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Perspective Taking

Building Positive Interpersonal Connections and Trustworthiness One Interaction at a Time

Michele Williams
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Abstract

There is growing interest in the role of perspective taking in organizations. Perspective taking has been linked to enhanced interpersonal understanding and the strengthening of social bonds. In this chapter,

I integrate research from sociology, communications, and psychology to provide insight into why, when, and how perspective taking facilitates the relational resources of positive connections and trustworthy actions. I introduce the importance of a three-dimensional view of perspective taking for building relational resources and present data validating this conceptualization. I conclude with directions for future research.

Keywords: Perspective taking, survey scale development, trust, trustworthiness, empathic concern, interpersonal connection

There is growing interest and debate surrounding the role of perspective taking in social interactions and organizational life. In this chapter, I examine the central role of perspective taking in building two relational resources: positive connections and trustworthy actions. Whereas some researchers focus on the ability of perspective taking to elicit empathy, concern, and cooperative behavior (Batson, Turk, Shaw & Klein, 1995; Parker & Axtell, 2001; Parker, Atkins, & Axtell, 2008), others focus on the strategic impact of perspective taking (Epley, Caruso, & Bazerman, 2006; Galinsky & Mussweiler, 2001; Galinsky, Maddux, Gilin, & White, 2008). I build on both streams by examining work that connects perspective taking to cooperative behavior and by delineating how the proactive or strategic aspects of perspective taking can also generate relational resources.

Perspective taking refers to the process of “imagining another person’s thoughts or feeling from that person’s point of view” (Davis, 1996; Mead, 1934). The topic of perspective taking is relevant to positive organizational scholarship (POS) because perspective taking can be considered a virtuous process.

Perspective taking not only requires discretionary cognitive and emotional effort, it paves the way for kind, understanding, compassionate actions— actions which Park and Peterson (2003) assert are related to the virtue of love (or, in the organizational context, befriending others).

Because the implications of perspective taking for interpersonal interactions have been examined by scholars in sociology, communications, and psychology (Davis, 1996; Epley et al., 2006; Galinsky et al., 2008; Krauss & Fussell, 1991; Mead, 1934), I take an interdisciplinary approach to perspective taking. Integrating the research from these disciplines provides insight into why, when, and how perspective taking facilitates the virtue of befriending others.

This chapter is organized as follows. First, I review literature that suggests that perspective taking fosters the relational resources of positive interpersonal connections and trustworthy actions. I then argue that a three-dimensional view of perspective taking, one which includes cognitive, affective, and appraisal-related perspective taking, is important for understanding the link between perspective taking and relational resources. Next, I present data validating the proposed subdimensions of perspective taking and conclude with directions for future research.

Perspective Taking and Positive Interpersonal Connections

Perspective taking builds positive connections in several ways. It facilitates interpersonal understanding, strengthens social bonds, and elicits compassionate behavior (Williams, 2008).

Perspective Taking and Interpersonal Understanding

Perspective taking is a process for gaining interpersonal understanding. It requires one to understand the meaning that a situation holds for another and to adjust to the needs of that interaction counterpart (Blumer, 1969; Goffman, 1967). Perspective taking allows people to respond to the needs and actions of others in a flexible, responsive manner (Blumer, 1969; Krauss & Fussell, 1991; Mead, 1934). It allows people to understand the values that counterparts place on various goals, possessions, achievements, and identities (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Moreover, it allows people to communicate their preferences in a way that more closely matches the underlying meaning (or symbolic level) of their interaction

partner's language (Blumer, 1969; Collins, 1990; Goffman, 1967).

Scholars in the field of communications, for example, investigate perspective taking in speaker- listener dyads (Fussell & Krauss, 1992). From this standpoint, it is widely accepted that perspective taking is necessary for effective communication because speakers must take into account what a specific listener knows when deciding how to formulate a message (Fussell & Krauss, 1992). People who are asked to engage in perspective taking adjust the content of their communication to the information they believe another person possesses (Fussell & Krauss, 1992; Krauss & Fussell, 1991). This combination of perspective taking and adjustment has been linked to greater comprehension by listeners (Krauss & Fussell, 1991). Thus, perspective taking may build social bonds by fostering mutual understanding, promoting communication that makes others feel understood, and decreasing conflicts that arise because of miscommunications.

Perspective Taking and Social Bonds

In addition to good communication and mutual understanding, which are important mechanisms for strengthening social bonds, perspective taking also strengthens social bonds by increasing perceived self-other overlap (i.e., similarity, Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005; Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008). Perspective taking increases positive perceptions of other individuals by increasing the overlap between the cognitive representation of the self, the representation of the other, and the representation of the group to which the other belongs. Thus, perspective taking influences the self—other overlap between people from different social groups, who may initially perceive themselves as quite different from one another. The increased self—other overlap that results from perspective taking is impactful because it decreases both stereotyping of other individuals and prejudice toward others, as well as negative perceptions of other groups, including stigmatized groups (Batson et al., 1997; Galinsky et al., 2005, 2008).

Perspective taking also helps people build social bonds by fostering emotionally positive interactions. The understanding gained through perspective taking increases individuals' ability to avoid negative interactions and foster positive interactions (i.e., interactions with energy and mutual engagement) (Blumer, 1969; Collins, 1990; Goffman, 1967).

Perspective Taking and Compassion

Finally, perspective taking increases positive interpersonal connections by eliciting tender feelings of empathic concern and compassionate actions. In contrast to the perspective taking literature in microsociology and communication, the literature in psychology has examined perspective taking primarily in the context of empathy and helping behavior (Batson, 1998; Batson, Turk, Shaw, & Klein, 1995; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Parker & Axtell, 2001). Although closely related to empathy and empathic concern, perspective taking refers solely to the cognitive understanding of another person's point of view (thoughts, feelings, and/or appraisals). Empathy and empathic concern, in contrast, always have an emotional or affective component that has been labeled "emotion matching," "affective attunement," and/or "emotional resonance" (Davis, 1996). Whereas symbolic interactionists highlight the strategic use of perspective taking to increase the positive emotional quality of interactions (Blumer, 1969; Collins, 1990; Goffman, 1967), social psychologists suggest that perspective taking can also evoke positive behaviors during interactions through nonstrategic, empathy- related processes (Batson et al., 1995). For example, in noncompetitive experimental studies, perspective taking consistently

elicits considerate behavior (Batson, 1998; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). In organizational contexts, the empathy-related manifestations of perspective taking have "been shown to foster cooperative behavior (Parker & Axtell, 2001). Perspective taking can also lead people to value others' welfare, feel compassion for them, and engage in helpful, benevolent behavior (Batson, 1998; Batson et al., 1995; Batson, Sager, Garst, Kang, Rubchinsky, & Dawson, 1997; Lilius, Kanov, & Dutton, 2011, Chapter 20, this volume; Van Lange, 2008).

In sum, perspective taking facilitates positive interpersonal connections by promoting interpersonal understanding, strengthening social bonds, fostering emotionally positive interactions, and motivating compassionate actions.

Perspective Taking and Trustworthy Action

Perspective taking enables trustworthy action in several ways. It motivates benevolence toward others, enables positive emotional influence, and facilitates proactive trustworthiness (Williams, 2008).

Perspective Taking and Benevolence

Benevolent actions are a central component of trustworthy behavior (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Mishra & Mishra, 2011, Chapter 34, this volume; Williams, 2001a). Perspective taking generates benefits that influence benevolence through motivational, affective, and cognitive mechanisms. In terms of motivation, psychologists' suggest that perspective taking can generate compassion, which "amplifies or intensifies motivation to relieve another person's need" (Batson et al., 1995, p. 300). Consequently, perspective taking may motivate individuals to prioritize the interests of others. Thereby, it can trigger benevolent behaviors, such as compassionate statements and actions (Batson et al., 1995; Davis, 1996; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). Similarly, because perspective taking leads people to value others' welfare (Batson et al., 1995), perspective taking may motivate benevolent actions that help others. It should also decrease the likelihood that a perspective taker will ignore the concerns of others and thereby inflict harm unintentionally.

Perspective Taking and Emotional Influence

In the affective domain, perspective taking may indirectly influence trust by enabling individuals to influence the emotions of others (i.e., emotional influence). Specifically, it may help the trust builder increase positive and decrease negative affect during interactions. Williams (2007) argues that, because perspective taking provides a mechanism for understanding when people anticipate harm and feel threatened, it provides the information that people need to actively decrease the amount of negative emotion experienced by others. Symbolic interactionists suggest that perspective taking is also likely to generate pleasant feelings in others because it enables perspective takers to maintain emotionally positive interactions (Blumer, 1969; Collins, 1990). Consistent with assertions by scholars who propose that individuals use feelings as information about trustworthiness (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2005; Jones & George, 1998; Williams, 2001a), I contend that when perspective takers generate positive feelings in others, those feelings may increase perceptions of the perspective taker's trustworthiness. Similarly, when a perspective taker prevents negative feelings, the resulting absence of negative feelings should maintain or at least not detract from the perception of his or her trustworthiness.

Perspective Taking and Proactive Trustworthiness

I define proactive trustworthiness as behavior that an individual actively engages in because she anticipates that others will view it as trustworthy (i.e., benevolent, morally appropriate, and/or competent), even if the behavior seems unnecessary from the individual's own point of view. Proactive trustworthiness is a new way of looking at trust building and trustworthiness. With few exceptions (Child & Möllering, 2003; Mishra & Mishra, 2011, Chapter 34, this volume; Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, & Werner, 1998; Williams, 2007), the scholarly research on trust has not focused on the intentional interpersonal processes individuals can use to build trust. Scholars most often describe trust development as a relatively passive process of gathering data about other people's trustworthiness by watching their behavior in various situations over time (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Ring & Van de Ven, 1994; Shapiro, Sheppard, & Cheraskin, 1992) or by using information from proxy sources (e.g., Burt & Knez, 1996; Zucker, 1986). Scant attention is given to the fact that people are evaluating the trustworthiness of individuals, who are often not passive, but engaged in proactive attempts to influence the evaluation process.

Perspective taking is a process that individuals may use proactively to avoid behavior that others will perceive as either intentionally or unintentionally harmful. Symbolic interactionists, for example, suggest that perspective taking can provide cognitive information about how others are likely to view one's actions (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934). This, in turn, allows one to better respond with behaviors that others will define as trustworthy and benevolent. In other words, perspective taking helps individuals negotiate the meaning of benevolence within a specific relationship.

Although organizational scholars routinely investigate a variety of proactive processes, including feedback seeking, taking charge, job crafting, and selling issues (e.g., Ashford & Tsui, 1991; Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; see Grant & Ashford, 2008 for review), they tend to focus on behaviors rather than cognitive processes. Thus, despite the proactive implications of perspective taking for trustworthy actions, perspective taking has rarely been investigated as a proactive process (c.f., Parker & Axtell, 2001). According to Parker, Williams, and Turner (2006, p. 636), "individual-level proactive behaviors typically focus on self-initiated and future-oriented action that aims to change and improve the situation or oneself." Although perspective taking includes both the anticipatory and the impact-oriented dimensions characteristic of proactive processes (Grant & Ashford, 2008), perspective taking is atypical in that it is an intrapsychic process. Individuals *imagine* how others will experience an event and then adjust their behavior accordingly. For example, a speaker first imagines what information another individual possesses and then adjusts his or her language and level of detail accordingly (e.g., Fussell & Krauss, 1992). Because perspective taking occurs before people act, and they engage in perspective taking to obtain more positive outcomes (Blumer, 1969; Collins, 1990; Goffman, 1967), perspective taking is a quintessentially proactive process.

Thus, I argue that perspective taking is not merely a process that allows people to have a more active role in trust building, but that perspective taking allows individuals to demonstrate proactive trustworthiness.

Perspective Taking Dimensions and Context

The effect of perspective taking on relational and material resources is influenced by the type of perspective taking

that one engages in and the competitiveness of the context.

Perspective Taking Dimensions: Cognitive, Affective, and Appraisal-related Perspective Taking

In contrast to the perspective taking literature in micro-sociology and communications, the psychological literature views perspective taking as a multidimensional construct. The two dimensions of perspective taking that have received the most scholarly attention are affective and cognitive perspective taking. *Affective perspective taking* refers to the intrapsychic process of imagining another's feelings from that person's point of view, whereas *cognitive perspective taking* refers to the process of imagining another's thoughts or motives from that person's point of view (Davis, 1996). Thus, although all perspective taking involves the cognitive process of imagining another's experience, its dimensions are defined by the content that one imagines (e.g., another's thoughts or feelings).

Appraisal-related perspective taking is a third underexplored component of perspective taking that is likely to have a unique impact on trustworthy behavior (Williams, 2007, 2008). Appraisal-related perspective taking refers to the process of imagining how events are relevant for others' goals, concerns, and well-being from their point of view (Williams, 2007). It requires taking perspective with respect to other people's cognitive appraisals of a situation.

Cognitive appraisals occur when people evaluate external events with respect to the implications of those events for their own goals, concerns, and general well-being (Ellsworth, 1991; Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). These appraisals are an integral part of people's emotional experiences (Ellsworth & Scherer, 2003; Smith & Ellsworth, 1983). For example, if a decision that thwarts employees' goals is made by their supervisor, whom they then hold responsible for the negative outcomes, these employees are likely to feel anger toward their supervisor (anger involves negative goal conduciveness and attributions of responsibility to another, Smith & Ellsworth, 1985). However, if their goals are thwarted by uncontrollable circumstances, they are likely to feel sad (sadness involves negative goal conduciveness and attributions that no one is responsible, Smith & Ellsworth, 1985).

I argue that, similar to the process of imagining how others will feel (affective perspective taking, Davis, 1996), the process of imagining how events are relevant for others goals, concerns, and wellbeing (appraisal-related perspective taking, Williams, 2007) will evoke concern for others and motivate compassionate behavior. However, relative to affective perspective taking, engaging in appraisal-related perspective taking attends specifically to other people's cognitive appraisals. Moreover, because people find events threatening or stressful when those events negatively impact their goals or general wellbeing (Folkman, 1984; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), appraisal-related perspective taking allows the perspective taker to better understand and anticipate which situations or actions other individuals are likely to find harmful or stressful. Appraisal-related perspective taking, therefore, has the potential to provide perspective takers with an anticipatory understanding of why other people may react with negative feelings and behavior. This understanding allows perspective takers to proactively influence the elements of the situation that may be perceived as harmful and mitigate the harm that others experience.

For example, imagining that others think a project's success is important (an example of general cognitive perspective taking) may have different action implications than imagining that they view the project's success as their only chance to

keep their jobs from ending (an example of appraisal-related perspective taking). In the first case, an e-mail containing data pointing to the marginal returns of the project may be surprising or unpleasant, but in the second case, the same message may be extremely threatening and anxiety provoking. Building on Williams (2007), who emphasized the importance of appraisal-related perspective taking for emotional influence, I argue here that appraisal-related perspective taking also builds trust through cognitive and motivational mechanisms. It not only motivates people to act benevolently and with compassion, but also enables them to cognitively anticipate which actions others are likely to find benevolent or harmful from their point of view.

Dimensions of Perspective Taking in Competitive and Cooperative Contexts

Recently, scholars examining perspective taking in competitive contexts have found that cognitive and affective perspective taking have different implications for acting with compassion versus acquiring material resources. They find that, in competitive contexts, cognitive perspective taking with respect to others' thoughts or strategic goals can simultaneously lead to less biased perceptions of fairness and more extreme assessments of the likelihood of competitive behavior by others (Epley et al., 2006). This more extreme assessment of others' competitive behavior increases the competitiveness of the perspective taker and his or her attainment of material resources (i.e., value claiming in negotiations). However, even in competitive contexts, affective perspective taking which occurs with respect to people's feelings builds relational and communal resources (Galinsky et al., 2008). Affective perspective taking motivates more cooperative behavior and leads to higher joint gains (Galinsky et al., 2008).

Less is known about appraisal-related perspective taking. However, because cognitive appraisals are central to understanding people's emotional experiences (Smith & Ellsworth, 1985), appraisal-related perspective taking should enhance the perspective takers ability to anticipate and understand the emotions of others. Thereby, it may also elicit more cooperative behavior from perspective takers. Thus, although the positive impact of cognitive perspective taking on relational resources may depend upon the competitiveness of the context, the positive impact of affective perspective taking (and appraisal-related perspective taking) may be less context dependent.

Measuring Perspective Taking Dimensions

I have introduced the construct of appraisal-related perspective taking as distinct from affective and cognitive perspective taking. Moreover, I have proposed distinct informational and anticipatory advantages of appraisal-related perspective taking. A first step in testing these theoretical assertions is developing a survey measure of appraisal-related perspective taking. In this section, I present data supporting a survey measure of appraisal-related perspective taking.

Procedure

One hundred and twenty-seven undergraduates from a large northeastern university were recruited through the university's online system to participate in a narrative study. A week prior to the narrative study, they filled out an online survey about their characteristic style of social interaction. This first survey, administered at Time 1, included the three measures of perspective taking discussed below.

Measures

Three-item measures of cognitive, affective, and appraisal-related perspective taking were included in the Time 1 survey (see Appendix 35.1 for items). Responses were captured on a five-point Likert scales ranging from 1 = not at all characteristic to 5 = very characteristic. The cognitive perspective taking items were taken from Davis' (1983, 1996) measure of perspective taking. The affective perspective taking items included the one perspective taking item from Davis' scale that was purely affective and two items based on the affective perspective taking directions used by Batson et al. (1995) and Galinsky et al. (2008). The appraisal-related perspective taking scale included three items from Williams (2001b).¹

Sample

After eliminating cases with missing data, analyses were performed on a final sample of 122 participants. Seventy-five percent were female and 25% were male. Eighty-six percent were born in the United States. Forty-eight percent were Caucasian, 33% were Asian, 7% were African American, and 6% were Latino or Hispanic. Six percent did not report their ethnicity or selected "other." Subjects received \$ 15 for participating in both parts of the study (two surveys).

Analyses

Using Lisrel 8.72 (Jöreskog & Sorbom, 1997), I performed a confirmatory factor analysis using a fully-disaggregated structural equations model.

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for the three measures of perspective taking appear in Table 35.1.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

The proposed three-factor model fit well: $\chi^2(24) = 22.45, p = 0.55$, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = 0.00, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = 0.03, comparative fit index (CFI) = 1.0. All factor loadings were significant and ranged from 0.77 to 0.86. To test the discriminant validity of the appraisal-related perspective taking scale, I analyzed several other models. I tested a one-factor model, in which all of the items loaded on the same general perspective taking factor ($\chi^2(27) = 65.86, p = 0.00$). The one-factor model fit significantly worse than the three-factor model: sequential chi-square difference test (SCDT) $\Delta\chi^2(3) = 43.41, p = 0.00$. Next, I tested models constraining the correlation between each two types of perspective taking to 1, where a correlation of 1 would indicate the factors were not distinct from one another. Sequential chi-square difference tests (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Kline, 2005) between the unconstrained three-factor model and a model constraining affective and cognitive perspective taking to a correlation of 1 (SCDT $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 10.53, p = 0.00$); a model constraining affective and appraisal-related perspective taking to a correlation of 1 (SCDT $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 8.44, p = 0.00$), and a model constraining appraisal-related and cognitive perspective taking to a correlation of 1 (SCDT $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 10.53, p = 0.00$) were all highly significant. These results indicate that the different measures of perspective taking were in fact distinct.

Finally, I confirmed that all three types of perspective taking formed a higher-order construct (see Figure 35.1). A

second-order factor, in which all three dimensions of perspective taking loaded onto a superordinate perspective taking factor fit well: $\chi^2(24) = 22.45, -0.55$, RMSEA = 0.00, CFI = 1.0, SRMR = 0.03). Appraisal-related perspective taking, affective perspective taking, and cognitive perspective taking all had significant relationships to the superordinate latent variable of perspective taking. The standardized parameter estimates were 0.95, 0.90, and 0.89, $p < 0.01$, respectively.

In conclusion, these results support the contention that appraisal-related perspective taking, affective perspective taking, and cognitive perspective taking are three distinct dimensions of perspective taking.

Discussion

In this section, I presented a new three-item measure of appraisal-related perspective taking. I also used the instructions from well-validated experimental manipulations to develop a survey measure of affective perspective taking. The measure of appraisal-related perspective taking was correlated with, but distinct from existing measures/manipulations of cognitive and affective perspective taking. Further, all three proposed subdimensions of perspective taking—appraisal-related, affective, and cognitive—formed a second-order factor of perspective taking. Although this is only a first step in developing and testing theoretical arguments related to appraisal-related perspective taking, it is a critical step for enabling additional research.

The measures presented here provide several opportunities for researchers. The measures of the perspective taking dimensions can be used to more distinctly capture the single dimension of perspective taking under investigation in a particular study. The individual measures of the dimensions also can be used as a manipulation check in experimental studies. These measures have also been successfully modified to investigate perspective taking with respect to a specific group (e.g., team members, doctors) and specific individuals (e.g., one's boss, assistant or team leader). Moreover, the theoretical reasons presented earlier suggest that the dimensions of perspective taking will have different influences on various outcome measures. The measures presented here may also allow researchers to amass enough empirical evidence to establish their differential relationships with outcome measures, despite the somewhat high correlations

Table 35.1 Descriptive statistics and Pearson correlation table (Cronbach's α reliability coefficients along the diagonals)

	Mean	St. dev.	1	2	3
1. Appraisal-related Perspective Taking	3.6	.81	.77		
2. Affective Perspective Taking	3.7	.91	.71**	.88	
3. Cognitive perspective Taking	3.4	.88	.67**	.68**	.81

** $p < 0.01$

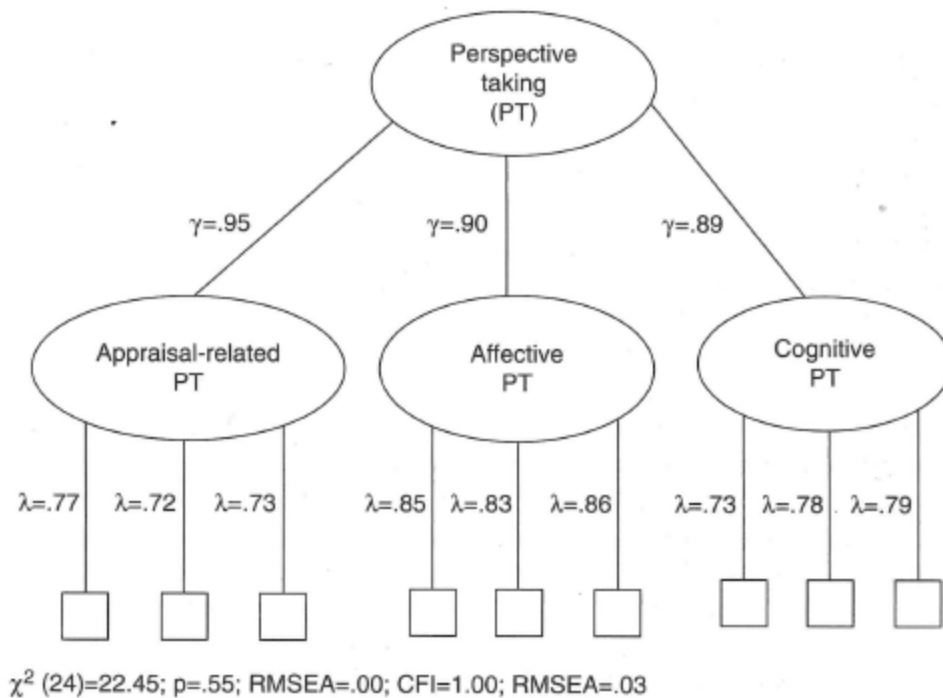


Fig. 35.1 Second-order factor of perspective taking (PT).

among the perspective taking dimensions (e.g., see Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007, for a parallel example—a meta-analysis that establishes the differential impact of the highly correlated dimensions of trustworthiness). Finally, the individual measures of the three dimensions of perspective taking can be aggregated to form a more comprehensive measure of perspective taking.

Additionally, recent research has begun to examine the nomological net of appraisal-related perspective taking. Appraisal-related perspective taking was found to be part of consultants’ mental models of active trust building (Williams, 2001b). Knowledge workers’ self-reported appraisal-related perspective taking was related to their bosses’ perceptions of the workers’ trustworthiness and performance (Williams, 2008). Additionally, appraisal-related perspective taking by knowledge workers was related to interpersonally sensitive and just behavior measured 1.5 years after appraisal-related perspective taking was measured (Williams, 2009).

Conclusion

This chapter used the lens of POS to address the growing interest and debate surrounding the role of perspective taking in organizational life. I asserted that perspective taking fosters kindness, understanding, and compassion—behaviors that Park and Peterson (2003) relate to the virtue of befriending others. I integrated research from the disciplines of sociology, communications, and psychology to provide insight into why, when, and how perspective taking facilitates the virtuous processes of positive interpersonal connections and trustworthy actions. Perspective taking motivates and enables positive interpersonal connections in three ways (Williams, 2008): by promoting interpersonal understanding, by strengthening social bonds, and by motivating compassionate actions. Perspective taking also influences trustworthy

behavior in three ways (Williams, 2007, 2008): by motivating benevolent, trustworthy behavior; by allowing individuals to influence the emotions of others; and by facilitating proactive trustworthiness.

Finally, in this chapter, I introduced the importance of investigating different dimensions of perspective taking. I asserted that cognitive and affective perspective taking have very different outcomes in competitive contexts. I then introduced the importance of appraisal-related perspective taking. Appraisal-related perspective taking enables people to engage in proactive attempts to act with compassion and influence the emotional experiences of others. I provided support for a three-dimensional measure of perspective taking that can be used to further research the outcomes related to perspective taking.

Although the potential importance of perspective taking for a variety of interpersonal processes within organizations seems clear, there is currently a dearth of work on perspective taking in organizational contexts. In the next section, I discuss practical implications of perspective taking for organizations and then highlight three promising areas for organizational research on perspective taking.

Practical Implications

Because perspective taking requires cognitive effort (Rosnagel, 2000), cognitive constraints such as time pressure and work load are likely to inhibit perspective taking at exactly the times when it would be most helpful to understand how one's actions will impact others. Thus, reaping the benefits of perspective taking may require managerial foresight. Managers not only need to sponsor professional development seminars that enable knowledge workers to understand the benefits of perspective taking, but also encourage the use of perspective taking during slack times. Establishing perspective taking as a well-learned response to interpersonal interactions will support the effective use of perspective taking during the most critical times in an organization— when people are under pressure.

On a cautionary note, managers need to be cognizant of the type of perspective taking they encourage among their subordinates. Although cognitive perspective taking can increase understanding across functional boundaries (Boland & Tenaski, 1995) and decrease some cognitive bias (Epley et al., 2006; Galinsky & Mussweiler, 2001), it also has the potential to increase competitive behavior (Epley et al., 2006). In contrast, affective perspective taking is associated with showing concern, facilitating collaboration, and higher joint gains across contexts (e.g., Galinsky et al., 2008; Parker & Axtell, 2001). Moreover, people may be less able to use affective perspective taking to take advantage of others or behave maliciously because affective perspective taking is more likely to elicit empathic concern, and increased valuing of others' welfare. In turn, these prosocial processes would serve to undercut malevolent intentions.

Future Directions

Work on perspective taking in organizational settings is on the rise (e.g., Parker et al., 2008). Although there are many interesting directions for future research, I have selected three research areas that capture issues that are central to understanding both the role of perspective taking in organizations and the importance of perspective taking for POS. In this section, I argue that future research would benefit from investigating the implications of perspective taking for high-

quality connections (HQCs), gratitude, and trust repair.

Perspective Taking and High-quality Connections

Perspective taking has a variety of positive interpersonal outcomes. It promotes interpersonal understanding (Fussell & Krauss, 1992), strengthens social bonds (Galinsky et al., 2005), fosters emotionally positive interactions (Blumer, 1969), motivates compassionate actions (Batson et al., 1995), and promotes trustworthy behavior (Williams, 2008). These positive processes are likely to contribute to HQCs. High-quality connections are important both because they contribute to personal health and well-being and because they facilitate the coordination of work (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003). Dutton and Heaphy (2003) define HQCs as relationships with three characteristics: They are high in emotional carrying capacity (i.e., the ability to weather high levels of emotional traffic), tensility (the capacity to withstand strain), and connectivity (i.e., generativity and openness to new ideas and influences, Dutton & Heaphy, 2003, p. 266). Perspective taking is likely to be particularly relevant for tensility and connectivity. In terms of tensility, perspective taking is likely to enable people to withstand the strain of interpersonal conflict. Imagining another person's perspective during a conflict situation and allowing oneself to feel empathic concern for a person who is blocking one's goals or reducing one's well-being should facilitate communication and compassionate action. Communication and compassionate action, in turn, should allow the relationship to withstand higher levels of strain than a relationship in which neither person engages in perspective taking. In terms of connectivity, the very act of perspective taking signals a degree of openness to new ideas and influences because the perspective taker wishes to understand how situations appear from a different point of view. Future research would benefit from additional exploration of how different dimensions of perspective taking can lead to and maintain HQCs.

Perspective Taking and Gratitude

In addition to compassion and trustworthiness, perspective taking is likely to foster other interpersonal virtues, such as gratitude and justice. Gratitude, for example, "is the positive recognition of benefits received" (Emmons, 2003, p. 82). It requires that a recipient recognizes that a gift or benefit was freely given. Gratitude is associated with positive relational outcomes, such as helping one's benefactor. Perspective taking facilitates gratitude because it enables individuals to understand the intentions of their benefactor and to recognize the value of the gift from the benefactor's point of view. Because of the potential for perspective taking to enhance people's ability to recognize the benefits bestowed by others, the relationship between perspective taking and gratitude represents a potentially fruitful area of research for organizational scholars.

Perspective Taking and Trust Violations

Trust repair is by nature a reactive process. Both the transgressor and the victim must respond to a violation that has already occurred. Future research, however, should explore how perspective taking can influence elements of the trust repair process in a proactive manner. I propose that perspective taking can influence the manner in which both transgressors and victims approach trust repair in three ways (Williams, forthcoming). First, perspective taking can influence the transgressor's ability to identify asymmetric trust breaks (those initially perceived by the victim only).

Second, perspective taking should enhance both parties' ability to reduce negative affect and perceive factors mitigating attributions of responsibility. Finally, because perspective taking can help victims to perceive mitigating factors, it can influence the victim's ability to approach trust repair in a more effective and socially complex manner than simply airing his or her grievances from his or her own perspective. Thus, perspective taking may play a central, but yet unexplored, role in effective trust repair.

Note

1. This chapter reports the discriminant validity of appraisal-related perspective taking from other dimensions of perspective taking. Please see Williams (2001b) for information on measure development, pretesting of the measure, and the discriminant validity of this appraisal-related perspective taking measure from other relational constructs such as trust and liking.

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Appendix 35.1

Perspective Taking Items by Dimension

Appraisal-related Perspective Taking Items

- When dealing with others, I try to imagine how my actions will affect things that are important to them.
- When interacting with others, I try to understand why particular issues hold emotional significance for them.
- When interacting with others, I try to look at things from their perspective.

Affective Perspective Taking

- I try to understand how other people are feeling.
- When interacting with others, I think about how I would feel if I were in their place.
- I try to think about what emotions other people may be feeling when I interact with them.

Cognitive Perspective Taking

- I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
- I believe that there are two sides to every question, and try to look at them both.
- When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.

(coefficient CL = 0.77; Williams, 2001b)

(coefficient CL = 0.88; Davis, 1983; Batson et al., 1995; Galinsky et al., 2008)

(coefficient CL = 0.81; Davis, 1983)