The Scarecrow and the Tin Man:
The Vicissitudes of Human Sympathy and Caring

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Why do some victims elicit outpourings of sympathy from those who are unaffected, while others do not? The authors propose a theoretical framework for making sense of the vicissitudes of sympathy based on the interaction between two qualitatively different mental processes. One, which the authors term "sympathy," is caring but immature and irrational. The other process, which the authors term "deliberation," is rational but uncaring. After proposing a framework for how these two factors interact, the authors first discuss a variety of factors that affect the strength of sympathy, including whether one is in the same state as the victim, one's past and vicarious experiences, proximity, similarity, vividness, and newness. Next, the authors discuss factors that affect the relative influence of deliberation. The framework helps to integrate a wide range of disparate experimental findings and provides a possible resolution to parallel debates taking place in psychology and economics over the nature of altruism.

Keywords: sympathy, empathy, altruism, helping behavior, emotion

Sympathy "is easily aroused but quickly forgotten; when remembered but not acted upon, its failure to produce action is easily rationalized. We are softened by the sight of one hungry child, but hardened by the sight of thousands."

James Q. Wilson[1]

The question of what evokes, or fails to evoke, human sympathy has been, and continues to be, of great importance to humanity. In recent years, the world has seen spikes of sympathy directed toward the victims of some calamities—most notably the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Towers, the Indian Ocean Tsunami, and the hurricane that devastated the southern coast of the United States[2]—but remarkable indifference to the victims of many similar or greater calamities. Hunger and disease, much of it easily preventable, continues to be widespread in many parts of the world. And despite the continued incantation of the words "never again," the world has remained passive in the face of repeated genocides since the Holocaust, including at least one, in Darfur, unfolding even as we write this article.

Why do some victims elicit outpourings of sympathy from those who are unaffected, while others do not? And what is the relationship between sympathy—an emotion experienced toward individuals and groups—and actual be-

[1] Wilson, J.Q. (1993). *The Moral Sense*. New York: Free Press. Quoted in de Waal, F. (1996). *Good Natured*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

[2] In fact, sympathy has, at times, reached absurd proportions. For example, the families of victims of 9/11 received a generous assistance fund, whereas those unfortunate enough to lose family members in other disasters, such as the Oklahoma City bombing, or in road accidents, received no such assistance. Sympathy also sometimes attaches itself to targets that are difficult to justify on any logical grounds, such as "Lady Di" whose death produced an outpouring of sympathy that seemed out of proportion to her significance, or the periodic animals who capture the public attention—a dog trapped on a yacht, three whales trapped on sea ice, or a whale that accidentally found its way, and then died, in the Thames River. Such disproportionate sympathy can, in turn, sometimes lead to a misdirection of resources. After 9/11, for example, despite the absence of any increase in the demand for blood, blood donations temporarily increased to the point where a large surplus had to be destroyed. Similarly, the outpouring of money donations to the tsunami, much of it earmarked, may have detracted from giving to subsequent victims, such as the large numbers of people left destitute in the wake of an earthquake that rocked Pakistan only a few months later.

neficence toward those groups? In this article, we propose a theoretical framework for making sense of the vicissitudes of sympathy and its relationship to helping behavior. We argue that helping behavior (or its absence) arises from the interaction between two qualitatively different mental processes. One which we term "sympathy" is caring but immature and irrational (like the brainless scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz*). Sympathy is what causes one to cry at the end of *Charlotte's Web*, desperately hoping (despite having read the novel three times before) that *this time* the eponymous spider will not have to die. The other process, which we term "deliberation," is rational but uncaring (like the heartless tin man). Deliberation is what enables us to recognize that, however lovable Charlotte may be, she is a fictitious character, infinitely less deserving of our sympathy than a host of living breathing people (as well as animals) in the real world.

When these processes interact in an ideal fashion—when the tin man's brains channel the feelings of the scarecrow's heart—one observes the ideal of helpful aid directed to those most deserving of it. However, this ideal is rarely observed. More commonly, we get misdirected sympathy—the scarecrow's heart without the tin man's brains—or indifference in the face of ameliorable suffering—the tin man's brains without the scarecrow's heart.[3]

A Theoretical Perspective on Sympathy and Aid

Figure 1 (adapted from Loewenstein & O'Donoghue, 2004) presents a schematic representation of our theoretical perspective. People encounter stimuli, which can potentially trigger sympathy (path a) and/or deliberations about whether aid would be helpful in a particular situation (path b). In some cases, these thoughts and feelings complement one another, as when one reacts sympathetically to a pitch for some specific cause and also comes to the intellectual conclusion that the cause warrants one's support. However, in other cases, stimuli can have different, even opposing, effects on the two systems. One might, for example, conclude, at a cognitive level, that an amorphous charity, such as United Way, merits one's support, yet feel little visceral sympathy toward the people who would be helped. Or one might feel great sympathy toward people, animals, or even make-believe characters who, if one were to deliberate at a cognitive level, one would recognize were not appropriate targets of aid.

Deliberations and sympathetic reactions interact. If one feels sympathetic toward a particular victim or cause, the human mind is adept at coming up with reasons why that victim deserves aid (line c from the Figure 1). This can be a matter of rationalization—of motivated cognition—or simply a consequence of sense-making; when one feels something, there is a natural and automatic tendency to try to make logical sense of that feeling (Clore, 1992; Gazzaniga, 1988). Indeed, Haidt (2001) argues that reasoning is the "tail" that wags the moralist "dog"—that most moral reactions are gut-level emotional reactions rationalized logically, if at all, only after the fact. Motivational processes also come into play in the absence of sympathy. If one does not experience sympathy toward a target, one will hone in on any pretext to provide an excuse to avoid coming to the
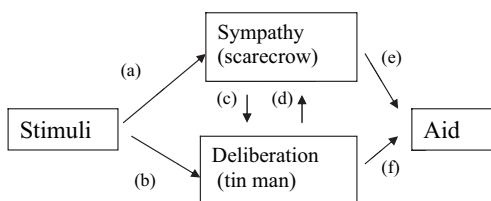

Figure 1. Theoretical perspective (adapted from Loewenstein & O'Donoghue, 2006).

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[3] Batson et al. (1995) distinguish between "empathy-induced altruism," the goal of which is "to increase the welfare of the person for whom empathy is felt," and "moral motivation" which has the goal of upholding a given moral principle. This distinction is very close to that which we draw between sympathy and deliberation. They also draw attention to the fact that these two motives often conflict. As an example, they cite the case of an employer who values fairness and who must decide whether to promote employee A who is more qualified and more deserving or employee B whose mother just died. Fairness favors the former; empathy and sympathy the latter. They conducted a series of experiments in which participants were asked to make a decision that affected the welfare of other individuals. Before making the decision, some subjects were induced to feel empathy for one of the individuals and others were not. To the extent that sympathy drove people to favor specific individuals and conflicted with principles of fairness, it tended to promote the former over the latter.

target's aid. This may be the reason why, several years ago, allegations of malfeasance at the top levels of United Way had such a devastating impact on donations to that charity; it gave people a pretext to not contribute to a cause that failed to move them emotionally in the first place.[4] Deliberation channels the inclinations induced by sympathy in more rational directions, preventing us from giving our money to the American Arachnological Society immediately after reading *Charlotte's Web* and directing us instead to give to United Way. However, distorted by the very emotions that provide the impetus for aid, deliberation rarely provides a rational and accurate calculation of the costs and benefits of such aid.

Deliberations about the benefits of providing aid can also affect sympathy (line d). Unmoved about dysentery in Africa, but believing that it can and should be dealt with, one can attempt to move oneself emotionally, for example, by imagining one's own child suffering from a debilitating, and easily curable, illness. Conversely, the cognitive realization that helping is impossible or excessively costly to the self might lead people to reappraise the situation so as to mitigate sympathy. Research on Lerner's (1980) "just world hypothesis" documents people's attempts to convince themselves that victims who cannot be helped in fact deserve their suffering.[5]

As the figure suggests, therefore, there are many paths to providing aid:

> (a) → (e): A particular sympathy-evoking stimulus, such as an obviously needy beggar, can cause one to provide immediate, spontaneous aid.

> (a) → (c) → (f): A sympathy-evoking stimulus can distort one's calculations, leading one to the conclusion that a particular undeserving target of aid is in fact deserving of aid.

> (b) → (f): Despite failing to evoke sympathy, one can calculate that a charity, such as United Way, is worthy of aid and contribute despite the absence of sympathy.

> (b) → (d) → (e): Failing to experience sympathy, but believing that a cause is worthy, one can attempt to evoke sympa-

thy in oneself, perhaps through the use of guided thoughts or images. In contrast, reappraising a victim's situation to maintain positive beliefs about the world can reduce sympathy.

With so many causal pathways leading to the provision of aid, one might expect aid-giving to be pervasive. However, for every pathway that leads to the provision of aid, there is a parallel pathway that leads to the opposite outcome. Moreover, any inclination to give aid that is motivated by sympathy needs to outweigh another powerfully emotional motive driving human behavior: self-interest.

The Determinants of Sympathy

Except insofar as it is influenced indirectly by calculations of deservingness, sympathy does not operate according to any kind of normative rules or higher-level principles.[6] The capacity for sympathy evolved for reasons that probably had to do with the nurturance of genetic offspring, but which subsequently became gener-

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[4] It would be interesting to determine whether similar allegations directed at more emotionally evocative charities would have had a similar effect.

[5] In one study, participants who were told that a fellow student had won a cash prize in a lottery tended to believe that the student worked harder than another student who lost the lottery. In another study, participants who believed that a fellow participant had been subjected to electric shocks formed lower opinions of these "victimized" participants when there was no possibility of the victim finding relief from the ordeal, or when the victim took on the role of "martyr" by voluntarily remaining in the experiment despite the apparent unpleasantness of the experience. Lerner concluded that "the sight of an innocent person suffering without possibility of reward or compensation motivated people to devalue the attractiveness of the victim."

[6] Pizarro (2000), contrary to this position, argues that emotions are much more valid guides to moral behavior than has typically been assumed. Bennet (1974) in a famous essay titled "The Conscience of Huckleberry Finn" also argues that sympathy should at least play a role in moral judgments. He illustrates his point with the example of Huck, who did not turn in the slave Jim because of his intense sympathetic sentiment for Jim, despite believing that turning him in was the morally right thing to do. Bennet also cites the opposite example of Heinrich Himmler, the mastermind behind the Nazi program for the extermination of Jews and other "enemies of the Third Reich." Himmler experienced intense pity, to the point of developing incapacitating psychosomatic disorders, but steeled himself to resist the pull of emotion and proceed with what he believed needed to be done.

alized to unrelated individuals. The specific situations and target-objects that evoke sympathy are certainly mediated by culture and personal experience, but many responses seem to be programmed at a more fundamental level, as suggested by the fact that they can be discerned in "lower" animals such as nonhuman primates and even rats (de Waal, 1996; Preston & de Waal, 2002). Situations and stimuli that reliably affect sympathy include:

Own Personal State

One important factor that influences sympathy is the match between one's own feeling state and that of the target individual. An Irish proverb states that "the full person does not understand the needs of the hungry," and this point could be generalized to almost any feeling state. In fact, research has documented, for a wide range of negative feeling states, a lack of empathy toward people suffering from various visceral states on the part of people who are not experiencing those states, and a commensurately greater degree of empathy on the part of people who are experiencing those states.

Empathy is, of course, different from sympathy. Empathy refers to the ability to experience the feelings experienced by other persons. Sympathy, in contrast, refers to an emotional concern for other persons. Laren Wispé (cited in de Waal, 1996) expresses it as "the object of empathy is understanding," but the object of sympathy is "the other person's well-being." Empathy is neither a necessary nor sufficient condition for sympathy. For example, empathy—the ability to appreciate another person's feelings—can be used to undermine the person—for example, to deliver a particularly devastating attack, as well as to benefit them. It is also possible to sympathize with someone—to feel emotions toward them that motivate one to provide aid—without actually experiencing anything approximating what they are experiencing. However, in most cases when one is positively (or at least not negatively) disposed toward an individual, to empathize with a negative feeling state the person is also to feel sympathetic toward them. This suggests that factors that generate empathy will also often produce sympathy.

In one set of studies, focusing on embarrassment, Van Boven, Loewenstein, and Dunning (2005) found that people who themselves faced the prospect of an embarrassing performance better appreciated the motivational force of the embarrassment that others would experience doing the same performance than those who did not themselves face such a performance, as measured by their ability to accurately estimate the fraction of people who would agree to perform in exchange for payment. In another study focusing on thirst, Van Boven and Loewenstein (2003) approached patrons of a health club who were either about to, or just had, exercised vigorously, asked them to imagine the plight of several hikers who were trapped in the wilds overnight without food or water and to predict whether those hikers would be more bothered by hunger or thirst. Those who were themselves dehydrated from exercising predicted that the hikers would be more bothered by thirst than did those who were about to, but had not yet begun to, exercise.

Nordgren, van der Pligt, and Harreveld (2006a) induced moderate fatigue or severe fatigue in subjects by having them complete either a moderately or severely straining memory task (memorizing and regurgitating 9-digit numbers for either 20 or 40 trials). Participants then read a vignette about a student who cited being fatigued as an explanation for failing to adequately study for a test and judged the degree to which fatigue or three dispositional factors (lack of discipline, motivation, or willpower) had influenced his performance. Those in the severe fatigue condition were most likely to endorse fatigue as the likely cause of the individual's failure to study, and those in the no fatigue condition were least likely to endorse fatigue as an explanation. Although sympathy was not measured in this study, it can be conjectured that professors in a fatigued state would be more willing to give a fatigued student a break—that is, would be more sympathetic—relative to professors in an energized state. In a follow-up study, the same researchers found that the effect was undiminished when participants' attention was explicitly drawn to their own fatigue, and other studies by the same researchers (Nordgren, van der Pligt, & Harreveld, 2006b) documented similar "interpersonal empathy gaps" for hunger and sexual arousal.

The impact of one's own affective state on empathy and sympathy toward others helps to explain an important property of sympathy al-

luded to by James Q. Wilson in the opening quote. Sympathy can be so quickly aroused and so quickly forgotten in part because our own emotions can be so quickly aroused and forgotten.

Past and Vicarious Experience

Beyond experiencing a particular misfortune in the present, having experienced it in the past or vicariously via someone close to oneself also appears to increase empathy, sympathy, and the likelihood of helping. A small number of studies have examined the impact of a person's own experiences as a victim on empathy toward victims. Barnett, Tetreault, Esper, and Bristow (1986) found that participants who had been raped reported greater empathy when watching a video tape about a rape victim than did those who had never been raped. Batson et al. (1996) found that the expectation of oneself receiving a shock affected self-reported empathy when observing a same-sex peer receive a shock, although this pattern was only observed in females. Christy and Voigt (1994) found that those who reported being abused as a child indicated that they would be more likely to intervene if they saw a child being abused than those who had never been abused.

Evidence that knowing someone who has suffered a tragedy affects sympathy toward people suffering the same plight is even sparser. Anecdotally, both casual observation and celebrity examples (e.g., Nancy Reagan [Alzheimer's disease], Rob Lowe [breast cancer], and Mia Hamm [bone marrow cancer]) suggest that people are often motivated to help victims of the same misfortune which someone close to them suffered. More rigorously, a survey of volunteers confirmed that volunteer choices are indeed related to the misfortunes experienced by close friends and relatives of those volunteers (Small & Simonsohn, 2006).

However, an association between knowing victims of a given misfortune and pro-social behavior toward other people with the same misfortune could be explained by other factors besides sympathy, namely (a) a spurious association because of an unobservable variable (e.g., charities may locate in areas of high incidence of the misfortune they target and if volunteers choose organizations near their homes, then a spurious correlations would arise), or by

(b) differences in informational content or salience (e.g., friends of victims may be better informed about volunteering opportunities at organizations they have encountered in the past).

However, Small and Simonsohn (2006) demonstrated that these explanations could not fully explain this sympathy bias. In a controlled experiment that first induced "friendship" between randomly matched participants and then turned some "friends" into "victims" by having them give up a $10 endowment, Small and Simonsohn found that "friendship" with a participant-turned-victim led to greater generosity in an allocation task to a third participant—who had also become a "victim." A second set of conditions, in which the recipient of the allocation task was a scholarship fund rather than another participant who had lost money, showed no such effect. This pattern suggests that friends of victims do not simply become more sympathetic in general, but rather that such exposure leads individuals to care more for others with the same misfortunes as their friends.

Proximity

Another important factor that influences sympathy is proximity. Close proximity tends to increase sympathy toward victims who are in other ways sympathy-evoking, whereas distance tends to decrease it. The latter effect is well documented in Jonathan Glover's book *Humanity*, which details and attempts to make sense of the atrocities of the 20th century. Writing about the Atom bomb, Glover notes that "for scientists and others involved in the bomb, sympathy was inhibited by distance. They were only faintly aware of the people who were to be burnt, blinded, blistered, shriveled, irradiated and killed" (p. 99).

Proximity can be defined, not just geographically, but over numerous dimensions; simple physical distance does not do justice to the complexities of proximity, which can also depend on arbitrary boundaries and symbolic factors. Thus, for example, even though Yucca Mountain, the federal government's proposed high-level nuclear waste repository, is right on the border with California and closer to many California population centers than to population centers in Nevada, one study found that the citizens of Nevada were more upset about the

nuclear waste's placement than were the citizens of California. Another dimension of proximity that undoubtedly matters is sensory proximity; one is more likely to care about other persons to the extent that one can, to paraphrase a famous line from the rock opera *Tommy*, see them, feel them, touch them, or *hear* them.

In his book *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*, Stanley Milgram (1974) describes 19 variations of the famous experiment that he conducted in which subjects believed they were administering shocks to other subjects, ostensibly as part of an experiment examining the impact of punishment on learning behavior. He found that when the immediacy of the victim was increased, compliance decreased (and when immediacy of the authority increased, compliance increased). In the most distant condition, the learner was placed in another room where he could not be heard or seen by the participants, except that at 300 volts he pounded on the wall in protest. The second condition was similar except that voice protests were introduced. In the third condition, the learner was placed in the same room as the subject, and in fact 1.5 feet away from him or her. Finally, in the fourth condition, the participant had to physically hold the learner's arm onto a shock plate. Compliance with the experimenter declined monotonically with proximity to the victim, as one would expect if proximity engenders sympathy. In the first condition only 34% of subjects defied the experimenter, but this percentage increased to 37.5%, 60%, and finally 70% as proximity increased across conditions. There are, of course, other interpretations of these effects. Perhaps the proximity manipulations affected feelings of responsibility or fears of reprisals. However, it seems likely that part of the differences across conditions resulted from an increase in sympathy produced by close proximity.

In-Group/Similarity/Nationality

The effects of physical distance may be mediated by more subjective social distance or the felt connection (or lack thereof) between individuals. Individuals may feel more socially distant as anonymity between them increases (Bohnet & Frey, 1999; Charness & Gneezy, in press). For instance, Charness & Gneezy (in press) demonstrate greater altruistic behavior toward others when a family name of the other person is provided, thereby weakening the anonymity.

Jones and Rachlin (2006) had undergraduates in an introductory psychology class imagine a list of 100 of the people closest to them and then asked them to make hypothetical choices between different distributions of money between themselves and people at different points on the 1–100 metric of social distance—for example, $155 for you alone versus $75 for you and $75 for the 27th person on the list. They found, not surprisingly, that generosity tended to decline with social distance and, more interestingly, that the decline followed a "hyperbolic" pattern that resembled the hyperbolic function observed in studies of time discounting.

Research on intergroup relations and social categorization consistently finds that people care more about others in their in-group than in their out-group (e.g., Dovidio et al., 1997; Flippen, Hornstein, Siegal, & Weitzman, 1996; Levine, Cassidy, Brazier, & Reicher, 2002). For example, Dovidio and coauthors (Dovidio et al., 1997), using a minimal group paradigm, found that students were more likely to offer help to another student in need when that student was believed to be an in-group member. Hornstein (1976) proposed that emphasizing similarity or a "common fate" gives rise to a sense of "we-ness," which in turn facilitates helping. Recent studies using nonconscious primes to make group membership salient provided further evidence of this pattern, without the experimental demand that could possibly account for prior results where the manipulation was known by participants (Garcia, Weaver, Moskowitz, & Darley, 2002).

A related set of findings shows that similarity and perspective-taking affect caring over and beyond group status. Krebs (1975) showed that when a stranger was ostensibly about to receive an electric shock, individuals led to believe that they were similar to the stranger in terms of values and traits exhibited a stronger physiological stress response and reported feeling worse than those led to believe that they were dissimilar (see also Stotland & Dunn, 1963). Batson and colleagues have consistently shown greater empathy and altruistic behavior by individuals who are primed to take the victim's perspective (Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997; Batson et al., 2003; Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978).

Newness

Of all the nonnormative factors that influence sympathy, perhaps novelty is the most profound and most important for public policy. Human beings are highly adaptive (Helson, 1964; Frederick & Loewenstein, 1999). The first time we see a body or an atrocity, we are apt to react with horror and sympathy, but even by the second exposure, such reactions are likely to be greatly attenuated. Thus, in the Milgram electric shock experiments, subjects were not asked immediately to administer potentially lethal shocks, but were given a series of requests to increase the voltage marginally. Having given someone a 100-V shock, the prospect of administering a 110-V shock seems much less horrifying than it would if one had not already witnessed, and adapted to, the 100-V reaction. Many historians of atrocity (e.g., Browning, 1992; Glover, 1999) have identified gradual exposure as a critical element of many instances of atrocity. For example, R.J. Lifton (1986) argued that it was the incremental character of ethical decay that enabled Nazi doctors to become active killers, even though they had taken the Hippocratic Oath to do no harm. Lifton (1986) describes a process whereby doctors were first present when euthanasia took place, were later asked to add their signature to a document, still later were asked to supervise a mercy killing, and so on to the point where many actually administered lethal injections to eugenically "undesirable" persons. These anecdotes demonstrate that a gradual adaptation to a sympathetic target weakens felt sympathy and moral restraint, enabling acts that would otherwise be unconscionable.

Vividness: Identifiable Victims

A final important determinant of sympathy is vividness. Sympathy, like other emotions, is highly attuned to visual imagery, and the more vivid that imagery is, the more likely one is to sympathize. This may be one reason why successful movies, which develop stories and protagonists in a highly vivid fashion, evoke so much sympathy, even for fictitious characters.

A dramatic illustration of the consequences of vividness, and one on which much of our own research has focused, is the identifiable victim effect first discussed by Thomas Schelling (1968).

A classic example of this phenomenon is the story of "Baby Jessica." At 18-months-old, she fell 22 feet down a narrow well in Texas. Within hours everyone in the United States knew about her plight. Her innocent face constantly appeared on every news channel. People reacted with tremendous sympathy, which took the material form of hundreds of thousands of dollars sent to her family to assist in the rescue effort.

In contrast to the sympathetic response to Baby Jessica's plight, there is an apparent lack of feelings toward victim statistics. For instance just in the United States, 16% of children live in poverty and several thousand die in automobile accidents each year. The numbers increase manifold when considering victims in other countries (who are more distant). Although Baby Jessica was in fact rescued, if the money given to her cause had instead been donated to causes supporting statistical victims, it is likely that many more lives could have been saved. Yet we see far less sympathy and generosity toward these statistical victims.

There are many reasons why Baby Jessica and other identifiable victims might elicit greater generosity than victim statistics.[7] Often their stories involve a lot of sympathy-inducing information, such as media images and elaborate stories portraying innocence. To be sure, portrayals of needy individuals who have suffered misfortune for reasons beyond their control (e.g, sick children) arouse sympathy and helping behavior (Weiner, 1980). Victims usually become identified by information about them, such that any effect of identifiability is confounded by this information. Therefore, one possibility is that the so-called identifiable victim effect is nothing more than the effect of sympathetic information which accompanies identifiable victims in real world examples.

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[7] Another factor that may have increased attention to, and concern for, Baby Jessica was that she was female. Roy Baumeister (personal communication) suggests that both men and women seem to have especially strong impulses to help female victims, with other examples being Laci Peterson, Jessica Lynch, and Terri Schiavo. He notes that ostensibly egalitarian newspapers often report whether victims include "women and children," a phrase that underscores the lesser value that society puts on male lives; the allusions to "women and children" convey the sense that the calamity was especially bad.

In our research (Small & Loewenstein, 2003), we demonstrated that the identifiable victim effect exists even in the absence of confounding information, a manipulation that we refer to as "determinateness." An identifiable victim has been determined, whereas an unidentifiable victim is as yet indeterminate. We hypothesized and found that determined victims elicited greater sympathy and received more aid. Indeterminate victims, in contrast, are more difficult to imagine and empathize with, and hence are less likely to elicit sympathy and aid.

Our first study provided a quantitative measure of altruism in an anonymous allocation experiment in which certain randomly assigned "fortunate" participants, who had an endowment of 10 dollars, were given the opportunity to split the endowment with other anonymous participants who had been randomly assigned to lose their endowment and thus were "victims." The experimental manipulation was that some fortunate participants drew the number of the recipient with whom they could share their money just before making their allocation decisions, whereas others drew the number just after making their decision. In neither case did the number provide any meaningful information because all participants were anonymous. However, when the number is drawn first, the person has been determined and is thus identified, but the recipient is yet to be determined if the number is not drawn until after the allocation decision has been made.

Results supported the prediction that identifying a victim, even in the absence of information, increases giving. In an unpublished study, we used the same procedure but measured sympathy rather than giving and found a consistent pattern (see Figure 2). This finding was replicated with similar results in a field study which people were asked to donate to help build a house for either a "determined" or an "undetermined" needy family. Finally, research by Kogut and Ritov (2005) further demonstrated that a single identifiable victim (represented by a name and a face) induced more emotional distress than a group of identifiable victims, and than both a single and a group of unidentifiable victims. Moreover, differences in emotional distress partially accounted for the differences in donations.

Other research has found a pattern compatible with the identifiable victim effect: people are sensitive to proportions of lives saved rather than absolute values (Baron, 1997; Featherstonhaugh, Slovic, Johnson, & Friedrich, 1997; Friedrich et al., 1999; Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997; Small, Loewenstein, & Slovic, 2007). When the proportion is high, the lives become more identifiable. Ten lives out of a group of 100 is a high proportion and thus more sympathy inducing than 10 lives out of 1,000,000. The identifiable victim effect described above represents one extreme on this continuum—one out of one. Once a victim is identified, she becomes her own reference group (e.g., there was only one
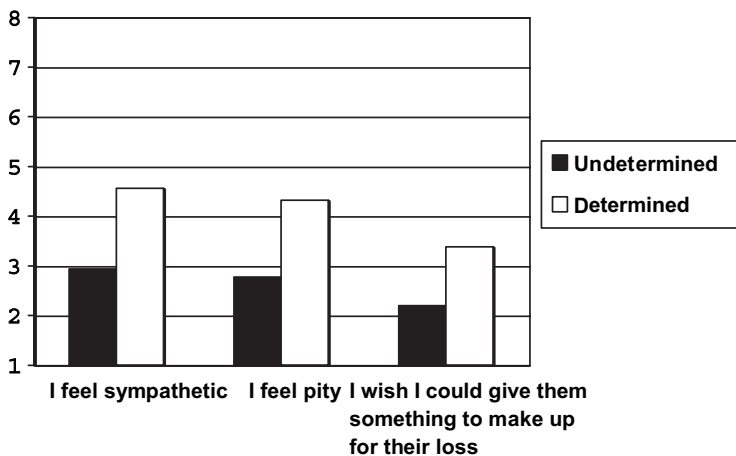

Figure 2. Emotional reactions toward undetermined and determined victims (Small & Loewenstein, 2005).

girl in a well to save) and thus receives the highest level of sympathy.

The opposite extreme occurs when there are so many victims in a given reference group that individual victims are hidden among the masses. In this case, any effort to help is perceived as only a "drop-in-the-bucket." People may be reluctant to help because of an error in cost/benefit reasoning. That is, they may improperly factor in the denominator, or reference group, when intuitively calculating the benefit. Indeed, some evidence shows that when primed to think "economically," this bias is even stronger (Friedrich et al., 1999).

Summary

In sum, sympathy is responsive to a variety of factors that are difficult to justify normatively. Victims who share our own affective state, who are geographically or socially proximate, who are similar to us or are presented to us in a vivid fashion are, logically, no more deserving of aid. But they are far more likely to elicit sympathetic responses.

Calculations of Deservingness

The calculations of the tin man are quite different from the emotional reactions of the scarecrow. The scarecrow simply reacts, reflexively, to those stimuli that elicit sympathy. The tin man, in contrast, can engage in deliberation at any one of a variety of different levels. Although different people will differ in the types of deliberations they engage in, and different situations may elicit different types of deliberations, most deliberations probably include two major components: (1) calculations of the degree to which a victim or victims merit assistance, perhaps based on their judged level of misery, and (2) an evaluation of the degree to which one is actually in a position to deliver helpful aid.

Perhaps the most famous proposal for how these cost-benefit calculations should ideally be performed was advanced by Jeremy Bentham in his *Introduction the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789). Bentham proposed what could be interpreted as a prescriptive theory of sympathy based in part on the idea that individuals are, in effect, interchangeable and that the ideal state is one that brings, as Bentham expressed it, "the

greatest happiness of the greatest number." Thus, the utilitarian perspective focuses solely on the magnitude of the benefit without any differentiation of deservingness.

In practice, however, Bentham's calculus seems somewhat unrealistic. Even when deliberation dominates sympathy, we suspect few people would subscribe to a calculation that placed equal weight on all people. Rather, people will naturally favor some people and some groups over others, even when they consciously deliberate. For instance, explicit public discussion about immigration and war often involves the assumption that American lives are more valuable than foreign lives. This raises the question of which individuals should be included in the group whose happiness one should maximize. As Frans de Waal (1996) notes, "Human history furnishes ample evidence that moral principles are oriented to one's own group, and only reluctantly (and never evenhandedly) applied to the outside world." At a minimum, there is good evidence, even beyond the fact that people tend to target their personal spending and bequests on family members, that people are more prone to deliver aid to family members, and especially children, than to strangers. For example, one study found that genetically identical twins help each other significantly more than fraternal twins, who do not share all their genes (Segal, 1984). Another found that survivors of a fire reported that they were much more likely to search for family members than for friends (Sime, 1983). Other research has found that, immediately following natural disasters, family members are the first to be helped, with friends, neighbors, and strangers receiving progressively less attention. The principle of "take care of your family first" probably has its origins in evolutionary programming that is so deeply ingrained that people barely even recognize that it influences their deliberations. The same thing can be seen when, for example in the war currently taking place in Iraq, even highly reputable American newspapers devote far more attention to American than Iraqi casualties.

Batson, Turk, Shaw, and Klein (1995) distinguish between "empathy-induced altruism," the goal of which is "to increase the welfare of the person for whom empathy is felt," and "moral motivation" which has the goal of upholding a given moral principle. This distinction is very close to that which we draw between sympathy and deliberation.

They also draw attention to the fact that these two motives often conflict. As an example, they cite the case of an employer who values fairness and who must decide whether to promote employee A who is more qualified and more deserving or employee B whose mother just died. Fairness favors the former; empathy and sympathy the latter. They conducted a series of experiments in which participants were asked to make a decision that affected the welfare of other individuals. Before making the decision, some subjects were induced to feel empathy for one of the individuals and others were not. To the extent that sympathy drove people to favor specific individuals and conflicted with principles of fairness, it tended to promote the former over the latter.

How often does higher level reasoning drive behavior, or are the deliberations of the tin man little more than rationalizations or justifications of behavior that is actually driven by sympathy? As Haidt (2001) expresses the relationship between morality and deliberation, is sympathy the dog and deliberation simply its rationalist tail? Somewhat short of the most extreme interpretation of Haidt's hypothesis, we suspect that some deliberation does, in fact, involve the types of calculations envisioned by Bentham (1789/1948) and the judgments of fair principles described by Batson et al. (1995), though even these are likely to be biased by emotion and influenced by implicit evolutionary and cultural programming of which we are largely unaware.

Conclusions

In this article, we have argued that human generosity to victims results from the interaction of two qualitatively different processes. One, sympathy, provides the motivational force that drives aid-giving. Although providing the fuel necessary for generous actions, sympathy on its own is an erratic, immature, force which responds to a wide range of situational factors that are not normatively justifiable. The other, deliberation, is more rational, but inherently lacking in feeling or motivation. Deliberation is the process that can channel the aid-giving motivated by sympathy in productive directions. By itself, however, it is of no more use than a disconnected computer. Thinking about sympa-

thy in this fashion, we believe, can shed new light on some existing controversies in the literature on altruism and can help inform public policies that involve social benefits.

A New Take on Empathy and Altruism

One important issue that our framework can potentially shed light on is the debate over whether altruism is, in fact, derivative of self-interest. This issue has attracted considerable attention from philosophers, psychologists, and even economists.

Immanuel Kant, in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (1785/1965), proposed that some people are naturally sympathetic, whereas others are not. Acts of kindness toward others that are motivated by sympathy, Kant argued do not warrant praise because they are inherently selfish. Those motivated by duty—the principle that one ought to practice benevolence or beneficence when one can—do, warrant praise because they place principle over self-interest.

In psychology the debate over the "empathy altruism" hypothesis (Batson, 1997; Batson et al., 1995; Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Neuberg, 1997) hinges on the question of whether aid-giving is, as the Cialdini camp advocates, ultimately selfish—that is, motivated by personal emotional benefits received by the aid-giver—or, as advocated by Batson and colleagues, it is "truly" altruistic in the sense of not being motivated by personal hedonic benefit.

In economics, the same dispute exists between the "warm glow" hypothesis proposed by Andreoni (1990), which posits that people provide aid because it gives them a warm glow—that is, a hedonic benefit—and the "pure altruism" hypothesis, which posits, again, that people are, or at least can be, altruistic in the absence of personal benefit Konow (2005).

The theoretical framework advanced here provides a new perspective on these parallel debates—that is, on the question of whether helping behavior *really* is selfish or altruistic. Much as Kant argued that people could be motivated either by sympathy or by duty, one could argue that both situations are possible. Behavior motivated by sympathy—by a direct response to affect—could be classified as inherently selfish in the sense of being designed to mitigate a

negative, or enhance a positive, emotion experienced by the giver. Giving that occurs in the absence of sympathy—that is driven entirely by the deliberative system—on the other hand, would seem to more closely meet the qualifications of "true" or "pure" altruism in the sense that it does not confer any obvious immediate hedonic benefit.

A staunch disbeliever in the possibility of unselfish altruism could, of course, point to other types of selfish motives, such as desire to adhere to societal norms, to explain aid-giving in the absence of sympathy. In fact, it could be argued that, although helping behavior in the service of duty may be less self-interested at some abstract level than helping in response to sympathy, sympathy-driven behavior is in fact the more appealing motivation.

Helping Behavior, Willpower and Self-Control

Helping behavior and self-control are usually viewed as distinct topics, but they are, in fact, closely connected. Providing aid when one is not emotionally motivated to do so, or not providing aid when one is so motivated, both involve the kind of deliberative override of affectively driven behavior that is the hallmark of self-control (Baumeister & Vohs, 2003; Shiv & Fedorikhin, 1999).

The idea that helping behavior (or lack thereof) may involve an element of self-control points to a variety of novel predictions concerning the impact of factors that have been shown to affect the exercise of self-control. Prior research has shown that the prior exercise of self-control, fatigue, alcohol intoxication, cognitive load, and a variety of other factors tend to undermine the application of self-control, whereas the opposite of these effects—for example, alertness, sobriety, and mental concentration—tend to promote self-control.

According to the theoretical perspective advanced here, the impact of any of these factors on helping behavior should depend on the balance of the relationship between sympathy and judgments about efficacy of aid. When the former is greater than the latter, then factors that undermine willpower will tend to increase aid. When the latter is greater than the former, then factors that increase willpower will tend to increase aid. Indeed, as we go to press, there is preliminary evidence support-

ing the prediction that self-control is relevant to helping. Gailliot et al. (in press) found that people whose willpower was depleted by a prior act of self-control (persisting on an exam) offered to donate less to a charity and were less likely to help a stranger from their class who had been evicted from his or her apartment than those who were not similarly depleted. However, an experimental group who consumed a glucose drink, which the authors find replenishes willpower, showed no such relationship. We conjecture that the charity and stranger probably did not evoke much active sympathy, which is why willpower depletion reduced aid, and that a more sympathetic victim might have produced the opposite pattern.

A study by Skitka, Mullen, Griffin, Hutchinson, and Chamberlain (2002) provides preliminary support for this prediction. Subjects were presented with cases of people who had contracted AIDS in different ways, in which different individuals were made to appear more or less responsible for their condition (e.g., sexual contact vs. a blood transfusion). For each case study, subjects were asked, either under conditions of high or low cognitive load, whether the individual should be given subsidized access to drug treatment, and filled out measures of blame and responsibility. The study found that under conditions of high load both liberals and conservatives were less likely to provide subsidized treatment to those deemed responsible (relative to those deemed not responsible), whereas under conditions of low load, liberals treated both groups equally whereas conservatives continued to favor groups who were seen as less responsible for contracting the disease. These findings are consistent with the idea that conservatives have similar affective and deliberative reactions to the provision of aid to people who take sexual risks, whereas liberals have divergent affective reactions: affective reactions that are similar to those of conservatives, but more generous deliberative reactions. Under load, liberals go with their natural affective response, but when given time and cognitive resources to deliberate, they are able to respond in a more generous fashion.

Sympathy, Deliberation, and Public Policy

Just as deliberation can play the role of taming the immature and incoherent spikes of sympathy that tend to naturally occur, public policy can play

a similar civilizing role. Even with the benefit of deliberation, people's natural inclinations to help or stand back from helping is at best weakly correlated with need. Epstein (2006), in an article aptly titled "Crisis Mentality," documents the mismatch between voluntary donations and actual needs, and discusses how disasters, such as the Indian Ocean Tsunami, the 9/11 attacks, and Hurricane Katrina receive donations that are out of proportion to the numbers of affected victims, whereas other problems of much greater magnitude, such as AIDS and malaria, receive dramatically less attention and remedial funds both absolutely and even more so in proportion to the number of victims affected (see Figure 3, adapted from his article). Indeed, the list of factors discussed above can help to explain the discrepancy. All three disasters that elicited disproportionate donations happened (at least in part) to westerners (even the Tsunami affected western tourists) and were new, whereas the two problems that received much less attention and elicited minimal donations were ongoing and were largely confined to developing countries distant from wealthy countries.

The importance of sympathy for public policy decisions can also be seen in the important role that is often played by "iconic victims" (Loewenstein, Small, & Strnad, 2006), includ-

ing Jessica Lynch, Terry Schiavo, and Laci Peterson. At the start of the Iraq conflict in 2003 when most news was bleak, the injured P.O.W. Jessica Lynch fostered patriotism and political support despite divided U.S. public opinion. In contrast, Terry Schiavo drove a political wedge by reigniting the debate about end-of-life decisions when politicians fought the courts on whether to remove her feeding tube following years of a persistent vegetative state. Finally, following the murder of the pregnant Laci Peterson, President George W. Bush enacted the "Unborn Victims of Violence Act" (also known as "Laci and Conner's Law") which treats a lethal attack on a pregnant woman as a double homicide. Although this enactment followed a 5-year effort of the National Right to Life Committee, the Laci Peterson episode provided the motivational push to actually change the law.

In contrast, there are many political causes that seem worthy when considering the potential life-saving impact, but whose victims are hidden and thus too often ignored. Slovic (2007) reminds that ignoring genocide is a repeated phenomenon, and the prevention of it has never been made a top priority of the U.S. government or the media. For instance, the few minutes devoted to the Darfur genocide by the major TV news programs pale in
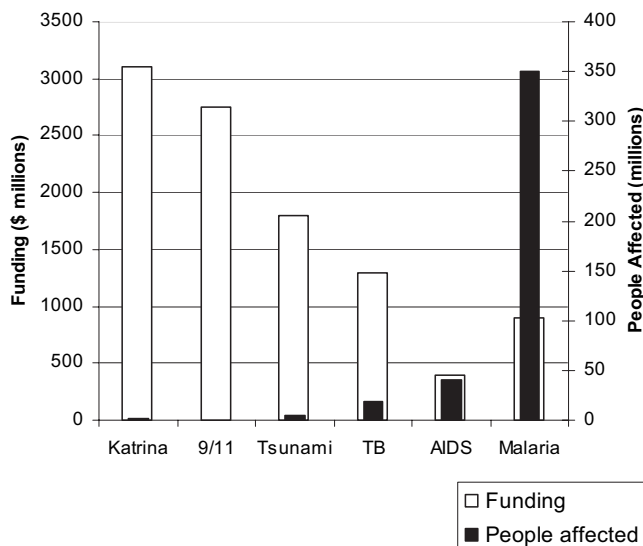

Figure 3. Mismatched donations and needs associated with different crises and conditions (Spence, 2006).

comparison to the coverage of Natalee Holloway, the American girl missing in Aruba. Similarly, the miseries of poverty and disease, particularly that occurring in other countries, are mostly out of sight to society and policymakers. Therefore, they seldom make the news or come up at the water-cooler and cocktail party discussions. It is especially difficult for the deliberative, rational system to triumph when these victims are so far out of our minds.

In an ideal world, public policy could shift collective aid-giving further in the direction dictated by deliberation. Policymakers, who have the resources to think carefully about where aid would best be allocated, could potentially blow against the wind of individual irrationality. In practice, however, this is rarely the case. Elected officials are often themselves buffeted by the same emotional winds as their constituents, and even when they are not, they likely feel the need to be responsive to the wishes of constituents. In the domain of charitable aid, as in so many other domains that involve an interplay between affect and deliberation, democratic institutions show their limitations, giving voice to the irrational, affect-driven vicissitudes of the electorate.[8]

Concluding Comments

As in so many other domains of human life, heart and mind come into conflict when it comes to helping behavior. Sympathy—an emotion—provides the motive force for helping behavior. But is all too often lacking in the situations where it is most warranted and, when aroused, is prone to direct the helping behavior it motivates in erratic, inefficient, and irrational directions. Deliberation can provide the reason that raw sympathy lacks, but on its own is useless, like a disconnected computer endlessly processing numbers.

At the end of *The Wizard of Oz,* the tin man and scarecrow (as well as the lion) learn from the Wizard of Oz that all along they in fact possessed the organ they believed they lacked. Unfortunately, no such happy discoveries are in line for the tin man and scarecrow in each of us. Human sympathy, even directed by deliberation, cannot be relied upon to provide aid where it is needed. Rather, we need social, political, and economic institutions that play the role of

Dorothy, channeling the mental powers of the tin man to direct the heart-felt helping behavior of the scarecrow.[9]

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[8] The difficulties of making rational public policy in the face of public irrationality is well illustrated by the trials and tribulations of the American Red Cross. The Red Cross created the Liberty Disaster Relief Fund to handle the surge in donations in the aftermath of 9/11. After using the funds for immediate disaster relief, however, the agency still had large amounts of money left over. When it attempted to reallocate these funds to other worthy causes, however, it met with a groundswell of indignation from the public as well as from elected U.S. officials. Ultimately, it was forced to distribute approximately $390 million in earmarked funds (an average of $110,000 per person) to 3500 beneficiaries, many who received diverse aid from other sources as well (including an earmarked fund established by the U.S. Congress). Clearly, the same money could have been used in different ways that would have alleviated more human suffering.

[9] A less uplifting possible ending to the article, suggested by Roy Baumeister, would have been to relate a real-life story about the filming of *The Wizard of Oz*. When the movie was originally cast, the actor who got the part of the tin man decided that he preferred the scarecrow and pled with the person cast in that role to change places, which that actor generously agreed to do. The movie producers' first attempt to create a tin man involved covering the actor's skin with makeup composed of aluminum dust which caused his lungs to stop functioning and nearly killed him. He spent a long time in the hospital, and although he survived, by then the movie had been filmed without him, and he missed out on the opportunity to be part of a classic. This example further illustrates the downside of sympathy, and more evidence of the adage that "no good deed goes unpunished."

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