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Basking in Reflected Glory: Three (Football) Field Studies

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The tendency to "bask in reflected glory" (BIRG) by publicly announcing one's associations with successful others was investigated in three field experiments. All three studies showed this effect to occur even though the person striving to bask in the glory of a successful source was not involved in the cause of the source's success. Experiment 1 demonstrated the BIRG phenomenon by showing a greater tendency for university students to wear school-identifying apparel after their school's football team had been victorious than nonvictorious. Experiments 2 and 3 replicated this effect by showing that students used the pronoun *we* more when describing a victory than a nonvictory of their school's football team. A model was developed asserting that the BIRG response represents an attempt to enhance one's public image. Experiments 2 and 3 indicated, in support of this assertion, that the tendency to proclaim a connection with a positive source was strongest when one's public image was threatened.

It is a common and understandable tendency for people who have been successful in some positive way to make others aware of their connection with that accomplishment. However, there also appears to be a seemingly less rational but perhaps more interesting tendency for people to publicize a connection with *another person* who has been successful. This latter inclination might be called the tendency to bask in reflected glory (BIRG). That is, people appear to feel that they can share in the glory of a successful other with whom they are in some way associated; one manifestation of this feeling is the public trumpeting of the association. Such a phenomenon is not hard to understand when the one wishing to share in another's success has been instrumental to that success. However, the more intriguing form of the phenomenon occurs when the one who basks in the glory of another has done nothing to bring about the other's success. Here, a simple case of affiliation or membership is sufficient to stimulate a public announcement of the critical connection.

There does seem to be abundant anecdotal evidence that people try to make us cognizant of their connections with highly positive or successful others. The forms of these connections are varied. For example, they may imply similarity of residence, past or present: States and cities like to list the names of famous entertainers, statesmen, beauty contest winners, etc., who live or were born within their boundaries; the state of Indiana has even gone so far as to brag that more vice-presidents of the United States have come from Indiana than any other state. Other such connections involve ethnic or religious affiliation: Italians speak proudly of the ethnic background of Marconi, and Jews refer to Einstein's heritage. Still other connections reflect physical similarities: "Napoleon was short, too." Sexual identity may also give rise to the BIRG phenomenon: At a women's movement forum attended by one of the authors, there was a round of feminine

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applause when it was announced that Madame Curie was a woman and Lee Harvey Oswald was not. Finally, connections suitable for BIRGing may be as tenuous as an incidental contact: We all know people who delight in recounting the time they were in the same theater, airplane, or restroom with a famous movie star.

While there appears to be rich informal support of the sort described above for the existence of a BIRG phenomenon, there seem to be no experimental investigations of the effect. Thus, it was the purpose of this series of studies to examine this tendency to bask in the reflected glory of another or group of others. In so doing, it was hoped to (a) reliably demonstrate the existence of the phenomenon, (b) establish its generality over experimental contexts and measures, (c) determine a mediating process for its occurrence, and (d) discover some of its limiting conditions and thereby gain further information as to its nature.

One of the most obvious arenas for the working of BIRG effects in our society is the athletic arena. Fans of championship teams gloat over their team's accomplishments and proclaim their affiliation with buttons on their clothes, bumper stickers on their cars, and banners on their public buildings. Despite the fact that they have never caught a ball or thrown a block in support of their team's success, the tendency of such fans is to claim for themselves part of the team's glory; it is perhaps informative that the chant is always "*We're* number one," never "They're number one."

It was our view that a sports context would be ideal for a test of some of our notions concerning BIRG effects. Our expectation was that an individual would attempt to bask in the glory of an associated, successful source by publicly announcing his or her affiliation with the source and that this effect would obtain even when the affiliation was clearly irrelevant (i.e., noninstrumental) to the success of the source. In order to gather data relevant to the above hypothesis, an experiment was simultaneously conducted at seven universities with powerful intercollegiate football teams during part of the 1973 football season. It was predicted that students at these schools would be more likely to announce publicly their connection with their universities after the varsity football teams had been successful than after the teams had not been successful. We decided to measure students' tendency to announce their university affiliation by means of an examination of wearing apparel. The frequency with which students wore apparel that clearly identified the university that they attended was hoped to be a subtle yet sensitive measure of the willingness to declare publicly a university affiliation.

Experiment 1

Method

Procedure. From the third week of the 1973 collegiate football season through the last week of regular play, the apparel of students enrolled in sections of introductory psychology courses at seven large universities was covertly monitored. At each school, three types of data were recorded in the same classes every Monday during the season: (a) the number of students present in the class, (b) the number of students with apparel identifying the school of attendance, and (c) the number of students with apparel identifying a school other than the school of attendance. Data recorders at each place received the following definitions prior to data collection:

> Apparel identifying the school of attendance is identified as apparel which unambiguously identifies your school through names, insignia, or emblems. Examples would be buttons, jackets, sweatshirts, tee shirts, etc., which display the school name, team nickname or mascot, or university insignia. Apparel which appears school-related *solely* through the use of colors would not qualify. Also excluded are utilitarian objects which announce a university affiliation such as briefcases, notebooks, or bookcovers. Apparel identifying a school other than the school of attendance are those which meet the same criteria for inclusion as above but which identify a school other than your own.

The data recorders were not members of the classes they monitored.

Results

Over all schools and across all weeks, an average of 176.8 students were present in the monitored classes; an average of 8.4% of these students wore apparel identifying the university of attendance, while 2% of them

wore apparel identifying a school other than the university of attendance. Because of huge differences among the schools in absolute amounts of these two kinds of apparel wearing and in order to make comparisons between the universities as well as between the types of apparel wearing, standardized indexes of relevant apparel wearing were considered necessary. The standard we decided on was the highest percentage of relevant apparel wearing that occurred on any Monday during the season; this standard was simply computed as the number of students wearing relevant apparel that day divided by the number of students in class that day. The percentages of apparel wearing on all other Mondays of the season were scored as proportions of the highest percentage. So, the Monday with the largest percentage of relevant apparel wearing was scored as 1.00, and any other Monday percentage was scored as a fraction (proportion) of that standard. This procedure was performed on the data from each school for the two relevant categories of apparel wearing: school-of-attendance apparel wearing and school-of-nonattendance apparel wearing. A mean proportion for each category was obtained for Mondays following a team's wins and nonwins; these are the mean proportions presented in Table 1. As can be seen from Table 1, these indexes showed a generally consistent tendency for students to wear school-of-attendance apparel more after victories than nonvictories; but this was not the case for school-of-nonattendance apparel. Because of the non-normality of the proportion data, the scores were converted to ranks, and Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed-ranks tests were performed using school as the unit of analysis.[1] Despite the conservativeness of such an approach (for this mode of analysis, n is only 7), the Wilcoxon T reflected a conventionally significant difference on the school-of-attendance measure ($T = 2$, $p < .05$, two-tailed). This result indicated, as predicted, that Mondays following football victories ranked significantly higher in school-of-attendance apparel wearing than Mondays following nonvictories.[2] The mean rank for victories was 3.2, while that for nonvictories was 4.9. A similar test for school-of-nonattendance apparel did not show any effect; the victory and nonvictory mean ranks for this measure were 3.4 and 3.7, respectively. This latter result suggests that the obtained effect on the school-of-attendance measure is not attributable to a simple tendency to wear clothing of a certain type (e.g., athletic team jackets, sweat shirts, tee shirts, etc.) after an athletic team victory.

TABLE 1

INDEXES OF RELEVANT APPAREL WEARING AT THE SEVEN MONITORED UNIVERSITIES

School	School-of-attendance apparel wearing		School-of-nonattendance apparel wearing	
	Wins	Nonwins	Wins	Nonwins
Arizona State	.63 (5)	.61 (1)	.58 (5)	.68 (1)
Louisiana State	.80 (5)	.33 (3)	.58 (5)	.51 (3)
Ohio State	.69 (4)	.30 (1)	.56 (4)	.94 (1)
Notre Dame	.67 (7)	.49 (1)	.62 (7)	.52 (1)
Michigan	.52 (5)	.83 (1)	.20 (5)	.00 (1)
Pittsburgh	.76 (4)	.27 (2)	.31 (4)	.50 (2)
Southern California	.36 (6)	.26 (1)	.17 (6)	.00 (1)
M	.63	.44	.43	.45

Note. Numbers in parentheses represent the number of games that fell into wins and nonwins categories for each school.

Discussion

In all, we found support for our expectations concerning the BIRG phenomenon.

[1] In any conversion of parametric data to ranks, the possibility exists that the ranked scores will not fully reflect the character of the parametric data. In order to examine such a possibility with respect to our results, a correlational analysis was performed on the standardized index scores and their derived rank scores. A highly similar relationship ($r = -.83$) between the two forms of scores was found; the negativity of this correlation is simply due to the fact that the better ranks of those of lower numerical value.

[2] It may be instructive to note that the single exception from this pattern in Table 1 occurred at the University of Michigan as a direct result of a 10–10 tie with Ohio State University in a game for the Big Ten Conference Championship. Most observers, especially the Michigan supporters, felt that the Michigan team had outplayed Ohio State that day and that the game demonstrated Michigan's superiority. However, that tie game constituted Michigan's only entry in our nonwin category, resulting in the only reversal in our data.

Students chose to display more apparel indicators of their academic affiliation after their university's varsity football team had recently been successful. It appears, then, from these data and from numerous anecdotal reports that people desire to make others aware of what seem to be their causally meaningless associations with positive sources.[3] Why? what do they intend to get from it? Perhaps, the answer has to do with Heider's balance formulation (1958). Heider discussed two types of perceived relations between things: sentiment relations, which imply a feeling state between stimuli, and unit relations, which merely imply that things are connected in some manner. It is the unit relationship that seems akin to the noninstrumental connection that people tend to publicize between themselves and a successful or otherwise positive source. The results of the present experiment could well be seen as consistent with balance theory. For example, if observers perceive a positive unit relationship (e.g., university affiliation) between a student and a successful football team and if observers generally evaluate successful teams positively, then in order to keep their cognitive systems in balance, the observers would have to evaluate the student positively as well. Hence, we might expect the student to want to make the unit connection evident to as many observers as possible, in this case, through the wearing of university-identifying clothing. The process whereby one publicly seeks to associate himself or herself with a successful other, then, may be reinforced by the tendency of observers to respond in a similar fashion to associated stimuli.

Indirect evidence that tends to support this hypothesis comes from research concerning the transmission of positive and negative information. Manis, Cornell, and Moore (1974) have shown that one who transmits information that the recipient favors is liked more by the recipient than one who transmits information that the recipient disfavors and that this liking occurred even though it was understood that the transmitters did not necessarily endorse the communicated information. Like the royal messengers of old Persia who were feted when they brought news of military victory but killed when they brought news of defeat, the transmitters in the Manis et al. (1974) study acquired the valence of the message with which they were simply paired. Moreover, there is evidence that people recognize this generalization effect and tend to take actions that connect them, in the eyes of observers, with positive rather than negative news. For example, Rosen and Tesser have repeatedly shown (e.g., Rosen & Tesser, 1970; Tesser, Rosen, & Batchelor, 1972; Tesser, Rosen, & Tesser, 1971) that people prefer to be connected with the communication of good news to another than with the communication of bad news. Investigating the basic effect, Johnson, Conlee, and Tesser (1974) found their subjects reluctant to communicate negative information not because they felt guilty about transmitting bad news but because they feared that they would be negatively evaluated by the recipient of such news; again, this was true even though all concerned knew that the communicators had in no way caused the bad news. Thus, it appears from these data that: first, individuals who are merely associated with a positive or negative stimulus (in this case, favorable or unfavorable information) will tend to share, in an observer's eyes, the affective quality of the stimulus; and second, at some level individuals seem to understand the workings of this phenomenon and make use of it in the ways they present themselves to others. We wish to interpret the results of Experiment 1 in terms of this formulation. Students at our seven monitored universities chose to wear school-of-attendance apparel after football team victories in order to *display* their connection with the successful team and thereby to enhance their esteem in the eyes of observers to the connection. However, another explanation of our findings exists as well. Perhaps the tendency to wear university-

[3] It might be argued that some subjects felt that their presence in the stands on the day of a game *directly* contributed to their team's success. This seems an unlikely explanation for the obtained results, as an analysis of the data of Experiment 1 showed an equally strong BIRG effect for home and away games.

related clothing following team wins had nothing to do with an attempt to proclaim the favorable connection to others but only reflected an increased positivity toward the university as a consequence of team success. That is, it is possible that a football victory caused students to like their school more, and this heightened attraction manifested itself in the tendency to wear school-identified apparel. To test these alternative explanations and to establish the generality of the tendency to BIRG in a different experimental situation than that of Experiment 1, a second experiment was conducted.

Experiment 2

The major distinction between the competing interpretations described above is the contention of the BIRG model that students wore school-of-attendance clothing after victories in order to publicize their university affiliations and hence increase their prestige in the view of *others*. The "heightened attraction" formulation makes no such claim: One is simply seen to like the school more following victories, and this, rather than the possibility of increased interpersonal prestige, is said to stimulate the wearing of relevant apparel. We decided to test these explanations by way of an examination of the pronoun usage of university students describing the outcome of one of their school's football contests. Earlier in this article we alluded to the tendency of athletic fans to crowd in front of television cameras, wave their index fingers high, and shout, "*We*'re number one!" The choice of this pronoun seemed to us a very good measure of the tendency to BIRG. By employing the pronoun *we,* one is publicly able to associate oneself with another person or group of persons. Through the use of some other designation, for example, *they,* one is able to distance oneself from (i.e., to weaken the perceived association with) another person or persons. It was our feeling that in order to BIRG a successful football team, students would be more likely to describe the outcome of a team victory using the pronoun *we* than they would a team nonvictory. Thus, it was our expectation that this tendency to connect oneself with a positive source but distance oneself from a negative source would influence subjects to use the term, "We won," to describe a team win but use the third person (e.g., "They lost") to describe a team loss.[4] Further, in line with our BIRG model, it was expected that this differential use of language would be most pronounced when the subject's esteem in the eyes of an observer had been recently lowered. That is, if we are correct in proposing that one proclaims a connection with a positive source in an attempt to raise one's esteem in the view of others, then one should be most likely to declare such a connection when that esteem has recently been jeopardized. Thus, if we were to create experimentally in subjects a need to bolster esteem in the eyes of an observer, subjects should be most likely to announce publicly (through use of the pronoun *we*) a connection with a successful team and be least likely to publicize a connection with an unsuccessful team. On the other hand, subjects who have less need to elevate an observer's evaluation of themselves should show a lesser effect. The simple "heightened attraction" model would not make such a prediction, since one's prestige in the eyes of others is not a critical variable in that formulation.

Method

Subjects. The subjects were 173 undergraduates at a large state university with a nationally ranked football team. Subjects were randomly selected from student listings in the university phone directory. The sample included approximately equal distributions of males and females.

Procedure. During a 3-day period midway through the 1974 football season, subjects were contacted on the phone by one of 16 experimenters (eight males and eight females) identified as an employee of a "Regional Survey Center" with headquarters in an out-of-state city. The caller explained that he (she) was conducting a survey of college students' knowledge of campus issues and was in town that day calling students at the subject's university. Subjects agreeing to participate (93%) were then asked a series of six factually oriented forced-choice questions about aspects of campus life (e.g., "What percent of students at your school are married? Would you say it's closer to 20% or 35%?"). Following

[4] It should be evident to the reader that the general statement of the BIRG formulation includes not only the tendency to bask in reflected glory but also the tendency to distance unattractive sources.

the subject's sixth response, the caller administered the first manipulation. Half of the subjects were told that they had done well on the test, and half were told that they had done poorly. Specifically, subjects were told:

> That completes the first part of the questions. The average student gets three out of six correct. You got [five; one] out of six correct. That means you [did really well; didn't do so well] compared to the average student.

Subjects were then told that there were a few more questions and that the first concerned students' knowledge of campus athletic events. At this point the second experimental manipulation occurred. Half of the subjects were asked to describe the outcome of a specific football game; their school's football team had won this game. The other half were asked to describe the outcome of a different game; this was a game that their team had lost. The question was phrased as follows:

> In the [first; third] game of the season, your school's football team played the University of [Houston, Missouri]. Can you tell me the outcome of that game?

If a subject did not know the results of the game, a new subject was called. Otherwise the subject's verbatim description of the game outcome was recorded. At the end of the interview, all subjects were fully debriefed.

Independent variables. Two factors were manipulated; a subject's personal outcome on the survey task (success or failure) and the affiliated football team's outcome in the game described (win or nonwin). These factors combined to produce a 2×2 factorial design.

Dependent variables. Subjects' tendency to use a *we* or *non-we* response in describing a team outcome constituted our dependent measure. Descriptions such as "We won," "We got beat," etc., were considered *we* responses. All other descriptions (e.g., "The score was 14–6, Missouri." "They lost.") were classified as *non-we* responses.

Predictions. Two predictions were made. First, it was hypothesized that subjects would emit more *we* responses in describing a team victory than a team defeat. Second, it was expected that the effect of Hypothesis 1 would be greatest for subjects who had "failed" the survey test. The latter hypothesis was based on the assumption that subjects in the personal failure conditions would attempt to associate themselves publicly with a positive event or distance themselves from a negative event through language usage in order to bolster or salvage their damaged images in the eyes of the caller. Subjects in the personal success conditions were not expected to show a similar sized effect, as their prestige had already been ensured via their successful task performance. Evidence that public success and failure on an experimental task leads to differential tendencies for social approval has been offered by Schneider (1969). He manipulated success and failure and found failure subjects to present themselves more favorably to an observer who could provide an evaluation. Thus, if the BIRG phenomenon is indeed an attempt to gain social approval, we should see our failure subjects BIRG more than our success subjects.

Results

Of the 173 subjects, the data of 5 were discarded because they clearly reported the game results incorrectly. For example, the description "We won" was not counted if in fact the subject's team had lost the game in question. The percentages of *we* responses emitted in the four experimental conditions are presented in Table 2. The first prediction, that *we* usage would be greater in the descriptions of team victories than team defeats, was tested by comparing the team win conditions against the team nonwin conditions. A significant effect was obtained, $\chi^2(1) = 4.20$, $p < .05$, confirming Hypothesis 1. The second prediction, that the tendency for *we* responses to attend victory rather than defeat descriptions would be strongest after a personal failure, was tested as an interaction of the two major independent variables. The resultant statistic, suggested by Langer and Abelson (1972) for testing interactions within a 2×2 contingency table, just missed conventional significance levels, $Z = 1.75$, $p < .08$, two-tailed. Tests of the simple main effects of the interaction strongly supported Hypothesis 2. The difference in *we* responding between the team success and team failure cells of the personal failure condition was highly significant, $\chi^2(1) = 6.90$, $p < .01$. The comparable test within the personal success condition did not approach significance, $\chi^2(1) = .07$, *ns*. There were no significant sex effects in the data.

TABLE 2

PERCENTAGE OF SUBJECTS USING "WE", EXPERIMENT 2

Team outcome	% Personal outcome		Mean %
	Success	Failure	
Win	24 (11/45)	40 (16/40)	32 (27/85)
Nonwin	22 (9/41)	14 (6/42)	18 (15/83)

Discussion

The data of Experiment 2 seem clearly to support the general BIRG formulation. Subjects used the pronoun *we* to associate themselves more with a positive than a negative source, and this effect was most pronounced when their public prestige was in jeopardy. We interpret these results as evidence for our contention that people display even the most noninstrumental connections between themselves and the success of others so as to receive positive evaluations from the observers of those connections.

It should be evident that the observer's tendency to assign positivity to one who is associated with positive things is crucial to our hypothesizing about the BIRG phenomenon. It follows from our previously stated assumption that if a person understood that a given observer did not value the success of a specific source, that person would be less likely to try to BIRG that source to the observer. So, if one of our subjects knew that an observer abhored successful college athletic programs, we would predict that there would be little likelihood of the subject attempting to make visible a connection with a winning football team. But this is a fairly obvious example; few people would predict otherwise. A more subtle and perhaps more informative demonstration might be obtained through a somewhat different manipulation of the observer's relationship to the connection. When an observer to a highly positive association can also lay claim to the association, the prestige of the connection is diffused and, consequently, reduced for anyone attempting to bask in its glory. It is when one's bond to a positive source is not shared by an audience that its prestige value is optimal. Thus, when everyone has a similar positive characteristic, there is no special prestige involved in possessing it, and the likelihood that any one person will boast about that quality should be reduced. For example, a resident of California is less likely to brag to fellow Californians about the favorable climate than to geographically distant others, especially those who cannot claim similarly pleasant weather. It is our hypothesis, then, that the tendency to BIRG a positive source should occur most often when one's connection with the source is stronger than the observer's.[5] A third study was conducted to test this contention.

Experiment 3

In Experiment 2, it was shown that a personal failure experience increased our subjects' tendency to associate themselves with a positive source and decreased their tendency to associate themselves with a negative source. We have argued that this result occurred because the failure experience lowered perceived prestige and motivated subjects to try to either bolster their images in the eyes of others or prevent them from being further degraded. Central to this argument is the assumption that one's simple, noninstrumental connections are seen to influence observers' personal evaluations. If so, it should be the case that in addition to their use as dependent measures, such connections could be used as effective independent variables. That is, it should be possible to influence subjects' behavior by publicly connecting them with either positive or negative events. In fact, if we are correct in our assumption, manipulating one's public connections with good or bad things should have the same effect as manipulating one's personal success or failure experiences. For example, just as Experiment 2 showed that subjects who failed a task increased the tendency to affiliate themselves with a winner and decreased the tendency to affiliate themselves with a loser in the eyes of an observer to their failure, it follows from our formulation that subjects who are merely publicly connected with a negative event should emit comparable BIRG responses in the presence of an observer to that connection. Experiment 3 was designed to test this possibility and represented a conceptual replication and extension of Experiment 2.

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[5] We do not wish to suggest that the tendency to BIRG a positive source never takes place when the observer's association to a successful other is as strong as one's own but only that the prestige to be derived from a unique (vis-à-vis the observer) connection is relatively more desirable.

Method

Subjects. The subjects were 170 undergraduates at a large state university with a powerful football team. The university was not the same as that of Experiment 2; however, subjects were selected for participation in a fashion identical to that of Experiment 2.

Procedure. Following the completion of play for the university's football team, subjects were called on the phone by 1 of 18 experimenters (11 males and 7 females) identified as an employee of either the "university's Survey Center" located on campus or the "Regional Survey Center" located in an out-of-state city. Subjects were told that a survey was being conducted of "undergraduates' knowledge of university athletic events." Those agreeing to participate (96%) were asked to describe the outcome of first one, then another of their football team's last games of the year. One of the games constituted an important victory, and the other an important nonvictory in the team's season. Half of the subjects were first requested to describe the nonvictory game and, having responded, to describe the victory game. The other subjects had the requests put to them in reverse order. The subjects' verbatim descriptions of the game results were recorded.

Independent variables. Two factors were orthogonally varied: the strength of the subject's affiliation to the university team compared with that of the observer (same as observer's or stronger than observer's) and order of presentation of the games to be described (victory game description requested first or nonvictory game description requested first).

Dependent variables. The dependent measure was the pattern of *we* and *non-we* usage employed by subjects to describe the combination of the victory and nonvictory games. Three combinations were possible. A subject could have used the same *we* or *non-we* term to describe both the victory and the nonvictory, could have used *we* to describe the nonvictory, and *non-we* to describe the victory, or finally, could have used *we* for a victory and *non-we* for a nonvictory.

Predictions. It was predicted, first, that there would be an overall tendency for subjects to use *we* in their descriptions of a team victory and *non-we* in their descriptions of a team nonvictory. Such a finding would replicate the basic BIRG effect obtained in Studies 1 and 2. A second hypothesis was that the tendency to use *we* for victory and *non-we* for nonvictory descriptions would be greater in the nonvictory-description–requested-first conditions. Such a result would constitute a conceptual replication of the second finding of Experiment 2. On the basis of the BIRG model, we expected that the effect of publicly describing a negative event with which one is connected would be equivalent in nature to publicly failing on a task. Both operations were thought to reduce subjects perceptions of their prestige as seen by an observer and, hence, to increase the likelihood of subjects' attempts to ensure the positivity of subsequent evaluations. The third prediction was that Hypothesis 2 would hold most strongly when the observer was identified with an off-campus organization. This expectation was based on the belief that felt prestige to be gained from one's connections to a source is greater and, thus more sought after, when one's connections to that source are stronger than an observer's. Confirmation of this prediction would appear as an interaction of the independent variables of the study.[6]

Results

As expected and consistent with the results of Experiments 1 and 2, the basic BIRG effect occurred in Experiment 3 to support our first hypothesis. That is, subjects used the term *we* nearly twice as often to describe a victory than a nonvictory (26% vs. 13.5%). This effect is further confirmed when the data are examined in terms of individual subjects' *we/non-we* usage patterns. The majority of subjects were constant in their pattern of responding to the two requests for descriptions; they consistently used either *we* or *non-we* to describe both game outcomes. Thus, there was a strong tendency for our subjects to be consistent in their verbal usage patterns for the two descriptions. However, in 23 instances subjects provided an inconsistent *we/non-we* pattern. In 22 of those instances, the pattern supported the BIRG model; the pronoun *we* was used for the victory description and a *non-we* term was used for the nonvictory description. Using McNemar's test for the significance of changes (Siegel, 1956, pp. 63–67)

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[6] The experimenters, undergraduate students in a laboratory social psychology course, were not fully aware of these predictions. In order to test the influence of conscious or unconscious experimenter bias on the results of this study, the experimenters were informed of the nature of Hypothesis 1. However, they were blind to the more subtle Hypotheses 2 and 3. If only Hypothesis 1 were confirmed, the data would likely have to be interpreted as potentially influenced by the experimenter bias artifact.

The investigation of such a possibility was deemed an important one, since in the prior experiments, experimenters had knowledge of the experimental hypothesis. In Experiment 1, some data recorders were unintentionally informed of the major hypothesis, while others were not. An analysis of the data from these two groups found only a minimal difference in the data patterns, with the uninformed group's data actually more favorable to prediction than the informed group. However, in Experiment 2, all experimenters had knowledge of the prediction.

TABLE 3

PERCENTAGE OF SUBJECTS USING BOTH "WE" FOR VICTORY DESCRIPTIONS AND "NON-WE" FOR NONVICTORY DESCRIPTIONS, EXPERIMENT 3

Strength of subject's connection to team relative to observer's	Order of request[a]	
	Victory description requested first	Nonvictory description requested first
Stronger than observer's	3 (1/39)	21 (10/47)
Same as observer's	11 (4/36)	14 (7/48)
Mean %	7 (5/75)	18 (17/95)

[a] Numbers given are percentages.

and correcting for continuity, the data are highly significant, $\chi^2(1) = 17.39$, $p < .001$. The tests of Hypothesis 2 and 3 were conducted by considering the distribution (across the cells of our design) of the instances of *we/non-we* usage fitting the pattern predicted by the BIRG model. Table 3 presents these data.

Hypothesis 2 stated that more subjects would use *we* to describe the victory and *non-we* to describe the nonvictory when they were asked to describe the nonvictory first. As expected, subjects were significantly more likely to so respond in the nonvictory-description-requested-first conditions, $\chi^2(1) = 4.69$, $p < .05$. Hypothesis 3 stated that Hypothesis 2 would hold most clearly when the subjects were more strongly connected with the university team than was the observer. As predicted, Hypothesis 2 was supported to a greater extent when the observer was affiliated with an off-campus rather than a campus agency. However, this tendency did not quite reach conventional levels of significance, $Z = 1.72$, $p < .085$. As in Experiment 2, there were no significant effects for sex of subject.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Overall, Experiments 1, 2, and 3 provided strong support for the BIRG formulation. All three experiments showed a significant tendency for students to strive to associate themselves publicly with their university's football team more after the team had been successful. A striking aspect of the phenomenon is that subjects sought to proclaim their affiliation with a successful source even when they in no way caused the source's success. This component of the effect suggests a mediator consistent with balance theory. It is our contention that people make known their noninstrumental connections with positive sources because they understand that observers to these connections tend to evaluate connected objects similarly. It appears that the tendency to BIRG is an attempt to secure esteem from those who can perceive the connection. Studies 2 and 3 provided support for such an interpretation. Both showed that experimental operations designed to threaten a subject's esteem in the eyes of an observer caused subjects to be more likely to try publicly to associate themselves with positive sources. Intriguingly, it was possible to increase the tendency to BIRG in these experiments either by initially causing the subject to experience personal failure in an observer's eyes or by initially causing the subject to be noninstrumentally connected with a negative event in an observer's eyes. These manipulations proved functionally equivalent in modifying subject pronoun usage. Thus, in support of our basic argument, being merely associated with someone else's success and failure had much the same effect as personal success and failure. Experiment 3 provided evidence in a different way as well that the desire for prestige is the mediator of the BIRG response. It demonstrated that when subjects' affiliation with a positive source was stronger than an observer's (and therefore carried a greater amount of prestige), they were most likely to BIRG that source in the presence of the observer.

These studies suggest a way to understand how the fortunes of affiliated sports teams can cause lavish displays of civic gratitude and pride in American cities, or "sports riots" in Europe, or murders in South America of players and referees whose actions had caused a home-team defeat. Through their simple connections with sports teams, the personal images of fans are at stake when their teams take the field. The team's victories and defeats are reacted to as personal successes and failures.

Throughout this article we have stressed an interpersonal mediator of the BIRG phenomenon—the perceived esteem of others. We

do not wish, however, to preclude the possibility of the tendency to BIRG privately. That is, for wholly intrapersonal reasons, people may draw connections between themselves and positive sources. For example, one may well feel an enhancement of self-esteem that is unrelated to the assessments of others when one is associated with success or positivity. Such an effect could also be interpreted in terms of a tendency to respond similarly to associated objects. It might be that the results of our experiments are, in some degree at least, due to a desire to bolster or maintain one's self-concept. The tendency to employ appropriate apparel or language in a way that connects oneself to something good may involve an attempt to remind oneself of such connections and, thereby, positively affect self-esteem. The fact that in Experiment 2 we were able to influence the BIRG response simply by manipulating the characteristics of the observer suggests that the BIRG phenomenon is not mediated solely by intrapersonal phenomena. Nonetheless, it remains possible that the tendency to BIRG has its basis in a desire to affect self-image as well as social image. In fact, since there is evidence that how we regard ourselves is influenced by how we perceive that others regard us (e.g., Harvey, Kelley, & Shapiro, 1957), these two mediators are not mutually exclusive.

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