

Perspective Taking as a Moderator of the Relation between Social Rejection and Altruism

Zheng Li

Faculty of Behavioral and Social Science, University of Groningen

Grote Kruisstraat 2/1, 9712 TS Groningen, Netherlands

&

Room 3001, 20th Building, Guan Fang Si Qi

Baoshan City, Yunnan Province, China

E-mail: s1946536@alumnus.rug.nl

Received: April 30, 2011 Accepted: June 9, 2011 Published: December 1, 2011

doi:10.5539/ijps.v3n2p64 URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/ijps.v3n2p64>

Abstract

This paper measures rejected people's willingness to help and empathic concern towards the target person need help under four scenarios after the manipulation of social rejection by essay task and perspective taking by instruction before reading the descriptions of the scenarios. Participants in rejection condition with a high level of perspective taking showed a higher level of willingness to help than participants with a low level of perspective taking. Rejected participants indicated equal degree of willingness to help another rejected person no matter they adopt perspective taking or not. When the helping behavior can be considered as a future interaction, rejected participants with a high level of perspective taking did not show a higher level of intention to help when compared with control participants with a high level of perspective taking. The willingness to help did not drop significantly when the altruistic behavior is under a risk of negative evaluation. The manipulation of rejection and perspective taking did not show an influence on the participants' empathic concern towards the target person. The results were not induced by mood or rejection sensitivity.

Keywords: Perspective taking, Social rejection, Altruism

1. The Need to Belong

Human beings are essentially social animals, the need to belong is one of the strongest human motivations (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). We spend our entire lives interacting with others: Infants favor intimate attachment style with their caregivers, children like to share their toys with peers and form naïve friendships, young people seek for acceptance and recognition from the social circle they involving with and love from a romantic partner, middle-aged people set up a family and foster their offsprings, etc. Anyway, the desire for positive interpersonal relationship is one of the most fundamental and universal human needs (Maner et al., 2007). Extensive evidence supports the idea that individuals greatly quest social bonds, thinking often about their relationships with other people, and exert considerable effort to maintain and protect social bonds, even bonds that have become less valuable or a source of hurt or discomfort (Baumeister & Leary 1995; Leary, 2001).

The strong and pervasive human need for social acceptance may deeply root in evolutionary adaption and exert a powerful influence on human psychological process (Buss, 1990; Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Maner, 2007). Our ancient ancestors who were excluded from groups often died because it would be extraordinarily difficult for them to hunt, gather, and protect themselves against predators with only an army of one (Abrams et al., 2005, p. 28). Thus, early humans lived in tribes and cultivated supportive affiliations were more likely to survive and propagate than those who lived alone or on the fringe of the community life, leading over time to a pervasive drive to form and maintain connections with others (Leary, 2001).

As mentioned above, the need to belong serves as a functional human nature, people are eager for acceptance and reluctant to lose the social attachments. Thus, thwarting the need to belong can have devastating consequence for psychological well-being (Baumeister & Leary, 1995; Baumeister et al., 2005; Maner et al., 2007). Consequently, rejected people may adopt a negative style when coping with rejection. Twenge et al. (2001)'s research confirmed that rejected participants are more aggressive when compared with accepted and misfortune-control participants, even when the target is someone they had never affiliated before; Baumeister et

al. (2005 and 2007)'s studies found that social rejection associated with emotional distress, decreased sensitivity to pain and an emotional insensitivity that impedes empathy and prosocial behavior. Self-regulation and intelligent ability are also impaired as a direct result of being rejected (Baumeister et al., 2005).

2. Why Social Rejection May Lead to Altruistic Behavior

Although failure to satisfy the strong need for social connection can have devastating consequence, however, on the other hand, humans are unique creatures that are famous of the subjective initiative to solve unpleasant issues like social rejection rather than knuckling under. There are pervasive examples of people seeking methods to be popular and liked by others, such as overweight girls try every means to regain slimness, weak boys go to gym every week in order to be strong, bad-tempered men go to workshop of therapy in order to ameliorate the relationship with family members and colleagues, etc. Expansive studies have shown support for the conjecture that individuals who are ostracized, excluded, or rejected behave in styles gestures that will advance their inclusionary status (e.g., Snoek, 1962; Predmore & Williams, 1983; Williams & Sommer, 1997; Zadro & Williams, 1998; Gardner et al., 2000; Williams et al., 2000; Maner et al., 2007). The prosocial reactions to rejection range from being more apt to observe and mimic others (Lakin & Chartrand, 2003), to working harder in group settings (Williams & Sommer, 1997), to donating more money and performing other sorts of prosocial behavior (Maner et al., 2007). These sorts of responses make intuitive sense: If individuals have been rejected, they want to regain the attachment that they have lost. In order to be re-included (by the rejecting person/group or a new person/group), they make themselves appear to be more attractive and worth affiliating with by acting in altruistic or conciliatory ways. Like Baumeister and Leary (1995) stated: "The general argument is that deprivation of belongingness should lead to a variety of affiliative behaviors..." (p. 508).

2.1 Conditions May Enhance or Impede the Rejection- altruism Relationship

According to the *social reconnection hypothesis* proposed by Maner et al. (2007), rejection stimulates a strong desire to interact and reconnect with others, at least to the extent that others are considered as affording realistic sources of renewed interaction (Maner et al., 2007). Relevant findings drawn from preceding research about rejection and prosocial behavior confirmed the reconnection hypothesis. Williams and Sommer (1997) discovered that excluded female participants later exerted more effort in a group project, showed a socially compensated attitude and behavior. Maner et al. (2007, study 6) found that when compared with control participants, rejected participants assigned greater rewards when a social affiliation was anticipated but fewer rewards when no affiliation was anticipated. Thus, there are reasonable rationalities for believing that whether the helping behavior could lead to a future interaction is a significant determinant to the rejection- helping relationship.

Despite reasons for assuming social rejection can lead to the increase of prosocial behavior, it is also clear that rejection can sometimes boost interpersonal withdrawal and even disdain (e.g., Twenge & Campbell, 2003; Maner et al., 2007). Maner et al. (2007) proposed several boundary conditions to the reconnection hypothesis. Their research confirmed that rejected participants are not likely to help when a) the target person is the perpetrator of exclusion, b) the helping behavior cannot be perceived as a possible resource of direct and pleasant interaction, and c) rejected participants possess a high level of fear of negative social evaluation. Combined with the *negative relief model* (Cialdini et al. 1981) which posits altruism as hedonism, it is reasonable to believe that facing a negative evaluation could hinder rejected people's willingness to help.

Besides, there is an underresearched question drew the author's attention: What if the target person is someone also being rejected? From an intuitive perspective, we would think that we will perform a special concern towards someone shares the similar unfortunate experience with us. Research about helping behavior also found that people have a higher tendency to help an ingroup member when compared with a outgroup member (e.g., Hopkins, et al., 2007; Levine et al., 2005; Nadler & Halabi, 2006). However, previous research also provided results with contradiction. Twenge, Chaco, & Lyche (2003)'s study indicated that rejected people showed a high level of aggression towards another rejected individual. This result can be explained by downward social comparison (e.g., Wills, 1981) and social identity threat (e.g., Branscombe et al., 1999), people been rejected may attempt to disidentify themselves from a low status group. Thus, the question whether rejected people would be willing to help another rejected person is incorporated into the current study as a research question.

3. The Effect of Perspective Taking on Altruism

Several social-psychological models of altruistic behavior are offered by social psychologists, like *norm theories* (e.g., *reciprocity norm* by Gouldner, 1960; *social responsibility norm* by Berkowitz & Daniels, 1963; *personalized norms* by Schwartz, 1997) which contend that prosocial behaviors are that which benefit society as a whole and citizens behave prosocially because they are motivated to act in accordance with the norm for

helping those who are needy, *negative state relief model* proposed by Cialdini et al. (1981) which argue as Clarke states: “we help not through concern for the welfare of others but a concern to make ourselves to feel better; to reduce our own negative feelings” (p. 30), and *empathy-altruism model* developed by Batson (1991) which proposes that pure altruism does exist and we help with the only goal to improve the welfare of others rather than an egocentric motivation, etc. But when talking about social rejection and prosocial behavior, which model, explanation, or determinant is plausible to be included? Perspective taking is defined as the capacity to a) identify and understand the feelings of another and b) the ability to recognize and understand the thought processes of another (Oswald, 1996, 2002; Underwood & Moore, 1982; Krebs & Sturupp, 1974; Kurdek, 1978). Scholars have noted that individuals have a tendency to actively engage in perspective taking—that is, we attempt to understand other people’s thoughts and feelings and, by doing so, are motivated to perform altruistically (Oswald, 1996, 2002; Rushton, 1980). The characteristic of “actively engage in” perspective taking is compatible with previous findings which indicating that rejected people turned to be more sensitive towards information about others (Gardner, Pickett & Brewer, 2000), more apt to observe and mimic others (Lakin & Chartrand, 2003), perceive others as friendly and desirable (Maner et al., 2007, study 3 and 4), and treat others favorably (Maner et al., 2007, Studies 5 and 6).

4. Overview of the Present Study

Based on the aforementioned theoretical framework, the question of how social rejection and altruistic behavior are influenced by perspective taking arises. Therefore, the idea of present research is filling this gap by including perspective taking into the scientific framework of prosocial reactions to social rejection. The primary hypothesis of the present study is that perspective taking is a moderator of the effect of social rejection on altruism, rejected people with a high level of perspective taking would be more prone to perform altruistic behavior than those with a low level of perspective taking. In four scenarios representing different situations requiring help, the author investigated several different dependent measures followed by different information about the target person need help and the possible consequence of the helping behavior. The study with four scenarios assessed whether rejected people with a high level of perspective taking would show a significantly high level of willingness to help when compared with those who engaging in a low degree of perspective taking in general (see Scenario 1), choose to help a rejected person or standing off because of the motivation to disidentify themselves with a stigmatized group (see Scenario 2), show a considerably higher intention to help a person who can be viewed as a source of future interaction (see Scenario 3), and also be altruistic or not when the helping behavior is under a risk of negative evaluation (see Scenario 4). The predictions are: a) perspective taking has a moderating effect on rejected individuals’ willingness to help in general (Scenario 1); b) when the helping behavior can be viewed as a means to interact with others, both rejection and perspective taking have a significant effect (Scenario 3); and c) the willingness to help would decrease dramatically when the helping behavior may end up with a negative evaluation (Scenario 4). Scenario 2 is included to explore the unanswered question: whether rejected individuals will choose to help a rejected person or not.

5. Method

5.1 Participants

Ninety-five participants (65 first-year undergraduates from Faculty of Behavioral and Social science and 30 Chinese international students living in Groningen) fully completed the questionnaire. Five participants were removed from the dataset, two of them were excluded because of not writing the essay as required and three were identified as statistical outlier (see Chatterjee, Hadi, & Price, 2000). On average, the remaining participants were 22.34 years old ($SD = 3.60$). About 70% of them are female. The first-year undergraduates received 0.7 credit points for participating whereas Chinese participants got 1 euro as a reward.

5.2 Design and Procedure

The study is an online study with a 3 (essay conditions: social rejection, social acceptance, and misfortune control) X 2 (perspective taking: high versus low) factorial design. Participants were randomly allocated to one of the six conditions.

Participants were told that this is a study about the relationship between recalled memory and decision making in the introduction page of the online questionnaire. The Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ; Downey & Feldman, 1996) is presented after the introduction page. The RSQ is a reliable and valid instrument to measure the rejection sensitivity, the result of RSQ will be included as a covariate in the analysis of data. After completing the RSQ, participants were asked to write an essay about a previous experience from their own life and try to put themselves back into that experience until the whole procedure of the research finished. Former research indicated that reliving a previous event of rejection could evoke similar response (Pickett, Gardner, &

Knowles, 2004; Maner, Dewart, & Baumeister, 2007).

The instruction the author used for the essay task is the same as Twenge et al. (2007)'s study (see Twenge et al., 2007). Participants in the rejection condition were asked to write an essay about a time when they felt rejected or excluded by others. Participants in the acceptance condition wrote instead about a time when they felt accepted and endorsed by others. Participants in the negative mood condition were asked to write an essay about a time when you encountered a misfortune that would induce strong negative mood. When participants had completed the essay task, they completed the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). The PANAS is a broadly used scale of affect that provides separate items of positive affect (e.g., "excited") and negative affect (e.g., "upset"). Participants marked the degree to which they were experiencing each item in the current moment by 5-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*).

After participants completed the PANAS, they were presented with four paragraphs/scenarios describing four people need help in four different situations. Participants were required to read the scenarios under instructions carefully and image this is a real-life situation. The different instructions were used to manipulate perspective taking, and the contents of instructions were adopted from Batson et al. (1997)'s study (see Batson et al., 1997).

Participants in the low-perspective taking conditions were instructed:

Try to be as objective as possible about what has happened to the person described and how it has affected his or her life. To remain objective, do not let yourself get caught up in imagining what this person has been through and how he or she feels as a result. Just try to remain detached as you reading the description.

Participants in the high-perspective taking conditions were instructed:

Try to imagine how the person being described feels about what has happened and how it has affected his or her life. Try not to concern yourself with attending to all the information presented. Just concentrate on trying to imagine how the person described feels.

The contents of the four scenarios were as follows:

Scenario 1: Linda is an international student of Rug, several days ago, her wallet has been stolen, so she lost all her cash, bank card, ID, passport etc. It needs time to get a new ID and bank account, therefore, we are going to hold a donation for her, the donation is not compulsory for anyone, if you don't want to donate, it's totally fine.

Scenario 2: Peter is a boy that has difficulties on getting along with others, he is not welcome in the school, and almost no one would like to talk with him. He is always alone and lives in the shadow. If you are a classmate of him, are you willing to talk with him and offer him some social skills about how to interact with people?

Scenario 3: There is an international student that would live in the same flat with you, so you two may be acquaintance with each other in the future. He/she has just arrived, however, his/her rental agreement with the landlord is going to become effective next month, so he/she have nowhere to stay right now. If you have a single room, are you willing to ask him/her to live with you until next month?

Scenario 4: Mr. Smith is an 80 years old man lives alone in his house. His wife passed away several years ago and his only son lives in another city. Now he needs someone to sweep away the snow covering the road in front of his door. He is too old to do it himself and it is a very dangerous work for an old man. If you are one of the neighbors of him, would you help him to clean the snow? By the way, there is one thing you should notice, Mr. Smith is a cranky, irritable person, he may complain about your help like saying "come on, it's not clean yet, did you clean it already? Do you know how to sweep the snow?" Any way, you may receive negative evaluation on your helping behavior.

After reading each scenario, participants were asked to indicate their willingness to help the target person and how empathic they felt towards the person using 9-point scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*). Once participants completed the whole procedure of the study, they were fully debriefed, thanked, and rewarded.

5.3 Dependent Measure

The willingness to perform the altruistic behaviour is the principal dependent variable of the present study. The extent of empathic concern was included to complement the result.

6. Results

6.1 Mood

Two one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) on participants' positive affect subscale and negative affect subscale of the PANAS were conducted. The result of positive affect revealed significant difference among the three essay conditions (rejection, acceptance, and misfortune), $F(2, 87) = 20.12, p < .01, \eta^2 = .32$. Participants from

acceptance groups ($M = 35.36$, $SD = 5.21$) scored significantly higher than participants from rejection groups ($M = 26.03$, $SD = 5.79$) and participants from misfortune groups ($M = 26.80$, $SD = 8.15$). The significant difference was also found on the negative affect subscale, $F(2, 87) = 16.43$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2_n = .27$. Participants from rejection condition ($M = 22.63$, $SD = 8.30$) and participants from misfortune condition ($M = 26.03$, $SD = 8.10$) scored significantly higher than participants from acceptance condition ($M = 15.17$, $SD = 5.88$), and there was a noticeable difference between the two preceding groups, although did not reach statistical significant level, $t(87) = 1.61$, $p < .11$.

6.2 Scenario 1

Willingness to help. Figure 1 shows the result of altruistic tendency reported by the participants from the six groups. A 3(Rejection, Acceptance, and Negative mood) X 2(Perspective taking high vs. Perspective taking low) ANOVA on participants' willingness to help revealed that only the main effect of the manipulation of perspective taking reached marginal significance, $F(1, 84) = 3.55$, $p < .06$, $\eta^2_n = .04$. Pairwise comparisons indicated that rejection participants with a high level of perspective taking ($M = 6.67$, $SD = 1.92$) reported more willingness to help than rejection participants with a low level of perspective taking ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 2.05$), $F(1, 84) = 6.23$, $p < .015$, $d = 0.88$. There was no significant difference between the two groups of acceptance condition nor the two groups of negative mood condition ($F < 1$). The variation of willingness to help between rejection participants with a high level of perspective taking ($M = 6.67$, $SD = 1.92$) and negative mood participants with a high level of perspective taking ($M = 5.33$, $SD = 1.80$) approached significance, $t(28) = 1.97$, $p < .06$. The main effect of perspective taking became significant when the score of negative affect subscale of the PANAS was included as a covariate, $F(1, 83) = 4.50$, $p < .037$, $\eta^2_n = .05$. There was no noticeable change when the score of positive affect subscale of the PANAS or the score of the RSQ was included as a covariate.

Empathic concern. A 3(Rejection, Acceptance, and Negative mood) X 2(Perspective taking high vs. Perspective taking low) ANOVA on participants' empathic concern towards the target person was conducted, none of the main effects in this analysis were significant (all $F_s < 1$). Including the covariates (positive affect, negative affect, and rejection sensitivity) did not make any noticeable change.

Correlation analysis indicated moderate correlation between empathic concern and the intention to help, $r(88) = .45$, $p < .01$ (see Cohen, 1988).

6.3 Scenario 2

Willingness to help. As it can be seen apparently from Figure 2, participants' self-reported willingness to help the target person did not vary significantly between the two rejection groups or the two misfortune groups. A 3(Rejection, Acceptance, and Negative mood) X 2(Perspective taking high vs. Perspective taking low) ANOVA on participants' willingness to help indicated that none of the main effects were significant (both $F < 1$). The interaction effect of perspective taking and essay task approached significance, $F(2, 84) = 2.76$, $p < .07$. Pairwise comparisons confirmed that significant difference only existed within the pair of acceptance condition ($M = 7.13$, $SD = 1.51$, and $M = 5.93$, $SD = 1.75$ respectively), $F(1, 84) = 4.21$, $p = .04$, $d = 0.73$. Perspective taking did not play a role on participants in rejection condition or participants in misfortune condition, and all of the four groups (the pair of rejection condition and the pair of misfortune condition) showed almost equivalent level of intention to help. There was no noticeable change when incorporated the covariates (negative affect, positive affect, and rejection sensitivity) in an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA).

Empathic concern. A 3 X 2 ANOVA on participants' empathic concern towards the target person was conducted, none of the main effects, nor the interaction effect in this analysis was significant (all $F_s < 1$). The insignificance remained when chose any one of the three covariates (negative affect, positive affect, and rejection sensitivity) in an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). However, rejection sensitivity had a significant effect on empathic concern when included as a covariate in the ANCOVA, $F(1, 83) = 3.96$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2_n = .05$. The implication behind the result is unclear yet.

Correlation analysis indicated moderate correlation between empathic concern and the intention to help, $r(88) = .49$, $p < .01$ (see Cohen, 1988).

6.4 Scenario 3

Willingness to help. As is apparently from the observation of Figure 3, perspective taking played a vital role on participants' willingness to help. A 3 X 2 ANOVA similar to the former analyses of Scenario 1 & Scenario 2 revealed a significant main effect of perspective taking, $F(1, 84) = 10.36$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2_n = .11$. Pairwise comparisons confirmed that rejection participants with a high level of perspective taking ($M = 6.20$, $SD = 2.04$) reported a dramatically higher level of willingness to help than rejection participants with a low level of

perspective taking ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 1.71$), $F(1, 84) = 4.47$, $p < .04$, $d = 0.78$. And participants in acceptance condition with a high level of perspective taking ($M = 6.73$, $SD = 2.09$) also indicated a higher degree of intention to help when compared with participants in the same essay condition with a low level of perspective taking ($M = 5.13$, $SD = 2.07$), $F(1, 84) = 5.32$, $p < .03$, $d = 0.77$. Again, there was no significant distinction within the pair of negative mood condition, $F(1, 84) = 1.33$, $p < .25$. The main effect of perspective taking became larger when the negative affect was included as a covariate in the ANCOVA, $F(1, 84) = 11.17$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2_n = .12$. Positive affect and rejection sensitivity did not show noticeable influence on the result when used as a covariate respectively.

Empathic concern. A 3 X 2 ANOVA on participants' empathic concern towards the target person was conducted, like preceding results shows, there were no main effects, nor interaction effect observed (all $F_s < 1$), and including the covariates did not make any remarkable change.

Correlation analysis indicated moderate correlation between empathic concern and the intention to help, $r(88) = .30$, $p < .01$ (see Cohen, 1988).

6.5 Scenario 4

Willingness to help. As can be seen from Figure 4, there is no systematic variation among the six bars representing participants' self-reported intention to perform the altruistic behavior. And the means are relatively lower when compared with preceding figures. The same 3 X 2 ANOVA confirmed that the main effects of essay task and perspective taking were not significant, nor the interaction effect (all $F_s < 2$). Pairwise comparisons did not reveal any significant difference within any pairs (all $F_s < 2$). Containing the covariates (mood and rejection sensitivity) did not make the main effects reach significance.

Empathic concern. Consistent with former analyses, a 3 X 2 ANOVA confirmed that rejection and perspective taking did not have a main effect on participants' empathic concern towards the target person (all $F_s < 2$), but the interaction effect of essay task and perspective taking was significant, $F(2, 83) = 4.37$, $p < .02$. Rejection sensitivity had a great effect on empathic concern when included in the ANCOVA, $F(1, 83) = 4.88$, $p = .03$.

Again, the correlation between empathic concern and willingness to help reached moderate size, $r(88) = .46$, $p < .01$ (see Cohen, 1988).

MANOVA was carried out to test the main effect of perspective taking (low versus high) on participants' willingness to help across the four scenarios. Pillai's trace showed significant multivariate effect of perspective taking on the four dependent measures, $F(4, 81) = 3.33$, $p = .014$. The effect was more significant when the negative mood was included as a covariate, $F(4, 80) = 3.81$, $p = .007$.

7. Discussion

Social rejection did induce significant negative mood on individuals. Results of Scenario 1 indicating that perspective taking had a significant effect on participants in the rejection condition when considering an altruistic behavior in general. This effect was not found on the participants from acceptance condition nor negative mood condition. Participants in the rejection condition with a high level of perspective taking were slightly more willing to help than participants from the other two high-perspective taking groups. This is consistent with the main hypothesis, which implies that perspective taking has a moderating effect on rejected people's consideration on performing an altruistic behaviour in general.

Participants in rejection condition showed a high degree of willingness to help a person that has been rejected whether they adopted perspective taking or not (Scenario 2). This finding is not in line with Twenge, Chaco, & Lyche (2003)'s study. The influence of downward comparison (e.g., Wills, 1981) and social identity threat (e.g., Branscombe et al., 1999) was not observed. Participants primed with social rejection were willing to help an excluded person rather than in an attempt to disidentify themselves from the low status group (Twenge, 2005). They responded in an acceptance style and were willing to affiliate the target person (see description of scenario 2). On the other hand, participants in acceptance condition with a low level of perspective taking reported remarkably low intent to help even though they were fully aware of the fact that the target individual needed help indeed, and the difference elicited by perspective taking was found between the two groups of acceptance condition only. This suggests (but not proves) that the latent influence of downward comparison might be a rationale. Due to the fact that rejection participants and misfortune participants reported close score in terms of both mood state and dependent measure under Scenario 2, the result could also be induced by the need to relieve the negative state (Cialdini, Kenrick, & Baumann, 1982; Cialdini et al., 1987), rather than a special caring attention to an entity sharing the similar experience.

The prediction that both rejection and perspective taking should have an effect when the receiver of the helping

behavior could be viewed as a future affiliation was not obtained under Scenario 3. Perspective taking had a great influence on participants in rejection and acceptance condition but rejection did not have an effect as expected. Participants in rejection condition did not express a higher desire to help even if the target person can be viewed as a source of future interaction and the helping itself is an association with someone new (see description of Scenario 3). This can be explained by the incompleteness of information offered by the description of the scenario, in the description of Scenario 3, there is no information regarding the target person's character like whether he/she is kind, friendly, warm, and easy to approach or not. Living with someone you do not know before is a big decision which needs deep consideration, participants may not be sure about whether the offering of help could bring favorable consequence or not. As a consequence, rejection did not exert an influence on participants' decision even though the target person was representing a realistic and immediate resource of regained interaction.

The hypothesized potential boundary condition for the tendency to help was not sufficiently proved under Scenario 4. The prediction of the results was that participants would show significantly low inclination to help no matter they adopt perspective taking or not under the situation that their helping behavior might be negatively evaluated. However, the result was not strongly supportive, perspective taking did not play a role indeed, but the willingness to do the favor was not significantly lower when compared with the results of preceding scenarios. This can be explained by the information offered in the scenario. The results made the author realize that the case offered is not a extreme one of negative evaluation, because the target person was described as a very old man who really need help, it is a moral obligation to help a lonely, old man for the majority of people even if they will take the risk of negative response. This situation is morality evolved, rather than the simple concern of negative evaluation. An alternative interpretation for the results of Scenario 4 could be the weakened manipulation, this scenario was the last one of the research, the manipulation of rejection and perspective taking might be very weak already and participants could be tired by then. Consequently, the results may not reveal the truth to an enough extent.

The result of MANOVA can be regarded as a summary of the main finding of present research, perspective taking had a considerable main effect on the dependent measures, which is in line with the hypothesis of the study.

The independent variables did not show any significant influence on empathic concern across the four scenarios, this is not in line with previous findings which claim perspective taking is an essential factor to empathic concern (Oswald & Patricia A, 1996). A moderate correlation between empathic concern and altruistic intention was found across all scenarios, this is consistent with the Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis (Batson, 1991).

Four ANCOVAs including mood as a covariate conducted for the four scenarios confirmed that the results are not simply induced by mood.

8. General Discussion

Across the four scenarios, participants in the rejection condition with a high level of perspective taking expressed a high degree of willingness to help, even under the risk of social identity threat (Scenario 2) or negative evaluation (Scenario 4). The previous finding of decreased pro-social behavior followed by rejection (Twenge, et al., 2007) is fully altered by the including of perspective taking. The main hypothesis of the current study which contending perspective taking has a moderating effect between social rejection and pro-social behavior in general is proved (Scenario 1). The author also created three specific situations with different target person and consequences to test the main hypothesis: Helping a rejected person (Scenario 2), helping a potential relationship partner (Scenario 3), and helping under the risk of unpleasant evaluation (Scenario 4). The results of Scenario 2 demonstrated that participants in rejection condition expressed a high level of intention to help a person who sharing the same distressful experience with themselves (in-group member) no matter they embraced perspective taking or not, rather than standing off from the needy person as a result of intentional disidentification with a stigmatized group. However, the prediction that both rejection and perspective taking would have an effect on altruism when the helping behavior is likely to facilitate a future relationship is not confirmed by Scenario 3. And the suggested possible boundary condition (negative evaluation) for the altruistic tendency of rejected people was not sufficiently proved under Scenario 4. The unexpected results of Scenario 3 and Scenario 4 may stemmed from the information presented by the two scenarios. Nonetheless, present study provides the first direct evidence that perspective taking could lead rejected individuals to turn helpfully towards people who need help.

The meaningful finding of the influence of perspective taking not only shed light on the research of social rejection on altruism, but also provides a useful means to deal with the damaging outcome confirmed by

accumulated evidence like aggressive behavior, avoidance, and selfishness among rejected persons (e.g., Twenge et al., 2001). For individuals who encountered with exclusion, providing help to others is a fulfilling form to interact with other people and hereupon building a new affiliation, it is an efficient course to increase the value of self to others. As for the social-rejection related intervention organizations, considering the effect of perspective taking is also a sensible approach to intervention. The idea that interventions could be designed to remediate problematic peer relations first emerged in the early 1940s (Bierman 2001, p.161), intervention researchers struggled to identify effective strategies and techniques for prompting the social skill of children with problematic peer relation (Bierman 2001, p. 161). Researches on this domain indicating that aggressive-rejected children often show pro-social skill deficits (Bierman, 1986, 2001; Coie, 1990). Thus, according to the findings from the current study, including perspective taking into the social-cognitive interventions is worth trying.

How to interpret the finding that perspective taking can lead to the resurgent bright side in the nature of rejected individuals? To answer this question, first we should go back to the question why social rejection would decrease pro-social behavior. Specific explanations of pro-social behavior have been provided by psychologists, some emphasize the role of emotional arousal whereas others suggest a cognitive model which deems we weigh up the costs and benefits and offering a help is the outcome of a logically reasoned decision-making process (Clarke, 2003). Thus, from the respect of emotional arousal, when social rejection occurs, the emotional responses of rejected people are temporarily interfered, thereby impairing the capacity for empathic understanding of others (Twenge, et al., 2007); From the respect of decision-making process, excluded people are more cautious while making the decision before taking the action (Leary, 2001). Based all the arguments offered above, it is reasonable to believe that taking the perspective of others is significantly beneficial for the both aspect: From the facet of emotional arousal, perspective taking could activate the negative numb emotion status, thus induce the emotional feelings and moral reasoning towards a needy person. The fact that participants in rejection and high perspective taking condition showed a significantly worse mood status when compared with participants in acceptance condition also indicted a high level of willingness to help fully confirmed this rationale. From the facet of cognitive decision making under a situation of help, perspective taking help rejected persons to realize that helping is a positive action to interact with others and further gain the affiliation with a potential relationship partner, thus ameliorate the social bond of the self. Hence, one key factor to how people cope with social rejection appears to be whether they could actively adopt perspective taking or not when facing a situation with someone need their help.

8.1 Limitations of Current Study and Suggestions for Future Research

As a study for master thesis, the present study was restricted from a variety of limitations (e.g., time, participants, funding, laboratory condition, etc.), and as a result of these limitations, the study was decided to be conducted online. One of the main problems of an online study is the weak control of the procedure of the research, we cannot be sure that whether participants took the study seriously and finished it without any disturbance or not. It is possible that some participants was listening to the music when completing the questionnaire, or talking with someone, etc. Consequently, the manipulation might not be strong enough to induce strong effect. The original idea of the design of present research is to conduct the study in the lab, so that there can be various ways to manipulate rejection more effectively than what can be done by an online study, like bogus feedback after completing a personality questionnaire (Twenge et al., 2001, 2007; Maner, 2007), ball tossing game (Williams & Sommer, 1997), and bogus selection for a group work (Maner, et al., 2007), etc. Another main concern originates from the dependent measure: Talking is highly cheap when speaking about altruism. So, what is the most important advantage of doing the research in the lab is that we are able to have an more realistic measure of pro-social behavior, such as donating money (after receiving the rewards for participating in the study), helping the experimenter to pick up the stuffs after a mishap (Twenge et al., 2007), volunteering for further research (Twenge et al., 2007), and Prisoners' dilemma for real money (Twenge et al., 2007), etc. However, due to all kinds of limitations, the study was eventually gone through with online. Accordingly, the only way to measure the altruism in this study is by self-reporting the willingness to help, which would cost the participants nothing hence has a great way with a true prosocial behavior which requires certain sacrifice from the giver. Moreover, participants may have a tendency to "guess" what answers the experimenter wants and giving social-desirable report in the self-report measures (Aronson, 1990).

Taking into together, the generalizability, external validity, and mundane realism (Aronson & Carlsmith, 1968) of the results drawn from the present study are compromised to some extent.

The predictions about the rejected people's response related to altruism under the situation of possible future affiliation and negative consequence was not (enough) proved through Scenario 3 and Scenario 4. As mentioned before, the reason may lies in the information offered by the two scenarios. As for Scenario 3, the information

presented did not provide a certain pleasant future interaction in fact. Recently rejected people are sensitive but needy, and the two feelings may push in opposite directions (Maner et al., 2007). Rejected people apparently want to protect themselves from being rejected or hurt again, so the willingness to offer a help may still be compatible with a consciously (or subconsciously) guarded posture towards an uncertain source of relationship. In general, people being rejected are cautious and only resorting to the positive gesture towards others when the minimal risk or cost is involved (Maner, et al., 2007). As for Scenario 4, the moral obligation may played a role as an extraneous variable. According to the *norm theories*, Clarke (2003) stated:

Pro-social behavior is something that is learned by every member of a society as part of a set of socialized norms, these socialized norms are unwritten rules that tell us how to behave in various situations. They are social guidelines, a set of norms or societal standards for behavior that represent the consensus about which behaviors are acceptable and encouraged. (p. 23).

More specifically, the *Social responsibility norm* proposed by Berkowitz and Daniels (1963) suggests we have a social responsibility norm whereby we assist those in need in respect that they are dependent on us (Clarke, 2003, p. 26). As a result we help the “ubiquitous” lonely and old man to sweep the snow covering his doorway because he is dependent on us and we feel a social responsibility to help him. However, the unwanted result elicited by the drawbacks of the scenarios does not mean the original assumptions are unverifiable, future researches with more ingenious design are expected to confirm the two hypotheses left by present study.

There is also another factor need to be considered: The composing of the participants. There are one third of the participants are Chinese, so, all the participants possess different cultural backgrounds. Based on Nobles (1976)’s research about cultural differences on pro-social behavior, Clarke (2003) stated:

Collectivist cultures, which include African and some Asian countries, are based on groupness, sameness, commonality and cooperation. Individualist cultures, such as some European countries, the USA, Canada and Australia, are based on a world view emphasizing individuality, uniqueness, difference and competition. As a result, collective cultures tend to be far more pro-social than others (p. 49).

What is more, cultural differences play a major role in defining in-groups and out-groups. The names of people need help in the scenarios are western names, this may lead Chinese participants to consider them as out-group members. These different factors among the participants may also biased the results.

The relationship among rejection, perspective taking, and empathy is remaining unanswered, according to previous study, rejection should lead to significant decrease of empathic concern towards others. On the other hand, perspective taking should be able to induce a relatively high level of empathic concern towards others. However, the main effects of both rejection and perspective taking on empathic concern are not significant, at least in present study. The reason besides systematic error and random error is not clear yet. Future research is expected to be carried out about this issue.

The manners used in the research about rejection are expected to be more comprehensive. Many other studies in this field of research were conducted with individuals who were unfamiliar with one other (before the study). But instances of rejection often involving significantly meaningful people like family members, friends, and romantic partners (Maner, 2007). So, in terms of the different value of different relationships to the individual, there are a variety of types and levels of rejection that may induce different response and consequence. Except the variation of rejection itself, the individual differences may also have a dramatic influence on the outcome. Our research only included social-rejection sensitivity as individual difference. However, according to preceding researches, there is a bundle of individual variables which may have an effect on reactions to rejection, such as *self-esteem* (e.g., Carlton-Ford, et al., 1997; Brennan & Bosson, 1998, etc), *loneliness* (e.g., Parkhurst & Asher, 1992, Boivin, et al., 1995), *social anxiety* (e.g., Baumeister & Tice, 1990), *depression* (e.g., Tambor & Leary, 1993), *narcissism* (Rhodewalt et al., 1998), and *attachment style* (e.g., Simpson et al., 1999).

These considerations mentioned above, integrated with the novel findings of current study, fit within a broad theoretical frame that contains social cognition and personality traits breeds a fecund and expansive ground for future research.

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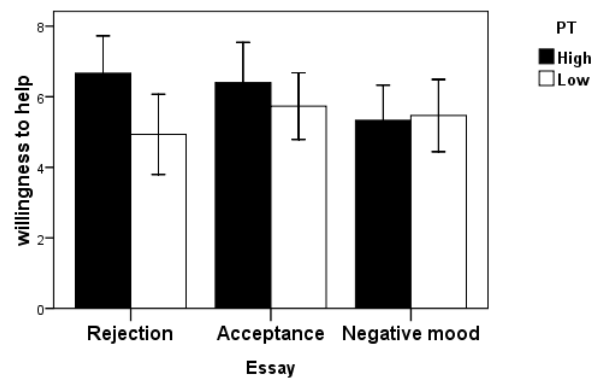


Figure 1. Participants' self-reported willingness to help on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 9(*very much*) as a result of the essay task and manipulation of perspective taking (Scenario 1)

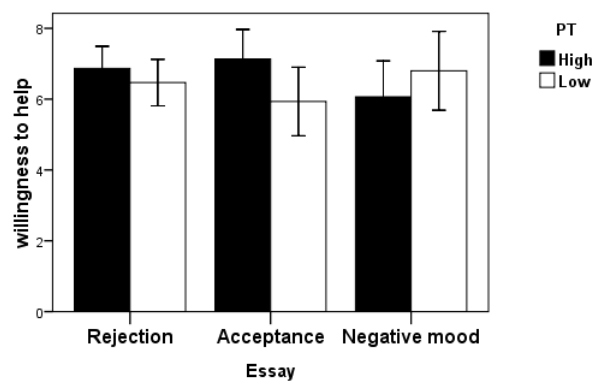


Figure 2. Participants' self-reported willingness to help on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 9(*very much*) as a result of the essay task and manipulation of perspective taking (Scenario 2)

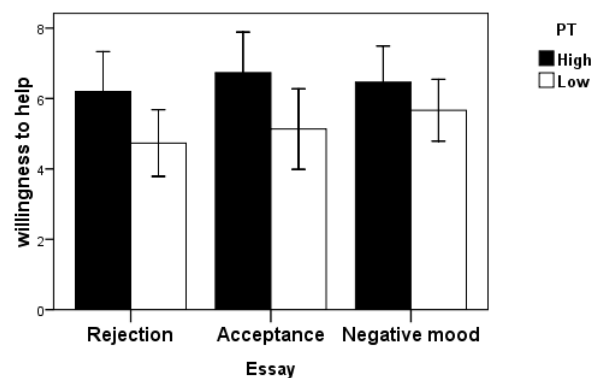


Figure 3. Participants' self-reported willingness to help on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 9(*very much*) as a result of the essay task and manipulation of perspective taking (Scenario 3)

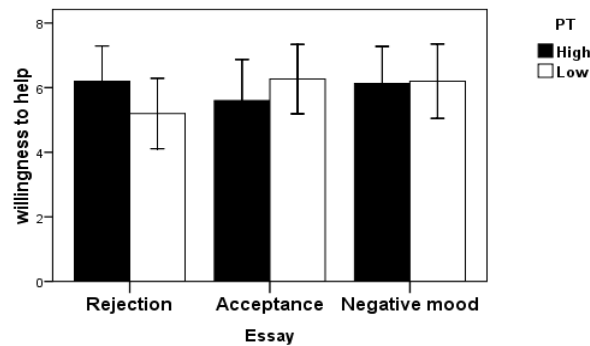


Figure 4. Participants' self-reported willingness to help on a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*very much*) as a result of the essay task and manipulation of perspective taking (Scenario 4)

Appendix A

Descriptors of the PANAS

Positive affect descriptors:

1. Enthusiastic
2. Interested
3. Determined
4. Excited
5. Inspired
6. Alert
7. Active
8. Strong
9. Proud
10. Attentive

Negative affect descriptors:

1. Scared
2. Afraid
3. Upset
4. Distressed
5. Jittery
6. Nervous
7. Ashamed
8. Guilty
9. Irritable
10. Hostile

Appendix B

Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ) Items

1. You ask someone in class if you can borrow his/her notes.
2. You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend to move in with you.
3. You ask your parents for help in deciding what programs to apply to.
4. You ask someone you don't know well out on a date.
5. Your boyfriend/girlfriend has plans to go out with friends tonight, but you really want to spend the evening with him/her, and you tell him/her so.
6. You ask your parents for extra money to cover living expenses.
7. After class, you tell your professor that you have been having some trouble with a section of the course and ask if he/she can give you some extra help.
8. You approach a dose friend to talk after doing or saying something that seriously upset him/her.
9. You ask someone in one of your classes to coffee.
10. After graduation you can't find a job and you ask your parents if you can live at home for a while.
11. You ask a friend to go on vacation with you over Spring Break.
12. You call your boyfriend/girlfriend after a bitter argument and tell him/her you want to see him/her.
13. You ask a friend if you can borrow something of his/hers.
14. You ask your parents to come to an occasion important to you.
15. You ask a friend to do you a big favor.
16. You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend if he/she really loves you.
17. You go to a party and notice someone on the other side of the room, and then you ask them to dance.
18. You ask your boyfriend/girlfriend to come home to meet your parents.