Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology

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Carolyn A. Ristau and Paul Rozin

BRIEF REPORT

The Aftermath and After the Aftermath of 9/11: Civility, Hostility, and Increased Friendliness

Carolyn A. Ristau
Barnard College of Columbia University

Paul Rozin
University of Pennsylvania

An attack such as 9/11 engenders both increased in-group solidarity and other prosocial responses and increased hostility to out-group(s) including those perceived as similar to the presumed perpetrators. We report retrospective data collected from 5 to 11 months after 9/11, from 209 New York City taxi drivers. Judgments of their patrons by the taxi drivers indicate changes in civility (friendliness, politeness) that typically were most intense for the first week but continued to some degree for a few weeks to months, and some, the increased positivity experienced by Blacks, were present almost a year later. The direction of change depended on the ethnicity of the cab drivers: African Americans reported an increase in civility, whereas South Asian cab drivers reported a decrease in civility. The 9/11 attack seemed to improve public reaction to African Americans, perhaps because they were replaced by Middle-Easterners/South Asians as part of the "new enemy," the Muslim terrorists.

Keywords: 9/11, disaster, ethnicity, politeness, race

After disasters, as diverse as the 1905 San Francisco earthquake and World War II bombing of cities, community response usually follows a char-

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acteristic temporal trajectory. Many authors have discussed the stages of the aftermath. The sense of community "persists actively for periods of several weeks or months following the disaster." (Fritz (1996/1961, pp. 28–29). Collins, (2004, p. 53), in a review of the literature and his 9/11 data, suggests four phases of response: "(1) an initial few days of shock and idiosyncratic individual reactions to attack; (2) one to two weeks of establishing standardized displays of solidarity symbols; (3) two to three months of high solidarity plateau, and (4) gradual decline toward normalcy in six to nine months." Strozier (2011, p. 107), in his extensive analysis of response to 9/11, reports that "Without question people in New York City turned *briefly* to touch and help after the attacks. This new sense of community seems to have been a response to the shock of facing a collective death." Evidence exists that the resilience shown by New Yorkers was mediated, at least in part, by the presence of positive emotions and pro-social behavior (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013).

What can account for the initial prosocial response and its decline? One factor is increased in-group bonding. In the case of 9/11, the relevant group could be construed as all who are

considered to be "victims" of the enemy. The greater cohesion of the in-group in times of threat from an outside adversary has been described by numerous scholars (e.g., Solnit, 2010).

Increased in-group bonding is typically associated with greater out-group prejudice and derogation. In-group solidarity is particularly salient if there is an out-group that can be designated as perpetrators. Although the victims of 9/11 were of diverse ethnicities, the immediate perpetrators were of one general ethnicity, Middle Eastern Muslims, primarily from Saudi Arabia. We expected increased hostility toward Middle Eastern Muslims, even though some victims were Middle Eastern Muslims. But it is difficult to quickly determine who is Muslim. We expected generalization from the ostensive target group to "foreign" looking persons, specifically South Asians, many of whom are Muslim. Indeed a study conducted after ours with New York cab drivers, (45 responding to surveys, 19 interviewed) indicates a particular focus of hostility and hardship on drivers of Middle Eastern or South Asian origin (Das Gupta, 2005).

A post 9/11 shift in "hierarchy" with Middle Easterners/South Asians moving lower and Blacks higher, and respectively more negative and more positive behaviors exhibited toward each is predicted by Social Dominance Theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). In that and other theories, a race-based hierarchy is assumed in terms of resources, status, and power. As one group (South Asians) loses status, here as a result of their imagined role in perpetrating 9/11, they sink lower in the racial hierarchy, displacing the lowest (Blacks) who thereby rise.

The Common In-Group Identity Model (Gaertner, & Dovidio, 2000, p. 152) suggests that in New York City post 9/11, the Black "out-group" might be recategorized as an in-group, and hence rise in the status hierarchy. The emergence of a superordinate recategorization depends on various conditions (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000, p. 47, p. 157). Most pertinent to 9/11 would be the perception of a common problem and common fate, that is, the attack and its consequences to all "victims" broadly construed.

As predicted by Cognitive Categorization Theories (Duckitt, 2003), the salient, dark skin color of African Americans leads to easy iden-

tification, and separates them from the category of "perpetrators." Indeed many black Muslims were not regarded as Muslim, but rather were categorized on the basis of their color (see also Das Gupta, 2005, p. 227).

Our focus is on the prosocial responses generated by the 9/11 attack. Far more research has been conducted on negative responses to disasters than on positive and likewise little on the emergence of positive attitudes toward other groups.

Method

Data collection from taxi drivers in New York City began February 2002, terminating in August. Drivers were interviewed during three time periods: 101 in February and April 2002, and 108 in August 2002. All 209 respondents were male. Ethnicity/racial information was based on appearance, along with the respondent's information on place of birth.

A brief questionnaire was administered verbally to taxi drivers waiting for customers in "holding areas" of La Guardia and JFK airports. Drivers selected for interview were not conversing or sleeping. They were asked to participate in a university study and told that their opinions were sought because of their extensive experience with the public. Responses were anonymous. Interviewers were female, two University of Pennsylvania undergraduates and one author (C.R.).

The interview included open-ended questions and a multiple choice rating scale. The interview began "In general, did you notice a change in public behavior (interactions among strangers) after September 11? (YES/NO). If YES, please describe the change. How long did it last?" Drivers usually offered some description of change. If they did not, they were "probed" with a question such as "In what ways did the public change?" This was followed by closed-ended questions: "We would like to now ask you questions about some specific kinds of public behavior. Please rate the public's friendliness with a number from 0 to 4, where 0 means *not at all*, 1 means *slightly*, 2 means *moderately*, 3 means *very*, and 4 means *extremely*. The same questions were then asked about the public's politeness. The comparison periods were "before September 11, week after September 11, month after September 11, now." If the driver

would not give a number, we repeated the choice of descriptors, for example, "not at all friendly," and so forth and asked for the phrase that gave the best description. Drivers were also asked to describe any incidents that particularly stood out post 9/11. Drivers were asked their "home/country of origin."

Results

The open-ended and rating scale scores of the taxi drivers were substantially consistent. When asked whether the respondent had noticed any change in public behavior after 9/11, of the 209 drivers, 107 (51%) spontaneously reported a positive change, and 37 (18%) a negative.

Open-ended responses by the taxi drivers were coded with reference to critical words or their synonyms. Increases in friendliness were the most common reference (77 of 209 [37%]), followed by increases in aggressiveness/ rudeness/anger (35%), increased prejudice (41%), increased worry (18%), and increased politeness (21%). No other characteristic showed a frequency greater than 20 cases. The driver racial/ethnic distribution was: South Asian (47%), Black (22%), White (12%), Middle Eastern (9%), Hispanic (6%), and "other"

(3%). We analyzed the two largest groups, South Asians and Blacks. That many saw South Asians as Middle Eastern or Muslims is reflected in a comment by an Indian Sikh taxi driver: "They think 90% of cabbies are Muslim."

The ethnic breakdown shows a clear distinction in mentions of "friendly": 55% of Blacks mention friendly whereas 30% of South Asians do (see Table 1 for statistical results). Positive comments also emphasized common group membership as American: A Black driver noted that a passenger had entered his cab, greatly relieved, saying, "Thank goodness, finally an American taxi driver."

On the friendliness rating scale (0–4), before 9/11, Black drivers reported a lower level of friendliness ($M = 1.49$) with South Asians higher ($M = 2.02$; Table 2 for comparison of Blacks vs. S. Asians). In the week post 9/11, there is a very significant rise in rated friendliness of 1.12 points to 2.61 for Blacks, $t(33) = 4.990$, $p < .001$, and a significant 0.42 point decline in perceived friendliness for South Asians, $t(65) = 2.058$, $p < .05$ (see Figure 2). Black–South Asian differences are smaller, but remain significant at one month, whereas at "now" (5–11 months post 9/11) there are no

Table 1

Summary of New York Taxi Driver Results From Coding of Spontaneous Mention

Item	All New York City	Black	South Asian	χ^2(1) Black versus S. Asian
Change in public behavior	155/209	30/39	57/72	.075
%Yes	74.2	76.9	79.2	
Mention of friendly	93/209	26/47	29/98	8.930**
% Yes	44.4	55.3	29.6	
Mention of polite	43/209	14/47	14/98	4.899*
% Yes	20.6	29.8	14.3	
Mention of anger	52/209	5/47	32/98	8.100**
% Yes	24.9	10.6	32.7	
Mention of prejudice	42/209	0/47	33/98	20.49***
% Yes	20.1	00.0	33.7	
Mention of worried	37/209	1/47	21/98	9.194**
% Yes	17.7	02.1	21.4	
Mention any positive	107/209	32/47	39/98	10.173***
% Yes	51.2	68.1	39.8	
Mention any negative	106/209	13/47	59/98	13.458***
% Yes	50.7	27.7	60.2	

Note. Number of participants showing designated response/total respondents (percentage underneath).
* $p < .05$.   ** $p < .01$.   *** $p < .001$ (all two-tailed).

Table 2
New York Taxi Driver Results From Overall Positive–Negative Comments and Multiple Choice Items

Item	All New York City	Black	South Asian	Black versus S. Asian *t* test
n[a]		37	84	
Overall valence of total response		1.32 (1.13)	−.42 (1.64)	6.029***
Friendly *n*[b]		34	66	
Friendly before	1.86 (.97) *n* = 156	1.49 (1.04)	2.02 (.94)	2.953**
Friendly, week after	1.94 (1.37) *n* = 151	2.60 (1.25)	1.60 (1.23)	3.206**
Friendly: week after–before	.09 (1.67) *n* = 158	1.12 (1.45)	−.42 (1.65)	4.362***
Friendly month after	2.05 (1.07) *n* = 154	2.37 (1.07)	1.90 (.97)	2.224*
Friendly month after–before	.19 (1.32) *n* = 159	.88 (1.12)	−.12 (1.32)	4.042***
Friendly "now"	2.00 (.90) *n* = 157	1.99 (1.13)	2.05 (.81)	.170
Friendly "now"–before	.15 (.97) *n* = 163	.50 (.94)	.03 (.92)	3.296***
Polite *n*[b]		27	53	
Polite before	1.82 (1.05) *n* = 132	1.54 (1.14)	1.98 (1.00)	2.237*
Polite week after	2.03 (1.29) *n* = 125	2.80 (.96)	1.49 (1.18)	4.121***
Polite week after–before	.22 (1.60) *n* = 132	1.26 (1.29)	−.49 (1.49)	5.115***
Polite month after	1.97 (1.07) *n* = 126	2.35 (1.04)	1.72 (.95)	2.206*
Polite month after–before	.16 (1.27) *n* = 134	.82 (1.24)	−.27 (1.15)	3.911***
Polite "now"	1.95 (.88) *n* = 130	1.93 (1.04)	1.99 (.78)	.387
Polite "now"–before	−.20 (4.42) *n* = 139	.39 (.86)	.00 (.77)	2.207*

Note. Results listed as mean value (standard deviation).
[a] Spontaneous comments overall rating (-2 = *negative*, -1 = *mixed, mostly negative*, $+1$ = *mixed, mostly positive*, $+2$ = *positive*). [b] Scaled responses (0 = *not at all friendly/polite* to 4 = *extremely friendly/polite*).
* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$ (all two-tailed); n^2 = minimum number of responses in data.

significant differences; friendliness rated by Blacks and South Asians is almost identical (Table 2, Figure 2). However, because Blacks started at a much lower friendliness baseline, there remains a significant difference between the change from baseline in Blacks (+.50) and South Asians (+.03). Even at "now," some 5 to 11 months post 9/11, the Black level of reported friendliness is significantly higher than it was pre 9/11, $t(33) = 3.084$, $p < .01$. Politeness data very closely parallels friendliness (see Table 2).

Data on negative changes derive from spontaneous comments with three categories of words (anger/aggressive/rude, prejudiced, worried) mentioned frequently enough to allow statistical analyses of group differences (Table 1 and Figure 1). The racial distribution of spontaneous negative observations roughly inverts the distribution for positive features and substantiates the large ethnic/racial differences. Whereas 34% of South Asians view the post 9/11 public as prejudiced, not a single Black, of 47, employed such a term or description.

General negative affect was expressed. A South Asian: "The world has changed . . . We sleep with one eye open."; an Egyptian Muslim:

"A passenger got out of car and broke my brake light; kicked it about 10 days after."

Because of smaller *n*s, we do not provide data on Middle Eastern or White scores. Middle Eastern origin scores were similar to South Asian scores, and Whites to Blacks. The Hispanic scores were closer to the South Asian and Middle Eastern scores, but Hispanics are sometimes mistaken for people from the Middle East.
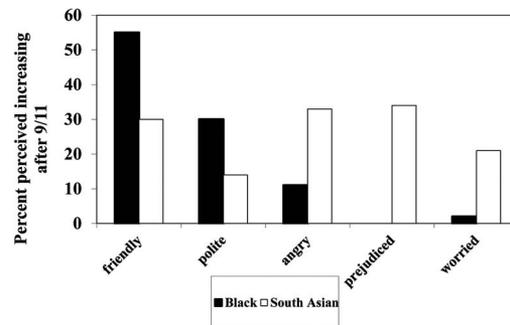

Figure 1. Degree of spontaneous endorsement of five major characteristics of public behavior by Black and South Asian New York taxi drivers.
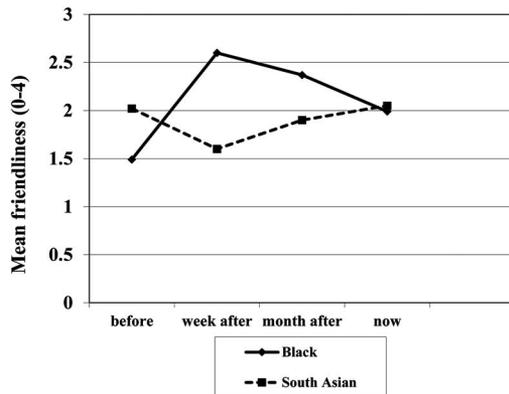
Figure 2. Change in friendliness over time based on rating scale means for African-American and South Asian New York taxi drivers. "Now" refers to contemporary judgments 5 to 11 months after 9/11.

Discussion

The increased friendliness and politeness we report conforms to the large body of literature predicting increased in-group bonding, and prosocial behaviors in the face of an attack by outsiders. As suggested by various researchers (e.g., Collins, 2004; Erikson, 1994) examining the dynamic time course of public response after disasters, we also saw a sharp rise, perhaps a plateau and then a gradual decline over several months, with some effects, namely greater positivity toward Blacks, lasting almost a year.

Increased in-group bonding can result in hostility toward those perceived as a threat. Included among those who were not "we American" victims were those foreign in dress, bearded, turbaned, and darker skinned, though not black. The public's misdirected prejudice and hostility was reflected in the South Asia taxi drivers' greater spontaneous mention of the word "prejudice" and related words, than did Black, and also White, taxi cab drivers.

There was a clear contrast in the perceptions of NYC black taxi drivers who perceived more positive change than did most of the other predominantly South Asian NYC cab drivers. The effect is amenable to interpretation as recategorization of Blacks into a superordinate category of "we American" victims (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). (Our finding of increased positive regard for African Americans is supported by journalistic observations post 9/11; the black-

white divide was reported to be decreased in New York [Sengupta, 2001; Das Gupta, 2005].) One of the messages that this study offers is about the danger of averaging data from heterogeneous sources: the mean taxi driver response would be entirely a function of the degree of representation of different ethnic groups in the sample, and could easily mask important and opposite effects.

Our results represent but a small sample of the possible psychological impacts of 9/11. Systematic survey studies of general reactions are more representative, but provide little interpersonal information. Our sample is limited to a particular occupational category, taxi drivers, and derive primarily from retrospective brief interviews, and are thus subject to possible distorting effects of memory.

When might interventions be most successful to reduce hostility, promote positive behaviors and engage in peace making and building? Ours and others' temporal data suggest that within the first week, while positive feelings are strongest and persons are still in a state of upheaval, could be potent moments.

Positive emotions foster both resilience and positive relationships. In general, "Promoting positive emotions appears to be particularly salubrious in the context of acutely aversive contexts" (Bonanno & Diminich, 2013, p. 391). One impact of our findings is to encourage more attention to positive responses in disasters, as opposed to the usual much greater emphasis on negative emotions and behaviors.

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