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The Addition of Gnre-Induced Mood State  
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THE EMPATHY COMFORTING MODEL:  
THE ADDITION OF GENRE-INDUCED MOOD STATE

By

Kristen E. Salomonson

A THESIS

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
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## ABSTRACT

### THE EMPATHY COMFORTING MODEL: THE ADDITION OF GENRE-INDUCED MOOD STATE

By

Kristen E. Salomonson

Building on previous research, an experiment was conducted to extend work on the empathy-comforting model which combines both the transitory impact of message characteristics (e.g. film genre) and the stable pattern of empathy traits to predict comforting in interpersonal behavior. The present investigation tests a rationale based on the potential of genre-induced mood states to intervene in the experience of aversion (or to perpetuate the experience of pleasure) as an explanation for differences found in comforting behavior following exposure to various film genres. Consistent with the previous findings, path analytic results demonstrate the importance of empathy processes in determining the provision of comfort. In addition, by replacing film genre with paths representing mood states the present investigation improved the model's ability to predict differences in comforting behavior

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## INTRODUCTION

Researchers from such varied fields as psychology, sociology, and communication have conducted numerous inquiries into the realm of prosocial behavior (e.g. Toi & Batson, 1982; Miller, Stiff, & Ellis, 1988). These investigations have focused on examining the role of various dimensions of empathy in determining these prosocial reactions (e.g. Stiff, Dillard, Somera, Kim, & Sleight, 1988). This engrossing program of research has captured the attention of those studying the effects of media presentations on individuals. This intent interest has led scholars toward examining both the media's role in the production of emotional responses and in determining empathic responses as well. The purpose of the present investigation is two-fold. The impact of both different stable dimensions of empathy and the temporary mood state of an individual following a media presentation will be assessed to determine the extent to which they are able to predict comforting responses, a form of prosocial behavior.

## Empathy and Prosocial Behavior

Empathy has been examined by myriad investigators employing a wide variety of definitions. Despite these many variations, all definitions of empathy contain reference to the way in which an individual reacts to the circumstances of another individual. Davis (1983) defines empathy as the collection of reactions of one individual to the observed experiences of another. Such simple conceptions of empathy became less common as scholars began to recognize that different components of empathy could have a unique impact on an individual's reaction to observed events. Therefore, more specific treatments of empathy are decidedly more regularly seen as most scholars agree that empathy is not a singular entity, but a multidimensional one (e.g. Davis, 1980). Although some debate persists over the specific dimensions included, there is considerable agreement on the importance of both cognitive and affective dimensions of empathy in the elicitation of prosocial behavior (e.g. Davis, Hull, Young, & Warren, 1987; Stiff et al., 1988). Cognitive dimensions of empathy relate to processes whereby we imagine ourselves in the position of another individual. Cognitive empathic dimensions include fictional involvement and perspective taking. Affective dimensions of empathy relate to processes associated with an individual's tendency to experience strong emotional reactions to another person's

pain, misfortune, or plight. Such affective dimensions include empathic concern and emotional contagion. Research has focused on empathy as a process characterized by stable relationships among trait characteristics representing several of these cognitive and affective dimensions.

Investigations testing causal models of prosocial behavior have yielded a stable pattern of results among dimensions of empathy and a variety of prosocial behaviors. These studies have demonstrated support for the empathy-comforting model relating a stable pattern of empathy to the provision of comforting responses (e.g. Stiff et al., 1988; Tamborini et al., 1993).

The four components of empathy typically included in the empathy-comforting model (fictional involvement, perspective taking, emotional contagion, and empathic concern) are viewed by many researchers to be both sequentially and causally ordered. The model suggests that the cognitive operations (fictional involvement and perspective taking) initiate the process via a direct impact on empathic concern (feeling sympathy or concern for another person's plight, but not experiencing the emotional response) and via an indirect impact on emotional contagion (experiencing an emotional response parallel to the one observed) through a path from concern to contagion. The model continues with positive paths from empathic concern to

both communicative responsiveness (an indicator of verbal comforting skills) and to comforting behavior, and is completed by negative paths from contagion to these same two variables.

More recent investigations on comforting have added situational determinants to this model suggesting that environmental factors such as message sensitivity and hedonic quality can provide additional predictive power. According to Tamborini et al. (1993) exposure to different film genres (an indicator of message hedonic quality) have an impact on the relation of empathy to comforting. In related work, Tamborini, Salomonson, and Bahk (1994) demonstrated that the sensitivity portrayed in a film may be more important than genre's hedonic quality in determining a viewer's willingness to comfort someone in distress. The model that has been developed from this research combines these transitory environmental factors with the stable pattern of empathy to predict comforting behavior in interpersonal settings. Unspecified in this model is the specific mechanisms by which film genre produces changes in comforting. The present investigation offers and tests a rationale based on genre-induced mood states and their potential to intervene in the experience of aversion or perpetuate the experience of pleasure.

Comforting as prosocial behavior. Comforting behavior is one specific form of prosocial behavior. Prosocial behavior is an action taken to benefit another person for reasons other than extrinsic reward (Cialdini, Kenrick, & Baumen, 1982). Burleson and his associates have delved into the prosocial realm by focusing almost exclusively on studying a person's proclivity to produce verbal comforting messages when faced with a distressed interactant (Burleson & Delia, 1983; Burleson & Samter, 1983). Building on this program of research, in the present investigation the type of prosocial behavior examined is spontaneous verbal comforting messages produced during an interaction situation.

While the study of stable empathy dimensions is an integral portion of the scholarly work in the area of prosocial behavior, other factors also have a role in determining responses to the plight of distressed others. One such variable is that of the current mood state of the observer.

#### Specifying Transitory Mood States

In previous research concerning the affective states of individuals, the terms affect, mood, and emotion have been used essentially as interchangeable ones. Batson, Shaw, and Oleson (1993) distinguish among these three terms and set

forth specific definitions for each, noting that the three states may serve very different functions.

Batson et al. (1993) first differentiate the characteristics of an affective state. Affect is the most basic term of the three and essentially informs an individual about his/her preferences in terms of what state of affairs is valued more than another. Affect, then, has a tone (varying from positive or negative) and a valence (varying from weak to strong).

Mood is defined as a particular type of affective state which possesses a tone (varying from positive to negative) and an intensity (varying from strong to weak). According to this approach, mood essentially functions to promote a general belief on the part of the person experiencing the mood that he/she is likely to have either positive or negative experiences in the future. In the instance of an individual having a positive mood experience, one believes that further interaction with one's present stimulus environment will be satisfactorily (i.e. that any interaction with the environment will end with pleasure), while an individual having a negative mood experience believes any environmental interaction will end noxiously (i.e. that any interaction with the environment will end with displeasure). An example of a positive mood is one where an individual is in what is typically deemed a "good

mood," and has a generally pleasant disposition for a few hours, extending up to a few days.

Emotion is also a particular type of affective state and as such subsumes the characteristics of tone and valence. While mood is composed of a change in the general expectations concerning future events, emotion involves ". . . the existence of a specific goal or of a perceived change in one's relation to a specific goal in the present (Batson et al., 1993, p. 300). Examples of emotions would include anger, guilt, and surprise.

Despite their temporary nature, an individual's mood state, regardless of the specific type, is thought to have an impact on the behavior of that individual. As should be evident from the preceding discussion on positive and negative mood state expectations about future interactions with a given environment, essentially, "[mood states] . . . are capable of influencing a broad array of potential responses, many of which seem quite unrelated to the emotion precipitating event" (Morris, 1989, p. 211). In a summary on the pertinent research, Morris (1989) concluded that the mood currently being experienced by a person influences how the present situation is perceived in a congruent manner. For example, if one is experiencing a convivial mood state, the surrounding elements in the present situation will seem to be more positive. This positive aura will determine to a

large extent the behavior manifested by the individual. In essence, then, the mood state of an individual at any given time influences behavior in two distinct ways. It has an impact first by influencing an individual's positive or negative expectations concerning future environmental interactions, and then by influencing an individual's perceptions about that environment in a mood-congruent manner.

One important way in which mood can impact behavior through its influence on the perceptual process is through the accessibility of various memory components during information processing. A person's positive or negative mood state can influence the accessibility of materials in memory. In general, a mood state increases the accessibility of representations in memory that are evaluatively congruent with the experienced mood state (Isen, 1978). Therefore, when one is in a positive mood, the experience primes positive associations when presented with various stimuli, whereas for one in a negative mood state the experience primes negative associations.

Evidence has been presented consistent with this functional definition of mood. Cunningham (1988) induced positive and negative moods in individuals. He then gave the subjects the opportunity to engage in a variety of behaviors, including social interaction situations, physical

and cognitive challenges, and prosocial behavior. Those subjects who had been placed in a positive mood situation were more likely to engage in the aforementioned social approach behaviors, while those subjects in a negative mood were more likely to avoid such behaviors and protect themselves through noncontact and other protective behaviors.

### Transitory Mood States and Prosocial Behavior

Mood states have been examined previously with regard to their connection to providing helping behavior, a specific form of prosocial behavior (e.g. Carlson & Miller, 1987). These investigations have examined the impact of both positive and negative mood states on the provision of prosocial behaviors.

Positive mood states and prosocial behavior. Dovidio (1984) in his meta analysis of the helping literature concluded that, "The results of many experiments . . . have found that people who feel good . . . happy and fortunate are more likely to help someone else than are people who are not in a positive state" (p. 390). The results of such studies have been amazingly consistent with both children and adult subject populations and using a variety of positive-emotion producing means, from exposing subjects to positive films to having them think about happy events. One rationale regularly offered for these findings is the mood

maintenance explanation. According to this notion, people in a positive mood state are more apt to offer helping behavior provided that the act of helping itself does not interfere with or threaten their present positive mood state (Levin & Isen, 1975).

Negative emotional states and prosocial behavior.

Despite the consistency with regard to positive emotional states and helping behavior, no such neat situation exists for negative emotional states. While some researchers (e.g. Cialdini & Kenrick, 1976; Schaller & Cialdini, 1988) have found that subjects experiencing negative emotions were more likely to respond to a request for help, other researchers are quick to mention that, "However, negative affect does not invariably lead to increased helping behavior" (Isen, 1970). A number of studies have found results where negative emotional states decreased the propensity to provide help to a distressed other (e.g. Carlson & Miller, 1987). Underwood, Froming, and Moore (1977) concluded that the negative emotional state was lingering in the person's mind and was coloring perceptions and actions in the present. People view the need for help as a further negative element with which they have to deal.

While studies that consider the current emotional state of the helping behavior provider have been fruitful, there is a pressing need for a clearer rationale as to what

emotional states lead to increased willingness and what emotional states lead to decreased willingness to provide social support. One plausible explanation is that of the intervention potential offered by Zillmann.

#### Intervention Potential and Prosocial Behavior

Zillmann introduced the intervention potential notion as an explanation for selection of mass media programming, but as he himself points out, the theory has a scope more general than solely that of the media realm and in fact can explain a wide variety of stimulus selections (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985). Zillmann posits that individuals seek to contrive their environment in order to alleviate pain and perpetuate pleasure. Specifically, people in aversive states select activities with a high potential to intervene in their current emotional condition. Conversely, people experiencing pleasurable states select activities with a low intervention potential. Identifying activities containing high or low intervention potential is the key to this behavior. According to Zillmann, activities with high intervention potential are those that are engaging or those that have hedonic and behavioral affinity with the extant emotional state. Conversely, activities with low intervention potential are those that are unengaging or that are void of hedonic and behavioral affinity. Both affinity and ability to engage are important determinants. It is

easy to see that, "the more engaging and absorbing any intervening stimulation, the more likely that the [mood] affective state in which it intervenes will diminish in intensity" (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985, p. 160). For the purpose of the present investigation, however, affinity may play a more important role.

Hedonic and behavioral affinity concern the extent to which activities contain a tone (from positive to negative) or actions similar to those associated with the individual's emotional experience. If one wants to change a negative mood state, one would select activities that are devoid of negative tone and behaviors suggesting or exhibiting anger, aggression, fear, and the like (activities with low hedonic and behavioral affinity). If one is experiencing a positive mood state, however, one would select activities with behaviors exhibiting or suggesting happiness, contentment, and the like (activities with high hedonic and behavioral affinity). Therefore, individuals experiencing negative states prefer stimuli that have little or no behavioral affinity with their current mood situation and prefer hedonically positive stimuli over negative stimuli in order to produce a lowering of the negative state. Individuals experiencing positive states, however, prefer stimuli with a large degree of behavioral affinity and prefer hedonically positive stimuli in order to maintain the positive state.

Clearly, the relationship between a specific behavior (here, helping behavior) to a mood state intervention is likely to depend more on the hedonic and behavioral determinants of the extant emotional condition. For even though the engaging nature of the activity option is always going to be important, when considering the likelihood of one engaging in some specific form of helping behavior (such as comforting), the hedonic and behavioral affinity of that specific action with the extant emotional condition of the individual actor becomes a critical determinant in the decision to provide comfort. These notions provide an indication of the circumstances under which different states can produce an increase or a decrease in the provision of help.

With regard to individuals in a positive mood state, they should be more apt to offer helping behavior to the extent that the act of helping does not threaten to end their present positive mood, but instead would perpetuate it. In Zillmann's terminology, the activity should have a high degree of hedonic and behavioral affinity with the current positive state.

For individuals experiencing a negative mood state the situation is reversed. In order for the individual to alter his/her mood state to a more positive one, the activity must have a low degree of hedonic and behavioral affinity. The

request for help by another may be too similar to the negative emotions being experienced by one in an aversive mood state. Given their mood, the situation would be perceived in a negative manner and seen as a further problematic element and as such attending to it would serve only to perpetuate and perhaps increase their negative mood state (high behavioral affinity) and therefore these individuals would be less likely to provide the requested help. In terms of hedonic affinity, the entire situation is viewed by the individual in such a mood state as negatively charged. The distressed individual is yet another noxious element with whom the individual does not want to be involved.

#### Mood States and Prosocial Behavior

This notion of intervention potential can help elucidate the impact of mood states on the provision of comforting behavior. In terms of hedonic and behavioral affinity, recall the earlier discussion of emotional states and how they color the perceptions of individuals with regard to their current situations. People in a positive mood state see their surroundings in a more positive manner than would people in a negative mood state. In a situation where one is faced with a distressed other, the individual in a positive, happy mood would likely see the situation as an opportunity for himself/herself to do something positive

by comforting another person in distress. In addition to viewing the situation as an opportunity instead of a hassle, because of the individual's positive mood, he/she believes that attempts to comfort will be successful. Therefore, based on an intervention potential rationale, these individuals would comfort in order to perpetuate their positive mood states.

In a situation where a person in a negative mood state is exposed to a distressed other, the possibilities are more numerous. There are several gradients of negative affect including sadness, grief, fear, and anger. Recall that there is a divergence of results with respect to whether the negative mood state would elicit more or less helping behavior in individuals. The differences with respect to these findings may be due, in part, to the imprecise nature of the term "negative affective state."

Results indicating that negative affective responses lead to more helping behavior have relied almost exclusively on the elicitation of sadness and grief by asking subjects to imagine that something terrible has befallen someone about whom they care. As a consequence of this, subjects are focused on the plight of another person rather than on themselves. Sadness experienced due to the sorrowful plight of others turns peoples' attentions outward, and one way to reduce their sadness is through helping someone or doing

something pleasant for them. Fear, as compared with sadness, by its intense personal nature would pull people inward. Contrary to the concern for another's plight produced by sadness, fear, and anxiety are feelings about terrible occurrences happening to that individual.

Mood and self-focused attention. These assertions concerning fear, sadness, and the proclivity to provide comfort are supported by research concerning the phenomenon termed self-focused attention. It is defined as, ". . . an awareness of self-referent, internally generated information that stands in contrast to an awareness of externally generated information derived through sensory receptors" (Ingram, 1990, p. 156). Morris (1992) states that negative moods (such as those produced by experiencing fear or anger) lead to heightened self-focus. This conclusion is supported by the work of Wood, Saltzberg, and Goldsmit (1990) where subjects in negative states (found to contain predominantly fear and anger, with lesser amounts of sadness) were more self-focused than those in the neutral affective state (no high levels of either positive or negative emotions). Studies exploring the connection between depressive moods and self-focus also support this general pattern (Hull & Bond, 1986). In such instances, alleviation of negative affect may in fact be prevented by focusing on another's problems and attempting to offer comfort. Therefore, an

intervention potential explanation would suggest that such negative mood states should result in the avoidance of comfort provision in favor of other behaviors with lower hedonic and behavioral affinity.

In the case of fear, it is as if one's need to alleviate his/her fear takes precedence over all else, including dispelling sadness or comforting others. With respect to anger, the reaction is similar. As Cialdini, Kenrick, and Baumen (1982) note, "Because anger is frequently reduced through aggressive rather than benevolent action, helping would not be instrumental to anger relief." Given their mood, attending to a further negative element would be perceived in a negative manner (high affinity). As such it would serve only to perpetuate and perhaps to increase their negative mood state. Therefore these individuals would be less likely to provide comfort.

Contrary to the case of fear, when one is in a positive mood state, heightened self-focus would not be expected to occur. According to Morris (1992) positive mood states lead to an increased tendency to engage in ". . . scanning the environment in a search to identify instrumental opportunities" (p. 268). This search takes place because the individual is optimistic about the success of any action he/she undertakes. As a result an individual's attention is focused on others in the outer environment, rather than

themselves and their own concerns. This external attentional focus is likely to lead to greater comforting. The notion of intervention potential explains how the emotional states of individuals may impact their willingness to provide helping behavior to distressed others. The question of how these mood states are produced has at this juncture been largely unaddressed. Media-related stimuli are thought to be one of many factors able to influence the moods of an individual.

#### Media Stimuli and Mood States

Mood states may be created in myriad ways. Scholars point to the ability of media presentations to evoke emotional responses in individuals (e.g. Cantor, 1991; Zillmann, 1986). Commenting on the entertainment experience Zillmann observed, "Television's excitation and mood-altering effects are not in doubt" (Zillmann & Bryant, 1985, p. 307). The mood-producing capability of television, film, and other visual and auditory media has been borne out in the research arena. For example, Zillmann (1984) examined whether people select media fare to alter their mood states and demonstrated the fact that individuals select media material that has the ability to alter undesired states, such as boredom and stressfulness.

In another study in the area of eating disorder research, subjects exposed to a frightening film became more

angry, anxious, and sad than those subjects in the control film condition. In addition, subjects in the frightening film condition ate significantly more popcorn than those subjects in the control film condition (Parker, 1990). Both of the aforementioned studies indicate in a clear manner that media presentations do possess the qualities necessary to alter the mood-related states of individuals. In addition, these studies indicate that these ensuing emotional changes can affect subsequent behaviors in many ways.

For the purpose of the present investigation, the specific mood states resulting from exposure to different film genre become a paramount concern. Although it is clear that media do possess the capability to alter mood states, the precise nature of the process is murkier.

Media and positive mood states. In general, a comedy presentation is expected to stimulate production of a positive mood. The question of what produces this result merits further attention. Freud distinguishes between two basic types of jokes, tendentious (purposeful, hostile) and nontentious (nonsense, innocent) jokes. Nontentious jokes are comprised of word play and silly humor, for example humorous rhymes. Tendentious jokes, conversely, include the word play elements of innocent humor, but also contain hostile or forbidden elements as well, such as

laughing at foreigners or sexual topics. The innocent element in these tendentious presentations is necessary to produce the mirthful reaction, because individuals are able to laugh at the hostile, forbidden tendentious humor only when it is veiled with the word play elements of innocent humor. This misattribution allows people to enjoy the hostility, but believe themselves to be laughing at the silliness of the joke's presentation. Scholars (e.g. Freud, 1960; Zillmann & Cantor, 1982) note that at the heart of the enjoyment of many forms of comedy is the element of disparagement.

It would seem possible, then, that because there is so much hostility inherent in certain comedic presentations, the affective state of an individual exposed to such a stimulus may not be the positive type which produces a greater proclivity to provide prosocial behavior. In fact, because of the disparaging elements it logically may produce a decreased likelihood to provide assistance. The tendentious and nonsense humor categorizations, however, provide an explanation for this apparent quandary. As Zillmann (1983) highlights, people do not think of themselves as laughing at the tendentious portion of the jokework, but only at the nonsense portion. As a result, following a comedic presentation containing both types of humor, the intense mirthful reaction is left behind, but in

the individual's mind only the innocuous jokework is remembered as being responsible. The nonsense humor provides an absolution of sorts as one no longer needs to think of oneself as a person who laughs at hostile, disparaging situations. People are left, then, with a positive mood from the presentation, but little recall of the exact circumstances which produced the mirth in the first place. This fortuitous amnesia concerning the hostile elements of the jokes is essential. The behavioral and hedonic elements in the hostile comedic presentation are not remembered as contributing to their mirth. This positive state, then, produces the increased tendency to provide help through the process already specified.

Media and negative affective states. There are more possibilities with regard to negative mood states as opposed to positive ones. There are several gradients of negative affect including anger, sadness, anxiety, and fear. It would seem logical that different types of media content have the ability to contribute to one or more of the aforementioned negative emotional states. The two genres of negative content important at present are horror and tragedy presentations.

In contrast to a comedy presentation, a horror segment would be expected to produce a negative affective state in the viewer, because of the disturbing images that are by

nature a part of the horror genre. Fear and anxiety about one's own plight would be the most likely emotional reactions to viewing a horror film.

The implications for the tragedy presentation also indicate that a negative emotional experience would result from viewing. In this instance, negative feelings would erupt because of the fate that befalls the undeserving character. The specific emotional reaction that would result, however, is open to question. Traditionally, tragedy is thought to evoke sadness and pity in those who are a witness to its presentation. Following this line of reasoning, it might be expected that the negative state elicited by such a presentation would serve to increase the propensity to offer help to another individual. There is extant work, however, that construes the situation with respect to tragedy differently. According to the work of Aristotle, tragedy does not leave those who view it filled with sadness and pity for the one to whom the tragedy has occurred, but ultimately makes viewers fear that what has befallen the character will harm them as well. Additionally, anger results from the realization that the world's circumstances were responsible for the tragedy. Looking at the reactions to a tragic presentation in this manner, these fear and anger responses would lead to a decreased tendency to help. As such, the anticipated impact

of exposure to tragedy presentations on comforting is dependent on the extent to which exposure influences the perceptions of fear and anger or the perceptions of sadness and grief.

### Goals

The aim of the present investigation is to assess the differences in verbal comforting behavior provided to a distressed other as a function of both pertinent empathy variables and the current emotional state of the comforter. The mood state of the comforter will be induced through exposure to different types of film stimuli (comedy, tragedy, or horror) and measured along the dimensions of mirth, fear, and grief. Subjects in the negative emotion-eliciting conditions (tragedy and horror) are expected to provide less comforting messages than those subjects in the positive emotion-eliciting condition (comedy). This study seeks to extend the work in this area by assessing the degree to which consideration of genre-induced mood state can improve our understanding of film exposure's impact on the provision of comforting behavior.

### Method

#### Subjects

120 undergraduate students served as subjects in the experiment. These students were recruited from an introductory communication course at a large midwestern

university. In exchange for their participation in the study, subjects were granted extra credit. Prior to their beginning the experiment, each signed an informed consent form.

### Procedure

Subjects filled out a questionnaire containing empathy measures, additional personality trait measures, and assessments concerning the consumption of sports-related media. The latter two groups of items were included to obscure the importance of the empathy measures. Three weeks after completion of the initial battery, subjects were asked to participate in an ostensibly unrelated study described as a film evaluation session.

Upon arrival, each subject was ushered into the experimental laboratory, where the confederate, whom the subject believed to be simply another participant in the study, was already seated in front of the video monitor. The experimenter had both subject and confederate sign consent forms. The experimenter then told both "subjects" that after viewing the film, they would have to complete a questionnaire. The thirty minute film, either a comedy, tragedy, or horror film, began. Subjects were randomly assigned to their film conditions.

After completion of the film, the experimenter began to videotape the subjects through a two-way mirror. Following

the film credits, the confederate expressed distress over his or her poor academic situation and the distinct possibility of being thrown out of school as a result. The confederate then waited for a response from the subject. If the subject did not respond, the confederate repeated the phrase, "What am I going to do?" If no response was given, the confederate sat quietly until the experimenter returned. If the subject did respond, the confederate, in an attempt to promote further communication, downplayed the effectiveness of any of the offered suggestions by repeating, "I don't know what good that will do." After a period of five minutes, the experimenter ceased the taping and reentered the room where both the subject and the confederate were seated. The experimenter then requested that the subject go with him/her to another room to complete the required questionnaire. The confederate remained in the experimental room.

The subject filled out the questionnaire consisting of his/her present mood state and his/her perceptions about elapsed time of the film. In addition, the subjects were asked if they had seen the film previously, and they were asked their perceptions of both the present experiment and the empathy questionnaire they completed weeks before the laboratory session. This was done to ensure that the subjects were not aware of the true purpose of the study.

No student had seen the film previously or was aware of the purpose. The experimenter debriefed the subjects and told them that the person with whom they had seen the film was a confederate. In addition, the subjects were told that the purpose of the study was to assess the influence of empathy and film condition on the provision of comforting messages to a distressed other. The subjects were informed that their conversation had been taped. The subjects were explicitly asked if they would like to have their tape destroyed. No subjects desired their tapes to be erased. Of course, an assurance of confidentiality was granted to the subjects with regard to their videotape.

#### Confederates

Two male and two female undergraduates served as confederates in the study. To guard against variability in expressions during the conversations with subjects, all followed an identical script with rigid instructions (see Appendix A). The confederates underwent three 2-hour training sessions to familiarize themselves with the procedure and script implementation. Coders were instructed to assess whether the confederate deviated markedly from the dictates of the script.

#### Stimulus Materials

In the horror condition, the film viewed by the subjects was a segment from the feature film release Tales

from the Darkside. In the film, an elderly man hires a hitman to kill a cat that the man believes killed three people close to him, because of his involvement with drug testing on cats. At the end of the film, the cat kills both the hitman and the one who hired him in a grisly manner. Subjects in the comedy condition viewed an episode of Fawlty Towers, a British comedy series, the segment called "Basil the Rat." The program involves a married couple that runs a hotel. Here, one of the hotel's employees, Manuel (the busboy), has a large pet rat that is running loose in the hotel on the day that the health inspector is examining the hotel for violations. Subjects in the tragedy condition viewed a segment of an HBO series, Lifestories: Families in Crisis. In this episode, an abortion parental consent law forces a young girl to have an illegal abortion rather than face the difficulty of telling her parents about her situation. She later dies from an infection due to dirty instrumentation used during the procedure.

### Measures

Film-induced mood state. To assess whether the films created the intended mood state, each subject was asked to evaluate the film they had just viewed. Differences were expected in terms of the mirth, grief, fear, and sensitivity they thought the presentation elicited. The inclusion of sensitivity was based on the results of research by

Tamborini et al. (1994) suggesting that the sensitivity portrayed in a message can be an important determinant of the message's impact on comforting. Each of these moods were scored on items using five point Likert scales. The items employed were selected on the basis of the results of a confirmatory factor analysis. In addition, Cronbach's Alpha was computed for each scale. The scales and reliabilities are shown below in Table 1.

Table 1

Scales and Reliabilities for Film Reaction Items From Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Scale	Alpha
Grief	.86
Mirth	.83
Fear	.89
Sensitivity	.72

In light of the failure of some of these items to meet the requirements of these two tests, several items were removed from the analyses.

The subject's evaluations were assessed by conducting one-way ANOVAs on the responses to the aforementioned items. First, a significant main effects were found for the grief items, tragic, hopeless, and grief-filled, ( $F = 7.32$ ,

$p > .001$ ); the fear items, frightening, terrifying, scary, horrifying, ( $F = 10.31, p < .001$ ); the mirth items, funny, amusing, light-hearted, laugh-filled,  $F = 12.08, p < .001$ ); and the sensitivity times, warm, tender-hearted, sympathetic, ( $F = 6.03, p < .001$ ). Subsequent Student Neuman-Keul's tests were conducted on all the items as shown below in Table 2. Means with no common vertical superscript differ at .05 level.

Table 2

Mean Differences of Grief, Mirth, Fear, Sensitivity and Comforting Measures by Film Condition

	GF	MF	FR	SN	CF
Tragedy	4.13c	1.32a	3.11b	2.32b	5.35a
Comedy	2.04a	4.12c	1.23a	2.57b	6.13b
Horror	3.21b	3.13b	4.07c	1.52a	4.91a

For the grief items, scores for those subjects in the tragedy film condition were significantly higher than for those in the horror condition, which were significantly higher than for those in the comedy condition. In terms of the fear items, the test revealed that the scores for the subjects in the horror film condition were significantly higher than the scores of the tragedy condition subjects,

which were significantly higher than for the comedy condition subjects. With respect to the mirth items, tests demonstrated that scores for the subjects in the comedy condition were significantly higher than for those subjects in the horror condition, which were significantly higher than for those in the tragedy condition. Finally, tests on the sensitivity items demonstrated that scores for subjects in the horror group differed from those in the comedy group and the tragedy group, while there was no significant difference between the tragedy and the comedy group.

Empathy measures. Five empathy dimensions were important in the present investigation. The five items measuring perspective taking and the five items measuring fictional involvement were taken from the work of Davis (1983). The seven items measuring empathic concern were developed also by Davis (1980, 1983). The four items measuring emotional contagion were taken from the work of both Davis (1980, 1983), and Deutsch and Madle (1975). The four items used to assess communicative responsiveness were taken from the work of Stiff (1984).

The items employed to measure each dimension of empathy were selected on the basis of previous studies examining empathic processes and emotional reactions. Confirmatory factor analysis was performed on all of the empathy dimensions. In addition, Cronbach's Alpha was computed for

each scale. Formal tests of internal consistency and parallelism were performed. In light of the failure of some of these items to meet the requirements of the two tests, several items were removed from the analyses. Complete information regarding item content from both the film reaction and empathy scales are included in Appendix B. The scales and their reliabilities are given below in Table 3.

Table 3

Scales and Reliabilities for Empathy Items From Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Scale	Alpha
Emotional Contagion	.70
Perspective Taking	.71
Empathic Concern	.75
Communicative Responsiveness	.74
Fictional Involvement	.74

Comforting Measure. Sensitivity of comforting behavior was measured by a nine-category hierarchical coding scheme developed from the work of Applegate (1980) and later employed in numerous other studies (e.g. Burleson, 1983). This scheme is grounded in Bernstein's distinction between personal and positional speech. Positional speech refers to communication that lacks sensitivity. People employing this

type of speech adapt messages in solely role-centered ways. Personal speech, however, refers to communication targeted at considering the inner thoughts and feelings of the person addressed. The value in using this speech lies in its quality of legitimating the affective states of others. Specifically, a lower score on the scheme represents messages more characteristic of positional speech, whereas messages higher on the coding scheme represent the use of more personal speech. The coding scheme is divided into three superordinate categories: denial of individual perspectivity (1-3), implicit recognition of individual perspectivity (4-6), and finally explicit recognition of individual perspectivity (7-9). Each succeeding category is more comforting (see Appendix C).

This study examined the interactional messages produced during conversations. These responses were coded according to the scheme by two trained coders. Their intercoder reliability was  $\text{Alpha} = .85$ . Coders assigned a comforting score number to each of the statements made by the subject in each turn during the conversation. Consistent with previous use of the scheme, each subject was assigned a final comforting score based on the highest level statement that he/she produced during the entire interaction.

## Results

Correlations among the empathy dimensions, film condition, film evaluation, and comforting were computed. The film condition manipulation was effect coded in concert with the theoretical rationale. Horror, tragedy, and comedy were labeled in ascending order. The corrected correlations used for path analysis are reported in Table 4.

Table 4

### Correlated Correlations for Use in Path Analysis

	PT	FI	EC	ET	CR	FC	CF
PT	1.00						
FI	.28	1.00					
EC	.41	.55	1.00				
ET	.06	.21	.40	1.00			
CR	.31	.23	.49	-.04	1.00		
FC	-.01	.03	.08	.07	.05	1.00	
CF	.18	.17	.23	.03	.03	.15	1.00
GF	.08	.11	.13	.07	.04	-.14	-.09
MF	.04	.08	.02	.05	.01	.03	.07
FR	.06	.05	.09	.08	.03	-.18	-.11
SN	.11	.09	.13	.07	.04	.03	.09
	GF	MF	FR	SN			
GF	1.00						
MF	.14	1.00					
FR	.21	.26	1.00				
SN	.03	.00	.04	1.00			

The path analysis was conducted using a statistical program named PACKAGE (Hunter, 1986). Three criteria are employed to assess the fit of the model. First, path coefficients are assessed to examine whether or not their

values are consistent with what their theoretical rationales indicate they should be. Next, the residual matrices were examined for statistically significant deviations and confidence intervals were drawn around the obtained correlations to assess whether the predicted correlations fall within the range. Last, a global test of the overall fit of the model, using a Chi square test, was employed.

#### Replication of the Empathy-Comforting Model

Initial tests were conducted to replicate the model presented by Tamborini et al. (1993). The hypothesized model and results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5

#### Path Model Results for Initial Model

Variables	Direction	Coefficient
FI to EC	+	.47
PT to EC	+	.28
EC to ET	+	.40
EC to CR	+	.60
ET to CR	-	.28
EC to CF	+	.25
ET to CF	-	.08
FC to CF	+	.14

First, there is a positive path from both fictional involvement and perspective taking to empathic concern. Next, there is a positive path from empathic concern to emotional contagion. Next, there are two paths to communicative responsiveness, a positive one from empathic concern and a negative one from emotional contagion. Finally, there are three predictors of comforting behavior in the model. There are positive paths from empathic concern and from film condition. In addition, there is a negative path from emotional contagion to comforting behavior. The relationship among empathy variables and comforting is consistent with the Tamborini et al. (1993) model.

An examination of the residual matrix indicates that there are no statistically significant residuals. The confidence intervals around the obtained correlations reveal that the correlations predicted by the model all fall within their accepted range. Last, a global Chi square test indicates that the data do not differ significantly from the model (Chi square = 5.28, df = 6,  $p < .05$ ).

#### An Extension: Genre-Induced Mood State

In order to move beyond employing the effect-coded film condition variable as a predictor of comforting behavior in the model, subjects' responses to the film evaluation scales (i.e. grief, fear, mirth, and sensitivity) were included in

place of the path from film condition. The model extends the initial one by employing subjects' mood evaluations following exposure to different genre, not using the manipulated film condition. Each scale was included as a separate predictor of comforting behavior. All other portions of the model remained identical. The hypothesized path model and the results of the analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Path Model Results for Extended Model

Variables	Direction	Coefficient
FI to EC	+	.47
PT to EC	+	.28
EC to ET	+	.40
EC to CR	+	.60
ET to CR	-	.28
EC to CF	+	.27
ET to CF	-	.07
GF to CF	-	.11
MF to CF	+	.12
FR to CF	-	.14
SN to CF	+	.07

The inclusion of the film evaluation scales as separate predictors of comforting behavior improved the amount of comforting behavior differences explained by the model. There was a negative path from the grief scale to comforting behavior such that those subjects who found their film more tragic were less comforting. In addition, there was a

negative path from the fear scale to comforting behavior such that those subjects who found their film more horrifying were less comforting. Next, there was a positive path from the mirth scale to comforting behavior such that those subjects who found their film to be more comedic were more comforting. Finally, there was a positive path from the sensitive scale to comforting behavior such that those subjects who found their film more sensitive were more comforting.

Upon examination, the residual matrix indicates that there are no statistically significant residuals. The confidence intervals drawn around the obtained correlations reveal that the predicted correlations derived from the model all fall within the accepted range. Last, the global Chi square test indicates that the data do not differ significantly from the model (Chi square = 7.56, df = 11,  $p < .05$ ).

### Discussion

The present work had as its primary goal to replicate results of previous experiments investigating the role of empathy and of film exposure on the provision of comforting behavior. In the main, the current findings are consistent with earlier experiments. Specifically, this study is largely consistent with the results of earlier experiments by Stiff et al. (1988) and Tamborini et al. (1993).

### Empathy Dimensions and Comforting

Consistent with Stiff et al., perspective taking led to empathic concern, which in turn influenced prosocial behavior in the form of providing comfort to a distressed individual. The results of this study lend further credence to the model of empathy and prosocial behavior that emerged from the Stiff study.

With regard to the Tamborini et al. (1993) piece, both that study and the present work sought to extend research on the empathy-comforting model by exploring the impact of media-induced short term mood change on the provision of comforting behavior. A path from fictional involvement to empathic concern was emergent in both models. Second, and contrary to the Stiff findings employing noninteractional data, both studies revealed a negative path from emotional contagion to behavioral comforting obtained under face-to-face interaction conditions. According to Tamborini et al. (1993) these contrasts might be explained by differences in the nature of the comforting measures employed by Stiff. If the negative path from contagion to comforting is motivated by a desire of contagious individuals to cope with aversion by avoiding others in distress, the absence of actual distressed others in Stiff's noninteractional measures of comforting (including use of the communicative

responsiveness battery) would repress the path from contagion to comfort.

#### Genre, Mood, and Comforting

The path that emerged in this study's initial model from film condition to comforting behavior illustrates that empathy dimensions alone do not determine the provision of comfort. Individuals who were exposed to the comedic film were more comforting than individuals who were exposed to either the tragedy film or the horror film. This finding has serious implications for the effect of exposure to different film stimuli on prosocial behavior in interpersonal settings. These results indicate that transient mood states are created by exposure to media fare and influence the type of comforting behavior offered to a distressed other. The present findings demonstrate that experiencing media materials of different genre characterized by negative hedonic quality (as in this experiment with a horror and a tragedy film), appear to have the potential to decrease the level of comfort offered to an individual, even if one is high on salient dimensions of empathy in terms of the proclivity to provide comfort. Contrarily, experiencing media materials with a positive hedonic quality (such as comedy) appear to have the potential to increase the tendency to provide comforting

even if the individual is low on relevant dimensions of social support.

The second model tested included separate paths for subjects' evaluations following film exposure, rather than a single path for the manipulated film condition. This is an important extension and refinement because it advances our understanding of the emotional processes associated with different film genre and the manner in which resulting mood states impact the provision of prosocial behavior. The results of the model mirrors previous work with regard to the relationship of comedy and horror to the proclivity to comfort. In several studies, findings indicated that individuals exposed to a comedy film (thought to induce a positive mood) demonstrated an increased proclivity to comfort as compared with those exposed to a horror film (e.g. Tamborini, Salomonson, & Bahk, 1993a). Similarly, the results associated with sensitivity are consistent with Tamborini et al. (1994) where individuals exposed to materials with higher sensitivity demonstrated greater comforting behavior. The results of the final model extend these previous findings by employing subjects' actual mood evaluations following exposure to different genre, instead of using the intended effect of the manipulated film condition.

This consistent state of affairs, however, does not exist in terms of results on the impact of tragedy. In the current investigation, subjects in the tragedy condition were less likely to offer comfort to a distressed individual than subjects in the comedy condition. This finding is contrary to earlier models indicating that exposure to tragedy was equal in its ability to increase comforting behavior under conditions of moderate to high sensitivity (Tamborini, et al., 1994; Tamborini, Salomonson, & Bahk, 1993b). This quandary may be explained by considering differences in the sensitivity levels of the materials used in each of these studies. In the Tamborini et al. (1993b) study, materials were specifically created to display low, moderate, and high levels of sensitivity for different conditions of tragedy. After exposure, subjects revealed a significantly increased tendency to provide comfort only under conditions of moderate to sensitivity. In the present study, these conditions do not appear to exist in the tragedy presentation employed. Subject reaction scores in the tragedy condition indicate that the tragedy was not perceived as a sensitive portrayal of events. Since the main character was treated callously by numerous individuals in this film, the insensitivity portrayed here may be responsible for the decreased comfort that followed exposure. The findings of previous studies showing

increased comfort associated with tragedy may have been due to the high levels of sensitivity contained in those tragic portrayals which was not found in the present study.

The results presented here most certainly are not a place at which to end. While the study accomplished a refinement of the empathy-comforting model, there are areas in need of greater explication. First, researchers should attempt to more finely assess the mood states of subjects in future work. Perhaps a combination of self-report mood measures, physiological indices, and nonverbal facial affect coding would be a fruitful way to more fully describe the constellation of possible mood responses. Next, in the area of the dimensions of empathy, additional work is needed on more short term empathic processes. In the present investigation, measures of empathy were taken weeks in advance and were considered stable dispositional characteristics. Perhaps different empathic processes result from exposure to various types of mood-inducing stimuli. Finally, this investigation paired strangers together for a comforting interaction. This relationship may not be the most interesting and important one to assess. Provision of social support in general, and comforting in particular, is far more likely to be found in more well-established relationships. As such, investigations need to

focus on different types of relationships, for example coworkers, friends, and romantic partners.

The goal of this investigation was to further work on the empathy-comforting model by attempting to specify the influence of mood on the process. The study suggests that consideration of individual differences in the affective states of subjects following exposure to films provides better prediction of comforting behavior than simple consideration of environmental stimuli represented in film genre.

## APPENDICES

**APPENDIX A**

## APPENDIX A

### SCRIPT FOR STUDY

Both the subjects and the Confederate in the experiment wait outside the experimental room. The confederate greets the subject with a simple "HELLO", and does not initiate any further conversation. The Experimenter comes out and greets the two people as if they are both subjects, and hands them a consent form to sign. When the two are both finished, the Experimenter seats the subjects in the chair farthest from the door, while the Confederate sits closest to the door.

\*EXPERIMENTER: Hello, My name is \_\_\_\_\_. We would like the two of you to participate in a television viewing study. Before we begin today I need to check and make sure that the two people who are supposed to be with me are here. [Read off the two names and repeat their first names]. The study deals with reactions to different types of film stimuli. You will view a short film and after the film is over, I will be back to ask the two of you some questions. Remember, if at any time you wish to discontinue, you are free to leave and will still receive credit for the experiment. I will begin the film now. When the film is over, please wait here and I will return.

EXPERIMENTER places the correct tape in the machine and turns on the cassette. The EXPERIMENTER leaves the room and returns to the observation room. At the end of the film, returns to the observation room. At the end of the film, but before the credits, the EXPERIMENTER starts to videotape the subject.

The CONFEDERATE while viewing the films, reacts to the content of the films in a regular way -- but not too much reaction. You want to appear to be wrapped up in your own problems, so do not laugh too much, etc. If during the film, the subject tries to converse with you, answer with short attempts to discourage any further interaction. CONFEDERATE initiates the conversation with the subject, immediately after the credits are over.

\*CONFEDERATE: I don't know about you, but I can sure use this extra credit. If I don't pass COMM 200, I don't know what I am going to do. I'm already on probation, and I bombed the midterm. Even with this, I don't think I have a chance to pass. If I fail, I could get kicked out of school. My folks will kill me when they find out. What am I going to do?

-Wait for a response from the subject.

-If the subject says nothing, ask "What would you do if you were me?" once only. If the subject still says

nothing, just sit quietly until the EXPERIMENTER returns.

-If the subject makes any suggestions, the CONFEDERATE responds by saying, "What good will that do?"

-If the subject asks questions, the CONFEDERATE responds by saying, "Nothing makes any difference at all."

The EXPERIMENTER tapes the interaction between the subject and the CONFEDERATE for five minutes and then stops recording. The EXPERIMENTER returns to the room to get the subject.

\*EXPERIMENTER: That is the end of the first part of the study and in the second part of the study, I need to ask each of you some questions. This part of the study needs to be done individually, \_\_\_\_\_ (Subject's name) will you come with me to another room?

The CONFEDERATE rewinds the tape in the machine after the subject has been escorted to another room.

The EXPERIMENTER seats the subject in the room across the hall.

\*EXPERIMENTER: This questionnaire will tell you a little more about what the study is trying to assess. (HAND THEM THE QUESTIONNAIRE). Please read it and answer the questions. (COLLECT IT WHEN THROUGH, AND HAND THEM THE EVALUATION OF RESEARCH FORM). And lastly, complete this

form telling us what you thought of the research you have completed this term. (COLLECT IT WHEN HRUGH, AND BEGIN TO DEBRIEF).

\*EXPERIMENTER: You have now completed all of the parts of the study. The study was designed to assess the impact of different types of film exposure on social interaction. In order to accomplish this, we wanted to observe the manner in which you handled a fellow student that was displaying distress. The student with whom you watched the film was a part of the experiment. These interactions will be coded to assess whether they differ following exposure to different types of films. Some subjects watched films different from the one that you did.

We have videotaped the interaction between the two of you. We apologize for having to do it without your knowledge. If you feel uncomfortable with the tape's existence, we will erase the tape right now while you wait to ensure that it is completely erased. This will be done without penalty for you, you will still receive credit for the experiment. If you do allow the use of your videotape in the study, it is important that you know that immediately following the coding of the videotape by the researchers, your tape will be erased. Finally, during the time that your tape is in existence, it will remain completely confidential as only those coding the tapes will look at

them. Since we feel that what took place in the interaction was just a normal part of everyday life, we hope that you will allow us to include your tape in the study. The study is an important one and should aid in the understanding of factors that influence social interaction.

You have now completed the research requirement. Thank you for participation. If you have further questions, I'll be glad to answer anything that I can, or you may speak to Kristen Salomonson if you have any other questions. The only other thing that I ask of you is that you not discuss this experiment with other classmates. If anyone asks you about it, tell them that you were asked not to disclose anything.

The EXPERIMENTER answers any questions that the subject may have. Then, the EXPERIMENTER walks the subjects out of the room. The EXPERIMENTER returns to the observation room and fills out a subject record sheet including whether the subject was aware of the purpose of the experiment, then checks the schedule for the next participant, and what film should be used.

The CONFEDERATE then walks out and sits in the chair as if they are waiting for the experiment to begin.

## APPENDIX B

## APPENDIX B

### Measures

#### Film Reaction Items

##### Grief

The film was tragic, hopeless, grief-filled.

##### Mirth

The film was funny, amusing, light-hearted, laugh-filled.

##### Fear

The film was frightening, terrifying, scary, horrifying.

##### Sensitivity

The film was warm, tender-hearted, sympathetic.

#### Empathy Items

##### Emotional Contagion

I cannot continue to feel OK if people around me are depressed.

I don't get upset just because a friend is acting upset.

I become nervous if others around me seem nervous.

The people around me have a great influence on my moods.

### Perspective Taking

Before criticizing someone, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place

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

I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the other person's point of view (R).

I try to look at everyone's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.

When I am upset at someone I usually try to put myself in his or her shoes for a while.

### Empathic Concern

I am the type of person who is concerned when other people are unhappy.

When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.

I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than myself.

I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.

I sometimes don't feel very sorry for people when they are having problems.

Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal.

I am often touched by things that I see happen.

### Communicative Responsiveness

I am the type of person who can say the right thing at the right time.

Even though I often try to console someone who is feeling bad, I never seem to be able to say the right thing.

I usually respond appropriately to the feelings of others.

Others think of me as an empathic person.

My friends come to me with their problems because I am a good listener.

### Fictional Involvement

I really get involved with the feelings and characters in a novel.

When I am reading an interesting novel or story, I imagine how I would feel if the events were to happen to me.

After acting in a play, or seeing a play or a movie, I have felt partly as though I were one of the characters.

When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of the lead character.

I become very involved when I watch a movie.

APPENDIX C

## APPENDIX C

### Coding Scheme

#### I. Denial of Individual Perspective

The speaker condemns or ignores the specific feelings that exist in the situation for the person addressed. This denial may be explicit or implicit.

1. The speaker condemns the feelings of another.

ex. "There's no reason to feel that way about not getting invited and if she did not invite me, she's no friend of mine."

2. The speaker challenges the legitimacy of the other's feelings.

ex. "There is nothing to be upset about--it's just an old party."

3. The speaker ignores feelings experienced by the other. Frequently, this includes statements telling the other to "forget" about the situation or tells one how to feel about the situation.

ex. "There'll be other parties. Just be happy about going to those."

#### II. Implicit recognition of individual perspectivity.

The speaker provides some implicit acceptance of/or positive response to the feelings of others, but does

not specifically mention, elaborate, or legitimize those feelings.

4. The speaker attempts to divert the other's attention from the distressful situation and the feelings that arise from that situation.

ex. "When it's my party I'll invite you."

5. The speaker acknowledges the feelings of the other, but does not attempt to help the other understand why those feelings are being experienced or how to cope with them.

ex. "I'm sorry you did not get invited to the party."

6. The speaker provides a nonfeeling-centered explanation of the situation intended to reduce the distressed emotional state of the other. This often includes references to mitigating circumstances.

ex. "Maybe your invitation was lost in the mail or maybe there wasn't enough room to invite everyone."

III. Explicit recognition and elaboration of individual perspectivity.

The speaker explicitly acknowledges, elaborates, and legitimizes the feelings of others. These strategies may include attempts to provide a general understanding

of the situation. Coping strategies may be suggested in conjunction with an explication of the other's feelings.

7. Speaker explicitly recognizes and acknowledges the feelings of the other, but provides only a truncated explanation of these feelings. (Often accompanied by attempts to remedy the situation.)

ex. "I know you feel badly about not going to the party, but you are my friend and lots of people like you. When my party comes up, I'll invite you."

8. The speaker provides an elaborated acknowledgment and explanation of the other's feelings.

ex. "Gosh, I'm sorry about the party. I did not mean to make you feel badly by mentioning it, but I know that I did. It's not fun being left out. Maybe it is a mistake. Why don't you talk to her about it."

9. The speaker helps the other gain perspective on his or her feelings and attempts to help the other see their feelings in relation to the broader context of the feelings of others.

ex. "I understand how you feel. I too have not been invited to parties that I've wanted to attend. I'm sure that you feel rejected."

Maybe there just wasn't room to have everyone that she wanted to have. I mean, I've had parties where I could not invite all the people that I wanted to. It doesn't necessarily mean that she does not like you."

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