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ABSTRACT

This paper reports two studies of the effects of empathic instruction on first graders' evaluations of other people. In Experiment 1, 23 children received either empathic or non-empathic instructions, listened to a taped conversation in which the main character obtained either a positive or negative outcome, and then evaluated both the main character and the person who provided the outcome to the character. It was found that empathic instructions increased positive evaluation of the main character under negative outcome conditions only and produced a change in evaluative perspective in regard to both members of the interacting dyad. In Experiment II, 80 children received either empathic or neutral instructions, were informed that the main character was similar or dissimilar to themselves, and listened to a taped conversation in which the main character always obtained a mildly negative outcome. Female subjects evaluated the main character in the predicted sequence: empathy instructions and similarity information led to greatest liking, neutral instructions and dissimilarity information led to least liking, and the other two combinations led to intermediate levels of liking. Unexpectedly, male subjects responded to empathic instructions by evaluating the main character less favorably. Explanations for the males' evaluative behavior are discussed. Results are discussed in terms of whether empathic responses can be directly induced by instruction. (Author/RH)

Effects of Empathy Instructions on First-Graders' Liking of Other People

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Running head: Empathy Instructions

Abstract

Two studies are reported in which the effects of empathic instructions on first-graders' liking of other people are assessed. In Experiment I, subjects received either empathic or non-empathic instructions, listened to a taped conversation in which the main character obtained either a positive or negative outcome, and then evaluated both the main character and the person who provided the outcome to the character. As predicted, it was found that empathic instructions increased positive evaluation only under negative outcome conditions and produced a change in evaluative perspective in regard to both members of the interacting dyad. In Experiment II, subjects received either empathic or neutral instructions, were informed that the main character was similar or dissimilar to themselves, and listened to a taped conversation in which the main character always obtained a mildly negative outcome. Female subjects evaluated the main character in the predicted sequence: empathy instructions and similarity information led to greatest liking, neutral instructions and dissimilarity information led to least liking, and the other two combinations led to intermediate levels of liking. Unexpectedly, male subjects responded to empathic instructions by evaluating the main character less favorably. Possible explanations for the males' evaluative behavior are discussed. More generally, results from both studies are discussed in terms of whether empathic responses can be directly induced by instruction.

Effects of Empathy Instructions on First-Graders' Liking of Other People

Empathy has been defined as the "ability to accurately perceive and comprehend the behavior, feelings, and motives of other individuals" (Rothenberg, 1970, p. 335). A number of investigators have adopted this type of cognitive emphasis in their examinations of empathic processes in children (Borke, 1971, 1973; Burns & Cavey, 1957; Chandler & Greenspan, 1972; Greenspan, Barenboim, & Chandler, 1976; Walton, 1936). The results of these studies are rather uniform in finding that empathic abilities increase with age: accuracy of perception increases and the level of cognitive sophistication and complexity increases.

Feshbach and her associates have pointed out the importance of focusing more on the affective dimension of empathy (Feshbach, 1973; Feshbach & Roe, 1968). In studies conducted from this perspective, subjects are typically asked to state how they (the subjects) feel after observing a peer who is portrayed as experiencing some kind of emotion. Findings from this approach support the existence of an affective component that can be distinquished from accuracy of social perception and indicate that empathic affect also increases with age. Extending this work, Feshbach has suggested that the cognitive and affective components of empathy are related to the regulation of social behavior. In this regard, several studies have investigated the relationship between empathy and children's

aggression (Murphy, 1937; Feshbach & Feshbach, 1969) and/or cooperation (Murphy, 1937; Levine & Hoffman, 1975).

It is of interest that none of these studies has utilized empathy as an experimentally manipulated independent variable. In general, prior investigations have examined empathy as a dependent variable, seeking to understand the developmental and situational circumstances that affect its occurrence. Such a dependent variable approach to empathy has had the advantage of focusing our attention on the need to achieve a precise yet conceptually powerful definition of the empathic process. To this end, the dialogue between the more cognitive and the more affective points of view has made a significant contribution. At another level, however, the dependent variable approach has produced some theoretical consequences that may not be so desirable.

One implication of previous research has tended to be the characterization of empathy as an endogenous psychological capacity that is subject to developmental change and on which environmental factors have only a limited impact. Furthermore, as long as empathy is viewed from the dependent variable end of the theoretical chain, the effects of empathy upon other psychological processes are precluded from experimental investigation. For example, if empathy does affect social behavior, such a relationship may well be mediated by the effects of empathy upon children's evaluations of other people. The presence of empathy may increase positive evaluation and thus make prosocial behavior more likely, while the absence of empathic responses may lead to less positive evaluation and make prosocial behavior less probable. In order, however, to investigate experimentally even the first step in this hypothetical sequence, empathy

must be approached as an independent variable, and must, therefore, necessarily be seen as less endogenous and more amenable to situational influence.

The present paper will describe two studies that have attempted to manipulate empathy as an independent variable and, thereby, to examine its effects on children's evaluations of other people. The fundamental research strategy adopted here consists of using empathic instructions that have been found in research with adults (Stotland, 1969; Coke, Batson, And McDavis, 1978) to reliably produce physiological and behavioral concomitants of an empathic state. In the following experiments, these instructions were administered to first-grade children in the context of other experimentally controlled variables and effects on interpersonal evaluations were assessed.

Experiment I

Studies by Aderman, Brehm, and Katz (1974) and Brehm and Aderman (1977) on empathy in adults provided adult comparison groups and the methodological strategy for the present research. Aderman et al found that empathic instructions increased positive evalution of an adult peer. In the Aderman et al study the peer was presented in negative, unpleasant circumstances only. Further work in this area by Brehm and Aderman suggested that this enhancing effect of empathy is limited to negative outcomes and does not occur for evaluations of a peer portrayed in positive, pleasant circumstances.

A number of studies suggest that the dimension of positive versus negative outcomes to a peer also may be important in children's evaluations. Borke (1971, 1973), Feshbach and Roe (1968), Rothenberg

(1970), and Levine and Hoffman (1975) have obtained data suggesting that the nature of peer behavior has an effect upon children's empathic responses. Apparently, the ability to accurately perceive happiness in another exists at an early age, while the ability to perceive accurately when others are angry, sad, or afraid takes longer to develop. Converging on these data are findings by Costanzo, Coie, Grumet, and Farnill (1973) that young children's moral judgments are less cognitively sophisticated when the peer to be morally judged has committed a negative act than when the peer has committed a positive act. The findings from these studies would suggest, then, that negative outcome conditions may serve to reduce empathic responses in children because of effects on either emotional or cognitive processes, or both. This implication is in direct contradiction to the Aderman, Brehm, and Katz (1974) and the Brehm and Aderman (1977) results indicating that for adults negative outcome conditions enhance the effect of empathic instructions.

An additional finding from the Brehm and Aderman experiment concerns the relationship among empathic instructions, peer outcome, and evaluations of both the peer and the person who provides the outcome to the peer. Subjects who were instructed <u>not</u> to empathize with the peer were found to evaluate the peer more in accordance with his outcomes (i.e., more positive evaluation when the outcome was positive; more negative evaluation when the outcome was negative) than did subjects instructed to empathize with the peer. On the other hand, subjects instructed to empathize with the peer evaluated the social environment (i.e., the person who interacted with the peer and provided his outcome) more in accordance with the peer's outcome than did subjects instructed not to empathize. This finding, in

conjunction with work by Regan and Totten (1975) and Galper (1976), indicates that empathic instructions lead observers to take the perspective of the actor: to attribute causality for events that happen to the actor to the environment surrounding the actor (including those other people that constitute the actor's social environment), and to evaluate the environment in terms that reflect the desirability of the actor's obtained outcome. Non-empathizing observers do not show this perspectival change; they behave more typically as observers: attributing causality for the actor's outcomes to the actor and evaluating the actor as a direct function of the desirability of his/her outcomes.

The issue of whether empathic instructions could have similar, perspective-taking effects on young children has not been addressed by previous research. If such effects were obtained, it would suggest that, in addition to affecting evaluations of the people they observe, empathic instructions can influence the way in which children cognitively structure causal relationships.

Subjects

Subjects were 23 first-graders (12 boys, 11 girls) at a parochial school in a midwestern town. They ranged in age from 77 to 93 months, with a mean age of 7.28 years. Ninety-five percent of the subjects were Caucasian and, while not measured, socioeconomic class within the school appeared to vary between lower and upper-middle class.

Procedure

The children whose parents had given their consent to participation were sent individually by their teacher to the experimental room. Experimenter I introduced himself to the subject and after having asked for

name, age, and birthdate (later checked with school records), he proceeded, according to a block randomized assignment schedule, to deliver instructions about how to listen to a forthcoming audiotape. All children were told that they would be hearing a conversation between Kathy, a first-grader, and Mrs. Green, a housewife, and that both Kathy and Mrs. Green lived in the subjects' hometown. Subjects in the Empathy condition were told: While you are listening to this conversation, imagine how you yourself would feel if you were Kathy talking to Mrs. Green. Pretend to yourself that you are Kathy. While you are listening to what happened to Kathy, pretend that what happened to her happened to you. Imagine how you would feel if you were Kathy. Just pretend that you are Kathy as you listen to the story.

Subjects in the No-Empathy condition were told: While you are listening to the story, listen to what Kathy does. Listen to what happened to Kathy. Pay attention to anything she does, whatever it is. In the story Kathy will be talking with Mrs. Green. Listen to what happens to Kathy as she talks to Mrs. Green. Do not pretend that you are Kathy. Don't think about how she feels or how you would feel. Just listen closely to what Kathy does.

After these instructions, all subjects heard a short audiotape in which Kathy met Mrs. Green and explained to her that she had lost her cat and was now searching for her missing pet. Subjects in the Positive Outcome condition heard Mrs. Green offer to help Kathy look for the cat, and Kathy sounded happy at the end of the tape. Subjects in the Negative Outcome condition heard Mrs. Green say she was too busy to help Kathy look, and Kathy sounded unhappy at the tape's conclusion.

After the subject had listened to the complete audiotape, Experimenter I went outside the room and called in Experimenter II, introducted her to the subject, and left the room. Experimenter II was blind to the experimental conditions. For first Kathy and then Mrs. Green, each subject was asked whether (s)he liked her or did not like her. If the subject responded that (s)he did not like the stimulus person, this response was seored "0" and Experimenter II went on to the next measure. If the subject responded that (s)he liked the stimulus person, Experimenter II inquired, with the assistance of a visual aid (a poster of five blocks of increasing size) whether (s)he "liked her a little bit, liked her more, liked her, liked her very much, liked her very very much.". The subject was instructed to point at the appropriate block. This procedure allowed for 0 to 5 scale evaluative rating for each stimulus person. If the child hesitated or refused to point to a block, moderate but not intensive pressure was applied for a response. All subjects did make the required pointing responses. After having responded to some additional, open-ended questions regarding their perception of the experimental materials, subjects were thanked for participating, asked not to tell any of their classmates what they had done until the study was completed, and sent back to class.

Results

A 2(empathy vs. no-empathy instructions) X 2(positive vs. negative outcomes) X 2(male vs. female subjects) X 2(ratings of the two story characters) mixed factor analysis of variance was performed on the liking ratings. On this overall analysis, no effects were found for sex of subject and the only significant result was the Instruction X Outcome X

Story Character interaction, $F(1,15) = 17.09$, $p < .001$. The data were then collapsed across sex and separate 2(Instructions) X 2(Outcome) ANOVA's were conducted on the ratings of each story character. These analyses each revealed only one significant effect; the Instruction X Outcome interaction was significant for both Kathy, $F(1,19) = 4.97$, $p < .05$, and Mrs. Green, $F(1,19) = 7.34$, $p < .05$. The means for these interactions are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1 about here

These findings are strikingly similar to those obtained by Brehm and Aderman (1977) with adult subjects. First, empathic instructions increased positive evaluation of the target person (the actor, Kathy) only under negative outcome conditions, $F(1,19) = 7.18$, $p < .05$. Under positive outcome conditions, there was no difference in ratings of the actor between subjects instructed to empathize and those instructed not to, $F<1$.

Second, the variation in subjects' perspectives on the two people involved in the observed interaction was quite apparent. For the actor, only non-empathizing subjects evaluated her parallel to her outcomes, such that favorable evaluation was enhanced by a positive outcome; empathizing subjects tended to reverse the effect of outcome and to rate the actor higher when a negative outcome was received. For the social environment, however, only empathizing subjects evaluated her (Mrs. Green) parallel to the actor's outcomes; non-empathizing subjects evaluated her more favorably when the actor had received a negative outcome. While it should be noted that only the last of these four specific comparisons between outcome

conditions reaches acceptable levels of statistical reliability, the overall pattern of results is supported by the significant interactions obtained in both the overall analysis and in the separate story character analyses.

Discussion

These results suggest that negative outcome situations do not inhibit empathic responses in first-grade children, but, rather, act to enhance them. Further, the data indicate that young children as well as adults are susceptible to perspectival changes induced by empathic instructions.

The confidence with which one draws these conclusions must, however, be tempered by recognition of some serious problems raised by the sample size of the present study. Such a small sample may, of course, be quite unrepresentative of first-grade children in general. Moreover, while the sex of subject factor was included in the initial overall analysis and had no significant effects, the sample size allowed for detection of only relatively large effects and precluded a more sensitive examination of possible sex differences.

Apart from the problems engendered by a small number of subjects, the present findings cannot avoid interpretive ambiguity. While these findings are most parsimoniously explained by assuming that empathy was created by the instructions to empathize, this inference can only be made on the basis of a somewhat complicated set of data (and on the resemblance of these data to findings with adult subjects that had originally been predicted using this assumption).

This assumption would be strengthened by an adequate direct measure of empathy, but such a direct measure is difficult to obtain. Physiological

recordings are not feasible when conducting research within a school setting. Questioning subjects as to their own emotional response is not a satisfactory method for the present experimental paradigm. For our study, variations in outcome were intentionally made quite obvious and no between-condition differences in perceptions of these outcomes were intended or expected. Confirming this, exploratory open-ended questioning after the dependent measures had been administered indicated that when subjects were asked how they felt after Mrs. Green had either helped or not helped Kathy, 96% of all subjects responded with an appropriate emotional label (e.g., "good" for positive outcomes; "mad" for negative outcomes).

Thus the search for an adequate direct measure of the empathic process remains the provence of future research and does not provide immediate assistance in interpreting the present data. An alternative strategy is to reduce the complexity of the data base and, thus, of the inferences that can be generated. Our second study was designed for this purpose.

Experiment II

Virtually all considerations of the empathic process have noted the close connections between responding empathically to another person and perceiving that person as similar to oneself. On the one hand, definitions of empathy (Stotland, 1969; Fashbach and Roe, 1968) stress its vicarious nature: to empathize with another is to share that person's cognitive perspective and/or emotional experience. On the other hand, several investigators have demonstrated empirically (Feshbach and Roe, 1968; Krebs, 1975; Stotland and Dunn, 1963) that similarity between the observer and the observed facilitates an empathic response on the part of the observer.

Moreover, there are major parallels between the effects of both similarity and empathy on evaluations of others. Research with adult subjects has amply documented that, in general, increased similarity with another will lead to increased liking for that person (Byrne, 1971). The direct association between empathic instructions and liking has been demonstrated by the Aderman, Brehm, and Katz (1974) and Brehm and Aderman (1977) studies discussed in Experiment I.

These findings suggest rather clearly that empathy and similarity should act in combination to affect evaluations of other people: empathy and similarity should lead to the most positive evaluations; no (or low levels of) empathy and dissimilarity should lead to the least positive evaluations; the remaining combinations of empathy-dissimilarity and no-empathy-similarity should lead to levels of evaluation intermediate between the previous two extremes. This design allows for a direct and fundamental prediction about the evaluative effects of an empathic response to be compared to an equally direct and fundamental prediction about the evaluative effects of similarity information, and for their combined effects to be assessed.

In addition to examining the hypothesized effects of empathy and similarity on evaluations of an observed other, the following study attempted to improve on some of the methodological problems or ambiguities of Experiment I. First, a larger sample size was obtained making possible a more powerful investigation of possible sex differences. Secondly, the no-empathy instructions were modified so that the direction to subjects <u>not</u> to pretend to be the target person was deleted. This modification resulted in more equivalent instructional sets: (1) the empathy instructions in

which subjects were told to put themselves in the other's place, and (2) the neutral instructions in which subjects were told to listen to what the other person did and what happened to this person. Neither instructional set contained any directions to subjects about what not to do.

Subjects

Subjects were 86 first-graders from 5 parochial schools in a midwestern city. 6 subjects were deleted due to their refusal to respond to the dependent measures, leaving a total of 80 subjects (40 boys, 40 girls) included in the analyses. Subjects ranged in age from 72 to 98 months, with a mean age of 7.05 years. 77% of the subjects were Caucasian; 23% were Mexican-American. While not measured, socio-economic class appeared to vary widely (primarily as a function of the location of the schools). Ethnic background and schools were counterbalanced across experimental conditions.

Procedure

The procedure was the same as that for Experiment I except for the following.

Two pairs of experimenters conducted the study and were counterbalanced across experimental conditions.

Prior to listening to the stimulus tape, subjects were told that the target person (Chris) was either similar to them (same sex, grade, place of residence) or was dissimilar (opposite sex, of high school age, living "far away"). Subjects were then given one of two listening conditions: empathic instructions (as in Experiment I) or neutral instructions (as described above).

Each subject listened to one of four tape-recordings, depending on experimental condition, in which the part of Chris was played by a peer male, a peer female, older male, or older female. The content of all tapes was the same. In the tape, an adult female (Mrs. Green) has just driven her car into the driveway of Chris's home and accidentally has hit Chris's new bicycle. As the conversation ensues, it turns out that Chris had been told previously not to leave his/her bike in the driveway. The tape ends with Chris and Mrs. Green going into Chris's house to tell Chris's mother what has happened. It should be noted that this taped conversation is considerably different from the tape used in Experiment I. In the present tape, Chris is uniformly presented as having experienced a negative outcome and is always dejected at the conclusion of the tape. Additionally, while the tape is quite ambiguous about whether one of the characters is more at fault than the other, Mrs. Green is never presented with any obvious opportunity to reduce Chris's distress. In this sense, then, Mrs. Green plays a less important role in this tape than in the one used previously.

The dependent measures, administered by Experimenter II who was blind to the subject's experimental condition, consisted of the subject's evaluations of Chris and Mrs. Green. Given Mrs. Green's reduced role in the taped conversation, all subjects were asked to evaluate Chris before evaluating Mrs. Green and only the results for the evaluation question about Chris could be predicted. On this question, the greatest liking for Chris was expected to be produced by empathic instructions and similarity information, the least liking by neutral instructions and dissimilarity information, and moderate levels of liking by the empathic-dissimilarity and neutral-similarity combinations.

After having responded to the dependent measures, each subject was asked, in an open-ended fashion, whether he/she would have said what Chris said to Mrs. Green. This question was designed to examine how critical subjects were of Chris's behavior during his/her part of the conversation. Subjects were then reassured that the bicycle had been easily repaired and that both Chris and Mrs. Green had learned to be more careful.

Results

A 2 (empathy vs. neutral instructions) X 2 (similarity vs. dissimilarity information) X 2 (male vs. female subjects) X 2 (ratings of the two story characters, Chris vs. Mrs. Green) mixed factor analysis of variance was performed on the liking ratings. On this analysis, the repeated measure factor of story character did not interact with any of the other experimental variables (although there was a main effect for story character such that Chris was liked more than Mrs. Green, $F(1,72) = 6.08$, $p < .05$). Separate 2 (Instructions) X 2 (Information) X 2 (Sex of Subject) ANOVA's for each story character were then performed.

On the evaluation measure of Chris, significant effects for similarity, $F(1,72) = 4.03$, $p < .05$; sex, $F(1,72) = 7.42$, $p < .01$; and the interaction of empathy and sex, $F(1,72) = 13.9$, $p < .001$, were obtained. These data suggested that separate 2 (Instruction) X 2 (Information) ANOVA's for each sex might provide the most precise description of the data and these were performed. For female subjects, there was a significant main effect for similarity, $F(1,36) = 5.12$, $p < .05$, and a marginally significant effect for empathy, $F(1,36) = 3.43$, $p = .07$. In addition, the ordering of the means (displayed in Table 2) was as predicted. Indeed, it

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Table 2 about here

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should be noted that the empathy-similarity condition suffered from a dramatic ceiling effect. All 10 female subjects in this condition gave the highest possible evaluative rating for Chris.

The 2 X 2 analysis of variance on male subjects' evaluations of Chris did not, however, conform to prediction. While the direction of the means for the similarity ($\bar{X} = 3.1$) and dissimilarity ($\bar{X} = 2.8$) conditions is in the expected direction, this effect was not significant. On this analysis, only the empathy effect was significant, $F(1,36) = 11.56$, $p < .01$, and the direction of the means (displayed in Table 2) is opposite from that predicted. Male subjects who were instructed to empathize with Chris evaluated Chris less favorably than male subjects given neutral instructions.

On the 2 (Instructions) X 2 (Information) X 2(Sex of Subject) ANOVA performed on the liking ratings for Mrs. Green, there were no significant effects.

Discussion

The data from the present study suggest that sex differences in response to instructions to empathize can have major effects on subsequent evaluations of the target person. For the young girls in our study, empathic instructions and similarity information combined in an additive fashion and confirmed our a priori expectations. These results suggest that, for female children, practical techniques using this kind of instructional and information approach--for example, in establishing more

positive regard among handicapped and non-handicapped children as handicapped children are "main-streamed" in the schools--would seem to merit serious consideration.

For male children, however, the present results have very different practical implications, especially in regard to empathic instructions. While our data do not indicate any major evaluative effect of indicating to male children that others are similar to them, there is no evidence that such a technique would have any undesirable effects. There is, however, a rather strong indication that empathic instructions could have the distinctly undesirable effect of reducing favorable evaluation.

In assessing this possibility, two levels of analysis are necessary. First, we must specify the locus of the effect. Is it clear that the reduction in favorable regard under empathic instructions is clearly due to the empathic instructions and not to the neutral ones? This conclusion is supported by the significant interaction between sex of subject and empathic instruction obtained on the initial 2 X 2 X 2 analysis of the liking ratings for Chris. Males and females have quite similar mean scores under neutral instructions (3.8 and 3.45, respectively). Only under empathic instructions do the sexes significantly differ (2.1 and 4.35, respectively).

Secondly, we would like to be able to specify the psychological processes giving rise to the males' response. Unfortunately, the clarity of the locus of effect is not matched by interpretation of its cause. Some possible explanations can, however, be eliminated. The males' relatively unfavorable evaluation of the target person when given instructions to empathize cannot be explained as simply reflecting male subjects' inability

to empathize. While there are some indications of possible sex differences in empathic response capacity among children of this age (see Feshbach and Roe, 1968, especially their results for "specific matching of affect"), lowered empathic response capacity in males would predict no difference in male response to the empathic and neutral instructions presented in Experiment II. The obtained highly significant difference for males between these two conditions points to a more specific, if unexpected, response to the empathic instructions than could be predicted from a reduced response capacity model.

Another possible explanation centers on males' becoming more critical of the target person's behavior when instructed to put themselves in this person's place. This explanation is not supported by the results of our open-ended question at the conclusion of the experiment. Males' responses to this question do not appear to differ as a function of the instructions they received.

A final possible explanation concerns the motivation aroused in males by being told to empathize. It is possible that the empathy instructions aroused psychological reactance in the male subjects and, thereby, motivated them to oppose the instructions (either by not putting themselves in the other's place, or by not expressing the positive evaluation they may have thought would be produced by putting themselves in the other's place). Although this explanation is consistent with other research indicating stronger reactance tendencies for male than for female children (Brehm, 1978; Brehm and Weinraub, 1977), it is a purely speculative interpretation at this point.

General Discussion

The two studies described in this paper provide evidence on a number of relationships between empathic instructions and children's evaluations of other people. Our findings showed that the combination of empathic instructions and similarity information produced extremely positive evaluations of the target person by female first-grade children. Furthermore, it was found that empathic innstructions had maximum effect when the target person had experienced a negative outcome rather than a positive one, and that empathic instructions produced a change in evaluative perspective in regard to both members of an interacting dyad. These findings should increase our understanding of how children evaluate the people around them and may have important implications for practical applications of this understanding.

On a more theoretical level, there will likely be some difference in opinion about how these findings should be interpreted. The most parsimonious interpretation of the data from Experiment I and the female subjects' responses in Experiment II remains the simple one of assuming that the empathic instructions did, in fact, elicit empathic responses. However, our inability to point to a compelling direct measure of empathy will inevitably provide grounds for dispute.

The correspondence between widely disparate developmental levels may also add to some reluctance to accept our instructional manipulation as having elicited empathy. In Experiment I, first-graders' responses were highly similar to those obtained from college students in the Brehm and Aderman (1977) study. In Experiment II, the ordering of the means for female subjects is precisely that which, based on previous research with

adults, would be predicted for adult subjects. Similar resultant effects do not, of course, necessarily implicate similar causal processes. But such similarities, do raise the possibility that (1) empathic response can be directly induced by instruction for both children and adults, and (2) the evaluative effects produced by an empathic response occur relatively early in development and, at least for females, remain relatively stable. While the present studies cannot provide conclusive evidence, our findings would appear to support further investigation of these issues.

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Footnotes

1 Due to the number of subjects available, it was not possible to counterbalance the order of measures for Kathy and Mrs. Green. The order utilized replicated the actor then social environment order of the Brehm and Aderman (1977) experiment.

2 The need for additional research is also suggested by the failure of a small number of second-graders (n = 18), exposed to the same experimental paradigm as the first-graders and intended to replicate the results from the first-grade sample, to replicate the first-grade findings. For these second graders, hearing the negative outcome story led empathizing subjects to like both Kathy and Mrs. Green more than non-empathizing subjects. When subjects heard a positive outcome, both story characters were liked equally well. Thus while empathic instructions had the expected facilitating effect on evaluations under negative outcome conditions, the expected perspectival differences for story characters were not obtained. While these divergent results between first and second graders point to the possibility of non-linear developmental changes in the perspectival effects of empathy instructions, the small number of subjects in each age group makes such comparisons highly tentative.

Table 1

Mean Evaluation Ratings

	Story Characters			
	Actor (Kathy)		Social Environment (Mrs. Green)	
	Observational Set		Observational Set	
Outcomes	Empathy	No-Empathy	Empathy	No-Empathy
Positive	3.17[a] (n = 6)	3.50 (n = 6)	4.33 (n = 6)	2.00 (n = 6)
Negative	4.60 (n = 5)	2.33 (n = 6)	2.80 (n = 5)	4.00 (n = 6)
	MS error = 1.94		MS error = 2.42	

[a]For all ratings, 5 = the greatest liking; 0 = the least liking

Table 2

Mean Evaluation Ratings

of the Major Stimulus Person

	Sex of Subject	
	Female	Male
Experimental Condition[a]		
Empathy-Similarity	5.0[b]	2.3
Empathy-Dissimilarity	3.7	1.9
Neutral-Similarity	3.9	3.9
Neutral-Dissimilarity	3.0	3.7
	MS error = 2.36	MS error = 2.50

[a] For each experimental condition and for each sex, n = 10.

[b] For all ratings, 5 = the greatest liking; 0 = the least liking