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Two Threats to the Common Good: Self-Interested Egoism and Empathy-Induced Altruism

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In each of two experiments, some participants chose between allocation of resources to the group as a whole or to themselves alone (egoism condition); some chose between allocation to a group or to a group member for whom they were induced to feel empathy (altruism condition); and some chose between allocation to a group or to a member for whom empathy was not induced (baseline condition). When the decision was private, allocation to the group was significantly—and similarly—lower in the egoism and altruism conditions compared to the baseline. When the decision was public, allocation to the group was significantly lower only in the altruism condition. These results indicated, first, that both egoism and altruism can be potent threats to the common good and, second, that anticipated social evaluation is a powerful inhibitor of the egoistic but not the altruistic threat.

Faced with a world in which there are not enough resources to go around, the power of self-interest is all too apparent. Social dilemmas are situations in which (a) individuals have scarce resources to allocate, (b) allocation to the group as a whole provides more total benefit than does allocation to any one individual, (c) allocation to an individual provides him or her more benefit than does allocation to the group, but, (d) if all allocations are to separate individuals, each individual is worse off than if all allocations are to the group (Dawes, 1980; Messick & Brewer, 1983; Schroeder, 1995). When self-interest is pitted against the common good in such a situation, the egoistic dictum “take care of number one” is so forceful an operating principle that Garrett Hardin (1977) elevated it to the Cardinal Principle of Policy: “Never ask a person to act against his own self-interest” (p. 27). If self-interest can be allied with the common good, there is hope; if the two conflict, the common good will suffer. Consistent with Hardin’s view, evidence from research on social dilemmas indicates that self-concern or self-focus increases allocation to self to the detriment of the group as a whole (Brewer & Kramer, 1986; Kelley & Grzelak, 1972; Komorita, Sweeney, & Kraatz, 1980; Yamagishi & Sato, 1986).

Self-interested egoism may not be the only motive that poses a threat to the common good, however. Empathy-induced altruism also may. Anecdotal, field, and controlled laboratory evidence now amply testify to the power of empathy-induced altruism to motivate action to benefit an individual for whom empathy is felt (see Batson, 1991; Oliner, Oliner, Baron, Blum, Krebs, & Smolenska, 1992, for reviews). The ultimate goal of this altruistic motive is to increase the welfare of the individual for whom empathy is felt, not to do good or to benefit the group (Batson, 1994). If that individual’s welfare and

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what is best for all coincide, fine, but if they conflict, then an altruistic motive may lead one to act against the common good. An executive may retain an ineffective employee out of compassion, hurting both company and customers; politicians may give administrative posts to needy friends rather than to those best qualified to serve the public; whalers may kill to extinction, herders overgraze, loggers clear cut, not out of personal greed but out of concern for their families. Supporting this reasoning, Batson, Batson, Todd, Brummett, Shaw, and Aldegner (1995) presented evidence that inducing empathy for one of the other group members in a social dilemma can motivate allocation of resources to that person as an individual, diminishing the common good.

Moving beyond prior theory and research, we believe there is good reason to think that altruism can, at times, be a more serious threat to the common good than is egoism. Clear social norms (e.g., equity) (Kerr, 1995) and sanctions exist to inhibit pursuit of one’s own interests at the expense of what is fair and best for all. Selfish and greedy are stinging epithets. Norms and sanctions against showing concern for another’s interests, even if doing so diminishes the common good, are far less clear. Although philosophers have long debated the morality of showing partiality (Kant, 1785/1898; Nagel, 1991; Rawls, 1971), to show favoritism toward another individual, especially an individual in need, is not likely to be called selfish or greedy. One may be accused of being naïve, a pushover, soft, or a bleeding heart, but these terms carry implicit charge of weakness, not greed.1

THE PRESENT RESEARCH

To assess the power of self-interested egoism and empathy-induced altruism as threats to the common good, and to assess the power of anticipated social evaluation to inhibit the former but not the latter, we placed research participants in a one-trial resource-allocation dilemma with no face-to-face contact (Bixenstein, Levitt, & Wilson, 1966; Bonacich, 1972; Dawes, McTavish, & Shanklee, 1977; Dawes, van de Kragt, & Orbell, 1990).

Each participant was given the chance to allocate scarce resources (raffle tickets) either to one of the four individuals in an allocation group or to the group as a whole. Allocations to the group as a whole were enhanced in value by 50% and distributed equally among the four group members. As a result, the group as a whole always benefited most from such allocations, and each member benefited equally. The specific individual always benefited most, and preferentially, from allocation to him or her as an individual. Yet, if all four allocations were to the group. Thus, this situation had the two properties that Dawes (1980) specified as defining a social dilemma.

(a) Each individual receives a higher payoff for a socially defecting choice . . . than for a socially cooperative choice, no matter what the other individuals in society do, but (b) all individuals are better off if all cooperate than if all defect. (p. 169)

When a person confronts an allocation decision that can benefit a single group member preferentially or can benefit all members of the group equally and produce greater total benefit, principles of fairness and utility clearly favor allocation to the group as a whole. If one has no reason to care especially for the welfare of the single group member, this allocation decision should pose no dilemma at all; motivation to be fair and to provide the greatest good for the greatest number should produce a high rate of allocation to the group. In accordance, to permit assessment of the power of self-interested egoism and empathy-induced altruism as threats to the common good, we employed a baseline condition in which participants—who were not group members themselves—chose between allocating to a group as a whole or to a group member for whom they had not been induced to feel empathy. Effects of conditions designed to introduce egoistic and altruistic motives were compared to this common baseline. Reduced allocation to the group occurring in these latter conditions would provide an indication of the power of the egoistic and altruistic motives, respectively, to undermine the common good.

Introducing Egoistic and Altruistic Motives

Self-interested egoism was introduced by making participants a member of the group and making them the individual to whom they could allocate. These changes created a classic social dilemma: Allocation to the group provided more total benefit than did allocation to self; allocation to self provided more personal benefit than did allocation to the group. In this condition, self-interested egoism was pitted against the common good.

In a third condition, empathy-induced altruism was pitted against the common good. Research on empathy (Scotland, 1960) and the empathy-altruism hypothesis (Batson, 1987, 1991) suggested that two conditions were necessary and sufficient for the introduction of empathy-induced altruism: (a) perception of another person as in need and (b) adoption of that person’s perspective, inducing special concern. In accordance, participants in the altruism condition—who were not group members themselves and so could not receive tickets (eliminating
direct self-interest as a motive)—read a note from the individual group member to whom they could allocate; the note revealed a need for cheering up. Participants in the altruism condition read this note from an empathy-inducing perspective. To ensure that any reduced allocation to the group in the altruism condition was a function of empathy and not simply of (a) receipt of communication from the individual group member to whom they could allocate or (b) awareness that this person was in need, participants in the baseline condition read exactly the same note, but from a perspective designed not to induce empathy.

Assuming that participants in the altruism condition were induced to care for the welfare of the target of empathy, they too would face a social dilemma, but one of a form quite different from that typically considered. Dilemma theorists and researchers have usually assumed that the only individual interest one can care about is one's own (e.g., Hardin, 1977). Yet, if feeling empathy can lead one individual to have another's welfare as an ultimate goal, then the definition of a social dilemma must be broadened to include situations in which the personal welfare of a target of empathy is in conflict with the common good. Failure to benefit this other would be a personally costly, undesirable outcome. Only if one assumes that empathy-induced altruistic motivation either does not exist or is impotent would such a situation not pose a social dilemma.2

Comparing the Threat Posed by Egoistic and Altruistic Motivation

In their research, Batson, Batson, et al. (1995) employed a resource-allocation dilemma in which egoism, altruism, and motivation to maximize the common good were all present at once. Participants were always group members; they had two blocks of raffle tickets to allocate; and they could allocate each block to themselves, to any other group member, or to the group as a whole. Sometimes empathy was induced for another group member; sometimes it was not. This procedure had the virtue that it reflected the character of many real-world resource-allocation dilemmas, in which all three options exist at once: self-benefit, other-benefit, and group-benefit. Results clearly indicated that empathy-induced altruism could pose a threat to the common good in such a situation.

Because, however, egoistic and altruistic motives were not separately pitted against motivation to maximize the common good, it was not possible to assess the power of each independently as a threat. By introducing egoistic and altruistic motives in two separate experimental conditions, and by comparing responses in each of these conditions to responses in a baseline condition in which neither motive was present, we could more clearly assess the level of threat posed by each.

EXPERIMENT 1

To provide initial evidence concerning the power of self-interested egoism and empathy-induced altruism, considered independently, to serve as threats to the common good, Experiment 1 used a simple three-cell design. The design included baseline, egoism, and altruism conditions. Participants were led to believe that their allocation decisions were entirely private and that they would never meet or even know the names of others in the session.

Consistent with our argument that both self-interested egoism and empathy-induced altruism pose threats to the common good, we predicted that participants in the egoism and altruism conditions would allocate to the group less often than would participants in the baseline condition. In addition to comparing the egoism and altruism conditions to the baseline, we wished to compare these conditions with each other. The latter comparison would provide some indication of the power of empathy-induced altruism as a threat to the common good relative to the power of self-interested egoism, at least as the two motives were operationalized in our procedure.

Method

Participants. The participants were 90 students (60 women, 30 men) in an introductory psychology course at the University of Kansas who took part in Experiment 1 to earn credit toward a course requirement. More women were included because two of the three experimenters were women, and to minimize self-presentation concerns (Jones & Pittman, 1982), we wished to keep gender of participant and experimenter the same. Using a randomized-block procedure, we assigned 20 women and 10 men to each of the three experimental conditions. Based on both indirect and direct probes during debriefing, three additional students (1 woman, 2 men) were excluded from the sample and replaced because they doubted either the presence of the other participants or the veracity of the communication. Two were excluded from the altruism condition and one from the egoism condition.3

Procedure. Participants took part in the experiment individually, although they were told to believe that several other same-sex students were also taking part. After arriving at the lab, each participant was escorted to an individual cubicle and left alone to read a written intro-
duction. The introduction explained that the study concerned resource allocation, and further elaborated:

Quite often, we make resource allocation decisions that affect not only our own welfare but also the welfare of others. And, often, what is best for us as individuals, or for another person as an individual, is not best for the group as a whole. What factors affect whether, when faced with such a decision, we use our limited resources for our own benefit, for another individual’s benefit, or for the benefit of the group as a whole? To help us answer these questions, you will take part in a resource allocation situation with scarce resources.

Raffle tickets. The scarce resources being allocated in the study were raffle tickets. Each ticket was good for one chance at winning a $30 gift certificate at the store of the winner’s choice. Members of a given allocation group were assigned to different raffles, so the number of tickets other group members received would have no effect on an individual group member’s chances of winning. The introduction emphasized that “Only participants in this study are eligible for these raffles, so anyone who ends up with a number of tickets has a good chance of winning a gift certificate.” Furthermore, the introduction made it clear that “all allocation decisions will be anonymous; none of the group members will know how any other participant allocated tickets. Each will simply be informed how many tickets he or she personally is to receive. You will never meet—or even know the names of—the other participants.”

Research roles. Ostensibly, there were three roles to which participants in the study might be randomly assigned.

If you are assigned to Role 1, you will be a member of the allocation group, and you will be given resources to allocate either to yourself or to the group as a whole. If assigned to Role 2, you will be a member of the allocation group, but you will be given no resources to allocate. Instead, you can receive resources from an allocator who is not a member of the group (a participant in Role 3) either as an individual or as a member of the group as a whole. If you are to be in Role 2, then by the time you read this Introduction, you will already have written a brief note describing something interesting that has happened to you recently. This note may or may not be read by the allocator who is not a member of the group (participant in Role 3), depending on whether that person has been randomly assigned to receive communication from you. If assigned to Role 3, you will not be a member of the allocation group, so you cannot receive resources. But you will have resources to allocate either to an individual who is a member of the group (a participant in Role 2) or to the group as a whole. Before making your allocation decision, you may or may not read a brief note from the Role 2 individual, depending on whether you have been randomly assigned to receive communication.

The allocation decision. The introduction went on to explain that each allocator would be given eight tickets to allocate as a single block. If the allocator gave the block to the group as a whole, the tickets would be enhanced in value and divided evenly among the group’s members. The 8 tickets would become 12, and 3 would be given to each of the four members of the allocation group to use in their separate raffles. So, if all four allocators gave to the group, the group’s resources would increase from an initial 32 tickets to 48, and each group member would receive 12 tickets. Alternatively, each allocator could give the block to a specific group member as an individual. If all four gave to the individual (oneself for participants assigned to Role 1, a Role 2 individual for those assigned to Role 3), there would be no increase; each member would receive eight tickets. If one allocator gave to the individual and the other three allocators gave to the group, that individual would receive 17 tickets ($8 + 3 + 3 + 3$) and the other three would receive 9 ($0 + 3 + 3 + 3$) each. If three allocators gave to the individual and one gave to the group, the three individuals would receive 11 tickets ($8 + 0 + 0 + 3$) and the fourth would receive 3 ($0 + 0 + 0 + 3$), and so on. These conditions created a potential dilemma: Regardless of what other allocators did, the group as a whole benefited more from allocation to the group; the individual benefited more from allocation directly to him or her.

Assignment to experimental condition. After participants had read the introduction, the experimenter returned, reviewed the information, and answered any questions. Once it was clear that the participant understood the three roles and the consequences of the allocation decision, the experimenter appeared to consult a table of random numbers to determine the role to which the participant had been assigned. Participants in the egoism condition were assigned to Role 1; participants in the baseline and altruism conditions were assigned to Role 3; no participants were assigned to Role 2.

All those assigned to Role 3 were informed that they would receive communication in the form of a note from the Role 2 individual to whom they could allocate, and they were reminded that this individual had written the note before learning anything about the ticket allocation so he or she could not be influenced by such knowledge. This information was provided so that participants would not perceive the note, which described the Role 2 individual’s need for cheering up, as an attempt to play on their sympathy to get tickets. Participants were also reminded that the Role 2 individual would not know whether they had read the note and that the note was
entirely confidential; it would be delivered in a sealed envelope and not read by the experimenter. Finally, participants were reminded that, as had been explained in the introduction, they would be asked to adopt a particular perspective while reading the note.

Using perspective to induce empathy. Role 3 participants were then given a sealed envelope with the Role 2 individual’s note. They were also given a sheet with instructions for the perspective from which they were to read the note. Instructions in the baseline condition were: “While you are reading this communication, try to take an objective perspective toward what is described. Try not to get caught up in how this student feels just remain objective and detached.” Instructions in the altruism condition were: “While you are reading this communication, try to imagine how this student feels about what is described. Try to imagine how it has affected his or her life and how he or she feels as a result.” (Similar perspective instructions have frequently been used in prior research to induce empathy; see Batson, 1991, for a review. Moreover, Stotland, 1969, using physiological measures, documented the effectiveness of perspective instructions such as these as a manipulation of empathic emotional arousal, not simply attentional or cognitive processes. Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978, using a misattribution of arousal technique, demonstrated that the behavioral consequences of perspective instructions such as these are a result of their effect on physiological arousal, not of experimental demand or purely cognitive effects.)

Participants were told to be sure that they had the perspective clearly in mind before reading the note. Moreover, they were led to believe that all participants receiving communication got the same perspective instructions, which prevented hypothesis guessing based on comparing the instructions for the two conditions. The experimenter remained unaware of which perspective each participant received.

Role 2 individual’s note. The Role 2 individual’s note told of being down after suffering a broken relationship. There were two versions of the note, one for women and one for men. Content of the two versions was identical, except women read that the Role 2 individual’s boyfriend broke up with her and men read that the Role 2 individual’s girlfriend broke up with him. The following is the version given to women:

I’m supposed to write about something interesting that’s happened to me lately. Well, I don’t know if this will be interesting to anybody else, but the only thing I can think of is that 2 days ago my boyfriend broke up with me. We’ve been dating since our junior year in high school and have been really close, and it’s been great being at KU [University of Kansas] together. I thought he felt the same. But things have changed. Now he wants to date other people. He says he still cares a lot about me, but he doesn’t want to be tied down to just one person. I’ve been real down. It’s all I think about. My friends all tell me that I’ll meet other guys and they say all I need is for something good to happen to cheer me up. I guess they’re right, but so far that hasn’t happened.

After reading the note and thinking about it for a minute or two, Role 3 participants completed an Impressions and Feelings Questionnaire. On this questionnaire, they used 7-point scales (where 1 = not at all and 7 = extremely) to indicate for a list of emotion adjectives the degree to which they were currently feeling each toward the Role 2 individual. Included among the adjectives were six that had been used in previous research to measure empathy (see Batson, 1987, 1991): sympathetic, warm, compassionate, softhearted, tender, and moved. These self-reports permitted a check on the effectiveness of the empathy manipulation.

Dependent measure: Resource allocation. Following completion of this questionnaire, Role 3 participants—baseline and altruism conditions—filled out an allocation form. On the form, they indicated whether they wished to allocate the eight-ticket block to the group as a whole or to the Role 2 individual. We assumed participants would think that giving the Role 2 individual the block of tickets might cheer him or her up. Role 1 participants—egoism condition—were given this form immediately after learning their role assignment and were asked to indicate whether they wished to allocate the tickets to the group or to themselves; they received no communication from another group member. (As mentioned in Note 4, Batson, Batson, et al., 1995, had found that receiving the communication without an empathy-inducing perspective produced a pattern of allocations very similar to that with no communication. Therefore, we omitted communication in the egoism condition to make this condition as simple as possible.)

Ticket allocation was the major dependent measure.

Ancillary measures. After filling out the allocation form, all participants completed a final reaction questionnaire. Consistent with the cover story, this questionnaire asked a number of questions about reasons for and reactions to the allocation decision. To assess the relative strength of self-interested egoism and motivation to be fair, Role 1 participants were asked, “In allocating your raffle tickets, how important were each of the following: Concern for your own welfare?” and “Concern to be fair or just” (where 1 = not at all and 9 = very much), Role 3 participants were asked parallel questions about the importance of “Concern for the welfare of the Role 2 individual with whom you were paired” and “Concern to be fair or just.” To provide another check on the effectiveness of
the empathy manipulation, Role 3 participants were also asked if they had received a communication and, if so, “While reading the communication, to what extent did you maintain an objective perspective toward what was written?” and “To what extent did you try to imagine the feelings of the person who wrote the note?” (where 1 = not at all and 9 = very much). In addition, all participants were asked, “Do you think the way you allocated the tickets was morally right?” (where 1 = not at all and 9 = yes, totally). Participants were left alone to read the note and complete the Impression and Feelings Questionnaire (baseline and altruism conditions), make the allocation decision, and complete the final reaction questionnaire.

**Debriefing.** Once participants completed the final questionnaire, the experimenter returned and carefully probed for suspicion. Then, participants were thoroughly debriefed. Participants were also informed that a raffle for a $30 gift certificate would actually be held and that they would receive 20 tickets, regardless of their allocation choice. Following debriefing, participants were thanked and excused. After all 90 participants were run, the raffle was held and a $30 gift certificate was awarded to the winner.

**Results and Discussion**

**Effectiveness of the empathy manipulation.** Although they read identical notes, we assumed that participants in the empathy-induced altruism condition would experience more empathy for the Role 2 individual than would participants in the baseline condition. We checked this assumption in two ways.

First, on the final reaction questionnaire, Role 3 participants were asked to indicate, on scales ranging from 1 to 9, the degree to which they (a) maintained an objective perspective and (b) tried to imagine the feelings of the person who wrote the note. Consistent with their perspective instructions, participants in the altruism condition reported remaining objective less than did participants in the baseline condition (M = 6.10 and 7.33, respectively), F(1, 58) = 5.92, p < .02; they reported imagining feelings more than did participants in the baseline condition (M = 8.47 and 5.07, respectively), F(1, 58) = 45.03, p < .0001. A difference measure created by subtracting participants’ ratings of objectivity from their ratings of imagining revealed far more imagining relative to objectivity in the altruism condition than in the baseline condition (M = 2.37 and –2.27, respectively), F(1, 58) = 34.41, p < .0001. (There were no reliable effects for gender, either main effects or interactions, in these or any other analyses reported for either Experiment 1 or 2; gender has been omitted as a factor in reporting results.)

The second way of checking the effectiveness of the empathy manipulation was with the self-reports of emotional response that participants in the baseline and altruism conditions made after reading the Role 2 individual’s note. As in previous research (see Batson, 1991, for a review), responses to the six empathy adjectives (sympathetic, warm, compassionate, softhearted, tender, and moved) were averaged to form an index of self-reported empathy (Chronbach’s $\alpha = .92$). Consistent with expectations, scores on this empathy index were significantly higher in the altruism condition than in the baseline condition ($M = 5.49$ and $4.19$ on the 1 to 7 scale), $F(1, 58) = 17.68$, $p < .0001$. We concluded that the empathy manipulation was effective.

**Effects on allocations of introducing self-interested egoism or empathy-induced altruism.** An analysis across the entire design revealed a highly significant effect of experimental condition on allocations, $\chi^2(2, N = 90) = 10.79$, $p < .005$. (All tests of significance on proportional data are based on log-linear analyses; see Bishop, Feinberg, & Holland, 1975; Wickens, 1989.) We had predicted that inducing either self-interested egoism or empathy-induced altruism would lead to fewer allocations to the group as a whole, which would diminish the common good. A comparison between the proportion of allocations to the group in the baseline condition (.80) and in the egoism (.43) and altruism (.40) conditions clearly supported this prediction, $\chi^2(1, N = 90) = 10.72$, $p < .002$. (For simplicity and consistency, all $p$-values are reported two-tailed, even for directional predictions.) There was no evidence of a difference between the egoism and altruism conditions, $\chi^2(1, N = 90) = 0.07$, $p > .80$. Log-linear pairwise comparisons revealed that the egoism and altruism conditions each differed significantly from the baseline, $z > 2.80$, $p < .005$. In sum, both self-interested egoism and empathy-induced altruism proved potent threats to the common good. Each significantly reduced allocation to the group and, thereby, the welfare of the group as a whole. Moreover, the magnitude of the reduction was quite similar.

**Self-reports of importance of individual welfare and of being fair when making the allocation decision: A motivational conflict analysis.** We had assumed that egoism and altruism would each increase concern for the welfare of the individual to whom allocation could be made, oneself or the Role 2 individual, creating motivational conflict with the concern to be fair or just. We also assumed that those participants for whom the concern for individual welfare was stronger than the concern to be fair would be more likely to allocate the tickets to the individual, showing partiality (to self in the egoism condition; to the Role 2 individual in the altruism condition). We tested these assumptions about motivational conflict using parti-
pants’ self-report ratings of the importance for their decision of concern for the welfare of the individual and concern to be fair or just.

Two cautions should be kept in mind when interpreting these responses. First, they are self-reports, so we cannot be sure that they are an accurate reflection of the relative strength of the different motives. Second, these measures were taken after participants had made their allocation decision. Rather than tapping motives that affected the decision, they might simply reflect participants’ interpretation of their motives on the basis of their decision. In light of these two cautions, inferences from these data should be considered only suggestive.

Consistent with a motivational conflict analysis, introduction of either egoism or altruism significantly increased reported concern for the welfare of the individual to whom allocation could be made—one self or the Role 2 individual (M = 6.80 for both the egoism and altruism conditions, respectively)—compared to the baseline (M = 4.63), t(58) = 3.69 and 3.63, p < .001, respectively. Introduction of either motive also reduced reported concern to be fair or just, although this reduction was significant only for the egoism condition (M = 6.17) compared to the baseline (M = 7.33), t(58) = 2.52, p < .02, not for the altruism condition (M = 6.43), t(58) = 1.79, p < .08.

To predict allocations based on motivational conflict, it was less important to know the absolute value of concern for the welfare of the individual (whether self or other) or of concern to be fair than it was to know the relative strength of these two motives for a given participant. In accordance, we divided participants in each experimental condition into two categories: those for whom concern for the welfare of the individual was dominant (who rated “concern for your own welfare”—egoism condition—or “concern for the welfare of the Role 2 individual with whom you were paired”—baseline and altruism conditions—higher than they rated “concern to be fair or just”) and those for whom fairness was dominant (who rated concern to be fair as high as they rated concern for the welfare of the individual).

As expected, the proportion of individual-concern dominant participants was higher in the egoism (.60) and altruism (.63) conditions than in the baseline condition (.23), χ² (1, N = 90) = 10.80, p < .002 (pairwise zs = 2.80 and 3.02, respectively, ps < .005). Also as expected, across all conditions, individual-concern dominant participants were far less likely to allocate to the group (.16) than were fairness-dominant participants (.91), χ² = 6.03, p < .0001, with no reliable effect of experimental condition.

Further evidence of the importance of the egoism or altruism problem. On the final questionnaire, participants were asked, “How difficult was it for you to allocate raffle tickets?” (where I = not at all and 9 = very difficult). If our motivational conflict analysis was correct, participants would have found the decision more difficult the more equal in strength were their ratings of concern for the individual’s welfare and concern to be fair. Consistent with this expectation, an index of absolute difference between ratings of concern for the individual’s welfare and concern to be fair was significantly negatively correlated with reported difficulty, r(88) = - .30, p < .004. The more similar the ratings of the two concerns, the more difficult participants found the decision.

Participants’ perceptions of the morality of their decision. Participants were also asked “Do you think the way that you allocated the tickets was morally right?” There was no reliable difference among experimental conditions in response to this item (overall M = 7.41 on the 1 to 9 scale), F(2, 87) = 0.95, p > .35. There was, however, a powerful effect of the allocation decision. In the baseline, egoism, and altruism conditions, those who allocated to the group consistently rated their action as highly moral (M = 8.29, 8.31, and 8.42, respectively), whereas those who allocated to the individual rated their action as less moral (M = 5.50, 6.12, and 6.78, respectively; for each condition, t(28) > 3.25, p < .005). It important to note that those who allocated to the Role 2 individual for whom they had been induced to feel empathy (egoism condition) did not rate the morality of their action significantly higher than those who allocated to themselves (egoism condition), t(33) = 1.00, ns and they rated their action as significantly less moral than those in the altruism condition who allocated to the group.

Implications of Experiment 1

We predicted that self-interested egoism and empathy-induced altruism would each serve as an potent threat to the common good in our one-trial resource-allocation dilemma. To test these predictions, allocation decisions when either self-interest or empathy-induced altruism was present were compared with allocations when neither of these motives was present. Compared to the baseline condition, each motive proved to be a potent threat to the common good, substantially reducing allocations to the group as a whole. Moreover, the goal of each motive—one’s own welfare or the welfare of the person for whom empathy was felt—was reported to be an important concern, often exceeding the importance of being fair. Participants for whom the individual’s welfare was of greater concern than was being fair were less likely to make an allocation to that individual rather than to the group as a whole. Consistent with our assumption that inducing egoism or altruism would create conflict with the motive to be fair, participants who rated the importance of the conflicting goals—the individual’s
welfare and being fair—more equally reported more difficulty making their decision.

Participants who benefited the individual for whom they felt empathy did not seem to believe that they had acted more morally than individuals who benefited themselves. Both reported that their allocation decision was less morally right compared to participants who allocated to the group as a whole. At issue with the introduction of either egoism or altruism was not a change in what action was considered moral; rather, each changed the motivational balance, introducing a competing desire either to benefit oneself (egoism) or the person for whom empathy was felt (altruism) that conflicted with a moral motive to be fair and benefit all. For many, this conflicting motive proved stronger than the moral motive, leading them to forsake the common good for the welfare of a specific individual.

Results of Experiment 1, in which the power of self-interested egoism and of empathy-induced altruism were examined independently, supported the proposal of Batson, Batson, et al. (1995) that each could be a potent threat to the common good. However, Experiment 1 was not able to shed light on our further proposal that, at times, altruism may pose a more potent threat than does egoism because altruism is less subject to social sanctions. This proposal led to the prediction that if the possibility for social evaluation was introduced, fear of sanctions would inhibit action to benefit oneself but not action to benefit an individual for whom empathy is felt. Experiment 2 explored this possibility.

EXPERIMENT 2

In Experiment 1, all allocation decisions were private, and there was no reason to fear social sanctions for not contributing to the common good. Experiment 2 employed a 2 × 3 design. The same baseline, egoism, and altruism conditions were used. Within each of these conditions, half of the participants were placed in the same private condition as were participants in Experiment 1. The other half were placed in a public condition; they were told that although they would not meet any of the other participants until after they made their allocation decision, once all decisions had been made, participants would be brought together to record the allocations to each individual and to the group, allowing each participant to know every allocator’s decision.

We assumed that in the public condition, participants would be well aware of the possibility of social censure from other group members for failure to contribute to the common good—hard looks and exasperated sighs, if not more. Participants in the egoism condition should be well aware that serving their own interest to the detriment of the welfare of the group could elicit condemnation as selfish and greedy. (Supporting this assumption, Dawes et al., 1977, reported that they pretested just one group using a standard social dilemma procedure, similar to our egoism condition, in which choices were made public. Participants who allocated to themselves were subjected to such strong censure and negative evaluation by the other group members that Dawes et al. were unwilling to run any more such groups.) Participants in the altruism condition should not anticipate similar condemnation were they to allocate to the Role 2 individual rather than to the group; they might feel that they would have some explaining to do, but they would not feel that they would be thought selfish or greedy.

Predictions for the private condition of Experiment 2 were the same as those for Experiment 1: Participants in both the egoism and the altruism conditions should allocate to the group less often than participants in the baseline condition. In the public condition, predictions differed. Fear of social sanctions should inhibit allocation to oneself in the egoism condition but not allocation to the target of empathy in the altruism condition. As a result, when decisions were public, participants in the altruism condition should allocate to the group less often than participants in either the baseline or egoism conditions. Across the entire 2 × 3 design, then, allocation to the group should be uniformly high in the baseline condition, uniformly low in the altruism condition, and low in the private-egoism condition but high in the public-egoism condition.

Method

Participants. Participants for Experiment 2 were 120 students (92 women, 28 men) in an introductory psychology course at the University of Kansas who earned credit toward a course requirement. Once again, more women were included because two of the three experimenters were women, and we wished to keep gender of participant and experimenter the same. Using a randomized-block procedure, we assigned 15 women and 5 men to four of the six cells of the 2 × 3 design; due to errors in blocking, we assigned 16 women and 4 men to the other two cells. Based on both indirect and direct probes during debriefing, eight additional students (6 women, 2 men) were excluded from the sample and replaced because they doubted either the presence of other participants or the veracity of the communication. One woman and one man were excluded from the private-baseline condition and from the private-altruism condition; one woman was excluded from the public-baseline condition; and three women were excluded from the public-altruism condition.

Procedure. The procedure in the private condition of Experiment 2 was virtually identical to the procedure for
Experiment 1, except for the addition of an item to the final reaction questionnaire to check the effectiveness of the private-public manipulation. This question read: “Was it your understanding that your allocation decision would be private (totally anonymous) or that it would be public (known by the other participants in this session)?” Participants responded by checking one of two options: “private (totally anonymous)” or “public (known by the other participants).”

Participants in the public condition were presented with the same basic procedure as those in the private condition—same cover story, rationale, roles, allocation decision, communication from the Role 2 individual with empathy manipulation (baseline and altruism conditions), dependent measures, and debriefing. But, at the end of the written introduction, instead of reading that their allocation decision would be anonymous, they read the following:

After the allocation decisions have been made, we will bring all participants in this session together to record the allocations to each member individually and to the group. That way, each of you can know every allocator’s decision and how many tickets each member of the group will receive.

As in Experiment 1, each raffle ticket was good for one chance at a $30 gift certificate at the store of the winner’s choice.

Results and Discussion

Effectiveness of the empathy manipulation. Similar to Experiment 1, although they read identical notes, we assumed that participants in the empathy-induced altruism condition would experience more empathy for the Role 2 individual than would participants in the baseline condition. We again checked this assumption in two ways.

First, consistent with their perspective instructions, a 2 (Private, Public) × 2 (Baseline, Altruism) analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that participants in the altruism condition reported remaining objective less than did participants in the baseline condition (Ms = 6.30 and 7.15, respectively, on the 1 to 9 scale), F(1, 76) = 8.85, p < .055; they reported imagining feelings more than did participants in the baseline condition (Ms = 8.10 and 4.65, respectively), F(1, 76) = 19.71, p < .0001. A difference measure created by subtracting participants’ ratings of objectivity from their ratings of imagining revealed far more imagining relative to objectivity in the altruism condition than in the baseline condition (Ms = 1.80 and -2.50, respectively), F(1, 76) = 37.09, p < .0005. There were no reliable effects for the private-public manipulation, either main effects or interactions, on any of these measures.

The second way of checking the effectiveness of the empathy manipulation was with the self-reports of emotional response that participants in the baseline and altruism conditions made after reading the Role 2 individual’s note. As in Experiment 1, responses to the six empathy adjectives (sympathetic, warm, compassionate, self-hearted, tender, and moved) were averaged to form an index of self-reported empathy (Cronbach’s α = .93). Consistent with expectations, scores on this empathy index were significantly higher in the empathy-induced altruism condition than in the baseline condition (Ms = 5.56 and 4.08 on the 1 to 7 scale). F(1, 76) = 30.08, p < .0001 (other Fs < 1.0). We concluded that once again the empathy manipulation was effective.

Effectiveness of the private-public manipulation. As expected, virtually all (59 of 60) participants in the private condition indicated that their allocation decision would be private (i.e., totally anonymous), whereas virtually all (57 of 60) participants in the public condition indicated that their decision would be public (i.e., known by the other participants). We concluded that the private-public manipulation was effective.

Effect on allocations of introducing self-interested egoism or empathy-induced altruism. Table 1 presents the proportion of allocations to the group as a whole in each cell of the 2 × 3 experimental design in Experiment 2. As can be seen, allocations patterned as predicted: The proportion of allocations to the group in the two baseline conditions and the public-egoism condition were higher (.70, .85, and .75, respectively) than the proportions in the two altruism conditions and the private-egoism condition (.35, .40, and .30, respectively). A planned comparison that contrasted the proportions in the first three of these cells with the proportions in the last three was highly significant, χ²(1, N = 120) = 19.72, p < .0001, and accounted for all reliable between-cell variance, residual χ²(4, N = 120) = 2.00, p > .70.

To provide specific tests for individual components of the predicted pattern, we also conducted a number of log-linear pairwise comparisons. As predicted, in the

Table 1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Induced Motive</th>
<th>Self-Interested</th>
<th>Empathy-Induced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baseline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: N = 20 in each experimental condition (15 women and 15 men).
private condition, the proportion of participants allocating to the group was lower in both the egoism and altruism conditions (.30 and .35, respectively) than in the baseline condition (.70), zs = 2.46 and 2.17, ps < .02 and .03, respectively. In the public condition, the proportion allocating to the group was lower in the altruism condition (.40) than in either the baseline (.85) or egoism (.75) conditions, zs = 2.76 and 2.18, ps < .01 and .03, respectively. Allocations did not differ reliably between private and public in either the baseline or altruism conditions (z < 1.15); however, as predicted, in the egoism condition, allocation to the group was significantly higher when the decision was to be known by other members of the group (.75) than when it was not (.30), z = 2.74, p < .01.

Self-reports of importance of individual welfare and of being fair when making the allocation decision. As in Experiment 1, we assumed that in the private condition, self-interested egoism and empathy-induced altruism would each increase concern for the welfare of the individual to whom allocation could be made, creating motivational conflict with the concern to be fair or just. We also assumed that those participants for whom the concern for individual welfare was stronger than the concern to be fair would be more likely to allocate the tickets to the individual, showing partiality. To test these assumptions, we again turned to participants’ self-report ratings of the importance for their allocation decision of concern for the welfare of the individual and concern to be fair or just.

Consistent with a motivational conflict analysis, a test of the predicted planned comparison on the measure of reported concern for the welfare of the individual to whom allocation could be made—oneself or the Role 2 individual—was highly significant, F(1, 114) = 32.23, p < .0005, and accounted for all reliable between-cell variance, residual F(4, 114) = 0.24, ns. Pairwise comparisons revealed, as expected, that in the private condition, introduction of either egoism or altruism significantly increased reported concern for the welfare of the individual to whom allocation could be made (Ms = 7.25 and 6.90 for the egoism and altruism conditions, respectively, on the 1 to 9 scale)—compared to the baseline (M = 4.90), t(38) = 3.56 and 3.30, ps < .001 and .002, respectively. Reported concern was much the same in the public condition as in the private among participants in the baseline (M = 4.50) and altruism (M = 6.75) conditions, but it was significantly lower in the private condition among participants in the egoism condition (M = 4.80), t(38) = 3.42, p < .002. The drop in reported concern for one’s own welfare in the egoism condition indicated the power of anticipated social evaluation to inhibit self-interested egoism.

Reported concern to be fair or just tended to mirror the reported concern for the individual to whom allocation could be made—where the former was high, the latter was low; and vice versa—but produced a weaker pattern. A test of the predicted planned comparison was significant, F(1, 114) = 5.88, p < .02, and accounted for all reliable between-cell variance, residual F(4, 114) = 0.66, ns. In the private condition, introduction of either motive reduced reported concern to be fair (Ms = 5.95 and 6.60, respectively) compared to the baseline (M = 7.05), although neither reduction was significant. In the public condition, reported concern to be fair was higher in the baseline (M = 7.05) and egoism (M = 6.80) conditions than in the altruism condition (M = 6.05), although the difference between the baseline and altruism conditions was statistically significant, t(38) = 2.21, p < .04.

To predict allocations based on motivational conflict, it was less important to know the absolute value of concern for the welfare of the individual (whether self or other) or of concern to be fair than it was to know the relative strength of these two motives for a given participant. In accordance, we used the same criteria as in Experiment 1 to divide participants in each experimental condition into two categories: those for whom concern for the welfare of the individual was dominant and those for whom fairness was dominant. As before, across all conditions, individual-concern dominant participants were far less likely to allocate to the group (.10) than were fairness-dominant participants (.80), z = 6.03, p < .0001.

Further evidence of motivational conflict. Consistent with the results of Experiment 1, an index of absolute difference between ratings of concern for the individual’s welfare and concern to be fair was significantly negatively correlated with reported difficulty, r(118) = -.34, p < .001. The more similar the ratings of the two concerns, the more difficult participants found the decision.

Participants’ perceptions of the morality of their decision. As in Experiment 1, there was a powerful effect of the allocation decision on participants’ perceptions of the morality of their decision. In the baseline, egoism, and altruism conditions, those who allocated to the group consistently rated their action as highly moral (Ms = 8.10, 8.00, and 8.07, respectively, on the 1 to 9 scale), whereas those who allocated to the individual rated their action as less moral (Ms = 4.78, 5.84, and 5.88); for each condition, t(38) > 4.60, p < .0005. Those who allocated to the Role 2 individual for whom they had been induced to feel empathy (altruism condition) did not rate the morality of their action significantly higher than those who allocated to themselves (egoism condition), t(42) = 0.10, ns, and they rated their action as significantly less moral.
than those in the altruism condition who allocated to the group.

Ratings of the morality of one’s action were much the same in the private and public conditions for participants in the baseline (both $M$s = 6.75) and altruism ($M$s = 6.60 and 6.80, respectively) conditions. In the egoism condition, however, participants in the public condition thought that their allocation was more morally right ($M$ = 7.75) than did participants in the private condition ($M$ = 6.20), $t(38) = 2.64, p < .02$. This increase reflected the shift in allocation away from self and to the group, once again indicating the power of social evaluation to inhibit egoism.

Implications of Experiment 2

The results in the private condition of Experiment 2 closely replicated the results of Experiment 1, providing further evidence that both self-interested egoism and empathy-induced altruism can be potent threats to the common good. Compared to the baseline condition, participants who could benefit themselves (egoism condition) or an individual for whom they had been induced to feel empathy (altruism condition) were significantly less likely to allocate to the group as a whole. Moreover, the goal of each motive—one’s own welfare or the welfare of the person for whom empathy was felt—was reported to be an important concern, often exceeding the importance of being fair. Participants for whom the individual’s welfare was of greater concern were highly likely to make allocation to that individual rather than to the group as a whole, and participants who rated the importance of the conflicting goals—the individual’s welfare and being fair—more equally reported more difficulty making their allocation decision. Finally, those who showed partiality, whether to themselves or to the Role 2 individual, perceived themselves to have acted less morally than did those who acted for the common good.

In the public condition of Experiment 2, however, the effects of self-interested egoism and empathy-induced altruism were quite different. When participants anticipated that their allocation decision would be known by the other participants in the session and that they would meet these others, acting on self-interested egoism was clearly inhibited; acting on empathy-induced altruism was not. As predicted, the prospect of having their partiality toward the Role 2 individual known did little to inhibit acting on empathy-induced altruism to the detriment of the common good.

It was not that participants in the altruism condition who allocated to the Role 2 individual thought that this action was more morally right than participants in the egoism condition who allocated to themselves thought their action. Consistently across conditions, those who allocated to the individual—themselves or the Role 2 individual—felt that they had acted less morally than those who allocated to the group as a whole. Yet, the inclination of participants in the altruism condition to act less morally and allocate to the Role 2 individual was not inhibited by the knowledge that their action would be public, whereas the inclination of participants in the egoism condition to act less morally and allocate to themselves was inhibited. We believe that this was because participants in the altruism condition did not fear social sanctions, whereas those in the egoism condition did.

General Discussion

Widening the Focus to Include Altruism as a Threat to the Common Good

Few people doubt that self-interested egoism can be a potent threat to the common good. As a result, this threat and ways to curb it have been the focus of virtually all theory and research on social dilemmas to date. In line with this prior theory and research, comparisons between the baseline and egoism conditions in our two experiments clearly indicated that (a) self-interest can lead one to act against the greater common good and (b) the possibility of social sanctions can inhibit the inclination to pursue self-interest. Our experiments also suggest, however, that the long-standing focus on egoism is too narrow. Assuming that our empathy manipulation induced altruistic motivation, as much previous research suggests (see Batson, 1991, for a review; also see Note 2), it appears that altruism can be a potent threat to the common good as well. The examples of executives, politicians, whale hunters, herdsmen, and loggers mentioned at the beginning of this article suggest that the scope of an altruistic threat may be broad.

Batson, Batson, et al. (1995) found that adding to a standard social dilemma the opportunity to allocate resources to another individual in the group (without inducing empathy) had little effect on responses; allocations went either to the group as a whole or to oneself. This was true even when the other individual was known to have a clear need. But when participants were led to feel empathy for this other individual, allocations to that individual increased significantly, with the increase being mostly at the expense of allocations to the group as a whole.

In this earlier research, three conflicting motives were present at once: self-interested egoism, empathy-induced altruism, and motivation to be fair and serve the common good. Therefore, it was not possible to assess clearly the power of egoism and altruism as threats to the common good. The present experiments permitted clearer assessment. Self-interested egoism and empathy-induced altruism were introduced separately in two dif-
ferent experimental conditions, each being placed in
direct conflict with motivation to act for the common
good. Allocation to the group under each of these
conditions was in turn compared to a baseline condition
in which neither egoistic nor altruistic motives were
elicited; the baseline provided an index of level of allo-
cation to the group based on conflict-free motivation
to act for the common good.5

Our less ambiguous comparisons revealed that when
allocations were anonymous (i.e., private), both self-
interested egoism and empathy-induced altruism were
potent threats to the common good. Each substantially
and similarly reduced allocations to the group.

We do not, of course, wish to claim that egoistic and
altruistic motives are always equally potent threats. Circ-
umstances may make one or the other more powerful.
One can easily imagine situations in which egoism is a
stronger motive than empathy-induced altruism. Batson,
O’Quin, Fultz, Vanderplas, and Isen (1983, Study 3)
appear to have demonstrated one such situation—when
the physical discomfort involved in helping the target of
empathy is high. One can also imagine situations in which,
even without social sanctions for egoism, altruism may
be the stronger. Oliner and Oliner (1988) reported a num-
er of likely examples among rescuers of Jews in Nazi
Europe. Our point is not that egoism and altruism are
always equally potent; our point is that each is potent
and that empathy-induced altruism is more potent than
has been recognized. Similar to self-interest, altruism needs
to be considered a serious threat to the common good.

Differences in Inhibition by the Prospect of Social Sanctions

Experiment 2 provided evidence for an important
difference between egoism and altruism as threats to the
common good. Acting against the common good for
egoistic reasons proved highly sensitive to inhibition
when participants anticipated social scrutiny of their
actions; acting against the common good for altruistic
reasons did not. We believe this was because, as noted by
Kerr (1995), there are clear and strong social norms and
sanctions against acting to benefit yourself at the ex-
 pense of the greater common good. This is not the case
with altruism. Social norms and sanctions against acting
to benefit another individual are far less clear.

Why No Sanctions Against Altruism?

Why are there not clear sanctions against undermin-
ing the common good for altruistic reasons? We can
suggest two possibilities. First, perhaps it is because of
the widespread assumption that altruistic motivation is
necessarily good and inevitably produces moral outcomes.
Certainly altruism can be on the side of morality, as when
it impels action on behalf of a victim of injustice. Yet, to
assume that altruism inevitably produces moral out-
comes seems wrong. Recent theory and research suggest
that altruistic motivation is both conceptually and em-
pirically distinct from moral motivation. The goal of
altruistic motivation is to increase another person’s wel-
fare; the goal of moral motivation is to uphold one or
another moral principle. Sometimes these goals are con-
gle sometimes they conflict. Batson, Klein, Highberger,
and Shaw (1995) found that empathy-induced altruism
could indeed lead individuals to act to benefit the person
for whom they felt empathy even when doing so violated
their own moral principles. Similarly, our two experi-
ments revealed that in the altruism condition, those
participants who allocated the tickets to the Role 2 indi-
vidual perceived their action to be less morally right than
those who allocated to the group, just as in the egoistic
condition, those who allocated to themselves perceived
their action to be less morally right than those who
allocated to the group. Altruism is, we suggest, best
thought of as neither moral nor immoral but amoral.

A second reason for the lack of clear sanctions against
altruism seems even more plausible. Within Western
society, there has long been a widespread assumption
that altruistic motivation either does not exist at all or, if
it exists, it is too weak to pose a threat to any other motive
(Wallach & Wallach, 1983). Operating on this assump-
tion, there would be no need for society to develop
sanctions to control the potential antisocial effects of
altruism. We do have sanctions against rampant or com-
pulsive altruism; one is likely to be thought foolish or a
do-gooder. But these sanctions protect self-interest, not
society’s interests.

CONCLUSION

In this world of growing numbers and shrinking re-
sources, self-interest is a powerful and dangerous threat
to the common good. It can lead us to grab for ourselves
even when giving rather than grabbing—if others give as
well—would bring more benefit to all, including our-
selves. But resource-allocation dilemmas are often more
complex than a conflict in which I am torn between what
is best for all and what is best for me. Often, I am also
pulled by what is best for one or more specific individuals
for whom I care. Empathy-induced altruism may seem
socially benign, even benevolent, but it too can pose a
powerful threat to the common good, at times more
powerful than self-interest. It can lead me to narrow my
focus of concern to those for whom I especially care—
the needy friend—and in so doing to lose sight of the
bleeding crowd.

NOTES

1. The bleeding heart need not be liberal. During the 1995 budget
debate in the U.S. Congress, when conservatives who wished to cut
welfare benefits for the poor and provide tax cuts for the more well-to-do were faced with opposition appeals to broader social responsibility, including pictures of people who would suffer from the welfare cuts, the conservatives responded by opening their wallets and holding up pictures of their own children and grandchildren. These, they were suggesting, was not whose heart bleeds but for whom one’s heart bleeds.

2. Two points of elaboration: First, Dawes’s (1980) classic definition of a social dilemma, quoted earlier, actually requires no change to include altruism-based dilemmas. Dawes’s definition does not specify that the socially directing choice must be made for one’s own benefit rather than for another individual’s benefit. Only interpretation from the perspective of universal egoism imposes this narrowing constraint. If one allows that the chooser and the benefited can be different people, Dawes’s definition encompasses altruism-based dilemmas. Second, given the extensive support for the empathy-altruism hypothesis (see Batson, 1991, for a review), we are assuming that motivation evoked by the induction of empathy is altruistic. Were this motivation egoistic instead, our basic point about its potential threat to the common good would remain, as would our question about the power of this empathy-induced motive compared to other forms of egoism. The specifics of our argument would, of course, change considerably, and there would be no need to broaden the understanding of a social dilemma.

3. In Experiment 1, we also attempted—to quite unsuccessfully—to manipulate justification for showing partiality to the individual (self or other). This manipulation had virtually no effect on any measure (only rarely did F values exceed 1.0). Apparently, participants either failed to attend to the justification information or failed to regard it as important. Therefore, we have omitted its further discussion.

4. We assumed that the objective perspective instructions would induce no particular motivation and would provide an appropriate baseline. Perhaps, however, asking participants in the baseline condition to remain objective and detached induced additional motivation to be fair and act for the common good, which could produce an inflated rate of allocation to the group in this condition. Fortunately, Batson, R., et al. (1995, Study 1) provided data that did not address this possibility. In addition, low and high empathy conditions that do not parallel our baseline and altruism conditions, respectively (exact same note and perspective instructions were used; however, in their study, allocation in each condition could be to the group, the self—who was always a member of the group—or to any other group member, including the note writer), they included a no-communication condition, in which no note was received and no perspective instructions were given. The proportion of allocations as to the group rather than to self or another group member was actually slightly lower in their empathy condition (comparable to our baseline) (.55) than their no-communication condition (.59). These results measured that receiving the note and objective perspective instructions would not inflate allocation to the group.

5. Actually, our baseline was conservative in that participants in this condition were presented with exactly the same information about the Role 2 individual as were participants in the altruism condition; the only difference between the two conditions was the perspective from which this information was viewed (objective vs. imagine). To the extent that some individuals in the baseline condition failed to maintain their objective perspective and felt empathy for the Role 2 individual, altruistic motivation would leak into the baseline condition and weaken the comparisons. Fortunately, (a) the clear evidence for effectiveness of the empathy manipulation and (b) the high proportion of participants in the baseline condition who allocated to the group, coupled with (c) Batson, Batson, et al.’s (1995) finding of very similar allocation patterns in their no-communication and communication/low empathy conditions, suggest that such leakage was minor.

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