worker and are primarily motivated to alleviate the worker’s distress rather than their own. Whether they can escape or not has no bearing on this issue, so they should help as much when they can escape the situation as when they can’t escape the situation.

Figure 12.5 shows these predicted effects, and several investigations have produced this same pattern of findings (Batson, Duncan, Ackerman, Buckley, & Birch, 1981; Batson, O’Quin, Fultz, Vanderplas, & Isen, 1983; Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978; Toi & Batson, 1982). Participants who are being empathic feel sympathetic toward the victim and help even when they can easily escape the situation, whereas those who are not being empathic experience high levels of personal distress and help only when escape is difficult. In consideration of these findings, Batson believes that empathy produces a form of altruistic motivation in which alleviating the other person’s distress is our primary goal.

Challenges to Batson’s Findings. Batson’s research has clearly established that empathy promotes helping even when escape is easy, but whether or not this helping is altruistic remains the source of some debate. At least four issues have been raised:

- People who empathize with a victim feel sadder than those who remain detached, and they help in order to alleviate their own sorrow rather than to promote the other person’s welfare (Cialdini et al., 1987; Schaller & Cialdini, 1988).
- People who are empathic anticipate feeling particularly guilty if they fail to help someone they care about, so they help in order to avoid feelings of remorse and regret (Dovidio, 1984).
- Because they view the situation from the other person’s perspective, people who are empathic help because they feel particularly joyful when the other person’s situation improves (K. D. Smith, Keating, & Stotland, 1989).
- High empathy produces a form of psychological merging, whereby self and other are seen as a single psychological unit. Consequently, helping the other person is a disguised form of egoistic helping (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, & Newberg, 1997; Maner et al., 2002).

Batson and others have conducted research to address each of these alternative explanations (e.g., Batson et al., 1988; Batson et al., 1989; Batson et al., 1991; Batson