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Immorality From Empathy-Induced Altruism: When Compassion and Justice Conflict

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Results of 2 experiments supported the proposal that empathy-induced altruism can lead one to act in a way that violates the moral principle of justice. In each experiment, participants were asked to make an allocation decision that affected the welfare of other individuals. Participants who were not induced to feel empathy tended to act in accord with a principle of justice; participants who were induced to feel empathy were significantly more likely to violate this principle, allocating resources preferentially to the person for whom empathy was felt. High-empathy participants who showed partiality agreed with other participants in perceiving partiality to be less fair and less moral (Experiment 1). Overall, results suggested that empathy-induced altruism and the desire to uphold a moral principle of justice are independent prosocial motives that sometimes cooperate but sometimes conflict. Implications of this independence are discussed.

The empathy–altruism hypothesis claims that empathy can be a source of immoral behavior (Batson, 1991; Batson & Shaw, 1991). Such a claim may at first seem paradoxical, especially given the way empathy and altruism are defined in this hypothesis: *Empathy* is defined as an other-oriented emotional response congruent with the perceived welfare of another person (if the other is in need, empathy includes feeling sympathetic, softhearted, compassionate, tender, and the like); *altruism* is defined as a motivational state with the ultimate goal of increasing another person's welfare. The *empathy–altruism hypothesis* states that empathic emotion evokes altruistic motivation to benefit the person for whom empathy is felt (Batson, 1987, 1991). Like people outside psychology, psychologists often assume close links between empathy-induced altruism, so defined, and morality.

Linking Empathy, Altruism, and Morality

Eisenberg (1986, 1991) and Staub (1978; but also see Staub, 1991) have suggested that prosocial behavior motivated by the desire to uphold a moral principle, such as a principle of justice, is altruistic. Hoffman (1987, 1989) has suggested that empathy is a source of moral motivation because it stimulates the general concern for the welfare of others that undergirds moral principles, whether a utilitarian principle of impartial benevolence and concern for all or a contractarian principle of justice and fairness. Referring to Rawls's (1971) theory of justice—probably the best-known theory in modern moral philosophy and reflected in moral psychology in Kohlberg's (1976) Post-Conventional, or principled, morality—Hoffman (1989) said, "Rawlsian justice may require empathy" (p. 297).

Empirical evidence that empathy is a source of moral action is considerable. Not only is there extensive evidence that empathy increases helping and other prosocial behaviors (see Batson, 1991; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987, for reviews) but there is also evidence (admittedly more limited and tenuous) that empathy decreases aggression and other antisocial behaviors (see Miller & Eisenberg, 1988, for a review).

Is a Link Between Empathy-Induced Altruism and Morality Inevitable?

To claim that empathy-induced altruism can be a source of immoral action seems, then, to fly in the face of common sense, expert opinion, and empirical evidence. Yet we believe this claim merits consideration. Why?

First, logically, the assumed link between altruism and morality is usually based on the juxtaposition of each to self-interest (cf. Mansbridge, 1990). Self-interest is often equated with selfishness, which is in turn considered by many to be the epitome of immorality (Campbell, 1975; Wallach & Wallach, 1983). As defined above, altruism clearly involves other-interest rather than self-interest. It may seem to follow, then, that if self-interest is not moral, and altruism is not self-interest, altruism is moral. This logic is flawed, however. Quite apart from whether self-interest should be equated with immorality (Rawls, 1971, and many others would challenge this equation), to say that A (self-interest) is not C (moral) and B (altruism) is not A does not require that B is C.

Second, empirically, to find that empathy-induced altruism can increase moral, prosocial behavior and decrease immoral, antisocial behavior does not rule out the possibility that it may also, at times, do the opposite. The observed empirical relations

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are not so strong as to suggest an invariant connection, and a systematic range of situations has not been examined. Rather, because the focal question for many researchers has been whether empathy can increase moral action—certainly a worthwhile question to ask—no attempt has been made to test whether it might also, at times, increase immoral action.

Third, theoretically, the empathy–altruism hypothesis claims an invariant relation between an emotional state (empathy) and a motive (altruism); it does not claim an invariant link to behavior. Rather than focusing on the behavioral outcome—moral action in the form of increased prosocial or decreased antisocial behavior—theory and research on the empathy–altruism hypothesis focus on prosocial motives (Batson, 1987, 1991, 1995). As Lewin (1951) suggested, the concern is to identify invariant relations among underlying psychological constructs (between empathic emotion and altruistic motivation) rather than to map surface empirical relations (between empathy-inducing conditions and prosocial behavior).

Given this Lewinian perspective, it is essential to recognize motivational differences that exist, even if in certain situations the different motives lead to the same behavior. It is also essential to recognize that the same motive may lead to radically different behavior in different situations. Simply because in a certain situation motives X and Y both lead to behavior Z does not mean that motives X and Y are equivalent or even linked. If the situation is changed, then these motives may no longer be in harmony but in conflict; X may still lead to Z, whereas Y may now lead to not-Z. Batson (1991, 1995) has suggested that empathy-induced altruism and motivation to uphold a moral principle such as justice are, like X and Y, two distinct and independent prosocial motives. In some situations they will promote the same behavior, but in other situations they will not.

Independence of Empathy-Induced Altruism and Morality

For two motives to be distinct, they must have different ultimate goals. The ultimate goal of empathy-induced altruism is to increase the welfare of the person for whom empathy is felt; the ultimate goal of moral motivation is to uphold a given moral principle (Batson, 1995). (If, instead, increasing another's welfare or upholding a moral principle is an instrumental means to the ultimate goal of gaining social and self-rewards or of avoiding social and self-punishments, then the motive is of a third variety: egoism.) In many situations, pursuit of these distinct goals will lead to the same behavior. For example, if you feel compassion for a person who is being treated unfairly, either empathy-induced altruism or a desire to uphold a moral principle of justice, or both, could lead you to intervene. Attention to such situations has, we suspect, led to the assumption that morality and altruism are inextricably linked, either that they are equivalent or that one necessarily contributes to the other.

If, however, these two prosocial motives are distinct, then there should also be situations in which pursuit of these two goals conflict. Behavior that enables a person to reach one goal will prevent that person from reaching the other. Imagine, for example, an employer who values fairness and who must decide which of two employees to promote: Employee A is clearly better qualified and more deserving, but the employer feels sorry for Employee B, whose mother recently died. Fairness and justice pull in one direction, empathy-induced altruism in the opposite. If sufficiently strong, empathy-induced altruism may lead the employer to act unfairly, violating his or her own principle of justice.

Our conceptual analysis leads, then, to the conclusion that empathy-induced altruism is neither moral nor immoral; it is amoral. Sometimes it encourages people to act in accord with their moral principles; at other times it encourages people to violate their principles. Far from thinking of this cross-situational inconsistency as an empirical embarrassment, however, the variation is embraced as a theoretically based prediction.

Given the proposed independence of altruistic and moral motives, it should be possible to bring empathy-induced altruistic motivation into conflict with motivation to uphold a moral principle, such as a principle of justice. If the altruistic motive is stronger than the moral motive, it should lead to violation of the principle, resulting in immoral action. Failure to find that empathy-induced altruism can lead to immoral behavior in this way would contradict the claim that empathic emotion evokes motivation with the ultimate goal of increasing the welfare of the person for whom empathy is felt, distinct from motivation with the ultimate goal of upholding a moral principle.[1]

When can empathy-induced altruism lead a person to violate his or her moral principles and act immorally? We believe it can when the following four conditions are satisfied: (a) The person is required to perform behavior for which a personally held moral principle, such as a principle of justice, is clearly relevant; (b) empathy is felt for one or more of the individuals affected by the behavior; (c) the individual or individuals for whom empathy is felt are not the only ones in need; and (d) not everyone's need can be met. In such a situation, empathy-induced altruism should motivate the person to show partiality toward the individual(s) for whom empathy is felt, even if doing so violates the person's moral principles. If the altruistic motive is stronger than the moral motive, the person should act immorally.

The Present Research

We conducted two experiments to test the basic prediction that inducing empathy for one of the individuals a person can benefit, but only at the expense of others, can lead the person to show partiality toward that individual, violating the moral principle of justice. We chose justice (fairness) as the moral principle to place in conflict with empathy-induced altruism for three reasons: (a) Justice is probably the most commonly cited moral principle in philosophy and psychology; (b) in contrast to the ambiguity surrounding some other moral principles, situations can easily be found in which what is fair and just is clear; and (c) there is much evidence that endorsement of a justice principle is widespread in contemporary society and

[1] Given the extensive support for the empathy–altruism hypothesis (see Batson, 1991, for a review), we shall assume that the prosocial motivation evoked by empathy is altruistic. Were the motivation egoistic instead, our basic point about conflict with motivation to uphold a moral principle such as fairness or justice would remain, but the specifics of our argument would change considerably.

that people are motivated to uphold it (see Hoffman, 1987, 1989; Lerner, 1975, 1980).

In each experiment, participants were asked to make a decision that affected the welfare of other individuals. Before making this decision, some participants were induced to feel empathy for one of the individuals; others were not. We predicted that participants who were not induced to feel empathy would act in accord with a principle of justice, showing impartial fairness, whereas participants who were induced to feel empathy would experience motivational conflict between altruism and justice, leading at least some to act preferentially to benefit the person for whom empathy was felt. We did not expect high-empathy participants to perceive this partiality to be moral or fair; rather, we expected empathy-induced altruism to lead them to violate their own principle of justice, acting in a way they perceived to be less moral and less fair.

Experiment 1: Assigning Workers to Tasks

Method

Participants. Participants for Experiment 1 were 60 women in the introductory psychology course at the University of Kansas; they took part to earn partial credit toward a course requirement. Using a randomized-block procedure, we assigned 20 participants to each of three experimental conditions: no-communication, communication/low-empathy, and communication/high-empathy. Three additional students (2 in the communication/low-empathy condition and 1 in the communication/high-empathy condition) were excluded from the sample and replaced because during debriefing they expressed doubt either that other participants were present or that one of the others might receive electric shocks.

Procedure. Participants attended the experimental session individually, although they were led to believe that 2 other female introductory psychology students were also present for the session. On arrival, participants were escorted into a small research cubicle and given a written introduction, which explained that the study concerned "how certain aspects of the work situation affect people's responses and attitudes." Participants read that three different aspects were being studied: (1) role—in work situations some people are workers and others supervisors; (2) outcome consequences—sometimes work is performed under positive-consequences conditions and sometimes under negative; and (3) communication—sometimes a supervisor has personal information about one or more of the workers, and sometimes a supervisor does not. To maintain anonymity, the 3 participants in the session were to be identified only by letter: A, B, and C. Each participant was always assigned to be Participant B.

Ostensibly, 1 of the 3 participants in the session had been randomly assigned to be the supervisor, the other 2 to be workers. The supervisor's job would be to assign the workers to the tasks, 1 to a positive-consequences task and 1 to a negative; the workers' jobs would be to perform their tasks. In regard to communication, the introduction explained:

> You will not meet or even learn the names of the other participants, but if you are a worker, you will write a note providing some personal information about yourself. This note may or may not be read by the supervisor, depending on whether the supervisor is randomly assigned to receive communication from you. Neither worker will know whether his or her note has been read.

The introduction also explained that it was necessary to use real consequences to ensure that the workers cared about their performance. On the positive-consequences task, for each correct response the worker would receive one raffle ticket for a $30.00 gift certificate at the store of his or her choice; for each incorrect response he or she would receive nothing. On the negative-consequences task, for each correct response the worker would receive nothing; for each incorrect response he or she would receive a mild but uncomfortable electric shock (2–3 times the strength of static electricity). Both tasks were described as brief paper-and-pencil tasks of moderate difficulty.

Assignment to supervisor role. Once participants read the introduction and signed a consent statement, the assistant returned and informed each participant that she had been randomly assigned to be the supervisor. Written instructions for the supervisor role explained:

> As the supervisor, it is your responsibility to decide which worker does which task. One worker must be assigned to do the positive consequences task; the other to do the negative consequences task. Most supervisors feel that flipping a coin is the fairest way to assign workers to the tasks, but the decision is entirely up to you. You can assign the workers however you wish. They will not know how they were assigned, only to which task they are assigned. And, of course, your anonymity as supervisor is assured.

This statement was intended to make salient the principle of justice. A coin (a quarter) was provided in the research cubicle for participants to flip if they wished.

Manipulation of communication. Participants in the no-communication condition read in the supervisor instructions that they had been randomly assigned not to receive communication from either of the workers. Participants in the two communication conditions read that they would receive a communication from one of the workers. The communication was to be in the form of a note describing "something interesting of a personal nature that happened to him or her recently." The supervisor instructions explained:

> The worker wrote the communication before learning anything about what this study involved—either the roles or the task consequences—so he or she would not be influenced by such knowledge. The content of the communication is entirely confidential; only you will read it. The communication will be delivered in a sealed envelope and not read by the assistant.

Finally, the instructions explained that previous research had shown that the perspective from which a communication is read can affect reactions. Therefore, participants would be asked to take a particular perspective when reading the worker's note. As in a number of previous studies, these perspective instructions were used to manipulate empathy (Batson, 1991).

Manipulation of empathy. Once participants had read their instructions, the assistant returned, informed participants in the two communication conditions that they would be reading the note written by Participant C, and gave these participants a sheet with perspective instructions. Instructions for participants in the communication/low-empathy condition read: "While you are reading this communication, try to *take an objective perspective* toward what is described. Try not to get caught up in how he or she feels; just remain objective and detached." Instructions for participants in the communication/high-empathy condition instead read: ". . . .Try to *imagine how this student feels* about what is described. Try to imagine how it has affected his or her life and how he or she feels as a result." (Stotland, 1969, using physiological measures, documented the effectiveness of perspective instructions such as these as a manipulation of empathic emotional arousal, not simply attentional or cognitive processes. Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978, using a misattribution of arousal technique, demonstrated that the behavioral consequences of perspective instructions such as these are a result of their effect on physiological arousal, not of experimental demand or cognitive effects.)

To prevent hypothesis guessing, participants were led to believe that all other research participants received the same perspective instructions they did. Also, each participant's perspective instructions were placed in a folder in advance, allowing the research assistant to remain unaware of the empathy condition of participants receiving communication.

Empathic reaction to Participant C's need. Participants in the two communication conditions were next given a sealed envelope containing Participant C's note. They were then left alone to read their perspective instructions, adopt the perspective, read the note, and make their task-assignment decision. The note was exactly the same for participants in both the low-empathy and high-empathy conditions; it told of Participant C being depressed after suffering the breakup of a romantic relationship and needing something good to happen to cheer her up:

> I'm supposed to write about something interesting that's happened to me lately. Well, I don't know if this will be interesting to anybody else, but the only thing I can think of is that two days ago I broke up with my boyfriend. We've been going together since our junior year in high school and have been really close, and it's been great being at KU together. I thought he felt the same, but things have changed. Now, he wants to date other people. He says he still cares a lot about me, but he doesn't want to be tied down to just one person. I've been real down. It's all I think about. My friends all tell me that I'll meet other guys and they say that all I need is for something good to happen to cheer me up. I guess they're right, but so far that hasn't happened.

After reading the note and thinking about it for a minute or two, participants in the two communication conditions completed an impressions-and-feelings questionnaire. On this questionnaire, participants used 7-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *extremely*) to indicate for a list of emotion adjectives the degree to which they were currently feeling each toward Participant C. Included among the adjectives were six that had been used in previous research to measure empathy (see Batson 1987, 1991): *sympathetic, warm, compassionate, softhearted, tender,* and *moved*. These self-reports permitted a check on the effectiveness of the empathy manipulation.

Dependent measure: Assigning workers to tasks. Following completion of this questionnaire, participants in the two communication conditions made their task-assignment decision. They indicated this decision on a task-assignment sheet simply by inserting letters (A, C) to indicate which other participant they assigned to the positive-consequences task and which they assigned to the negative-consequences task. Participants in the no-communication condition were left alone to make their task-assignment decision and fill out the assignment sheet immediately after reading their instructions for the supervisor role.

Ancillary measures. After filling out the task-assignment sheet, all participants completed a final reaction questionnaire. Consistent with the cover story, this questionnaire asked a number of questions about participants' performance of and reactions to their role as supervisor. To help us understand the task-assignment decision, two open-ended questions were asked: "Briefly explain why you assigned the workers as you did" and "In your opinion, what was the most fair way to assign the workers to task consequences?" Participants were also asked: "Do you think the way you assigned the workers to the tasks was morally right?" (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *yes, totally*). Finally, two items permitted us to assess the relative importance of fairness (justice) and empathy-induced altruism for the task-assignment decision. Participants were asked to rate (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very much*) the importance of: "Concern to be fair or just" and "Concern for the welfare of Participant C." These items were embedded in a list of factors that participants rated for importance for their decision.

Debriefing. Once participants completed this reaction questionnaire, they were thoroughly and carefully debriefed. Following debriefing, participants were thanked for their cooperation and excused.

Results and Discussion

Effectiveness of the empathy manipulation. Although they read identical notes, we assumed that participants in the communication/high-empathy condition would experience more empathy for Participant C than would participants in the communication/low-empathy condition. To check this assumption, we used participants' self-reports of empathy after reading Participant C's note. As in previous research (e.g., Batson, 1987; Batson et al., 1988), we created an empathy index by averaging responses to the six empathy adjectives: *sympathetic, warm, compassionate, softhearted, tender,* and *moved* (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$). Consistent with our assumption, scores on this index were higher in the high-empathy condition than in the low-empathy condition (Ms = 5.53 and 4.31 on the 1–7 scale), $t(38) = 3.41$, $p < .002$. We concluded that the empathy manipulation was effective.

Effect of experimental condition on assignment to task. The frequency with which Participant C was assigned to the positive- or negative-consequences task by participants in each of the three experimental conditions is presented in Table 1. (Participant A was, of course, always assigned to whichever task Participant C was not.) As can be seen, in the no-communication condition, Participant C was assigned to the positive-consequences task 50% of the time and to the negative-consequences task 50% of the time. There was no evidence of partiality in this condition, and we had not expected there to be. Participants had no information about either worker, except that each was a female introductory psychology student. Task-assignment decisions in this condition reflected the even-handedness of blind justice.

In the communication/low-empathy condition, in which participants knew about Participant C's need for cheering up but felt relatively little empathy, assignment was also 50–50. Again, there was no evidence of partiality. In the communication/high-empathy condition, however, in which participants knew about Participant C's need and felt considerable empathy, Participant C was assigned to the positive-consequences condition 75% of the time. In this condition there was clear evidence of partiality ($z = 2.24$, $p < .015$, one-tailed, testing observed proportion against .50).

Decision strategies used in each experimental condition. After making their assignments, participants were asked to "Briefly explain why you assigned the workers as you did." Re-

Table 1
Assignment of Participant C to Task Consequences: Experiment 1

	Experimental condition		
		Communication	
Consequences for Participant C	No communication	Low empathy	High empathy
Positive	10	10	15
Negative	10	10	5

sponses were easily classified into two categories: (a) assignment by random method (usually flipping the coin but occasionally some other random method, e.g., "eenie, meenie, miney, moe" or "A to positive because A comes first") or (b) assignment by choosing to give Participant C the positive-consequences task. In the no-communication condition, all 20 participants said they used a random method. In the communication/low-empathy condition, 17 said they used a random method; 3 said they chose to give C the positive-consequences task (and did). In the communication/high-empathy condition, 10 said they used a random method, and 10 said they chose to give C the positive-consequences task (and did). Of the 10 in this last condition who used a random method, 5 assigned C to positive consequences and 5 assigned C to negative consequences, once again showing impartiality.

These results were entirely consistent with the prediction that participants in the communication/high-empathy condition would experience motivational conflict between empathy-induced altruism and desire to uphold a principle of justice. Wanting to be fair and wanting to benefit Participant C, for whom they felt empathy, these participants had to choose. Half chose to stick to impartial random assignment; half chose to show partiality toward the participant for whom they felt empathy.[2]

Participants' perceptions of the most fair decision strategy. Participants were also asked "In your opinion, what was the most fair way to assign the workers?" Once again, responses were easily classified, this time into four categories: (a) use a random method (flip the coin or some other random method); (b) give Participant C the positive-consequences task; (c) there is no fair way; or (d) no response. In each experimental condition, 18 of 20 participants (90%) said the most fair thing to do was to flip the coin or use some other random method. Only 2 participants (1 in the communication/low-empathy condition and 1 in the communication/high-empathy condition) said choosing to give C the positive-consequences task was most fair. The remaining 4 participants either said there was no fair way (2 participants) or gave no response (2 participants). It seemed clear, then, that although empathy induction introduced considerable partiality, it did not change participants' perceptions of fairness or justice in the situation. The vast majority of participants in all three experimental conditions perceived impartial random assignment to be most fair.

Were participants really concerned to be fair? What if participants in the no-communication and communication/low-empathy conditions were not really concerned to be fair but simply did not care and so flipped the coin? Presumably, a cavalier, thoughtless response would result in impartiality, as was observed in each of these conditions. Responses to the item on the final reaction questionnaire about "concern to be fair or just" suggested that participants in these two conditions were neither cavalier nor thoughtless. Participants in all conditions expressed considerable concern to be fair (overall $M = 7.42$ on the 1–9 scale). Moreover, participants in both the no-communication and communication/low-empathy conditions rated concern for fairness higher (Ms = 7.70 and 8.21, respectively) than did participants in the communication/high-empathy condition ($M = 6.40$, ts = 1.89 and 2.59, ps < .04 and .01, one-tailed, respectively). Among participants in the communication/high-empathy condition, those who showed partiality rated the importance of being fair lower ($M = 5.40$) than did those who did not ($M = 7.40$), $t(18) = 2.01$, $p < .03$, one-tailed.

Participants' perceptions of the morality of their decision strategy. Participants were also asked "Do you think the way you assigned the workers to condition was morally right?" An analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed no reliable differences among experimental conditions in response to this item (overall $M = 6.51$ on the 1–9 scale), $F(2, 56) = 0.01$. An internal analysis in the communication/high-empathy condition, however, revealed a highly significant difference in response between the 10 participants who reported using a random method to assign workers to tasks ($M = 7.90$) and the 10 who reported choosing to give Participant C the positive-consequences task ($M = 5.10$), $t(18) = 2.90$, $p < .01$. Those who showed partiality perceived themselves to have acted less morally.

Relative importance of fairness (justice) and empathy-induced altruism for task assignment in the low- and high-empathy conditions. To assess the relative importance of fairness and empathy-induced altruism for task assignment, we compared participants' ratings of the importance of concern to be fair or just and concern for the welfare of Participant C. Two cautions should be kept in mind when interpreting these ratings. First, they are self-reports, so we cannot be sure they are an accurate reflection of the different motives. Second, these measures were taken after participants had assigned the workers to tasks. Rather than tapping motives that affected assignment, they may simply reflect participants' interpretation of their motives on the basis of their action. In light of these two cautions, inferences from these data should be considered suggestive rather than conclusive. Still, the ratings seemed potentially informative and worthy of analysis.

Across the two communication conditions, mean responses indicated that both concern to be fair and welfare of Participant C were important (overall Ms = 7.28 and 6.46, respectively, on the 1–9 scale). The mean response for concern to be fair was higher in the low-empathy condition (8.21) than in the high-empathy condition (6.40), and the mean response for welfare of Participant C was higher in the high-empathy condition (7.00) than in the low-empathy condition (5.89). The first of these differences was statistically reliable ($t = 2.92$, $p < .01$), but the second was not ($t = 1.34$, *ns*). (Means on the "be fair" and "welfare of C" measures were 7.70 and 5.53, respectively,

[2] It is important to note that the strategy chosen by participants in the communication/high-empathy condition was not predicted by level of self-reported empathy alone. (Nor had we expected it to be; rather, we had expected it to be predicted by the relative strength of empathy-induced altruism and justice motivation, to be discussed shortly.) Self-reported empathy was actually marginally higher among those who used a random method ($M = 5.80$) than among those who gave Participant C the positive-consequences task ($M = 5.27$), $t(18) = 2.03$, $p < .06$, two-tailed. In retrospect, it seems possible that some of the reported empathy of participants who used a random method was compensatory. Having already decided that they were not going to favor Participant C, they may have felt additional empathy for her. Alternatively, participants who favored Participant C may have decided to do so as soon as they read the note; this decision may in turn have reduced their perception of Participant C's need and, thereby, their level of empathic feeling.

in the no-communication condition, in which participants had no knowledge of Participant C except that she was another introductory psychology student.) As expected, concern for the welfare of Participant C was positively correlated with reported empathy for her, $r(37) = .35$, $p < .02$ (1 participant in the high-empathy condition whose welfare-of-C rating was quite unusual—a 1, the next lowest rating being a 5—was omitted from this correlation).

Of interest for our present concern was not the strength of moral (justice) motivation or empathy-induced altruism independent of one another; our interest was in the relative strength of these two motives for a given participant. To provide an index of relative strength, we divided participants in each empathy condition into two categories: those for whom justice was dominant (who rated "be fair" higher than they rated "welfare of C") and those for whom altruism was dominant (who rated "welfare of C" as high or higher than "be fair"). It was this relative dominance of justice or altruism that we expected would show the influence of our empathy manipulation and would, in turn, influence participants' assignment decisions.

Consistent with this expectation, the proportion of altruism-dominant participants was higher in the high-empathy condition (.70—14 of 20) than in the low-empathy condition (.37—7 of 19; 1 low-empathy participant failed to complete the importance measures; $z = 2.12$, $p < .02$, one-tailed). (Unless otherwise specified, tests of significance on proportional data are based on a normal approximation using the arcsine transformation, see Langer & Abelson, 1972; Winer, 1971, pp. 399–400.) Also consistent with our expectation, in the high-empathy condition altruism-dominant participants were more likely to assign Participant C to the positive-consequences task (.93—13 of 14) than were justice-dominant participants (.33—2 of 6; $p < .015$ by Fisher's exact test). The pattern was similar in the low-empathy condition (.71 vs. .33) but failed to reach statistical significance ($.10 < p < .15$).

Mediation of the effect of the empathy manipulation on task assignment. Our motivational-conflict analysis implied a three-step causal path from the empathy manipulation to task assignment. The high-empathy perspective should lead to increased empathic feelings (Step 1), which should lead to increased dominance of altruistic over moral motivation (Step 2), which should lead to preference for assigning Participant C to the positive-consequences task (Step 3).

A path analysis based on maximum-likelihood structural-equation modeling (using EQS, Bentler, 1980, 1989) revealed that this predicted three-step causal path was a clear improvement over the null model (difference in $\chi^2(3, N = 39) = 25.38$, $p < .001$) and was not significantly different from a saturated model ($\chi^2(3, N = 39) = 3.42$, *ns*). The comparative fit index (CFI) for the predicted path model was .98, well above the recommended minimum of .90. The Lagrange multiplier test indicated that no more complex models could significantly improve the fit. Betas for the three steps were .482, .252, and .537, respectively; the betas for Steps 1 and 3 were highly significant ($ps < .0005$, one-tailed), but the beta for Step 2 was only marginal ($p < .055$, one-tailed). The weakness of Step 2—the effect of self-reported empathy on motivational dominance—may have been due at least in part to participants' empathic feelings being affected by awareness of the assignment decision (see footnote 2).

Although this path analysis was generally supportive, the finding that the beta for Step 2 was only marginally significant cast some doubt on our motivational-conflict analysis. Rather than the effect on motivational dominance being due to an increase in altruistic motivation produced by an increase in empathic feeling in the high-empathy condition, perhaps the perspective-taking instructions that we used to manipulate empathy produced a purely cognitive reassessment of the importance of the two motives. Consistent with this alternative possibility, a two-step path model that included the direct effect of the empathy manipulation on motivational dominance but omitted the effect mediated through self-reported empathy also provided a good fit to the data, $\chi^2(3, N = 39) = 1.47$, *ns*, when tested against the saturated model (CFI = 1.00), indeed, a slightly better fit than the predicted three-step model. Given the result of this second path analysis, we could not rule out the possibility that effects of our empathy manipulation on task assignment were due to cognitive reassessment.

Implications of Experiment 1. Results of Experiment 1 were, then, encouraging but not conclusive. There was clear evidence that the high-empathy perspective both increased reported empathic feeling for Participant C and led a number of supervisors (10 of 20) to turn their back on fairness and show partiality in task assignment, acting to increase Participant C's welfare. This partiality did not appear to result from a shift in the perceived fairness or morality of partiality: (a) High-empathy participants perceived use of a random method to be most fair, just as low-empathy and no-communication participants did, and (b) high-empathy participants who chose to give Participant C the positive-consequences task perceived themselves as having acted less morally. Instead, the observed partiality appeared to result from a conflict between two distinct prosocial motives. Empathy-induced altruism was in conflict with justice, and for some high-empathy participants, altruism overrode justice. It was not clear, however, whether the effect of the perspective-taking manipulation on motivational dominance was the result of its effect on empathic feeling, as we assumed, or a result of a more purely cognitive reassessment. The overall pattern of results seemed to favor our motivational-conflict explanation, but given the only marginally significant beta for Step 2 in the path analysis and the goodness of fit of the two-step alternative path model, we could not rule out a cognitive-reassessment explanation.

In sum, the results of Experiment 1 were generally supportive of the prediction that inducing empathy for one of the individuals a person can benefit, but only at the expense of others, can lead that person to show partiality toward that individual, violating the moral principle of justice. Yet the path analyses were not entirely supportive. To clarify the mediation predicted by our motivational-conflict analysis, it seemed wise to conduct a generalized replication in which participants reported their empathic feelings before knowing they had to make a moral decision.

We also introduced a number of other procedural changes in the replication, allowing us to address a range of issues raised by the specific procedure we used in Experiment 1. First, instructions in Experiment 1 explicitly stated that most supervisors

feel that flipping a coin is the fairest way to assign the workers. This may have limited participants' opportunity to justify partiality as fair or moral. Had instructions made salient other moral standards, such as social responsibility or caring for those with special needs, responses to the morality item might have been different. (Granting this possibility, the focus on justice in Experiment 1 still seemed appropriate. We do not mean to suggest that justice is the only moral principle or that partiality cannot be perceived as moral; rather, we are suggesting that empathy-induced altruism can at times lead a person to act in a way that he or she does not consider moral. To test this suggestion, we purposely focused participants' attention on a conflicting rather than a congruent moral principle.)

Second, the form of justice at issue in Experiment 1 was procedural justice; distributive justice could not be achieved. Perhaps people are less likely to show empathy-induced partiality when doing so conflicts with distributive as well as procedural justice. Third, if participants' judgments of fairness in Experiment 1 referred only to equality or equity, then those who showed partiality might have still been motivated to uphold a principle of justice, but a different form of justice. Specifically, empathy might have induced a shift from using a principle of justice based on equality or equity to using one based on need (Deutsch, 1975). Hoffman (1989) suggested that empathy does precisely this, producing a broad-based and evenhanded concern to allocate resources on the basis of need.

Fourth, perhaps we observed partiality in the high-empathy condition of Experiment 1 because all participants were women and less committed to a justice principle than men (Gilligan, 1982). On the other hand, but related to this possibility, the decision context in Experiment 1 was a work situation, with participants placed in the role of supervisor. Perhaps in such a context, evenhanded justice is perceived to be morally right, even by people inclined to use an ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982). Our female participants may have experienced a moral bind, preferring an ethic of care but believing the situation demanded a morality of justice.

We conducted a second experiment to complement Experiment 1, which allowed us to address each of these issues. In Experiment 2 we used a different decision context, one in which: (a) Empathy was assessed before participants knew they had a moral decision to make; (b) it was clear that showing preference for the target of empathy would violate the principle of justice, but impartiality was not explicitly stated to be most fair; (c) showing preference would violate distributive as well as procedural justice; (d) the target of empathy was in need but explicitly less needy than those who would be adversely affected by empathy-induced partiality; and (e) the decision context was not the workplace but charity, a context in which an ethic of care would seem to be quite appropriate. If feeling empathy leads one to shift justice principles from equity or equality to need (as Hoffman, 1989, suggested) rather than to target-specific partiality (as we suggest), then high-empathy participants should not show partiality in such a context. To check for a possible sex difference, both women and men served as participants in Experiment 2.

Experiment 2: Playing God

Method

Participants. Participants for Experiment 2 were 60 introductory psychology students (30 women and 30 men) at the University of Kansas; they took part to earn partial credit toward a course requirement. Using a randomized-block procedure, we assigned 30 participants (15 women and 15 men) to each of two experimental conditions: low empathy and high empathy. Four additional students (1 woman and 2 men in the low-empathy condition, 1 man in the high-empathy condition) were excluded from the sample and replaced because during debriefing they expressed doubt that the reassignment decision they were asked to make was real.

Procedure. Participants attended the experimental session individually. On arrival, they were escorted into a small research cubicle and given a written introduction. The introduction presented the study as a pilot test of a plan to broadcast on local radio brief interviews created by the Quality Life Foundation (actually fictitious). Ostensibly based in nearby Kansas City, the Quality Life Foundation was described as a "national organization devoted to helping improve the quality of life of children with terminal illnesses." The introduction explained:

> Since 1988, Quality Life has helped over 75 terminally ill children by making their final years more comfortable, as well as more enjoyable. Because of this success, an increased number of terminal children have been seeking their services. Unfortunately, the available funds are not sufficient to meet the needs of all the children seeking help. In an effort to meet this rising demand, Quality Life has developed a plan to raise community awareness of these children's needs and to encourage contributions to help them. The program involves taping interviews with individual children and airing these interviews on local radio stations.

Contributions would not go to the specific children interviewed but to increase the Foundation's budget as a whole.

Ostensibly, there were a number of interviews, each with a different child who was on the Waiting List for help from Quality Life. Because the interviews were pilots and not up to broadcast standard, they would not be aired; each participant would listen and react to a different one.

Finally, participants read that one factor the professor conducting the research had found to be "especially important in determining reactions to broadcast material is listening perspective. Therefore, you will be asked to adopt a particular perspective as you listen to the interview." As in Experiment 1, we used perspective to manipulate empathy.

Manipulation of empathy. After participants finished reading the introduction and signed a consent statement, the research assistant readied the tape player, placed an emotional-reaction questionnaire face down on the desk to be completed after listening to the interview, and presented a sheet with listening-perspective instructions. The assistant then left participants alone to read these instructions, listen to the interview tape, and complete the reaction questionnaire.

Perspective instructions closely paralleled those used in Experiment 1. Participants in the low-empathy condition read:

> While you are listening to this interview, try to *take an objective perspective toward what is described.* Try not to get caught up in how the child who is interviewed feels; just remain objective and detached.

Participants in the high-empathy condition read:

> . . . try to *imagine how the child who is interviewed feels about what has happened and how it has affected this child's life.* Try to feel the full impact of what this child has been through and how he or she feels as a result.

As in Experiment 1, participants were led to believe that all research participants received the same instructions, and each participant's instructions were placed in a folder in advance, allowing the assistant to remain unaware of empathy condition.

Empathic reaction to Sheri Summers's need. All participants were

(ostensibly randomly) assigned to hear the interview with "a very brave, bright 10-year-old," Sheri Summers (actually fictitious). Sheri had a muscle-paralyzing disease, myasthenia gravis. At the beginning of the pilot-broadcast tape, the interviewer explained Sheri's plight:

> This disease is always fatal—when the diaphragm is paralyzed and breathing stops. There is no cure. Already, Sheri is unable to walk more than a few steps in her heavy braces without falling down.
>
> There is, however, a new drug, Norzac, that can substantially improve the quality of Sheri's life. Norzac can allow her normal use of her arms and legs, even as this horrible disease progresses. It cannot lengthen Sheri's life, but it can let her live her remaining days fully. Unfortunately, Norzac is very expensive. Sheri's family cannot begin to afford it. That's why they contacted Quality Life for help. At this point, however, Quality Life does not have the funds to help Sheri. She has been placed on the Waiting List.

The interviewer then talked to Sheri, who described her frequent falling, how much she missed playing with her friends, and how much she would like to go back to school. When asked if there was a chance of going back, Sheri said: "Well, my mom says there's this medicine. I'm on the Waiting List. Mom says if we can get the medicine I can go to school—and even ride my bike. That would be great!"

After listening to the interview, participants completed the emotional-reaction questionnaire. On this questionnaire, participants used 7-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *extremely*) to indicate for a list of emotion adjectives the degree to which they actually experienced each while listening to the interview. Included among the adjectives were the six that were used in Experiment 1 and previous research to measure empathy: *sympathetic, warm, compassionate, softhearted, tender*, and *moved*. As before, these self-reports permitted a check on the effectiveness of the empathy manipulation.

Dependent measure: Opportunity to move Sheri into the Immediate Help Group. Following completion of this questionnaire, the assistant returned, gave participants an envelope containing a letter from the professor in charge of the research, and left them alone to read it. In the letter, the professor thanked participants for taking part in the pilot-testing study and explained that it had occurred to him that some participants might want to help the child whose interview they heard. He had contacted the Quality Life Foundation about this possibility and had learned:

> Children on the Waiting List are ranked according to when they first applied for assistance, the seriousness of their need, and the time they have left to live. Because of the number of children needing help, a child may remain on the Waiting List for months before receiving help. This is time that most of these children do not have; many die before they are ever helped.

The professor went on to say that he had suggested that Quality Life allow students in the pilot-testing study an opportunity to improve the quality of life of the child they heard, if they wished, by moving that child from the Waiting List into the Immediate Help Group. Quality Life had agreed:

> Quality Life accepted this suggestion in appreciation for your assistance evaluating the interview tapes. At the same time, they emphasized the consequences of such a decision. Moving your child up into the Immediate Help Group means that children who are currently higher on the Waiting List than your child, due to earlier application, greater need, or shorter life expectancy, will have to wait longer. On the other hand, moving your child up would make a very significant difference in the quality of life for the time this child has left.
>
> Obviously, the decision of whether to move the child you heard into the Immediate Help Group is a very important one, but one we feel you should be given the opportunity to make. Neither the child nor his or her family knows that this opportunity is being provided; they will be informed *only* if you decide to move the child.

Enclosed with the professor's letter was a reassignment form on which participants were to indicate their decision, and an envelope (addressed to the professor) in which they were to seal the form to keep the decision confidential. Participants did not put their own name on the form. They simply inserted Sheri's name in the following blank, if they wished: "Please move ____, the child I listened to, into the Immediate Help Group. I understand that this will mean that children currently higher on the Waiting List than this child will have to wait longer to receive help." If participants decided not to have Sheri moved, they simply left the form blank.

Ancillary measures. Once participants had sealed the reassignment form in the envelope, the assistant returned and gave them two questionnaires to complete. Consistent with the cover story, the first asked a number of questions about participants' reactions to the interview they heard. The second had ostensibly been added by the professor in charge because he wished to find out how participants felt about being given the opportunity to reassign the child. In addition to asking general questions about how difficult and upsetting participants found the decision whether or not to reassign, two items once again permitted us to assess the relative importance of justice and empathy-induced altruism for the reassignment decision. Participants were asked to what extent each of the following was a factor in their decision: "Wanting to be fair to the other children on the Waiting List" and "Feeling sympathy for the child you heard" (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very much*). In Experiment 2 we did not feel that we could ethically ask participants whether they thought their decision was morally right, as we had in Experiment 1, given the life-and-death nature of the decision. Still, in an attempt to measure perceived morality indirectly, we included among the list of possible decision factors: "Trying to do what was morally right."

Debriefing. Once participants completed these two questionnaires, they were thoroughly and carefully debriefed. Special care was taken to be sure participants believed that their decision was real and would have real consequences, which all participants did (as noted, 4 additional students who did not believe this were replaced). Special care was also taken to be sure that participants did not find making the decision too upsetting. Many participants did report finding the decision difficult and moderately upsetting (*M*s = 6.93 and 5.87, respectively, on 1—*not at all*—to 9—*extremely*—scales), but all said that they had not found it too upsetting. After learning the true purpose of the research, most participants expressed considerable interest and even enthusiasm about learning the results. Following debriefing, participants were thanked for their cooperation and excused.

Results and Discussion

Effectiveness of the empathy manipulation. Although they had heard exactly the same interview, we assumed that participants in the high-empathy condition would experience more empathy for Sheri than would participants in the low-empathy condition. To check this assumption, we used participants' self-reports of empathy made after hearing the pilot broadcast. As in Experiment 1, we created an empathy index by averaging responses to the six empathy adjectives: *sympathetic, warm, compassionate, softhearted, tender*, and *moved* (Cronbach's α = .87). Consistent with our assumption, scores on this index were higher in the high-empathy condition than in the low-empathy condition (*M*s = 5.37 and 4.44, respectively, on the 1–7 scale), $F(1, 56) = 11.46$, $p < .001$; there were no sex effects,

neither main effect nor interaction ($Fs < 1.75$). We concluded that, once again, our empathy manipulation was effective.[3]

Effect of experimental condition on decision to move Sheri into the Immediate Help Group. The proportion of women and men moving Sheri into the Immediate Help Group in each experimental condition of Experiment 2 is presented in Table 2. As can be seen, participants in the high-empathy condition were, once again, more likely to show partiality, helping Sheri at the expense of others who were more needy (.73), than were participants in the low-empathy condition (.33), $\chi^2(1, N = 60) = 10.31$, $p < .001$. Apparently, empathy did not lead participants to adopt a general principle of justice based on need, as Hoffman (1989) predicted; if it had, high-empathy participants would have shown more, not less, sensitivity to the greater need of the children ahead of Sheri on the Waiting List. Instead, empathy evoked partiality for Sheri in spite of her lesser need. Rather than producing a general sensitivity to the needs of all, empathy increased sensitivity to the need of the individual who was the target of empathy.

There were no reliable effects on the reassignment decision for sex of participant, $\chi^2(1, N = 60) = .30$ for main effect and interaction. The predicted empathy effect was somewhat weaker for men ($z = 1.88$, $p < .035$, one-tailed) than for women ($z = 2.66$, $p < .005$, one-tailed). The weaker effect for men was not due, however, to less readiness to show preference toward Sheri in the high-empathy condition, as one would expect if men were more committed to justice and less vulnerable to empathy-induced partiality than were women (Gilligan, 1982); the weakness for men was due to slightly more readiness to show preference toward Sheri in the low-empathy condition. It did not appear, then, that men were any less vulnerable to empathy-induced partiality than were women.

Relative importance of justice and empathy-induced altruism for reassignment decisions. Paralleling Experiment 1, we assessed the relative importance of justice and empathy-induced altruism for reassignment decisions by comparing participants' ratings of the importance of "Wanting to be fair to the other children on the Waiting List" and "Feeling sympathy for the child you heard." Overall, mean responses indicated that both wanting to be fair and feeling sympathy were important (overall Ms = 7.73 and 6.57, respectively, on the 1–9 scale), with wanting to be fair rated significantly more important than feeling sympathy, $t(59) = 3.10$, $p < .003$, two-tailed. The mean response for wanting to be fair was higher in the low-empathy condition (7.90) than in the high-empathy condition (7.56), and the mean response for feeling sympathy was higher in the high-empathy condition (6.93) than in the low-empathy condition (6.20), but neither of these differences approached statistical significance, ts(58) = 0.69 and 1.34, respectively. As expected, feeling sympathy was positively correlated with reported empathy for Sheri, $r(58) = .53$, $p < .001$.

Once again, our interest was not the strength of moral (justice) motivation or empathy-induced altruism independent of one another; our interest was in the relative strength of these two motives for a given participant. To provide an index of relative strength, we divided participants in each condition into two categories: those for whom justice was dominant (who rated "being fair" higher than they rated "feeling sympathy") and those for whom altruism was dominant (who rated "feeling sympathy" as high or higher than "being fair"). It was this relative dominance of justice or altruism that we expected would show the influence of our empathy manipulation and would, in turn, influence participants' reassignment decisions.

Consistent with this expectation, and paralleling the results of Experiment 1, the proportion of altruism-dominant participants was higher in the high-empathy condition (.67—20 of 30) than in the low-empathy condition (.37—11 of 30; $z = 2.36$, $p < .02$). Also consistent with our expectation, within each empathy condition altruism-dominant participants were more likely to move Sheri into the Immediate Help Group than were justice-dominant participants. In the high-empathy condition, the proportion of altruism-dominant participants reassigning Sheri was .95 (19 of 20); the proportion of justice-dominant participants reassigning her was .30 (3 of 10; $z = 3.46$, $p < 001$). In the low-empathy condition, the same proportions were .73 (8 of 11) and .11 (2 of 19), respectively ($z = 3.65$, $p < .001$).

Sample sizes were too small to do formal tests for sex effects, but each of the patterns just described was much the same for men as for women. Indeed, contrary to the sex differences in motivation to uphold justice proposed by Gilligan (1982), justice was no more likely to be dominant for men (.47—14 of 30) than for women (.50—15 of 30). Men were slightly more likely to report altruism dominance in the high-empathy condition (.73—11 of 15) compared with the low-empathy condition (.33—5 of 15) than were women (altruism dominance = .60—9 of 15—in the high-empathy condition, .40—6 of 15—in the

Table 2
Proportion Reassigning Sheri to Immediate Help at Expense of Others Who Were More Needy: Experiment 2

	Empathy condition	
Sex of participant	Low empathy	High empathy
Female	.27	.73
Male	.40	.73

Note. $N = 15$ per cell.

[3] Given the extremity of Sheri's condition, it may seem surprising that participants' self-reported empathy in Experiment 2 (overall $M = 4.91$) was virtually identical to that in Experiment 1 (overall $M = 4.92$). We suspect that participants' self-reports were made not on an absolute scale but in context, tempered by their expectations about how the note (Experiment 1) and pilot broadcast (Experiment 2) would make them feel. Had participants been making a direct comparison, their ratings of the two situations would likely have been quite different.

[4] On the other hand, correlations between deciding to move Sheri into the Immediate Help Group and participants' ratings of the importance when making their decision of "Trying to do what was morally right" (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *very much*) produced a pattern of results that provided some situation-specific support for the kind of sex difference in morality claimed by Gilligan (1982). In the low-empathy condition, the correlation between deciding to reassign Sheri and reported importance of doing what was morally right tended to be negative for both men and women, rs(13) = −.27 and −.23, respectively. In the high-empathy condition, this same correlation tended to be negative for men, $r(13) =$

low-empathy condition), but this sex difference did not approach statistical reliability ($z < 1.0$).[4]

Mediation of the effect of the empathy manipulation on reassignment. As in Experiment 1, our motivational-conflict analysis implied a three-step causal path from the empathy manipulation to task assignment. The high-empathy perspective should lead to increased empathic feelings (Step 1), which should lead to increased dominance of altruistic over moral motivation (Step 2), which should lead to moving Sheri into the Immediate Help Group (Step 3).

Once again, a path analysis based on maximum-likelihood structural-equation modeling (using EQS) revealed that this predicted three-step causal path was a clear improvement over the null model, difference in $\chi^2(3, N = 60) = 60.42, p < .0001$, and was not significantly different from a saturated model, $\chi^2(3, N = 60) = 6.78, .05 < p < .10$. The CFI for the predicted path model was .94. Perhaps because of the increased power from the larger sample size, the Lagrange multiplier test did identify a more complex model that could significantly improve the fit, $\chi^2(1, N = 60) = 4.32, p < .04$; this was a model that, in addition to including the three predicted steps, also included a direct path from the empathy manipulation to the reassignment decision. This more complex model did not seem to call into question our prediction; it only suggested that there might be an additional effect of perspective taking on behavior independent of its effect on empathy.

Betas for the three steps of the predicted model for Experiment 2 were .405, .398, and .700, respectively, all highly significant (ps $< .001$, one-tailed). The two-step alternative path model that included the direct effect of the empathy manipulation on motivational dominance but omitted the effect mediated through self-reported empathy did not provide a good fit to the data, $\chi^2(3, N = 60) = 11.30, p < .01$, when tested against the saturated model (CFI = .86). Thus, the weakness of the predicted Step 2—the effect of self-reported empathy on motivational dominance—noted in Experiment 1 was not present in Experiment 2, in which participants reported their empathic feelings before knowing they would be asked to make a moral decision. These results seemed to rule out the possibility that the effect of perspective-taking instructions on motivation was due to a purely cognitive reassessment and not to the mediating effect of empathic feelings.

Further evidence of motivational conflict. On the final questionnaire, participants were also asked "How difficult did you find the decision of whether to move the child?" and "How upsetting did you find the decision of whether to move the child?" (1 = *not at all*, 9 = *extremely*, for each question). If our motivational-conflict analysis is correct, then participants should have found the decision more difficult and upsetting the more equal in strength were their ratings of "wanting to be fair" and "feeling sympathy." Consistent with this expectation, an index of absolute difference between ratings of being fair and feeling sympathy was significantly negatively correlated with both reported difficulty, $r(58) = -.43, p < .001$, and reported upset, $r(58) = -.38, p < .005$. The more similar the ratings of being fair and feeling sympathy, the more difficult and upsetting participants found the decision.

Implications of Experiment 2. Overall, then, results of Experiment 2 seemed quite consistent with the results of Experiment 1 and with the prediction that inducing empathy for one of the individuals a person can benefit, but only at the expense of others, can lead that person to show partiality toward that individual, violating the moral principle of justice. Participants in the high-empathy condition were far more likely than participants in the low-empathy condition to place Sheri ahead of other children who had greater need, had been waiting longer, or had less time to live. Consistent with a motivational-conflict analysis, the decision to reassign (or not) was strongly predicted by the relative strength of empathy-induced altruism and motivation to uphold justice. Among participants in each experimental condition for whom the desire to be fair to the other children on the Waiting List was dominant, the most likely decision was to leave Sheri where she was on the Waiting List. Among participants for whom sympathy for Sheri produced a motive as strong or stronger than justice, the most likely decision was to move Sheri into the Immediate Help Group ahead of children who were higher on the Waiting List. Finally, whereas in Experiment 1 it was unclear whether the effect of the empathy manipulation on the relative dominance of the two motives was due to its effect on feelings of empathy, this mediation was clear in Experiment 2, providing further evidence for our motivational-conflict analysis and casting doubt on a purely cognitive-reassessment explanation of our results.

General Discussion

Empathy-Induced Altruism as a Source of Immoral Injustice

Together, results of these two experiments provide support for our two key suggestions: (a) empathy-induced altruism and justice are two independent prosocial motives, each with its own unique ultimate goal; and (b) in resource-allocation situations in which these two motives conflict, empathy-induced altruism can become a source of immoral injustice. In Experiment 1, when given no specific information about either of the people their allocation decision would affect, participants' decisions of whom to assign to positive and negative consequences were

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−.24, but positive for women, $r(13) = .31$. Moreover, in the low-empathy condition, reported importance of doing what was morally right tended to correlate more positively with reported importance of trying to be fair to the other children than with importance of feeling sympathy for the child heard for both men (rs[13] = .34 and .19, respectively) and women (rs[13] = .41 and .02). In the high-empathy condition, this same pattern appeared even more strongly for men, rs(13) = .86 and .26, but for women the pattern reversed, rs(13) = −.00 and .36. These patterns of correlations were consistent with the possibility that women in the high-empathy condition switched from viewing impartial justice as more moral to viewing empathy-induced partiality as more moral, whereas men did not. Although we find these patterns interesting, we must caution against overinterpreting them. With the exception of the .86 correlation between reported importance of doing what was morally right and being fair to others that was found among men in the high-empathy condition, none of these correlations reached conventional levels of statistical significance. So this evidence of a shift in moral standard for women is tentative and suggestive at best. Still, it seems worthy of note—and possibly of following up in future research.

guided by fairness and justice. In the low-empathy conditions of each experiment, knowing that one of the people had a specific need had no effect; actions were still strongly guided by a desire to be fair. Knowing and feeling empathy for the person in need, however, as occurred in the high-empathy conditions, led many participants to forsake justice in the interest of benefiting the person for whom they felt empathy, even though they perceived doing so to be less fair and less moral (Experiment 1; also see footnote 4) and even though they knew this person's need was not as great as the need of others (Experiment 2). Although path analyses in Experiment 1 left open the possibility that the effect of our empathy manipulation on motivational dominance might be due to cognitive reassessment independent of empathic feelings, path analyses in Experiment 2 seemed to rule this possibility out, providing clear support for the mediation through empathic feelings predicted by our motivational-conflict analysis. Empathy-induced altruism can, it seems, sometimes overpower justice, leading to unfair, immoral behavior.

Reflecting on these results, we believe it is worth remembering that in each experiment we used a relatively weak empathy induction. The person in need was not kin or a close friend, not even someone participants had met—or even seen. Participants simply read a note or heard an interview while trying to imagine how the other felt. Presumably, a more potent empathy induction would have produced even more partiality and injustice.

Is Partiality Immoral?

Was the partiality shown by participants in our two experiments really immoral? The answer depends, of course, on one's definition of morality. If one defines *moral* as any action that benefits someone other than oneself, then all participants in each experiment acted morally. Every decision benefited someone other than self. Such a conception of morality, although popular in common parlance, seems so broad as to be vacuous. Alternatively, if one defines *moral* as acting from altruistic motives, regardless of the consequences, then any participants led by empathy-induced altruism to show partiality acted morally—even if they did not think so themselves (Experiment 1; again, also see footnote 4). Such a conception of morality seems too narrow, unless one also defines acting to uphold principles as moral, in which case we are back to a definition that is vacuously broad.

In contrast to either of these definitions, we have chosen to follow the dictionary and define *moral* as acting in accord with a socially recognized and endorsed principle for right conduct (e.g., *Webster's Desk Dictionary of the English Language*, 1990, offers as the first two definitions: "1. of or concerned with principles of right or wrong conduct. 2. being in accordance with such principles." [p. 589]). In our society, the most clearly recognized and endorsed principle of right conduct seems to be justice (Kohlberg, 1976; Lerner, 1975, 1980; Rawls, 1971). Some have also pointed to principles of universal benevolence, such as the utilitarian principle of the greatest good for the greatest number (e.g., Hoffman, 1987), or to a principle of care (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984).

From a psychological perspective, what seems crucial is that moral action is defined by its relation to some evaluative standard or principle, some "ought." Empathy-induced altruism provides no such standard; it provides an emotionally based impulse to relieve another's distress. Kant (1785/1889) made the distinction between such an impulse and morality clear and sharp more than two centuries ago, asserting that a person should act "not from inclination but from duty [to principle], and by this would his conduct first acquire true moral worth" (Section 1, paragraph 12). We have accepted Kant's stern appeal to duty to define morality, but we have softened it to include acting in accord with principle, even if not motivated by principle. For Kant, action motivated by empathy-induced altruism could never be moral; for us, it can if it conforms to a moral principle.

Central to a principle of justice—whether a justice of equity, equality, or need (Deutsch, 1975; Hoffman, 1989)—is impartial fairness. What is good for the goose is good for the gander. The present experiments suggest that empathy introduces partiality based not on invocation of a new form of justice or on a new general moral principle but on emotion and an individualized feeling of care that can disrupt principled moral judgment. Some may wish to call this emotion-based, individualized care a form of morality (in spite of Kant), but we believe it is more accurate and psychologically informative to call it a new motive, one that is amoral and can at times conflict with the motive to do what is morally right.

Implications

Immorality From Empathy-Induced Altruism Outside the Laboratory

In our two experiments we focused on situations in which altruism and fairness conflict, in which empathy-induced altruism creates problems for the moral principle of justice. That such situations exist outside the laboratory was underscored by the frequency with which participants in Experiment 1, after debriefing, recounted personal experiences involving much the same dilemma that we created, in which a supervisor's special feelings for one among a number of workers led to unfair partiality. The dilemma we created in Experiment 2 was more extreme and less common, but most people face essentially the same dilemma every time they decide to whom to give charity contributions: Those for whom they feel special concern are often not the ones in greatest need.

More broadly, chilling testimony to the moral danger of empathy-induced altruism is offered by survivors of the death camps in Nazi Europe. In the camps, members of the underground could not save everyone. They were faced with having to decide who would live and who would die. Survivors reported that empathic feelings interfered with making such decisions, clouding judgment about what was right:

> Compassion was seldom possible, self-pity never. Emotion not only blurred judgment and undermined decisiveness, it jeopardized the life of everyone in the underground. . . .Hard choices had to be made and not everyone was equal to the task, no one less than the kind of person whose goodness was most evident, most admired, but least available for action. (Des Pres, 1976, pp. 153–154, quoting Kogon, 1953, p. 278)

Empathy-induced altruism may even be a source of immo-

rality at the level of international affairs. As Walter Isaacson pointed out in a *Time Magazine* Essay at the time United Nations troops were sent to Somalia, empathy was a potent factor in the decision, so potent as to pose a problem:

> In a democracy, policy (unless pursued in secret) must reflect public sentiment. But sentiment can ooze sentimentality, especially in the age of global information, when networks and newsmagazines can sear the vision of a suffering Somalian child or Bosnian orphan into the soft hearts of millions. Random bursts of compassion provoked by compelling pictures may be a suitable basis for Christmas charity drives, but are they the proper foundation for a foreign policy? Will the world end up rescuing Somalia while ignoring the Sudan mainly because the former proves more photogenic? (Isaacson, 1992)

Our research suggests that the answer to this last question is likely yes.

Empathy-induced altruism can, it seems, produce myopia in much the same way as egoistic self-interest. The ultimate goal of egoistic self-interest is to increase one's own welfare; the ultimate goal of altruism is to increase another's welfare. Each of these motives is focused on the welfare of specific persons, so each is potentially at odds with appeals to universal moral principles such as justice.

Indeed, in one respect, altruism may be a greater threat than self-interest to morality. There are clear social norms and sanctions proscribing concern for one's own interests at the expense of what is right and fair. "Selfish" and "self-centered" are stinging epithets. Norms and sanctions against showing concern for another's interests, even if doing so leads one to violate moral principles, are far less clear. One may be accused of being "soft" or a "bleeding heart," but these epithets carry an implicit charge of weakness or optimism, not greed.

Morality From Empathy-Induced Altruism

The power of empathy-induced altruism to override moral motivation is, however, only half the story. A more positive implication of recognizing the independence of these two prosocial motives is that one can think about using them in concert. Once again consider justice. Justice is a powerful motive, but it is vulnerable to rationalization; it is easily co-opted (Lerner, 1980; Solomon, 1990). Empathy-induced altruism also is a powerful motive but limited in scope; it produces partiality. Perhaps if empathy can be evoked for the victims of injustice, then these two motives can be made to work together rather than at odds. Desire for justice may provide perspective and reason; empathy-induced altruism may provide emotional fire and a push toward seeing the victims' suffering end, preventing rationalization and derogation (Aderman, Brehm, & Katz, 1974).

Something of this sort occurred, we believe, among the rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe. A careful look at data collected by Oliner and Oliner (1988) and their colleagues suggests that involvement in rescue activity frequently began with concern for a specific individual or individuals for whom compassion was felt—often an individual the rescuer had known previously. This initial involvement subsequently led to further contacts and rescue activity and to a concern for justice that extended well beyond the bounds of the initial empathic concern. (The chilling reverse of this phenomenon was expressed by Rudolph Hoess, the commandant of Auschwitz, who reported that in order to be able to kill 2.9 million Jews he "stifled all softer emotions" [Hoess, 1959; quoted by Dawes, van de Kragt, & Orbell, 1990].)

However difficult it may be in practice, coordinating altruism and justice by inducing empathy for the victims of injustice is theoretically straightforward. Yet this is not the only possibility. The story of wise King Solomon presents a far more subtle example of the use of empathy-induced altruism—and the partiality it induces—in the service of justice. Recall that two women came before Solomon. One claimed that when the other's infant son died the bereft mother switched her dead son for the first woman's live one; the other woman claimed that the dead son was the first woman's, and the live son was hers.

> So the king [Solomon] said, "Bring me a sword," and they brought a sword before the king. The king said, "Divide the living boy in two; then give half to the one, and half to the other." But the woman whose son was alive said to the king—because compassion for her son burned within her—"Please, my lord, give her the living boy; certainly do not kill him!" The other said, "It shall be neither mine nor yours; divide it." Then the king responded: "Give the first woman the living boy; do not kill him. She is his mother." (1 Kings 3:24–27 New Revised Standard Version)

Thus, it is said, did Solomon "execute justice" (1 Kings 3:28—presumably, pun intended). Had Solomon turned to a social psychologist for advice, one doubts he would have received so complex and successful an orchestration of prosocial motives. Clearly, we still have much to learn about the way empathy-induced altruism and moral motives compete and cooperate.

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