Empathy

Before you criticize someone, you should walk a mile in their shoes. That way when you criticize them, you are a mile away from them and you have their shoes.

-Jack Handey

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Elements of empathy are present at birth

- We are social creatures
- “like me” is the foundation of all learning
Development of Empathy

- At Birth
  - Imitation, Emotion Matching, Emotional Contagion
- 10 months
  - Self-regulation, can respond to affective signals
- 2 year
  - Pro-social behavior

- Hutman & DaPretto, 2009
We must recognize that the suffering of one person or one nation is the suffering of humanity. That the happiness of one person or nation is the happiness of humanity.

- Dalai Lama
Fewer homeless people on streets of San Francisco

Empathy is a social glue

- Cognitive
  - Perspective Taking
  - Fantasy

- Affective
  - Empathic Concern
  - Personal Distress

Davis, 1980; 1983
Kevin Ware

Social Pain
Perspective Taking

Low Status SELF

High Status STRANGER
Status

- Group Based
  - SES
- Physiological
  - Testosterone
Testosterone

- Personality Trait
  - Sellers et al., 2007
- Predicts Status Preference
  - Josephs, Sellers et al., 2005
The Testosterone Mindset

- Testosterone as a Social Inhibitor (Groom, Pennebaker & Dabbs, 2006)
  - Words are a window into our minds
    - Predict testosterone inhibits “I” and “you”
Testosterone & Language
2 studies

Study 1
- 79 participants wrote an application for an influential position on a psychology panel
- Normalized testosterone within gender and took the upper and lower thirds of the combined distribution (31 females and 19 males).
- 2 (testosterone: high, low) x 2 (sex: male, female) ANOVA
- DV’s: I, you

Sellers & Josephs, in preparation
Low testosterone

- I believe that I deserve this position because I am very motivated and very open minded. By being on this panel, I can make my opinions matter and help in making major decisions. Not only will I be voicing my opinions but I will be responsible for taking on the responsibility of representing all undergraduate students in psychology. My opinions are very valid. I am very educated and very smart. I am on the Dean’s List which shows that I am very studious and hard working. This means that my decisions and thoughts are highly thought out and organized. I do not like to jump into a problem without first planning and logically thinking it through. I hope that all my good strong qualities are what you are looking for in your panel. If you need a strong willed, open minded, great listener, and a highly educated person, I am the one for you.
I am qualified for this position because I am not majoring in Psychology, and I have experience in democratic meetings. Since the board has many psychology professors residing, it would cause a bias in a student who is being taught by these professors. I would not be influenced or have a bias since my dependency of my graduation is very minimally affected by psychology professors. In this respect, I would provide valuable unbiased opinions to the board. I can provide these opinions very efficiently because I have gained experience in parliamentary procedure. I have lived in cooperative housing since my freshman year. At this coop we have two weekly meetings which discuss membership and house issues. These meetings have a scribe and mediator. During these meetings, people have previously written the topic on an agenda board. We follow this agenda according to parliamentary procedure. I have learned how to table an issue, make a motion, and be brief. These experiences qualify me for this position.
IF (1,46) = 4.12, \( p = .05 \)

\[ F(1,46)=4.12, \ p=.05 \]

IF (1,46) = 5.54, \( p = .02 \)

\[ F(1,46)=5.54, \ p=.02 \]
Study 2 – spoken language

- 30 female participants arrived to the experiment in same sex dyads.
- Competed against one another on rigged competition
- After the competition was over, participants sat together in the room while the experimenter ostensibly finished up with paperwork. The conversation that took place during this time was later transcribed from the video recording.
- The upper and lower thirds of the testosterone distribution was computed, leaving a total of 20 female participants.
High Testosterone
Low Testosterone

Self Words

References to Others

Sellers & Josephs, in preparation
Testosterone inhibits social connectedness

Testosterone inhibits empathic accuracy (Hermans, Putnam & van Honk, 2006)
- Reading the Mind in the Eyes
Figure 1. Mediation of the effect of testosterone on interpersonal leadership via empathic accuracy. Numbers represent standardized regression coefficients; numbers in parentheses represent simultaneous regression coefficients. *p < .05. **p < .01.
What is the association between testosterone and leadership?
It depends on the situation

- Testosterone vs. Self-Reported Dominance
  - Self-reported dominance predicts behavior across situations
  - Testosterone predicts behavior in challenging situations
Study Overview

- Measures of self-reported dominance as well as testosterone
- “selected” participants to lead either an agreeable or hostile group

Sellers, 2006
Methods

- 74 participants, 68 after 6 were dropped for suspicion
  - 33 female, mean T = 18.95 pg/ml
  - 35 male, mean T = 137.02 pg/ml

- Testosterone sample

- Self-reported dominance
  - Personality Research Form (Jackson, 1977); t/f
    - Dominance subscale
The scenario

Focus Group – Family Planning
Leaders job is to solicit input from the group and decide on a recommendation
Attitudes on Abortion
Desire for Leadership (time 1)

Sellers, 2006
Desire for Leadership (1-5)

- How much would you like to lead the group?
- How comfortable would you feel in the leadership position?
- How competent do you feel you would be deciding on a recommendation?
Confrontational Condition

“I need to be up front with you and tell you that the discussion may get quite heated. About half of the members are for a woman’s right to choose and the other half are against it. As leader of the group, it may be very difficult for you to get everyone to come to a consensus and sign the written statement. I can assure you, based on my experience with previous focus groups that this is probably going to be a very heated discussion and therefore a difficult job for the leader. If you are having second thoughts about your role as leader, you need to indicate it on these forms so I can select a new leader.”
Agreeable Condition

“I want to be up front with you and tell you that the discussion will probably go quite smoothly. The other members’ views are all aligned with yours. As leader of the group, it should not be very difficult for you to get everyone to come to a consensus and sign the written statement. If you are having second thoughts about your role as leader, however, you need to indicate it on these forms so I can select a new leader.”
Desire for Leadership (time 2; 1-5)
- Are you willing to lead the group?
- Would you prefer that someone else lead the group?
- If you are not willing to lead, but no one else in the group indicates that they are willing to do so either, are you willing to reconsider?

Sellers, 2006
Time 1 Leadership Desire

- testosterone $\rightarrow$ no
  $B = .006, t(64) = .051, p = .959$

- PRF $\rightarrow$ significant
  $B = .326, t(64) = 2.47, p = .016$

Sellers, 2006
Desire to Lead

**Disagree** - $R^2$ change $F(1, 27) = 3.308$, $p = .080$, $B = 1.164$, $R^2$ change = .083
Summary

- Only emerged during conflict
- Self-Reported Dominance guided behavior
- Testosterone predicted “follow through” under threat

Sellers, 2006
Implication

- The people most willing to lead in difficult times are those who are the least able to consider and correctly identify the perspectives of others.
We must recognize that the suffering of one person or one nation is the suffering of humanity. That the happiness of one person or nation is the happiness of humanity.

- Dalai Lama
Current Research

Prof. Cronise
Metta Earth Institute
Center for Mindfulness Learning
Student Research Symposium

Madeline Brooks
Kristina Conroy
Scarlett Kirk