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Understanding Empathy: Exploring Power Relations, Group Dynamics, and Counter-dominance in Shaping Outgroup Attitudes

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Abstract

This article is a literature review of how the context of group dynamics, power relations, and counter-dominance change our understanding of empathy towards outgroups. A large focus of current psychological research around empathy aims to better understand empathy in improving intergroup relations. However, many of the current studies measure the perspectives of the majority (high-power) groups, while failing to take into account the differences in the perspectives of the minority (low-power) groups, for whom empathy does not predict positive intergroup attitudes. In order to look at the importance of group dynamics and power relations in understanding empathy, I analyze different studies both in the interpersonal and intergroup contexts. Furthermore, when analyzing these studies within the different types of empathy contexts, I illustrate the prominent role of counter-dominance in explaining why empathy relates to positive attitudes toward subordinate groups but negative attitudes toward dominant groups. Additionally, I use counter-dominance to explain differences and similarities in findings when examining different intergroup empathy contexts such as group empathy and attitudinal empathy. In explaining these similarities and differences, I illustrate how counter-dominance is important to understanding empathy in the context of intergroup relations due to its ability to positively predict positive attitudes towards low-power groups and negatively predict attitudes towards high-powered groups.

Keywords: Empathy, interpersonal, intergroup, counter-dominance

Empathy has been a longstanding subject of study within the field of psychology since the early 1900s, and yet we still don't have a comprehensive understanding of it despite the immense amount of research. Even within the literature from the 20th century, we still have a lack of uniformity within our conceptualizing of empathy and how we define different aspects of it, such as interpersonal versus intergroup empathy. However, a growing amount of research has examined different factors that influence and mediate the role of empathy, at both the interpersonal and intergroup levels, such as gender, prejudice attitudes, egalitarianism, counter-dominance, social status, group status, and the level of power a group holds. Oftentimes, when such studies look at empathy at the intergroup level, they focus on only one group's perspective, and usually, it is the majority group, which puts limitations on the generalizability of valuable findings. For example, McFarland (2010) found that empathy reduces prejudiced attitudes however, they only looked at the perspective of the majority towards the minority and failed to consider crucial considerations about the power dynamics between the groups such as how being in a high versus low-power group might affect ones outgroup attitudes. Findings from such studies are still significant, however, when trying to determine empathy's role in understanding intergroup dynamics and understanding empathy itself, it is important to consider all related contributing factors. Additionally, one large contributing factor and influencer to empathy, and our understanding of it, is counter-dominance. Counter-dominance is defined as "support for group inclusion and equality and opposition to group-based dominance" (Pratto et al., 2023). Counter-dominance is a key factor that explains why empathy differentially predicts attitudes toward dominant and subordinate groups. Even though counter-dominance influences empathy in a multitude

of ways, many studies do not account for it, thus creating a lack of understanding of the topic. Through my analysis of different literature, I will illustrate how empathy doesn't always reduce prejudiced attitudes, how the quality of contact between outgroups improves outgroup attitudes, and how egalitarianism positively predicts perceived harm towards low-power groups which in turn predicts empathy towards those groups, thus demonstrating how group and power dynamics change our current understanding of empathic concern and perspective taking on outgroups empathy towards low-powered groups. Additionally, I will demonstrate how counter-dominance also changes our current understanding of empathic concern and perspective taking on outgroups by positively predicting attitudes towards low-powered groups and negatively predicting attitudes towards high-powered groups.

My review of the literature will be divided into two major sections. These sections include Interpersonal Context and Intergroup Power Context. The second section will include three subsections, each about a different type of empathy within the intergroup context. Each of these subsections will also have its own subsection on the relation to counter-dominance.

The first main section aims to provide a foundation for empathy in its basic forms. In order to provide this foundation as to what interpersonal empathy is and its different facets, I will analyze older and more modern constructs of interpersonal empathy, such as the Interpersonal Reactivity Index.

Second, we transition into the intergroup context. The first subsection here provides us with a background into empathic concern, one of the dimensions of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index. In this subsection, I analyze two different studies that

measure empathic concern using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index but conclude different findings. The goal of this is to illustrate significant findings about how intergroup dynamics and power relations affect our understanding of empathy by providing studies where the perspective is from groups with different levels of power and status. Following this, I provide a subsection on counter-dominance intending to illustrate how counter-dominance explains the differences in the findings by being a mediator and predicting outgroup attitudes.

In the second intergroup subsection, I will introduce group empathy and the index created to measure it, the Group Empathy Index. This section aims to demonstrate how our previous understanding of interpersonal empathy changes when looking at it from a different context, with the sole focus being on outgroups, where we see that the quality of contact between groups helps improve outgroup attitudes. Additionally, I will analyze the role of counter-dominance within group empathy, thus further providing evidence for the prominent role counter-dominance plays in understanding empathy such that counter-dominance positively predicts feelings towards low-power groups and negatively predicts feelings toward high-powered groups.

Finally, I will introduce the last intergroup context of empathy, attitudinal empathy. In this section, I aim to exhibit how when looking at empathy in the attitudinal context, we are provided with new insights into group and power dynamics within empathy such as egalitarianism predicting perceived harm to disadvantaged groups which in turn predicts empathic attitudes towards that group. Similar to the previous sections, I will introduce the role of counter-dominance in attitudinal empathy and analyze the consistencies within the different studies and the important role of counter-dominance

positively predicting positive outgroup attitudes towards low-power groups and negatively predicting outgroup attitudes toward high-powered groups.

Interpersonal Context

Interpersonal empathy is being able to share and understand other's feelings and perspectives. The context of empathy here is at a very basic level between people without any context of ingroup or outgroups. Empathy is very complex and multidimensional, however, beginning research on the topic only focused on singular dimensions of it. At first, only the emotion-related side of empathy was researched focusing on the emotional sharing side of it, but it was then expanded to also look at the cognitive side which then focused on our ability to conceptualize others' emotions and understand them (Davis, 1980). However, even when the research expanded to look at both sides it either focused on the cognitive side or the emotional aspects of empathy, but not both together which was an issue (Davis, 1980). Then, when both the emotional and cognitive aspects were looked at together, the measures and scales did account for both aspects, however, they combined the responses into one single empathy score which "masks individual contribution" that each aspect makes (Davis, 1980). To be able to understand empathy, appropriate methods and scales are necessary to accurately measure it which through most of the 1900's we didn't have. This led to the creation of Davis' Interpersonal Reactivity Index (See Appendix 1 for full index). Davis illustrated four separate subscales that collectively measure interpersonal empathy. The four subscales included: fantasy, perspective-taking, empathic concern, and personal distress. Fantasy can be defined as it "taps the tendency to imaginatively transpose oneself into fictional

situations" (Davis, 1980, p. 11). Perspective-taking is defined as being able to, in real-life instances not fictitious, "reflect an ability or proclivity to shift perspectives – to step "outside of the self" – when dealing with other people. Empathic concern he defines as "assessing the degree to which the respondent experiences feelings of warmth, compassion, and concern for the observed individual" (Davis, 1980, p. 12). And finally, personal distress is defined as "the individuals own feelings of fear, apprehension, and discomfort at witnessing the negative experience of others" (Davis, 1980, p. 12). Collectively, these four subscales make up the Interpersonal Reactivity Index allowing us to measure interpersonal empathy towards others. Even though it was created in the 1980s, the index is still used even today in 2023 because of how valid and reliable the measure has proven to be. However, even though it is still used today with those four subscales, our understanding of what four constructs our empathy is made up of has changed.

More recently, in research done by Batson and Ahmad (2009) four different psychological states of empathy have been defined. These four states include imagine-self perspective, imagine-other perspective, emotion matching, and empathic concern. Imagine-self perspective is defined as imagining how one would think and feel in another's situation or "shoes" (Batson & Ahmad, 2009). Imagine-other perspective is imagining how another person thinks or feels given his/her situation (Batson & Ahmad, 2009). Emotion matching is defined as feeling as another person feels (Batson & Ahmad, 2009). Lastly, empathic concern is feeling for another person who is in need (Batson & Ahmad, 2009). Two of these concepts are self-focused whereas the other two are other-focused. In their paper, they also describe how these different subfactors of

empathy are interconnected and provide steps in which we may interpret stimulis. For example, as Batson and Ahmad (2009) explain, imagine-self and imagine-other perspectives are two processes that we use to understand empathic stimulis. This works by taking an imagine-self perspective of another person when we relate to their experience, such as losing a game, then we take an imagine-other perspective in order to understand how they might feel in that situation. So, by first understanding how they themselves would feel, one can then apply it to understanding how the other person might feel. Similarly, the imagine-self perspective, described by Batson and Ahmad, can lead to empathic concern. This is because you imagine how you would feel in a given situation which then "should provide a basis for feeling empathic concern" (Batson & Ahmad, 2009, p. 146). Here we can see how the four different states of empathy, defined by Batson and Ahmad (2009), work together to help us process stimuli and feel "empathy".

Our more modern understanding of empathy follows those four states defined by Batson and Ahmad. However, when we measure interpersonal empathy we use the Interpersonal Reactivity Index created by Davis following his four subscales, which as we have seen, are different. Although they are both different, there are similarities between Davis' old subtypes of empathy and the newer ones defined by Batson and Ahmad (2009). Focusing on perspective-taking (Davis, 1980) we see an ability to take on the perspective of other people. Similarly, with both imagine-self and imagine-other perspective, we see the ability to take on someone else's perspective whether it be imagining oneself in the situation, or imagining how the person in the situation feels. Another similarity with the imagine-self perspective is that of the fantasy subscale. It

might be strange to see a "fantasy" scale when trying to measure one's empathy, however, like the imagine-self perspective, both look at the ability to imagine oneself in another situation, whether that be fictional or another person's real situation. Regardless of the situation one is imagining themselves in, both involve some imagination and connection with emotions. Another similarity between the two subscale groups is empathic concern. Empathic concern has always been a prominent aspect of empathy so it makes sense that both explanations of empathy include it. Although the actual written definitions of them might be different, they are both focused on the emotional response of seeing another person in need. However, one subtype that isn't directly similar to another is personal distress. Personal distress captures one's own discomfort at seeing another person struggling, which is unlike any of the other types we have seen which all focus on feeling similar feelings to the person in need. However, it still measures emotional intelligence and some perspective-taking since you have to understand someone else's pain to feel uncomfortable with it. Overall, our understanding of empathy is evolving, but the main focuses and aspects within these constructs have stayed the same. We can see that all of these are very basic levels of how we process and feel empathy. However, these do not take into account how group dynamics or power relations might affect these processes and our feelings of empathy.

Intergroup Power Context

Empathic Concern

Now that we have a foundational understanding of interpersonal empathy at its simplest level, we can expand our understanding of interpersonal empathy to the

intergroup context. In this section, empathic concern is an interpersonal type of empathy measured in the interpersonal context, however it is applied to the intergroup context. One study that looks at the role of interpersonal empathy in the intergroup context is McFarland (2010). In this study, empathy was defined in terms of two dimensions of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, empathetic concern and perspective-taking (McFarland, 2010). The aim of the study was to see if empathy could be used to predict the attitudes of high-power group members (whites) toward low-power groups (minorities), rather than just authoritarianism and social dominance, which based on previous findings, have been determinants of prejudiced attitudes. In order to measure empathy in their study they used the Interpersonal Reactivity Index to measure the attitudes of high-power group members (whites) toward low-power groups (minorities). For clarification purposes, the Interpersonal Reactivity Index is written in the context of interpersonal empathy, however, because of how easy it is to use and the strength of the measure, it is also used to help provide insights on individuals' attitudes towards outgroups, as McFarland has done here. The index provided evidence that empathy does in fact play a role in generalized prejudice and in fact, whites with greater empathy have less prejudiced attitudes toward minorities (McFarland, 2010). From this finding, we can conclude that members of high-powered groups will have less prejudice towards low-power groups if they have high levels of empathy. Although these are significant findings that provide insight as to how our empathy works in understanding outgroup members, this cannot be generalized beyond this specific situation in which it is a high-powered group's empathy measured towards a low-power group.

When looking at the study previously discussed, we are provided with evidence that when high-powered group members have higher levels of empathy they will have less prejudiced attitudes toward the low-powered groups. This is similar to much of the current literature which consists of the intergroup empathy focus being on that of the ingroup (high-powered majority) attitudes towards outgroup (low-powered minority) members, such as Finlay and Stephen (2000), Esses and Dovidio (2002), and Dovidio et al (2004, Study 1), all which Batson & Ahmad (2009) described in their analysis. However, the issue within the literature here is that it only provides the context in which the majority is the ingroup and the minority is the outgroup, and the only context of power relations we see is the high-powered as the ingroup and low-powered as the outgroup. Because of this, the idea, that those with greater empathy have lowered feelings of prejudice and hostility toward others, may not be generalizable because it has not been tested in contexts that look at the attitudes of disadvantaged groups towards advantaged groups being measured. In order for us to truly understand and be able to somewhat generalize the effects of empathy on attitudes towards groups we need to understand all perspectives not just the white majorities.

One study that looks at interpersonal empathy from a low-power ingroup perspective towards a high-power outgroup is Pratto et al (2023). Similar to the study done by McFarland (2010), to measure empathy in their study Pratto et al (2023) used the empathic concern subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, however, they only used a few specific scale items from the Index (See Appendix 3 for specific scale items). They demonstrated that within the low-power ingroup (Arabs in Lebanon and Syria) empathy was positively associated with support for attacking the high-power outgroup

(US military). In other words, this means that those in the ingroup with higher levels of empathy had more support for attacking the outgroup which is in fact the opposite of what McFarland (2010) and other studies in the literature have found. Adding to this finding, their evidence demonstrated that in one of the low-power groups (Syria), empathic concern positively predicted support for violence especially when relative US power was perceived to be higher (Pratto et al., 2023). This evidence suggests that both sets of previous findings should be re-stated in order to be reconciled such that the more empathy those in the low-powered groups have, the more support for violence they exhibit toward the high-powered group, and the more empathy those in the high-power groups have, the more positively they feel toward low-power groups (McFarland, 2010). In other words, interpersonal empathy (measured as empathic concern) positively predicts feelings toward low-powered groups (McFarland, 2010) and negatively predicts feelings toward high-power groups (Pratto et al., 2023).

Empathic Concern and Counter-Dominance

We have seen two intergroup contexts, one from the perspective of a majority high-power group and one from a minority low-power group. What explains the difference between how empathy works within a high-power versus a low-power group? One way we might explain this difference between these two intergroup contexts is counter-dominance. Counter-dominance is the support for group inclusion and equality and opposition to group-based dominance (Pratto et al., 2023). According to studies, high empathic concern and high counter-dominance are positively related (Pratto et al., 2023). In their study, Pratto et al (2023) argue that empathic concern and counter-dominance

have shared underlying motivations and therefore there will be more support for violence and hostility towards the US from empathic people in Lebanon and Syria due to desires for counter-dominance. In fact, Pratto et al, (2023) found that counter-dominance was a mediator between empathy and support for violence towards a high-power outgroup: empathic concern positively predicted counter-dominance in both Syria and Lebanon and counter-dominance went on to predict support for violence against the US in both countries. Here we can see that counter-dominance explains why empathy positively predicts support for violence against powerful outgroups. So, due to its association with counter-dominance, the prosocial orientation of empathy predicted the antisocial behavior of intergroup violence. Based on McFarland (2010), strong feelings of empathy among high-powered groups are also associated with counter-dominance, but this counter-dominance is associated with more positive attitudes towards low-powered groups. Taken together, findings from both Pratto et al, (2023) and McFarland (2010) indicate that empathy is associated with counter-dominance, and counter-dominance positively predicts feelings toward low-power groups (McFarland, 2010) and negatively predicts feelings toward high-power groups (Pratto et al., 2023). That is, it is the pairings of empathy with desires for counter-dominance that facilitates either prosocial or antisocial intergroup behavior. Therefore, again, it is empathy's association with counter-dominance that explains its association with less prejudiced attitudes towards low-power outgroups and more negative attitudes towards high-power groups.

We have looked at two different intergroup studies that measure empathy at the interpersonal level using the Interpersonal Reactivity Index. Now, moving onto intergroup empathy, intergroup empathy is "where individuals from one social group

come to take the perspective of members of potentially threatening or competitive

outgroups" as well as disadvantaged outgroups (Sirin et al., 2017, p. 429). In looking at

intergroup empathy, Sirin et al, (2021) argue about the lacking ability of the Interpersonal

Reactivity Index to measure outgroup attitudes which is why they felt a new intergroup

index was necessary. As we have defined earlier, interpersonal empathy is being able to

share and understand other's feelings and perspectives. However, in the book, Seeing Us

in Them, Sirin et al (2021) produce the Group Empathy Index which measures empathy

towards outgroups. In creating this index, they interpret Davis'(1980) understanding of

interpersonal empathy as it "primarily taps the bond of family and friendship" (See

Appendix 2 for full Group Empathy Index). Consistently when referring to interpersonal

empathy throughout the book, they similarly categorize it as being empathy only shared

between the ingroup. For example, they also say "We have the opportunity to revisit a

critical claim the theory makes about the distinction between intergroup and interpersonal

empathy. Empathy for outgroups should operate much differently than individual

empathy often expressed toward close intimates and friends" (Sirin et al., 2021, p. 217).

Based on their definition of interpersonal empathy as only within the ingroup, they

perceived the Interpersonal Reactivity Index as only measuring empathy within the

ingroup and stated that it cannot be used for intergroup purposes. However, when making

these claims, their "supporting evidence" is very vague and doesn't explicitly

demonstrate how the Interpersonal Reactivity Index only measures ingroup attitudes. For

example, they refer to scale items of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index when making

their argument about it not including attitudes towards outgroups such as "we altered the

perspective taking item discussed above ("I try to look at everybody's side of a

disagreement before I make a decision') to focus on outgrpups: "I try to look at everybody's side of the disagreement (including those of other racial or ethnic groups) before I make a decision" (Sirin et al., 2017, p. 431-432). Nowhere in this scale item from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index does it specifically point to ingroup members, but rather it refers to everybody in a general sense. Similarly, when creating the Index, the wording Davis used when describing who the attitudes being measured were towards, he only said "others" which demonstrates no specific focus on the ingroup. Because of their lack of strong supporting evidence, we can't conclude that Interpersonal empathy is only towards the ingroup and that the Interpersonal Reactivity Index only measures ingroup attitudes. However, this does not mean that their argument for creating a new scale to measure outgroup attitudes, the Group Empathy Index, or their new index itself has no validity, but rather because the Interpersonal Reactivity Index measure empathy at the interpersonal level which can then be used to help predict intergroup attitudes, the Group Empathy Index looks solely at outgroup attitudes and might be a better measure for specific outgroup attitudes.

Group Empathy

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index is used to provide insight to predict how we may relate, understand, and show compassion for outgroup members as well as ingroup members. However, it does not specifically address ingroup or outgroup attitudes. In their book, Seeing Us in Them, Sirin et al (2021), discuss their theory of group empathy in introducing their Group Empathy Index. The purpose of this index was to "have respondents focus on outgroups rather than their individual-level, interpersonal

experiences" (Sirin et al., 2017). The Group Empathy Index is very similar to the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, however, it is more clear in the scales that it uses so that the reader only focuses on outgroup members. For example, from the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, the empathic concern item "I often have tender, concerned feelings for people who are less fortunate than me" was changed: "I often have tender, concerned feelings for people from another racial or ethnic group who are less fortunate than me'" (Sirin et al., 2021, p. 41). Here we can see that by changing the context of the scales, it measures specifically attitudes towards outgroups. In their theory, they defined group empathy as, "a predisposition that motivates members of one group to vicariously experience and care about the perspectives and emotions of members of other groups" (Sirin et al., 2021, p. 24). Based on their theory, they argue that because of the diversity within our societies, there are a lot of group benefits from being able to empathize with different racial, religious, and cultural groups. Thus, being able to understand the role empathy plays between different diverse groups can help us understand how to reduce many issues which are not limited to stigmatization, stereotyping, and political issues between groups (Sirin et al., 2021). Although it is less common than ingroup empathy, the structure of our society today provides a basis for more group empathy. Group empathy is a prosocial orientation where we are caring about others' suffering, rather than focusing on how the misfortunes of others make us feel in order to empathize with them. It is possible that our understanding of empathy, when looking at it as group empathy, expands and we are provided with a new context which can study empathy through.

Analyzing studies that look into group empathy may provide us with insights as to how it influences group attitudes. In a study by Sirin et al (2017), they argue that race, ethnicity, education, age, and gender affect group empathy because they form the social contexts people live in (Sirin et al., 2017). According to their group empathy theory, historically disadvantaged groups may have a stronger ability to understand and relate to experiences faced by other minority groups and therefore affect one's level of group empathy such that minorities have more empathy for all outgroups (Sirin et al., 2017). Similarly, increased education is likely to be reflected in having better cognitive abilities to understand other people and their emotions. Age acts in the same way as the older you get the more developed your cognitions are and the more life experiences you have to reflect on to better understand other people and their emotions.

One's gender can also be a possible factor affecting group empathy because women tend to take on more of a caregiving role in our society and therefore might empathize with others more as well as be able to understand and relate to others' emotions better. In fact, Sirin et al., (2017) found that the female gender is a factor that boosts group empathy. Reflective of their argument, this also supports their hypothesis that gender can affect group empathy. This is interesting because in the study by McFarland (2010) it was found that in the context of interpersonal empathy, females have more empathy and therefore lower prejudiced attitudes towards low-power groups than males. Comparing that with the findings within group empathy here, we see two different valid indices used, and a consistent association between gender on one hand and interpersonal and group empathy on the other.

Additionally, they argue that life experiences "that spring from these social contexts –exposure to discrimination, the quality and quantity of contact with other groups, and perceptions of intergroup economic competition– should also predict group empathy" (Sirin et al., 2017, p. 430). They argue this because of the factors I previously mentioned within their first argument, such as gender, education, age, and race. These factors help to shape their exposure to groups through different day-to-day activities and interactions, for example, at school or work.

Lastly, in terms of economic competition, factors like the level of one's education can affect this because increased education can lead to improved economic status and therefore a reduced feeling of economic competition with other groups (Sirin et al., 2017). When there is less feeling of economic competition between groups, there is one less factor that might influence one group to feel less empathy with another.

Group Empathy theory states that "historically disadvantaged groups (e.g., minorities and women) might find it easier to imagine themselves in the position of a person being unfairly treated, even when that person comes from a different group (Sirin et al., 2014, 2017, in press)" (Sirin et al., 2017, p. 429). The evidence from their study demonstrated that "both African Americans and Latinos report significantly more experience with discrimination than Anglos and that experience significantly boosts group empathy" (Sirin et al., 2017, p. 436). This finding supports their argument that exposure to discrimination should predict group empathy. Group empathy provides us with another context in which we can look at empathy, opening our understanding to other factors that play a role in how we empathize with others, such as outgroup members. Based on this finding we can see that experience with discrimination can affect

our outgroup attitudes by boosting our group empathy levels. Thus, applying this to one of my overarching ideas of what affects our levels of empathy, here in the group empathy context when groups have faced similar discrimination it might in fact improve intergroup dynamics between them.

Additionally, through the use of the Group Empathy Index, Sirin et al, (2017) illustrated that the quality of contact in general with other groups can increase group empathy, thus supporting their hypothesis. This is unlike any of the findings we have seen throughout the different contexts within empathy we have looked at thus far. We have seen that shared experiences improve group empathy, as well as one's gender influencing empathy levels, but not the quality of contact. This illustrates that group empathy addresses new factors that can influence our outgroup attitudes beyond what we already know.

Lastly, looking back at the findings we discussed where the more discrimination faced by groups (African Americans and Latinos), the more group empathy they have we can see some similarities with previous findings. Here we have two low-powered groups who similarly face discrimination and therefore they have more group empathy. These findings are similar to that of Pratto et al., (2023) in that both studies find that empathy (interpersonal and group empathy) among low-power groups predict negative feelings towards high-power groups. Comparing these two findings, we see a consistent association between discriminated/low-powered groups on one hand and high interpersonal and group empathy on the other hand.

Based on the findings from the study by Sirin et al., (2017) we can conclude that group empathy has some similar as well as different effects on outgroup attitudes.

Through the use of the new Group Empathy Index which focuses solely on outgroup attitudes, we were able to determine that when looking at group empathy, new factors that influence our empathy arise such as the quality of contact between groups. Additionally, the index provided us with consistent findings with the Interpersonal Reactivity Index regarding groups faced with discrimination.

Group Empathy and Counter-Dominance

Counter-dominance, as I discussed, is a crucial factor in understanding intergroup dynamics and power relations. These findings were illuminated through the use of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index by Pratto et al (2021). Are we able to see the similar importance of counter-dominance when looking at group empathy? As group empathy focuses on how one feels about another group's suffering, we would expect it to be related to counter-dominance. In the second part of the study by Sirin et al., (2017) they looked at attitudes toward undocumented immigrants and the role of group empathy, predicting that group empathy would boost positive attitudes towards immigrants. The findings concluded that when group empathy was maximized, the probability of "very strongly" supporting undocumented immigrants doubled (Sirin et al., 2017, p. 441). Additionally, it was concluded that "SDO has a significant and negative effect on positive attitudes towards immigrants, and the effect is even larger than empathy" (Sirin et al., 2017, p. 441), which tells us that group empathy is negatively related to SDO. Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) is defined as "the degree to which individuals desire and support group-based hierarchy and the domination of "inferior" groups by "superior" groups" (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, p. 48). SDO is the opposite of counter-dominance.

Therefore, if group empathy is negatively related to SDO, then it is positively related to counter-dominance. Like interpersonal empathy, which facilitated positive feelings toward low-power groups (McFarland, 2010) and support for negative behavior towards high-power groups due to counter-dominance (Pratto et al., 2023), group empathy may predict support for undocumented immigrants due to desires for counter-dominance.

Attitudinal Empathy

There is a final type of empathy that has not been discussed yet, which is empathy as an attitude. For the purposes of this paper, we will call this attitudinal empathy. Attitudinal empathy is caring about a specific group. For example, if I have more empathy for a specific group, I will have a more positive attitude toward that group, which is different from group empathy where you care about another group's suffering. Put simply, group empathy focuses on how one feels about another group's suffering, whereas empathy as an attitude focuses on the attitudes one group has towards another. One study that looks at attitudinal empathy is Lucas and Kteily (2018). They argue that egalitarians, compared to anti-egalitarians, will have more empathy for disadvantaged targets (e.g., those lower in social status) who have been harmed compared to advantaged targets (e.g., those higher in social status) who have been harmed. This is because "in general, individuals higher on SDO (i.e., relative anti-egalitarians) show a greater motivation to maintain and enhance the hierarchical differentiation between groups in society, whereas those lower on SDO (i.e., relative egalitarians) are more motivated to bring about group equality" (Lucas & Kteily, 2018). Based on this general understanding, Lucas and Kteily (2018) argue that egalitarians have more motivation for equality and

therefore may disregard harm done to those in advantaged groups thus minimizing their empathy for those groups and maximizing it for disadvantaged groups. Similarly, since anti-egalitarians have more motivation to maintain the social hierarchy, they may disregard or minimize the harm faced by disadvantaged groups thus minimizing their empathy for the disadvantaged targets and maximizing it for the advantaged (Lucas & Kteily, 2018). This is exactly what the study found. Their findings aligned with their hypothesis and revealed that, whereas egalitarianism was significantly associated with greater perceived harm to disadvantaged targets, anti-egalitarianism significantly predicted perceived harm to advantaged targets, and perceived harm in turn predicted empathy toward the target group (Lucas & Kteily, 2018). This finding illuminates the extent to which group position in the social hierarchy, even beyond that of race, helps determine our attitudinal empathy. We previously have looked only at studies in which the intergroup context of low-power (minority) and high-powered (majority) which typically involves race, however, this study provides us a new understanding of how egalitarianism (and relatedly, counter-dominance) affects empathy for experimentally created low-power and high-power groups.

Attitudinal Empathy and Counter-Dominance

As attitudinal empathy focuses on caring about a specific group, we would expect counter-dominance (i.e., egalitarianism, Lucas & Kteily, 2018) to be associated with caring more about low-power groups and dominance (i.e., anti-egalitarianism, Lucas & Kteily, 2018) to be associated with caring about high-power groups. If egalitarianism and counter-dominance predict perceiving less harm to advantaged groups and more harm to

disadvantaged groups (Lucas & Kteily, 2018), wouldn't this also explain why interpersonal empathy, through counter-dominance, predicts negative attitudes towards advantaged groups (Pratto et al., 2023) and positive attitudes toward disadvantaged groups (McFarland, 2010)? In sum, those who are higher in egalitarianism, or counter-dominance, have more empathy for those in disadvantaged groups, and those who are higher in anti-egalitarianism, or social dominance orientation, have more empathy towards advantaged groups.

These findings about the relationship between dominance and empathy for the advantaged are the exact mirror of those found in Pratto et al (2023). Pratto et al (2023) demonstrated that people in low-power groups who were more counter-dominance oriented (or those with high interpersonal empathy) showed more support for violence against advantaged groups. On the other hand, dominance-oriented people showed more support for advantaged groups just like Lucas and Kteily (2018) found. This counter-dominance framing is also consistent with the finding from Lucas and Kteily (2018) that those higher in egalitarianism have more empathy for disadvantaged groups and the finding from McFarland (2010) that those higher in interpersonal empathy have less prejudice toward low-power groups. People who are dominance-oriented (e.g., low in interpersonal empathy) have more positive attitudes toward advantaged groups and people who are counter-dominance oriented (e.g., high in interpersonal empathy) have more positive attitudes towards disadvantaged groups. In comparing the findings of Lucas and Kteily (2017), with those of Pratto et al (2023) and McFarland (2010), we see that even though the context through which empathy is measured may be different in the first study (attitudinal) versus the two others, high empathy is paired with either

counter-dominance or egalitarianism, leading to support for some disadvantaged/ low-powered group. Like the associated constructs of interpersonal empathy and attitudinal empathy for the disadvantaged, counter-dominance and egalitarianism both represent some opposition to hierarchical power structures and a preference for more equal and equitable social arrangements. Through the similarities between these findings, we see a common theme of high empathy being paired with some ideal around equality and less stratification which predicts support for disadvantaged low-power groups. In spotlighting this theme, I have provided a deeper understanding of the relationship between empathy and intergroup attitudes due to counter-dominance's strong association with high empathy.

Conclusion

Throughout this paper I have analyzed and compared different contexts of empathy and related findings throughout different studies looking into the various contexts. Through analyzing these different texts and empathy contexts, I aimed to demonstrate how group and power dynamics change our understanding by providing different contexts, such as low versus high-power groups. I also illustrated the strong relationship between empathy and counter-dominance in understanding outgroup attitudes, such that the relationship between empathy and counter-dominance is consistent regardless of how empathy is measured (interpersonal, group, or attitudinal). Much of the literature surrounding intergroup empathy lacks multiple perspectives (high and low-powered groups), which limits our understanding of the subject. The limitation of the scope of such studies, for example, when looking only at the perspective of high-powered

individuals, hinders the generalization of such findings to that specific context. By taking into account all group dynamics and power relationships, we will be able to better understand and explain the role of empathy in intergroup relations.

Starting my analysis, I described an older theory behind interpersonal empathy and its four facets (Davis, 1980), and compared it with a newer interpersonal empathy theory along with its four facets (Batson & Ahmad, 2009), in order to provide a basic framework of empathy at the interpersonal level. By doing this, I demonstrate how our understanding of even the basic levels of interpersonal empathy have evolved as well as create a strong starting point to understand the true effects of how empathy changes when looking at it in the intergroup context. Moving to the intergroup context, I describe two main types of empathy in addition to interpersonal empathy which include: group empathy, and attitudinal empathy. Throughout the analysis of these three types of intergroup empathy, I illustrate how when looking at intergroup empathy within different contexts, our previous understanding of empathy changes, and new patterns emerge such as one's level of outgroup empathy when they identify with a low-power versus high-power group. In addition, I then connect the three types of intergroup empathy contexts together in analyzing the prominent role of counter-dominance in intergroup empathy attitudes, demonstrating the importance of counter-dominance in understanding intergroup relations through empathy.

Through my analysis, I demonstrated many important findings. I illustrated two different studies, both which used the Interpersonal Reactivity Index to measure empathic attitudes towards outgroups, but found conflicting findings. The findings being that high empathy among whites predicts reduced prejudiced attitudes towards minorities

(McFarland, 2010) and that high empathy among low-power groups predicts support for violence against high-powered groups (Pratto et al., 2023). I then exhibited how the differences in the finds can be attributed to counter-dominance, such that counter-dominance positively predicts feelings towards low-power groups (McFarland, 2010) and negatively predicts feelings toward high-power groups (Pratto et al., 2023). This strong example demonstrates the extreme changes in our understanding of empathy when factoring in counter-dominance as well as the strong influence it has.

Then, by looking at contradicting theories about the use of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index, I was able to look into a newer empathy theory called the group empathy theory. In looking at these contradicting theories, I criticized the analysis by Sirin et al (2021) that the Interpersonal Reactivity Index only measured ingroup attitudes and illustrated that that is not the case. In doing so, however, I highlighted the importance of looking solely at the outgroup. With the focus solely on the outgroup, I was able to demonstrate how factors such as discrimination, gender, and the quality of contact can improve group empathy. Additionally, I highlighted the role of counter-dominance in group empathy by analyzing their findings of the relationship between group empathy and SDO, and teh negative relationship between counter-dominance and SDO and therefore exhibiting how counter-domiance is positively related to group empathy. Overall, by focusing on these outgroup perspectives, we can see new factors that influence our intergroup empathy, as well as the strong prevalence of counter-dominances role in affecting it.

Finally, by exploring the findings of the last empathy context, attitudinal empathy, I was able to provide a new group dynamic and power relation we had not yet seen, thus

exhibiting the extent to which group dynamics and power relations affect our previous understanding of intergroup empathy. In looking at the study by Lucas and Kteily (2018) I was able to show how group dynamics beyond what we have previously seen with race, such as experimentally-assigned group position in a social hierarchy, influence our empathy attitudes. In comparing the findings by Lucas & Kteily (2018) with McFarland (2010), I illustrated a consistent pattern between empathy and (counter-) dominance and positive outgroup (high versus low-power) attitudes. Similarly, by comparing the Lucas and Kteily (2018) study with the findings by Pratto et al (2023) I highlighted a consistent theme of high empathy paired with ideals centered on equality which predicts support for disadvantaged (low-power) groups. Additionally, throughout my analysis of Lucas and Kteily's (2018) findings with those of Pratto et al (2023) and McFarland (2010) I highlighted the prevalent mediating role counter-dominance has. When looking at different empathy contexts with a focus on group and power dynamics, we gain new insights into how our empathy works as well as how so much of our intergroup empathy attitudes are connected to counter-dominance.

Future Directions

I have demonstrated how the context of group and power dynamics changes our previous understanding of empathy, as well as how potent of a role counter-dominance has in how we feel empathy, but what is the importance of this? In looking at the strong difference in findings when looking at the perspective of minority (low-power) groups, such as that of Pratto et al (2023), rather than the typical perspective taken in looking at the majority (high-power group), as McFarland (2010) did, we highlight the importance

of the need for a more inclusive approach to psychological research around empathy. In order to better understand empathy's role in helping to reduce stigmatization and at the same time increase support for intergroup violence, it is important that we expand the empathy research paradigm. If we want to improve intergroup relations we need to better understand how we can reduce violence when it is driven by high compared to low empathy. In order to improve such dynamics, it is important to understand the role of empathy from all perspectives, taking a whole inclusive perspective approach rather than a partial approach. Furthermore, I have demonstrated the importance of the role counter-dominance plays in our empathy thus highlighting the need for a stronger focus on the topic. The strong emphasis on counter-dominance demonstrates the need for a theoretical shift, focusing on the complexities of power relations in intergroup dynamics with an emphasis on counter-dominance because of its role in supporting violence against high-power groups. Therefore, in order to reduce violence towards high-powered groups when driven by counter-dominance, by better understanding this relationship, new areas of focus in improving intergroup relations, specifically those driven by counter-dominance, can be explored. By being able to understand the entirety of empathy and counter-dominance's collective role in intergroup relations, we can better frame our education on the topic and programs which help support it.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

INTERPERSONAL REACTIVITY INDEX

The following statements inquire about your thoughts and feelings in a variety of situations. For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate letter on the scale at the top of the page: A, B, C, D, or E. When you have decided on your answer, fill in the letter on the answer sheet next to the item number. READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING. Answer as honestly as you can. Thank you.

ANSWER SCALE:

A	B	C	D	E
DOES NOT				DESCRIBES ME
DESCRIBE ME				VERY
WELL				WELL

1.   I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me. (FS)

2.   I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me. (EC)

3.   I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view. (PT) (-)

4.   Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. (EC) (-)

5.   I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel. (FS)

6.   In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease. (PD)

7.   I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it. (FS) (-)

8.   I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision. (PT)

9.   When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them. (EC)

10. I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation. (PD)

11. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective. (PT)

12. Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me. (FS) (-)

13. When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm. (PD) (-)

14. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. (EC) (-)

15. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments. (PT) (-)

16. After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters. (FS)

17. Being in a tense emotional situation scares me. (PD)

18. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. (EC) (-)

19. I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies. (PD) (-)

20. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen. (EC)

21. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both. (PT)

22. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person. (EC)

23. When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character. (FS)

24. I tend to lose control during emergencies. (PD)

25. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while. (PT)

26. When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me. (FS)

27. When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces. (PD)

28.   Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place. (PT)

NOTE: (-) denotes item to be scored in reverse fashion

    PT = perspective-taking scale
    FS = fantasy scale
    EC = empathic concern scale
    PD = personal distress scale

    A = 0
    B = 1
    C = 2
    D = 3
    E = 4

Except for reversed-scored items, which are scored:

    A = 4
    B = 3
    C = 2
    D = 1
    E = 0

Note: Items from Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1980).

Appendix 2

Group Empathy Index

_____

Perspective-Taking Items (Cognitive Subcomponent of Group Empathy)

- I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both, including for issues involving other racial or ethnic groups
- I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other person's" point of view, particularly someone from another race or ethnicity. (R)
- When I'm upset at someone from another racial or ethnic group, I usually try to "put myself in their shoes" for a while.
- I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement (including those of other racial or ethnic groups) before I make a decision.
- I sometimes try to better understand people of other racial or ethnic groups by imagining how things look from their perspective.
- If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to the arguments of people, particularly those of other racial or ethnic groups. (R)
- Before criticizing somebody from another racial or ethnic group, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.

Empathic Concern Items (Affective Subcomponent of Group Empathy)
- I often have tender, concerned feelings for people from another racial or ethnic group who are less fortunate than me.
- The misfortunes of other racial or ethnic groups do not usually disturb me a great deal. (R)
- I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person towards people of another racial or ethnic group.
- When I see someone being treated unfairly due to their race or ethnicity, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. (R)
- Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for people of other racial or ethnic groups when they are having problems. (R)
- When I see someone being taken advantage of due to their race or ethnicity, I feel kind of protective towards them.
- I am often quite touched by things that I see happen to people due to their race or ethnicity.

Note: R = reversed items.

_____

Note. Items from the Group Empathy Index (Sirin et al., 2017)

Appendix 3:

Items from Interpersonal Reactivity Index used in Pratto et al., (2023). Consists of two items from the Concern for Others subscale rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

1. "I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me"
2. "Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal"

Note: Items from Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Pratto et al., 2023).