Chapter 12
Better Living Through Perspective Taking

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One of us (SDH) teaches an undergraduate seminar in the University of Oregon's Honors College called "Normal People Behaving Badly." It's all about tendencies that are common (if not universal) among mentally healthy humans – that is, people without any kind of psychopathology – but that nonetheless result in conduct and attitudes that are commonly (perhaps universally) condemned, such as hypocrisy, prejudice, and selfishness. The psychological mechanisms behind these bad behaviors are not inherently "evil" and in fact, they probably persist in the human repertoire because they developed alongside some other useful purpose, such as reducing cognitive effort in processing information or increasing the likelihood of survival.

The seminar has been popular, enrolling as many literature, history, and political science majors as psychology majors. However, at some point into the course, after several weeks of listening to the litany of "bad behaviors" and analysis thereof, students start to show signs of being a little overwhelmed and depressed. Not only does the course cover loathsome behaviors, such as acts of discrimination and slander, and even atrocities like genocide, but also furthermore, because part of the underlying course message is that these acts are related to "normal" human tendencies, the "normal" students enrolled in the class do not have the comfort of being assured that they are above such behaviors. In fact, only unrealistic self-serving biases (something actually covered in the course ...) could really keep a student from thinking he or she was entirely immune. Eventually, the students start to plead for mercy from the seemingly endless barrage of nasty human foibles and plaintively ask, "Can't *something* be done? Is there something *we* can do?" The long answer of course is complicated: Historical wrongs would have to be righted, ingrained prejudices would have to be reversed, and cultural and institutional traditions (some of which serve very positive purposes) would have to be unlearned and dismantled. However, to keep the students' despair at bay, a little ray of sunshine is offered – in the form of perspective taking. Virtually every "bad behavior" covered in the course has appeared in some empirical psychology study alongside

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a manipulation of perspective taking, and these studies conclude with a common moral: People behave better – more acceptably, more admirably, more prosocially – after perspective taking.

What exactly are the effects of this simple panacea? This is the question we will address in this chapter, but to begin, the simplest answer that encompasses the most territory can be summed up in two parts. First, perspective taking has been consistently found to increase compassionate emotions (commonly called empathy, but the precise label in this case is "empathic concern") toward the person whose perspective has been taken. Second, perspective taking leads people to view and treat other people more like the self, viewing them as possessing more traits in common with the self, and symbolically having "merged," at least partially, with the self in terms of cognitive representations and descriptions of personality and explanations of behavior.

Are these two general outcomes separable? Our answer is only speculative – and requires treading carefully. There has been a spirited debate about *helping* others whose perspective we take and whether this helping is "truly" altruistic or egoistic, given that the recipient of the helping may be linked to the self (see, Batson, Sager, et al., 1997; Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997). Interestingly, this debate has focused on the "either/or" question of what mediates helping behavior: Is it EITHER empathic concern OR similarity/merging? One answer is clear: Perspective taking does ultimately lead to more helping behaviors, regardless of which mediators are involved. However, researchers have not generally asked a question that we think is more fundamental: Does perspective taking have separable effects on empathic concern and similarity/merging, or are these two sides of the same construct? We know of only three studies (two published) that have explicitly explored the *simultaneous* effects of perspective taking on empathic concern *and* similarity/merging, and the results do not explicitly answer this question. Maner et al. (2002) found that perspective taking increased empathic concern across the board, and that it also increased one measure of merging (Aron, Aron, & Smollan's 1992 "Inclusion of Other in Self" [IOS] scale), but this latter effect occurred only when no information was provided about how similar the target of perspective taking was to the perspective taker. Batson, Sager, et al. (1997) found that perspective taking increased empathic concern and affected some measures of merging, but not others. Finally, Myers and Hodges (unpublished manuscript) found that perspective taking increased empathic concern, and increased merging on some measures more than others. Without studies that specifically set out to test whether one part mediates perspective taking's effect on the other, an answer may be premature.

In this chapter, although we will present numerous examples of the direct effects of perspective taking on empathic concern and related outcomes, we will not try to tackle the much larger and more diffuse relationship between the broader construct of empathy (or other moral emotions) and the potential for positive social change (for reviews, see Haidt, 2003; Pizarro, 2000; Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007). Instead, we will focus specifically on perspective taking, which is sometimes identified as the "cognitive" side of the multidimensional construct of empathy

(Davis,1983; Hodges & Biswas-Diener, 2007). We will further narrow our focus by not attempting to cover the extensive literature on *accuracy* in perspective taking – for example, accurately guessing other people's attitudes, intentions, thoughts, and feelings (for this topic, we refer to the reader to other sources, such as Baron-Cohen, 1997; Hall & Bernieri, 2001; Ickes, 2003; Smith, Ickes, Hall, & Hodges, in press). Instead, we will limit our discussion to the effects of *engaging* in perspective taking, regardless of whether the perspective taken is accurate or not. Even with these limits, there is plenty to say about the potential for perspective taking to lead to positive social change.

Cross-Cultural Caveat

Virtually all of the studies we have referred to so far and those that we will refer to subsequently were conducted using North American samples. Although we would like to believe that the claims we are making about perspective taking are universal, there is good reason to expect that many of the effects we report would be moderated by culture. Particularly, results would be expected to differ between individualist cultures (particularly associated with North America) and collectivist cultures (particularly those associated with Asian countries, like Japan and Taiwan), largely because of different conceptions of the self in these two broad classes of culture. In individualist cultures, the self is viewed largely as independent of others and in fact may even be defined by how the self differs from others. In collectivist cultures, the self is defined in relation to others, and reflects a self that is part of a larger collective whole (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, the idea of "taking" someone else's perspective might be a more meaningful concept in individualist cultures, where the self and others would be thought to have different perspectives. In a collectivist culture, the embedded self might already have a perspective that reflects the perspective of others (see Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Wu & Keysar, 2007), without having to "take" anything new.

Some intriguing research findings support these ideas. For example, Cohen and Gunz (2002) evoked specific emotions (e.g., fear, shame, or anger) in individualist and collectivist participants by having them recall events in which those specific emotions were predominant. Participants then viewed pictures of faces and were asked to rate the emotions being felt by the people in the pictures. People with individualist cultural backgrounds showed evidence of what the authors called "egocentric projection": They rated the faces as more frightened when they had reported a frightening memory. However, people with collectivist backgrounds showed "relational projection": They saw more of whatever emotion would likely have *prompted* or been felt *in response* to their own emotion. So, for example, when they felt fear, they saw the other faces as angrier; when they felt sad, they saw the other faces as more sympathetic; when they felt contempt, they saw the other faces as more shameful.

People with collectivist cultural backgrounds are also relatively more likely to recall memories from a third-person perspective – one that could be shared by

others – and relatively less likely to recall memories from the "self-exclusive" first-person perspective. In addition, they appear to be better able to put aside privileged knowledge available only to the self and assess how a situation would appear to a "naïve" person (Wu & Keysar, 2007), at least when they are not under cognitive load (Cohen & Hoshino-Brown, 2005). Thus, we humbly limit our claims in this chapter to individualist cultures. However, we encourage future researchers to consider exploring whether collectivist and individualist cultures have different starting points for perspective taking. Does perspective taking have the same effect in individualist and collectivist cultures, creating the same pattern of results, only with different mean levels? Or are members of collectivist cultures already performing at a perspective taking "ceiling" or some other qualitatively different starting point than members of individualist cultures?

Development and Mechanics of Perspective Taking

We have presented perspective taking so far as a remarkably simple strategy to increase prosocial behavior, and certainly it is less complicated than implementing, say, universal education or democracy. However, while perspective taking may seem to be a simple task for the adults reading this book, for the younger set, perspective taking constitutes a major developmental milestone. The famous cognitive developmental psychologist, Jean Piaget, included a visual perspective-taking task as one of his cognitive milestones (Piaget & Inhelder, 1956). Children looking at a 3D model of a landscape from one side were asked what someone viewing the landscape from the opposite side would see. Specifically, the task tested whether children would realize that mountains in the landscape obscured parts of the view from one vantage point, but not the other. The ability to perform such visual perspective-taking tasks has been linked, developmentally and conceptually, to social perspective-taking tasks and prosocial behavior (Flavell, 1963; Underwood & Moore, 1982). Although social perspective taking is the main focus of this chapter, perspective taking in general may represent a willingness to consider alternatives, which may potentially underlie the power of perspective taking and may be key in producing positive social change.

A rather dramatic social perspective-taking development takes place in children between the ages of about 3 and 5 years old, as they develop what is known as a "theory of mind." Children come to understand that people have minds, that the workings of these minds guide and influence people's behaviors, and that the contents of another person's mind (her thoughts, beliefs, desires) can differ from the contents of one's own mind. Although the changes associated with acquiring a theory of mind may not be as dramatically visible to a young child's parents as familiar milestones such as learning to walk or talk, the transition does leave the child qualitatively different – and possessing what some would argue constitutes the very essence of what distinguishes humans from other species (see, Povinelli & Vonk, 2003). Like many key early childhood developments, a theory of mind will

emerge when the child is developmentally ready. Focused coaching or even the earlier development of other skills (Sabbagh, Xu, Carlson, Moses, & Lee, 2006) does not change the developmental trajectory substantially, although some developmental disabilities, like autism spectrum disorders, feature theory of mind deficits.

Ironically, a theory of mind can also improve some skills not considered to be prosocial. For example, a child may become a better liar by being able to take into account what information another person might consider in assessing the truthfulness of a claim, such as being able to construct plausible answers to questions about exactly *why* there are cookie crumbs on the child's lap if he did not just eat a cookie. Although parents may not see their children's increased ability to lie convincingly as a positive development, it does represent an advancement in children's socialization when one considers that a large proportion of lies are told with an eye to avoiding other people's feelings from being hurt (DePaulo, 2002).

Once a young child has acquired a theory of mind, the work surrounding perspective taking is not over. Other developmental progress allows for more complicated theory of mind tricks, such as the multi-level perspective taking involved in imagining what Karyn thinks Ezra feels about Sean. However, the subsequent development of perspective taking appears to reflect more incremental progress, rather than the dramatic qualitative shift that occurs early on in life. And even though perspective taking may become more sophisticated over developmental time, it can still be hard for grown ups. Intentionally trying to take another person's perspective activates areas of the brain associated with effortful processing (Sabbagh & Taylor, 2000), focuses attention on certain pieces of information to the exclusion of others (Pichert & Anderson, 1977), and deteriorates under cognitive load (Keysar, Barr, & Horton, 1998; Rossnagel, 2000) and time pressure (Epley, Keysar, Van Boven, & Gilovich, 2004). As further evidence that perspective taking can be difficult, people's attempts to take other perspectives are less successful when they are offered fewer incentives to do it accurately (Klein & Hodges, 2001). Indeed, when people are praised for being good perspective takers, the admiration may be because of the perception that they have taken the effort to *try*, as much as any actual *success* they have at taking the other person's perspective (Hodges, Kiel, Kramer, Veach, & Villanueva, 2010)

If perspective taking ever does seem easy, it is probably when it does not need to be prompted by explicit intentions or instructions to take the other person's perspective. Under these circumstances, it may not *feel* like perspective taking to the perspective taker, and thus it may not even be labeled as such by the person doing it. Repeatedly taking another person's perspective – such as a person whose opinion we care about (Baldwin & Holmes, 1987), someone with whom we must frequently coordinate, or even a fictional character (Taylor, Hodges, & Kohanyi, 2003) – may result in perspective taking becoming automatic (see Hodges & Wegner, 1997), in the same way that other often-repeated actions such as driving become automatic (e.g., Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1986).

Some of the more effortless aspects of perspective taking may be handled outside conscious awareness in neural structures specifically designed to link the self and others. Groundbreaking neuroscience research began to identify the presence of

"mirror neurons" in non-human primates about 20 years ago (see Iacoboni, 2009, for a review) with analogous brain regions and functions also identified in humans. The hallmark of the mirror neurons in monkeys was that they fired both when the owner of the brain performed certain motor actions (the monkey reaching for raisins), and when the owner of the brain observed another primate performing the same motor action (the experimenter reaching for raisins).

In humans, the "mirror system" may play a fundamental role in emotional contagion: Seeing *your* emotional expression (e.g., fear) causes *me* to feel the same emotion (see, Carr, Iacoboni, Dubeau, Mazziotta, & Lenzi, 2003), although the concept of emotional contagion was around long before psychologists began to identify which neural areas might be involved in it (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1993). As the name implies, emotional contagion is not considered an intentional strategy to increase perspective taking, although it may facilitate perspective taking: If both the perspective taker and the target of perspective taking are feeling the same emotion, the distance between their two perspectives may be shorter.

Something along the lines of "reduced effort" perspective taking may occur when the distinction between the perspective taker and the person whose perspective is taken is fuzzy, as is the case when representations of the self and representations of the other overlap or merge. When this occurs, some might argue that perspective taking is not occurring at all. If the self and other are the same, they have the same perspective and there is not really any new perspective to take (see, Batson, Sager, et al., 1997; Cialdini et al., 1997). However, there are striking parallels in terms of how people represent themselves and others, and how they allocate resources such as helping to others, that result both from an intentional attempt to take another person's perspective *and* from close associations with others (Batson, Sager, et al., 1997; Cialdini et al., 1997; Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996; Maner et al., 2002; Myers & Hodges, unpublished manuscript).

Taking the perspective of another person involves a complex interplay of multiple processes: projection ("What is my current perspective?"); adjustment ("How does her perspective differ from mine?"); stored knowledge and cognitive stereotypes and scripts ("What do single mothers feel?" "What generally happens when someone loses a parent?"); attention to individual cues provided by the target of perspective taking ("He looks nervous;" "She said she's not hungry because they ate on the road"); and imagination ("I wonder what he thinks about when he is alone?"). Although researchers are starting to identify how the various perspective-taking strategies interact (e.g., Ames, 2004a, 2004b; Davis et al.,2004; Epley et al., 2004; Gesn & Ickes,1999; Karniol & Shomroni,1999), identifying *which* strategies predominate *when* is an ongoing investigation.

Many studies – both those in the literature at large and those discussed in this chapter – have successfully manipulated perspective taking by explicitly instructing research participants to take another person's perspective (e.g., Batson et al., 1991; Toi & Batson, 1982). However, there are few easily identifiable "real life" analogues to an experimenter telling us to take another person's perspective, although explicit requests for perspective taking may come from people asking for understanding and sympathy ("Try to see it from my point of view;" "Just imagine how I

felt when I read your letter"). Encouraging perspective taking as a habit may come from people trying to socialize children, such as parents who encourage their children to consider others' feelings (Krevans & Gibbs, 1996) or even institutionalized educational programs such as "Second Step" (Committee for Children, 1992) or the PATHS curriculum (Greenberg, Kusche, Cook, & Quamma, 1995). Perspective taking is entrenched in aphorisms ("walk a mile in another person's shoes") and moral and religions teachings (e.g., the "Golden Rule"). Perspective taking may also be "the result of prior similar experience or of attachment" (Batson, 1987, p. 91). Furthermore, manipulating similarity by telling people they have shared preferences and traits produces a similar pattern of effects on empathic concern and helping as do perspective taking instructions (e.g., Batson, Duncan, Ackerman, Buckley, & Birch, 1981; see also Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007).

In addition to being considered a variable that can be manipulated, perspective taking has also been treated as a tendency that varies in degree across individuals (e.g., Davis & Oathout, 1987; Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin, & White, 2008; Richardson, Green, & Lago, 1998; Richardson, Hammock, Smith, Gardner, & Signo, 1994, Studies 1 and 3): Greater perspective taking is assumed to occur among those scoring higher on scales such as the perspective-taking subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1983). Yet other lines of research do not explicitly manipulate or measure perspective taking, but rather focus on the processes related to perspective taking, like guessing what other people are thinking (Ickes, 2003), or the dynamics of close relationships, especially romantic ones, in which perspective taking is presumed to occur (Kilpatrick, Bissonnette, & Rusbult, 2002).

Exactly what triggers spontaneous perspective taking, how often the triggers occur, and whether people are consciously aware of them all represent frontiers yet to be charted in the perspective-taking landscape. Furthermore, we do not know whether the results of naturalistic perspective-taking prompts parallel the effects of explicit instructions from an experimenter. However, given the focus of this volume on mechanisms for social change, we want to make the encouraging statement that perspective-taking propensity is something that can be at least partially controlled, is affected by effort, and thus can potentially be increased. The following points support our position.

First, the beneficial outcomes associated with being dispositionally high in perspective taking do not look that different from those associated with manipulations that explicitly instruct people to perspective take. Researchers who have used both manipulated and measured perspective taking in conceptually similar studies find similar outcomes (e.g., Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008; Galinsky, Maddux, et al., 2008). The difference just seems to be that people who score high in dispositional perspective taking do it without being told.

Second, dispositional *measures* of perspective taking look a lot like manipulated perspective taking *instructions*. A very commonly used measure of dispositional perspective taking (perhaps the most commonly used measure) is Davis's perspective-taking subscale of the IRI (Davis, 1983). As a self-report measure, it is largely a measure of people's self-perceived propensity and frequency to take others' perspectives (e.g., it includes items such as "I try to look at everybody's side of

a disagreement before I make a decision" and "I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective") and *not* the range of their abilities (i.e., the items are not things like "I can read minds" or "I am particularly sensitive to what others are feeling"). In other words, the items on Davis's individual difference perspective-taking subscale could all be rewritten in the imperative and used as perspective-taking instructions!

Third, although dispositional perspective taking has been shown to be *somewhat* heritable, its heritability is lower than other components of empathy (Davis, Luce, & Kraus, 1994; Soenens, Duriez, Vansteenkiste, & Goossens, 2007), suggesting more potential room for environment and teaching to play a role. Finally, what people think about "naturally" when they encounter another person appears to resemble more what they think about when given explicit instructions to imagine how another person feels and looks a lot *less* like what people do when they are trying to inhibit perspective taking (Davis et al., 2004; see also Aderman, Brehm, & Katz, 1974). In fact, Davis et al. (2004) provocatively (and persuasively) argue that when differences are found in instructional sets for perceiving other people, it is less the "imagine self/other" sort of instructions (often portrayed as an experimental condition) that are facilitating perspective taking, and more the "observe carefully/objectively" sort of instructions (often portrayed as a control condition) that may actually inhibit perspective taking. Specifically, imagining what the other person is feeling may be a kind of default strategy in person perception and preventing oneself from trying to do this may be unnatural.

In sum, there is hope for all of us, individually and collectively, when it comes to harnessing perspective taking as a vehicle of positive social change. It is controllable, and when controlled, its effects are similar to the effects of being dispositionally high in perspective-taking propensity. Big questions about perspective taking do remain, but psychologists have already accumulated a substantial body of work demonstrating the link between perspective taking and behavior associated with positive social change. Rather than providing an exhaustive review of all these studies, our coverage is designed to give a sense of the breadth and variety of effects that perspective taking has on societally relevant behaviors and attitudes. We now turn to those findings.

Perspective Taking, Compassion, and Helpful Behavior

In surveying the positive results of perspective taking, we start with one of the most replicated and robust findings in social psychology: Taking the perspective of another person increases compassionate emotions (often called "empathic concern") toward that person (as just a sampling of references: Batson, 1987; Batson et al., 1991; Batson, Polycarpou, et al., 1997; Batson, Sager, et al., 1997; Klein & Hodges, 2001; Stotland, 1969).

The link between perspective taking and concern for others emerges early. When asked to imagine how victims in various scenarios felt, children in elementary school reported more concern for the victim (Thompson & Hoffman, 1980). And in

support of Batson's (1987) claim that perspective taking is likely to occur between people who have had similar experiences, several studies have shown that people – at least children and adult women – have greater empathic concern for those who have had similar experience (Barnett, 1984; Batson et al., 1996; Hodges et al., 2010).

Many perspective-taking studies then go on to show the next step in Batson's "empathy-altruism" hypothesis (e.g., Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978), whereby empathic feelings lead to a valuing of the target's welfare, which motivates helping on their behalf (Batson et al., 1991; Batson, Polycarpou, et al., 1997; Batson, Sager, et al., 1997). As already alluded to, researchers have hotly debated whether the helping that results from perspective taking is motivated by truly altruistic concerns (i.e., no benefit to the self, and perhaps even some cost; Batson, Sager, et al., 1997) or whether it benefits a self that has been extended to include representations of others (Cialdini et al., 1997). However, designating a winner in that debate can be sidestepped for the purposes of this chapter, where we are more focused on outcomes than mechanisms, and the outcomes (empathic concern and helping as a result of perspective taking) are undisputed.

One important aspect of Batson's model that has been nicely resolved is the distinction between two kinds of empathic emotion – empathic concern and personal distress – that are evoked by perspective taking. The former is concern or compassion *for* the target of perspective taking; whereas the latter is distress felt *by* the perspective taker that is aroused by the target's plight. Slight, but meaningful, changes in perspective-taking instructions affect the balance of the two emotions. Asking research participants to imagine what *they* would feel in another person's situation ("imagine self" instructions) evokes both personal distress and empathic concern, whereas instructions to imagine what they think the *other person* is feeling ("imagine other" instructions) evokes only empathic concern (Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997). Related distinctions between the two sets of instructions have also been demonstrated by brain imaging studies (Lamm, Batson, & Decety, 2007), but it should be noted that for other behavioral outcomes, sometimes the results of the two sets of instructions are similar (Davis et al., 1996; Finlay & Stephan, 2000). Empathic concern is thought to be a more sophisticated empathic response than personal distress (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1990; Eisenberg, Wentzel, & Harris, 1998), emerging later developmentally (Hoffman, 1984; Zahn-Waxler & Radke-Yarrow, 1990; Zahn-Waxler, Radke-Yarrow, Wagner, & Chapman, 1992) and reflecting healthy emotion regulation (Eisenberg et al., 1996). Empathic concern is thought to do more of the heavy lifting, mediating the link between perspective taking and helping, whereas personal distress may interfere with addressing the target of perspective taking's needs, because the perspective taker becomes focused on resolving his own distress (Batson, 1987). This suggests that people might be more helpful after "imagine other" instructions than after "imagine self" instructions (Batson et al., 2003).

In another variation on perspective taking instructions, Oswald (1996) found that instructions to attend to a target person's *feelings* resulted in more willingness to help others similar to the target than did instructions to attend to the target's *thoughts*. The pattern of means for empathic concern in this study echoed those for

helping. However, both forms of perspective taking instructions resulted in greater helping than instructions to attend to technical details of the film of the target person.

Perspective taking may also lead to more helping because the perspective taker is better able to provide help. In a psycholinguistics study by Traxler and Gernsbacher (1993), the researchers did not directly manipulate or measure perspective taking, but gave half of their participants access to another perspective by having them first play one role in a paired interaction, then play the other role, and then return to the first role. The interaction required one participant to describe complex geometric figures to the other, so that the other could then pick out which figure had been described from a set of distractors. The figures were complex and abstract enough that describing the target figure in such a way that would help another person distinguish it from the distractors was quite challenging (more challenging than most describers seemed to realize initially). Participants who first described the figures and were then given the other role of trying to pick which figure had been described showed marked improvements when they were asked to describe the figures to other people a second time, as compared to participants who were not given the experience of trying to pick out the figures. Thus, being temporarily put in someone else's shoes made people more effective helpers.

Perspective Taking, Similarity, and Self-other Merging

A variety of evidence supports the idea that perspective takers view the target of perspective taking in ways that resemble how they view the self. It is perhaps somewhat ironic that perspective taking is often associated with getting "outside" of one's self, and yet the self is highly involved (Davis et al., 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). However, the involvement of the self makes more sense when one considers what a valuable and useful proxy the self is when trying to comprehend something as complex and inaccessible as another person's mind (see, Ames, 2004a, 2004b; Dawes, 1990; Hoch, 1987) and also how perspective taking involves sharing with others the central spot in cognition and consciousness that is generally occupied by the self.

At the most basic level, perspective takers perceive greater similarity between traits they ascribe to themselves and traits they ascribe to the target of perspective taking. Perspective takers ascribe traits to the target of perspective taking that they previously used to describe themselves, such that perspective takers, relative to non-perspective takers, see a larger proportion of self-traits as also being traits belonging to the perspective-taking target (Davis et al., 1996; Myers & Hodges, unpublished manuscript). Perspective takers may also see smaller absolute differences between how they rate themselves on traits and how they rate the target of perspective taking on those same traits (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; but see Batson, Sager, et al., 1997 for contradictory results). Perspective takers perceive trait similarity both when targets are generally similar to the perspective taker (e.g., college students taking the perspective of an average college student; Davis et al., 1996), and when targets are dissimilar (Myers, 2009) or are members of stereotyped outgroups (Galinsky &

Moskowitz, 2000). For example, Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000, Study 2) found that student participants taking the perspective of an elderly man showed less absolute difference between participants' self ratings on 85 traits and participants' ratings of the elderly as a group on those same traits.

In addition to perspective takers viewing the target of the perspective taking as more like the self, there is growing evidence that perspective takers also change their views of the *self* to be more similar to the target of perspective taking (Galinsky, Wang, et al., 2008; Goldstein & Cialdini, 2007). In a series of studies, Galinsky, Wang, et al. (2008) showed that people instructed to take the perspective of a stereotyped group (relative to people given instructions to remain objective) rated themselves, and even behaved, in ways that resemble the group's stereotype. For example, people asked to take the perspective of a cheerleader while writing about a day in her life subsequently rated *themselves* as more attractive and sexy (Study 1A). People asked to take the perspective of a professor rated themselves as more intelligent (Study 1B) and afterward performed better on standardized test questions designed to measured analytic ability (Study 2A). Even negative traits of the stereotyped group were attributed to the self more after taking the perspective of a representative of that group (Study 1C), with people rating themselves as weaker and less independent after taking the perspective of an elderly man. Galinsky, Wang, et al. (2008) assert that changing self-conceptions in a direction toward the group stereotype facilitates coordination with the target of perspective taking. Furthermore, they believe that perspective-taking instructions have a more powerful effect than merely priming traits associated with stereotyped group, although it must be noted that the mechanisms and effects involved appear to share common ground with those found in studies that prime stereotypes (e.g., Dijksterhuis & van Knippenberg, 1998) or create the anticipation of interactions with others who hold stereotyped views (e.g., Sinclair, Huntsinger, Skorinko, & Hardin, 2005).

Perspective-taking induced similarity in trait ascription is sometimes accompanied by greater global perceptions of similarity with the perspective-taking target (e.g., answers to the question, "How similar are you and the target?" Davis et al., 1996; Vorauer, Martens, & Sasaki, 2009, Study 4), but sometimes it is not (e.g., Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Perspective taking also influences "inclusion of the other in self" (IOS), a construct introduced by Art Aron (e.g., Aron et al., 1992; Aron, Aron, Tudor, & Nelson, 1991) in the close relationships literature to describe how people perceive themselves as "merging" with close others or being interconnected with them in terms of their representations. The construct is often measured using the IOS scale developed by Aron et al. (1992) that presents seven pairs of side-by-side circles that increasingly overlap. It is striking that taking the perspective of a stranger – one who is often presented only via audiotape or videotape (Batson, Sager, et al., 1997, Study 2; Maner et al., 2002; Myers & Hodges, unpublished manuscript) – can result in people viewing themselves as joined to this stranger in a manner resembling the way long-term romantic couples see themselves as joined.

Thus, taking the perspective of another person seems to "align" the self with that person (see, Gentner & Markman, 1994), increasing the extent to which the perspective takers see the target of perspective taking as sharing their own traits; triggering

perspective takers to take on traits of the target; and creating a shared representation of perspective taker and target. The social psychology literature is full of findings showing that similar others are liked better (Berscheid & Reis, 1998; Byrne, 1961, 1997; Griffitt & Veitch, 1974; Montoya, Horton, & Kirschner, 2008) and members of ingroups receive more favorable treatment and are viewed more charitably than outgroup members (Brewer, 1979; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Billig, 1974). However, perspective taking seems to provide something beyond merely liking the target better (Davis et al., 1996; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Galinsky, Wang, et al., 2008; Gould & Sigall, 1977; Myers & Hodges, unpublished manuscript). It is as if the target of perspective taking is not just *liked* by the self, but somehow *joined* to the self. Not only does perspective taking extend the self, but also courtesies afforded to oneself are extended to the target of perspective taking as well, as we see in our next section when we turn to other perspective-taking outcomes that often accompany the two large classes of outcomes we have already discussed (empathic concern/helping, and similarity/merging). In many cases, researchers have not tested whether our "big two" mediate these other outcomes, but when those meditational results are available, we have tried to report them.

Perspective Taking and More Charitable Attributions

Although long held beliefs about attributional differences between actors and observers have recently been convincingly challenged (Malle, 2006), the classic claim that actors tend to explain their own behaviors in terms of factors external to themselves (e.g., aspects of the situation) and observers tend to explain the behaviors of others in terms of internal factors (e.g., personality) still holds for *negative* behaviors.[1] Thus, as an actor, when asked to explain why she failed her driver's test, Lulu is more likely to mention the uptight examiner or the ridiculously hard parallel parking spot she had to get into, whereas someone observing Lulu is likely to note that she simply did not practice enough. However, after perspective taking, observers make attributions more like actors, attributing negative outcomes to factors outside the agent's control.

In a classic example of perspective-taking observers making more charitable attributions for an agent's failures, Gould and Sigall (1977) asked observers to watch a target person try to make a positive first impression on another person. They

[1]Notably, although Malle's exhaustive meta-analysis shows no "traditional" actor–observer effect for positive behaviors, there are several oft-cited studies that report that perspective taking increases observers' external attributions even for positive or neutral behaviors, such as (Storms, 1973). However, Malle (2006) reports five published failures to replicate Storms' original attributional pattern among non-perspective-taking observers. Galper's (1976) study is also regularly cited. She labeled her manipulation as an "empathy" versus a control condition, but the instructions in the empathy condition are quite similar to "imagine self" perspective-taking instructions used in other studies. Additionally, it should be noted that Malle's meta-analysis only included studies that had actors and observers making attributions; studies that manipulated perspective taking but only for observer subjects were excluded.

gave the observers instructions to either imagine how the target person felt or carefully observe the target. Observers were then told that the target either succeeded or failed at making a positive impression, and were asked to make attributions about the outcome. For observers instructed to "imagine the other," failures (i.e., negative outcomes) were seen as more due to situational causes than were successes. Importantly, the perspective taking instructions did not affect how much observers liked the target, relative to observers in the control "observe" condition. Thus, the effects of perspective taking went beyond mere evaluation of the target.

Vescio, Sechrist, and Paolucci (2003) found that perspective-taking instructions ("imagine other") increased the extent to which White students made situational attributions for adjustment difficulties faced by an African-American student, relative to students who received instructions to remain objective while hearing about the African-American student. Furthermore, Vescio et al. also found that the extent to which participants made situational attributions significantly mediated the effect of perspective taking on pro-African-American attitudes: Participants who took the target's perspective made more situational attributions, which in turn led to more pro-African-American attitudes.

In terms of perspective taking's effects on assigning blame and punishment, a study by Macrae and Milne (1992) asked participants to imagine a food-poisoning incident either from the perspective of the victim of food poisoning or from the perspective of the restaurant where the incident occurred. Participants' estimates of what the compensation and fines for the incident should be corresponded to their perspective: greater compensation when taking the victim's perspective and less compensation when taking the restaurant's perspective, relative to a control condition with no assigned perspective. Participants' responses were amplified in these respective directions when the circumstances preceding the incident were out of the ordinary as opposed to routine (i.e., the diner went to a new restaurant instead of her regular haunt). The researchers also measured amount of sympathy felt for the victim, which appears to have mediated the financial award results.

In related work, Archer, Foushee, Davis and Aderman (1979) put perspective taking's attributional effects on trial. When instructed by a defense lawyer to take the defendant's perspective (using "imagine self" perspective-taking instructions), mock jurors saw the defendant's personality as having a less causal role in an aggressive bar room brawl (as long as they did not also hear a reminder from the judge to weigh only the facts in their deliberation). Taking the perspective of wrongdoers appears to have resulted in holding the defendant less responsible for the wrongdoing. However, a potentially even more effective way to get people to see a wrongdoer as less responsible is to have them recall a time when they engaged in similar wrongdoing (Takaku, Weiner, & Ohbuchi, 2001).

Of course, more sympathy or less blame for a particular party in a dispute does not *necessarily* lead to positive social change. More sympathy for a sham victim or truly guilty defendant may not be a good thing. However, in many contexts, those who are disadvantaged (economically, socially, etc.) are not only more likely to be victimized, and victims are also often blamed for their misfortune (e.g., Branscombe, Owen, Garstka, & Coleman, 1996; Kaiser & Miller, 2003). Taking

the perspective of the victim may remind us of the former and reduce the latter. Similarly, certain social and ethnic groups are more likely to be fingered as perpetrators and dealt with more harshly when found guilty (see Greene, Heilbrun, Fortune, & Nietzel, 2007). Taking their perspective may help counteract these biases. In both cases, perspective taking's effects on attributions may help level the playing field. Furthermore, perspective taking may simply result in attributions being made more carefully: In an attribution study by Malle and Pearce (2001), observers taking the perspective of others noticed and reported more actions being performed by those others.

Perspective Taking and Prejudice

Vescio et al.'s (2003) results that are discussed above foreshadow the idea that perspective taking not only makes us more charitable in our attributions about others whose perspective we have taken, but that perspective taking may also counteract culturally shared prejudices. In one set of very clear and illustrative results, Dovidio et al. (2004, Study 1) had college student participants watch a video clip from a documentary about discrimination against an African-American man. Beforehand, they received either perspective-taking instructions ("imagine other"), instructions to watch objectively, or no special instructions. Only those in the perspective-taking condition later showed a drop in prejudice toward African-Americans, relative to pretest scores collected earlier in the term using the same prejudice scale. Those in the perspective-taking condition also felt more of a sense of merging between themselves and the character in the video (using Aron et al.'s 1992 IOS scale), and reported a greater sense of injustice in response to the video, but only the latter appeared to mediate perspective taking's reduction of prejudice.

Using a different target of prejudice (gays), Karaçanta and Fitness (2006) found that perspective-taking instructions ("imagine other" instructions, relative to "remain objective" instructions) increased compassion for a gay target who discussed on video the harassment he had received for his sexual orientation. In another study, Johnson, Brems, and Alford-Keating (1997) measured dispositional differences in perspective taking with the perspective-taking subscale of Davis's IRI, rather than manipulating perspective taking, and found that higher perspective-taking scores predicted less homophobic attitudes.

Perspective taking for a particular stigmatized target may generalize to more positive attitudes toward the group as a whole, with the effect mediated by the empathic concern for the specific target (Batson, Polycarpou, et al., 1997). Batson, Polycarpou, et al. (1997) found this chain of events held generally, even when the specific target could be seen as somewhat responsible for the stigmatized fate (i.e., a homeless man who quit his job rather than being fired from it). In Batson, Polycarpou, et al.'s (1997) final study, where the stigmatized group was the decidedly unpopular category of "murderers," an ameliorative effect on attitudes toward the group was limited at first, but became more robust when attitudes toward prison reform and murderers were assessed a week or two later in an ostensibly unconnected survey. Finally in a closely related study, Batson, Chang, Orr, and

Rowland (2002) found that perspective takers not only reported more empathic concern for a convicted criminal and heroin addict, but they also recommended allocating more "Student Action Committee" funds to an addiction counseling program.

Perspective taking has been shown to reduce ingroup favoritism, even when the ingroup/outgroup distinction was novel to participants (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000, Study 3) – a result that appears to stem from a reduction in ingroup ratings *and* an increase in outgroup ratings. In at least one study, taking the perspective of ingroup member who experienced discrimination resulted in more positive attitudes toward members of *another* outgroup: Finlay and Stephan (2000) asked European-American participants to read a scenario about an American student (race not specified) who was discriminated against in Hong Kong. The participants were asked to either take the perspective of the student (using "imagine self" or "imagine other" instructions) or to follow control ("observe") instructions. Relative to participants in the control condition, participants who were asked to imagine the perspective of the student later reported more positive attitudes toward an outgroup (African-Americans), and less positive attitudes toward European-Americans (their own ingroup). However, these results may be limited to situations where the target of perspective taking is like the self and toward outgroups for whom prejudice is well-documented and easily brought to mind.

Perspective taking not only reduces prejudice, but also appears to reduce use of stereotypes. Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000) showed college participants a picture of an elderly man and asked them to write about a day in his life. Participants who were asked to imagine themselves as if they were the man in the photo wrote essays with content that was less stereotypic of the elderly and more positive in tone, relative to control participants. In a less serious context, Piper and Langer (1984) reported that people instructed to watch soap operas from the perspective of people in different professions ended up seeing the characters as more complex and less stereotypic.

Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000) explain their stereotype reduction results as being due to the fact that "perspective-taking nonconsciously increases the accessibility of the self-concept, which then diminishes the accessibility and application of the stereotype because only one construct tends to be dominant at any one time" (p. 720). This leads to an interesting paradox: On the one hand, perspective taking leads to a reduction in prejudice toward a group, which would seem consistent with abandoning the group's stereotype. On the other hand, it leads to viewing the self as having more in common with the stereotype of the group, which sounds consistent with embracing the group's stereotype. Despite an apparent surface contradiction, simultaneously obtaining both results is not impossible. After perspective taking, stereotypes are applied relatively less to members of the group (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000), but relatively more to the self (Galinsky, Wang, et al., 2008). The final piece of the puzzle that has to be reconciled is that past results have also shown that perspective takers ascribe more of their own traits to targets of perspective taking (Davis et al., 1996). In order to balance the equation, these self-traits would have to be traits that are inconsistent with the stereotype.

Of course, prejudice is a complex, thorny, and deeply embedded problem, and we should not expect any simple solutions, even with perspective taking. Further complicating matters are important boundary conditions to keep in mind, such as the perspective taker's view of the self. If, as we have asserted earlier, perspective taking results in sharing traits of the self with the target of perspective taking, then the positive effects of perspective taking on perceptions of another person might be expected to disappear if the self is not viewed favorably. Support for this idea comes from work by Galinsky and Ku (2004), who showed that perspective taking produces a reduction in prejudice toward a stereotyped group only when self-esteem is high. Furthermore, perspective taking may backfire in terms of reducing prejudice when the instruction to perspective take comes *from* a member of the stereotyped group and is directed toward people who are highly prejudiced against members of that group (Focella, Whitehead, Stone, & Schmader, 2010). In addition, Skorinko and Sinclair (2010) suggest an important moderator in perspective taking's ability to reduce the use of a group's stereotype in describing group members: When the group member strongly confirms to the group stereotype (such as an elderly man who is also clearly ill), perspective taking may actually increase stereotype use.

Finally, although perspective taking appears to improve beliefs and attitudes about other groups, work by Vorauer et al. (2009) demonstrates that perspective taking may backfire for certain people in actual social interactions. In four studies, university participants were asked to communicate with a person who was an ethnic minority (by writing, making an audiotape, or interacting face-to-face). Among those who took the perspective of their ethnic minority partner prior to the interaction, *lower* prejudice scores predicted *fewer* intimacy-building behaviors in their communication with their partner (Studies 1, 2, and 3) as well as interactions that were rated *less* positively by their ethnic minority partners (Study 4). Vorauer et al. explain these counterintuitive results by using a "divergent effort account": Low prejudice people assume that ethnic minorities will recognize their low prejudice beliefs, and thus they do not feel like they need to "work" to avoid being perceived as prejudiced. However, their non-prejudicial beliefs are *not* readily apparent to ethnic minorities, whereas their lack of work to convey positive attitudes apparently is. Ironically, higher prejudiced people may fair better after perspective taking – they do not assume that they will be perceived by the ethnic minorities in a positive manner and thus work harder to counteract negative perceptions. Clearly, although perspective taking is powerful weapon against prejudice, it is not perfect.

Perspective Taking and Aggressive Behavior

Perspective taking (either manipulated or measured as an individual difference) generally predicts less aggressive responses in a competitive laboratory task (although there appear to be boundary conditions, such as how threatening the task is; Richardson et al., 1998, 1994). In particular, people who score higher in dispositional perspective taking (using Davis's perspective-taking subscale of the IRI) respond less aggressively than do people who score lower, in response to interaction

partners retaliating in a highly provocative way (Richardson et al., 1994, Study 3) or escalating in aggressiveness (Richardson et al., 1998). People who score high on perspective taking also report being more likely to seek out constructive strategies such as problem solving and discussion in potentially aggressive situations, and less likely to seek out aggressive tactics (Richardson et al., 1994, Study 1). However, perspective taking does not always lead to less aggression. When the perspective taken is that of a member of a group that is stereotyped as aggressive, such as African-Americans, perspective taking may lead to more aggressive behavior relative to taking the perspective of a member of a group that is not stereotyped as aggressive, such as the elderly (Galinsky, Wang, et al., 2008).

Perspective Taking and Social Interactions

People who score higher in dispositional perspective taking (using Davis's perspective-taking subscale of the IRI) appear to be more socially adept. They have higher self-esteem and show less social anxiety on a variety of measures (Davis, 1983). Greater perspective taking may increase the chances of reaching a deal in negotiations and lead to more creative solutions that result in gains for both parties (Galinsky, Maddux, et al., 2008; see also Neale & Bazerman, 1983), probably because they think more about what would satisfy the other party. In addition, Bernstein and Davis (1982) reported that people dispositionally high in perspective taking were better at a social perception task involving strangers. Participants were given three-word self-descriptions written by participants in a group discussion. After watching a videotape of the group discussion, people who were high in perspective taking were better able to match which self-description went with which group participant.

Perspective taking might be a particularly important component of successful close, long-term relationships (Davis & Oathout, 1987; Franzoi, Davis, & Young, 1985; Long & Andrews, 1990). Davis and Oathout (1987) found that when in close relationships, people who scored high in perspective taking reported more positive social traits (e.g., having a positive outlook) and fewer negative social traits (e.g., being untrustworthy) when describing themselves. Many of these self-reported traits were echoed in their romantic partners' perceptions, and some of those perceptions in turn led to reports of greater relationship satisfaction by the partners.

Perspctive Taking and the Environment

Can taking the perspective of something other than another person result in positive social change? A small collection of environmental science studies suggests that being asked to take the perspective of plants or animals that are pictured or described in text increases proenvironmental attitudes and commitment to helping the environment. Berenguer (2007) showed university students either a photo of trees that had been cut down, or a dead bird on an oil-covered beach. They were given instructions

to either take the perspective of the trees or the bird, or to remain objective while viewing the photo. Perspective takers not only reported greater empathic concern after viewing the photos, but they also reported feeling more of a moral obligation to help the bird or trees and a greater desire to help nature as a whole (see also Shelton & Rogers, 1981, for conceptually similar results using whales as the perspective-taking targets). Furthermore, perspective takers advocated greater funding for environmental programs when asked to allocate money to student programs, a result that was mediated by how much empathic concern they reported feeling.

In a similar study, Berenguer (2010) asked some participants to perspective take while reading about a vulture being hit by a car and asked other participants to read the passage objectively. He found the same perspective taking induced empathic concern results as he did in the 2007 study. Furthermore, he found that when perspective takers were later asked to read environmental dilemmas and justify which course of action they would take, their answers contained more "ecocentric" reasons (i.e., reasons that referred to protecting nature for its own sake, rather than protecting it because of instrumental benefits to humans).

However, greater "ecocentrism" may be evoked by perspective taking only when the target of perspective taking in nature is being harmed. Schultz (2000) showed undergraduates photos of people in natural environments, animals in natural environments, or animals being harmed by human caused factors (e.g., a seal caught in a fishing net). Before viewing the photos, participants were given instructions either to take the perspective of the subject (human or animal in the photo) or to try to remain objective while viewing the photo. The two factors – type of photo and instructions – interacted, such that perspective takers who viewed animals being harmed reported more "biospheric concerns" – that is, concerns "based on a value for all living things" (p. 392), a construct similar to Berenguer's "ecocentrism."

Perspective Taking as Thinking Again, Thinking Differently

We detour now from concrete positive social outcomes associated with perspective taking to a more speculative path about how perspective taking may be generally related to flexible cognition. If nothing else, perspective taking makes us (a) think again and (b) think differently (see, Koehler, 1991), which can cause us to attend to new or different information. For example, participants reading a passage about a tropical island learned and recalled different information when they took the perspective of a florist looking for place to gather flowers than when they took the perspective of a shipwrecked person (Pichert & Anderson, 1977). Ginossar and Trope (1987) also found that asking people to take a different perspective caused them to attend to information to which they would not normally attend. In their study, they provided subjects with a hit-and-run scenario involving a taxicab. Subjects were asked to assess the likelihood that the taxicab was from one of two cab companies, the answer to which relied in part on the base rates of the number of cabs from the two companies. Subjects given this scenario usually ignore or under-utilize the base rate information (cf. Tversky & Kahneman, 1982), but when

Ginossar and Trope asked their subjects to judge the likelihood from the perspective of a lawyer involved in the case, their perspective-taking manipulation increased subjects' use of base rate information. In addition, thinking of alternative scenarios (which perspective taking seems to involve) results in making those alternatives more cognitively available (Koehler, 1991). Even though our initial construal (in this case, the self perspective) will probably still dominate, we may be less biased to doggedly defend it (Anderson, 1982; Bassok & Trope, 1984; Griffin, Dunning, & Ross, 1990; Lord, Lepper, & Preston, 1984).

Perspective taking may reduce people's unrealistic optimism about the likelihood of certain life outcomes happening. Weinstein and Lachendro (1982) found that asking students to list possible factors that would either increase or decrease their chances of a negative life event (e.g., cancer or heart disease) did not reduce their unrealistic optimism. However, asking subjects to either read another student's factor list or fill out the factor list from the perspective of a "typical" student did reduce optimism.

Ending Ideas

Even though we think we have gathered together a convincing collection of findings suggesting that perspective taking could play an important role in promoting positive social change, we don't want to leave the impression that we are "Pollyannas for perspective taking." Although we have already acknowledged a number of limitations on the positive potential of perspective taking within our section on prejudice and hinted at it in our section on attributions, there are other potential perspective taking pitfalls. For example, when Batson, Klein, Highberger, and Shaw (1995) asked participants to take the perspective of a target who had experienced a major life set back (a romantic breakup or a serious disease), they gave the targets preferential treatment when it came to allocating subsequent outcomes, even when that preferential treatment directly contradicted allocation guidelines and even when participants agreed it wasn't the fairest way to make the allocation (see also Batson et al., 1995).

Perspective taking can also backfire in zero-sum, competitive contexts where perspective takers have little information with which to generate another party's perspective, other than general theories of human behavior or their own tendencies. Epley, Caruso, and Bazerman (2006) reasoned that if participants who were asked to claim a part of a shared resource were also asked to take the perspective of other parties who were sharing that resource, they would assume the other parties would overclaim. They would then increase their own claim in order to counteract the predicted overclaiming by the other parties. In other words, if perspective taking leads people to draw negative conclusions about the target of perspective taking, then the perspective takers' subsequent behaviors may reflect retaliatory or self-protective behaviors that may impede positive social change. Perspective taking in zero-sum situations, particularly "winner takes all" scenarios (see Batson et al., 2003), may also highlight the costs to the self of behaving sympathetically toward the other.

Perhaps more sobering is that even when perspective taking is working at its best, it may fall short in counteracting some of the most noxious human behaviors. Perspective taking operates on a personal scale. Even though we have described studies where taking the perspective of an individual results in more positive outcomes for groups, there may be a bottleneck, given the limitations that we can take just one perspective at a time and that taking another perspective is effortful. When faced, for example, with a whole nation of victims, as in the case of genocide, perspective taking appears to be woefully insufficient (Slovic, 2007).

However, while we humbly acknowledge the limitations of perspective taking, we want to end this chapter on a positive note. Perspective taking has demonstrated a remarkable flexibility in its applications: It is like the duct tape of social interactions. And like duct tape, there may be ways we are – or could be – using perspective taking that have not yet been tried (or studied). If we can take the perspective of trees (Berenguer, 2007), could we take the perspective of other things – like a park, the department in which we work, or democracy – with similarly positive outcomes to the ones we have already covered? Here is a strategy that requires no special equipment or infrastructure and it is already endorsed by many of the world's religious, educational, and moral institutions. It is within the skill range of most people over the age of 5, and is perhaps close to the human default course of action in some contexts already (e.g., Davis et al., 2004). Most of us just need a bit of prodding to engage in it more often.

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Chapter 13
Investing in Others: Prosocial Spending for (Pro)Social Change

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Imagine the following: It is a Saturday morning in December and you have decided to have breakfast at your local diner. You take a seat in a booth by the window and order the usual – a mushroom and cheese omelet with a side of hash browns and a coffee. As you enjoy your omelet, you consider your plans for the day. You have a long list of errands to attend to before heading to a friend's place tonight, so as soon as you finish your meal, you summon your waitress for the check. She makes her way to your table and tells you that your check has been paid by another customer who just left the diner and then adds, "Happy Holidays." Your bill was not large, but you are emotionally moved by the kindness of this generous act. You reach for your wallet anyway and tell the waitress you would like to pay the check for the next table. You leave $20 and head out the door with a smile. And just like that, a favor has been paid forward.

This may sound more like a scene from a movie than real life, but this is just what happened in a Philadelphia diner in the winter of 2009 (Johnson, 2009). The positive chain reaction was initiated by an unknown couple who paid for their bill and the bill of another customer. The couple did not leave their names or phone number, but simply asked that the waitress wait until they had left the restaurant before informing the other customer that their tab had been paid. This act inspired others to do the same. For the next 5 h, dozens of customers continued to pay the favor forward. The staff at the diner were amazed by the string of generous spending, so much so that one waitress reported that the "magical" event brought tears to her eyes.

This occurrence provides a poignant example of how *prosocial spending*, that is, spending money on others, can lead to positive outcomes for the people spending the money, those receiving it, and even other individuals nearby. In this chapter, we unpack and explore the possibility of prosocial spending as a mechanism for positive social change. After providing some background, we review our research on the happiness benefits of prosocial spending. We discuss the impact of prosocial spending at four levels, starting first with the happiness benefits of prosocial spending for individuals, and then extending this discussion outward to dyads, to

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