"I Am So Angry I Could . . . Help!": The Nature of Empathic Anger

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Empathy is widely viewed as a precursor to civic engagement, a mediator of other responses during civic engagement, and an outcome resulting from civic engagement. However, empathic sadness is can be biased toward helping a lone victim, a member of an in-group, a person who is physically nearby, and an individual who is personally identified. Alternatively, empathic anger occurs when an observer experiences anger, rather than sadness, on behalf of a victim as the basis for inferring social injustice and for taking action. Empathic anger represents an untapped dimension of motivation that is not captured within other approaches to motives for civic engagement. This article details three studies which found that those reporting higher empathic anger were altruistic, not aggressive, oriented toward advocacy rather than charitable service, nonprejudicial, endorsed a social justice perspective, and active in communities outside (and independent) of campus activities. Implications for future research on motives for civic engagement are presented as well as implications for designing service-learning courses to promote empathic anger as a basis for action directed at social justice issues.

Keywords: empathy, community service, helping, service-learning, social justice, empathic anger

Showing and expressing empathy is a vital component of social interaction because it helps to build and maintain interpersonal relationships (Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004). Research has shown that empathy is important in developing healthy relationships (Toussaint & Webb, 2005); supplying the affective and motivational foundation for moral development (Eisenberg & Eggums, 2009); and promoting helping and prosocial behaviors (Batson, Chang, Orr, & Rowland, 2002; Batson, Eklund, Chermok, Hoyt, & Ortiz, 2007; McMahon, Wernsman, & Parnes, 2006). Although there are many reasons why individuals engage in helping behavior (e.g., Clary et al., 1998; Hatcher, 2017), empathy is viewed as an important one (Batson, 1991; Eisenberg & Miller, 1987). Whereas psychology, social work, neuroscience, and many other disciplines have all acknowledged the role of empathy (Konrath & Grynberg, 2013; Zaki, 2014), the dominant paradigm used to understand when people will offer assistance to others due to empathy has involved examining how observers react to factors related to another person's suffering and need (e.g., one's own responsibility for the person's need, the nature of the relationship to the person, the person's similarity to the observer, shared group membership; Dovidio et al., 2010). Generally, this paradigm is a reflection of the observer experiencing emotions because of the other's suffering and possibly matching the victim's emotions.

Despite research on the role of empathy in helping, altruism, and civic engagement, definitions and conceptualizations vary greatly (Batson & Ahmad, 2009; Konrath & Grynberg, 2013). Batson and Ahmad (2009) identified four distinct perspectives that have been labelled empathy: (a) cognitive/perceptual, imagine-self perspective: imagining how one would think and feel in another person's situation; (b) cognitive/perceptual, imagine-other perspective: imagining how a person thinks and feels in a situation; (c) affective/emotional matching: feeling as another person feels; (d) affective/emotional concern: feeling for another person. Most conceptualizations and measures of empathy focus on sadness-oriented attributes as "warm," "compassionate," and "tender" (Davis, 1996; Konrath & Grynberg, 2013). Empathy has also been conceptualized as trait-like (dispositional quality, prosocial and altruistic personality) and state-like (situation-specific emotional reaction). In addition, Batson, Ahmad, and Tsang (2002) delineated that helping can comprise emotional responses directed toward one's self (egotism), another individual (altruism), a group (collectivism), or a universal good (principlism).

Empathic sadness, sorrow, or distress resulting from observing another who is suffering can motivate a person to help alleviate the other person's suffering/distress (i.e., altruism) and/or to alleviate one's own discomfort when observing another's suffering (i.e., self-interest, relief). We view empathy at the most general level as someone having an emotional reaction to observing another person in distress, which could be sadness if the person is suffering but could also be disgust, fear, and/or anguish. For the sake of brevity and because we are focused on empathy's role in helping situations, we use the shorthand of *empathic sadness* to represent an individual's empathic emotional responses to someone who is suffering in some way. This is consistent with the most common operationalizations of empathy (e.g., Davis, 1996). Konrath and Grynberg (2013) noted that empathically motivated altruism can provide benefits to the helper (e.g., enhanced physical and mental well-being) and to the recipient (e.g., assistance that alleviates suffering). They also noted that that empathic helping is often biased toward helping a lone victim (vs. many), members of an in-group (vs. out-group), a person who is physically nearby (vs. at a distance or out of sight), and an individual who is personally identified (vs. unnamed individuals or groups of individuals).

Empathic Anger

Although defining and measuring empathy as sad affect has dominated the psychological literature, empathy may not be limited to this emotional response (Hoffman, 2010; Telle & Pfister, 2012; Vitaglione & Barnett, 2003). Hoffman (2010) emphasized the role of causal attributions in arousing empathic responses. If the observer blames the victim for the circumstances, the observer's empathic distress is reduced (Hoffman, 1990). Otherwise, depending on the attributions, empathic distress may be transformed in whole or in part into (a) sympathetic distress, when the cause is unknown or beyond the victim's control (e.g., illness, accident, loss); (b) empathy-based guilt, when one is the cause, when one's efforts to help have not prevented or not alleviated the victim's distress (Batson & Weeks, 1996), when one experiences guilt for not trying to help, or when someone in the observer's group is responsible for the distress; (c) empathic anger, when someone else is the cause, even if the victim is distressed but not angry; or (d) empathy over injustice, when there is a perceived discrepancy between a victim's fate and what is deserved.

The current research focused on empathy that is an angry affective response to perceived injustices. The differentiation between a sad reaction and an angry reaction is assumed to occur when the attribution is made about the unfairness of the circumstances that caused the victim's or victims' suffering. We conducted three studies that explored the nature of attitudes and dispositions of individuals who self-reported experiencing higher levels of empathic anger. Two broad research questions guided the studies: What is the portrait of these individuals? What psychological dynamics and patterns do these individuals encompass? Vitaglioni and Barnett (2003) found that state empathic anger resulted in enhanced self-reported intention to help, but they noted, "Directions for future research include studying a variety of prosocial responses to assess the range of behaviors motivated by empathic anger" (p. 321). Helping can occur in many ways, and this research examined different types of helping as well as motives for helping associated with empathic anger.

The perpetrator of injustice who elicits empathic anger can be an individual, a group, a law, or the government. According to Hoffman (2010), the empathizer has not been transgressed against but anger results because someone else is suffering due to a transgressor and an unjust circumstance. Although the observer's anger does not necessarily emotionally match the other person (because the other person may not be angry), it nevertheless aligns with our definition of empathy as an emotional reaction that stems from caring for the well-being of another person (Hoffman, 2010; Konrath & Grynberg, 2013; Vitaglione & Barnett, 2003). At the most general level, across the three studies, this research tested the presumption that those scoring higher on empathic anger are caring, inclined to help, and endorse a social justice perspective.

Study 1

Measuring Empathic Anger

Vitaglione and Barnett (2003) developed the Trait Empathic Anger (TEA) scale and the State Empathic Anger (SEA) scale. Both trait and state empathic anger were found to increase desires to help victims and punish transgressors. The following are examples of items from the 7-item TEA scale: "I get angry when a friend of mine is hurt by someone else"; "When someone I know gets angry at someone else, I feel angry at that person"; and, "When I see someone feeling sad because he or she was hurt by another person, I feel angry" (Vitaglione & Barnett, 2003, p. 307). However, we thought that the TEA focuses too specifically on an individual victim and a particular victim who is close to the observer, which is altruism in Batson et al.'s (2002) framework and a bias in research on empathic sadness. We sought to broaden the nature of reference in the scale items in order to examine the dynamics of this broader perspective. One purpose of the current research was to develop a revised measure of trait empathic anger, one containing items that are uniformly broader than an individual as the point of reference. That is, we wanted items that contained referents reflecting Batson et al.'s (2002) collectivism and principlism.

Empathic Anger and Aggression

Although psychologists have examined anger primarily as a motivator of aggressive behaviors (Berkowitz, 1989), people can respond to feelings of anger in a variety of ways, many of which are positive and constructive (e.g., Vitaglione & Barnett, 2003). Typically, anger is a response to a threat to oneself that "mobilizes energy and makes one capable of defending oneself with vigor" (Izard, 1977, p. 333). Empathic anger is a response to a threat to someone else that can mobilize energy, make one capable of defending the victim or victims, and intervene to reduce the suffering as well as the causes of the suffering in the short- and long-terms (Hoffman, 2000). The current research sought to determine if individuals who self-reported higher tendencies to experience empathic anger were more aggressive (because of the anger) or less aggressive (because of their concern for others).

Empathic Anger and Empathy

Vitaglione and Barnett (2003) correlated TEA with the four subscales of Davis' Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) and found that TEA correlated strongly with Emotional Concern ($r = .46$), moderately with Personal Distress ($r = .26$) and Fantasy Empathy ($r = .31$), and had a nonsignificant correlation with Perspective Taking ($r = .05$). According to Vitaglione and Barnett, these findings indicated that "although empathic anger and empathic sadness are certainly related, they are not identical or redundant empathic phenomena" (p. 311). Therefore, the new measure of empathic anger was expected to have no more than moderate correlations with the subscales of the IRI.

Empathic Anger and Values

Rather than associating empathic anger solely with aggression, this research also studied the degree to which those scoring higher on an empathic anger measure reported an altruistic motive. Vitaglione and Barnett (2003) found a strong correlation between TEA and the Emotional Concern subscale of the IRI. The Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) (Clary et al., 1998) provides a measure of six functions served through volunteer activity. One of those functions, values, represents the degree to which volunteering expresses altruistic and humanitarian concern for others. Because of the assumption that empathic anger is a motive base for helping and because Vitaglione and Barnett found a correlation between TEA and Emotional Concern, those scoring higher on empathic anger were expected to score higher on the Values subscale of the VFI.

Empathic Anger and Nonegalitarian Attitudes

Social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994) is a construct that captures the degree to which individuals subscribe to a worldview that endorses inequality among social groups and a social hierarchy. Pratto et al. (1994) found that higher SDO scores were correlated with

prejudice against other nations, ethnic groups, and women; they also found that Emotional Concern was significantly negatively correlated with SDO. Empathic sadness is biased toward helping those who are similar, likeable, close, and members of an in-group. However, because the new measure of empathic anger is presumed to be associated with actions to mitigate injustices at a broader level (Hoffman, 2010), empathic anger was expected to be negatively correlated with SDO scores.

Methods

Participants. A convenience sample of 152 undergraduate students (70 males, 82 females) from Appalachian State University was formed by either recruiting students enrolled in psychology courses or approaching students in the university student union and inviting them to participate in the study. Due to the nature of the study, the only requirement of participants was they be 18 years of age or older.

Questionnaire. Participants completed the questionnaire anonymously. The first section of the questionnaire collected demographic information from respondents as well as single items measuring the frequency of political involvement during the previous four years (e.g., they had worked on a political campaign, assisted with voter registration), community involvement through campus organizations or clubs, service through community organizations, and the number of service-learning courses they had taken during college.

The second section of the questionnaire contained the five items of the VFI Values subscale (Clary et al., 1998). The next section included the IRI scale (Davis, 1996). This 28-item scale measures four separate types of empathy: Perspective Taking, or the tendency to adopt the psychological point of view of others (coefficient alpha = .78 in the current research); Fantasy, or the tendency to transpose oneself imaginatively into the feelings of fictitious characters (alpha = .84); Emotional Concern, or the "other-oriented" feelings of sympathy and concern for others (alpha = .88); and Personal Distress, or the "self-oriented" feelings of personal anxiety at the plight of other people (alpha = .80). Each of these subscales is made up of seven different items, which are answered on a 5-point scale ranging from *Does not describe me well* to *Describes me very well*. The scores were averaged across the seven items of each subset.

The fourth section of the questionnaire contained the eight items for the newly developed Revised Empathic Anger (REA) scale, which included the following:

1. "I volunteer because I am angry about issues within the community."
2. "I have gotten so irritated about people having unequal opportunities that I wanted to help them."
3. "I have involved myself in the community because I felt driven by my anger towards inequality or injustice."
4. "My anger towards inequality has motivated me to take action against it."
5. "When I think about problems that will affect future generations, I have gotten mad enough to do something about it."
6. "Thinking about instances of injustice makes me so mad, I feel like doing something about it."
7. "I get angry when I see social injustice, so I volunteer to help resolve these situations."
8. "Problems like discrimination make me so mad that I want to help."

Responses were made on a 6-point response scale anchored by *Not at all like me* and *Very much like me* (alpha = .93).

The next section contained the SDO scale (Pratto et al., 1994), the 16 items of which participants responded using a 7-point continuum, ranging from *Extremely Negative* (1) to *Extremely Positive* (7) (alpha = .89). The final section contained the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992). Participants used a 5-point response format ranging from *Extremely uncharacteristic of me* to *Extremely characteristic of me* (alpha = .92). Scores on the 29-item Aggression Questionnaire were computed as a single score across items in the four subscales: Physical Aggression, Verbal Aggression, Angry Aggression, and Hostility.

Results

REA was negatively correlated with the Aggression score, $r(150) = -.25$, $p < .01$, and negatively correlated with SDO, $r(150) = -.47$, $p < .01$. REA was positively correlated with the Values subscale of the VFI, $r(150) = .52$, $p < .01$, and the single item measure of service through community organizations, $r(150) = .43$, $p < .01$. For the subscales of the IRI, REA was positively correlated with Personal Distress, $r(150) = .18$, $p < .05$, Perspective Taking, $r(150) = .30$, $p < .05$, Fantasy, $r(150) = .33$, $p < .05$, and Emotional Concern, $r(150) = .45$, $p < .01$.

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted with REA as the dependent variable and aggression, social dominance orientation, Personal Distress, Emotional Concern, Fantasy, Perspective Taking, Values, volunteering in community organizations, activities in campus organizations, political activity, service-learning courses, gender, and age as the independent variables. Values was a significant predictor of REA, $F(1, 124) = 45.69$, $p < .01$, beta = .52, $R = .52$, indicating that those with higher motivation to help others reported higher empathic anger on REA. Past involvement in community organizations was a second significant predictor of REA, $F(2, 123) = 24.55$, $p < .01$, beta = .32, cumulative $R = .60$, indicating that those with more past involvement in community organizations reported greater empathic anger. A third significant predictor of REA was Empathy Distress, $F(3,122) = 18.24$, $p < .01$, beta = .21, cumulative $R = .64$. There were no other significant predictors.

Discussion

The results of Study 1 were consistent with all expectations. Empathically angry individuals did not report higher aggressive tendencies or behaviors. This finding is consistent with Batson and colleagues' (2007) distinction between personal anger, which can result in aggression or revenge against the perpetrator (Vitaglione & Barnett, 2003), and empathic anger, of which concern for the other person is a salient attribute. Those scoring higher on empathic anger were also not prejudiced but just the opposite—they rejected hierarchical views of others. The correlation of REA with the IRI subscales was very similar to the correlations between TEA and the IRI subscales in Vitaglione and Barnett (2003), with the exception that the latter researchers found a nonsignificant correlation between TEA and Fantasy, whereas the results of Study 1 found a significant correlation. Individuals who reported experiencing anger about injustices and social issues were clearly expressing interest in caring about others on the Emotional Concern subscale, replicating Vitaglione and Barnett (2003). Generally, the correlations between REA and the subscales of Davis's IRI scale were rather moderate, consistent with Vitaglione and Barnett's (2003) conclusion that empathic sadness and empathic anger are related but not the same.

These results for individuals who scored higher on REA support the centrality of their altruistic and humanitarian values for others. Interestingly, among these student respondents, empathic anger was not associated with having taken service-learning courses, being politically involved, or community involvement through student organizations. They did, however, report that they were involved in the community independent of the campus. Thus, these students found ways on their own to be civically engaged and to act on their interests in community issues, and they were not dependent upon campus-based programs to facilitate their involvement.

Study 2[1]

To elaborate further on the nature of empathic anger, the second study explored additional attributes that we posited are associated with empathic anger.

Empathic Anger and Civic-Mindedness

A civic-minded graduate (CMG) is defined as

> a person who has completed a course of study (e.g., bachelor's degree), and has the capacity and desire to work with others to achieve the common good. "Civic-mindedness" refers to a person's

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[1] Portions of these data were also reported in Bringle & Wall (2018).

inclination or disposition to be knowledgeable of and involved in the community, and to have a commitment to act upon a sense of responsibility as a member of that community. (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010, p. 429)

Civic-mindedness is viewed as distinct from orientations that emphasize one's self, family, or a corporate or profit motive. Steinberg, Hatcher, and Bringle (2011) found that CMG correlated with Morton's (1995) concept of integrity. Integrity is viewed as the degree to which civic values and civic behaviors are aligned and integrated with the self.

Because Study 1 found empathic anger to be related to altruistic values and empathic concern for others, and because empathy anger is viewed as an altruistic motive base, those scoring higher on empathic anger were expected to also score higher on the CMG scale.

Empathic Anger and Motives

Because Study 1 found that altruistic values were strongly correlated with empathic anger, Study 2 explored the relationship between empathic anger and all motives for volunteering on the VFI (Clary et al., 1998). The VFI provides a measure of the following six functions served through volunteer activity:

1. Values: the degree to which "volunteering expresses altruistic and humanitarian concern for others" (p. 1517).
2. Understanding: the degree to which volunteering provides opportunities for new learning experiences and to use knowledge, skills, and abilities.
3. Social: the degree to which volunteering allows the person to be with friends and receive the recognition of others.
4. Career: the degree to which volunteering promotes clarity about vocational choices.
5. Protective: the degree to which volunteering allows the person to avoid guilt and better cope with personal problems.
6. Enhancement: the degree to which volunteering promotes an individual's sense of personal growth and positive feelings.

As in Study 1, those scoring higher on empathic anger were expected to score higher on the Values subscale of the VFI. However, the research also explored correlations between REA and the other five motives.

Empathic Anger and Types of Community Involvement

Empathic anger is presumed to be related to helping (volunteering, in Vitaglione & Barnett, 2010), but which types of helping? Morton (1995) described three service paradigms: charity (providing direct service to another person), project (implementing or participating in service programs through community service organizations), and social change (transformational models of systemic change). This research explored to what degree empathically angry respondents would indicate interest in one or more of Morton's types of service.

Methods

Sample. A convenience sample of 132 undergraduate students (55 males, 76 females) from Appalachian State University was formed by either recruiting students enrolled in psychology courses or approaching students in the university student union and inviting them to participate in the study. Due to the nature of the study, the only requirement for participation was that respondents be 18 years of age or older.

Questionnaire. Participants completed the questionnaire anonymously. The first section of the questionnaire collected demographic information from respondents as well as single items measuring the frequency of political involvement during the previous four years (e.g., they worked on a political campaign, assisted with voter registration), community involvement through campus organizations or clubs, service through community organizations, and the number of service-learning courses taken during college.

The second section of the questionnaire presented the VFI (Clary et al., 1998), which consists of 30 items, with a 7-point response format (*Not at all important/accurate* to *Extremely important/accurate*). The VFI examines how volunteering can reflect different motivations of the volunteer due to the behavior serving different functions. The 30 items are divided into six subscales measuring the following functions of volunteering services, which had the following alphas in the current research: values (alpha = .88), career (alpha = .85), protective (alpha = .81), understanding (alpha = .82), enhancement (alpha = .86), and social (alpha = .91).

The third section presented the CMG scale (Steinberg et al., 2011), which has 30 items that sample four domains: knowledge, skills, dispositions, and behavioral intentions. For this survey, a 6-point response scale was used (*Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*); however, items were rewritten from their original format used in Steinberg et al. (2011), and respondents were asked to respond to items for all of their college experiences, not just their experiences at a specific university, as was done in Steinberg et al. (2011). The following is an example of an item: "My college education has given me the professional knowledge and skills that I need to help address community issues." CMG in this study had a coefficient alpha = .95, which is comparable to alpha = .96 in Steinberg et al. (2011). The fourth section contained the same REA scale used in Study 1 (alpha = .92).

Morton's Typology of Service Scale was adapted from Morton (1995) by using four items that measure each of the three types of service: interest in providing direct service to individuals, being involved in programs that provide service, and advocating for social change (Bringle, Hatcher, & MacIntosh, 2006). The items utilized a 6-point response format (*Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree*). Due to an unacceptable coefficient alpha, only two items were used for the charity subscale. Reliabilities for the three subscales in the current research were as follows: advocacy (alpha = .80), direct service (alpha = .80), and charity (alpha = .64).

Results

REA was significantly correlated with Values, $r(130) = .36$, $p < .01$, Protective, $r(130) = .23$, $p < .05$, and Understanding, $r(130) = .23$, $p < .05$, but none of the correlations with the other motives in the VFI was significant. REA was correlated with CMG, $r(130) = .34$, $p < .01$. For Morton's (1995) types of service, REA was not significantly correlated with interest in direct service; however, it was significantly correlated with interest in programs, $r(130) = .26$, $p < .05$, and with interest in advocacy, $r(130) = .53$, $p < .01$.

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted with REA as the dependent variable and age, volunteering in community organizations, activities in campus organizations, political activity, service-learning courses, Protective, Values, Career, Social, Understanding, Enhancement, motivation for direct service, motivation for programs, and motivation for advocacy as the independent variables. Advocacy was the only significant predictor of REA, $F(1, 126) = 49.19$, $p < .01$, beta = .53, $R = .53$, indicating that those with higher interest in advocacy and social change were also higher on REA. There were no other significant predictors.

Discussion

Consistent with Study 1, these results replicated the finding that students scoring higher on REA had concern for others (i.e., Values). Omoto, Snyder, and Hackett (2010) found that being other-focused was associated with activism for a particular cause (i.e., AIDS) and general social and political engagement. They also found that becoming involved in a specific cause led to broader civic engagement (e.g., Bickford & Reynolds, 2002). Empathically angry individuals are interested in programs (i.e., organizing others), particularly when the cause is focused on advocacy. Thus, this altruistic and humanitarian concern is manifested in an orientation toward activism, advocacy, and social change. In Study 2, there was discriminate validity on REA for the three types of service, with the strongest correlation for advocacy, in contrast to individual acts of charity and interest in volunteer programs. This suggests that whereas empathic sadness is biased toward helping an individual (Bloom, 2016; Konrath & Grynberg, 2013), empathic anger predisposes the person to act at a broader, more systemic level of social change.

Vitaglione and Barnett's (2003) measure of empathic anger was focused on the individual. The items in the REA scale have a broader, more collective focus. Thus, the concern of individuals scoring higher on REA in this research relates broadly to social concerns rather than helping an individual, although social and systemic change will benefit individuals.

The tension between charity orientations to service-learning and advocacy orientations raises issues about the purpose, goals, and outcomes for service-learning courses and other civic engagement programs and activities (e.g., Mitchell, 2008). Bringle and Wall (2018) found that interest in each of Morton's (1995) three types of service was correlated with CMG, suggesting that those civic-minded individuals did not prefer just one type of civic involvement. Also, Bringle et al. (2006) and Moely, Furco, and Reed (2008) found that students had the strongest interest in charity activities and the lowest interest in advocacy. Thus, although not entirely mutually exclusive (e.g., Kinefuchi, 2010), the distinction between charity and advocacy has significant implications for the design of service-learning courses. As Boyle-Baise (2002) noted, "a charitable task probably will not generate insights for social change" (p. 33). Furthermore, this research showed that those scoring higher on empathic anger, which had a higher correlation with advocacy, were not exactly like those scoring higher on CMG, which had rather uniform correlations for charity and advocacy (Bringle & Wall, 2018). This suggests that empathic anger, although related to the attitudes, beliefs, and dispositions of civic-mindedness, is somewhat distinct, with empathic anger being dominated by an advocacy and social justice orientation. What empathic anger and CMG may share is the internalization of concern for others.

Study 3

Study 3 provided additional construct validity evidence for REA as a measure of empathic anger and added to the portrait of what empathically angry persons are like in terms of personality, attitudes, and beliefs. Building on the finding in Study 2 that empathic anger was correlated with advocacy, this study included a measure of social justice, a dimension related to certain types of advocacy. Consistent with Hoffman's (2010) thesis, and consistent with the finding in Study 2 about advocacy, REA was expected to correlate positively with attitudes and beliefs associated with a social justice orientation. To complement the finding in Study 1 that REA was negatively correlated with SDO, which is a measure associated with prejudice, Study 3 examined the relationship between REA and nonprejudicial attitudes, defined as "a universal orientation in interpersonal relations whereby the actor selectively attends to and accentuates the similarities between the self and diverse others" (Phillips & Ziller, 1997, pp. 420-421). REA was expected to correlate positively with a measure of universal orientation. An additional research question focused on the degree to which individuals who become engaged due to empathic anger also have a sense of a capacity to accomplish tasks (i.e., self-efficacy). Finally, this research re-examined the relationship between REA and types of service by including alternative measures of interest in helping through charity and volunteering and helping through advocacy-oriented activities.

Methods

Participants. A convenience sample of 70 undergraduate students (35 males, 34 females) enrolled at Appalachian State University was formed by recruiting students enrolled in psychology courses. Due to the nature of the study, the only requirement of respondents was they be 18 years of age or older.

Questionnaire. Participants completed the questionnaire anonymously. The first section collected demographic information from respondents as well as single items measuring the frequency of political involvement during the previous four years (e.g., they worked on a political campaign, assisted with voter registration), community involvement through campus organizations or clubs, service through community organizations, and the number of service-learning courses taken during college. The second section contained the Universal Orientation Scale (Phillips & Ziller, 1997), a 20-item scale on which respondents rate their perceptions of self-other similarities on a 5-point response scale ranging from *Does not describe me well* to *Describes me well* (coefficient alpha = .67 in the current research). The third section presented the Self-Efficacy Scale (Sherer et al. 1982), a 23-item measure of generalized expectancy of personal

mastery. Responses were made on a 5-point response scale ranging from *Disagree Strongly* to *Agree Strongly* (alpha = .85).

The next section of the questionnaire presented the Social Justice Scale (Torres-Harding, Siers, & Olson, 2012), which measures "social justice-related values, attitudes, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and intentions" (p. 77). Participants indicated responses to the 24 items using a 5-point response format ranging from *Strongly Disagree* to *Strongly Agree* (alpha = .94).

The fifth section contained a measure of interest in volunteering to help others through charity. It contained all four items from Moely et al. (2008) and two items from Wang and Jackson (2005). The measure of interest in advocacy and social change contained? all four items from Moely et al. (2008) and two items from Wang and Jackson (2005). All items from Moely et al. were modified by using the introductory phrase, "In the past 12 months." All items used a 5-point response format ranging from *Not at all* to *Great Extent*. The coefficient alpha for the 6-item measure of interest in charity was .84 and was .87 for the 6-item measure of advocacy. The final section presented REA (alpha = .95).

Results

REA was significantly correlated with the Social Justice Scale, $r(69) = .41$, $p < .01$, and Universal Orientation scale, $r(69) = .30$, $p < .05$, but not with self-efficacy, $r(68) = .07$, $p > .05$. There was a significant correlation between REA and interest in charity, $r(68) = .28$, $p < .05$, and a stronger correlation between REA and interest in advocacy and social change, $r(68) = .46$, $p < .01$. REA was significantly correlated with past political activity, $r(68) = .26$, $p < .05$, and strongly correlated with past community involvement, $r(68) = .41$, $p < .01$.

A stepwise multiple regression was conducted with REA as the dependent variable and age, gender, volunteering in community organizations, activities in campus organizations, political activity, service-learning courses, the Self-Efficacy Scale, the Social Justice Scale, the Universal Orientation Scale, charity, and advocacy as the independent variables. Interest in advocacy and social change was the first predicator of REA, $F(1, 66) = 17.39$, $p < .01$, $R = .46$. The second predictor was the Social Justice Scale, $F(2,65) = 11.63$, $p < .01$, cumulative $R = .52$. The third predictor was past political activity, $F(3,64) = 10.11$, $p < .01$, cumulative $R = .57$.

Discussion

The picture that emerged from Study 3 is that empathically angry individuals were indeed concerned with advocacy issues, especially those focusing on social justice. Furthermore, advocacy and social justice were independently related to empathic anger. These results converged with and extended the results of Studies 1 and 2 to support the conclusion that individuals who reported a history of becoming angry because of social justice issues have a perspective that focuses on interventions that correct the conditions that produced those circumstances. The role of social justice in service-learning, including critical service-learning, is not new (see Mitchell & Rost-Banik, 2017, for a summary) but is underdeveloped in research on service-learning outcomes and how to achieve them.

Consistent with Hoffman's (2000, 2010) analysis, the underlying perceptions of social injustice based on attributions are presumed to be the basis for the anger. A lingering question remains, however: Why do some individuals make those attributions and perceive these injustices, whereas others are less sensitive to them, even if they perceive suffering and the need for help? This question is pivotal to the distinction between social justice orientations to civic engagement and charity orientations to civic engagement. One possibility is that the dominant charity orientation among students, which has been reported by Moely et al. (2014) and Bringle et al. (2006), interferes with those mechanisms that produce anger. That is, feelings of satisfaction and contributions that are associated with charity and volunteering buffer individuals from critically examining the conditions that produced the needs (Stokamer & Clayton, 2017).

In addition, empathically angry individuals had a broader view of acceptance of others (i.e., a universal orientation). This complements the previous finding that they are predisposed against hierarchical views of others in society and that they have nonprejudicial attitudes toward others. It also

suggests that their approach to civic engagement is more democratic and inclusive than an approach based on empathic sadness, which is biased toward similar in-group members (Stokamer & Clayton, 2017).

The failure to find a correlation with self-efficacy is puzzling. The lack of correlation could be due to variability in the degree to which empathically angry individuals think they can effect outcomes they desire or solutions to underlying causes of suffering. By contrast, Bringle, Hahn, and Hatcher (2018) found that CMG scores were correlated with general self-efficacy, suggesting that broadly civic-minded individuals did think that they were contributing through their civic activities. This again suggests that civic-mindedness and empathic anger are somewhat distinct constructs. Changing systems and underlying causes is not easy work and may produce varying degrees of success in achieving goals and feelings of self-efficacy. Some of those scoring higher on empathic anger also reported self-efficacy, which might be associated with more enduring engagement, whereas those reporting higher empathic anger and low efficacy might reflect frustration and possibly less resilience. An alternative explanation is that the scale used to measure self-efficacy was too general, and a different result might be obtained with a scale focused on self-efficacy in the civic domain (e.g., Community Service Self-Efficacy; Reeb, 2006).

General Discussion

A Reexamination of Empathy

Implicating any aspect of empathy in a discussion about altruistic acts, prosocial behaviors, civic-mindedness, volunteering, and community service raises issues about both the role of empathy in research on civic engagement and educational practices like service-learning. One perspective is that empathic sadness is deficit-oriented because of its emphasis on someone who is suffering, someone who presumably cannot engage in self-help, and someone who needs another's assistance (Bringle & Clayton, 2017); this provides the basis for a charity orientation of "haves" giving to the "have nots." Nevertheless, individuals do sometimes suffer in ways that warrant intervention to improve their state. For instance, if someone is in a car accident, the assistance of bystanders and EMS personnel is welcomed and demonstrates that others are responsive to that individual's acute needs. However, the EMS's response is not motivated by empathy but by other motives (e.g., duty, role, professional responsibility), although the person who called them might have had an empathic reaction as a basis for taking action. Batson's (1991; 2011) laboratory research demonstrated that some individuals will help for purely altruistic reasons (vs. alleviating one's own distress due to empathic sadness or distress). As such, empathy can serve as one way of understanding why someone provides assistance under some circumstances.

This could lead to the conclusion that empathy is desirable and that educators should identify interventions that enhance empathy (Everhart, 2016; Weisz & Zaki, in press). The interest in educational interventions, such as service-learning, for increasing empathy may be viewed as more urgent because, according to Konrath, O'Brien, and Hsing (2010), empathy scores, as measured by the IRI, have been dropping, with the sharpest declines on the Emotional Concern and Perspective Taking subscales. Konrath et al. (2010) concluded, "Although there has been no meta-analytic work specifying which elements of empathy training are effective in changing particular behaviors in specific groups of people, initial work suggests that declines in empathy appear to be changeable" (p. 191). Thus, if empathy is central to helping others, then increasing empathy may be possible and desirable. This could provide a basis for intentionally designing service-learning courses (e.g., readings, community service activities, reflection) to increase empathy as a learning objective (see Everhart, 2016; Lundy, 2007; Weisz & Zaki, in press).

However, the deficit view implied by empathy aligns with a charity orientation to civic involvement. Charity's role in community service-learning may be part of the problem, rather than the solution, because it focuses undue attention on the short-term outcomes of helping that may have negative long-term consequences that are damaging and that tip the cost/benefit analysis of the helping toward a net negative outcome (Bloom, 2016). Furthermore, empathic sadness focuses on the here-and-now, encourages short-term perspectives on interventions, is insensitive to those who are suffering outside of immediate awareness, is biased toward those who are close to or similar to the helper, and favors

assistance to a single victim rather than larger numbers of persons who are suffering (Konrath & Grynberg, 2013). In other words, slaughters and genocides occur abroad while public attention remains fixated on individual victims near home (Slovic, 2007; Small, Loewenstein, & Slovic, 2007). Bringle and Velo (1998) examined how helping can undermine self-efficacy for the person helped, create a sense of dependency (vs.encouraging self-help), result in self-blame for the need for help, and create resentment toward the helper. Konrath and Grynberg (2013) also noted that high empathy can produce personal distress and result in emotional fatigue for the helper.

Empathic Anger

> *Anyone can become angry. That is easy. But to be angry with the right person, to the right degree, at the right time, for the right purpose, and in the right way, that is not easy.*
>
> *—Aristotle*

The focus on empathic anger is not an endorsement of blind rage but of the thoughtful analysis of injustice which produces anger that motivates constructive action to correct the causes of that injustice. The construct of empathic anger represents an untapped dimension of motivation for community service that has not been captured in other approaches to studying motives for voluntary action (Clary et al., 1998; Hatcher, 2017). Although empathic anger may also be critiqued as focusing on deficits rather than assets and as an emotional response, anger, as Prinz (2014) noted, "outperforms empathy in crucial ways: anger is highly motivating, difficult to manipulate, applicable whenever injustice is found, and easier to insulate against bias" (para. 8).

Hoffman (2000) recognized the broader social dimensions of empathy when he called for expanding empathy beyond the individual level to create a moral and just society: "At empathy's highest level, one can empathize not only with an individual's but also with a group's distressing life condition" (as cited in Hoffman, 2010, p. 463). For empathic anger to occur, the suffering person(s) may not even be present or visible. The results of the current research provided a portrait of empathic anger that corrects some of the issues associated with empathic sadness identified by Konrath and Grynberg (2013): Empathic anger focuses on a longer-term perspective for correcting injustices for an individual or groups of individuals with a nonprejudicial attitude and openness to diverse others (vs. bias toward close and similar others). As such, developing empathic anger through service-learning courses may be a preferable learning outcome to developing empathic sadness, although there is no guarantee that perceptions of injustice will result in action (Bheekie, van Huyssteen, Rae, & Swartbooi, 2016).

Implications for research. REA changes several perspectives and issues associated with past measures of empathy and empathic anger. The current analysis of empathic anger, including its operationalization in REA, reflected Hoffman's (2000, 2010) change in perspective from an individual to a broader reference to groups of individuals. This is consistent with correcting the views of Konrath and Grynberg (2013) and Bloom (2016) that empathic sadness is biased toward constraining attention on an immediate, close, similar, and likeable person who is suffering. Second, the IRI contains items that focus on individuals and sadness. The Emotional Concern subscale, which had the highest correlation with REA in our studies, contains the following items: "I am often touched by the experiences of others"; "Sometimes I don't feel sorry for other people when they are having problems" (reverse scored); "I care for my friends a great deal"; and, "I feel sad when I see a lonely stranger in a group" (Bringle, Phillips, & Hudson, 2004, pp. 117-118). These items reflect a focus on emotions (e.g., "touched", "feel sorry", "caring", "sad") other than anger. REA is different from the IRI because it focuses on anger and not sadness, although both emotions may be elicited, which is consistent with the correlation between the two scales. Thus, REA provides an alternative measure to TEA of empathic anger because it focuses on groups of individuals, as well as an alternative to the IRI for assessing empathy because it focuses on anger. Furthermore, the scale has demonstrated good psychometric properties (i.e., reliability, content validity, construct validity). The selection of any scale depends on the research question being studied; nevertheless, this research provides a new research tool for understanding a basis for social action resulting from a particular constellation of motives.

The nature of empathic anger offers an additional basis for understanding why individuals respond and why they focus on social change, advocacy, social justice, and systemic change (Mitchell & Rost-Banik, 2017). Future research should focus on how situational and cognitive factors (e.g., exposure to unjust suffering, attributions of injustice, perspective taking) can heighten state empathic anger and lead to enduring trait empathic anger (Batson et al., 2007). Under what conditions can state empathic anger that is felt on behalf of an individual generalize to broader groups of individuals and vice versa? What aspects of attributions that are made about suffering result in anger due to injustice and action? In addition to empathic anger and empathic sadness, are there other empathic emotions (e.g., disgust, fear, surprise, happiness) that can be related to behavior? Service-learning can result in many emotional responses, changes in emotional responses, and variations in individuals' emotional reactions (Priesmeyer, Mudge, & Ward, 2016). Mikula, Scherer, and Athenstaedt (1998) found that events that were perceived as unjust or unfair elicited, first and foremost, anger, followed by disgust, then sadness, fear, guilt, and shame. So, what about the nature of empathic disgust? Empathic fear? Empathic surprise? Could the co-occurrence of these experienced emotions produce more intense, more reliable, more enduring, and more extensive actions (Mikula et al., 1998)? Empathic happiness, also termed *capitalization* (Gable & Reis, 2010) and *positive empathy* (Morelli, Lieberman, & Zaki, 2015), refers to an individual's feeling of happiness (vs. indifference or resentment) when another person experiences a success or pleasurable outcome, which may also be a basis for prosocial and helping behaviors that shifts the focus from needs and suffering to assets and well-being.

Implications for practice. Is empathy a desirable educational learning objective? Can empathy be taught? Lundy (2007) found that service-learning led to increased empathy—but why? Everhart (2016) suggested that service-learning that includes observing the emotional experiences of others, reflection, class discussions, readings, and being given more responsibilities at a community site might have contributed to enhanced empathy. Weisz and Zaki (in press) summarized interventions that have enhanced empathy, including perspective-taking exercises, role playing, simulations, key readings, and communication training. Furthermore, they noted that when individuals failed to empathize, it was most likely because of a motivational deficit, not an ability deficit. Some of the variables they identified for enhancing empathic motivation included suggesting that empathy is malleable, expanding identification with others as having commonalities, promoting cooperative relationships, suggesting that empathy can increase accomplishing common goals, suggesting that empathic responses can be rewarding rather than aversive, and establishing norms for empathic responses (Bringle & Clayton, 2017). Cranton (2002) identified the following factors that can be drawn upon to foster transformation in students (i.e., to potentially develop attributions supporting the perception of social injustice): (a) an event that violates expectations; (b) articulating assumptions, stereotypes, and expectations for clarification; (c) critical reflection; (d) openness to alternative perspectives; (e) discussion and dialogue; (f) revising presumptions and perspectives; and (g) developing intentions to act on new perspectives (see also Jakubowski & McIntosh, 2018). Will any of these produce changes in empathy? Under what conditions? Why?

However, issues and concerns raised earlier about the nature and desirability of empathy (Bloom, 2016; Konrath & Grynberg, 2013) have suggested certain reservations about empathy as an appropriate learning objective for service-learning, either in its own right or as a precursor to compassion or moral development. Empathy's apparent alignment with a charity orientation, which is very limited in scope, suggests that educators may want to consider other learning objectives, particularly learning objectives associated with broader views of helping, philanthropy, and engagement for advocacy and social change (Hatcher, 2017). Empathic anger, which, like empathic sadness, is also based on a negative emotion and can also be viewed as encompassing a deficit basis, may also stigmatize others as victims who are incapable of self-help. A potential solution to both types of empathy is encouraging helpers to work *with* other persons and recognize how their assets, rather than deficits, can be incorporated into helping activities. Bringle and Velo (1998) acknowledged some of the faults of a too helpful response (e.g., stigmatizing, removing the locus of control, shifting responsibility for outcomes to others, promoting dependency, undermining autonomy), and they recommended the use of self-help and peer helping groups as two alternative models for structuring interventions that build on assets.

In contrast to hierarchical, dependency-oriented helping, in a randomized group design, Brown, Wymer, and Cooper (2017) found in a service-learning course that autonomy-oriented helpers who had higher levels of direct intergroup contact held more positive attitudes toward social equality than a control group engaged in lower autonomy helping activities. Mikula (2003) concluded, based on theories of injustice and attributions as well as research, that "attributions of causality and intention, and perceived lack of sufficient justification, contribute to the perceived injustice beyond the mere observation that somebody's entitlement or deserving has been violated" (p. 806). Attributions of blame were central to perceived injustice, particularly when the focus was on the victim (Mikula & Schlamberger, 1985). Thus, educational strategies for mitigating a charity orientation to helping might include critical readings, classroom discussions, autonomy-oriented service, service activities focused on systemic change and political interventions, and structured reflection that guides students' perspective on systemic analysis (Cipolle, 2010; Mitchell, 2008; Stokamer & Clayton, 2017). Developing an enhanced understanding through research for how these educational elements can result in shifts in attributional analyses (Bringle & Velo, 1998), which are presumed to be critical components for eliciting empathic anger and inferences of social injustice (Hoffman, 2010), is important to expanding service-learning practice to better represent critical service-learning (Mitchell & Rost-Banik, 2017).

Conclusion

Engaging in community service, prosocial behavior, and helping canhave a variety of origins. Carefully considering different motives can begin to clarify what motives are operating in different circumstances and permit analysis of what is preferable in the short- and long-terms. For example, emotional reactions can be relatively ephemeral in contrast to more enduring cognitive appraisals of injustice. Blader and Tyler (2002) explored the ways in which empathy and justice can work together, with empathy providing a basis for perceptions of injustice, and appraisals of justice providing a basis for empathy, potentially correcting some of the partiality that may accompany empathy: "What absolutely remains interesting . . . is critical questioning as part of academics' civil society roles to expose state and institutional hypocrisy and half-truths whenever basic human rights that ought to accompany democratic life are subverted or violated" (Hartman, 2013, p. 65). Hartman (2013) urged civic engagement practitioners to consider the degree to which an emphasis on community service avoids confronting the "impossibility of an apolitical democratic civic education" (p. 68). Like critical service-learning (Mitchell & Rost-Banik, 2017; Stokamer & Clayton, 2017) at a general level, empathic anger provides a new lens through which to view a mediating variable between what is encountered in civic engagement activities, how it is interpreted, what is experienced, and what types of actions are taken. As such, it challenges educators to consider empathic anger as an educational learning objective and to explore how it can be achieved.

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