



NATURALISTIC PERSPECTIVE TAKING: THEMES FOUND IN NARRATIVES

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Introduction

The majority of social psychological studies of perspective taking involve experimental manipulations: Research participants are instructed either to take a target person’s perspective or not. In these studies, perspective taking has often been linked to empathic emotions and prosocial outcomes (Hodges et.al., 2011). However past research tells us little about when people choose to perspective take on their own. This study explores naturalistic self-reports of perspective taking and addresses how and when people do it.

Method

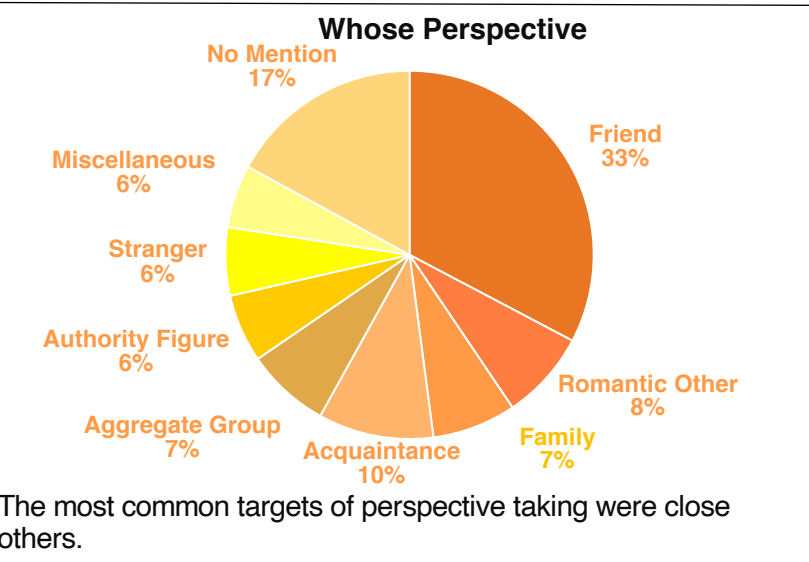
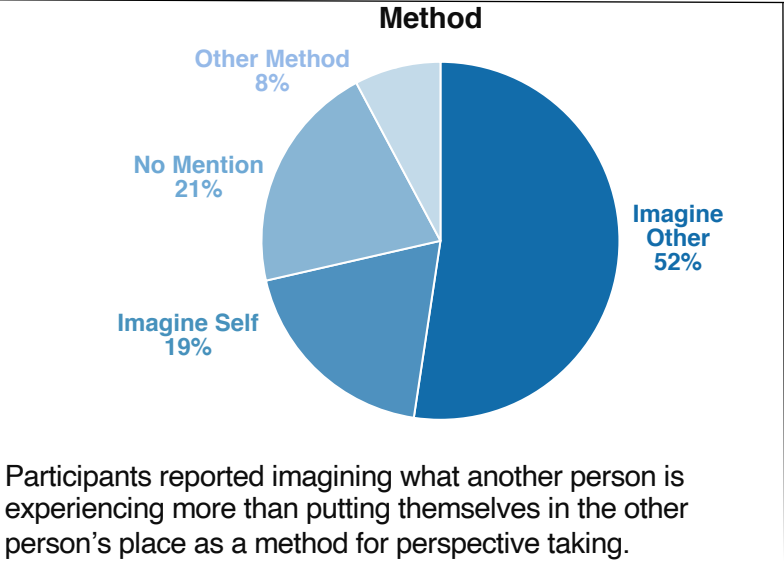
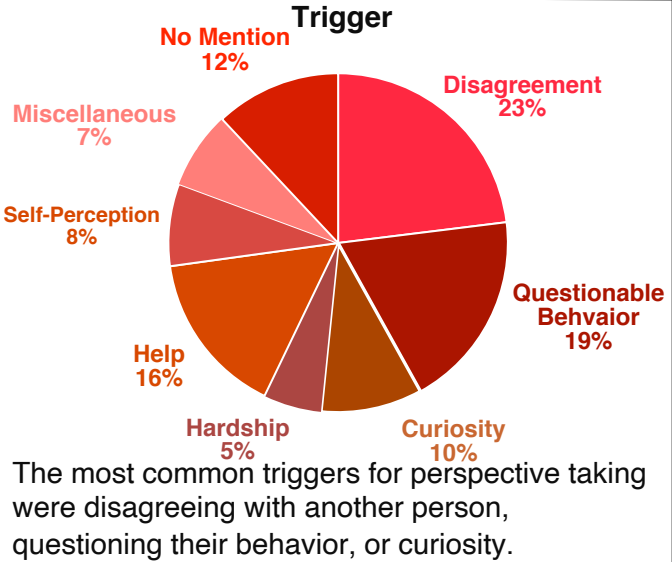
PARTICIPANTS

- 217 University of Oregon students. **Age:** 18-34 ($M_{age} = 19.8$), **Gender:** Male: 31.3%, Female: 66.8%, Other: 1.8%
- Completed online study for partial fulfillment of class requirement

PROCEDURE

- Participants responded to this prompt: *"Think about a time – preferably in recent days – when you were aware of trying to take another person’s perspective."*
- Responses were coded for :
 - **whose** perspective was taken (e.g., roommate, co-worker, professor, ex-boyfriend, mom, people experiencing homelessness, liberals)
 - what **triggered** the perspective taking (e.g., a recent breakup, trying to understand mistreatment of another person, wondering how classwork will be evaluated)
 - **strategies** mentioned for perspective taking (e.g., imagining another person’s experience, imagining the self in another context, projecting from one’s own experience)
 - interpersonal or other **outcomes** (e.g., empathic concern, recognizing the validity of another person’s perspective)
 - use of perspective-taking **metaphors** (e.g., “see it through their eyes,” “standing in their shoes,” “put myself in their place”)
- Responses were coded by two coders, who achieved at least 88% agreement on all coding categories. Discrepancies were resolved by discussion.

Results



ADDITIONAL FINDINGS:

Over 38% of participants used at least one metaphor (visual, place, in someone else's shoes) when describing their naturalistic perspective taking. Despite the prevalence of empathic emotions and prosocial outcomes associated with manipulated perspective taking, only 18% of the current participants reported feeling empathic emotions as part of perspective taking and the majority, 74%, did not report any specific outcome as a result of perspective taking.

Conclusion

Our results suggest that manipulated and naturalistic perspective taking may differ in important ways. Accounts of naturalistic perspective taking highlight new findings, such as disagreement with another person being a common trigger for perspective taking. There is much to be learned from studying perspective taking “in the wild.”