim. Taken together, these data are in line with the results from Experiment 5, demonstrating that claims of perspective taking must be perceived as successful in order for these effects to occur in the target. However, unlike in Experiment 5, in which the failure was stated explicitly, the failure in Experiment 6 was implicit and required inferences about ability to be made by the participants.

General Discussion

The past two to three decades of research have revealed a great deal about the causes, consequences, and processes involved in perspective taking. However, the focus of this work has been squarely on the psychology of those who are doing the perspective taking. This emphasis is only natural because researchers and practitioners alike have viewed taking another's perspective as a potential intervention for combatting and correcting negative attitudes and biases toward others or for encouraging prosocial behavior toward individuals in need. However, we argue that to fully understand the perspective taking process, researchers need to get inside the heads not only of perspective takers but also of their targets.

The current research represents what we believe to be an important first step in filling this gap in the literature. The results of six experiments and one pilot study support our assertion that believing that one's perspective has been successfully taken results in many of the same positive outcomes as taking the perspective of another individual. These outcomes include enhanced liking for perspective takers compared to nonperspective takers or those who tried but failed to take one's perspective. Furthermore, the increased affinity for perspective takers is mediated by both an augmented sense of self–other overlap with their counterpart and the participants' perception that their counterpart empathized with them. We also observed behavioral outcomes similar to those reported in prior research that has focused on the experience of perspective takers: Believing that one's perspective has been successfully taken results in more prosocial behavior toward one's counterpart. Finally, we found significant positive paths through each of the mediators and liking to propensity to help perspective takers compared to nonperspective takers or those who tried and failed to take their perspective.

These results were consistently observed across all six experiments, even though we varied numerous features of the situations that participants encountered across the experiments. For example, throughout the first five experiments, we varied the kind of experiences about which participants wrote (i.e., being treated poorly

by their boss or experiencing anxiety over something), the format through which information about their counterpart's behavior was communicated (i.e., through open-ended statements or through the researcher), and the level of choice involved in their counterpart's behavior (i.e., perspective taking because the counterpart was instructed to do so or because the counterpart freely chose to do so). In addition, in the cases in which the ostensible counterpart freely chose how to read the participant's story, across experiments we also varied whether the researchers explicitly gave the counterpart a choice of whether to take the participant's perspective or whether the researchers simply allowed the counterpart to write an open-ended message to the participant regarding how he or she read the story; each method produced the same outcomes. Finally, we compared the perceived perspective taking condition against three different types of control conditions, one in which the counterpart read the participant's story neutrally and objectively, one in which the counterpart simply read the story without any additional information, and one in which the counterpart tried but failed to take their perspective. Moreover, utilizing a completely different experimental paradigm altogether, Experiment 6 demonstrated the same effects (plus moderation) in the context of a political campaign, in which the perspective taking was directed toward a large group rather than a single individual within a dyad. Each method we employed across the experiments yielded the same positive outcomes of perceiving that one's perspective has been successfully taken.

The current research not only sheds light on a side of perspective taking that has been largely ignored but also suggests an alternative (or additional) interpretation to the findings of several perspective taking studies using real dyads that we described in the introduction (e.g., Galinsky, Maddux, et al., 2008; Long & Andrews, 1990; Neale & Bazerman, 1983; Todd et al., 2011). Those studies have shown that favorable task and relationship outcomes are positively correlated with the extent to which members of the dyad were inclined (via disposition or experimental manipulation) to take the other's perspective. Such beneficial outcomes have typically been interpreted as being heavily influenced by the perspective taker adjusting his or her behavior to be more in line with those of his or her counterpart, which leads to smoother, more positive interactions and increases the likelihood of finding a solution to potential disagreements that is acceptable to both parties. The results of our experiments suggest there are likely dual processes operating concurrently—agreements may be more likely to be reached and disputes may be more likely to be resolved not just because perspective takers adjust to their counterpart's perspective but also because the counterpart concomitantly may perceive their perspective is being successfully taken, leading to a host of positive perceptions of, and behaviors toward, the perspective taker.

Practical Implications

We believe that this line of inquiry represents not only an important theoretical advance but also a source of promising practical implications. For example, perspective taking has often been discussed as a powerful, inexpensive, and easy-to-implement intervention to combat many of the prejudices and bad behaviors regularly observed by social psychologists, historians, and nightly news anchors alike (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2005; Hodges et al., 2011;

Vescio et al., 2003). But perspective taking as an intervention has its limitations. For example, one cannot guarantee that the holder of negative attitudes toward a particular individual or members of a larger group will actually make an effort to follow perspective-taking instructions, even in formal contexts like therapy sessions, mediations, intergroup interventions, or conflict resolution programs in which there is pressure to do so. In contexts in which perspective taking does not naturally or automatically occur, we cannot simply force stubborn individuals to take the perspectives of people or groups they dislike. However, it would be far more difficult for such obstinate individuals to resist an intervention in which they were informed that a disliked person (or a member of a disliked group) had taken *their* perspective. This is because, unlike the act of perspective taking, the perceived perspective taking process does not require any active participation on their part. Nonetheless, we would urge caution and careful empirical testing of this idea before attempting to implement it. After all, Experiments 5 and 6 showed that for the positive outcomes to occur, the targets of perspective taking must believe that the counterpart is capable of successfully taking their perspective. If instead their own prejudice makes them think that a person or a group they dislike would have a difficult time taking their perspective, the results of our experiments suggest that this intervention might not only fail to be successful, but it could actually backfire.

Perceived perspective taking could also have important applications in formal conflict resolution settings. Training mediation specialists not just to urge each side to consider issues from the other side's point of view, but specifically to emphasize instances in which the parties have successfully accomplished this goal, could promote the benefits of perceived perspective taking and lead to better conflict resolution outcomes. Similarly, outside of formal interventions or conflict resolution contexts, actually taking the point of view of one's counterpart during an interpersonal dispute but not verbalizing it to him or her could represent a missed opportunity to realize the full benefits of perspective taking.

Finally, this research suggests that political candidates and office holders should recognize the power of communicating to constituents not only that they care about them but that they have successfully tried to put themselves in the voters' place to understand their point of view. Of course, whether this communication is effective likely depends on a number of factors. We have shown in Experiments 5 and 6 that one of those factors is the candidates' perceived ability to take voters' perspectives in the first place based on the candidate's background, life circumstances, or personal disposition. Whereas exit polls published after the election indicated that many voters felt that President Barack Obama could take their perspective, voters remained skeptical that Romney's background even allowed for the possibility that he could accurately imagine the difficulties of surviving in a terrible economic downturn (Kraus, Cote, & Keltner, 2010; Marsh, 2012). Comments like, "I should tell my story, I'm also unemployed," which Mr. Romney told to voters in Florida who were desperately looking for a job (Zeleny, 2011), or Ann Romney's quote that "We can be poor in spirit, and I don't even consider myself wealthy . . ." (Cillizza, 2012) certainly did not do much to help convince the electorate that the candidate and his wife had the capacity to understand their point of view even if they tried. Another potential

factor that could influence how voters respond to candidates' claims to have taken voters' perspectives may be the perceived sincerity of the statement. For example, whereas President Bill Clinton was widely regarded for his ability to convey effectively to voters that he genuinely felt their pain, attempts to do so by Mitt Romney in the most recent election came off as insincere to many voters due to his private comments suggesting he truly felt quite differently about their worldview (e.g., the now infamous remark in which he made it clear he thought "47%" of Americans, most of whom were struggling economically, feel entitled to benefits from the government that they do not actually deserve). Experiment 6 showed that participants thought that a wealthy candidate who said he took their perspective on financially distressing issues was very unlikely to have the ability to truly see things from their point of view, but we did not test for participants' perceptions of the candidate's sincerity. We think this issue would be interesting to explore in future research.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present investigation has a number of strengths, including the consistent results we observed across this research despite a wide range of differences between the experimental designs. However, the present investigation also has several limitations, which we regard as potentially fruitful areas of future research. For instance, although we attempted to increase generalizability by asking participants to write about two different types of experiences among the first five experiments—one that was necessarily interpersonal and dyadic in nature and one that was more general—we note that these instructions produced stories that tended to be negatively valenced, involving issues of mistreatment or anxiety. We chose to have participants write about negative rather than positive experiences for two central reasons. First, from an ecological validity standpoint, it seems that perspective taking is not only more likely to occur but is also more likely to have a positive influence on the outcome when targets have experienced or are experiencing negative circumstances. Second, as we noted earlier, much of the existing perspective taking literature involves targets whose experiences are negatively valenced in some way; such individuals are commonly targets of discrimination, in need of aid, experiencing interpersonal issues, or suffering from a tragedy of one form or another (e.g., Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997; Cialdini et al., 1997; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Maner et al., 2002; Vescio et al., 2003). This was also true for Experiment 6, which we think is typical of politicians and perspective taking; such claims are usually made toward constituents or prospective voters who are unhappy or enduring life's difficulties. We suspect that the findings from the current investigation are likely to generalize to more neutral or positive contexts, although perhaps not quite as powerfully due to less perceived empathy from the counterpart. Future empirical tests of this hypothesis are welcome to better understand the generalizability of our findings.

A second limitation of the current design is that although we were able to show that perspective taking targets (compared to control targets) experience a greater sense of self–other overlap with their counterparts, the experimental paradigm we employed to test our hypotheses cannot distinguish between targets seeing more of themselves in their counterpart (in which the other becomes more "self-like"), seeing more of their counterpart in themselves

(in which the self becomes more “other-like”), or both (Davis et al., 1996). As we discussed earlier, researchers have shown that perspective takers both see aspects of themselves in their targets as well as see aspects of their targets in themselves (Epley et al., 2004; Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007; Laurent & Myers, 2011). We expect that like the act of perspective taking, the sense of enhanced self–other overlap that results from having one’s perspective taken is bidirectional. However, we also might speculate that from the target’s standpoint, the other-in-self effect may be more powerful than the self-in-other effect because targets are likely to view the perspective taker as someone who is assimilating to their own world (and worldview), rather than the reverse, a hypothesis open to future validation.

Another potential future direction relates to the causality of the variables we examined in our model. We have argued that perceived perspective taking leads to an increase in self–other overlap, which further leads to increased liking for perspective takers. Although the data have supported this causal model across many experiments, one question we have not yet addressed is whether it is possible that the causal order might be reversed. In other words, might perceived perspective taking lead to increased liking, which then leads to increased self–other overlap? These models cannot be compared statistically to one another to see which one is a significantly better fit for the data because the models are not nested (i.e., we cannot obtain one model from the other merely by constraining some parameters). However, theoretically, we feel our hypothesized causal pathway is the more likely of the two. There are two primary reasons for this. First, the traditional perspective taking literature has shown that increases in liking for targets of perspective taking tend to be conscious and explicit, whereas increases in self–other overlap tend to be automatic and implicit, suggesting that self–other overlap precedes liking in the causal chain when the two minds merge (Ames et al., 2008; Davis et al., 1996; Galinsky et al., 2005; Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008). Second, even outside the domain of perspective taking, there is a huge body of research in numerous subfields in social psychology demonstrating convincingly that self–other overlap (e.g., in the forms of similarity, shared identity, etc.) causes liking (e.g., Brewer, 1979; Burger et al., 2004; Byrne, 1971; Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Cialdini & Richardson, 1980; Finch & Cialdini, 1989; Heider, 1958; Hornstein, Fisch, & Holmes, 1968; Locke & Horowitz, 1990; Tajfel, 1981); yet we are not aware of any experiments in the literature that conclusively show the reverse causation. Thus, although it is theoretically possible for liking to lead to perceptions of self–other overlap, the evidence strongly supports our hypothesized model. Nonetheless, this issue could potentially be explored further in a future investigation.

To this point, we have argued and found that being the target of a successful attempt at perspective taking should produce a whole host of positive attitudinal and behavioral outcomes. But just as perspective taking can sometimes lead the perspective taker to perceive or behave toward the target in a negative way under certain circumstances (e.g., Skorinko & Sinclair, 2013; Vorauer et al., 2009), we recognize that there must also be situations in which being the target of successful perspective taking leads the target to perceive or behave toward the perspective taker in a negative way. For example, Epley et al. (2006) found that perspective taking leads to increased selfish-

ness in competitive contexts, in large part due to perspective takers’ cynical conclusion that their target is likely to act selfishly him- or herself if left unchecked by their own defensive hoarding of scarce resources (see also Caruso et al., 2006). It would be interesting to examine perceived perspective taking under such circumstances. It may be that when competing over limited resources, individuals do not embrace the idea that their counterpart is taking their perspective, viewing it as an unwelcome sort of Vulcan mind-meld designed to gain insight into their strategic plans. That is, knowing that one’s competitor is taking one’s perspective may activate cynical attributions regarding the reasons underlying this behavior (e.g., “She is doing this to get an advantage over me by determining my strategy”), leading the target to behave more selfishly. We believe this possibility to be worthy of future exploration.

Finally, another potential question that would be interesting to address is whether, in addition to the positive reactions to perceived perspective taking that we have documented, having one’s perspective taken activates reciprocal perspective taking. That is, individuals who believe they are the target of perspective taking may be more likely to take the perspective of their counterpart in response, which could augment these positive outcomes even further in a virtuous cycle. We find this to be an intriguing hypothesis for future research to examine.

Conclusion

In sum, the existing perspective taking literature has focused almost exclusively on the psychology of the perspective taker. However, we have argued that if we are to fully understand perspective taking as the dynamic process that it is, it is critically important that we get inside the minds not only of those walking in another’s shoes but also of those standing by in their socks watching and reacting to the process as it occurs. We believe that the present investigation represents an important first step toward a more comprehensive understanding of the perspective-taking process.

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