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PEOPLE MORE LIKELY TO HELP OTHERS THEY THINK ARE “LIKE THEM”

STUDY RESULTS REPORTED IN *PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY BULLETIN*

Thousand Oaks, California, London, United Kingdom, and New Delhi, India (June 30, 2006) – Feelings of empathy lead to actions of helping – but only between members of the same group – according to a recent study in the July issue of ***Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin***, an official publication of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology, published by SAGE Publications.

The research, led by Stefan Stürmer of the University of Kiel, is presented in the article “Empathy-Motivated Helping: The Moderating Role of Group Membership.” The article discusses two different studies, one using a real-world, intercultural scenario and the other using a mixture of people with no obvious differences besides gender. Researchers concluded that, while all the people felt empathy for someone in distress, they only tended to assist if the needy person was viewed as a member of their own “in-group.”

The first study, using a real-world intercultural scenario, split German and Muslim male participants into culturally-defined groups. When everyone learned that another participant was having difficulty finding housing, they all felt empathy for the other regardless of what group they were in. However, when asked about their intentions to help the participant, empathy had a stronger impact when the other was categorized as a member of their in-group.

To further substantiate the findings from the first study, the second study created “minimal” in-groups and out-groups using a mixture of male and female participants without obvious cultural differences. As in the first study, when participants learned that another participant needed financial help due to the loss of money and a credit card, they all felt empathy, but actual assistance was provided only when the distressed person was a member of their in-group.

Research grants for these studies were provided by the National Institute of Mental Health and Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft. Go to: <http://pspb.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/32/7/943> to access the article in the July issue of ***Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*** at no charge for a limited time. To contact the researchers, email Stefan Stürmer at: stuermer@psychologie.uni-kiel.de.

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About *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*

For over 30 years, the official monthly journal of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP), ***Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin (PSPB)*** has provided an international forum for the rapid dissemination of original empirical papers in all areas of personality and social psychology. SPSP counts more than 4,500 researchers, educators, and students in its membership worldwide. To contact the Executive Officer of SPSP, please phone David Dunning at (607) 255-6391, or email at spsp@cornell.edu. <http://pspb.sagepub.com> www.spsp.org

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