

**Does Outgroup Gratitude Predict Outgroup Helping? The Mediating Role of Outgroup
Empathy**

Katharina Kulle

s3774872

Department of Psychology, University of Groningen

PSB3E-BT15: Bachelor Thesis
Group number 21

Supervisor: Ana Figueiredo Leal

Second evaluator: dr. Mirjam Frey

In collaboration with: Yla Nguyen, Franciscus Peters, Rosa Schues

June 24, 2022

A thesis is an aptitude test for students. The approval of the thesis is proof that the student has sufficient research and reporting skills to graduate, but does not guarantee the quality of the research and the results of the research as such, and the thesis is therefore not necessarily suitable to be used as an academic source to refer to. If you would like to know more about the research discussed in this thesis and any publications based on it, to which you could refer, please contact the supervisor mentioned.

Abstract

Gratitude is a positive emotion which occurs between the benefactor and the beneficiary. Previous research explored the benefits of gratitude in an interpersonal context, such as engaging in prosocial behaviors. However, benefits of gratitude may extend to the intergroup context. Gratitude directed toward the outgroup was explored as a novel factor in this research. This study examined whether and why outgroup gratitude promotes outgroup helping behavior in a political intergroup context in the US. We hypothesized that outgroup gratitude predicts outgroup helping, and outgroup empathy mediated this relationship. An online experiment was conducted including 225 American Democrats. We found no effect of outgroup gratitude on outgroup helping, and outgroup empathy, and thus, outgroup empathy did not play a mediating role. We found a significant indirect effect of outgroup empathy. Theoretical implications of the findings are discussed. Directions for future research are to test the hypothesis in a different intergroup context.

Keywords: gratitude, helping behavior, prosocial behavior, empathy, outgroup, intergroup

Does Outgroup Gratitude Predict Outgroup Helping? The Mediating Role of Outgroup Empathy

Gratitude is a moral other-praising emotions which is experienced when a benefactor gave or had the intention to give something valuable to another person (McCullough et al., 2001; McCullough & Tsang, 2004). Therefore, it has the potential to motivate individuals to improve their relationship with the benefactor (Algoe et al., 2013), such as through helping behavior (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006). However, research has not yet examined how gratitude can motivate helping behavior in contexts of intergroup relations. In this research, we examine whether outgroup gratitude predicts outgroup helping and whether this relationship can be explained by outgroup empathy.

Gratitude in the Context of Intergroup Relations

Gratitude is defined as a positive emotion that occurs in the interpersonal context (Algoe & Stanton, 2012) and it is proposed that it is a method for fostering behaviors between beneficiary and benefactor (Algoe, 2012). Further, it is suggested that gratitude predicts higher collaboration (Sznycer et al., 2016). Gratitude seems essential to maintain relationships between individuals (Bartlett & Steno, 2006) and fulfills a social function (Algoe & Haidt, 2004; Emmons & McCullough, 2004). Additionally, gratitude is linked to positive emotions. Dispositional gratitude predicts positive emotions such as happiness, hope and joy (Watkins et al., 2018; Witvliet et al., 2019). Indeed, someone who is grateful is more likely to acknowledge beneficial behaviors which are directed toward them and evaluate them as valuable which can lead to positive outcomes (Watkins et al., 2018). Further, individuals being high in trait gratitude are higher in ‘mindful attentiveness’ which is associated to hope (McCullough et al., 2002). Also, grateful individuals engage in behavioral patterns that are linked to happiness (McCullough et al., 2002). These ‘cognitive tendencies’, acknowledging benefits and being attentive toward them, are predictors of positive emotions. Moreover, a

grateful disposition is related to positive affect and overall well-being (McCullough, 2002; Kashdan et al., 2006).

Gratitude has mainly been investigated in contexts of interpersonal relations or within a group (Algoe et al., 2013 and Jackson et al., 2001). However, gratitude cannot only be directed toward individuals of an ingroup or others in general but also toward outgroups (Rambaud et al., 2021). This is important because advantages of gratitude can be expanded to intergroup relations (Doosje et al., 2005). Indeed, some research suggests that positive emotions can be a way of improving intergroup relations, *including* gratitude (Armenta et al., 2017; Tam et al., 2008). For example, some research indicates that feelings of hope and empathy predict behavioral outcomes (e.g., support for policies and concessions) that contribute to peacemaking in the context of intergroup conflict (Cohen-Chen et al., 2014; Halperin et al., 2016). Additionally, positive emotions are an essential factor in alleviating intergroup conflict by *eliciting positive behavior tendencies* prosocial behavior (Halperin et al., 2013). We extend this line of research by proposing that gratitude can be another positive emotion that facilitates positive behavior toward outgroups and, thus reduce intergroup tension or conflict.

Outgroup-Based Gratitude and Outgroup Helping

Gratitude is an emotion that triggers affiliative motives and contributes to positive social relationships, such as positive emotions (Algoe et al., 2012; Watkins et al., 2018; Witvliet et al., 2019), prosocial behaviors between the benefactor and the beneficiary (Algoe & Haidt, 2004; Emmons & McCullough, 2004) and helping behaviors toward strangers (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006). Induced gratitude is positively associated with prosocial behaviors in children (Shoshani et al., 2020) and it promotes helping behavior at the workplace (Sawyer et al., 2022). Individuals even engage in helping toward a benefactor when it is ‘hedonically negative’ (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006). Additionally, gratitude induced

toward an outgroup predicted higher willingness to give social support toward the outgroup (Collange & Guegan, 2020). Therefore, gratitude can be a way of connecting with others through prosociality-oriented behavior.

However, gratitude may not always induce helping behavior, especially in contexts of intergroup relations. A large body of research shows that ingroups tend to have a negative perception of outgroups, and are less likely to engage in helping behavior toward them (Abrams et al., 2015; Berry et al., 2021). Indeed, prejudice toward the outgroup, ingroup favoritism and outgroup-hatred are contributing to negative intergroup relations and in turn do not elicit outgroup helping behavior (Rambaud et al., 2021; Carlo et al., 2022; Halperin et al., 2008). Accordingly, feeling grateful in general may not be sufficient to counteract ingroup's perceptions of the outgroup in contexts of conflict. However, we suggest that gratitude directed at them can be a way of facilitating such helping behaviors.

Outgroup-based gratitude can increase prosocial behavior intentions toward the outgroup. Shifting the perspective of the outgroup by inducing gratitude toward the outgroup may be a way of promoting outgroup helping behavior. There is evidence in research that a cognitive shift of negative emotions to positive emotions alleviates intergroup conflict (Halperin et al., 2013). Correspondingly, some research suggested that specifically gratitude directed toward the outgroup leads to a cognitive shift which facilitates outgroup helping whereas incidental gratitude does not lead to a cognitive shift (Gross et al., 2013). Moreover, research by Gross (1998) proposed that the focus of the attention, which alters the perspective toward the outgroup, in the process model of emotion regulation is responsible for the cognitive shift when gratitude is directed toward an outgroup. Emotions are an influential factor in intergroup conflict (Halperin et al., 2014; Bar-Tal et al., 2007) and gratitude can lead to positive emotions (McCullough et al., 2002; Watkins et al., 2018; Witvliet et al., 2019) which in turn can have a positive impact on intergroup conflict (Halperin et al., 2011).

Further, research suggested that positive emotions are associated with helping behavior tendencies (Carlson et al., 1988; Aknin et al., 2018). Thus, we propose that inducing gratitude toward the outgroup leads to a shift in a more positive perspective of the outgroup which in turn facilitates outgroup helping behavior.

The Mediating Role of Empathy Toward the Outgroup

Empathy is defined as the ability to understand and share the perspective and experienced affective responses of other people as well as their expressed emotional state (Eisenberg, et al., 2006). Further, intergroup empathy is defined as experienced empathy related to group membership (Vanmann, 2016). The presence of empathy in an intergroup context predicted liking members of the outgroup more, which were disliked before (Yabar & Hess, 2007). Moreover, empathizing with one member of the outgroup may be sufficient to predict higher positive attitudes toward the outgroup, as one outgroup member can be representative for the whole outgroup (Tarant et al., 2009).

We propose that outgroup empathy may explain why outgroup gratitude may predict outgroup helping. There is some evidence that gratitude predicts empathy (Bono et al. 2019). Nonetheless, little research was done in the context of intergroup relations. However, we propose that inducing gratitude in the ingroup toward the outgroup may lead to a better understanding of the perspectives and emotional states of the outgroup (Decety & Jackson, 2004). This can be defined as outgroup empathy. Indeed, the ability of perspective taking is an important factor why outgroup gratitude may predict outgroup empathy. Research shows that gratitude encourages to express concern for the other (McCullough et al., 2008) whereas empathy is defined as having an understanding for the expressed emotional state of the other person (Eisenberg, et al., 2006). Additionally, evidence from previous research suggested that by targeting gratitude toward the outgroup a cognitive shift takes place which alters the perspective toward the outgroup (Gross et al., 2013; Gross, 1998). Moreover, the attention

toward the outgroup is an important factor why outgroup gratitude may predict outgroup empathy. This change in perspective may facilitate outgroup empathy, because members of the ingroup might be more prone to empathize with members of the outgroup. Thus, we propose that outgroup gratitude may predict outgroup empathy.

Outgroup empathy may predict outgroup helping. There is some evidence from previous research that shows that the motivation to behave prosocially can be elicited by empathy (Masten et al., 2011; McMahon et al., 2006; Sahdra et al., 2015). Further, research showed that cognitive empathy, which is the ability of perspective taking, is associated with engaging in prosocial tendencies (Brazil et al., 2022). Some research suggests that empathy facilitates prosocial behaviors in an intergroup context (O'Driscoll et al. 2021; Fuouchi et al., 2018). Further, empathy seems to be related to the engagement in outgroup helping behavior tendencies and is associated with a higher positive perspective toward the outgroup (Taylor et al. 2020). Moreover, the relationship between outgroup empathy and outgroup helping behavior in an intergroup context was explored by Tam et al. (2008). Evidence from this research suggested that the induction of empathy predicted an enhancement in prosocial behavior tendencies toward the outgroup. Inducing empathy in an intergroup context by using the concept of perspective taking alleviated intergroup conflict and found a significant effect of empathy on helping behavior (Sasse et al., 2022). Thus, we propose that outgroup empathy may predict outgroup helping behavior. Further, we propose that outgroup gratitude may predict outgroup helping behavior and outgroup empathy may explain this relationship.

Current Research

The goal of this research was to investigate whether and why outgroup gratitude predicts outgroup helping. We propose that outgroup empathy may mediate the relationship between outgroup gratitude and outgroup helping. We hypothesized that outgroup gratitude predicts greater outgroup helping (than incidental gratitude). Moreover, we predict that

outgroup gratitude induces greater outgroup empathy (in comparison with incidental gratitude) Further, the relation between outgroup gratitude and outgroup helping behavior is mediated by outgroup empathy, such that induced gratitude toward the outgroup leads to a cognitive shift toward the outgroup, e.g., outgroup empathy, which facilitates outgroup helping behaviors. Thus, outgroup empathy may explain why outgroup gratitude may predict outgroup helping behavior.

Method

Participants and Design

We recruited 250 American individuals who participated in the study in exchange for a total fee of \$0.90 in compensation. We conducted an online study via Academic Prolific and sampled people who reside in the United States, are American, and members of the Democratic Party (ingroup). We excluded 25 participants from the data set including those who either indicated to not be Democrats ($n = 11$) or wrote that they were not thankful to the outgroup ($n = 14$) or not thankful in general ($n = 4$) (see Appendix). The final sample consisted of 225 Democrats (144 Females, 74 Males, 5 reported Other, and 2 preferred not to say) ranging in age from 19 to 77 years ($M = 38.91$, $SD = 14.62$). Participants were randomly assigned to either an incidental gratitude condition or an outgroup gratitude condition ($n = 115$ and $n = 110$ respectively).

Procedure

The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioral and Social Sciences at the University of Groningen (EC-BSS). Before participating in the study, participants were asked to read and give informed consent. In the first part of the study, they were asked to take part in a writing task. In the *Incidental gratitude condition*, participants were asked: “We would like you to spend 2-3 minutes thinking and writing about things you are thankful for in your life in the United States. Please write down 4-5 things you are

thankful for your life (max. 100 words). For example, they could be related to your personal life, social life, professional life, culture, economy, country, or other domains.” In the *outgroup gratitude condition*, participants were asked: “We would like you to spend 2-3 minutes thinking and writing about things you are thankful for Republicans in the United States. Please write down 4-5 things you are thankful for Republicans (max. 100 words). For example, they could be related to your personal life, social life, professional life, culture, economy, country, or other domains.”

In the second part, they completed measures of emotions, emotions toward Republicans, empathy towards Republicans, and other constructs that were not relevant to the hypotheses of this study. Then, they filled out a measure of helping intentions toward Republicans, and finally provided some socio-demographic information (gender, age, and political affiliation) At the end of the study, they were debriefed and thanked.

Measures

Manipulation Checks

We assessed whether participants experienced gratitude in general, and gratitude toward the outgroup. To measure feelings of gratitude in general, participants indicated how they were feeling at that moment: “Appreciative”, “Thankful”, “Grateful” ($\alpha = 0.966$). We additionally measured other positive and negative emotions to counterbalance the number of positive and negative items. For the positive emotions in general, participants indicated how they were feeling at that moment: “Enthusiastic”, “Happy” ($r = .786$). For the negative emotions in general, participants indicated how they were feeling at that moment: “Sad”, “Angry”, “Guilty”, “Embarrassed”, “Ashamed”, “Outraged”, “Disgusted” ($\alpha = 0.881$). All answers were reported on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much).

To measure feelings of gratitude toward the outgroup, participants indicated their feelings toward members of the Republican party: “As a Democrat, I feel thankful for

Republicans”, “As a Democrat, I feel appreciative of Republicans” ($r = .940$). We also additionally measured other negative emotions to counterbalance the number of positive and negative items. Participants indicated their negative feelings toward members of the Republican party. That is, as a Democrat I feel “Embarrassed by Republicans”, “Fearful of Republicans”, “Angry at Republicans”, “Outraged by Republicans”. and “Ashamed of Republicans” ($\alpha = 0.898$). All answers were reported on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much).

Outgroup Empathy

To assess empathy toward the outgroup, we used the following items: “I feel empathy toward Republicans.”, “I feel similar to Republicans.”, “I have a lot in common with Republicans.”, “I feel sympathy towards Republicans.”, “I feel compassion towards Republicans.” ($\alpha = .924$; Hasson et al., 2018). Empathy toward the outgroup was measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). We averaged the items and created a composite score for outgroup empathy with higher scores indicating higher levels of empathy toward the outgroup (i.e., Republicans).

Outgroup Helping

To measure outgroup helping behavior, we created three subscales that capture different levels of helping behavior toward Republicans (support a movement, sign a petition, donate money). For the support a movement subscale, participants indicated their willingness to “Support a gender equality (MeToo) movement organized by members of the Republican party.”, “Support a racial equality (Black Lives Matter) movement organized by members of the Republican Party.”, “Support a climate change movement organized by members of the Republican Party.” ($\alpha = 0.898$). For the sign a petition subscale, participants indicated their willingness to: “Sign a petition, started by members of the Republican Party, that protects religious freedom.”, “Sign a petition, started by members of the Republican Party, that

supports removal of statues of historical figures.”, “Sign a petition, started by members of the Republican Party, to change Columbus Day to Indigenous Peoples Day.”, “Sign a petition, started by members of the Republican Party, that supports abortion rights in a Republican community.”, ($\alpha = 0.796$). For the donate money subscale, participants indicated their willingness to: “Donate money to a church that promotes same-gender marriage in a Republican community.”, “Donate money to a Republican movement that supports gun control regulations.”, “Donate money to a charity organization, led by members of the Republican Party, that supports victims of gun violence and their families.”, ($\alpha = 0.879$). We averaged all items and created a composite score for outgroup helping, ($\alpha = 0.905$).

Results

Preliminary Analysis

Descriptive statistics and zero- order correlations for all study variables are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Study Variables

Variable	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3
1. Outgroup Gratitude	225	1.891	1.295	-		
2. Outgroup Helping	225	4.158	1.627	.085	-	
3. Outgroup Empathy	225	2.047	1.251	.535**	.244**	-

Note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Manipulation Checks

We first checked whether participants experienced gratitude in general across conditions. A one-sample *t* test showed that participants reported to be grateful in general ($M = 4.317$, $SD = 2.156$); significantly different from the scale midpoint, $t(224) = 2.206$, $p = .028$.

An independent samples *t* test showed that participants in the incidental gratitude condition reported higher incidental gratitude ($M = 5.589$, $SD = 1.407$) than those in the outgroup gratitude condition ($M = 2.988$, $SD = 1.988$), $\beta = .165$, $t(223) = 11.327$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.505$, 95% CI [2.144, 3.057].

Regarding feelings of gratitude toward the outgroup, a one-sample *t* test showed that participants reported low levels of gratitude toward the outgroup ($M = 1.776$, $SD = 1.189$); significantly different from the scale midpoint, $t(224) = -28.074$, $p < 0.001$. An independent samples *t* test showed that participants in the outgroup gratitude condition did not report significantly higher gratitude toward the outgroup ($M = 1.891$, $SD = 1.295$) than those in the incidental gratitude condition ($M = 1.665$, $SD = 1.071$), $\beta = .085$, $t(223) = -1.427$, $p = .155$, $d = .190$, 95% CI [-.537, .086]. This suggests that our outgroup gratitude manipulation was not successful. However, participants still reported enhanced feelings of gratitude in general across conditions.¹

Main Analyses

Outgroup Helping

We tested the hypothesis that outgroup gratitude led to outgroup helping. We conducted a regression analysis and found no significant effect of outgroup gratitude on outgroup helping, $t(223) = -.135$, $p = .893$, 95% CI [-.434, .379]. Participants in the outgroup gratitude condition did not exhibit higher outgroup helping ($M = 4.130$, $SD = 1.464$) compared to the incidental gratitude condition ($M = 4.130$, $SD = 1.464$). Interestingly, self-

¹ We additionally tested whether positive and negative emotions in general and toward the outgroup differed across conditions. We found that participants reported higher negative emotions toward the outgroup and higher negative emotions in general, in the outgroup gratitude condition ($M = 4.756$, $SD = 1.803$; $M = 2.150$, $SD = 1.355$, respectively) than in the incidental gratitude condition ($M = 5.245$, $SD = 1.502$; $M = 1.398$, $SD = .704$, respectively), $t(223) = 2.213$, $p = .028$, $t(223) = -5.254$, $p < .001$, respectively. They experienced higher positive emotions in general in the incidental condition ($M = 4.483$, $SD = 1.501$) than in the outgroup condition ($M = 3.023$, $SD = 1.814$), $t(223) = 6.588$, $p < .001$.

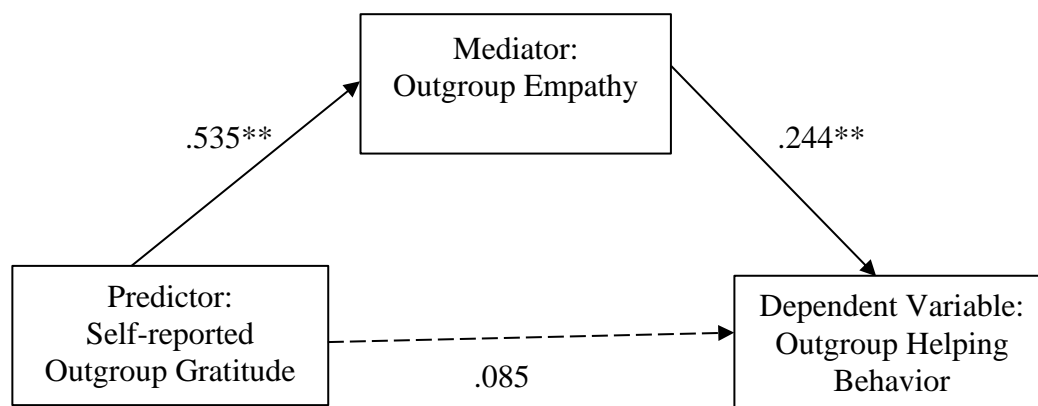
reported outgroup gratitude was not significantly associated with outgroup helping, $r = .085$, $p = .206$.

Outgroup Empathy

We conducted another regression analysis and found no significant effect of outgroup gratitude on outgroup empathy, $t(223) = -.754$, $p = .451$, 95% CI [-.422, .188]. Participants in the outgroup gratitude condition did not experience higher empathy toward the outgroup ($M = 2.047$, $SD = 1.251$) compared to the incidental gratitude condition ($M = 1.93$, $SD = 1.069$). However, self-reported gratitude was significantly correlated with outgroup empathy, $r = .535$, $p < .001$ and outgroup empathy was significantly correlated with outgroup helping, $r = .244$, $p < .001$.

Figure 1

Mediation Model



Note: * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Exploratory and Additional Analysis

We additionally explored correlations between self-reported outgroup gratitude and outgroup empathy and outgroup helping. We found that self-reported outgroup gratitude was significantly and positively correlated with outgroup empathy, $r = .535$, $p < .001$, but not with outgroup helping, $r = .085$, $p = .206$. Moreover, outgroup empathy was significantly and positively correlated with outgroup helping, $r = .244$, $p < .001$.

Given these positive associations, we conducted additional exploratory analyses to examine the indirect effect of self-reported outgroup gratitude on outgroup helping behavior through outgroup empathy. We thus used Hayes' PROCESS model 4 (Hayes, 2013) to test such indirect effect. Results showed a significant indirect effect of outgroup empathy as 95% confidence interval for outgroup empathy did not include zero, 95% CI [.1098, .3409]. Therefore, outgroup empathy explained the relationship between self-reported outgroup gratitude and outgroup helping.

Discussion

The goal of the present research was to investigate the relationship between outgroup gratitude and helping behavior toward the outgroup, and the mediating role of outgroup empathy. We hypothesized that outgroup-based gratitude motivated outgroup helping behavior, and outgroup empathy. Further, we hypothesized that outgroup empathy mediated the relationship between outgroup gratitude and outgroup helping, such that outgroup empathy explained why outgroup gratitude predicts outgroup helping. We conducted a study in the political intergroup context in the United States, in which Democrats are the ingroup, and Republicans are the outgroup.

In general, did our findings not support the hypothesis that outgroup gratitude predicts outgroup helping. No significant effect of self-reported outgroup gratitude on outgroup helping was found. Further, outgroup self-reported gratitude was not significantly correlated with outgroup helping. The mediation hypothesis that outgroup empathy explains the relationship between outgroup gratitude and outgroup helping was not support by the results of our research. However, findings of the additional analysis revealed that self-reported outgroup gratitude was significantly and positively correlated with outgroup empathy, but not with outgroup helping. Additionally, outgroup empathy was significantly and positively correlated with outgroup helping. A significant indirect effect of outgroup empathy was

found. Thus, outgroup empathy explained the relationship between outgroup gratitude and outgroup helping.

Theoretical Implications

Several theoretical implications can be drawn from the findings of this study. One result from the present research is that self-reported outgroup gratitude did not have an effect on outgroup empathy. The theoretical implication is that the theory that outgroup gratitude leads to outgroup empathy through a cognitive shift which alters the perception toward the outgroup was therefore contradicted (Gross, 1998). One could argue that negative emotions were a constraining factor in this research. Further, findings about emotions suggested that political ideology is associated with how members of the ingroup want to feel toward members of the outgroup (Halperin et al., 2016). In general, it is assumed that Democrats do not feel positive about Republicans and it can be assumed that this was a restraining factor in the present study. The correlation between outgroup gratitude and outgroup empathy was significant. Theoretical implications from this finding can be that outgroup gratitude is related to outgroup empathy. One could argue that these findings can be explained by previous research which suggested that benefits of gratitude can only be acknowledged when one has the capacity to fully understand them, thus be empathetic (Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994). Previous research suggested that through the induction of gratitude a better understanding of the perspective toward the outgroup was gained which facilitates outgroup empathy (Decety & Jackson, 2004).

Secondly, findings from this research indicated that self-reported general gratitude was correlated with helping behavior. Further, no difference across conditions was found in helping, thus outgroup gratitude did not predict higher outgroup helping. Thus, the theoretical implication which can be concluded from this is that general gratitude might be sufficient to

elicit helping behavior. One could argue that gratitude directed toward the outgroup is not necessary in order to elicit outgroup helping behavior.

Findings from our research indicated that outgroup empathy was significantly and positively correlated with outgroup helping. Moreover, empathy had a significant indirect effect. The third theoretical implication from our research is more evidence that outgroup empathy facilitates outgroup helping. Previous research suggested that empathy is associated with higher willingness to engage in prosocially-oriented behaviors directed at the outgroup (Tam et al., 2008). Further, research conducted in an intergroup context proposed that inducing empathy predicted greater prosocial behavior tendencies and consequently alleviated intergroup conflict (Sasse et al., 2022). Accordingly, findings of our study are in line with the proposed theory that outgroup empathy may be a determining factor in alleviating intergroup conflict and in the prediction of outgroup helping. Thus, the present study contributes to the existing body of research of gratitude and empathy. The hypothesis that outgroup empathy predicts outgroup helping should be tested in a different intergroup context.

The predicted effect of outgroup gratitude on outgroup helping was not found in the present study. One could argue that the theoretical implication is that the expressed outgroup gratitude was not sincere. This would be in line with previous research that suggested that when participants were being forced to express gratitude it did not result in gratitude toward the target, but in an increase in negative emotions which consequently would not result in helping behavior (Layous & Lyubomirsky, 2014).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The study examined gratitude and prosocial behaviors in a political context, which is contributing to existing literature about group-based emotions and political affiliations (Halperin et al., 2016) by adding the value of gratitude and examining its effect on positive behaviors toward an outgroup. But findings of this study are limited to the political context of

American Democrats and Republicans. Thus, the generalizability of the data is limited as the sample consisted only of American Democrats. Future research could apply this study design in a different intergroup context to examine whether a significant effect can be found.

Another limitation of this study was that we did not include a control condition, meaning that we do not have statistical evidence whether a significant effect of gratitude on helping behavior is present in general with the study design used. Future research should include a baseline to ensure that a significant association between gratitude and helping behavior is present before examining this relationship in an intergroup context. Further, directions for future research are to statistically control for positive and negative emotions to examine solely the relationship between gratitude and helping behavior. Negative emotions were higher in the outgroup gratitude condition compared to the incidental gratitude condition. They may have an influence on outgroup gratitude or on outgroup helping. Further limitation of this study was that only helping behavior intention were measures. Thus, we cannot conclude whether participants would actually engage in these helping behaviors. A further limitation of this study was the online environment in which the study took place. We had little control on how the participants approached the writing task where outgroup-based gratitude was manipulated. Although, participants could not continue the study before the completion of three minutes, we do not have evidence whether the time was actually used to think and write about reason to feel grateful toward Republicans. Accordingly, direction for future research is to carry the study out in a laboratory setting where it is possible to have higher control over the induction of gratitude toward the outgroup. Further, it might be relevant to have more time in order to induce gratitude toward the outgroup. Moreover, measurement of empathy was limited to five items and it was not differentiated between different forms of empathy. To further investigate this relationship, it may help to differentiate between cognitive empathy, sympathetic empathy and empathetic concern. Cognitive

empathy is the ability of perspective taking and it is related to engaging in prosocial behaviors (Brazil et al., 2022) as well as sympathetic empathy. A direction for future research is to measure empathy on more items to examine in which ways it has an effect on outgroup gratitude and on outgroup helping behavior respectively.

Conclusion

The aim of the present research was to investigate gratitude in an intergroup context. We hypothesized that outgroup-based gratitude predicts outgroup helping when gratitude is directed toward the outgroup. Further, we proposed that outgroup empathy may explain why outgroup-based gratitude predicts outgroup helping. No support for the hypotheses was found. Although, exploratory research revealed that outgroup-based gratitude was positively and significantly correlated with outgroup empathy and outgroup empathy was significantly and positively correlated with outgroup helping. These findings should be explored further to gain more insight into these relationships. Findings of our research are contributing to the existing body of research on gratitude as previous research focused mainly on gratitude in interpersonal or ingroup relations and this research explored gratitude in an intergroup context. Thus, the results of our study contribute to the understanding of the role of outgroup-based gratitude in the relation with outgroup helping and outgroup empathy. The findings of our study have several theoretical implications. Outgroup gratitude may explain outgroup empathy through a cognitive shift toward the outgroup. Further, outgroup empathy be an essential aspect in alleviating intergroup conflict as it may lead to prosocial behavior. Future research should explore the role of outgroup-based gratitude in outgroup helping and outgroup empathy further.

References

- Abrams, D., Van de Vyver, J., Pelletier, J., & Cameron, L. (2015). Children's prosocial behavioural intentions towards outgroup members. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 33*(3), 277-294.
- Aknin, L. B., Van de Vondervoort, J. W., & Hamlin, J. K. (2018). Positive feelings reward and promote prosocial behavior. *Current opinion in psychology, 20*, 55-59.
- Algoe, S. B. (2012). Find, remind, and bind: The functions of gratitude in everyday relationships. *Social and personality psychology compass, 6*(6), 455-469.
- Algoe, S. B., Fredrickson, B. L., & Gable, S. L. (2013). The social functions of the emotion of gratitude via expression. *Emotion, 13*(4), 605.
- Algoe, S. B., & Haidt, J. (2009). Witnessing excellence in action: The 'other-praising' emotions of elevation, gratitude, and admiration. *The journal of positive psychology, 4*(2), 105-127.
- Algoe, S. B., & Stanton, A. L. (2012). Gratitude when it is needed most: social functions of gratitude in women with metastatic breast cancer. *Emotion, 12*(1), 163.
- Bartlett, M. Y., & DeSteno, D. (2006). Gratitude and prosocial behavior: Helping when it costs you. *Psychological science, 17*(4), 319-325.
- Bar-Tal, D., Halperin, E., & De Rivera, J. (2007). Collective emotions in conflict situations: Societal implications. *Journal of Social Issues, 63*(2), 441-460.
- Berry, D. R., Wall, C. S., Tubbs, J. D., Zeidan, F., & Brown, K. W. (2021). Short-term training in mindfulness predicts helping behavior toward racial ingroup and outgroup members. *Social Psychological and Personality Science, 19485506211053095*.
- Bono, G., Froh, J. J., Disabato, D., Blalock, D., McKnight, P., & Bausert, S. (2019). Gratitude's role in adolescent antisocial and prosocial behavior: a 4-year longitudinal investigation. *Journal of Positive Psychology, 14*(2), 230-243.

- Carlo, G., Davis, A. N., & Taylor, L. K. (2022). Reducing Youth In-Group Favoritism to Address Social Injustice. *Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 9(1), 90-95.
- Carlson, M., Charlin, V., & Miller, N. (1988). Positive mood and helping behavior: a test of six hypotheses. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 55(2), 211.
- Cohen-Chen, S., Halperin, E., Crisp, R. J., & Gross, J. J. (2014). Hope in the Middle East: Malleability beliefs, hope, and the willingness to compromise for peace. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 5(1), 67-75.
- Collange, J., & Guegan, J. (2020). Using virtual reality to induce gratitude through virtual social interaction. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 113, 106473.
- Decety, J., & Jackson, P. L. (2004). The functional architecture of human empathy. *Behavioral and cognitive neuroscience reviews*, 3(2), 71-100.
- Doosje, B., & Haslam, S. A. (2005). What Have They Done for Us Lately? The Dynamics of Reciprocity in Intergroup Contexts 1. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 35(3), 508-535.
- Eisenberg, N., Fabes, R., & Spinrad, T. (2006). Prosocial development. In W. Damon, N. Eisenberg, & M. Lerner (Vol. Eds.), *Child psychology: Social, emotional, and personality development: Vol. 3*, (pp. 646–718). Hoboken, NJ: USA: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Emmons, R. A., & McCullough, M. E. (Eds.). (2004). *The psychology of gratitude*. Oxford University Press.
- Fuochi, G., Veneziani, C. A., & Voci, A. (2018). Exploring the social side of self-compassion: relations with empathy and outgroup attitudes. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 48(6), 769–783. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2378>

- Gross, J. J., Halperin, E., & Porat, R. (2013). Emotion regulation in intractable conflicts. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 22(6), 423-429.
- Gross, J. J. (1998). Antecedent-and response-focused emotion regulation: divergent consequences for experience, expression, and physiology. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 74(1), 224.
- Halperin, E. (2008). Group-based hatred in intractable conflict in Israel. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 52(5), 713-736.
- Halperin, E., Cohen-Chen, S., & Goldenberg, A. (2014). Indirect emotion regulation in intractable conflicts: A new approach to conflict resolution. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 25(1), 1-31.
- Halperin, E., Porat, R., Tamir, M., & Gross, J. J. (2013). Can emotion regulation change political attitudes in intractable conflicts? From the laboratory to the field. *Psychological science*, 24(1), 106-111.
- Halperin, E., Sharvit, K., & Gross, J. J. (2011). Emotion and emotion regulation in intergroup conflict: An appraisal-based framework. *Intergroup conflicts and their resolution: A social psychological perspective*, 249.
- Hasson, Y., Tamir, M., Brahm, K. S., Cohrs, J. C., & Halperin, E. (2018). Are liberals and conservatives equally motivated to feel empathy toward others?. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 44(10), 1449-1459.
- Hayes, A. F. (2013). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Kashdan, T. B., Uswatte, G., & Julian, T. (2006). Gratitude and hedonic and eudaimonic well-being in Vietnam war veterans. *Behaviour research and therapy*, 44(2), 177-199.

Lazarus, R. S., & Lazarus, B. N. (1994). *Passion and reason: Making sense of our emotions*. Oxford University Press, USA.

Layous, K., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2014). Benefits, mechanisms, and new directions for teaching gratitude to children. *School Psychology Review*, 43(2), 153-159.

Masten, C. L., Morelli, S. A., & Eisenberger, N. I. (2011). An fMRI investigation of empathy for 'social pain' and subsequent prosocial behavior. *Neuroimage*, 55(1), 381–388.

McMahon, S. D., Wernsman, J., & Parnes, A. L. (2006). Understanding prosocial behavior: The impact of empathy and gender among African American adolescents. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 39(1), 135–137.

McCullough, M. E., Emmons, R. A., & Tsang, J. A. (2002). The grateful disposition: a conceptual and empirical topography. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 82(1), 112.

McCullough, M. E. (2002). Savoring life, past and present: Explaining what hope and gratitude share in common. *Psychological Inquiry*, 13(4), 302-304.

McCullough, M. E., Kimeldorf, M. B., & Cohen, A. D. (2008). An adaptation for altruism: The social causes, social effects, and social evolution of gratitude. *Current directions in psychological science*, 17(4), 281-285.

O'Driscoll, D., Taylor, L. K., & Dautel, J. B. (2021). Essentialist beliefs affect children's outgroup empathy, attitudes and prosocial behaviours in a setting of intergroup conflict. *International Journal of Psychology: Journal International De Psychologie*, 56(1), 151–156. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12679>

Porat, R., Halperin, E., & Tamir, M. (2016). What we want is what we get: Group-based emotional preferences and conflict resolution. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 110(2), 167.

- Ramnaud, S., Collange, J., Tavani, J. L., & Zenasni, F. (2021). Positive intergroup interdependence, prejudice, outgroup stereotype and helping behaviors: The role of group-based gratitude. *International Review of Social Psychology*, *34*(1). <https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.5334/irsp.433>
- Sahdra, B. K., Ciarrochi, J., Parker, P. D., Marshall, S., & Heaven, P. (2015). Empathy and nonattachment independently predict peer nominations of prosocial behavior of adolescents. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *6*, 1–12.
- Sasse, J., Nazlic, T., Alrich, K., Frey, D., & Baumert, A. (2022). Mitigating Intergroup Conflict: Effectiveness of Qualifying Subjective Justice Views as an Intervention Technique in Comparison to Empathy Induction. *Social Justice Research*, *35*(2), 107-127.
- Sawyer, K. B., Thoroughgood, C. N., Stillwell, E. E., Duffy, M. K., Scott, K. L., & Adair, E. A. (2022). Being present and thankful: A multi-study investigation of mindfulness, gratitude, and employee helping behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *107*(2), 240.
- Shoshani, A., De-Leon Lendner, K., Nissensohn, A., Lazarovich, G., & Aharon-Dvir, O. (2020). Grateful and kind: The prosocial function of gratitude in young children's relationships. *Developmental Psychology*, *56*(6), 1135.
- Sznycer, D., Tooby, J., Cosmides, L., Porat, R., Shalvi, S., & Halperin, E. (2016). Shame closely tracks the threat of devaluation by others, even across cultures. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, *113*(10), 2625–30. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1514699113>
- Tam, T., Hewstone, M., Kenworthy, J. B., Cairns, E., Marinetti, C., Geddes, L., & Parkinson, B. (2008). Postconflict reconciliation: intergroup forgiveness and implicit biases in

- northern ireland. *Journal of Social Issues*, 64(2), 303–320.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4560.2008.00563.x>
- Tarrant, M., Dazeley, S., & Cottom, T. (2009). Social categorization and empathy for outgroup members. *The British Journal of Social Psychology*, 48(Pt 3), 427–46.
<https://doi.org/10.1348/014466608X373589>
- Taylor, L. K., O'Driscoll, D., Dautel, J. B., & McKeown, S. (2020). Empathy to action: child and adolescent out-group attitudes and prosocial behaviors in a setting of intergroup conflict. *Social Development*, 29(2), 461–477. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sode.12421>
- Vanman, E. J. (2016). The role of empathy in intergroup relations. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 11, 59–63. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2016.06.007>
- Watkins, P. C., Emmons, R. A., Greaves, M. R., & Bell, J. (2018). Joy is a distinct positive emotion: assessment of joy and relationship to gratitude and well-being. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 13(5), 522–539.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2017.1414298>
- Witvliet, C. vanOyen, Richie, F. J., Root Luna, L. M., & Van Tongeren, D. R. (2019). Gratitude predicts hope and happiness: A two-study assessment of traits and states. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 14(3), 271–282. <https://doi-org.proxy-ub.rug.nl/10.1080/17439760.2018.1424924>
- Yabar, Y., & Hess, U. (2007). Display of empathy and perception of out-group members. *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 36(1), 42.

Appendix

Table 1	
<i>Participants who did not express gratitude</i>	
Number of Participants	Answers of the Participants
1	I hate you people. Please add "writing task" to all the descriptions where you demand writing tasks. I hate writing like this. But I do like writing to tell you that you are jerks for not notifying people about writing tasks. I am thankful for tasks that do not require writing! I am thankful for other tasks that do not require writing! Go away!
5	Truthfully, I have very little to thank Republicans for. Especially in office. They are party over country. Not only are they hypocrites, they outwardly lie to their constituents. Republicans pass legislation that inherently jeopardizes the lives of millions. Whether it's pertaining to womens rights, gay rights, police brutality, healthcare, etc.
6	They do many silly things that I can make fun of later. Some of them have invented useful things. They give me something to argue about. They can create a competitive environment.
9	My boss is a Republican, I'm thankful for her not the group in general. I think most of them are rude and cruel and selfish. My boss is none of those things but she still loves trump
10	Im not sure what I would be grateful towards republicans. I dont really know what they do for us.
12	I'm not sure I can think of anything I'm thankful for that I can contribute to Republicans.
13	I honestly cannot think of a single thing I am thankful to republicans for. They are responsible for the daily attacks on right of women and members of the LGBTQIA community. They have destroyed this country and emboldened the worst of our society.
14	I have zero affiliation with the Republican party, and generally despise that whole institution. The only sort of right leaning political opinion I have is that I support people's right to bear arms, but even in that regard I don't agree with most Republicans on how that should manifest itself in the real world. So, in short, I am not at all thankful for Republicans and I think the party does vastly more harm than good.
15	I have nothing I am thankful for Republicans. Period. No questions. Asking to be thankful for Republicans is not the best survey subject I can think of. To sum up I am not grateful for anything related to Republicans. Any party that supports Donald Trump is to be banned.
16	I genuinely do not feel thankful for Republicans, especially today with the leaked opinion draft from the Supreme Court that Republicans have stacked with an anti-choice, anti-female

	majority opposed to abortion rights and reproductive rights. I can't think of how to thank them for the Trump administration being allowed to go uncharged for inciting sedition and rioting at the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021 nor for politicizing COVID-19 instead of uniting our country to take care of each other and reduce its spread.
17	I didn't realize until 2016 just how corrupt and cruel they are when it comes to democracy. They don't believe in democracy where the majority rules. They are all about money and power. They care nothing about anyone but themselves.
19	I am not thankful for Republicans. They have been actively trying to take away my rights for years. They are greedy and trying to make women be seen as less than men. They try to blame liberals for cancel culture but tried to cancel Starbucks over Christmas cups.
20	I am not thankful for anything that Republicans do. I dislike them but I am thankful for them because they are ridiculous and easy to make fun of and I can get a good laugh out of them sometimes, I guess. They use the color red and red is a nice color. They also use the elephant which is my favorite animal. Republicans have a lot of money and give their money and connections to their children so they won't will always be set for life.
21	I am not really thankful for Republicans. I think most of them are vile creatures. The Republican party has made a fool out of themselves by supporting Donald Trump and his ridiculous antics. I wish their party had a major overhaul and stepped up to their jobs.
22	I am grateful for nothing that has come from republicans. I can not think of one single tiny thing that republicans have done for this country. Instead, I can think of a million things that Republicans have done to mess up this country and will continue to do so if they have the chance. Republicans are the worst human beings to walk the planet and I say this knowing child rapists and serial killers breathe the same air as them. I would not piss down the throat of a republican if it was on fire. They are privileged, white, garbage monsters who want to stay rich and keep the poor, poor. They are obsessed with money and have the audacity to shield themselves with religion when they are far from any holyness in their personal lives.
23	Honestly, there's nothing recent that I'm thankful towards Republicans for. I can only think back to decades ago when Republicans pushed a strong work ethic, but that was also during a time where hard work was properly rewarded. Now a days, that mentality merely leads to exploitation by large corporations and employers. Republicans like to advocate for personal liberty and rights, but their recent policies have all been aimed at removing rights.