Responding to people who differ from us:
The dissimilar, the disliked, and the socially distant

Mark Davis

Eckerd College
Projection to Real World Targets
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“The assignment of one’s own characteristics, attitudes, and behavioral preferences to other people or social groups” (Machunsky, Toma, Yzerbyt, & Corneille, 2014)
Why Project?
Why Project?

Information processing explanations (e.g., Krueger, 2007; Ames, 2004)

Goal = Accuracy
Why Project?

Information processing explanations (e.g., Krueger, 2007; Ames, 2004)

Goal = Accuracy

Motivational explanations (e.g., Machunsky et al., 2014; Marks, Miller, & Maruyama, 1981)

Goal = Hedonism
Valence  \[\rightarrow\]  Perceived Similarity  \[\rightarrow\]  Projection
Using Real-World Targets

Easy to find variation in liking across targets

More generalizable findings than laboratory environments

More stringent test of projection’s ubiquity
Study 1

Participants were 31 male and 44 female undergraduate students at Eckerd College

*Inference Tasks*
1. Preferences in romantic partners (e.g., attractive; sense of humor)
2. Big Five trait ascriptions (10-item measure)

*Targets*
1. Closest friend of opposite sex (not romantic partner)
2. Disliked member of the opposite sex

*Manipulation Checks*
1. How close are you and the target?
2. How similar are you and the target?
Study 1 (continued)

Procedure

Each participant rated both targets on the two tasks
Each participant also rated the self on those tasks
Each participant also rated the “stereotypical college male/female” on those tasks

Measuring projection and stereotyping

For each participant, for each inference task, a multiple regression analysis was conducted

Target ratings on the items making up that task were the dependent variable
Self and and stereotype ratings on those items were the predictor variables
Regression coefficient for “self” was the measure of projection
Regression coefficient for “stereotype” was the measure of stereotyping
Rank the Importance of the Characteristic for . . .

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Target’s Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easy-Going</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physically Attractive</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good Earning Capacity</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Humor</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socially Exciting</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
<td>_____</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Projection Stereotyping

Target rating = Self rating + Target Group rating
Table 1. Mean levels of projection and stereotyping as a function of target valence: Study 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mate Preference Task</th>
<th>Big 5 Traits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liked Target</td>
<td>Disliked Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projection</td>
<td>.34(^a) (.44)</td>
<td>.10(^b) (.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotyping</td>
<td>.18(^a) (.38)</td>
<td>.22(^a) (.45)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** For each task, values in the same row sharing the same superscript do not differ significantly.
Study 2

Participants were 32 male and 74 female undergraduate students at Eckerd College

*Inference Tasks*
  1. Big 5 trait ascriptions
  2. Positive traits (honest; witty)
  3. Negative traits (boastful; lazy)

*Targets*
  Same as Study 1

*Procedure and Measures*
  Same as Study 1
Table 2. Mean levels of projection and stereotyping as a function of target valence: Study 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target</th>
<th>Big 5 Traits</th>
<th></th>
<th>Positive Traits</th>
<th></th>
<th>Negative Traits</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liked Target</td>
<td>Disliked Target</td>
<td>Liked Target</td>
<td>Disliked Target</td>
<td>Liked Target</td>
<td>Disliked Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projection</td>
<td>.18&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-.04&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.12&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-.05&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.15&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>-.08&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.42)</td>
<td>(.42)</td>
<td>(.46)</td>
<td>(.47)</td>
<td>(.43)</td>
<td>(.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotyping</td>
<td>.08&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.14&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.15&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.14&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.11&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.20&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.38)</td>
<td>(.41)</td>
<td>(.36)</td>
<td>(.48)</td>
<td>(.38)</td>
<td>(.37)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. For each task, values in the same row sharing the same superscript do not differ significantly.
Table 3. Relationship closeness and perceived similarity to targets (Studies 1 and 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Study 1</th>
<th></th>
<th>Study 2</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liked</td>
<td>Disliked</td>
<td>Liked</td>
<td>Disliked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Closeness</td>
<td>6.95</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>6.79</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity Index</td>
<td>5.92</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>5.60</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. For each task, values in the same row sharing the same superscript do not differ significantly.
Study 3

Participants were 21 male and 61 female undergraduate students at Eckerd College

Inference Tasks
   Big Five trait ascriptions

Targets
   1. Liked and similar person of the opposite sex
   2. Disliked and similar person of the opposite sex
   3. Liked and dissimilar person of the opposite sex
   4. Disliked and dissimilar person of the opposite sex

Procedure and Measures
   Same as Study 1
Table 4. Mean levels of relationship closeness and similarity as a function of target valence and similarity: Study 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similar Target</th>
<th>Dissimilar Target</th>
<th>Similarity Index</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked</td>
<td>Disliked</td>
<td>Liked</td>
<td>Disliked</td>
<td>Liked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Closeness</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>1.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity Index</td>
<td><strong>6.55</strong></td>
<td>4.70</td>
<td><strong>3.97</strong></td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** For each task, values in the same row sharing the same superscript do not differ significantly.
Table 4. Mean levels of relationship closeness and similarity as a function of target valence and similarity: Study 3

<table>
<thead>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liked</td>
<td>Disliked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target</td>
<td>Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>6.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity</td>
<td>6.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Index</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** For each task, values in the same row sharing the same superscript do not differ significantly.
Table 5. Mean levels of projection and stereotyping as a function of target valence and similarity: Study 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similar Target</th>
<th>Dissimilar Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liked Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projection</td>
<td>.35&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotyping</td>
<td>.07&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note.** For each task, values in the same row sharing the same superscript do not differ significantly.
When Will Valence Matter?
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Initial response to a target is to assess similarity as a kind of “screening process”
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If the target is perceived to be similar, valence is then taken into account and may influence projection
When Will Valence Matter?

Initial response to a target is to assess similarity as a kind of “screening process”

If the target is perceived to be similar, valence is then taken into account and may influence projection

If the target “fails the audition” and is judged dissimilar, valence is then disregarded
Current Study (with Michael Connelly)

Assumption: Perceptions of liking are more “fluid” than perceptions of similarity, and will vary with target behavior. Target transgressions will lower liking, and thus projection.
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**Procedure** Guided writing task in which participants describe a time that the target hurt them
Assess projection, liking and similarity either before or after the writing task
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Procedure: Guided writing task in which participants describe a time that the target hurt them
Assess projection, liking and similarity either before or after the writing task

Predictions: Liking will decline after recalling the transgression
Perceived similarity will not decline
Projection will decline after recalling the transgression
The decline in projection will be mediated by the decline in liking
Empathy and Helping for Psychologically Distant Targets
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psychological Distance Between Observer and Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close friends; family; romantic partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link between empathic concern and helping is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inconsistent and/or attenuated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generic strangers; interdependent strangers;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>acquaintances; co-workers; recipients of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>volunteer help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistent link between empathic concern and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>helping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problematic strangers; outgroup members when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group membership is highly salient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Link between empathic concern and helping is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inconsistent and/or attenuated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why?
Why?

Range restriction (floor and ceiling effects)
Why?

Range restriction (floor and ceiling effects)

Differing levels of obligation
Why?

Range restriction (floor and ceiling effects)

Differing levels of obligation

Thus, intermediate targets provide the greatest opportunity for empathic concern to motivate helping behavior
Participants
Participants were 89 undergraduate students (32 men; 57 women) enrolled in psychology classes at Eckerd College.

Materials
Participants were asked to imagine that they had signed up for a bone marrow registry, and that they had been notified that they were a match for a particular person. They were then presented with six targets differing in psychological closeness.

Closest family member
Closest non-romantic friend
College student unknown to them
Worker living in another state
Burglar on parole
Convicted child molester
For each target, participants indicated:

How psychologically close they felt to the target  
The likelihood that they would go through with the marrow donation  
How obligated they would feel to do so  
Degree to which they felt empathic concern  
Degree to which they felt personal distress  
Degree to which they felt sadness

All ratings were made on 7-point scales
Closeness As a Function of Target

- Family
- Friend
- Student
- Worker
- Burglar
- Molester

Closeness
Helping, Empathic Concern, and Obligation
As a Function of Target

- Family
- Friend
- Student
- Worker
- Burglar
- Molester

Help
Helping, Empathic Concern, and Obligation
As a Function of Target

- Family
- Friend
- Student
- Worker
- Burglar
- Molester

Categories: Helping, Empathic Concern

Graph legend:
- Black line: Help
- Green line: Empathic Concern
Helping, Empathic Concern and Obligation
As a Function of Target

- Family
- Friend
- Student
- Worker
- Burglar
- Molester

- Help
- Empathic Concern
- Obligation
Effect of Obligation and Empathic Concern on Helping (Beta weights)

- Family
- Friend
- Student
- Worker
- Burglar
- Molester

Obligation
Effect of Obligation and Empathic Concern on Helping (Beta weights)
Closeness As a Function of Target: Arab Students
Closeness As a Function of Target: Arab Students
Helping, Empathic Concern, and Obligation
As a Function of Target: Arab Students
Helping, Obligation, and Empathic Concern
As a Function of Target: Arab Students
Helping, Obligation, and Empathic Concern
As a Function of Target: Arab Students

- **Help**
- **Concern**
- **U.S. Concern**

Graph showing the trends of helping, obligation, and empathic concern for different targets: Family, Friend, Student, Worker, Burglar, and Molester.
Helping, Obligation, and Empathic Concern
As a Function of Target: Arab Students

![Graph showing helping, obligation, and empathic concern as a function of target: Arab Students. The graph indicates a decrease in concern and obligation as the target moves from Family to Molester. The y-axis represents the levels of concern and obligation, ranging from 0 to 7. The x-axis represents different targets: Family, Friend, Student, Worker, Burglar, and Molester. The graph shows that concern and obligation decrease significantly as the target transitions from Family to Molester.]
Helping, Obligation, and Empathic Concern
As a Function of Target: Arab Students
Effect of Obligation and Empathic Concern on Helping (Beta weights): Arab Students
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