



Journal of Experimental Social Psychology 42 (2006) 213-220

Journal of Experimental Social Psychology

www.elsevier.com/locate/jesp

When ostracism leads to aggression: The moderating effects of control deprivation ☆

Wayne A. Warburton a,*, Kipling D. Williams b, David R. Cairns a

^a Department of Psychology, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW 2109, Australia ^b Department of Psychological Sciences, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907, USA

> Received 7 March 2004; revised 27 February 2005 Available online 3 June 2005

Abstract

We hypothesized that increasing or decreasing levels of control in an ostracized individual could moderate aggressive responding to ostracism. Participants were either ostracized or included in a spontaneous game of toss, and then exposed to a series of blasts of aversive noise, the onsets over which they had either control or no control. Aggression was defined as the amount of hot sauce participants allocated to a stranger, knowing the stranger did not like hot foods, but would have to consume the entire sample. Ostracized participants without control allocated more than four times as much sauce as any other group; ostracized participants who experienced restored control were no more aggressive than either of the groups who were included. Aggressive responding to ostracism may depend on the degree to which control needs are threatened in the target, and is discussed in terms of Williams's (2001) needs threat model of ostracism.

© 2005 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Ostracism; Aggression; Social exclusion; Control

Introduction

What is the relationship between ostracism and aggression? Recent laboratory findings suggest that social exclusion can lead to increased aggression (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001), and an examination of 15 recent school shootings in the US, implicates "acute or chronic rejection... in the form of ostracism, bullying and/or romantic rejection" as a possible causal factor in 87% of cases (Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003, p. 202). Conversely, aggressive behavior may also result in ostracism (see McDougall,

Corresponding author. Fax: +61 2 9850 8062.

E-mail address: waynew@psy.mq.edu.au (W.A. Warburton).

Hymel, Vaillancourt, & Mercer, 2001, for a review), and so it seems feasible that for some individuals, ostracism and aggression may be mutually causative, with each feeding the other and causing a spiraling escalation in both. In a longitudinal study by Kupersmidt, Burchinal, and Patterson (1995), not only did rejection predict aggression in elementary and middle school students, but as rejection increased over time, so did aggression. If such a cycle *does* exist, then factors that can moderate aggressive responding to ostracism (we call this the outcast-lash-out effect), may prevent ostracism-related aggression from escalating into outright violence.

Identifying outcast-lash-out moderators is complicated, however, because of inconsistencies in the research findings related to rejection, social exclusion, and ostracism (see Warburton & Williams, 2005). Some studies have found that ostracism elicits pro-social responses, whereas other research using rejection and social exclusion paradigms have found anti-social

^{*} An Australian Research Grant to the second author provided part of the funding for this research. This research fulfilled partial requirements for the first author's honour thesis. We would like to thank Doris McIlwain, Trevor Case, Julie Fitness, and Cassandra Govan, for their comments on the design and previous drafts.

responses. It might be tempting to dismiss these differences as an artifact of the different definitions and methods used. After all, ostracism refers to being ignored and excluded, and is usually manipulated experimentally in vivo, but research into both rejection (which implies initial or anticipated acceptance) and social exclusion (which implies not being included) generally uses paradigms in which excluded/rejected participants receive news of future exclusion/rejection through a third party or via feedback from a personality test. We can find no reason, however, why these operationalizations should be so fundamentally dissimilar as to produce opposite results. Rather, in the absence of a better explanation, we assume that all three paradigms reliably produce perceptions of social exclusion and could produce either proor anti-social responses, but that, as yet, studies have not manipulated or assessed the types of moderating factors that can determine the direction of the sociality of responses. To address this gap, the focus of this paper will be to determine whether we can steer ostracismrelated behaviors toward or away from aggressiveness by manipulating a relevant moderating factor that underlies the direction of the response.

Why should ostracism lead to aggression?

Twenge et al. (2001) suggested that social exclusion might weaken normal social restraints on selfish and aggressive behavior, thus releasing an instinctual drive to aggress. This explanation appears to predict an increase in aggressive responding to *all* instances of social exclusion and does not adequately explain the many findings in which ostracism, despite being painful (Eisenberger, Lieberman, & Williams, 2003), has elicited pro-social rather than aggressive behaviors, such as conformity (Williams, Cheung, & Choi, 2000) social compensation (Williams & Sommer, 1997); unconscious mimicry (Lakin & Chartrand, in press), and increased attention to and processing of social information (Gardner, Pickett, & Brewer, 2000; Pickett, Gardner, & Knowles, 2004).

Similarly, Baumeister, Twenge, and Ciarocco (2003) suggested that because social exclusion may lead to emotional numbness, cognitive overload and self-regulatory deficits (Twenge, Catanese, & Baumeister, 2002, 2003), it may also lead to aggression through a state of passivity in which the excluded individual's resources are too depleted to either restrain aggressive impulses or resist group pressures. Although this hypothesis offers an explanation for both pro-social and anti-social responses to ostracism, it cannot adequately account for findings that ostracism can elicit various *effortful* pro-social behaviors, such as social compensation and increased processing of social information.

It is possible, however, that another factor may be instrumental in the outcast-lash-out effect. According to Williams's (1997, 2001) model of ostracism, an

ostracized individual will experience an immediate threat to four basic human needs—belonging, control, self-esteem, and meaningful existence—and will consequently be motivated to restore those needs. Of these factors, control has considerable potential as an outcast-lash-out moderator, because there are demonstrated links between control and aggression.

It should be noted here that belonging may best be fortified by *pro-social* behaviors, and can also achieve a sense of control. However, when control is sufficiently thwarted, desires to fortify control can outweigh desires to be liked, thus allowing aggression to be a functional response (Warburton & Williams, 2005).

Control and aggression

Control has been linked to aggressive behavior in various ways. Mueller (1983) theorized that a loss of personal control leads to aggression either as a reactant attempt to restore a lost freedom or as an angry response to frustration. Tedeschi and Felson's (1994) social interaction theory portrayed aggression as a coercive tool used to control others' behavior. Other theorists have suggested that individuals may aggress as a way of restoring a generalized sense of personal power or control over others (see Depret & Fiske, 1993; Frieze & Boneva, 2001). It also seems feasible that some acts of indirect (Richardson & Green, 1997), relational (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995), or displaced aggression (Marcus-Newhall, Pedersen, Carlson, & Miller, 2000), may be used as a means to restore a sense of personal control or power (e.g., Crick, Casus, & Mosher, 1997), perhaps through the device of symbolically asserting superiority over another (see Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; Williams & Warburton, 2003).

There appears to be little experimental literature about the processes underlying control-aggression effects, but it seems reasonable to suggest that they may involve schemas or scripts in which an aggressive response is believed to be an effective remedy to a loss of control or power. According to script theories of aggression (e.g., Huesmann, 1986, 1998), the activation of such knowledge structures by a relevant trigger (such as a significant loss of control), would set in motion linked goals and action plans, and these, in turn, may increase the likelihood of an aggressive response. Further, if an individual has control-aggression scripts that are chronically accessible, they might automatically respond to a loss of control trigger with aggression, and with little conscious awareness of the processes underlying their behavior (see Todorov & Bargh, 2002). Consistent with such a mechanism, recent findings in our laboratory show that individuals vary in the degree to which they hold control-aggression beliefs, and that higher levels of such beliefs predict greater aggressive responding to a control loss.

دريافت فورى ب متن كامل مقاله

ISIArticles مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✔ امكان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگليسي
 - ✓ امكان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
 - ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
 - ✓ امكان دانلود رايگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
 - ✔ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
 - ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات