The Role of Self-Focused Attention in Political Participation Decisions*

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ABSTRACT

Political mobilization may increase participation in part by inducing self-focus in those mobilized. Psychological research shows that self-focus, an attention process, increases the influence of certain types of cognitions on behavior. This experimental study examines whether self-focus increases the effect of personal responsibility judgments on the likelihood of taking steps to join public interest groups. The study surveyed 246 community members in three treatment groups. Survey and behavioral responses were analyzed by probit, OLS, and confirmatory factor analysis. Self-focus significantly and substantially increased the impact of cognitions on behavior. The average probability of behavior was not, however, increased due to compensating downward shifts in the regression constants. Nonetheless, the results have political implications, and they suggest many avenues for future research.
Much depends upon people’s focus of attention, upon what values and knowledge are evoked while their decisions are being reached. Focus of attention is a variable of particular importance for political phenomena.... (Simon, 1995, p. 60)

The political science literature contains many intimations that people's attention plays an important role in public opinion and political choice. The ebb and flow of public attention to political issues is an important aspect of politics (Graber, 1993). Jones (1994) suggests that the focus of public attention determines which evaluative dimensions are used to determine policy preferences, with great impact on which solutions command public support. Iyengar (1990) finds that priming by the news media, a manipulation of attention, can alter which issues people employ in presidential evaluations.

Political scientists have not explored the possibility that attention processes might also play an important role in political participation decisions, by helping to account for the efficacy of political mobilization. Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) have shown that mobilization—that is, organizations contacting citizens—is among the most potent factors in determining whether people participate politically. Mobilization may in part operate by making citizens aware of participation opportunities. Many people, however, are aware of participation opportunities but do not act until they have been contacted. Contacts may mobilize these people because being contacted induces self-focused attention in the person. Psychological research indicates that self-focused attention can dramatically alter cognition and behavior, making both more consistent with a person's self-image (Carver and Scheier, 1981).
If self-focus proves to influence political participation decisions, it may help clarify what types of mobilization methods will prove successful for political groups. Certain methods, such as direct personal recruitment appeals, more readily induce self-focus than others. The effects of self-focus may also help clarify why different political groups use the types of appeals they do.

Despite extensive psychological research showing powerful effects of self-focus, political scientists have yet to examine the explanatory power of this phenomenon. This paper brings to bear methods used in psychological research to explore the role of self-focus in decisions to join public interest groups—a costly form of participation with arguably important political effects (Rothenberg, 1992). The paper reports a study in which self-focus was induced by manipulations of the recruitment literature and of the publicness of the participation decision. Self-focused persons prove to have a stronger relationship between participation-relevant cognitions and participation intentions and behavior. The results have implications for interest group recruitment strategies and for the processes resulting in political mobilization.

The Effects of Self-Focused Attention

Self-focused attention should increase the effects of personal standards on political participation decisions. Self-focused attention results in greater influence of personal standards on behavior. Self-focused attention usually involves self-evaluation (Duval and Wicklund, 1972). If people find that their views or their actions fall short of personal standards salient at the time of self-evaluation, they will correct this divergence (see Carver and Scheier, 1981, for a review of the literature). In particular, numerous studies
show that self-focus increases helping and justice-related behavior, provided the context does not make the respondent self-concerned and the helping request is legitimate and sufficiently noticeable (Aderman and Berkowitz, 1983; Berkowitz, 1987; Gibbons and Wicklund, 1982; Greenberg, 1983; Mayer, Duval, Holtz et al., 1985; Rogers, Miller, Mayer et al., 1982). This line of research bears particular relevance to political participation decisions because such decisions appear to be heavily influenced by altruistic and justice-related considerations, as I shall elaborate.

In order to study the effects of self-focus on the relationship between personal standards and participation in public interest groups, it is necessary to specify means of measuring the personal standards. Relevant standards should be embodied in evaluations of political groups and their goals. Self-focus should not, however, influence just any group evaluations but evaluations that are related to those personal standards involved in self-evaluation (Carver and Scheier, 1981, Chapter 17).

Prior research indicates that evaluations of the public goods value of group goals (perceived benefits to others) and self-relevance of group goals, as well as affect toward the goals are relevant considerations in making participation decisions (Finkel, Muller, and Opp, 1989; Muhlberger, 1995; Muller, Dietz, and Finkel, 1991). Moreover, these considerations probably involve personal standards that affect self-evaluation. Affect and self-relevance bring to bear standards involving personal preferences and individuality. Public goods value brings to bear personal ethical standards.

Prior research indicates that self-relevance, affect, and public goods value are all considerations involved in judgments of whether one has a personal responsibility
(Schwartz, 1970; Schwartz and Howard, 1984) to contribute to the goals promoted by a public interest group (Muhlberger, 1995). Because perceptions of personal responsibility depend on the personal standards embodied in these other considerations, perceived responsibility might itself be affected by self-focus. Finally, a number of studies indicate that anticipations of internal rewards may mediate the effects of responsibility on behavior (Muller, Dietz, and Finkel, 1991; Schwartz and Howard, 1982)—for many persons (Muhlberger, 1998). This may mean that self-focus also enhances attention to internal rewards.

In summary, self-focus may bring attention to the considerations relevant to personal responsibility judgments (affect, public goods value, and self-relevance), the responsibility judgment itself, and expectations of internal rewards for acting on personal responsibilities—at least for the majority of people who express some interest in politics. Attention to these five cognitions should increase their influence on behavior. I will name these five cognitions "personal standards considerations," because of their association with self-based standards.

Self-focus may increase the influence of the personal standards considerations on behavior for a second reason. It might insure deeper processing of the considerations — resulting in greater accuracy in the perceived considerations and greater certainty about them. Self-focus results in more accurate reports of self-related cognitions (Gibbons, 1983), which might generalize to the personal standards considerations. In particular, one of the attention manipulations here—telling respondents that they may have to explain their evaluations to the research assistant—engenders a particular type of self-focus called
"accountability." The type of accountability employed here has positive effects on the depth and accuracy of cognition (Lerner and Tetlock In Press).

**Research Design**

In the following study, community members read the literature of a public interest group, answered questions about the group meant to tap the personal standards considerations, and were given opportunities to contact the group. The study seeks to test self-focus manipulations directly relevant to politics. Some subjects were led to expect that they might need to explain their evaluations of a public interest group to the research assistant. Anticipation of an audience evokes self-focus (Carver and Scheier, 1981). In a second self-focus condition, subjects were exposed to interest group literature modified to make extensive use of the pronoun "you." The goal was to evoke self-contemplation in the reader. Research shows that getting people to use pronouns such as "I" or "me" induces self-focus (Hamilton and Shuminsky, 1990). Perhaps mere exposure to such pronouns evokes self-focus. These manipulations are politically relevant because interest groups have some control over the content of their literature and whether participation decisions are made with accountability to an audience.

**Data**

**Subjects**

Respondents consisted of 270 jury pool members at the Allegheny County Criminal Courthouse, in Pittsburgh, PA. Jury pool members are selected through voting registration rolls, driver's license registration, and the phone book, constituting a diverse though not random sample of the community. Mean age of the respondents in the final
sample was 41 ($s.d.=12$). The sample was 31% male, 90% Caucasian of mixed ethnic background, and 54% college graduates.

This sample is no more interested in politics than is the general population, which is important because more politically interested persons may be more susceptible to the self-focus effect and therefore might overstate its impact. Asked how much of the time they follow government and public affairs, 25% of respondents said most of the time, 41% some of the time, 27% now and then, and 8% hardly at all. The figures for the same question (Variable 701) on the 1994 National Election Study, a nationally-representative sample, are 29%, 34%, 23%, and 13%.

**Procedures**

After being introduced by an administrator, a research assistant sat in the jury pool room and waited for pool members to express an interest in the study. Those interested were given a list of 10 public interest groups\(^1\) with short descriptions of each group. After respondents picked a preferred group from the list, they were given a questionnaire and the group's official recruitment brochure. They were instructed to read the literature and then respond to the questionnaire.

Upon returning the questionnaire, respondents were offered a business reply card that they could use to get more information about the group. The official-looking reply cards were addressed to a Washington, D.C. Post Office box that forwarded the cards

\(^{1}\) These groups were: Amnesty International, Children's Defense Fund, NAACP, National Abortion Rights Action League, NOW, National Right to Life, NRA, National Taxpayer's Union, Public Citizen, and Sierra Club.
back to the researcher. Cards had code numbers that matched them to a given questionnaire. The relevant public interest groups were notified so respondents would get information from the group. Respondents received a debriefing letter.

The list of 10 public interest groups used was diverse. The groups were picked by a process meant to select groups that are publicly prominent, maximizing the chances that respondents may come across these groups in real life. Selection began with a list of 251 groups identified as prominent and politically influential by the Foundation for Public Affairs (1992), a clearinghouse for public interest group information. Next, the Newspaper Abstracts database (University Microfilms Inc.), a database of 25 top national and regional newspapers, was searched for each public interest group's name and name renditions. The search period was for the 18 month period prior to the study. The ten groups with the largest number of newspaper articles were selected, excluding duplication of groups with highly similar goals and excluding the ACLU, out of concern for juror reactivity.

**Questionnaire**

The questionnaire consisted of two pages. Each question included a scale and respondents were instructed to place a mark anywhere on the scale. The question order was randomized under constraints to insure distance between similar questions. Twenty-four questionnaires were unusable, leaving a total of 246. Five of these unusable questionnaires had many missing answers because respondents were called out of the pool waiting room. Fourteen of the omitted questionnaires involved respondents circling only
scale anchors, suggesting they did not know they could use the whole scales. Five more were from persons who were already members of the groups in question.

**Manipulations**

The study involved two experimental conditions—an audience and a "you" condition—and a control condition. In the audience condition, respondents were told that when they finished the questionnaire they should return it to the research assistant who would look it over and ask any questions she might have about responses. In the control condition, respondents were told their responses would be anonymous and asked to put their questionnaires in a box upon completion.

In the "you" condition, the group literature given to respondents was modified, if necessary, to include at least 13 instances of the word "you." Existing sentences were altered so they had the same meaning but made reference to the reader with the word "you." In the control condition, group literature was cleansed of all references to "you," "us," "we," "I," and so forth. The control and audience conditions each contain 83 observations. The "you" condition contains 80 observations.

**Variables**

The following will describe the measures employed. All of the terms in parentheses in the question text are scale anchors appearing on a continuous scale accompanying the question. A star after a question indicates it was used and validated in previous research (Muhlberger, 1995). A weighted average of the measures of each construct is used for OLS analysis, with weights determined by factor analysis.
1) **PUBLIC GOODS VALUE (MORAL VALUE)**—If this group succeeded in achieving its goals, I think it would (greatly benefit humanity / neither / greatly harm humanity).* If this group succeeded in achieving its goals, I think it would make the world (a far worse place / neither / a far better place).*

2) **SELF RELEVANCE**—The goals of this group are (hardly relevant / moderately relevant/ very relevant) to me. (either positively or negatively)* The goals of this group matter (very much / moderately much / not much) to someone like me.

3) **AFFECT**—I (strongly like / neither / strongly dislike) this group's goals.* I feel (strongly negative / neither / strongly positive) about this group's goals.

4) **RESPONSIBILITY**—I feel (a strong responsibility to oppose / neither / a strong responsibility to contribute to) this group.* I feel (a strong obligation to contribute to / neither / a strong obligation to oppose) this group's goals.

5) **INTERNAL REWARDS**—Contributing to this group's goals would make me feel (very good / neither / very bad) about myself.* I would feel (very unhappy / neither / very happy) about myself if I contributed to this group's goals.

6) **REPORTED MOTIVATION**—I am (strongly motivated to participate *in* / neither / strongly motivated to participate *against*) this group.* "I do (not want to / very much want to) participate in this group."

7) **COSTS**—The negative of: In the next month, I will have (no / moderate amount of / very much) free time.*
8) **NON-MONETARY REWARDS**—"Participating in this group would directly benefit me in non-monetary ways. (For example, cleaner air, greater security, less discrimination....) (strongly agree / moderately agree / do not agree)"*

9) **MONETARY REWARDS**—"Participating in this group could pay off for me in terms of goods and services that I want. (For example, lower taxes, a nice magazine....) (strongly agree / moderately agree / do not agree)"* 

No solidary rewards measures were collected because all but one of the public interest groups indicated having local chapters.

**Results**

**Validity**

The variables measured here are part of a responsibility model of political participation. I have presented this model elsewhere and provided evidence for the convergent and divergent validity of the measures (Muhlberger, 1995). The self-relevance and public goods measures are significantly correlated with related self-concept and ideological measures and not with unrelated self-concept measures. The specifically moral cognitions measured here (e.g., sense of responsibility) are stressed in participation decisions by persons scoring high on a moral reasoning test, while non-moral considerations (e.g., internal rewards), are deemphasized (Muhlberger, 1998).

Confirmatory factor analysis with the data in the current study supports the hypothesis that the questions in this study measure distinguishable underlying constructs (factors) as identified in the variables section. Experience with similar data from a prior study recommends a confirmatory factor model in which factor loadings are set equal for
each of the three conditions, but error variances are free to vary across condition. The proposed model fits the data well. The Comparative Fit Index was .97 (values above .90 are considered good); Bollen-Stine bootstrapped $p=.41$ (a test of the null hypothesis that the model does not fit the data; values above .05 are considered good; N=1000 in all bootstrapped tests), and all factor loadings are highly significant with $z>11$.

Two additional tests of validity were performed. A potential criticism states that all the variables measure the same construct, perhaps motivation. To test this hypothesis, I checked whether the correlations between factors were significantly different than one. In nine of the 10 factor pairs, the correlation was significantly different ($p=.00$), providing strong evidence that the variables measure distinct constructs. The one exception was the correlation between public goods value and affect, which was not quite significant ($p=.10$). Public goods benefits and affect are more clearly delineated in other research.

A final test of validity was a permutation test. In such a test, variables and factors are randomly recombined. If many of these random models fit the data as well as does the theoretical model, the theoretical model can be rejected. Of 999 random permutations, none fit the data as well as the theoretical model.

**Hypothesis Tests**

The attention manipulations in this study are in some respects weak. The audience and "you" conditions did not constitute continuously present self-focus stimuli. Distractions in the jury pool waiting room might also have interfered with the manipulations. Moreover, the waiting room made convincing execution of the audience condition difficult. Because respondents often lined up, the research assistant asked a
short question of every other respondent. Prospective respondents could see that the assistant was not grilling respondents.

Despite the weakness of these manipulations, focus of attention did substantially affect behavior. Probit coefficients for the personal standards considerations were in almost all cases much larger in the self-focus conditions than in the control condition. Table 1 presents these probit coefficients. All considerations were scaled to range between 0 and 1. Thus, the coefficient of 2.3 for perceived public goods value indicates that at the highest value of this variable—one—the coefficient times the variable equals 2.3. With a constant ($\beta_0$) of -2.0, the linear portion of the probit function (the index) equals .3 (2.3-2). Treating that value as a z-score, and taking the probability of that z-score, the probability of taking a reply card for the highest perceived public goods value in the control condition is .62 ($=\Phi(.3)$). The reader can assess the probabilities of various outcomes using this table. The coefficients for the personal standards related considerations are in most cases at least twice as large in the experimental conditions than in the control.

Most of the rows in the table are for univariate regressions containing only the consideration of that row. Significance values indicate whether the consideration has significantly larger coefficients in an experimental than in the control condition. Many of the univariate coefficients are significant or show trends. A proper simultaneous test is, however, needed. Self-focus should enhance the overall effects of the considerations on behavior. This should mean that in a regression of behavior on all the considerations, the sum of the coefficients in an experimental condition should be significantly larger than in
the control condition. The "Sum of All Coefficients" row reports such an analysis. Table 1 shows that the sums of the coefficients in multivariate analyses prove significantly larger than the sum for the control condition in three of the four behavior by manipulation conditions (significance determined by Wald $\chi^2$ tests, related to F-tests in OLS).

I do not report individual coefficients from the multivariate analyses for several reasons. As already discussed, the considerations are part of a multi-tier path model. Theory presents no guide regarding how self-focus will affect this model, it only gives guidance with respect to the overall effects on behavior. Moreover, collapsing a multi-tier model into a single regression gives misleading results for individual coefficients.

One concern is that the audience and "you" conditions might affect mailing a reply card only because respondents were more likely to take a card if they were in these conditions. Even if so, such an effect deserves attention because it increases participation-relevant behavior. That said, the data show that the audience condition did directly influence likelihood of mailing, controlling for taking a card ($p=.04$ for the sum of coefficients in a multivariate analysis). Taking a card was controlled by analyzing only those respondents who had taken a card (n=126). Controlling for taking a card, the "you" condition shows a substantially larger sum of coefficients, but the sum is not significantly different than in the control condition ($p=.21$).

Throughout Table 1, the size of coefficients shows that subjects were far more responsive to personal standards considerations when self-focused. The constant terms, however, are generally more negative in the self-focus conditions. This means that while respondents were more responsive to the considerations, their probability of action did not
exceed the probability of action in the control condition until fairly high levels of the considerations. For mean values of the considerations, the probabilities of action are almost identical for the self-focus and the control conditions. Therefore, self-focus does not elevate the mean probability of behavior.

The absence of changes in the average probability of behavior does not, however, mean that there were no behavioral effects. Self-focused respondents are far more sensitive to the considerations and, for high levels of the considerations, their probability of behavior is often much higher than in the control condition, as shown in Table 2. The table displays the probability of each behavior with considerations held at 1.5 standard deviations above their means. The probabilities are significantly different, in a multivariate analysis, for both behaviors in the "you" condition. Also, the audience condition in the case of mailing a card shows a trend ($p=.08$). This condition did, however, have significantly higher values than the control condition ($p<.05$) when the personal standards considerations are fixed at any value between .63 and 1.43 standard deviations above their means.

Two other points deserve mention. First, Table 1 shows that self-focus does not enhance the effects of selective incentives on taking a reply card, but self-focus does enhance the effects of these incentives on mailing the reply card. This effect is driven by non-monetary incentives. Second, despite clear effects of self-focus on behavior, no evidence was found of an effect of self-focus on the relationship between considerations and reported motivation. This may be because the manipulations in the current study induce focus on the public aspects of the self. The "you" condition could have resulted in
public self-focus by creating a mental "conversation" between the respondent and the literature writer (Morin, 1993). Public self-focus emphasizes publicly visible aspects of the self, and behavior is certainly more publicly visible than attitudes. This may have led to more change in behavior than in intentions.

**Counterarguments**

The strong findings in the "you" condition might be criticized on the grounds that use of the word "you" made the group literature seem friendlier. Feeling more positively about the literature, subjects then responded differently to various considerations. Contrary to the counterargument, subjects in the "you" condition did not report liking the literature more than persons in the control condition ($p=.42$, one-sided).

A second counterargument suggests that self-focus merely made subjects more cautious in their replies, with the result that they reported lower levels of considerations than they would have in the control condition. This could explain both why reported considerations have more of an effect in the experimental than the control conditions and why average probability of behavior does not change. Contrary to this hypothesis, mean levels of each consideration were not significantly different in the experimental conditions than in the control condition in eight of 10 comparisons ($p>.05$, one-sided). Of the two significant comparisons, one supports the counterargument and the other contradicts it.

**Discussion**

This study provides a complex picture of the role of self-focus in political reasoning and behavior. It also raises many questions for future research. As such, it
constitutes a useful first step in understanding the role of attention processes in political mobilization.

One objective of this research has been to determine whether self-focus helps account for the potent behavioral effects of political mobilization. It was hypothesized that political mobilization induces self-focus. A substantial psychological literature indicates that self-focus causes people to be more consistent with their personal standards, particularly standards relevant to altruism. Self-focus should therefore increase the likelihood of political participation.

Self-focus was induced using either an anticipated audience or by modifying interest group literature to contain many instances of the word "you." These manipulations substantially and significantly enhanced the impact of personal standards related considerations on taking a public interest group business reply card and on mailing the card. However, the constant terms for the self-focus conditions were also usually lower than in the control condition. As a result, the mean level of behavior was not significantly increased. Those with above-average levels of a consideration were more likely to act in the self-focus conditions, while those with below average levels were less likely to act. What changed was who acted—those who acted in the self-focus conditions were likely to have higher levels of the personal standards considerations than those in the control condition.

These behavioral effects have implications for organizations interested in mobilizing participants. First, note that both the wording of interest group literature and anticipations of an audience can be controlled by political organizations. Organizations
can create audiences for participation decisions by having people talk with potential recruits. Second, given the findings here, if an organization anticipates intense, ethically-grounded support among the population being mobilized, inducing self-focus in potential participants should increase the likelihood of the participation-directed behaviors tested here. If an organization does not anticipate high levels of responsibility-relevant considerations, a strategy of not inducing self-focus should increase the kinds of participation behavior measured here.

Interestingly, the recruitment literature used in the current study shows hints of a pattern consistent with this strategy. The NAACP's recruitment literature contains an astonishing complete absence of pronouns such as "you," "we," or "us." The NAACP is an old, established organization whose current mission probably does not tap the kind of moral outrage that would make a self-focus strategy desirable. Ralph Nader's Public Citizen group, in contrast, has recruitment literature swimming with pronouns. This literature clearly attempts to tap the moral outrage of readers.

Similarly, a morally inflamed constituency should be more likely to engage in the kinds of participatory behaviors measured here if they are recruited by direct personal contact. Such personal contacts provide an audience to the participation decision and should therefore induce self-focus. Interestingly, social movement organizations, such as the Civil Rights Movement, often take advantage of personal recruiting (McAdam, 1982). Without a morally inflamed constituency, a recruitment strategy relying less heavily on self-focus should be more successful, in terms of the behaviors measured here. Consistent
with this observation, public interest organizations in more quiet times depend heavily on mail solicitations.

These inferences from the current study should, however, be treated cautiously because much research remains to be done on the political effects of self-focus. In particular, the absence of an increase in the average frequencies of participatory behavior may be peculiar to conditions in the current study or may occur for the behaviors measured but not for actual joining. These possibilities are suggested by prior psychological research, a prior research study on public interest group participation, and an examination of why the average frequencies of the measured behaviors did not change in the current study.

The psychological research previously discussed finds changes in the average frequency of altruistic and justice-related behavior for self-focused persons. The "behaviors" measured in some of these studies are behavioral intentions, such as agreeing to work a number of hours for an organization. Other studies examine voluntary helping in a laboratory context, with subjects misled to believe that helping is not part of an experiment. These behavioral measures are obviously limited, but they do point to fundamental psychological mechanisms that should apply to political participation.

Second, another study conducted by the author provides some limited evidence that the average probability of joining may increase for self-focused persons (Muhlberger, 1996). In that study, college students were induced to self-focus by the presence of a mirror, a standard manipulation of self-focus (Carver and Scheier, 1981). Those who formed their participation decisions in the presence of the mirror showed much larger
effects of the personal standards considerations on an action index composed of reported motivation and costs. The constant terms did not shift downward. The action index, in turn, significantly and substantially predicted behavior (agreeing to be contacted by a public interest group). The personal standards did have a substantially larger direct impact on behavior, but this effect was not significant perhaps because of the low variability in the behavioral variable and the consequent low power of the test.

The study provides limited support for the view that self-focus may enhance the probability of participation. It also suggests that attitudes, self-reported motivation to participate in this case, can be appreciably modified by self-focus. Such attitude change may be politically important in contexts such as opinion polls and voting, where the dependent variable is largely attitudinal.

Finally, explanations for why the average frequencies of behavior did not rise in the current study leave open the possibility that self-focus may change the average probability of joining in many contexts. Perhaps respondents had a lower constant in the experimental conditions because self-focus also shifted attention toward considerations that reduced motivation to participate. Prior research indicates self-focus does not promote altruism and justice-related behavior if subjects have cause to be self-concerned—such as when they are anxious about a pending evaluation of personal abilities (Aderman and Berkowitz, 1983; Gibbons and Wicklund, 1982). In retrospect, it seems probable that respondents in the jury pool were concerned about being evaluated as jurors or over the hardships jury duty would impose. If so, a different experimental setting may ameliorate the reduced constants.
Alternatively, perhaps self-focus moves attention away from unmeasured considerations that would otherwise be elevating the constant term. What these considerations are is unclear, given that the current study did measure a variety of considerations and incentives.

The reduced constants might also be explained by the possibility that self-focus increases the depth of information processing. More careful consideration of the public interest groups should result in respondents being more certain about whether or not they wished to participate. Those in the control condition, in contrast, may have been less certain. Less certain persons with lower levels of the personal standards related considerations may be more likely to "hedge their bets" by continuing to seek more information about the group. But, less certain persons with high levels of the considerations may be less likely to act than people with higher certainty. This pattern would result in exactly the findings reported here, with higher constants but lower coefficients among the less certain persons.

This certainty explanation has a number of testable implications. Persons in the self-focus condition should report higher levels of certainty, and they should have a higher level of actually joining the public interest groups because of their higher certainty. More thorough information processing might also be reflected in lower estimates of error variance in confirmatory factor analysis of the current data. The audience condition indeed proves to have significantly lower error variance ($p=.03$) than the control condition, but the "you" condition has non-significantly lower error variance ($p=.42$). The
lower error variance in the audience condition is consistent with research on accountability (Lerner and Tetlock, In Press).

The downward shift of the constants might also be the result of a homeostatic mechanism. Perhaps people carry an image of themselves that indicates how political they consider themselves to be. A sudden shift in participation interest may be counteracted by their long-held self-concept as politically uninvolved. It may take a number of exposures to a self-focus manipulation to change this self-concept. Those in the non-experimental conditions may exhibit the effects of such downward adjustment when they become more interested. In the end, those who were not self-focused may prove to join less.

A number of avenues for future research suggest themselves. First, it would be desirable to examine the audience and "you" conditions in a population that is not as subject to self-concern as was the jury pool population. This would help determine whether self-concern negatively impacted the average probability of participatory behavior. Measures of certainty and response latency should be employed to test the depth-of-processing explanation. Finally, a longer-term experiment that tracks subjects through joining a group and measures self-image would test the homeostatic hypothesis.
Bibliography


Muhlberger, Peter (1995). Participation in Public Interest Groups and Campaign Organizations: From Rational Choice to an Explanation Based on Altruism and Ethical


Table 1. Probit Coefficients and Constants for Behavior Regressed on Considerations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavior:</th>
<th>Taking Reply Card</th>
<th>Mailing Reply Card</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>Variable Coefficient</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>$\beta_0 =$ Constant Term</td>
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<td><strong>Personal Standards</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Public Goods Value</td>
<td>$2.6$</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\beta_0 = -2.2$</td>
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<td>Self-Relevance of Goals</td>
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<td></td>
<td>$\beta_0 = -0.59$</td>
<td>$\beta_0 = -0.96$</td>
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<td>Affect Toward Goals</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Sense of Responsibility</td>
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<td>Sum of All Coefficients in Joint Regression</td>
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<td>Selective Incentives (Effect Uncertain)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sum of Both Coeff. in Joint Regression</td>
<td>$0.72$</td>
<td>$1.4$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$\beta_0 = -0.29$</td>
<td>$\beta_0 = -0.81$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: N=246, except selective incentives, for which N=244 and 237. Rows represent univariate probit regressions. Considerations have a range of 0 to 1.

$^{\dagger}p<.15$, $^{\dagger\dagger}p<.10$, $^{\dagger\dagger\dagger}p<.06$, $^{*}p<.05$, $^{**}p<.01$, $^{***}p<.001$, one-tailed. These $p$-values indicate the significance of the difference between the experimental condition coefficient and the control condition coefficient. Analyses controlled for ethnicity, gender, education, and age.
Table 2. Probability of Behavior Across Condition for Considerations at 1.5 Standard Deviations Above Mean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Standards Related Considerations</th>
<th>Probability of Taking Reply Card</th>
<th>Mailing Reply Card</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Control</td>
<td>Audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Goods Value</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Relevance of Goals</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect Toward Goals</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense of Responsibility</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.78†</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Rewards</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effects of All Variables in Joint Regression</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: N=246, except selective incentives, for which N=244 and 237. Rows represent univariate probit regressions.

†p<.15, ††p<.10, †††p<.06, *p<.05, **p<=.01, ***p<=.001, one-tailed. These p-values indicate the significance of the difference between the experimental condition and the control condition for maximum values of the variables. Analyses controlled for ethnicity, gender, education, and age.