



# An Examination of Common Strategies to Improve Intergroup Relations and Minority Group Members' Perceptions of Group Social Standing and Individual Power



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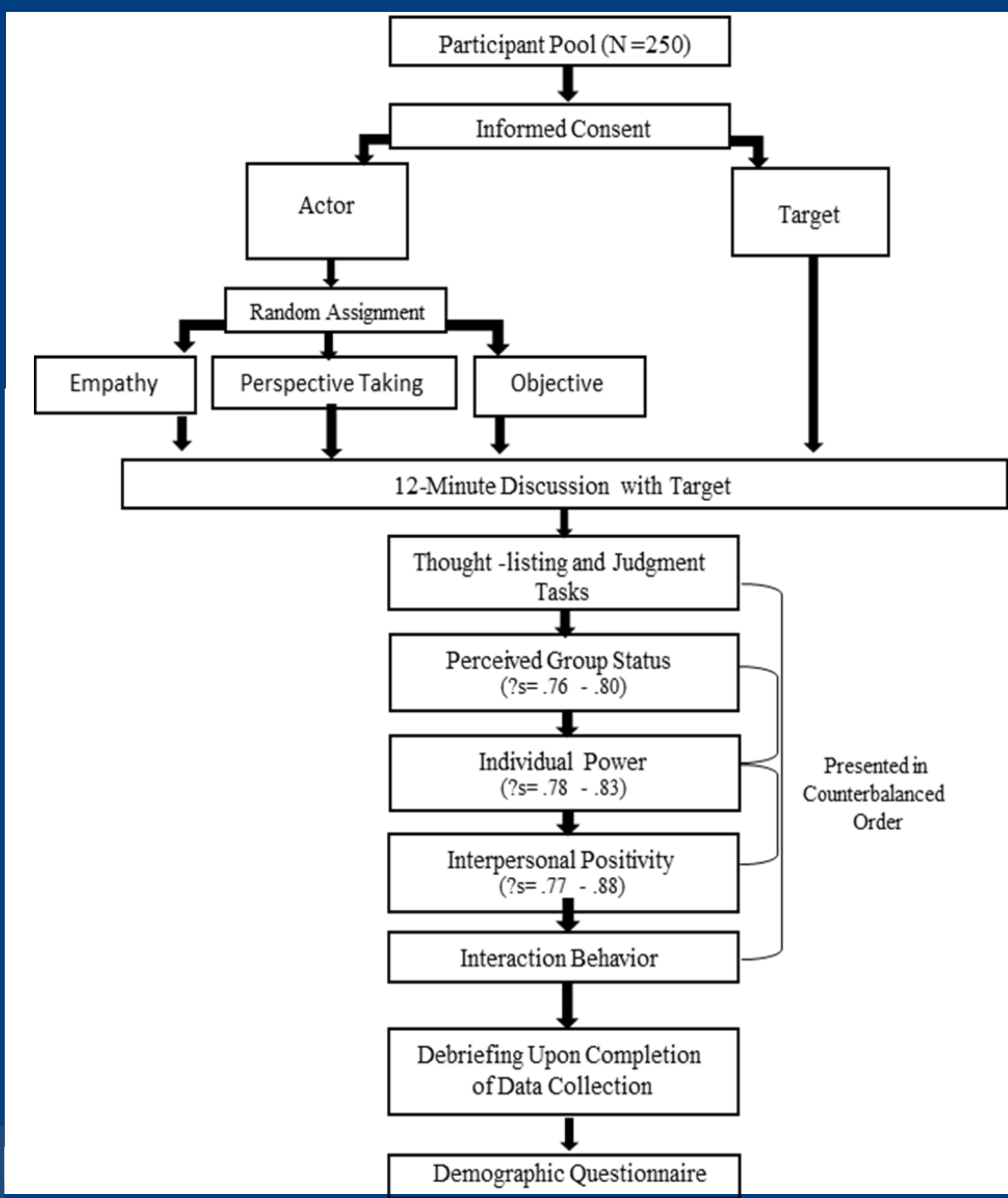
## PURPOSE

Vorauer and Quesnel (2016) examined the effects empathy, perspective taking, and an objective control condition as intergroup relation strategies on a sample comprised of White (majority) and Indigenous (minority) Canadians. Their findings indicate that targets of empathy rather than perspective taking experienced a significant decrease in perceptions of their groups' social status and power. The present study will replicate and extend this research to a sample of White and Black Americans.

## SUMMARY

With few exceptions, the research examining perspective taking and empathy as intergroup relation strategies has focused on the benefits of each strategy on members of the majority group (Vorauer & Quesnel, 2016). This research will focus on the potentially negative impact of empathy compared to perspective taking and objectivity as a control condition on Black minority students in the American South in the context of intergroup exchanges.

## METHODOLOGY



## INTERGROUP RELATIONS STRATEGIES

- Empathy and Perspective taking are often utilized as strategies for increasing positive intergroup relations among members of majority and minority groups (Vorauer & Quesnel, 2016).
- Engaging in empathy involves creating an affective/motor/cognitive connection with another individual's emotional behavior (Brook & Kosson, 2013). Within intergroup contexts, researchers often attempt to evoke an emotional response oriented at another individual (Batson et al., 1997).
- Previous research has shown that empathy is effective at increasing actors' altruistic behavior such that individuals that experience empathy towards a target often strive to decrease negative emotional states in others (for review see Batson, Ahmad, & Lishner, 2009; Vorauer, 2013). However, individuals are most likely to empathize with others if they are of a higher social status and the target is of a lower social status (Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978).
- Perspective taking is the process through which individuals imagine the world through another individual's perspective, and it is imperative for appropriate social functioning (Galinsky, Ku, & Wang, 2005).
- When individuals take the perspective of another, research has shown an increase in the mental self and other overlap of the actor, increase in actors' social bonds with targets through decreased prejudice, and decreased stereotyping toward members of their minority group (Davis, Conklin, Smith, & Luce, 1996; Batson et al., 1997; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000a).
- Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson, and Galinsky (2011) found that Black participants experienced increased intergroup positivity with White participants following perspective taking. However, they also found that all participants experienced an increase in perceptions of racial inequalities among their groups.

## HYPOTHESES

- H1:** It is hypothesized that the induction of empathy compared to perspective taking and objectivity as intergroup relation strategies will decrease minority group members perceived social standing in society when they engage in intergroup interactions with majority group members.
- H2:** It is hypothesized that minority group members perceived individual-level power will decrease based on the induction of empathy compared to perspective taking and objectivity as intergroup relation strategies in interactions with majority group members.
- H3:** It is hypothesized that minority group members perceived interpersonal positivity will decrease based on the induction of empathy compared to perspective taking and objectivity as intergroup relation strategies in interactions with majority group members.
- H4:** It is hypothesized that minority group members' pair interactions with majority group members will be perceived as less balanced based upon the induction of empathy compared to perspective taking and objectivity as intergroup relation strategies.

## EXPERIMENTAL MANIPULATIONS

**EMPATHIC SCRIPT** (Batson et al., 1997): We have found that people are better able to answer these questions if, during the discussion, they try to imagine how the other participant feels about the events and experiences that he/she describes and to imagine how these events and experiences have affected his/her life. Try to feel the full impact of the experiences that he/she has had and how he/she feels as a result.

**PERSPECTIVE TAKING SCRIPT** (Vorauer & Sucharyna, 2013): We have found that people are better able to answer these questions if they try to take the other participant's perspective during the discussion. So, please concentrate on trying to get inside the other participant's head and on looking at the discussion through his/her eyes. That is, imagine as clearly and vividly as possible what your reactions would be if you were the other participant, taking into account everything that you know about him/her and trying to adopt his/her own way of looking at things.

**OBJECTIVE CONTROL SCRIPT** (Batson et al., 1997): We have found that people are better able to answer these questions if they try to take an objective perspective toward the other participant during the discussion. Try not to get caught up in how he/she feels. Just remain objective and detached.

## DISCUSSION

Due to the differences in goals that members of majority and minority groups hold, individuals experience each type of intergroup relation strategy through the lens of their most salient social group (Bergsieker, Shelton, & Richeson, 2010). Additionally, Kurtz-Costes, DeFreitas, and Kinlaw (2011) have shown that race is so salient for young Black and White Americans that it influences their development of group identity and social behavior. By replicating and extending the findings of Vorauer and Quesnel (2016) to a sample of Black and White Americans, the present study contributes to our understanding of both the differences in goals that group members tend to hold and to our understanding of the development of group identity and social behavior.

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