

Building better work places through individual perspective taking:

A fresh look at a fundamental human process

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Biographies

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Introduction

Consider the following scenarios. A leader makes a speech that seems to perfectly capture and reflect the mood of her followers, leading to renewed motivation and enthusiasm. After carefully listening to each other's view point, two team members agree on a way forward that meets both their needs. A customer service representative soothes an angry customer by discerning the most important aspects of their complaint. A nurse accurately identifies a quiet patient's need for more information, and asks the doctor questions on the patient's behalf. What is it that these situations have in common?

We suggest that the capacity to take the perspective of another, or to see the world from another's point of view, underlies all of these forms of organizational behavior. It is such 'perspective taking' that is the focus of this chapter, particularly its application to the work place. Over the past two decades, research on cognition in organizations has been on the ascendancy (Hodgkinson and Healy, in press), particularly following Walsh's (1995) influential review. In this chapter, we selectively review this and other literatures relevant to perspective taking in order to propose new theoretical insights and stimulate new research directions that, in the longer run, might positively influence effectiveness in the workplace.

Specifically, we have three aims. First, we review and clarify the construct of individual perspective taking, identifying its important features and variants. In contrast to most previous organizational literature on this topic, we define perspective taking as a psychological process rather than as a stable trait or ability. We also argue that previous research has failed to differentiate an individual's effort to engage in perspective taking ('active perspective taking') from the degree to which one actually understands another's perspective ('perspective taking effectiveness'). We describe how the former is essential for the latter, but also how this relationship is moderated by the capacity of the perspective taker, as well as the demands of the perspective taking task and situation. Our conceptual clarification provides an important platform

for discussing how the perspective taking process might work in organizations.

Second, we develop a framework for considering the outcomes of perspective taking within organizations. This framework distinguishes outcomes at the intra-individual level from those at the interpersonal (dyadic) level, and suggests how these outcomes might, over time and people, affect teams and organizations. The framework also identifies how perspective taking not only enhances interactions in the moment, but can build more enduring capabilities and resources for individuals, teams, and organizations. Considering the role of perspective taking provides new insights into these outcomes and the conditions under which they might be stimulated. For example, facilitating greater perspective taking has been given little attention as a strategy for managing diversity in organizations, or as a way of enhancing organizational citizenship, yet our analysis shows its potential in these regards.

Third, drawing on our conceptual analysis of the process of perspective taking, we consider how this process can be influenced by situational and individual factors in the work place. Our integrative model of antecedent factors identifies management practices and work structures that potentially enhance perspective taking amongst organizational members, or that inhibit and de-rail this process. This part of the paper is critical as it identifies how one can intervene to achieve more perspective taking, and hence its associated outcomes, within the work place.

Our first goal is to conceptualize perspective taking more precisely than hitherto attempted in most of the literature, and it is this to which we now turn.

What is Perspective Taking?

To date researchers in the field of perspective taking have often used different words to refer to the same phenomenon and the same word to refer to different phenomena. Further, perspective taking has been variously defined as a personality trait, as an ability, as a process, and as an outcome; in part, the particular approach typically reflects one's disciplinary orientation.

In this section, we propose a definition of perspective taking that is clearly differentiated

from related phenomena such as empathy, while also clearly articulating a critical but previously unacknowledged distinction between the act of taking another person's perspective (active perspective taking) and the effectiveness of that act. Obviously one can attempt to understand another's perspective without necessarily doing so accurately or effectively.

There are many definitions related to active perspective taking, which is also sometimes referred to as role taking. Most definitions highlight that perspective taking is a cognitive process that involves focusing on another's view point (e.g., Batson, 1991; Davis, 1983a, Duan, 2000; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Hoffman, 1982; Long & Andrews, 1990; Okun, Shepard & Eisenberg, 2000; Settoon & Mossholder, 2002; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). For example, Galinsky, Ku, & Wang (2005, p. 110) defined it as "the process of imagining the world from another's vantage point or imagining oneself in another's shoes".

Based on our analysis across multiple domains of inquiry, we believe there is value in developing a more precise definition of perspective taking than is present in most of the literature. We define active perspective taking as follows:

Active perspective taking occurs when an observer tries to understand, in a non-judgmental way, the thoughts, motives, and/or feelings of a target, as well as why they think and/or feel the way they do.

According to this definition, active perspective taking is an intentional and goal-directed process, rather than an automatic or subconscious activity. There might be different motives underpinning the desire to understand the other, as we elaborate later. For example, perspective taking might be engaged in to understand how recipients of a change program might react to a planned change, to understand the view point of a customer so the service agent can respond with the appropriate emotions, or to better know the other so the salesperson can sell them more products or win their business. The 'perspective' focused on can also vary, such as being concerned with recognizing how the other feels, or it might be more focused on understanding beliefs, motives, and thought

processes. However, in all of these cases, active perspective taking is an intentional process, embarked upon with the goal of understanding the view point of the other.

As such, active perspective taking is a process that requires effort, and hence resources, to distance oneself from one's own perspective (Piaget, 1932) and infer or imagine the other's view-point. This subjective sense of effort is strongly supported by recent neuroimaging studies demonstrating specific regions of the brain are recruited during perspective taking (Ruby and Decety, 2001). One's inferences can be based on tangible features, such as the target's physical setting, or less tangible features, such as memory of past interactions or beliefs about the target's group membership (Schober, 1998). Active perspective-taking is reduced by cognitive load (Roßnagel, 2000), which implicates the role of cognitive resources in this process. However active perspective taking can also require emotional resources, such as the regulatory demands involved in putting aside one's own emotions, and it is often accompanied by behavioral strategies (e.g., skilled questioning, active listening). The level of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral resources involved in active perspective taking will vary according to many factors, including how much effort one puts in. For example, one might take a minute or two to try to imagine a target's view point, whereas in another case, one might proactively seek out the target, ask them probing and detailed questions, and engage in considerable cognitive effort to put aside one's own view to fully hear the target's perspective.

We also define active perspective taking as a process in which the observer intends to understand the other in a relatively non-judgmental, or unbiased, way. In other words, it is genuinely about trying to understand the 'other'. It involves trying to accept another's view point and recognize it as legitimate for that person.

An important aspect of our definition is that we do not assume active perspective taking is solely trait-based. Whilst individual differences in personality can affect an individual's likelihood of engaging in perspective taking within a particular situation, we also allow for the possibility

that trying to see another's view point is an act that can be influenced by non-dispositional person variables (e.g., mood and affect) as well as situational factors (e.g., work load, time pressure). In other words, whilst some individuals might be generally more likely to take the perspective of another across many situations, an individual's perspective taking in a particular situation will also vary according to many situational factors. We return to these influences later.

We define perspective taking effectiveness as:

The degree to which the observer has a relatively accurate, comprehensive, and objective understanding and appreciation of the target's thoughts and/or feelings and the reasons they are thinking and/or feeling that way.

Perspective taking effectiveness is related to 'empathic accuracy' (Ickes, 1993), which focuses on accurately identifying a target's emotion. However, empathic accuracy is only a component of effective perspective taking because one can be accurate about a target's emotion without necessarily understanding why the target thinks and feels the way they do. For example, recognizing another's behavior and accurately labelling it as anger is part of effective perspective taking, but the latter also involves having some understanding of *why* an individual might be angry by closely considering, and inferring from, their particular attributes and circumstances (Steins, 2000). Effective perspective taking also means that one accepts and appreciates the perspective of the other as legitimate for that person. Accepting another's view point, however, does not mean that one necessarily colludes or agrees with the perspective (Frantz & Janoff-Bulman, 2000). For example, in a clinical context, one might understand the perspective of a murderer and why they took the action they did, whilst not endorsing his or her actions.

It is important to note that, in using the term perspective taking effectiveness, we are aiming to convey a notion of *relative* effectiveness. Obviously active perspective taking is an inferential process, not an objective 'fact gathering' process (even though it might involve gathering information). Given knowledge limitations and personal biases, it is not possible for an observer to

completely or definitely know the other's view point. Indeed, the target might not fully 'know' their own perspective, and their views, opinions and feelings might change throughout the course of an interaction. As such, for active perspective taking to be effective, it needs to be a dynamic process in which an individual tests out their understanding of the other, and updates or revises it accordingly. As Rogers (1980, p. 143) recognized, it requires: "being sensitive, moment by moment, to the changing felt meanings which flow in this other person... and frequently checking with the person as to the accuracy of your sensings, and being guided by the response you receive".

Perspective taking effectiveness can be measured by the agreement between target and observer reports of perspectives on a given event or exchange, or by the extent to which a target considers and reflects an observer's perspective, such as beliefs and social knowledge consistent with a view point and assumptions about the character's internal states (Frantz & Janoff-Bulman, 2000).

Distinguishing active perspective taking from effective perspective taking highlights that efforts to understand another view point do not always result in an understanding and/or appreciation of the other. This is important because the antecedents and outcomes of these different concepts are likely to vary. For example, if we focus on promoting active perspective taking only, when it is actually effective perspective taking that is really important for promoting effective interpersonal relationships, then interventions are likely to be misguided and unsuccessful. As such, it is important to understand when and how active perspective taking translates into effective perspective taking.

Later, we propose a model of factors that influence whether active perspective taking becomes effective perspective taking. Specifically, we suggest that active perspective taking is more likely to result in effective perspective taking when (1) the observer has the capacity for engaging in perspective taking, such as when the observer has high cognitive complexity, and (2)

when the demands associated with the perspective taking task or situation are low, such as when the target is similar to the observer, thus making their perspective more readily accessible. We discuss later in the chapter factors that influence both the motivation to engage in active perspective taking, and that influence perspective taking effectiveness.

Because there is little point considering perspective taking and its influences unless it has important consequences, our next goal is to identify key outcomes of the perspective taking process. In our discussion of outcomes, we distinguish between active perspective taking and perspective taking effectiveness where we can, but we necessarily draw on research that has not distinguished these concepts.

Why is Perspective Taking Important at Work?

Mead (1934) equated being fully human with our ability to maintain an inner conversation with a generalized other, or to 'take the role of the other'. Neuroanatomists have identified specific regions of the brain associated with perspective taking (Ruby and Decety, 2001) and philosophers speculate that taking the perspective of others is a fundamental facet of consciousness (Thompson, 2001). The development of perspective taking is a key marker of human cognitive and moral maturity (Kohlberg, 1976). For example, Piaget (1932) identified the ability to adopt a non-egocentric view as one of the stages that children must progress through as they develop and a variety of neo-Piagetian; and constructivist-developmental theories include increasingly sophisticated cognitive and affective perspective taking as a core dimension of human growth (e.g. Kegan, 1982; 1994; Labouvie-Vief, 2005). Perspective taking allows us to transcend our aloneness: All meaningful communication requires that, to some degree, one must realistically imagine the view of the other and take into account what the other does or doesn't know.

Being such a fundamental human process, there is almost no aspect of organizational functioning that is not potentially improved by better perspective taking. In part, the benefits depend on the role of the observer. For example, coaches and mentors might be more effective at

providing advice, customer service representatives might build greater rapport with customers, leaders might be more transformational, and a member of an interdisciplinary team might be more creative if s/he is able to take the perspective of another. The potential benefits also depend on the level of analysis on which one focuses, and the time period over which the effects are observed. They can range from a one-off consequence for the individual perspective taker, such as feeling empathy, to the enhancement of an organization's social capital.

The point, therefore, is that there are many potential positive work-related outcomes of perspective taking. As such, rather than outline all possible outcomes, we suggest a way of organizing these outcomes, thereby helping practitioners and researchers to identify why perspective taking can be important in the work place, as well as when such outcomes are most likely to arise. Where we discuss specific outcomes, we concentrate on those with the most research support and/ or for which perspective taking appears to play a central role rather than a peripheral one.

Overview of model

Our proposed model distinguishes different levels of outcomes that can arise with perspective taking. At the intra-individual level, we discuss consequences that arise for the perspective taker, including how perspective taking changes the way the perspective taker thinks and feels about others and their situation. These cognitive-affective consequences can, in turn, affect the nature and quality of the perspective taker's interactions with the other or others, and over the longer term, their relationships. For example, perspective taking can improve the interactions between service providers and their customers, or improve the relations between members in a team. Ultimately, the effects of these more positive dyadic interactions can aggregate up to affect higher-level functioning. For example, at the team level, we consider how perspective taking within specific interactions can, when aggregated over multiple individuals, result in outcomes such as more co-ordinated team-working.

Our model also identifies how perspective taking can, when its effects are aggregated over time, build more positive relationships and more enduring resources for individuals, relationships, and teams. For example, an individual who engages in frequent and sustained perspective taking is likely to develop greater cognitive complexity (Kegan, 1994), and a team who has members who frequently engage in greater perspective taking is likely to develop more accurate and shared mental models about team tasks. Finally, our model also highlights potential negative outcomes of perspective taking. Figure 1 summarizes the model of perspective taking outcomes.

 Insert Figure 1 about here

Intra-individual outcomes for the perspective-taker

In this section, we identify cognitive-affective responses (sometimes referred to as empathic responses), as well as feelings of meaning and significance, that can arise within the perspective taker as a result of actively trying to understand the other's view point. These intra-individual outcomes are likely to be important mediators in the relationship between active perspective taking and interpersonal outcomes, although they can also be important in their own right.

Affective responses (empathic concern)

It is well-established that people's affective reactions can change as a result of taking another's perspective. A major affective response associated with active perspective taking involves reacting to the experiences of another with compassion and empathic concern (Davis, 1983b; Karinol & Shomroni, 1999). For example, a leader might feel empathic concern for a subordinate who is experiencing difficult personal circumstances. Empathic concern is usually assessed by asking the observer how much they are experiencing a range of emotions toward the target such as warmth, concern, and compassion, and has also been labeled as reactive empathy (Stephan & Finlay, 1999) or sympathy (Eisenberg, 2000).

It is important to understand that empathic concern is not the same as feeling personal distress, or alarm and discomfort because of the target's suffering. It is also not the same as feeling what the other is feeling (e.g., feeling anger because the target is angry) which has been referred to as parallel empathy (Stephan & Finlay, 1999), empathic emotion (Duan, 2000) or pure empathy (Eisenberg, 2000). Personal distress and parallel empathy are considered to be relatively automatic and self-focused responses that arise just by observing another person in need (Eisenberg, 2000; Hoffman, 1982) thus, bypassing perspective taking. In contrast, empathic concern is considered to arise out of the more active - and other-focused - process of perspective taking. For example, Okun et al., (2000) showed that active perspective taking is associated with high empathic concern but low personal distress.

Empathic concern is important for organizations in so far as it is likely to drive important behaviors and relationship outcomes. For example, as we note later, empathic concern appears to mediate the relationship between active perspective taking and helping behavior.

Cognitive responses

We have already described how active perspective taking can lead to individuals having a better and more comprehensive understanding of the other and their situation, which we defined as effective perspective taking. Here we identify further cognitive responses.

One important cognitive response that arises from active perspective taking is reduced attribution error. A key feature of organizational life is the attributions that we make for other's behavior. The actor-observer bias (Jones & Nisbett, 1971) occurs when observers tend to attribute the behavior of others to their 'disposition', but when explaining their own behavior they take situational factors into account. An extension of the actor-observer bias is the self-serving bias (Bernstein, Stephan and Davis, 1979) in which individuals tend to attribute their own success to dispositions (e.g., ability) and failure to external factors (e.g., task difficulty), whereas they do the reverse for others. These biases have been shown to reduce with active perspective taking (e.g.,

Regan & Totten, 1975; Storms, 1973). For example, Regan and Totten showed that, when participants were asked to take the target's perspective, participants made the same attributions towards the target that they would have made for themselves in that situation.

There are likely to be significant follow on effects of changed attribution processes. For example, Betancourt (1990) showed that perspective taking led to changed attributions which in turn led to greater helping. Perspective taking-induced positive attributions will also be important in processes such as performance appraisal, negotiation, and leadership; all processes that are affected by the attributions people make for others' behavior (e.g. Haywood, Rindova & Pollock, 2004; Meindl, Erhlich & Dukerich, 1985; Repenning & Sterman, 2002; Staw, 1975).

A further type of cognitive change that potentially occurs with perspective taking is self-other merging or 'oneness'. Evidence shows that perspective taking can change cognitive representations of the 'other' in relation to the 'self' (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). For example, perspective taking can result in individuals ascribing positively-valued traits that individuals feel are characteristic of themselves to the target (Davis, Conklin, Smith & Luce, 1996).

Meaning and task significance

Perspective taking of one's beneficiaries or customers at work might play a critical role in meaning making. Consider, for example, the case of a hairdresser cutting someone's hair. By taking the perspective of the customer, this transaction might become much more meaningful, such as helping the customer to look their best for her son's wedding, or helping a customer overcome his/ her shyness and giving them more confidence. Consider also a nurse. By adopting the perspective of a patient, one is not just performing as a nurse, but is helping an individual person with their own worries and fears.

It is well known that perceived task significance has a substantial impact on job satisfaction and intrinsic motivation (Hackman & Oldham, 1976). More recent evidence shows

that jobs that involves contact with, and feedback from, the beneficiaries of the work leads to greater helping behavior towards these beneficiaries, as well as higher performance (Grant, in press). Although not explored in Grant's work, one mechanism by which contact with beneficiaries might have its positive impact is through perspective taking. That is, job incumbents better learn and appreciate the perspective of their beneficiaries, which in turn enhances their feeling of meaning and impact. Understanding a beneficiary's perspective, however, need not necessarily be a positive experience. Enhancing the perspective taking of a salesperson involved in selling poor-quality goods to customers who cannot afford them seems likely to lead to a more negative evaluation of task significance.

Interpersonal and dyadic outcomes

As a consequence of the intrapersonal outcomes of active perspective taking, the perspective taker is likely to behave differently within an interaction, such as portray a feeling of concern, which in turn can engender different responses in the target, thereby affecting the nature and quality of the interaction. Perspective taking can also have more direct consequences on interpersonal interactions. Next we identify interpersonal outcomes that can result from active perspective taking, or the intrapersonal outcomes that arise from this process.

More effective interpersonal relating

At a general level, positive interpersonal consequences are a likely outcome because perspective taking affects the quality and meaningfulness of communication (Schober, 1998). For example, individuals engaging in active perspective taking frame their own message so that they are more easily understood by others (Krauss & Fussell, 1991). In turn, individuals disclose more information when interacting with others engaged in perspective taking (Sermat & Smyth, 1973). Perspective taking can have other interpersonal benefits, such as improving interpersonal problem-solving ability (Falk & Johnson, 1977), enhancing trust (Williams, 2007), and lowering interpersonal aggression (Richardson, Hammock, Smith, Gardner & Signo, 1994). Physician

empathy, an outcome of perspective taking, has been shown to predict patient trust, compliance with clinical decisions, and satisfaction with medical services (e.g., Barnett, Howard, King, & Dino, 1981).

Given its effect on communication and other fundamental interpersonal processes, perspective taking is likely to enhance the performance of all roles within organizations that have a strong interpersonal requirement. To illustrate, consider leadership. Transformational leaders need to understand followers' needs and wants in order to provide meaningful rewards to followers (contingent reward) and to tailor development opportunities to the individual (individualized consideration), and they need to interpret and understand the emotional reactions of individuals to craft inspiring messages (inspirational motivation) (Barling, Slater, & Kelloway, 2000). Furthermore, transformational leaders need to understand the perspectives of those they lead in order to craft messages that shape followers' understanding of the situation appropriately to bring about desired organizational changes (Torbert et al, 2004). Effective leadership, therefore, is likely to depend on good perspective taking. Consistent with this, Atwater and Yammarino (1993) found that leaders who considered the impact of their decisions on others' feelings when making decisions were rated as more transformational by their team members and superiors than leaders whose decision making was based on more rational, cost-benefit analysis (Caruso & Wolfe, 2004; Gardner & Stough, 2002).

Citizenship and helping

An individual who actively takes the perspective of another is more likely to help that person. Dozens of social psychology experiments have shown that active perspective taking, typically induced via instructions, leads individuals to help others (e.g., Batson, Batson, Slingsby, Harrell, Peekna, & Todd, 1991; Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978; Stephan & Finlay, 1999, see also Batson, 1991, and Underwood & Moore, 1982, for reviews). For example, students who watched a video of a prospective student thinking aloud about returning to college were more

likely to offer help to that person if they were given instructions to pay attention to their feelings or thoughts than if they were asked to focus on distracting details of the video (Oswald, 1996). A great deal of developmental literature also shows that a child's degree of perspective taking influences their propensity to help other children and behave in prosocial ways (see Eisenberg & Miller, 1987 for a review).

Helping is clearly an important behavior in organizations. It has been identified as a core component of organizational citizenship (Bateman & Organ, 1983), prosocial organizational behavior (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986) and contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993). More specifically, helping is identified as an “affiliative promotive” behavior (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998): promotive because it encourages or causes things to happen, and affiliative because it is interpersonal and co-operative. As one might expect, it has been proposed that employees’ level of perspective taking, and their empathy, affects citizenship behaviors (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986), although these latter concepts have received surprisingly little empirical attention as antecedents in this literature. The few studies that exist all support a link between perspective taking and citizenship outcomes. Parker & Axtell (2001) found that two intrapersonal outcomes of perspective taking (empathic concern and positive attributions towards a target) predicted supervisor-ratings of helping the target. Settoon & Mossholder (2002) reported that active perspective taking, via a positive effect on empathic concern, led to both person-focused interpersonal citizenship behavior and task-focused interpersonal citizenship behavior amongst service workers. Axtell, Parker, Holman and Totterdell(2007) found that call centre representatives who reported taking the perspective of their customers were rated by their managers as more likely to help them, such as by being prepared to go above & beyond the call of duty.

There is therefore good evidence to suggest that, when an organizational member actively takes the perspective of another such as a colleague, team member or customer, they will be more

likely to help that target. In some cases, this effect appears to be mediated by empathic concern (e.g., Settoon & Mossholder, 2002), but not in other cases (Axtell, Parker, Holman & Totterdell, 2007). Given that helping another usually engenders positive attitudes such as trust and well-being in the target, a virtuous cycle could arise whereby active perspective taking leads to helping the target, which in turn leads the target to reciprocate by helping the perspective taker, leading to yet greater perspective taking between the parties, more trust, and so on.

Conflict reduction and improved negotiation

As described above, perspective taking can improve the quality of communication, enhance interpersonal problem-solving ability, and lower interpersonal aggression; all of which are likely reduce the potential for conflict. Perspective taking can also change the nature of the conflict. Sessa (1996) argued that, with greater perspective taking, team members will respond to conflict by trying to understand the other person. The conflict will therefore be task-based, which can be less damaging than person-focused conflict. Consistent with this prediction, nursing teams with greater perspective taking were more likely to perceive conflict as task-oriented rather than person-oriented when discussing a case (Sessa, 1996). Person-oriented conflict was more strongly related to negative affect than task-oriented conflict.

Perspective taking can also promote mutually-focused conflict resolution and negotiation. A key element in both conflict resolution and negotiation is a willingness to collaborate to create solutions that meet the needs of all parties (Fisher & Ury, 1999). It is essential to understand the perspective of the other party before one can generate solutions designed to meet the needs of both parties. Corcoran-O'Connell & Mallinckrodt (2000) found that dispositional perspective taking was strongly positively related to having a win-win focused style, and negatively related to having a dominating style. Other researchers have shown that perspective taking promotes a compromising approach to conflict resolution rather than an avoidance or attacking approach (Alexander, 2001) and that couples in conflict show infrequent perspective taking (Sillars,

Roberts, Leonard, & Dun, 2000).

More broadly, perspective taking can improve negotiations, leading to higher joint profits (Kemp & Smith, 1994) and more successful outcomes for the perspective-taker (Neale & Bazerman, 1983). For example, Galinsky & Mussweiler (2001) showed that perspective taking could negate the advantage afforded by making the first offer in a negotiation. These authors suggested that, as well as these positive effects for the perspective taker, the potential benefits of perspective taking could extend to higher joint gain (i.e., win-win's) because it helps to overcome the fixed pie bias (that the other party's interests are opposed to one's own) and could improve the attributional biases that exist in negotiations (Morris, Larrick & Su, 1999). Bazerman (1998) similarly argued that, although often neglected by negotiators, perspective taking promotes communication and trust, which overcomes the inefficient negotiation outcomes predicted by game theory and behavioral decision-theory.

Reduced stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination

Perspective taking can be a powerful way of reducing stereotyping and prejudice, such as in relation to those suffering from AIDS/ HIV and from homelessness (Batson et al., 1997), members of minority racial groups (Finlay & Stephan, 2000), or members of stereotyped groups such as the elderly (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). These effects can be quite long-lasting. For example, observers who took the perspective of a member of a stigmatized group had more benign attitudes toward those individuals several weeks later (Batson, et al., 1997). Moreover, in contrast to a stereotype suppression strategy (which had negative effects on unconscious stereotyping), Galinsky & Moskowitz (2000) showed that perspective taking decreased stereotypic biases on both a conscious task (i.e., writing essays) and a non-conscious task (i.e. a lexical decision task). The authors suggested that, whereas thought suppression is an avoidance-oriented strategy, perspective taking is an outward-focused approach that will increase inter-group contact and result in more positive interactions.

There are many mechanisms by which these effects of perspective taking might occur. Galinsky & Moskowitz (2000) showed that perspective taking reduced stereotyping by changing representations of the stereotyped group to be more self-like (or 'self-other merging'). Stephan & Finlay (1999) suggested that perspective taking might reduce prejudice by lowering perceptions of dissimilarity; leading observers to perceive that they and the other group share a common humanity; or teaching people about the attribution patterns of other groups. Finlay & Stephan (2000) proposed that perspective taking could reduce prejudice via arousing feelings of cognitive dissonance. For example, if one takes the perspective of a member of an outgroup that was previously held in low esteem, this might create a state of cognitive dissonance due to the gap between the individual's perspective taking and their prior negative attitudes. The person might then develop positive attitudes towards the previously disliked outgroup to reduce the dissonance. Finally, perspective taking might simply lead the person to like the target more (Davis et al., 1996). It is not clear which of these possible mechanisms is actually in operation. However it is clear that when an organizational member takes the perspective of an internal target (e.g., colleague) or an external target (e.g., customer), s/he is less likely to engage in stereotyping, prejudice, or discrimination against that target.

Heedful interrelating

Perspective taking may promote heedful interrelating (Weick & Roberts, 1993). Heedful interrelating involves relating in a way that is mindful of the broader system, its interconnections, and one's contributions within that system. When interrelating is not heedful, "attention is focused on the local situation rather than the joint situation... Interrelating becomes careless. Key people and activities are overlooked". Perspective-taking is a way in which individuals understand the meaning that a situation holds for another (Mead, 1934). It is thus one way in which individuals might develop collective mind, or patterns of heedful interrelating, particularly in situations where the context is not shared and individuals must actively imagine another's viewpoint to understand

the wider system.

Heedful interrelating can decrease the likelihood of errors and accidents in high reliability organizations (Weick & Roberts, 1993). Thus, via heedful relating, perspective taking might increase safety. For example, if an engineer designs safety procedures for operators in a way that takes into account their perspective, such as operators' work constraints, this heedful design might result in safety procedures that are more readily adhered to by operators. Huy (1999) made a similar argument in a quite different context - that of organizations developing the ability to achieve radical change. Huy argued that one's ability to understand someone else's feelings evokes behaviors that are heedful of other's feelings, which means others are then more likely to be receptive to one's proposals for change. Likewise, Ford (1996) suggested that framing one's communication of ideas to fit the target's perspective allows the target to interpret their ideas on their own terms, which will increase the probability the idea is accepted.

Emotional regulation

There is emerging evidence that perspective taking can assist with the regulation of emotions in situations where emotional labor is required. Emotional labor refers to the management and regulation of emotions for a wage (Hochschild, 1983). It is particularly common when people are in jobs that require significant interactions with customers. Two key types of emotional regulation strategies have been identified (Gross, 1998): surface acting (or response-focused regulation) and deep acting (or antecedent-focused regulation). Surface acting involves employees regulating their emotional expressions to fulfill their job duty (e.g., pretending to be enthusiastic, suppressing emotions). In contrast, deep acting involves employees regulating their feelings to seem authentic. Perspective taking has been identified as a form of deep acting that involves evaluating or appraising situations differently to change the emotions that they induce, such as by seeing a situation from a customer's view point as a way of reducing feelings of anger towards that person.

Evidence from a time-sampling study in call centers suggests that whereas surface acting in the form of faking emotions was associated with emotional exhaustion, deep acting (including perspective taking) was not associated with this negative outcome (Totterdell & Holman, 2003). Other studies have similarly found detrimental effects on well-being of surface acting and either positive or neutral effects of deep acting (Grandey, 2003). Deep acting, in the form of perspective taking, has also been associated with better service delivery as rated by customers (Grandey, 2003). Drawing practical implications from this research, Larson (2005) recommended deep acting involving perspective taking as an important strategy for physicians to deliver better quality care and for physicians' own mental health.

In a similar vein, Williams (2007) proposed that perspective taking, in the form of considering how others' cognitively appraise an event, is the first step in threat regulation processes. Perspective taking provides information about the other persons' probable emotional reaction to the observers' actions, and thus provides the information necessary to mitigate the threat that others perceive during collaborative interactions. More empathic and responsive action is likely to be evoked from this form of perspective taking. Thus, Williams (2007) suggested that this 'cognitive appraisal' oriented perspective taking is particularly crucial for boundary spanners in collaborative contexts where there can be a lack of trust and high perceived threat.

Higher-level outcomes and enduring capabilities

The intra-individual and interpersonal outcomes outlined above, when aggregated over time and people, can affect higher-level outcomes, and can build more enduring resources and capabilities for both individuals and the organization (see Figure 1).

In relation to higher-level outcomes, consider as an example, perspective taking-induced helping and citizenship. At an aggregated level, previous research has established the positive effects of individual's citizenship behaviors, including helping, on organizational-level outcomes, such as performance quantity, quality, and customer satisfaction (Podsakoff & MacKenzie, 1997).

Likewise, having organizational members that are less prone to stereotyping and prejudice will enhance the likelihood of fair treatment for members of minority groups. Brickson (2000) proposed that greater perspective taking by the majority group will lead to positive outcomes for minority individuals (e.g., self-esteem), which in turn leads to the more effective management of diversity at the organizational level.

Perspective taking is likely to be especially important at higher-levels to the extent that there is a high degree of interdependency. Thus, team working will benefit from perspective taking because it is so dependent on effective inter-relating and communication. For example, coordination to achieve joint goals requires effective communication and planning, such as managing deadlines without destructive conflict and negotiating task allocation in fair ways, each of which can be enhanced by perspective taking. At the organizational level, inter-department team working is becoming increasingly important. The growth in knowledge-intensive firms and lateral organizational forms means that specialist departments need to integrate their work for success (Mohrman, 1993). As Boland and Tenkasi (1995: 358) reported, in such firms, competitive advantage is "a result of collaboration in which diverse individuals are able to appreciate and synergistically utilize their distinctive knowledge through a process of perspective taking". Each of the interpersonal outcomes we discussed above (e.g., improved communication, more helping, reduced stereotyping of out-group members) can contribute to more effective lateral integration.

As well as improving interpersonal processes at higher levels, outcomes such as organizational innovation can potentially be enhanced as a consequence of improved perspective taking between individual members. As Dougherty (1992, p. 195) observed, "innovation requires collective action, or efforts to create shared understandings from disparate perspectives". Dougherty (1992) showed how members of different departments considered different aspects of the product development process to be critical, tended to gloss over the concerns of those from

other departments, and did not appreciate the complexities involved in other roles. Boland & Tenkasi (1995, p. 359) similarly observed, integrating knowledge is more than simply combining or sharing data: "it is a problem of perspective taking in which the unique thought worlds of different communities of knowing are made visible and accessible to others" (p. 359).

Perspective taking can also have consequences beyond a particular time-defined interaction or set of interactions. Thus, if it is sufficiently embedded, perspective taking can build resources and capability. For example, individuals who regularly and routinely engage in perspective taking will probably develop richer social networks. Through actively seeking out others' perspectives when problem-solving, they will also likely increase their divergent thinking and hence be more likely to come up with creative and innovative solutions. Ultimately, individuals who engage in perspective taking will gain greater understanding about the other and their context, essentially developing cognitive complexity (Streufert & Nogami, 1989) and enhancing their capacity for systems thinking.

At the team level, perspective taking can build the shared understanding and team 'mental models' that facilitate effective performance. Thus, as well as explicit co-ordination achieved through communication and planning (as described above), co-ordination can also be implicit, involving team members anticipating the needs and actions of their colleagues and task demands, and dynamically adjusting their own behavior accordingly, without the need to communicate directly with each other or plan the activity (Rico, et al., 2007). Perspective taking is identified as an important process in such implicit co-ordination, in part because it helps to build up a shared and accurate understanding amongst team members regarding their overlapping requirements (referred to as a team situation model). Rico et al., described an example of air traffic controllers who have developed an accurate understanding of each other's mental work load status. They can anticipate and provide the kind of assistance a highly-fatigued team mate will need to complete the task. However, if none of them recognize the fatigue, then errors and poor performance will ensue.

Perspective taking is important in this process of anticipating the other, and over time, repeated perspective taking amongst team members will build more complex, shared, and accurate mental models.

Potential negative outcomes

Perspective taking, of course, is not a panacea. Indeed, we suggest that under some situations, active perspective taking might lead to negative outcomes.

First, one can aim to achieve a better understanding about the target to further one's own ends to the detriment of the other. Frequently, engaging in perspective taking will include a mixture of self-focused and other-focused motives, such as aiming to convey a positive impression (e.g., as a bright, interpersonally-skilled individual) at the same time as genuinely wanting to understand the other. Sometimes, however, the motive might be predominantly self-interest, or the aspect of the other's perspective that is focused on might induce more self-focused responses. For instance, salespeople can use perspective taking to sell products the buyer doesn't really need, and leaders can use it to manipulate colleagues, although such behavior may be due to focusing on aspects of the others' perspective that are less likely to evoke empathic or helping responses, such as 'what is the minimum this person will be satisfied with?'. In the negotiation context, Galinsky & Mussweiler (2001) found that negotiators achieve better outcomes for themselves if they take the perspective of the other party on certain aspects like the lowest price the other is likely to accept; although other negotiation research shows perspective taking leads to better outcomes for both parties. The context is likely to play a role here. For instance, Epley, Caruso and Bazerman (2007) found that in competitive contexts perspective taking tends to focus on the selfish motives of the target, which therefore increases the egoistic behavior of the observer. In collaborative contexts, however, where shared interests are highlighted, more collaborative behavior is induced from perspective taking. In essence, the motives for engaging in perspective taking, or the aspects of the perspective taken, will influence the outcomes of this process.

Second, even if perspective taking is embarked upon with other-focused motives, evidence from the laboratory suggests that negative outcomes can arise. For example, active perspective taking can stimulate preferential treatment towards the target that can conflict with other beliefs such as equity, fairness and justice (Batson, Klein, Highberger, & Shaw, 1995; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). In a similar vein, Batson, Batson, Todd, Brummet, Shaw and Aldeguer (1995) found that perspective taking can result in more resources being given to the target, reducing the overall collective good of the group. Given the importance of processes such as fairness and justice in organizational behavior more generally, and in processes such as performance appraisal, this potential downside of perspective taking is a significant one. At this stage, there is insufficient research to know whether such negative consequences can be overcome, such as by coaching individuals in how to maintain a balance between competing interests.

In some contexts, such as virtual teams, where little information is known about the remote target, even well intentioned perspective taking may make things worse. This is because erroneous conclusions can be made about remote colleagues when based on the limited cues and partial information available at a distance. For instance, Axtell, Parker & Wall, (2007) found that active perspective taking was related to more misunderstandings in virtual teams when the other party's perspective was less accessible (e.g., through less familiarity with what the other party does, or low similarity between the observer and target) or when feedback cues were lower (i.e., low returned attempt by the other party at understanding and helping the observer). Thus active perspective taking may not translate into effective perspective taking in virtual contexts, especially if mechanisms for improving the information available to the observer are lacking.

A further consideration of perspective taking as a strategy to achieve particular outcomes is that its positive effects tend to be focused only on the target (Dovidio, Allen & Schroeder, 1990; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000). Parker and Axtell (2001), for example, found that supplier perspective-taking was predictive of helping those external to the team including suppliers, but did

not generalize to helping their own team members. To a large extent, these findings simply endorse that perspective taking is strongly influenced by the situation, rather than being determined solely by dispositional factors. Nevertheless, these studies have implications for interventions. Interventions that enhance general perspective taking capacity will be needed if employees are to take the perspective of multiple groups.

An intriguing question is whether there is such a thing as too much perspective taking. Can individuals who take on others' perspectives become immobilized or overwhelmed, for example, resulting in them feeling unsure which direction to move since they are aware of so many different view points? Or might actively engaging in perspective taking unrealistically raise targets' expectations that their views will be acted on? These are common response when encouraging managers to engage in greater perspective taking. In essence, managers fear that their objectivity, or their own perspective, will be lost. This is an issue that has been extensively examined in the clinical literature. For example, Mearns and Thorne (1999) discuss the importance of therapists being differentiated enough from their clients that they are able to visit "the troubled world of the client" without staying there. Managers too must be sufficiently differentiated to take another's perspective without losing their own.

Simpson, Orina, and Ickes (2003), in their study of married couples, identified another way in which perspective taking might harm relationships. When actors accurately understood the feelings and thoughts of their partner, and their partner harboured relationship-threatening thoughts and feelings, actors reported feeling less close to their partners. However, when actors were more empathically accurate, and their partners had less threatening feelings, actors experienced post-discussion closeness. As the title of their article suggests, there are times "when accuracy hurts" and times "when it helps", at least in terms of preservation of an existing relationship. However, this is a complex issue: Enhanced perspective taking would presumably be associated not only with understanding that the other holds relationship-threatening feelings, but

also with enhanced understanding of the reasons for those feelings. Furthermore, in both marriages and organisations, one might reasonably argue that the termination of dysfunctional relationships can be a positive rather than a negative.

Summary

In summary, there is good evidence for the positive role of perspective taking in the work place. There are a number of benefits of perspective taking that can, when aggregated over people and time, positively affect and build resources for individuals, dyads, teams, and organizations. Because so much of organizational functioning is based on interactions, conversations and relationships, this list of outcomes could be readily extended; indeed, perspective taking could be seen as the sine qua non of organizations and management. Our goal here was not to identify an exhaustive list of possible outcomes, but to suggest a framework to guide further inquiry in this area. In addition, as we have highlighted, there are potential negative effects and boundary conditions of perspective taking that need to be considered.

There are at least two important consequences of considering perspective taking as a contributor towards these outcomes. First, an alternative way of achieving these outcomes is highlighted. For example, as noted in the case of stereotyping, perspective taking might be much more effective than suppression strategies. Thus, a focus on perspective taking highlight processes for achieving outcomes that are currently not often considered. In particular, because it is possible to enhance individuals' perspective taking (as we elaborate next), this model provides potential levers for effectiveness that might have not yet been considered. For example, much of the research on helping and citizenship behaviors has focused on dispositional predictors, such as conscientiousness, positive affectivity and agreeableness (Organ & Ryan, 1995). The disadvantage of this latter approach is that one can't change one's personality, which limits applicability to practices such as selection and person-job fitting. By focusing on perspective taking, one can identify new work-based strategies to achieve important organizational outcomes.

A second major contribution of our model of outcomes is that it helps to provide alternative theoretical explanations for why the outcomes arise. For example, one study found that task feedback and intrinsically satisfying tasks were positively related to citizenship behaviors, whereas task routinization was negatively related to these behaviors (Podsakoff, & MacKenzie, 1995). Existing theory would point towards lowered morale as the explanation for why these job characteristics were associated with citizenship. However, it could also be that task feedback and enriched tasks prompts greater perspective taking by broadening the employees' outlook (as we suggest shortly), whereas routinized tasks give no scope for perspective taking. In essence, including perspective taking expands our set of explanatory concepts for understanding when important organizational behaviors arise.

There are nevertheless many unanswered questions about specific process and timescales by which these positive effects occur. In particular, most research looking at outcomes has examined active perspective taking as the predictor, rather than effective perspective taking. Rarely have studies considered both variables. Therefore, it is not clear the extent to which active perspective taking needs to be effective in order for the outcome to arise. In some cases and for certain outcomes, it might be enough that the observer tries to take the perspective of the other. For example, the very act of trying to understand another might lead one to feel empathy towards that person, and hence be more likely to help them, an effect well understood in the therapeutic literature. Further, if perspective taking is understood as a dynamic process of listening, inferencing and checking with the other regarding their perspective, then initially inaccurate perspectives can be made progressively more accurate throughout the course of conversation. That said, persistently inaccurate perspective taking is unlikely to enhance a relationship and it seems likely that the more the understanding is accurate, the better the outcome.

A further area of inquiry concerns the circumstances in which perspective taking is most important. As already discussed, perspective taking might be especially important when there is

high interdependence between sub-units, combined with strategic value in coordinating across these sub-units. Likewise, one could anticipate service situations where taking the perspective of the customer is especially critical, such as where repeat business is important for success or when individualized service is part of the competitive advantage. Finally, perspective taking might be especially important (but harder to do) when the view point of the other is masked, such as where virtual team working is prevalent. These possibilities for contextual moderators have yet to be investigated.

We turn now to consider what factors will inhibit or enhance perspective-taking in the work context.

How Might Perspective Taking Be Enhanced at Work? What Inhibits or Derails

Perspective Taking?

Given its potential benefits, one might expect all individuals in the work place to engage in perspective taking all the time. Why don't they? What circumstances prompt people to engage in perspective taking? Does familiarity enhance active perspective taking due to increased liking of the other, or does familiarity breed complacency? Even if one aspires to engage in perspective taking, what barriers to enacting that aspiration might exist? Is there anything one can do within organizations to enhance perspective taking?

All of these questions pertain to the determinants and antecedents of perspective taking. Our goal in this section is to address this issue. We propose a model (see Figure 2) with three key categories of influences on effective perspective taking. The first set of influences concerns factors that affect active perspective taking. The harder an individual tries to take the perspective of another, the more likely they will do so accurately. Thus, we consider what motivates an individual to try to understand the view point of another. Nevertheless, active perspective taking does not automatically translate into effective perspective taking. We propose that active perspective taking is more likely to result in effective perspective taking to the extent that the

observer has the capacity for perspective taking, and to the extent that the demands arising from the situation or the perspective taking task are low. We discuss in turn how to motivate more active perspective taking, how to increase observer capacity, and how to decrease the demands of the perspective and/or the situation.

Enhancing active perspective taking

At least some degree of active perspective taking is necessary for effective perspective taking. For example, an individual might have some understanding of the perspective of a salesperson that comes to the door; not because they are motivated to do so, but because they have worked as a door-to-door sales person in the past and understand some of the difficulties of the position. Nevertheless, they cannot completely understand the salesperson's perspective unless they know how it is for that specific individual in that particular circumstance. Some degree of active perspective taking is thus required to effectively know another's view point, and this active perspective taking requires effort. Motivation focuses attention, produces effort, and results in persistence and task strategies to reach a particular goal (Mitchell & Daniels, 2003). A person who is highly motivated to understand where another is coming from will try harder, will engage in a wider range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral strategies, and will persist longer in order to learn the perspective of another.

We identify the following categories of factors as influencing perspective taking motivation: beliefs and role orientations; affect, mood and emotion; social processes; task and work design, and a co-operative and relational work context. Our focus is on motivational influences that can be changed or enhanced, rather than motivational influences rooted in dispositions.

Beliefs and role orientations

Consider three different managers, each about to engage in restructuring of their department that will significantly affect the roles of departmental employees. Manager A believes

there is little or no need to understand what recipients of the restructuring feel or what they think since the restructuring will go ahead anyway. She believes talking to employees to understand their perspectives would only raise employees' expectations unrealistically. In contrast, Manager B believes it is important to understand the view points of employees so that he can gain employees' acceptance regarding the change, thereby meet his/ her own targets. This manager plans to use the knowledge about employees' perspectives to identify where the change process might be de-railed. Manager C similarly believes in understanding employees' view points, but she does it out of a belief that the best restructuring solution for employee well-being and morale will emerge if their views are considered. Finally, Manager D agrees with Managers B and C that understanding employees' perspectives is important in change management, but she perceives that she already knows her employees' view points as a result of previous change experiences, and thus intends not to apply additional effort to perspective taking.

In the above scenarios, Managers B and C are motivated to engage in active perspective taking because they perceive they currently do not know the perspective of individuals and they believe that the perspective taking will have some value. These managers vary in their specific motives - Manager B is more self-focused than Manager C - but both believe that understanding employees' view points will help them achieve their goals. Manager A does not believe there is any need to understand employees view points, and Manager D does not believe there is any need for active perspective taking because she already knows the view point of the employees. At least two sets of beliefs, therefore, need to intersect to motivate perspective taking. The first, based on expectancy theory and goal setting theory, is the belief that understanding the other will help achieve one's goal or otherwise will be of benefit within the situation. The second, important from an uncertainty reduction perspective, is the belief that one doesn't already know the others' perspective. We discuss these beliefs in turn.

We first consider the importance of a belief that perspective taking is relevant for goal

achievement. For particular roles, such as coaching, mentoring, and work-place counseling, such a belief is likely to be rather uncontentious. Neale & Griffin (2006) identified three sources of behavioral expectations about a role: system requirements (expectations demanded by the organization & reinforced by formal and information sanctions, rewards, and norms), role schemas (behaviors typically exhibited by role holders within the broader society), and one's activated self-concept. In the case of a work-place counselor, for example, it is likely that each of these sources of behavioral expectations converge to engender a strong belief in the value of perspective taking. The professional schema of a counselor is strongly focused on being concerned with others. In regard to self-concept, individuals with a significant concern for the other are likely to embark on this type of profession. The organizational system, including formal role descriptions, training and selection, will also likely reinforce this expectation. Altogether, there is a coherent set of expectations regarding perspective taking. Indeed, given the 'strength' of the role in regard to the requirement for perspective taking, there is likely to be relatively little variation in counselors' motivation to understand the other (although there is likely to be variation in one's capability of understanding the other, as we discuss later). Likewise, even within jobs where the perspective taking requirement is less clear cut, there can be 'strong' situations within the job where perspective taking is clearly relevant and expected, such as a manager who is expected to mediate a dispute between two employees or to listen to a distressed employee.

More interesting from a motivational perspective are the cases where understanding the other is not necessarily a clear role expectation, such as the managers introducing change described above. Thus, the perceived professional schema might, or might not, support the value of a manager engaging in perspective taking (e.g., managers are often portrayed as someone who is decisive and directive); the organizational system might, or might not, support this belief (employee well-being might have little value in the organizational culture); and the belief might, or might not, be compatible with one's own self concept (e.g., some managers might see

themselves as people who know their own mind, with no need to ‘pander’ to subordinates). The resulting variation in role perceptions is likely to influence whether one engages in perspective taking. If an individual doesn’t see perspective taking as relevant to the role, or important for achieving a particular outcome, then they are not likely to exert much effort. For example, Axtell, Parker, Holman and Totterdell (2007) found that having a customer-focused role orientation (perceiving customers’ needs as relevant to one’s job) meant call centre operators were more likely to actively take the perspective of the customer. Likewise, Parker & Axtell (2001) showed that employees with a broad and flexible role orientation, in which they feel ownership for goals beyond their immediate tasks, were more likely to feel empathic concern towards their internal suppliers.

Based on the above, one might alter role perceptions or role orientations by changing the expectations inherent in the organization’s systems, such as by explicitly including perspective taking goals in goal setting/ performance management processes and role descriptions, or by changing the individual’s self-conception of their role. Previous research evidence shows that enriching jobs is one way to promote a broader role orientation (Parker, Wall & Jackson, 1997). Training can also help individuals to learn when and why perspective taking can be valuable and powerful (as well as enhancing skills that enable more effective perspective taking, as we discuss later). For example, transformational leadership training often incorporates exercises to help leaders learn the value of understanding subordinates’ view points. Indeed, at a general level, role plays are frequently about trying to get someone to experience being in another role, and to operate from that perspective.

As well as perceiving perspective taking as relevant to achieving one’s goals, the observer also needs to believe that they don’t already know the other’s perspective; that there is some degree of uncertainty. If a manager is listening to a staff member talking about a situation they

have described many times before, the manager might, perhaps quite legitimately, not want to exert much effort to understanding this person's view point.

One situation where the belief that the other's perspective is already known might be erroneous is where the observer has experienced the same situation. The 'false consensus effect' is one in which the observer assumes others are more similar to themselves than is the case (Ross et al., 1977). This bias occurs because of the ready availability of the observer's own perspective. A common mistake, therefore, is to assume that, because one has had the same experience as the target, they know how the target is thinking and feeling. For example, a manager who dealt with a violent customer many years earlier in their career might assume they know how an employee experiencing a violent customer feels. However this does not take into account what is unique about the 'target's' experience (the customer might have been more violent), nor what is unique about the target (the employee might have been raised in a violent family, triggering distressing memories). A further potential situation in which individuals mistakenly believe they already understand the other's view point could occur when strong stereotypes are activated. Given the costs of mistakenly assuming one knows the perspective of another in critical conversations such as performance appraisal or strategic planning meetings, it would seem appropriate to advocate that as a general rule managers' should seek to actively take the perspective of others.

Affect, mood and emotion

It has become increasingly clear that affect, mood and emotions can have a profound influence on organizational behavior, decision-making, and judgments (Forgas & George, 2001). Positive mood has been shown to enhance helping behavior (George, 1991), to promote a more open, flexible cognitive style in social situations (Forgas, 1999), and to increase the flexibility of decision making, problem solving, and openness to information (e.g., Isen and Baron, 1991). Drawing on this research, Fredrickson's (1998, 2001) broaden-and-build model of positive emotions proposed that positive affect broadens action-thought repertoires, such as creativity,

flexibility, and openness to ideas. Since perspective taking is a broadening process, involving opening oneself up to others' view points, we propose that positive affect will enhance the motivation to engage in perspective taking. Consistent with this idea, Fredrickson argued that interest is a positive emotion that evokes exploratory behavior that is "explicitly and actively aimed at increasing knowledge of and experience with the target of interest" (Fredrickson, 1998, p. 305).

Positive affect might be especially important when seeking to understand a perspective that contains negative information. For example, consider a manager trying to understand why their leadership style is being resisted. Positive affect can enhance the extent to which the manager feels 'up to' hearing some unpalatable view points. Drawing on mood as resource theory, people need emotional and cognitive resources to engage in perspective taking, and positive mood provides information that one's resources are adequate to deal with negative information (Trope & Pomerantz, 1998). If individuals enjoy a level of positive affect and well-being above some threshold, then this means resources are available for self-improvement goals, and one can consider goal relevant information that might involve costs to positive affect (Aspinwall, 1998). However, if self-esteem and one's sense of well-being fall below a certain threshold, self-enhancement and self-defence may outweigh other motives (Tesser et al., 1997; cited in Aspinwall, 1998), with behavior focused on mood-repair and enhancing self-esteem. Under situations of negative affect, therefore, the willingness to open oneself up to other view points is likely to be reduced.

From an organizational perspective, these linkages suggest that where perspective taking is very important, such as resolving an entrenched dispute, efforts to enhance positive affect, such as through humor, might be particularly powerful. However, in doing so, it is important not to diminish the importance of the task. The improved processing effects of positive affect have been shown to occur only if people feel the task is important (see Aspinwall, 1998). Organizational

practices that engender more enduring states of positive affect, such as job enrichment (Parker & Wall, 1998), might be helpful in promoting perspective taking on a day-to-day basis.

Social processes

From a social perspective, what motivates someone to try to take the view point of another? Evidence suggests that liking the target enhances perspective taking (Frantz & Janoff-Bulman, 2000), as does being close to the target (Cialdini et al., 1997) and being interested in them. Regarding the latter, Ickes, Stinson, Bissonette and Garcia (1990) found that empathic accuracy (an indicator of one aspect of perspective taking effectiveness) was positively correlated with the degree to which the observer was interested in the other person. In essence, when an observer feels connected with the target in some way, they are more prepared to put in effort to understand where they are coming from.

The identity of the target in relation to the observer, such as whether the target is part of the in-group, is also an important potential determinant of perspective taking. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986) and social categorization theory (Turner, 1985; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987) propose that, to maintain self-esteem and reduce uncertainty, individuals identify strongly with those in the same social category (e.g., same age, race, gender, work group) and make more favorable judgements about them, see them as more similar to one's self, and become more attached to them. One would expect, therefore, that individuals are more motivated to understand the view point of members of the in-group. Consistent with such a proposition, out-group members are seen as less trustworthy and less cooperative (Tajfel, 1982), and there is more cohesion, cooperation, and empathy between members of the in-group (Hogg & Terry, 2000). Sturmer, Snyder and Omoto (2005) showed that shared group membership promotes feelings of empathy and subsequent helping.

The main implication for organizations arising from these studies is that efforts to engage in perspective taking will be least prevalent in situations where targets are not liked, or are

perceived to be members of out-groups. Yet this is perhaps when perspective taking has most value. As Frantz & Janoff-Bulman (2000, p. 40) observed, "In precisely the situations when balanced perspective taking is most needed, it is most difficult...". In such situations, breaking down stereotypes via interacting with out-group members outside of their usual sphere might be a powerful circuit-breaker. An example of such a process was reported to one of the authors. A change manager working in a heavily-unionized company described how his perspective of an employee was altered after interacting more closely with this person outside of the typical work context. Relations were poor between the management and unions in the organization due to a prolonged period of a very difficult industrial situation. In an effort to improve relations, the change manager invited two union delegates to join him in a two day off site workshop. One of the union delegates had been described to the change manager as a 'blockhead'. The change manager described how, as a result of a long car journey to the off-site venue, he discovered that the union representative was a highly successful district commander for Scouts. He also discovered they had many common outside work interests, such as sport and children. Largely as a result of this more informal and social contact with the union representative, the change manager developed a fuller understanding of the view point of the union delegate that went well beyond the stereotype he had previously relied on.

Other social processes are also likely to affect perspective taking motivation. For example, an observer may be more motivated to understand the perspective of a powerful stakeholder than a subordinate because of the importance for one's career of developing a good relationship with this high status individual. The powerful, however, may be less likely to take the perspective of others (Galinsky, Magee, Inesi & Gruenfeld, 2006). Indeed, perspective taking requirements might even characterize power. As suggested by Fletcher (2007, p. 361), "in systems of unequal power, what marks you as more powerful is the entitlement of having others anticipate your needs and respond to them without being asked; what marks you as less powerful is being required to do the

anticipating and accommodation without any expectation of reciprocity”. Reciprocity itself has been found to be related to the perspective taking effort exerted by call center agents in relation to customers (Axtell, Parker, Holman & Totterdell, 2007). Those customers who reciprocated the agents’ efforts by being pleasant and courteous were likely to receive greater perspective taking effort from the agent.

The length of the relationship is also likely to influence perspective taking motivation, although further research is needed to test the direction of these influences. On the one hand, longer-term relationships involve a shared history and hence are likely to be valued more highly, thus motivating perspective taking. There is evidence that individuals are more accurate in their understanding of friends’ perspectives relative to strangers (Stinson & Ickes, 1992), which might reflect a greater motivation (as well as greater capacity, see later). On the other hand, Bissonnette, Rusbult, & Kilpatrick (1997) found that accurate perspective taking of couples was related to their conflict resolution in the first year of marriage, but these relationships did not hold one year later. They suggested that perhaps as one’s marriage becomes more stable, one’s motivation to engage in active perspective taking so as to prevent conflicts is reduced.

Perspective taking might also be motivated by an anticipated future of the relationship. For example, in service contexts ongoing “service relationships” are distinguished from short-term “service encounters” (Gutek, Bhappu, Liao-Troth, & Cherry, 1999). Groth, Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (in press) proposed that surface acting (e.g., faking emotions) is more likely in service encounters and deep acting, of which perspective taking is a core strategy, is more likely in service relationships because these relationships are on-going, and as such, there is more motivation to make them successful.

Task and work design

The way that tasks and jobs are structured is typically considered an important motivational force in organizations because certain job characteristics, such as high levels of job autonomy, are

intrinsically motivating. As indicated earlier, job enrichment has been shown to increase positive affect (Parker & Wall, 1998) and to promote more flexible role orientations (Parker et al., 1997); with both of these outcomes expected to increase active perspective taking. Work redesign in the form of team working might also enhance perspective taking within teams by creating new social boundaries and new 'in-groups'.

A further and more specific motivational consequence of work design arises from the fact that it can change the interdependencies and the requirement for co-operation between individuals. For example, members of self-managing teams have shared accountability for team-level outcomes. Active perspective taking is more likely if there is high outcome dependency between the observer and the target. First, if the observer and target are interdependent and reliant on each other to complete their work, then they are less likely to rely on stereotypic information when forming impressions and more likely to engage in active processing, such as perspective taking (Neuberg & Fiske, 1987). Second, high levels of outcome dependency imply the need for co-operation. Studies of children's development have shown that, through having to listen to each other and explain their own position, co-operation enhances understanding of each other's perspectives (Piaget, 1932; Carpendale, 2000). Thus some forms of work design can increase the motivation of individuals to try and see the view point of those because the others' outcomes are more closely tied up with their own. In a similar way, designing jobs so that there is contact with the beneficiaries of the work (e.g., Grant, in press) can increase an individual's understanding that their work is making a prosocial difference. This, in turn, is likely to motivate further perspective taking towards the beneficiaries.

Finally, the level of task demands in the jobs could interfere with one's motivation to engage in perspective taking. If a manager is under severe time pressure, for example, their willingness to carefully attend to the perspective of a subordinate is likely to be curtailed.

Co-operative and relational work context

Brickson (2000) suggested the importance for perspective taking, and hence fair treatment of minorities, of having a 'relational identity orientation', that is, where individuals are motivated to obtain benefit for the other, conceive of themselves primarily in terms of their roles in relation to others, and evaluate themselves according to how well they perform interpersonal roles. A relational identity orientation contrasts to a personal identity orientation (i.e., involving self-interest motives) or a collective identity orientation (i.e. involving group-focused motives). Work places vary in the extent to which norms and cultural values emphasize co-operation rather than competition, and in the extent to which they facilitate a relational orientation (Brickson, 2000). For example, reward structures can act against individuals working collaboratively together, or they can support relational working (e.g., including the level of support provided to others as a performance criteria).

Baker & Dutton (2007) similarly identified six practices that promote positive social capital that are likely to be relevant for motivating perspective taking: selecting based on relational skills & participatory selection practices, relational socialization practices, rewarding for relational skills, using group incentives, relational meeting practices, and using collaborative technologies. Very little research has investigated how such practices might motivate individual's motivation to engage in perspective taking, but it is an area that is ripe for enquiry.

Enhancing perspective taking effectiveness

Even if an observer is motivated to understand another's perspective, there is no guarantee that they will accurately or comprehensively understand the other's view point. We suggest that the observer's capacity for perspective taking, and the demands of the perspective and the situation, influence how successfully the act of perspective taking leads to actual understanding. We discuss these dimensions in turn.

Factors that affect the perspective taker's capacity

As described earlier, active perspective taking is an effortful cognitive process that is often accompanied by emotional regulation and interpersonal behaviors. The greater the cognitive, emotional and interpersonal resources that the observer has available to engage in perspective taking - that is, the greater their perspective taking capacity - the more likely the observer will be able to accurately and comprehensively see the other's view point. The availability of resources will be influenced by stable attributes of the observer, such as their cognitive ability, as well as by variables such as the observer's knowledge about the target and situation and the observer's affective state.

One potentially important influence on capacity is cognitive complexity, or the ability to differentiate aspects of a stimulus and identify complex connections amongst the differentiated aspects. Cognitive complexity has been linked to dispositional perspective-taking (Alcorn & Torney, 1983; Lutwak & Hennessy, 1982). In a similar vein, perspective taking has been reliably linked to emotional awareness (i.e., the degree to which individuals notice and think about their feelings; Davies, Stankov and Roberts, 1998) and emotional regulation abilities, such as being able to regulate and control one's emotions (Eisenberg et al., 1994; Eisenberg & Okun, 1996; Labouvie-Vief, 2003; Okun et al., 2000). Evidence also suggests that self-esteem might be important in enhancing the effectiveness of active perspective taking. Galinsky & Ku (2004) proposed that, through a process of self-other merging, when perspective-takers feel positively about themselves, they are more likely to apply this positive self-concept to out-group members. Consistent with their reasoning, these researchers found that perspective taking only reduced prejudice when the perspective-taker also had high self-esteem.

The different cognitive and interpersonal strategies and styles that people use to uncover, or understand, another's perspective might also vary in their effectiveness. For example, Galinsky & Moskowitz (2000) found that asking participants to describe a day in the life of an out-group

member from an out-group member's perspective was more effective for reducing favoritism of the in-group than describing ways in which the in-group and out-group member were similar or describing a time when the participant behaved similarly to an out-group member. Mendoza (1997; cited in Gehlbach, 2004) found some evidence that imagining how the other was feeling was more effective than asking them to imagine the other person's situation, and Oswald (1996) found that perspective taking focused on feelings led to more helping than perspective taking focused on thoughts.

In addition, interpersonal behaviors and styles will also influence how the target responds, which will in turn influence perspective taking effectiveness. If the observer is someone who engages with people in a way that encourages them to feel safe and share their perspective, then they are likely to generate more information needed for accurate perspective taking. Silvester et al., (2007), for example, found that physicians who engaged in open and reassuring communication behaviors were more likely to generate a feeling of empathy amongst their patients. A great deal of research in clinical settings has investigated the types of behaviors most conducive to promoting effective perspective taking and empathy.

One's knowledge and understanding relevant to the specific target and their context will also play a role in enhancing perspective taking effectiveness. If the observer already has a deep knowledge of the job or familiarity with the context, fewer resources are required to understand the target, once they seek to do so. Consistent with this idea, Parker & Axtell (2001) found that employees' understanding of how their job relates to the bigger picture within the organization was positively related to understanding the perspective of internal suppliers. Similarly, Ickes et al., (1990) reported a study in which male friends were more accurate at reading each other's thoughts and feelings than male strangers, and Marangoni, Garcia, Ickes and Teng, (1995) found that target familiarity enhanced the accuracy with which one understood another's perspective.

An obvious way in the work place to acquire greater knowledge of understanding of the

target and their context is through more exposure and interaction with the target, thereby increasing the opportunity for the motivated observer to learn about the target's background, personality, and situation. For instance, to increase perspective taking across departmental boundaries, lateral integration devices, such as visiting schemes, secondments, co-location, integrator management roles, and task forces (Mohrman, 1993) are likely to be important practices. Shadowing employees from other functional departments, for example, can increase the observer's understanding of the target and their context, such as by extending their knowledge of the constraints under which the target works or seeing the difficult problems they need to deal with. Shadowing might also have other benefits, such as increasing one's personal liking of the other, thereby motivating further active perspective taking.

The observer's affective state might not only affect one's motivation to engage in active perspective taking, as we suggested earlier, but also their capacity to do so. Positive affect can improve self-regulatory processes, enabling individuals to more thoroughly process information, including negative information. Negative affect, in contrast, can reduce perspective taking capacity. A recent meta analysis showed that individuals experiencing negative affect (depression, anxiety, negative mood) are more self-focused (Mor & Winquist, 2002), which suggests more cognitive resources will be required to put aside one's own view point. Evidence also suggests that threat-related emotional states impair regulatory capacities, and lead individuals to make decisions based on short-term outcomes regardless of long-term consequences (Gray, 1999).

Factors that affect the demands of the perspective taking task and situation

The final category of variables we consider concerns the level of cognitive, emotional and interpersonal demands that occur as a result of the perspective taking task and/or the situation. These demands will be affected by attributes of the perspective taking task that are quite independent of the observer, such as the inherent complexity of the perspective and its accessibility, as well as by factors that increase demands on the particular observer, such as

personally confronting view points that require more effort from the observer to process than might otherwise be the case.

One of the key influences here is the accessibility of the perspective. Accessible perspectives require less inference, such as if the perspective is based on physical location (e.g., what the target can see) rather than based on the target's values or membership of a social category. For example, if one is trying to understand how someone might perceive a particular situation based on the location of their office, this is more readily observable than trying to understand how one might perceive a situation on the basis of them being from a different culture.

The extent of inference required will also depend on the target, and their willingness and/or ability to convey their perspective in a way that is least threatening for the observer. The perspective of a highly expressive and open person is likely to be more accessible than that of a very shy individual, or one who is skilled at hiding their feelings (Gehlbach, 2004). Regarding the latter, for example, in some situations, targets might deliberately misrepresent their real thoughts or feelings. An employee asked to give their view to a manager about a proposed change program might tell the manager what they want to hear, rather than disclose their own view point, in order to protect their job security. Some targets will simply be more effective at putting across their view point; being better at sharing, and indeed customizing, their own reality, skills, and knowledge to make it accessible to others (Fletcher, 2007). The target's attributes and behavior can therefore obscure, or enhance, the availability of their perspective.

In some cases, accessibility will be reduced because of a simple lack of exposure to the perspective. For example, a customer service representative might be willing to understand dissatisfied customers' view points, but might get little access to their perspectives because all complaints are dealt with by the supervisor or the complaints department. On the other hand, the perspective of the CEO might be more accessible than that of others in the organization because this person's views are widely disseminated via formal and informal information systems, such as

through strategy documents, speeches, and meetings.

Given the importance of accessibility, one relatively straightforward way to enhance perspective taking effectiveness is to increase interaction between the observer and the target. If a motivated observer has more opportunity to interact with the target, this will facilitate better understanding through increased accessibility to the other's perspective. For instance, Parker & Axtell (2001) found that employees' close interaction with the target (i.e., being on the same improvement team, visiting the supplier's work area, and communication with suppliers) enhanced empathic concern. We noted above some ways of enhancing interaction, such as shadowing and integrator roles. Yet another way of enhancing interaction between observers and targets is through job redesign, such as implementing self-managing work teams with employees from different functions working collectively, or forming cross-disciplinary project teams with joint goals. An advantage of these types of work redesign is that they build expanded interaction requirements into an individual's role, which can mean that the interaction is more readily sustained than lateral integration methods such as quality improvement groups. Dougherty (1992) suggested that, even with interactive structures such as task forces and boundary spanners, if roles are narrow and relationships limited, then perspective taking between members of different departments will be constrained.

The accessibility of a perspective, and hence its associated demands, will also be affected by the medium of communication, such as whether the interaction is face to face or computer-mediated. Distributed workers relying on virtual methods of communication can have more difficulty successfully understanding others' perspectives because of the constraints of the media (Brennan, 1998), reduced contextual cues (Cramton, Orvis & Wilson, in press), and lowered mutual knowledge (Cramton, 2001). For example, Hinds (2000) showed that distributed colleagues had less overlap of mental models than those who were co-located, and this was largely because they did not discuss the context within which they were working, nor did they try to

understand their teammates' work context even when they were using very different technologies to do their tasks. This suggests the good sense of strategies to improve contextual knowledge of ones' virtual colleagues, such as arranging for visits to their work place or explicitly sharing and attending to contextual information during virtual meetings.

Some perspectives will inherently be more complex than others, and therefore require more resources to process. Wood (1986) defined task complexity as resulting from the component complexity (the number of acts that need to be executed & number of information cues to be processed), co-ordinative complexity (the nature of relationships between task inputs and task products, including form, strength & sequencing); and dynamic complexity (adaptation required to changes during performance of a task). The complexity of one's view point could be analyzed in a similar way. A complex view point is one in which there are many different elements of the perspective, with complex relationships between elements of the perspective, and changes in the perspective as the situation or the dialogue changes.

The emotional or moral content of the perspective can also increase the demands required to understand it. As noted above, people will find some views particularly incompatible with their own value systems or beliefs, which will mean greater resources are required to understand the other. Perspective taking tasks that have a moral content are predicted to be more cognitively complex, and therefore more difficult to process than tasks without a moral dimension (Gehlbach (2004). Evidence shows that it is harder to assimilate information that does not fit with one's expectations (Bartlett, 1968). The type of feelings one is trying to understand can also influence perspective taking effectiveness. Duan (2000) found that more positive attributions were made about a target when the target was sad than when the target was happy, perhaps because perspective-taking of people in distress is morally expected, whereas participants experienced more empathy when the target was happy than when they were sad, perhaps because of mood contagion. Emotions such as anger might also be more demanding of resources for effective

perspective taking. Anger can be threatening to an observer, which according to the threat rigidity hypothesis (Staw, Sandelands & Dutton, 1981), will engender rigid responses. When the target is experiencing a strong emotion, this might be more likely to spill over through a process of emotional contagion and affect the emotional state of the observer. As described earlier, negative emotions as experienced by the observer make perspective taking less likely and more difficult. In addition, Ickes & Simpson's (1997) empathic accuracy model predicts that a perceiver's empathic accuracy will be influenced by the degree to which the perceiver feels threatened by the consequences that would likely result from accurately inferring the partner's thoughts and feelings.

Finally, the demands present in the work context will also influence perspective taking effectiveness. Active perspective taking requires cognitive effort, so factors that reduce the cognitive resources available to the observer, such as time pressure, work load, and distractions, will lower the likelihood that active perspective taking leads to actual understanding. Horton & Keysar (1996) showed that perspective taking in a communication task was reduced when participants were under time pressure, and Roßnagel (2000) found that increased cognitive load led to communication that was not adapted to the target's perspective. Totterdell & Holman (2003), who found that perspective taking was greater when customers were pleasant, speculated that pleasant customers might produce a more harmonious working environment that reduces competing cognitive demands, and thereby leaves more resources available for emotion regulation.

An obvious implication for organizations of the above is that, if perspective taking is important, the situation needs to be conducive for this act. In many call centers, for example, there is tremendous time pressure for service representatives to answer calls quickly. Indeed the number of calls answered is typically the main performance indicator. Such high levels of time pressure are likely to reduce customer service representatives' available resources for perspective taking

(and indeed their motivation to do so), which in turn will significantly impair service quality. This could create a negative spiral in which a lack of perspective taking by service agents leads to angry or rude customers, which further reduces agents' perspective taking capacity, and so on.

Summary

We have proposed three categories of variables that together influence perspective taking effectiveness. These include: factors that motivate active perspective taking, factors that affect the observer's capacity for perspective taking, and factors that influence the demands of the perspective taking task or situation. Each of these categories of variables can be influenced by work practices and processes. For example, we proposed that work design can enhance perspective taking effectiveness via multiple pathways, including generating positive affect, promoting flexible role orientations, changing social boundaries (and hence creating new in-groups), and building new interaction patterns into daily activities. Interestingly, it is even possible that work design might affect cognitive complexity, which we identified as a relatively stable observer attribute that can increase an observer's perspective taking ability. Thus, Kohn and Schooler (1978) showed that enriched and complex jobs increased employees' intellectual flexibility (which is similar to cognitive complexity) over a 10-year period. A compelling, but speculative, prospect is that enriched work design might enhance perspective taking over the long-term by increasing an observer's cognitive complexity.

It is important to note that our model suggests that, whilst factors such as interaction with an individual can increase perspective taking effectiveness through enhancing perspective taking capacity or reducing perspective taking demands, the opportunity for greater interaction alone is unlikely to be sufficient. Our model suggests that interaction must co-occur with the motivated goal of trying to take the others' perspective, or active perspective taking. A recent study supports this idea. For example, consistent with a large body of research showing that people tend to be insensitive to the effect of social situations on others, Moore (2005) found that participants in a

negotiation experiment tended to overlook how a deadline would affect others, focusing only on how it affected themselves. This egocentric bias was not mitigated by the person interacting with the other party, nor by them being in the same situation. However, a simple perspective taking manipulation in which participants were asked to put themselves in the shoes of the other person reduced the myopia of predictions. Thus, it is active perspective taking, in conjunction with low perspective taking demands and high perspective taking capacity, which is most likely to lead to positive outcomes.

Discussion

Despite evidence that it can lead to important outcomes, perspective taking in organizations has had relatively little attention. In this chapter, we argued that by focusing on perspective taking, one can identify new ways to achieve important work place outcomes. Our review of perspective taking and its application to the work context has three major contributions. First it clearly distinguishes the act of perspective taking from the effectiveness of that act; something rarely attempted in the literature. This is important because the effects of perspective taking might be being systematically under-estimated in the literature because most research focuses only on active perspective taking, regardless of its effectiveness. Second, the chapter summarized a variety of positive organizational outcomes that are potentially associated with enhanced perspective taking. We distinguished outcomes at different levels, and suggested that perspective taking not only affects momentary interactions but can also build capabilities for individuals and organizations. We also warned that negative outcomes can arise in some situations. Finally, our model extrapolated from research in other domains to create a novel framework for understanding perspective taking antecedents in organizations.

Here we consider implications of our review and proposed model, some of the limitations, and the key avenues for further research.

Practical and theoretical implications

The key implication for organizations of this analysis lies in how the perspective taking process can potentially enhance individual, team, and organizational effectiveness. As we have described earlier, there is solid evidence from research in other domains that perspective taking can lead to increased helping, conflict prevention and resolution, and reduced stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination. There is every reason to believe that these findings will apply in the organizational context, and indeed there is already evidence that perspective taking enhances helping at work. In addition, as well as these well-established outcomes of perspective taking, we identified several further important organizational outcomes that are potentially enhanced via perspective taking, such as heedful relating, the ability to achieve radical change (Huy, 1999); trust between partners (Williams, 2002), transformational leadership (Trevino, 1992); and interdisciplinary innovation (Dougherty, 1992; Boland & Tenkasi, 1995).

All of this suggests that, if it is possible to influence the perspective taking process within organizations, then it will be possible to intervene to enhance important outcomes within organizations. We discussed how one might change work contexts to increase one's motivation for active perspective taking, as well as increasing one's capability for effective perspective taking or reducing the demands associated with the perspective taking task or situation. Example interventions include increasing interaction between relevant parties, reducing time pressure when service quality is important, and restructuring the work design to increase task interdependence. Because active perspective taking is enhanced by beliefs about this process, and because its effectiveness is increased with emotional and interpersonal capabilities (e.g., active listening), training is another potential strategy. Marangoni et al., (1995) found that it was possible to enhance individuals' empathic accuracy by providing them with feedback. Such class-based training might be particularly useful if it involves interaction with targets, thereby providing opportunities for increased familiarity, liking, feeling part of the same in-group, and so on, and if

it includes exercises to bring the tacit differences in perspectives to conscious awareness (Dougherty, 1992). All together, there are many exciting avenues for promoting perspective taking in organizations, most of which had thus far had limited attention.

Theoretically, there are several ways that incorporating ideas of perspective taking expands our understanding of organizational phenomena. First, it provides an alternative lens through which to view several of the outcomes we reviewed. For example, considering the role of perspective taking in promoting citizenship behavior in the work place provides a deeper insight than existing theories into the conditions under which these behaviors might be stimulated.

Second, considering the perspective taking process complements, and adds to, existing theories of social relationships. For example, social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) proposes that individuals voluntarily provide extrinsic or intrinsic benefits to another, invoking an obligation of the other party to reciprocate by providing a benefit in return. Perspective taking theory recognizes that exchanges such as helping might occur, not just because individuals expect reciprocation, but also because they can understand the perspective of the target. Thus it incorporates other-focused motives into our understanding of exchanges. Similarly, considering perspective taking can enhance the major inter-group relations theories. For example, the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) proposes that inter-group attitudes can be improved via contact between members of different groups. Although much research supports this hypothesis (see Johnson, Johnson, & Maruyama, 1984, for a review), it has been criticized because more and more pre-conditions for contact leading to better relations have been introduced (Brickson, 2000). Our proposed framework provides a more systematic articulation as to when and how contact might lead to more positive relations. The same argument applies to the similarity attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971), which suggests that we are attracted to people that are similar to ourselves, and that this attraction leads to increased interaction with, and more positive evaluation of, these targets. Our model identified several additional attributes of the target, observer, context, and perspective that can

influence the process over and above similarity.

Finally, we suggest that bringing the concept into the organizational domain will enhance the theory of perspective taking. For example, most social experimental perspective taking research has focused on distressed targets that need help. In organizations, there are many different situations that are appropriate for perspective taking (e.g., team working, serving customers, interdisciplinary project meetings), and targets in these situations will experience a range of emotions (e.g., anger, disappointment, injustice, helplessness). To a greater extent than in experimental or clinical contexts, members of organizations might be expected to take the perspective of multiple targets simultaneously, and these perspectives can be conflicting. In organizations, there are also many competing demands that can drain cognitive and emotional resources for perspective taking. Motivation for perspective taking has received less attention than one would expect, and this is probably because, in the clinical context, perspective taking is an expected part of one's role. The primary emphasis therefore has been on enhancing perspective taking capability, as well as the process by which one communicates one's understanding of the perspective to the other. In the social context, participants are given instructions to take the perspective of the other, so again, understanding what drives one's motivation for perspective taking has not had much attention. In contrast, within organizations, one cannot assume a motivation to engage in perspective taking. It might not be an expected or even desired part of one's organizational role. The proposed ways in which perspective taking motivation might be enhanced represents a relatively new area of inquiry in mainstream organizational psychology. Organizations are also multi-level phenomena (Klein, Tosi, & Cannella, 1999), which means extending existing ideas beyond the individual-level focus. The specific bottom-up processes by which individual-level outcomes translate into higher level outcomes, as well as the top down processes by which organizational variables (e.g., culture, structure) influence individual perspective taking, are issues unique to the organizational context.

Future research directions

We propose three priority research directions. The first is a straightforward requirement for more empirical tests of the model proposed in this chapter. The effect of perspective taking on individual-level and higher-level work outcomes needs systematic inquiry, including the possibility of negative consequences or boundary conditions. The model of antecedents that we have proposed also needs testing. We identified several factors, based on past research, that are likely to influence the willingness to try and see another's view point or the effectiveness of efforts to do so. However, there is little empirical evidence concerning the relative importance of these factors within organizations, or how they interact with, and influence each other. For example, if the observer's capacity for perspective taking is high, does this influence their motivation to engage in active perspective taking? And exactly how do active perspective taking, the capacity of the perspective taking, and the demands of the situation come together to influence effectiveness? Finally, we proposed the value of distinguishing between active perspective taking and perspective taking effectiveness, as the act of perspective taking may not always result in an accurate or comprehensive appreciation of the other's viewpoint. We have suggested that more research is needed to identify whether it is the act of perspective taking that is the critical influence on outcomes, or the effectiveness of the act.

Second, there are many ways the current propositions can be developed and expanded. For example, there has been little attention to potential moderators of the relationship between perspective taking and outcomes, nor has much work considered how long the effects of perspective taking last or whether they are dynamic effects. For example, observer perspective taking is likely to lead to reciprocation by the target, which could create a positive dynamic spiral. The processes underlying the relationships also have yet to be clarified. For example, it is unclear whether the effects of perspective taking on helping are necessarily mediated through affective reactions like empathic concern, as proposed by Coke, et al., (1978). For instance, Underwood and

Moore's (1982) meta-analysis did not support empathic concern as a mediator, but Eisenberg & Miller's (1987) review did. Similarly, Betancourt (1990) showed that perspective taking affected helping via both an affective path (i.e. arousing empathic concern) and a cognitive path (changed attributions); whereas other researchers recently showed that the link between perspective taking and helping was mediated by 'oneness' (i.e., merged identity with the victim) and negative affect, rather than empathic concern (Maner, Luce, Neuberg, Cialdini, Brown and Sagarin, 2002). We hope that our clear distinguishing of perspective taking (active and effective) from empathic concern and other cognitive-affective responses will enable such questions to be more readily addressed.

Third, we have given little attention to how individuals convey to others that they understand their perspective. Our definition of effective perspective taking focused on what the observer understood and experienced. An extension of this approach is to consider the perceptions of the person who is being empathized with (Hakansson & Montgomery, 2003), thus focusing not on effective perspective taking per se, but how that understanding and/or concern is communicated and demonstrated to the target (Davis, 1996). This approach has been investigated within the medical context (Byland & Makoul, 2005; Silvester, Patterson, Koczwara, & Ferguson, 2007). Silvester et al., (2007), for example, found that physician's who attribute patient outcomes to causes that were stable, internal, and controllable to themselves then engaged in more open and reassuring communication styles, which in turn related to patients' judgments of feeling understood. Ultimately, for perspective taking to have its most powerful impact on others, one not only needs to understand the view point, which has been our focus in this article, but also to effectively convey and demonstrate this understanding to the other.

Conclusion

Perspective taking is a fundamental human process that influences all meaningful human interaction. It has had much attention in domains such as children's development, psychotherapy,

and social psychology; yet it has been relatively neglected in the organizational sphere. We have argued that leveraging existing understanding of perspective taking, as well as extending this understanding, can ultimately engender a more effective work place. We hope our review and proposed models will help organizational researchers to take up this challenge.

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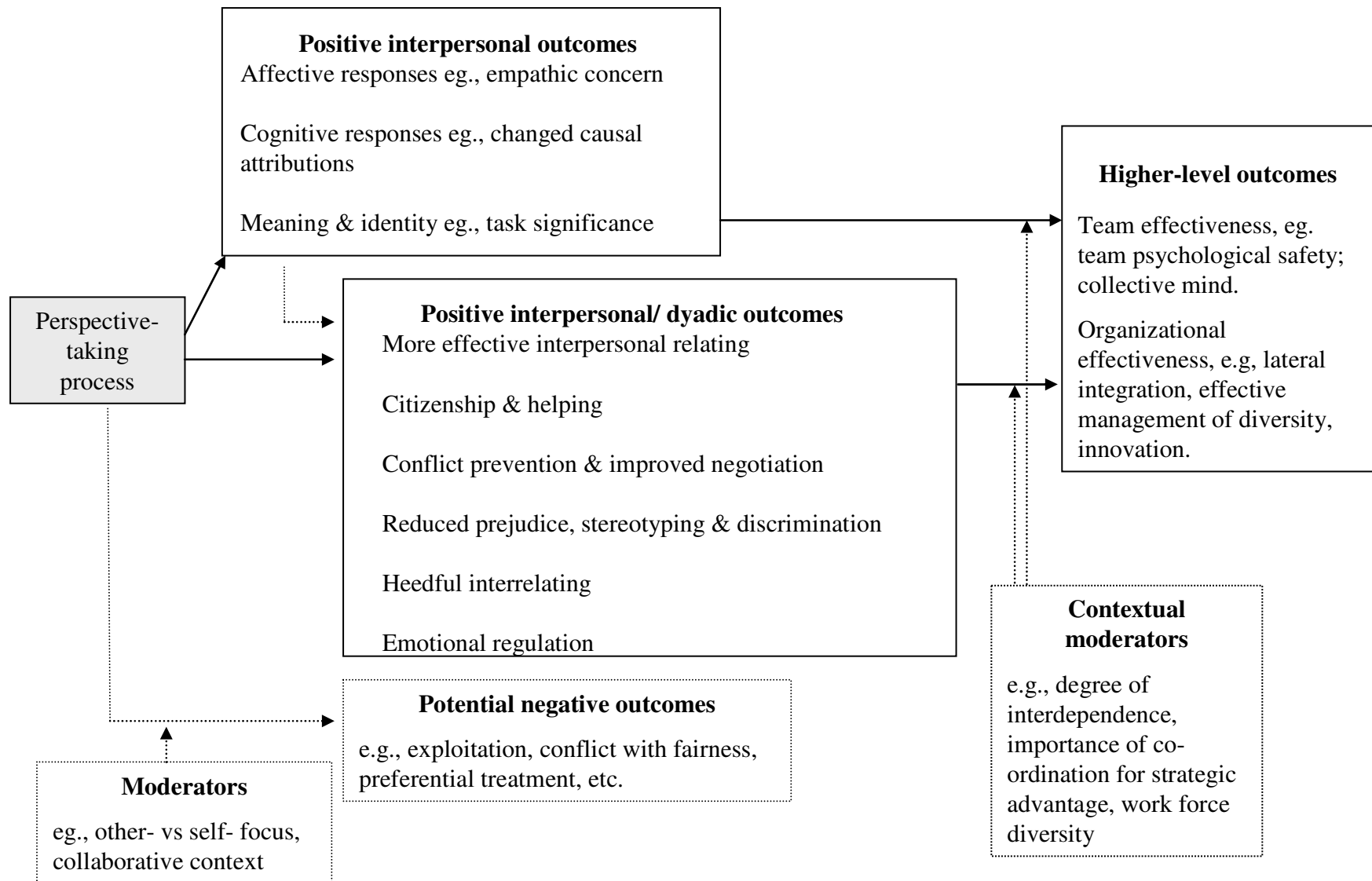


Figure 1. Model of outcomes of perspective taking. Dotted lines indicate more speculative pathways.

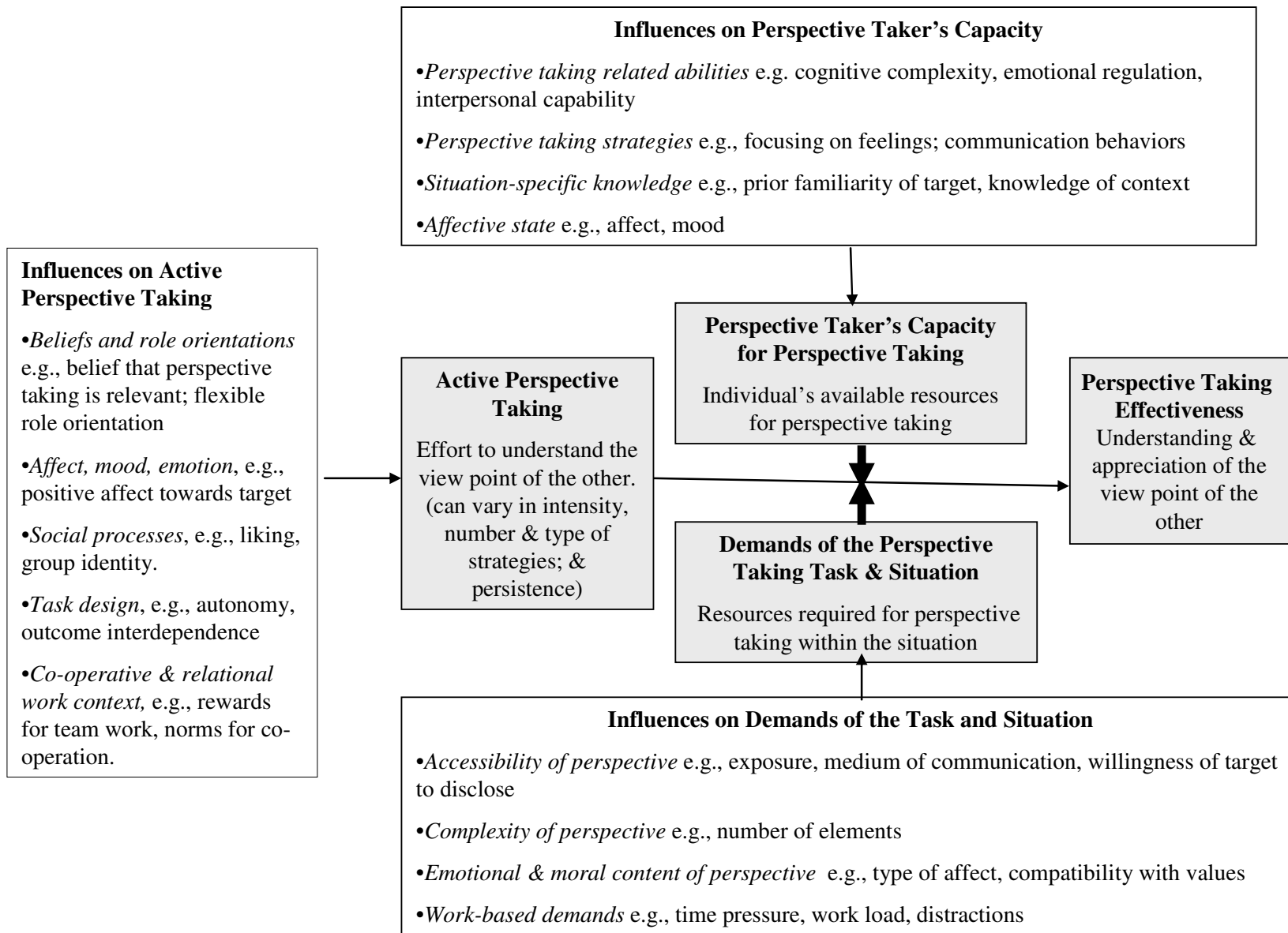


Figure 2. A model of work-based influences on perspective taking effectiveness