The Role of Empathy in Improving Intergroup Relations

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This article analyzes the role that empathy can play in improving intergroup relations. Three types of empathy are defined: cognitive empathy and two types of emotional empathy, reactive and parallel. Research indicating that empathy causes prosocial behavior is reviewed, along with studies indicating that training can be used to increase levels of empathic skills. Intergroup relations programs that employ empathy are also reviewed. Studies of the effects of empathizing with outgroup members on prejudice are discussed, and several processes by which empathy may mediate changes in prejudice are presented (e.g., reducing perceived dissimilarity and anxiety concerning the outgroup) and cognitive dissonance. The ways in which empathy can be introduced into intergroup relations programs are discussed, along with a series of recommendations for its implementation.

> *Granma said you couldn't love something you didn't understand.*
>
> —Carter, 1976, p. 38

Prejudice has proven to be an enduring and intractable enemy. It is in the nature of prejudice, defined here as negative attitudes toward social groups, to create a psychological distance between the prejudiced person and the target of his or her prejudice. Prejudice alienates people from the targets of their hostility. As a consequence, people make little or no attempt to understand the people toward whom they are prejudiced. And their dislike for members of the other group makes it difficult for people who are prejudiced to take the perspective of members of the other group. This article is an attempt to explore the proposition that narrowing the

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psychological distance between prejudiced people and the targets of their prejudice through empathy can result in improvements in intergroup relations. To this end, we will define empathy, explore its effects, summarize research employing it in intergroup relations programs, examine the mediators of its effects, and make recommendations for its use.

Empathy and Its Effects

The study of empathy has a long and rich history in the social sciences (Cooley, 1902; Coutu, 1951; Mead, 1934; Piaget, 1932; Turner, 1956). One unfortunate result of this distinguished pedigree is that there is now a definitional morass that surrounds the concept of empathy (Redmond, 1989). Thus, we must come to terms with empathy before we can proceed. In general, researchers and theorists agree there are two basic types of empathy: cognitive empathy and emotional empathy (Davis, 1994; Duan & Hill, 1996). Although many terms are used to label these two types of empathy, the first clearly refers primarily to taking the perspective of another person, whereas the second refers primarily to emotional responses to another person that either are similar to those the other person is experiencing (parallel empathy) or are a reaction to the emotional experiences of the other person (reactive empathy). To illustrate the distinction between reactive and parallel empathy, imagine that you are observing a member of an ethnic outgroup as an ethnic ugly slur is uttered. If you sympathize with this person's pain and discomfort, you are experiencing reactive empathy (your emotional reaction to the other's situation), whereas if you respond with feelings of indignation and resentment toward the person who uttered the slur, you are more likely experiencing parallel empathy (feeling emotions similar to those of the outgroup member). What we will refer to as cognitive empathy has often been labeled perspective taking and role taking in the literature, and what we are referring to as emotional empathy has often been labeled as sympathy, affective empathy, affective perspective taking, or emotional responsiveness.

Research indicates that empathy has a host of beneficial effects on attitudes and behavior, whereas a lack of empathy has a host of negative effects on attitudes and behavior. A well-established finding in the literature is that empathic concern causes helping (Batson, 1991; Davis, 1994; Oswald, 1996). The standard paradigm involves having people read about the plight of another person under varying types of processing instructions. These people are then given an opportunity to assist the person in need. When people read about the plight of others under instructions to engage in emotional empathy, they subsequently offer more help than those who read about the plight of others under instructions that blunt empathic responding. The increases in helping that have been found in these studies are due to the arousal of empathic concern (compassion and related emotions) in the readers (Batson, Sager et al., 1997).

Although the studies done in this tradition have not generally explored attitudes toward the people who are suffering, several recent studies have done so. In one set of studies, Batson and his colleagues asked students to read scenarios involving individuals who were suffering and then measured attitudes toward the groups of which these individuals were members (Batson, Polycarpou et al., 1997). They found that reading these scenarios under emotional empathy instructions led to more favorable attitudes toward the groups of which these individuals were members than did reading the same materials under instructions designed to minimize empathy. Using this procedure, they found changes in attitudes toward people suffering from HIV/AIDS or homelessness, as well as for prisoners on death row. In one of these studies the attitude changes were present 2 weeks after the students read the scenarios, suggesting that the attitude changes may be lasting.

We have conducted research in a related vein, using a racial group as the target group (Finlay & Stephan, in press). The White students in this study read a series of vignettes depicting everyday acts of discrimination directed toward African Americans. The vignettes were presented to students as a set of short essays written in the first person by African American freshmen attending a metropolitan college. The vignettes included instances of African Americans being falsely accused of wrongdoing, being denied check-writing privileges, overhearing personally relevant racially slanderous remarks, and being perceived as a threat simply because of their race. The vignettes contained reports of the victims' feelings of anger, annoyance, hostility, discomfort, or disgust as a result of these acts of discrimination. In the empathy condition the students were asked to "try to imagine how each writer feels . . . [and] identify with their feelings and responses to the situation." As part of a separate study, the students were then asked to evaluate both African Americans and Whites. The central finding of this study was that reading vignettes about African Americans who had suffered from discrimination, under instructions to empathize with the victims, eliminated the differences between evaluations of African Americans and Whites that were found in the control condition. The students in this condition also reported experiencing more of the parallel empathic emotions (anger, annoyance, hostility, discomfort, and disgust) than students in the control condition.

Other nonexperimental studies have shown that a lack of empathy is associated with sexual aggression among men (Lisak & Ivan, 1995), child abuse (Letourneau, 1981), aggression among males (Feshbach & Feshbach, 1969; Miller & Eisenberg, 1988), antisocial behaviors (Eysenck, 1981), and negative attitudes toward homosexuals (Johnson, Brems, & Alford-Keating, 1997). At the opposite end of the spectrum, studies of dispositional empathic concern have found that it is related to prosocial behavior. For instance, one study found that for children both empathic concern and perspective taking were related to teacher ratings of the students' helpfulness (Litvack-Miller, McDougall, & Romney, 1997). In another study it was found that dispositional perspective taking skills were associated with

the inhibition of aggression under conditions of moderate threat (Richardson, Hammock, & Smith, 1994). Thus, both situational and dispositional empathy are related to prosocial attitudes and behaviors, whereas a lack of empathy is linked to antisocial behaviors.

A number of studies have shown that it is possible to increase levels of empathy through a variety of different types of training programs (Crabb, Moracco, & Bender, 1983; Goldstein & Michaels, 1985). For instance, one program found that training social work students in emotional empathy by having them imagine the emotional responses of their clients increased levels of empathy as measured by a widely used index of dispositional empathy (Erera, 1997). In this study, no changes in empathy were observed for a group of students receiving cognitively oriented empathy training. In another study it was found that an empathy-oriented rape awareness training program that included discussions of case histories increased empathy for victims of rape (Pinzone-Glover, Gidycz, & Jacobs, 1998). A third study found that training medical students in empathy for the elderly led to increases in empathy and more favorable attitudes toward the elderly (Pacala, Boult, Bland, & O'Brien, 1995).

Feshbach (1989) developed a program in which children aged 7–11 were provided with 30 hr of training in cognitive and emotional empathy. This training led to reductions in aggression and increases in prosocial behavior and self-esteem. A developmental study by Doyle and Aboud (1995) measured children's role-taking abilities and their attitudes toward racial outgroups in kindergarten and again in the third grade. The children who improved the most in role-taking abilities displayed the greatest reductions in prejudice. In this study naturally occurring changes in cognitive empathy abilities were associated with reduced prejudice in children, which suggests that increasing empathy may improve intergroup relations.

The literature we have just reviewed demonstrates that empathy leads to prosocial behavior and that it can be enhanced through training. Perhaps in recognition of its potential benefits, empathy has been incorporated into many intergroup relations programs. We will review several of these programs next.

Intergroup Relations Programs That Incorporate Empathy

Despite the widespread use of empathy in intergroup relations programs, few programs actually measure empathy as either a mediating or outcome variable. One exception consists of studies of the "jigsaw classroom." The jigsaw classroom and other cooperative learning techniques involve bringing children of different racial and ethnic groups together to work cooperatively on academic materials. Bridgeman (1981) believes that when children work interdependently with children from other groups, they learn to take the role of the other students and learn to view the world from their perspectives. In her study, the empathy scores of children in cooperative jigsaw groups increased over the course of the study (8 weeks),

whereas the empathy scores of children in control classes did not. Aronson and Bridgeman (1979) argue that the improvements in intergroup relations that occur in jigsaw classrooms (Aronson, Blaney, Stephan, Sikes, & Snapp, 1978; Aronson & Patnoe, 1997) are due in part to empathy.

Other intergroup relations programs explicitly use empathy-oriented techniques. For instance, empathy is an explicit component of the conflict resolution workshops that have been used to foster mutual understanding between members of opposing groups (Burton, 1986, 1987; Doob, 1974; Kelman, 1990; Kelman & Cohen, 1986; Rouhana & Kelman, 1994). In these workshops, the conflict is presented as a problem to be solved, not a contest to be won. The facilitator fosters a norm of analytical processing, but participants are also encouraged to express their hopes and fears. The participants are urged to engage in role taking so they can learn to view the conflict from the perspective of people on the other side. The goal of these workshops is to improve relations between the opposing parties by generating changed perceptions and new ideas for resolving the conflict.

Conflict resolution workshops have been used to facilitate the resolution of a number of different conflicts. For example, one workshop was conducted with Turkish and Greek Cypriots (Fisher, 1994). The workshop explored the needs and fears of each side as well as ways to resolve the conflict. The participants also discussed the forms that a new relationship between them could take. Evaluations of the workshop indicated that the participants came away with an increased understanding of one another and a feeling of mutual empathy. Although there is little hard evidence concerning the effectiveness of these techniques, one researcher has suggested that they produce a greater understanding of the other side, help to identify negative interpretations of the behavior of the other side, and create workable solutions (Ross, 1993).

Most multicultural education programs involve empathy to a greater or lesser extent. Improving intergroup relations is one of the principal goals of multicultural education (Banks, 1987, 1988, 1997). In the majority of multicultural education programs, students learn about the similarities and differences among the various racial, ethnic, and cultural groups in their society. This information is usually presented in its historical context, and an attempt is made to present the information from the perspective of each group (Banks, 1987; Sleeter & Grant, 1987; NCSS Task Force, 1992). Students in these programs typically read material about different groups, watch movies and videos, and engage in exercises designed to give them insight into the values, norms, and behaviors of other groups. Although the emphasis is not explicit, it appears that when such materials are presented, students are engaging in cognitive empathy. Only a limited number of studies of the effects of multicultural education exist. For instance, Litcher and Johnson (1969) examined the use of a multiethnic reader by White second-grade students. This program led to more favorable attitudes toward African Americans after 4 months of classes. Colca and her colleagues (Colca, Lowen, Colca, & Lord, 1982) examined

the effects of a semester-long program for fourth and fifth graders that included presentations on intergroup relations, small group discussions, films, role playing, games, and experiential exercises. The program led to improved racial attitudes and decreased social distance among both African American and White students.

Intergroup dialogue programs involve bringing together members of different social groups under conditions that fulfill many of the stipulations of the contact hypothesis (i.e., equal status, individualized, cooperative, and supported by authority figures). The groups typically vary in size from 10 to 20. Many dialogue groups are conducted in university settings, but some are also done in community settings. Dialogue groups usually include members of two groups that have a history of troublesome intergroup relations (e.g., African Americans and Whites). The groups are run by trained facilitators, and they discuss such topics as their experiences with stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination, as well as current problems between the groups. In addition, those groups that are conducted in university settings usually read assigned materials on the nature of the groups or information on current issues that are relevant to relations between the groups. Role playing and other exercises are often used as starting points for dialogue. The dialogues provide participants with opportunities to voice their own experiences and listen to and ask questions about the experiences of others. The groups are designed to foster introspection and attempt to help participants take the perspective of members of other groups. One study of the effects of dialogue groups found that college students who had participated in a semester-long dialogue course had a better understanding of the social structural factors associated with racial inequalities and poverty than students who had not participated (Lopez, Gurin, & Nagda, 1998). A four-year longitudinal study of college students participating in dialogue groups found that White students perceived greater commonalities with people of color and that students of color perceived that there was less racial divisiveness as a result of participation in the dialogues (Gurin, Peng, Lopez, & Nagda, 1999).

In these techniques of improving intergroup relations, it is impossible to determine what effects empathy has. In each case empathy is only one component of a multifaceted program. Even when empathy is measured, as it was in the studies of the jigsaw classroom, no analyses were conducted to examine its mediational role. However, there are a number of explanations that have been offered to account for the effects of empathy on intergroup relations, and we examine these next.

Theoretical Accounts of Empathy as a Mediator of Attitudes and Behavior

Researchers have proposed several explanations to account for the mediational role of empathy in improving intergroup relations. The effects of cognitive empathy on prejudice may be mediated by reductions in perceptions of dissimilarity and feelings of threat. Prejudice toward outgroups is often associated

with exaggerated perceptions of intergroup differences and high levels of fear and threat (Rokeach & Mezei, 1966; Stephan & Stephan, in press; Triandis & Davis, 1965). Cognitive empathy may reduce prejudice because it leads people to see that they are less different from members of the other group than they thought they were. It may also lead them to perceive that they themselves and members of the other group share a common humanity and a common destiny. In laboratory studies, creating a sense of a common identity has been found to reduce prejudice and discrimination (Gaertner, Mann, Dovidio, Murrell, & Pomare, 1990). The feelings of threat engendered by concerns over differences in values, beliefs, and norms, misperceptions of realistic conflict, and anxiety over interacting with members of the outgroup may all be dissolved by learning to view the world from the perspective of outgroup members. Cognitive empathy may also teach people about the attributional patterns of members of other groups and this, too, may reduce prejudice (Triandis, 1972). Understanding the ways that others view the world has the potential to make them seem less alien and frightening and thus to break down the perceived barriers between the ingroup and the outgroup.

Batson, Polycarpou et al. (1997) argue that there is a three-stage process by which attitudes change in response to reactive empathy. First, people experience empathic concern for the individual who is suffering. Second, empathizing with the individual who is suffering leads people to value the welfare of this person. And third, concern for the welfare of this person generalizes to the group of which this person is a member, leading to more "positive beliefs about, feelings toward, and concern for the group" (p. 106).

Finlay and Stephan suggest that parallel empathy leads to attitude change by arousing feelings of injustice (Finlay & Stephan, in press). Feelings of injustice can counteract prejudice, particularly if the prejudice is based on beliefs in a just world (Lerner, 1980). People who believe the world is just and that others receive what they deserve tend to blame the suffering of outgroup members on negative traits they possess. Ingroup members may then derogate the outgroup members because of the negative traits they have attributed to the outgroup. However, learning about suffering and discrimination while empathizing with the victims may lead people to reappraise their assumptions concerning victim blame, and they may come to believe that the victims do not deserve the mistreatment to which they are being subjected. If the victims do not deserve this unjust treatment, it may no longer be tenable to hold such negative attitudes toward them.

There may also be an element of cognitive dissonance involved in the changes in attitude brought about by empathy. Empathizing with a member of a outgroup toward which one has previously held negative attitudes may create dissonance due to the discrepancy between the individual's current empathic concern and his or her prior negative attitudes. As a means of reducing this dissonance, the person may change his or her attitudes toward the previously disliked outgroup. A similar process has been suggested for people who engage in exercises that involve

actively playing the role of outgroup members (McGregor, 1993). Role playing seems to require both cognitive and emotional empathy. Playing the role of others may lead people to experience dissonance if there is a discrepancy between their prior negative attitudes toward members of the outgroup and the empathy created by role playing. This dissonance can be reduced if people change their attitudes in a favorable direction.

Each of these explanations suggests reasons why it is difficult to hate the people with whom you empathize. In the following section we consider the ways in which empathy can be incorporated into intergroup relations programs, and we employ these meditional explanations to help us understand the role empathy can play.

The Role of Empathy in Improving Intergroup Relations

The role of empathy in intergroup relations is quite complex. Empathy can be induced in several ways, take a variety of forms, and influence different aspects of intergroup relations. Further, as we have seen, it is likely that different factors mediate these influences.

In intergroup relations programs it is often assumed that reading information about the experiences of another group or listening to the members of an outgroup describe their experiences creates empathy for that group. This may well be the case for people who have high levels of dispositional empathy, but even for these people and certainly for others, empathic responses could probably be strengthened by explicitly encouraging participants to empathize with the members of the other group, as is routinely done in experimental studies (e.g., Batson, Polycarpou et al., 1997; Finlay & Stephan, in press). Suggestions to empathize could be offered by group facilitators and could stress emotional empathy, cognitive empathy, or both. As the research on empathy training programs indicates, empathy can also be explicitly taught (Barak, 1990; Erera, 1997; Pinzone-Glover et al., 1998). Role-playing exercises, done either vicariously or acted out, may also activate empathy. For example, in a simulation game designed to create empathy, third-grade students were divided into two groups and asked to wear either orange or green armbands. The orange-banded children then experienced a day in which they were negatively stereotyped, discriminated against, and not praised by the teacher. The roles were reversed on a second day. The students exposed to this experience were less prejudiced than a comparison group, and the changes in attitude persisted for at least 2 weeks (Weiner & Wright, 1973). Thus, empathy for outgroups may be triggered by situational or dispositional factors that lead to identifying with outgroup members.

When people do empathize with outgroups, their empathic reactions can take three forms: cognitive empathy, reactive empathy, and parallel empathy. Cognitive empathy is likely to be useful in acquiring knowledge about the outgroup, including

coming to understand the worldview of members of the other group and learning about their cultural practices, norms, values, beliefs, standards, and rules, as well as learning about the way the outgroup views the ingroup. Cognitive empathy may be more effective in changing stereotypes and such cognitive processes as attributional patterns than either type of emotional empathy. Cognitive empathy makes the unintelligible understandable.

Reactive empathy can lead to two different types of emotional responses (Davis, 1994). One consists of compassion-related emotions that arise from a feeling of concern for the suffering of the other, usually labeled empathic concern. These emotions tend to be predominantly positive and are likely to lead to favorable changes in attitudes toward the outgroup. The other type of reactive empathy consists primarily of negative emotions elicited by feelings of distress evoked by the suffering of the other, usually labeled personal distress. These emotions can include feelings of anxiety, threat, and revulsion and are unlikely to lead to improvements in intergroup relations. Therefore, reactive empathy can lead to either positive or negative emotional reactions.

The emotional responses elicited by parallel empathy may also be positive or negative, depending on the emotional responses of the outgroup members. For instance, outgroup members are likely to respond to an ethnic slur with negative emotions, but they are likely to respond to favorable outcomes (e.g., winning a competitive game) with positive emotions. Thus, reactive and parallel emotions may share the same valence (e.g., both positive), or they may differ in valence (one type being positive and the other negative). Learning about the suffering caused by discrimination may lead to the reactive emotional responses of compassion and concern along with the parallel emotional reactions of dread, confusion, and perhaps anger toward one's own ingroup. Because the elicitation of mixed emotions could be confusing for participants in intergroup relations programs, it might be helpful if trainers assisted participants in understanding the complex array of emotions they are experiencing. Emotional empathy may lead to both attitudinal and behavior changes, depending on which emotions are elicited and the intensity of these emotional reactions.

Different theories of the mediational role of empathy suggest that the manner in which empathy performs its mediational role will influence the outcomes of the empathic responses. When reactive empathy creates concern for the welfare of the outgroup, the consequence may well be more favorable attitudes toward the other group, but there is some risk that these attitudes will have a component of condescension. Empathy that is not accompanied by respect for the other group is clearly problematic. To minimize the tendency for members of majority groups to respond in patronizing and condescending ways to the suffering of minority group members, trainers, facilitators, and educators may have to raise these issues explicitly and insist that participants treat each other with respect.

When parallel empathy creates a sense of injustice on behalf of the outgroup members, ingroup members may be stirred to social action. They may also change their attitudes toward members of the outgroup and perhaps their own ingroup as a result of the discomfort or guilt they experience as members of the group that is responsible for the suffering of the outgroup. The experience of this discomfort and guilt may be another area in which facilitators can perform a useful role by assisting participants in working through these feelings. It is also important for facilitators to help participants channel their rage and guilt in productive ways.

When empathy creates dissonance, people are caught in an uncomfortable dilemma. Rokeach (1971) demonstrated that when White students were confronted with the discrepancy between their attitudes and behavior toward minorities and their beliefs in freedom, they responded by changing both their attitudes and their behaviors toward minority group members. Similarly, when reactive empathy creates dissonance, participants may change their attitudes to be consistent with the feelings of compassion they are experiencing toward the outgroup. On the other hand, they may react to this dilemma with defensive avoidance, and it is the task of the facilitator to tilt the balance in the direction of attitude change by counteracting defensive avoidance.

Recommendations for the Use of Empathy in Intergroup Relations Programs

Although a great many intergroup relations programs have employed procedures designed to create empathy, most have done so without a careful consideration of the subtleties of the process or an explicit understanding of what they are trying to accomplish. Thus, our first recommendation is that intergroup relations trainers, facilitators, and educators devote some careful attention to deciding what their goals are and how to achieve them. Then they can match their procedures to their goals. If the goal is greater understanding, cognitive empathy may be called for, but if it is social action, parallel empathy is more likely to prove successful. The content of the intergroup relations program should also be selected with the goals in mind. Greater understanding and improved skills in relating to outgroup members should result from the use of materials that stress attributional patterns and provide information on values, beliefs, and norms, whereas dissonance due to empathic concern might be more successful in bringing about changes in behavior.

Our second recommendation is to beware of the pitfalls of empathy. The literature is replete with studies of unsuccessful intergroup relations programs (see Bigler, this issue). Empathy can lead to undesirable outcomes such as greater distance between groups, defensive avoidance, negative attitudes, confirmations of negative stereotypes, increased tension and hostility, hurt feelings, and lowered self-esteem. Also, empathy can be introduced in ways that blunt its impact. In discussing this issue, Boler (1997) suggests that techniques designed to activate empathy run the risk of creating compassion without simultaneously leading

participants to recognize that they themselves are implicated in the social forces responsible for the suffering with which they are empathizing. Another risk of activating empathy is that the greater the identification with the victim, the greater the possibility that the participants will fear that similar suffering could befall them, which may lead to defensive avoidance. That is, they will be "threatened by the prospect of their own vulnerability" (Coller & Resick, 1987, p. 116). If people feel threatened, this may distance them from the victims of discrimination and could actually lead to more negative attitudes. Boler also worries that empathy spares "the reader of the emotions of rage, blame and guilt" (1997, p. 260) and thus is ineffective in engaging participants in issues of social justice. Of course, rage and anger can also be problematic in the context of responding to materials designed to enhance empathy, if the anger is directed at the outgroup instead of the groups, institutions, or individuals that are causing the outgroup to suffer. For this reason, trainers may need to play an active role in directing anger in productive, not destructive, ways.

Our third recommendation is that trainers implement empathy in ways that are most likely to maximize its impact. We urge trainers not to leave the induction of empathy up to chance. Invite participants to identify with members of the other group as they read about them or listen to them. Pose questions to the participants that they can ask themselves while reading or listening, such as, "What emotions are the members of the other group feeling, what are they thinking, how are they viewing the world, and how do you feel about their responses to the situation?" Trainers may find that it is valuable to have participants discuss the answers to these questions in order to make what is otherwise an implicit process into an explicit one. Boler (1997) suggests that trainers, educators, and facilitators use testimonial reading, in which multicultural educational materials are accompanied by suggestions to the readers to challenge their own assumptions and worldviews. She wants readers to recognize the obstacles that prevent them from identifying with the victims, feel distressed by the injustice they are experiencing, take responsibility for the suffering of others, and experience an obligation to act on these feelings of responsibility. One way to achieve a more active stance toward empathy consists of role-playing exercises or paraphrasing exercises in which people actively take the role of the other and write about or speak from the perspective of the other. Participants can also be given specific empathy training before the program begins to enhance their empathic skills.

The fourth recommendation we would make is that intergroup relations trainers who are contemplating the use of empathy interventions attend to a host of issues that may influence its effectiveness. What groups will be involved and what is the nature of their prior relations? What is the societal and situational context in which the intervention will be used? What is the age of the participants (for a developmental analysis of the relationship of prejudice to role-taking skills, see Doyle & Aboud, 1995)? What is the numerical ratio of the groups involved? How intensely

do they identify with their ingroups? How similar are the members of the two groups in terms of social class and other status variables that might be relevant in the context? What are the attitudes of the participants toward the other group and the intervention itself (for a discussion of these and other issues related to implementation, see Bargal, 1992)?

Our fifth recommendation is to evaluate the use of empathy in intergroup relations programs to determine the effects of different types of empathy and different techniques of incorporating empathy in order to improve the implementation of empathy interventions in the future.

A Caveat . . .

Most of this discussion has assumed that the participants are members of the majority group and the groups to be empathized with are minority groups. We emphasized this pairing because in hierarchical social systems it is typically the prejudices, stereotypes, and discriminatory behavior of majority group members that is the greatest problem. However, many intergroup relations programs also include members of minority groups, and it is reasonable to ask if empathy is also useful in helping them to understand and interact with members of the majority group. We believe the answer to this question is a definite "yes," but we would qualify it by saying that perhaps it is more important to emphasize cognitive empathy with minority participants than it is to emphasize reactive and parallel empathy. Generally speaking, members of the majority group do not suffer from discrimination at the hands of minority group members, but they may well be the targets of stereotypes and prejudice, and their worldview, values, beliefs, norms, and practices often do differ from those of the minority group. Learning information about the majority group may be useful in improving relations between the groups, empathizing with their "suffering" as members of the majority may not be. It is hard to imagine that empathizing with privilege and power would lead to beneficial outcomes.

. . . and a Conclusion

We have argued that empathy takes three forms, cognitive, reactive, and parallel. Empathy can be induced through simple instructions, and training can be used to increase it. Its presence is associated with prosocial behavior and its absence with antisocial behavior. Empathy is widely used as a technique to improve intergroup relations, but usually without clear goals or an understanding of how it operates. It can be created through a variety of means, its effects are mediated by several different processes, and it can have a positive effect on both attitudes and behaviors. Empathy can also have negative consequences, so attention must be given to maximizing its beneficial effects. This involves being consciously aware of the

goals one is attempting to achieve, carefully selecting means that will accomplish these goals, and explicitly assessing this process so that it can be improved in the future. We also would urge researchers to explicitly examine the mediational role of empathy in both laboratory and field settings. We believe that used effectively, empathy shows great promise of increasing the beneficial effects of intergroup relations programs.

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