



Social categorization and empathy for outgroup members

Mark Tarrant*, Sarah Dazeley and Tom Cottom

Keele University, Staffordshire, UK

Three experiments ($N = 370$) investigated the effects of social categorization on the experience of empathy. In Experiment 1, university students reported their empathy for, and intentions to help, a student who described a distressful experience. As predicted, participants reported stronger empathy and helping intentions when the student belonged to an ingroup compared to an outgroup university. Experiments 2 and 3 demonstrated that stronger empathy for outgroup members was experienced following the activation of an ingroup norm that prescribed the experience of this emotion. Activating this norm also led to the expression of more positive attitudes towards the outgroup (Experiment 3), and empathy fully mediated this effect. These findings indicate that like other emotions, empathy is influenced by social categorization processes.

Several studies have advocated the benefits of empathy as an emotion that can underpin the development of positive attitudes towards outgroups. Encouraging group members to empathize with a single member of an outgroup (e.g. to experience emotions such as compassion and sympathy for that member) has been shown to lead to an increased caring for that member. To the extent that the member is representative of the outgroup as a whole, this increased caring extends to the outgroup and is seen both in the form of more positive attitudes towards, and greater support for behavioural actions aimed at helping, the outgroup (Batson, Polycarpou, *et al.*, 1997; Batson, Chang, Orr, & Rowland, 2002). In the current research, rather than examining the effects of empathy on subsequent attitudes and behaviours, we focus on a factor which affects group members' likelihood of experiencing empathy in the first place. The research develops the idea that empathy is influenced by social categorization processes, and we test the suggestion that group members limit the degree to which they experience empathy for outgroup members. Ultimately, to the extent that group members are successful in

*Correspondence should be addressed to Mark Tarrant, School of Psychology, Keele University, Keele, Staffordshire, ST5 5NA UK (e-mail: m.tarrant@keele.ac.uk).

this regard, we argue that attitudes towards the outgroup are likely to remain relatively unchanged. In Experiment 1 we tested the hypothesis that empathy would be experienced more strongly for an ingroup than for an outgroup member. In Experiments 2 and 3 we tested the hypothesis that empathy for outgroup members can be encouraged, and ultimately more positive outgroup attitudes promoted, through the activation of an ingroup norm which prescribes experiencing empathy for others.

The social identity perspective

Research on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) shows that the way in which people categorize themselves and others in terms of their social group memberships has a powerful influence on how they interpret and respond to social phenomena. Self-categorization theory argues that once a social identity is made salient there is a depersonalization of the self—an enhanced perception of the self and other members of one's group as interchangeable—which in turn facilitates group behaviour. This process has been employed to account for a broad range of social phenomena, including group polarization and social influence (Turner, 1991), leadership (Hogg, 2001), stress perceptions (Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005), stereotyping (Hogg & Turner, 1987), intergroup attitudes (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 2002), and prosocial behaviour (Levine, Cassidy, Brazier, and Reicher, 2002). Extending this line of work, recent research has demonstrated that emotional experience is also influenced by social categorization processes. For example, following intergroup emotions theory (Smith, 1993, 1999; also MacKie, Devos, & Smith, 2000), Gordijn, Wigboldus, and Yzerbyt (2001) found that the emotion anger was less likely to be experienced in response to harmful intergroup behaviour when victims of that behaviour were categorized as outgroup members compared to when they were categorized as ingroup members (see also Dumont, Yzerbyt, Wigboldus, & Gordijn, 2003; Gordijn, Yzerbyt, Wigboldus, & Dumont, 2006).

Consistent with the social identity perspective, the different emotional reactions to ingroup and outgroup members has been suggested to be motivated by the need to secure a positive social identity. Miron and Branscombe (2008) argue that the categorization of another person as an outgroup member will activate pro-ingroup bias amongst ingroup members and that this bias structures group members' interpretations of that person's experience. Thus, when exposed to someone who has experienced a negative event, group members will require more evidence to confirm that the experience is unjust when the affected person belongs to an outgroup compared to when the person belongs to an ingroup. Intergroup emotions are seen in part as an outcome of such justice perceptions: by perceiving that an experience is not just, negative intergroup emotions are more likely to be experienced (see also Branscombe & Miron, 2004; Tarrant, Van Rooy, Branscombe, & Hagger, 2008).

Social categorization and empathic experience

As an other-focused emotion, empathy is most likely to be experienced when another person is perceived to be in need (Batson, 1991). However, because of the

above bias in the interpretation of social phenomena, it is likely that empathy will be experienced more readily for ingroup members than for outgroup members. Few studies have examined this idea, however, and those that have done have produced results that are difficult to interpret. For example, Dovidio *et al.* (2004, Study 2) reported no differences in white participants' empathy in response to an article about the relative of a black murder victim following activation of a superordinate (American) or subordinate (white American) identity. However, the absence of an effect on empathy may be attributable to the experimental context employed, rather than indicating a lack of support for a social categorization effect. Specifically, the article used by Dovidio *et al.* not only described the reactions of the relative of the murder victim, but also presented information about the murder itself. Consequently, it is unclear whether participants were reporting their emotional reactions to the victim or to the relative; given that feelings of injustice were the overall dominant emotional response, it might be inferred that participants focused mainly on the victim's experience. Empathy for the victim's relative may well have been influenced by social categorization, but participants' focus on the victim may have suppressed its expression.

Stürmer and colleagues (Stürmer, Snyder, Kropp, & Siem, 2006; Stürmer, Snyder, & Omoto, 2005) similarly observed comparable levels of empathy for ingroup and outgroup members. However, they also obtained evidence that social categorization moderated the relationship between empathy and subsequent behaviour. Specifically, Stürmer *et al.*'s research showed that empathy was a stronger predictor of ingroup helping than it was of outgroup helping. In discussing their findings, Stürmer *et al.* (2006) suggested that the effect of empathy on outgroup helping will likely depend upon the extent to which the ingroup and outgroup are seen in terms of a common essence. According to Stürmer *et al.*, even when empathy is experienced similarly for ingroup and outgroup members, empathy will motivate outgroup helping to the extent that the outgroup is seen as similar to the ingroup.

One explanation for the absence of a direct effect of social categorization on empathy in Stürmer *et al.*'s research may lie in the nature of the relationship between the two groups investigated. Stürmer *et al.* (2006) found that, like empathy, the amount of help offered to outgroup targets did not differ from that offered to ingroup targets, and this might suggest that participants had a generally positive orientation towards the outgroup. Indeed, in one study (Stürmer *et al.*, 2005, Study 1), participants had previously volunteered to help the target outgroup. It is possible that in more 'typical' intergroup contexts which are characterised by a stronger sense of ingroup favouritism, empathy—like other emotions such as anger and fear: Dumont *et al.*, 2003; Gordijn *et al.*, 2006—will be affected by social categorization. Indeed, as research on group members' responses to acts of intergroup harm has shown, empathy for harmed outgroup members is undermined when that harm can be justified (Miron & Branscombe, 2008). Moreover, findings that group members sometimes report experiencing *pleasure* when confronted with an outgroup's negative experiences (i.e. intergroup *schadenfreude*: Leach, Spears, Branscombe, & Doosje, 2003) might suggest that in certain circumstances it is somewhat normative to *avoid* empathizing with outgroup members (see also Tarrant *et al.*, 2008).

Several other studies point to a role of social categorization in the experience of empathy. Maner *et al.* (2002) manipulated participants' perceptions of self-other 'oneness' to test competing hypotheses concerning the relationship between

empathy and helping. An examination of the mean scores suggests that empathy for a target was experienced most strongly when participants perceived they were highly similar to that target (i.e. when perceived self-other oneness was high). Similarly, Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, and Neuberg (1997) demonstrated that as relationship closeness between participants and a target person increased (e.g. from a stranger to a family member), so too did empathic concern for that person. Finally, Batson, Eklund, Chermok, Hoyt, and Ortiz (2007) found that empathy for a target person was higher when participants had first been provided with information encouraging them to value the welfare of the target. To the extent that perceived self-other similarity, oneness and valuing are likely to be greater for ingroup members than for outgroup members (see Smith & Henry, 1996; Tropp & Wright, 2001), these studies suggest that empathy can itself be experienced more readily for ingroup members than for outgroup members (see also Brown, Bradley, & Lang, 2006).

The present research

Despite the documented importance of experiencing empathy for the development of positive outgroup attitudes and associated behaviours such as helping (e.g. Batson, Polycarpou, *et al.*, 1997, Batson *et al.*, 2002; cf. Stürmer *et al.*, 2005, 2006), recent research and theorising suggests that the experience of empathy itself can be influenced by social categorization. The present research presented a direct test of this idea. In Experiment 1 we tested the hypothesis that empathy will be experienced more strongly for another person when that person is categorized as an ingroup member compared to when that person is categorized as an outgroup member. Experiment 1 also investigated the effects of social categorization on intentions to help ingroup and outgroup members. Previous research by Levine *et al.* (2002) has shown that people are more likely to intervene to help members of an ingroup than they are members of an outgroup (see also Cialdini *et al.*, 1997; Dovidio *et al.*, 1997; Levine, Prosser, Evans, & Reicher, 2005). However, Levine *et al.* did not establish the processes underlying the social categorization effect (cf. Dovidio *et al.*, 1997). Given the link between empathy and helping behaviour (Batson *et al.*, 2002), and our above theorising, we hypothesized that participants would report stronger intentions to help ingroup members than outgroup members to the extent that they would empathize more strongly with ingroup members.

Experiments 2 and 3 tested whether this relative avoidance of empathy for outgroup members can be overcome by building on those social identity processes which we theorise undermine it. An important principle of social identity theory is that the behaviour of group members is influenced by ingroup norms (McAuliffe, Jetten, Hornsey, & Hogg 2003), and research shows that when people self-categorize in terms of a group membership they become motivated to conform to the norms of the group, since doing so is an important means by which group members are able to assert their social identity (Jetten, McAuliffe, Hornsey, & Hogg, 2006). Demonstrating that empathy for outgroup members is influenced by beliefs about an ingroup's norms would be further evidence for an influence of social identity processes. To examine this, Experiments 2 and 3 tested whether empathy for outgroup members could be encouraged by activating an ingroup norm which prescribed the experience of this emotion for others. We hypothesized that participants who believed that the norm of their group was to experience empathy for other people would report higher levels of

empathy for a target outgroup member than would those for whom such a norm was not activated.

EXPERIMENT I

Method

Participants and design

Keele University students ($N = 80$: 46 females, 34 males; mean age = 20.86, $SD = 1.83$) responded to a target student who described her experiences of a distressful situation. One between-groups variable, target university group membership, was manipulated: participants were informed either that the target belonged to the ingroup (Keele University: $n = 40$) or that the target belonged to an outgroup (Staffordshire University: $n = 40$).

Materials and procedure

To make social identity salient, participants were informed that the research was concerned with the emotions that 'Keele University students' experienced when they learn about the experiences of other people. After providing their consent to take part, participants were presented with a written description of the target (a university student). After stating the target's name and university affiliation (Keele University or Staffordshire University), participants were told that the target's parents had recently died in an automobile accident and that, as a result, she was now responsible for looking after her two younger siblings. Participants then read the following transcript of a radio interview ostensibly given by the target student (adapted from Batson, Sager, *et al.*, 1997) in which she described the difficulties she was having coping with her situation:

'It's—it's just such a nightmare. I guess I'm still numb. I need to make sure I can be around for my little brother and sister now that our parents have gone. You know, the help we've gotten so far has really been wonderful, but we've got a long way to go. If we don't get more help soon though, I don't know how we're going to cope.'

After reading the transcript, participants were presented with a set of 15 emotion labels, embedded in which were six items intended to tap the emotion, empathy (sympathy, soft-heartedness, warmth, compassion, tenderness, and moving; see Batson, Sager, *et al.*, 1997). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they experienced each emotion as a result of reading the radio interview transcript. Responses were made on 9-point scales (higher scores indicated stronger emotional experience).

Next, participants completed nine items which described various behaviours, or action intentions, which could be performed in response to the target's situation. They were asked to indicate their likelihood of performing each behaviour. Three of the behaviours were designed to tap helping intentions: *show support*, *show sympathy*, and *find out how to help*. Responses were given on 9-point scales (higher scores indicated stronger support for engaging in the behaviour). After completing the items participants were debriefed as to the purpose of the experiment and given the opportunity to ask questions.

Results

Factor analysis of the emotion items

The 15 emotion items were subjected to a factor analysis (with varimax rotation) and this revealed a four-factor solution. The six empathy items loaded clearly on a single factor (all loadings $> .51$; $\alpha = .90$) and this factor accounted for 32.55% of the variance¹.

Factor analysis of the action intentions

The nine items measuring action intentions were similarly subjected to a factor analysis (with varimax rotation) and this revealed a three-factor solution. The three helping-related items (show support, show sympathy and find out how to help) loaded on a single factor, together with two further items (ignore and do nothing), which negatively loaded on the factor (all loadings $> .68$; $\alpha = .87$). This factor accounted for 38.80% of the variance¹. A further factor analysis of the six empathy items and the three helping-related items confirmed the distinctiveness of these two factors: the empathy items all loaded on one factor (accounting for 43.70% of the variance; loadings $> .67$) and the helping-related items loaded on the second factor (accounting for 29.35% of the variance; loadings $> .81$).

Effects of target group membership on empathy and helping intentions

An independent *t* test was performed to test the effects of target group membership. As hypothesized, participants reported higher levels of empathy for the ingroup target than they did for the outgroup target (Table 1), $t(78) = 3.63$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .144$. An independent *t* test also revealed that participants showed stronger interest in helping the ingroup target than they did in helping the outgroup target (Table 1), $t(78) = 2.20$, $p = .031$, $\eta_p^2 = .058$.¹

Table 1. Effects of target group membership on empathy and helping intentions (Experiment 1)

	Ingroup target (and SD)	Outgroup target (and SD)
Empathy	7.40 (1.44)	6.13 (1.68)
Helping	7.76 (1.13)	7.01 (1.86)

Mediational analysis

We next tested whether the above effect of target group membership on helping intentions was mediated by empathy. The procedure outlined in Baron and Kenny (1986) was followed for this analysis. The analysis revealed evidence for full mediation. Thus, there was

¹ In Experiment 1, the second emotion factor included the emotions anger, irritation, shame and embarrassment (all loadings $> .55$; $\alpha = .72$) and accounted for 15.88% of the variance. The third factor included the emotions worry and sadness (loadings $> .84$; $\alpha = .87$) and accounted for 14.73% of the variance. The fourth factor included the emotions happiness and pleasure (loadings $> .78$; $\alpha = .76$) and accounted for 8.87% of the variance. One item, guilt, did not load clearly on any of the four factors. The emotion sympathy loaded on the third factor as well as on the empathy factor, with a factor loading of .52 & .51 respectively. It was retained as an item on the empathy scale in subsequent analyses given its conceptual association with this emotion (Batson, Sager, et al., 1997). The second action tendency factor included the actions make fun and show mockery (loadings $> .93$; $\alpha = .86$) and accounted for 21.32% of the variance. The third factor included the items show anger and show intervention (loadings $> .77$; $\alpha = .61$) and accounted for 14.11% of the variance. We also examined the effects of group membership on the other action tendencies and emotions in Experiment 1. None of the effects achieved significance.

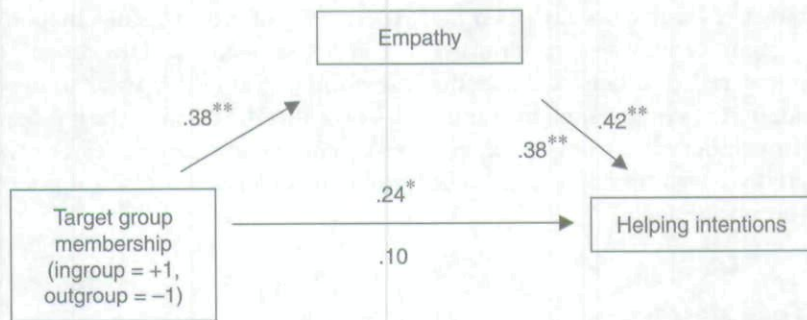


Figure 1. Mediation analysis (Experiment 1): Effect of target group membership on helping action intentions. Coefficients appearing above lines are β weights for uncorrected paths. Coefficients appearing below lines are β weights for corrected paths. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

an effect of target group membership on both helping, $\beta = .24$, $t(78) = 2.20$, $p = .031$, and the candidate mediator, empathy, $\beta = .38$, $t(78) = 3.63$, $p = .001$, and an effect of empathy on helping, $\beta = .42$, $t(78) = 4.04$, $p < .001$. However, when target group membership and empathy were entered simultaneously into the equation, the effect of target group membership was rendered non-significant, $\beta = .10$, $t(77) = .87$, $p = .385$, while empathy continued to influence helping, $\beta = .38$, $t(77) = 3.40$, $p = .001$ (Sobel $z = 2.48$, $p = .013$ (Figure 1)).

Discussion

Experiment 1 provided direct evidence in support of the hypothesis that empathy is experienced more strongly for ingroup members than it is for outgroup members. The experiment also demonstrated an effect of social categorization on helping intentions, which was mediated by empathy. In Experiment 2 we sought stronger support for the idea that the relatively weaker experience of empathy for outgroup members is motivated by social identity concerns. An important principle of social identity theory and self-categorization theory is that when social identity is salient, individuals come to *behave* like group members, and the specific nature of that behaviour is influenced by the group's norms (McAuliffe *et al.*, 2003). Consequently, conformity to norms is an important means by which group members are able to assert their social identity (Jetten *et al.*, 2006). In Experiment 2 we manipulated participants' perceptions of an ingroup norm prior to exposing them to a target group member: participants were led to believe either that the norm of the ingroup prescribed empathy for other people, or that the norm of the ingroup prescribed objectivity. It was hypothesized that empathy for an outgroup member would be experienced more strongly when participants believed that the norm of the ingroup was to empathize with others compared to when they believed the norm was to remain objective.

EXPERIMENT 2

Method

Participants and design

Keele University students ($N = 180$: 135 females, 45 males; mean age = 19.62, $SD = 4.48$) responded to an ingroup (Keele University: $n = 88$) or outgroup (Staffordshire University:

$n = 92$) target student who described her experiences of a distressful situation. Target university membership was manipulated as in Experiment 1. Orthogonal to this, participants were led to believe either that the norm of the ingroup was to experience empathy for other people (empathy norm: $n = 91$) or that the norm of the ingroup was to remain relatively detached from the experiences of other people (objective norm: $n = 89$). The experiment was therefore a 2 (target group membership) \times 2 (ingroup norm) between-groups design.

Materials and procedure

After obtaining their consent to take part in the experiment, and making social identity salient as before, participants were presented with the norm manipulation. This was embedded within some information about the results of some previous research on emotions (this information was actually constructed for the purposes of the experiment). Those in the empathy norm condition were told this previous research had shown that Keele University students (the ingroup) typically respond to the experiences of other people with 'high levels of compassion, tenderness and sympathy' and that they tend to go through 'more intense empathic emotions due to the experiences of others'. Participants in the objective norm condition were told that the previous research had shown that Keele University students typically respond to the experiences of other people with 'lower levels of compassion, tenderness and sympathy' and that they tend to 'remain objective and relatively detached from the experiences of others'. Participants were then presented with a written description of the ingroup or outgroup target and a transcript of a radio interview she had ostensibly given. This was the same as in Experiment 1. After reading this description, participants completed three items which served as checks of our manipulations. First, they were asked to write on the questionnaire the name of the university that the target attended. Second, they were asked to indicate how good members of the ingroup are at taking the perspective of other people, and third to indicate the extent to which they thought ingroup members experience the emotions compassion, tenderness and sympathy when they learn about the experiences of others. These latter two items were assessed on 7-point scales. Participants then reported their emotional reactions to the transcript. Given the increased complexity of the design of this experiment as a result of introducing a second independent variable, we sought to limit the demands on participants by presenting a smaller set of emotion items. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they experienced each of nine emotions as a result of reading the radio transcript. Four of these items targeted the emotion empathy (compassion, empathy, moved, and sympathy). Responses were made on 7-point scales (higher scores indicated stronger emotional experience). After completing this scale participants were debriefed as to the purpose of the experiment and given the opportunity to ask questions.

Results

Factor analysis of the emotion items

As in Experiment 1, we first subjected the emotion items to a factor analysis (with varimax rotation) and this revealed a two-factor solution. The four empathy items, together with the item sadness, loaded on the first factor (all loadings $> .69$) and

accounted for 38.77% of the variance. The item sadness was removed from the analyses in order to retain the conceptual integrity of the original empathy measure ($\alpha = .81$)².

Manipulation check

Consistent with the manipulation of target group membership, all participants correctly responded to the question asking them to identify the university affiliation of the target. A 2 (target group membership) \times 2 (ingroup norm) ANOVA was conducted on participants' responses to each of the two items measuring perspective taking ability and empathic responses of ingroup members. There was a single main effect of ingroup norm on each of these items: participants in the empathy norm condition reported that the ingroup were better at adopting the perspective of others ($M = 6.00$, $SD = 1.09$) and that they experienced stronger empathic emotions ($M = 6.11$, $SD = .97$) than did participants in the objective norm condition ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.48$ & $M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.51$, respectively), $F(1, 176) = 237.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .574$ for the perspective taking item, and $F(1, 176) = 237.09$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .574$ for the empathic response item. The manipulations were deemed to be successful.

Effects of target group membership and ingroup norm on empathy

A 2 (target group membership) \times 2 (ingroup norm) ANOVA revealed a main effect of ingroup norm on empathy, $F(1, 172) = 3.98$, $p = .048$, $\eta_p^2 = .023$: participants in the empathy norm condition reported experiencing stronger empathy for the target overall than did participants in the objective norm condition ($M = 5.67$, $SD = 1.09$ & $M = 5.34$, $SD = 1.08$ respectively). There was also an interaction between target group membership and ingroup norm, $F(1, 172) = 4.15$, $p = .043$, $\eta_p^2 = .024$ (Table 2). Simple effects analysis revealed that in the objective norm condition, participants reported stronger empathy for the ingroup target than they did for the outgroup target, $F(1, 172) = 4.67$, $p = .032$, $\eta_p^2 = .026$. However, in the empathy norm condition, there was no difference in the level of empathy experienced for the outgroup and ingroup target ($F < .50$). The simple effects analysis also revealed that the effect of the ingroup norm was significant only for participants exposed to the outgroup target: participants experienced stronger empathy for the target in the empathy norm condition than in the objective norm condition, $F(1, 172) = 8.43$, $p = .004$, $\eta_p^2 = .047$ ($F < .05$ for the ingroup target)³.

Discussion

Participants who were led to believe that the norm of the ingroup prescribed empathy for other people reported higher levels of empathy for the target outgroup member than did participants who believed the norm of the ingroup prescribed objectivity.

² In Experiment 2, the second emotion factor comprised the items anger, disgust and irritation (all loadings $> .72$; $\alpha = .74$) and accounted for 24.57% of the variance. One further item, distress, loaded similarly on both factors (.60 & .43 respectively for the empathy factor and the second factor); however, since its loading was somewhat lower than the other items on these factors it was removed from subsequent analyses of empathy. Note that including the items sadness and distress on the empathy scale does not affect the pattern of subsequent results.

³ In Experiment 2, there was a non-significant tendency for participants in the empathy norm condition ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 1.29$) to report stronger levels of anger, disgust and irritation overall than participants in the objective norm condition ($M = 1.87$, $SD = .98$; $F(1, 174) = 3.31$, $p = .070$, $\eta_p^2 = .019$).

Table 2. Effects of target group membership and ingroup norm on empathy (Experiment 2)

	Empathy norm (and SD)	Objective norm (and SD)
Ingroup	5.59 (1.24)	5.60 (.84)
Outgroup	5.75 (.92)	5.10 (1.22)

Notably, following activation of the empathy norm, empathy experienced for the outgroup target was found to be no different from that experienced for the ingroup target. This pattern of findings suggests that the activation of an ingroup norm of empathy raised empathy for the outgroup target to a level comparable to that experienced for the ingroup target.

Having demonstrated in Experiment 1 that the experience of empathy is influenced by social categorization processes and, in Experiment 2, that empathy for outgroup members can be enhanced by activating an ingroup norm which prescribes empathy for others, the final experiment examined the effects of activating such a norm on group members' subsequent attitudes towards the outgroup. Demonstrating that such effects are not restricted to empathy for individual members of an outgroup, but extend to attitudes towards the outgroup as a whole, is important because it will highlight the wider usefulness of our procedure as a means of improving intergroup perceptions. To the extent that activating an ingroup norm which prescribes empathy yields stronger experience of this emotion for a target outgroup member, it was expected that more positive attitudes towards the outgroup as a whole would result (Batson, Polycarpou, *et al.*, 1997).

EXPERIMENT 3

Method

Participants and design

Keele University students ($N = 110$: 76 females, 34 males; mean age = 20.36, $SD = 1.97$) responded to a scenario in which a target outgroup member described his experiences of a distressing situation. In order to test whether the effect of activating an ingroup norm which prescribes empathy for others generalises to a different group context, and to facilitate a more direct comparison of our research with previous empathy research (e.g. Batson, Polycarpou, *et al.*, 1997, Batson *et al.*, 2002), participants were presented with a scenario which detailed the experiences of an individual member of a stigmatised group. One between-groups variable, ingroup norm, was manipulated (empathy norm: $n = 55$; objective norm: $n = 55$).

Materials and procedure

After obtaining their consent to take part in the experiment and making their social identity salient, participants were presented with the norm manipulation. To ensure that participants were all referencing the manipulation in the same way, the norm information was presented in relation to another social group. Participants in the empathy norm condition were provided with information about some previous research (constructed for the purposes of the experiment) showing that university students (the

ingroup) typically respond to the experiences of other people with 'higher levels of compassion, tenderness and sympathy than non-students' and that university students tend to go through 'more intense empathic emotions due to the experiences of others'. Participants in the objective norm condition were told that this previous research had shown that university students typically respond to the experiences of other people with 'lower levels of compassion, tenderness and sympathy than non-students' and that university students tend to 'remain objective and relatively detached from the experiences of others'.

After this, participants were presented with information about the target outgroup member, a 35 year old male who had recently contracted AIDS. Participants were told that, as part of a research interview, the target had described their experiences of living with AIDS. They then read the following interview transcript (which was based on that employed by Batson, Polycarpou, *et al.*, 1997):

'Living with aids has seriously affected my life and the way I now view the world. It all happened roughly 5 years ago when I contracted AIDS from my long-term partner. I had felt under the weather for a couple of months when my doctor sent me for a blood test. The results were a big shock, I couldn't believe it—I felt like my life had just come crashing down around me. I hadn't been with any other partners whilst in the relationship so couldn't understand how I could possibly have contracted it. It later came to light that my partner had given it to me, and I couldn't believe it, I'd always been so sensible—and thought he had too. My future is now so uncertain, I was just starting to live my life, and now, instead, I'm dying. It's constantly at the back of my mind—every time I get a cough or feel a bit run down, I think is this it? Is this the beginning of the downward spiral? It could happen any day—there is no escape.'

After reading the transcript, participants were presented with a set of nine emotion labels, embedded in which were the four empathy items from Experiment 2 (compassion, empathy, moved, and sympathy). Participants were asked to report the extent to which they had experienced each emotion while reading the interview transcript. Responses were made on 7-point scales (higher scores indicated stronger emotional experience). We then assessed participants' attitudes towards the outgroup, people with AIDS. Seven items were presented, based on those employed by Batson, Polycarpou, *et al.* (1997). Examples of items included are: 'For most AIDS victims, it is their own fault that they contract AIDS' (reverse-scored), 'I care very much about the plight of AIDS victims in our society', and 'In general, what are your feelings towards AIDS victims in our society?'. Responses were made on 7-point scales (higher scores indicated a more positive attitude; $\alpha = .67$). The final item on the questionnaire was a check of our ingroup norm manipulation: participants were asked to indicate on a 7-point scale the extent to which they believed members of the ingroup experience empathy when thinking about people with AIDS (higher scores indicated stronger perceived empathy).

Results

Factor analysis of the emotion items

As before, we first subjected the emotion items to a factor analysis (with varimax rotation) and this revealed a two-factor solution. The four empathy items, together with the item sadness, loaded on the first factor (loadings $> .58$) and accounted for 35.83% of the variance. We removed the sadness item from subsequent analyses in order to retain the conceptual integrity of the original empathy measure ($\alpha = .78$).⁴

Manipulation check

To test the effectiveness of the group norm manipulation, participants' responses to the manipulation check item were compared with an independent *t* test. Participants in the empathy norm condition ($M = 4.87$, $SD = 1.23$) perceived that the ingroup experienced stronger levels of empathy when thinking about people with AIDS than did participants in the objective norm condition ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 1.22$), $t(108) = 2.33$, $p = .021$, $\eta_p^2 = .044$. The manipulation was deemed to be successful.

Effects of ingroup norm on empathy and outgroup attitudes

Consistent with Experiment 2 and in support of the hypothesis, participants in the empathy norm condition reported higher levels of empathy for the target than did those in the objective norm condition, $t(104) = 2.43$, $p = .017$, $\eta_p^2 = .054$. Participants in the empathy norm condition also reported more positive attitudes towards the outgroup as a whole than did those in the objective norm condition, as expected, $t(102) = 2.47$, $p = .015$, $\eta_p^2 = .056$ (Table 3)⁴.

Table 3. Effects of ingroup norm on empathy and attitudes towards the outgroup (Experiment 3)

	Empathy norm (and SD)	Objective norm (and SD)
Empathy	5.47 (.88)	4.96 (1.23)
Attitudes	4.75 (.73)	4.38 (.80)

Mediational analysis

We next tested whether the effect of the ingroup norm on attitudes towards the outgroup was mediated by empathy for the target outgroup member. This analysis revealed evidence for full mediation. Thus, there was an effect of ingroup norm on both outgroup attitudes, $\beta = .24$, $t(102) = 2.47$, $p = .015$, and the mediator, empathy, $\beta = .23$, $t(104) = 2.43$, $p = .017$, and an effect of empathy on outgroup attitudes, $\beta = .54$, $t(100) = 6.47$, $p < .001$. However, when ingroup norm and empathy were entered simultaneously into the equation, the effect of ingroup norm on attitudes became non-significant, $\beta = .10$, $t(99) = 1.17$, $p = .244$, while empathy continued to affect attitudes, $\beta = .52$, $t(99) = 6.00$, $p < .001$ (Sobel $z = 2.25$, $p = .025$, Figure 2).

Discussion

As in Experiment 2, participants in Experiment 3 who were exposed to the ingroup empathy norm reported stronger levels of empathy for the target outgroup member than did participants who were exposed to the objective norm. Extending Experiment 2, Experiment 3 demonstrated that the effects of the ingroup norm manipulation were

⁴ In Experiment 3, the second emotion factor comprised the items anger, disgust and irritation (all loadings $> .79$; $\alpha = .74$) and accounted for 24.83% of the variance. One further item, distress, loaded similarly on both factors (.50 & .54 respectively for the empathy factor and the second factor); however, since its loading was lower than the other items on these factors it was removed from subsequent analyses. Note that including the items sadness and distress on the empathy scale does not affect the pattern of subsequent results. Responses to the other emotion factor were unaffected by experimental condition in Experiment 3.

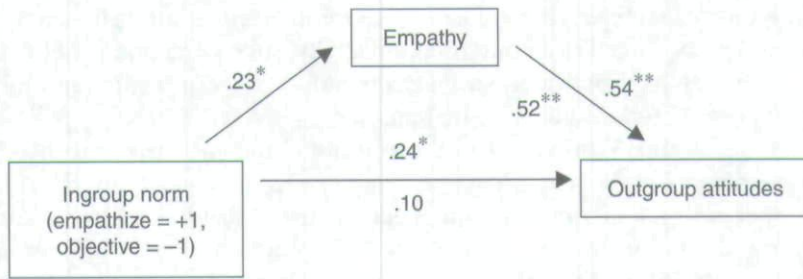


Figure 2. Mediation analysis (Experiment 3): Effect of ingroup norm on attitudes towards the outgroup. Coefficients appearing above lines are β weights for uncorrected paths. Coefficients appearing below lines are β weights for corrected paths. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

not restricted to empathy for an individual member of the outgroup: rather, the norm manipulation also influenced participants' attitudes towards the outgroup as a whole such that participants exposed to an ingroup empathy norm reported more positive attitudes towards the outgroup than did those exposed to an ingroup objective norm. This effect was fully mediated by empathy: participants in the empathy norm condition reported more positive attitudes towards the outgroup as a whole to the extent that they experienced stronger empathy for the target outgroup member.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Encouraging people to experience empathy for members of other groups has been shown as one way in which intergroup attitudes can be improved (Batson, Polycarpou, *et al.*, 1997). The present research reveals that, like other emotions, empathy is influenced by social categorization. When presented with a target person in need, participants in Experiment 1 reported higher levels of empathy for that person when the person belonged to an ingroup compared to when the person belonged to an outgroup. Further, participants reported greater support for actions aimed at helping the target person when that person belonged to the ingroup, and this effect was fully mediated by empathy. Empirically articulating the link between self-categorization, empathic experience and helping intentions helps explain previous research which has shown an effect of social categorization on helping behaviour. More specifically, our research suggests that one of the reasons participants in Levine *et al.*'s (2002, 2005) research offered greater help to ingroup members than outgroup members was because they experienced stronger empathy in response to the needs of ingroup members than they did in response to the needs of outgroup members.

The finding that empathy is influenced by social categorization processes is consistent with the work of Miron and Branscombe (2008), who argue that people's appraisals of others' experiences are motivated by social identity concerns. Miron and Branscombe suggest that ingroup members will differentially interpret the experiences of another person depending on that person's group membership, and they have shown that the distressful experiences of outgroup members are more likely to be minimized by ingroup members than are the same experiences of ingroup members. Similarly biased appraisals may have influenced the responses of participants in our research. For example, when told that the target student in Experiment 1 belonged to the ingroup university, participants may have perceived the student's experiences to be more

distressful—and to perceive that student as more in need as a result—compared to when the student belonged to an outgroup university: such perceptions of the ingroup student's need may have activated stronger empathic concern for her and motivated stronger support for actions aimed at helping her.

Experiments 2 and 3 provide some support for the idea that the bias against outgroup members in the experience of empathy is motivated by social identity concerns. Specifically, Experiments 2 and 3 demonstrated that the relative avoidance of empathy for outgroup members can be overcome by activating ingroup norms which prescribe the experience of this emotion for others. Thus, when participants perceived that the norm of the ingroup prescribed empathy, empathy for the target outgroup member was experienced more strongly, and (in Experiment 3) attitudes towards the outgroup as a whole were more positive, compared to when the ingroup norm prescribed objectivity. Moreover, when an empathy norm was activated, empathy for the outgroup target was actually comparable to that experienced for the ingroup target (Experiment 2). As previous work has shown, adherence to ingroup norms is an important means by which group members are able to assert their social identity (Jetten *et al.*, 2006; McAuliffe *et al.*, 2003; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997). In a similar way, conformity to the activated empathy norm may have enabled our participants to achieve the need for positive social identity. This idea accords with the model of subjective group dynamics developed by Abrams and colleagues (Abrams, Marques, Bown, & Henson, 2000; also Marques, Abrams, & Serôdio, 2001). According to this model, ingroup members who violate the group's norms potentially undermine the ingroup, and the subsequent derogation of those members helps the ingroup legitimise its intergroup position. Consequently, adherence to group norms becomes an important way in which group members are able to demonstrate their commitment to the group—to assert their social identity—and in doing so gain the support of the group as a whole.

An interesting finding of Experiment 2 is that the norm manipulation only affected responses to the outgroup target: empathy for the ingroup target was unaffected by the manipulation. Although we did not make any predictions regarding the effects of the ingroup norm on empathy for the ingroup target, it is possible that the way in which the study was framed led participants to interpret the norm information as pertaining only to the treatment of outgroup members. In Experiment 2, as in Experiments 1 and 3, the participant instructions made social identity salient at the experiment outset. Because of the depersonalization of the self which occurs following self-categorization (Turner *et al.*, 1987), the 'other people' referred to in the subsequent norm manipulation may have been categorized by participants as *not* 'one of us' (i.e. not part of the ingroup). If so, it seems appropriate that the norm manipulation only influenced empathy for targets beyond that ingroup (i.e. outgroup members). Another possibility is that the different effect of the norm manipulation on empathy in the ingroup and outgroup conditions reflects a different underlying process such that appraisals of need or distress are a key determinant of empathy for ingroup members, whereas empathy for outgroup members is influenced more by ingroup norms pertaining to the treatment of others. Future research should seek to test these suggestions directly.

While an effect of empathy on outgroup attitudes has been documented in several previous studies (e.g. Batson, Polycarpou, *et al.*, 1997, Batson *et al.*, 2002), the current research is unique in demonstrating that empathy for outgroup members can be induced through the activation of group norms. We believe that this is an important step forward for research into empathy. Much previous empathy research has sought to increase empathy by instructing participants to actively adopt the perspective of a target

person (see Batson, Polycarpou, *et al.*, 1997, Batson *et al.*, 2002). However, recent research has questioned the benefits of perspective-taking in intergroup contexts, and it has been suggested that instead of leading to heightened empathy, perspective-taking sometimes leads to empathy avoidance and increased group-serving responses (Batson *et al.*, 2007; Davis *et al.*, 2004; Tarrant *et al.*, 2008; Zebel, Doosje, & Spears, 2004; see also Castano & Giner-Sorolla, 2006; Powell, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2005). An important contribution of Experiments 2 and 3 of the present research therefore is to highlight an alternative procedure by which empathy for outgroup members can be encouraged.

A question which arises from Experiment 3 relates to the process by which increasing empathy for outgroup members leads to a change in orientation towards the outgroup. Stürmer *et al.* (2005, 2006) found that the relationship between empathy and helping was moderated by social categorization such that empathy was a stronger predictor of ingroup helping than it was of outgroup helping. They suggested that empathy-motivated outgroup helping would become more likely as the ingroup and outgroup is perceived to be similar. Although this suggestion requires testing, one reason why we observed a relationship between empathy and subsequent perceptions of the outgroup could be that increasing empathy for outgroup members leads to an enhanced perception of intergroup similarity, and it is this perceived similarity which facilitates the development of a more positive orientation towards the outgroup (see e.g. Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000).

By showing an effect of social categorization on the experience of empathy, the current research also makes a contribution to the empathy-altruism hypothesis (see Batson, 1991, 1998). This hypothesis states that experiencing empathy for another person leads to a selfless motivation to help that person. The hypothesis has proved controversial and opinion is divided as to whether helping truly is selfless, or whether selfish motivations (such as the need to relieve personal sadness: Cialdini *et al.*, 1987; Maner *et al.*, 2002) also play a role. Our finding that empathy for outgroup members is influenced by perceptions of the ingroup's norms suggests that experiencing empathy can be at least partly motivated by the desire to portray the self and the ingroup in a particular way. Put simply, our research suggests that when experiencing empathy for others is believed to be ingroup normative, conformity to the norm might enable ingroup members to feel good about their group and, by association, also feel good about themselves.

Our decision to focus on empathy for a single member of an ingroup or outgroup was influenced by previous empathy research which has employed the same approach (e.g. Batson, Polycarpou, *et al.*, 1997, Batson *et al.*, 2002; Maner *et al.*, 2002; Vescio, Sechrist, & Paolucci, 2003). We note that this is different to the approach taken in studies of intergroup emotions theory in which emotions are usually elicited in response to a group as a whole (see MacKie *et al.*, 2000). However, the finding in Experiment 3 that empathizing with an individual outgroup target led to the expression of more positive attitudes towards the outgroup as a whole suggests that the target was perceived in terms of his group membership (Batson *et al.*, 2007): as such, we believe that similar patterns of response would have been observed even if we had employed a procedure more common to the intergroup emotions literature. Had the target not been perceived in terms of his group membership, though, we may have found that even if empathy was experienced for that member, that empathy would be unlikely to translate to attitudes towards or intentions to help the outgroup (cf. Stürmer *et al.*, 2005, 2006).

Some potential limitations of the research should be considered here. First, by only manipulating an ingroup norm, we cannot say conclusively whether similar effects on empathy for outgroup members would have been obtained if we had also manipulated an outgroup norm. However, research showing that group members are more influenced by ingroup sources than outgroup sources (e.g. Haslam, Jetten, O'Brien, & Jacobs, 2004; Puhl, Schwartz, & Brownell, 2005) might suggest that any effects of an outgroup norm on empathy would be less marked than those of an ingroup norm (see also Mlicki & Ellemers, 1996). It might also be argued that the patterns of empathy observed in our research were not a result of activating a specifically *ingroup* norm but rather reflect the influence of a more generic, or societal, norm concerning the treatment of others. However, if a generic norm had indeed been salient for our participants we would have expected its effects to emerge similarly across the ingroup and outgroup target in Experiment 2: that the effects of the norm manipulation in that experiment were restricted to empathy for the outgroup target suggests that participants were indeed conforming to an ingroup norm. As well as addressing such issues in future research, further evidence for our interpretation could be obtained by building other measures into the experimental design which speak directly to a social identity mechanism. For example, if the heightened empathy for outgroup members when an ingroup empathy norm is salient is indeed motivated by social identity concerns, then we would expect strongest effects on empathy to emerge amongst those group members who are most concerned about securing positive social identity, namely high group identifiers (e.g. Jetten *et al.*, 1997).

While our manipulation of an ingroup norm was consistent with previous such research (e.g. Jetten *et al.*, 2006), a further limitation of the present research is that we did not include a true control condition in Experiments 2 or 3 in which participants are not given any specific information about the norms of the ingroup. Inclusion of a control condition would enable us to determine precisely whether the activation of an empathy norm increases empathy for outgroup members to a level comparable with that experienced for ingroup members or whether an objective norm actually reduces empathy which would otherwise be experienced for outgroup members. In their comparison of the effects of different perspective-taking instructions on people's cognitions about others, Davis *et al.* (2004) found that instructions to watch a target in a 'natural' way led participants to report a comparable number of target-related thoughts as did instructions to actively adopt the perspective of the target. Such a finding might suggest that empathizing with others is a default tendency and that empathy is only avoided when there is a clear norm prescribing such avoidance. However, it is useful to reiterate the finding of Experiment 1 of the present research that empathy for outgroup members was experienced less strongly than was empathy for ingroup members, even though no information concerning the ingroup norm was presented to participants in that experiment. If the default was to empathize with others in general, we should not have found such a difference in levels of empathy across the ingroup and outgroup target conditions. This suggests that ingroup norms can be employed to *increase* empathy for outgroup members.

Finally, it might be argued that the effects of the ingroup norm observed in Experiments 2 and 3 were a result of experimental demand. However, if the norm manipulation presented a demand characteristic, then we would expect its effects to be restricted to that construct which is most obviously associated with it (empathy). Experiment 3 showed that the effect of the norm extended beyond empathy to a different construct, attitudes towards the outgroup. Also, the finding in Experiment 2

that the norm manipulation only influenced empathy for the outgroup target is evidence against an experimental demand argument: if the results had been because of experimental demand, we would have expected similar effects of the norm manipulation across both ingroup and outgroup targets. Together, these findings suggest that the norm information was indeed internalized by participants.

In conclusion, the present research adds to the body of work which has documented the role of empathy in intergroup perceptions. Extending that work, the current research establishes that empathy is itself influenced by social categorization processes. The research demonstrates that empathy is experienced more readily for ingroup members than it is for outgroup members and, uniquely, that this bias against outgroup members can be overcome by activating an ingroup norm which prescribes empathy for others. In this regard, the research offers a promising way forward for empathy initiatives and highlights a procedure by which group members can be encouraged to express more positive outgroup attitudes while at the same time asserting their social identity.

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