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# Empathy in a Citizen Deliberation Experiment

Kimmo Grönlund\*, Kaisa Herne<sup>†</sup>, and Maija Setälä<sup>‡</sup>

Despite increased scholarly attention, there is still limited knowledge on how empathy works in democratic deliberation. This article examines the role of empathy in citizen deliberation with the help of a deliberative experiment on immigration. First, a random sample of citizens was surveyed regarding their opinions on immigration. Based on their opinions, they were then divided into a permissive or a non-permissive enclave, and randomly assigned into like-minded or mixed-opinion groups for deliberation. After deliberation, they were surveyed anew. The study analyzes: (a) empathy differences between permissive and non-permissive participants; (b) changes in outgroup empathy toward immigrants as a result of deliberation; and (c) differences in prosocial behavior (i.e., donating to charity). The results show that the permissive respondents had more empathy, especially toward immigrants, than the non-permissive respondents. Among participants, outgroup empathy increased during deliberation. Regarding prosocial behavior, the permissive participants donated more often to charity at the end of the experiment.

## Introduction

Democratic deliberation appears to be the key to informed and fair collective decision making. In democratic deliberation, participants' awareness of facts and causalities related to political issues are expected to increase together with their understanding of other people's perspectives. This study concerns especially the latter aspect – that is, the ability of deliberators to empathize with other people. We are specifically interested in the question of whether the capacity to consider the perspectives of others is a precondition for deliberation, and to what extent deliberation improves this capacity.

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While democratic deliberation is primarily a collective process of reasoning, it also entails individual processes of reflection or, as Robert Goodin (2000) describes it, ‘deliberation within’. Internal deliberation requires that people are reflective over their own viewpoints as well as empathetic toward others’ positions. Jürgen Habermas (1996, 162), who mostly emphasizes intersubjective aspects, regards ‘ideal role-taking’ as a part of moral discourse. The term ‘ideal role-taking’, originally introduced by Mead (1934), refers to a process of placing oneself in another’s position and trying to understand their perspective. In Habermas’s discourse ethics, role-taking is needed to track whether others have a generalizable attitude about the validity of a norm (Morrell 2010, 79).

Recently, there has been increasing attention paid to the role of affect in democratic deliberation (e.g., Krause 2008). In his book *Empathy and Democracy*, Michael Morrell (2010) criticizes those understandings of deliberative democracy that lean too heavily on rationality and the reasonableness of argumentation. Moreover, he argues that democratic deliberation needs empathy, understood as a process that involves both affective and cognitive components. Morrell (2010, 114) writes:

[W]ithout the process of empathy, it is highly unlikely that citizens will demonstrate the toleration, mutual respect, reciprocity, and openness toward others vital for deliberative democracy to fulfill its promise of equal consideration that is central to giving collective decisions their legitimacy.

In this article, we examine the role of empathy in a citizen deliberation experiment. Our experimental design provides a way to test the effects of deliberation on participants’ levels of empathy. We have also included a specific design feature allowing us to test altruistic behavior among participants. Our experiment is designed to compare so-called ‘enclave deliberation’ (i.e., deliberation among like-minded people) with deliberation in cross-cutting groups. The topic of the discussion – immigration politics – is ideal for testing the causal link between deliberation and empathy since deliberation on immigration seems to require concern for others’ positions, especially regarding outgroups.

In our empirical analysis, we first pay attention to the potential differences between those who were willing to participate in democratic deliberation and those who were not. Were those who participated more empathetic than those who dropped out? We also look at the potential of deliberation to increase empathy, especially towards members of an outgroup, which in the present context is immigrants. We investigate whether our experimental treatment influences levels of empathy by examining differences between like-minded and mixed groups. Finally, we examine proneness to altruistic behavior in different groups. Altruistic behavior is operationalized through an act of donating money to charity.

The article is organized as follows. First, we provide a definition of empathy, and consider its role in democratic deliberation. We then present our hypotheses and the experimental procedures, which are followed by the results and concluding remarks.

## Empathy as an Element of Democratic Deliberation

Empathy, understood as a capacity and motivation to put oneself in the position of others, seems to be a necessary element in the process of deliberation. Although many theorists have thought about the role of empathy, there are not many empirical studies on empathy, or ‘ideal role-taking’, in the context of democratic deliberation. Apart from some fairly recent contributions in this area (e.g., Morrell 2010), empathy is largely neglected in studies of deliberation.

The term ‘empathy’ has been defined in a number of ways, and no generally shared definition of the term exists (e.g., Hoffman 2000; Preston & De Waal 2002; Walter 2012). For this reason, the discussion on empathy is often elusive (Morrell 2010, 39–66). Furthermore, there are concepts such as ‘sympathy’, ‘compassion’ and ‘empathetic concern’ that are closely related to ‘empathy’, both conceptually and empirically. Some writers consider empathy mainly as an affective process where others’ emotions are reproduced. Others, in turn, make a distinction between affective and cognitive elements of empathy where the latter refers to an understanding of others’ positions (Walter 2012). Davis (1980) argues that empathy is a multidimensional concept and that there is a need to measure both cognitive and affective aspects of empathy (i.e., a perspective-taking capacity and emotional reactivity).

Democratic deliberation, especially its idea of equal consideration of all viewpoints based on their merits, clearly requires empathy, interpreted as a cognitive process of understanding others’ perspectives. Notably, Rawls’s (1971) concept of ‘public reason’ requires that people are open to others’ perspectives and ready to justify their own claims in terms acceptable to others. Habermas’s (1996) idea that the validity of moral norms is defined through the universalization test, which examines what is acceptable for all, is a similar concept. It seems that both Rawls’s public reason and the fulfillment of Habermas’s universalization test require an understanding of others’ social positions and interests. Such an understanding is necessary to determine what kind of terms of cooperation can be acceptable to others. Deliberative democracy calls for an understanding of those aspects of other people’s social positions that are ‘ethically relevant’ – that is, those pertaining to generalizable moral principles. These ethically relevant aspects could be interpreted as being related to what Rawls (1971) calls

‘primary goods’. In the process of deliberation on income distribution, for instance, it seems relevant to understand that living with less than a minimum income can lead to poor nutrition.

Authors such as Krause (2008) and Morrell (2010) have argued that emotional components of empathy are also relevant for democratic deliberation. While cognitive aspects of empathy pertain to the process of gaining knowledge about others’ positions as well as preferences and values related to them, the emotional aspect of empathy refers to affections related to those positions. Emotional empathy requires the reproduction of the target’s emotions based on one’s own anticipated emotions in the position of the target or alternatively on the observed or imagined emotions of the target. This does not mean that the subject has to experience exactly the same emotions as the target; rather, the subject should feel something that is in line with the target’s emotions. In this respect, emotional empathy is similar to empathetic concern or sympathy. Batson (2011), for example, argues that empathetic concern involves a variety of feelings, including sympathy and compassion. Understood in this way, emotional empathy seems relevant for democratic deliberation because it is likely to be linked to pro-social attitudes. We would not regard a person as empathetic if she or he uses their understanding of what causes pain to harm others; nor can we see how this kind of an attitude would help democratic deliberation.

In addition to objective social positions, understanding of certain kinds of emotions related to those positions can be regarded as ethically relevant in democratic deliberation. Emotional empathy might be needed, for example, to understand that a person would feel disrespected as a citizen if denied the right to vote, or angry or frustrated if treated unfairly by public officials. Yet, there are also good reasons for being critical of the view that democratic deliberation would require reproducing others’ emotions. First, people can misunderstand others’ emotions. Second, people may misrepresent their own emotions in order to enhance better outcomes for themselves, although this would violate Habermas’s sincerity condition. Third, there is the problem of morally ‘wrong’ emotions – for example, ‘the pain the racist feels in the face of anti-discrimination laws’ (Krause 2008, 166). Such an emotion is hardly justifiable from a more generalizable perspective, which should be the outcome of a deliberative process.

Although the role of affective aspects of empathy is not straightforward, Morrell (2010) claims that open-mindedness and sensitivity to others’ emotions are likely to be empirically related to the sense of reciprocity and commitment to deliberation. In other words, it is the affective element of empathy that *motivates* considerations of other people’s positions. If this is the case, affective components of empathy facilitate or can even be a precondition for the cognitive type of empathy. Following Davis’s multidimensional model of empathy, Morrell (2010, 60–3) promotes a

‘process model of empathy’ that emphasizes interaction between affective and cognitive elements. From the perspective of democratic deliberation, it is, however, important that emotional reactions, whether one’s own or others’, are assessed in terms of the ethical relevance and generalizability of the claims related to them.

The understanding of the affective components of empathy helps to recognize potential sources of biases in empathizing. Such biases can be problematic for the idea of equal consideration of the perspectives of all affected, which is a central point in democratic deliberation. Social psychological literature provides a number of examples of empathy biases. People are more likely to empathize with those who are similar or close to them than with members of socially more distant outgroups (for references, see Cikara et al. 2014). In other words, friends, relatives and other in-group members are more likely to generate empathy, which may lead to biased judgments. A single parent understands the position of another single parent; a disabled person is familiar with the specific problems of disabled people; and so on. Empathy biases have also been observed in empirical studies. For example, judges who have daughters are more likely to take a feminist standpoint in their decisions compared to judges who have only sons, suggesting that the former understand women’s perspectives better than the latter (Glynn & Sen 2015). While people tend to understand ingroup members’ perspectives, outgroup members, in turn, are not as likely to give rise to empathy. In a conflict situation, compassion is lower for an individual who represents the other side in a conflict (Bruneau et al. 2012).

Democratic deliberation, understood as an intersubjective process where different viewpoints are put forward for balanced consideration, can be regarded as a possible remedy to empathy biases. For example, Mutz (2002) has shown that exposure to cross-cutting views, which is typical in processes of democratic deliberation, helps to understand things from another’s perspective. It can be assumed that inclusive processes of deliberation, where people are encouraged to consider others’ positions, could enhance empathy toward outgroups, especially if they appear to be in a disadvantaged position. In this study, we separate general empathy from empathy toward a specific outgroup – in this case, immigrants. ‘General empathy’ refers to cognitive and affective empathy felt towards people in general, whereas ‘outgroup empathy’ refers to empathy felt towards immigrants.

In addition to the role of empathy in the deliberative process, we also study the connection between empathy and prosocial behavior in the context of democratic deliberation. It appears that an empathetic understanding of someone else’s position is not automatically linked to prosocial behavior. Binmore’s (1998) example is a gunfighter who uses ‘his empathetic powers to predict an opponent’s next move without losing the urge to kill him’. However, empirical studies in social psychology show that

empathy or sympathy usually tends to promote prosocial action (e.g., Montada & Schneider 1989; Pagano & Huo 2007).

Furthermore, perspective-taking abilities learned in one context can extend to other contexts (Batson 2011, 175–6). Studies give support to the empathy-altruism hypothesis, which states that empathetic concern evokes an altruistic motivation to help others – that is, gives rise to prosocial action (e.g., Batson 1997). Several studies show that inducing empathy increases the willingness to help or actual helping of others, even when the act of helping is costly (e.g., Batson 1997; Batson et al. 1997, 2002). Experimental evidence also suggests that altruistic donations might be related to the donors' beliefs about the respondents' worthiness of help (Fong 2007).

In sum, there is a theoretical link between democratic deliberation and empathy, including empathy towards outgroups. Furthermore, empathy is empirically linked to prosocial attitudes or behavior. While empathy is theoretically connected to deliberative discussion, we are not aware of previous empirical studies on the connection between deliberative discussion and empathy. Moreover, there are no previous studies on the influence of group composition on empathy in the context of deliberation. There are a number of studies showing that participation in deliberative discussion leads to opinion changes (e.g., Luskin et al. 2002; Barabas 2004; Fishkin & Luskin 2005; Setälä et al. 2010; Grönlund et al. 2015), as well as to other expected consequences of deliberation, such as increases in political knowledge, efficacy, trust and preparedness for political participation (e.g., Grönlund et al. 2010; Himmelroos et al. 2017). None of these empirical studies looks at the connection between deliberation and empathy. Grönlund et al. (2015) is based on the same experiment as the one in this article, but it studies opinion changes and observes that people with anti-immigrant attitudes become more tolerant even when they discuss in like-minded groups with deliberative rules and facilitation. This change in opinions cannot only be explained by gaining more information on the immigration issue during deliberation. Finally, although the empathy-altruism hypothesis has been tested in a number of social psychological studies, we are not aware of any of them connecting the hypothesis to democratic deliberation. However, earlier studies suggest that participation in organized deliberation enhances generalized trust and a willingness to contribute to collective action (Setälä et al. 2010; Grönlund et al. 2010).

## Deliberation on Immigration: Hypotheses on Empathy

To sum up the theoretical discussion, empathy – understood as a willingness to consider others' perspectives and emotions – can be regarded as a

precondition for democratic deliberation, and it can also be expected to develop in the course of deliberation. The role of empathy may vary according to the type of issue; it can be expected to be particularly important when deliberating about an issue such as immigration, which calls for consideration for other people's perspectives. Those capable of empathizing are likely to be motivated to deliberate on immigration because they are willing and able to understand others' perspectives and emotions. Moreover, successful deliberation is expected to enhance understanding of others' perspectives, especially those in a disadvantaged position.

In this study, we compare the role of empathy in enclave deliberation – that is, deliberation among a like-minded group – to cross-cutting deliberation where group members hold different views. The inclusion of different viewpoints in the process of exchanging arguments is one of the key features in democratic deliberation. Indeed, the presence of conflicting viewpoints is often regarded as a necessary precondition for deliberation (Thompson 2008, 502). Diversity of opinions can be expected to enhance consideration and reflection on different viewpoints (e.g., Mercier & Landmore 2012). Cass Sunstein (2002, 2007, 2009) discusses the problems and risks related to enclave deliberation, including, most importantly, group polarization. Other scholars (e.g., Karpowitz et al. 2009; see also Sunstein 2007, 76–7) point out that deliberation in like-minded contexts might facilitate articulation of specific interests and values as well as enhance mobilization, especially for those in disadvantaged positions. Mansbridge (1994, 63), who was probably the first to use the term 'enclave deliberation', calls for 'enclaves of protected discourse and action' as an element of a just society.

In our experiment, the respondents were divided into two enclaves based on their opinions on immigration expressed in a baseline survey (T1). Respondents with negative attitudes to immigration were classified into a *con* enclave, and respondents with a positive view on immigration into a *pro* enclave. Furthermore, participants were randomly assigned into: like-minded groups consisting of people from the same enclave; mixed groups, including an equal number of participants from both enclaves; and a control group. Subjects in the first two groups took part in the deliberation event, whereas the control group only filled in three mail-in surveys. The purpose of our experiment was to compare processes and consequences of deliberation in like-minded and mixed groups.<sup>1</sup> Although group composition was subject to manipulation, the other standard procedures of the deliberative 'package' (Mutz 2006, 61) were applied. These procedural features include the provision of balanced information to all participants as well as the use of moderators and discussion rules to encourage a process where participants listen to each other's arguments and reflect on their own views.



Empathy was measured through surveys conducted among the experimental subjects before and after deliberation (at T2 and T4). To measure general empathy, we used three items from Davis's (1980) large empathy questionnaire. We focused on items of perspective-taking and empathetic concern, which we consider relevant from the point of view of democratic deliberation.<sup>2</sup> In addition to general empathy, we also analyzed questions designed for the specific purposes of this study. These questions measure participants' willingness to consider the views of a specific outgroup (i.e., immigrants).

As pointed out in the theoretical discussion, we consider empathy as a factor facilitating successful deliberation. Based on this, we expect that those who were actually willing to participate in the deliberative experiment are more empathetic than those who dropped out.

Since the participants were divided into *pro* and *con* enclaves, we are able to compare empathy in these two groups. Based on earlier studies (e.g., Newman et al. 2015), we expect people in the *pro* enclave to be more empathetic when it comes to outgroup empathy, operationalized as a willingness to consider the perspectives of immigrants.

Furthermore, our experimental subjects deliberated either in like-minded or in mixed groups, which allows us to analyze the effects of the exposure to conflicting viewpoints in the course of deliberation. The diversity of viewpoints, put forward in a deliberative process, is expected to help participants to see things from other people's perspectives, including outgroups such as immigrants. This kind of development is expected to take place especially among those participants who have negative attitudes toward immigration and who deliberate in mixed groups. This is because these participants are likely to hear arguments and viewpoints in support of more permissive views towards immigration. Another issue is that according to Sunstein's (2002) 'law of group polarization', people deliberating in like-minded groups can become more extreme in their views. Especially, participants with anti-immigration attitudes can be expected to reinforce each other's negative attitudes toward immigrants, which may decrease their willingness to consider immigrants' perspectives.

In addition to the survey data measuring empathy, our study yields evidence on the participants' proneness to behave altruistically. At the end of the experiment, the participants had the possibility to donate €5 of their €90 remuneration to the Red Cross. Moreover, they could choose between domestic or international charity. Based on earlier findings on empathy and altruism, we assume that members of the *pro* enclave are more likely to contribute to charity compared to the members of the *con* enclave. As people in the *pro* enclave can be expected to be more empathetic toward outgroups, they can also be assumed to be more willing to contribute to international aid than those belonging to the *con* enclave. On the basis of the previous discussion, we formulate the following hypotheses.

*H1:* Empathy, especially empathy toward outgroups, is higher among the participants in the *pro* enclave than in the *con* enclave.

*H2a:* Empathy toward outgroups increases during deliberation.

*H2b:* The largest increase in outgroup empathy occurs among those participants in the *con* enclave who deliberate in mixed groups.

*H3:* Participants in the *pro* enclave donate more often to the Red Cross than participants in the *con* enclave, especially to the International Catastrophe Fund.

## Experimental Procedures

Our analysis is based on an experiment where citizens, drawn from a random sample, deliberated on immigration. The experiment was held in Finland in 2012. A short survey (T1) was first mailed out to a simple random sample of 12,000 adults in the region of Turku (Åbo). Of the addressed sample, 39 percent ( $n = 4,681$ ) responded to the survey. T1 consisted of 14 questions measuring respondents' immigration attitudes. The questions are listed in the Appendix. Figure 1 shows the initial dispersion of attitudes among those respondents ( $n = 3,232$ ) who allowed further contact from the research group.<sup>3</sup>

Figure 1. The Initial Dispersion of Attitudes toward Immigration.

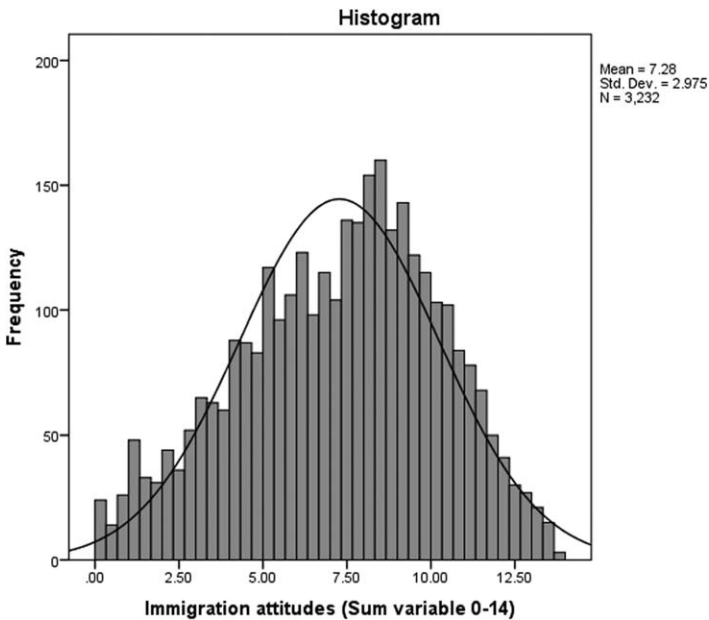
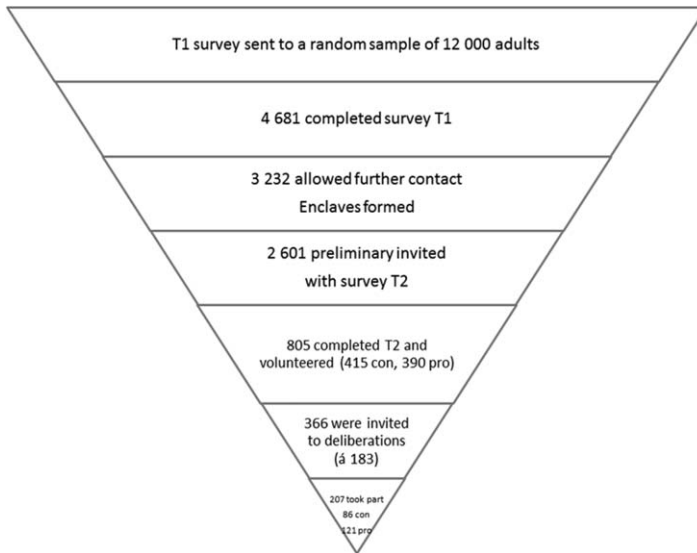


Figure 2. Recruitment and Attrition.



The histogram in Figure 1 shows that the sum variable capturing initial opinions on immigration was close to being normally distributed. Since the aim was to construct opinion enclaves of like-minded individuals, we excluded moderates (i.e., respondents whose opinions on immigration were close to the middle on the 14 item scale) ( $n = 631$ ). Thus, the second survey (T2), with 37 items and an invitation to take part in a deliberation event, was sent to 2,601 people who were classified as members of either the *con* or the *pro* enclave. This survey also included questions related to empathy. At this point, it was clearly stated that the deliberation event was an integrated part of the research project. Furthermore, it was clarified that only a part of those who volunteered could be included in the deliberation event and that the final participants would be randomly chosen. Each participant who completed all stages of the project was compensated.<sup>4</sup>

In the end, 805 people volunteered and, of these, 366 were invited to take part in the deliberation event. Stratified sampling was used in order to guarantee equal representation from the *pro* and *con* enclaves as well as age and gender balance. Within the strata, participants were selected by lot. The final target sample was 256 participants yielding 32 small groups of eight participants (eight *pro* like-minded, eight *con* like-minded and 16 mixed groups). Alas, only 207 people showed up. Especially people in the *con* enclave tended to abstain at this final stage.<sup>5</sup> Figure 2 shows the phases of the recruitment process.

Table 1. Assignment to Treatments and Enclaves

Stratification	Randomization	
	Like-minded	Mixed
Con	<i>Con</i> like-minded (n = 42)	<i>Con</i> mixed (n = 44)
Pro	<i>Pro</i> like-minded (n = 77)	<i>Pro</i> mixed (n = 44)

The deliberations took place in small groups, which were randomly formed so that there were ten like-minded groups in the *pro* enclave, five like-minded groups in the *con* enclave and 11 mixed groups. Each mixed group consisted of eight participants, four from each enclave, whereas like-minded groups consisted of seven to nine members. The control group consisted of 369 people who were initially willing to take part and who returned each of the surveys T1, T2 and T4.<sup>6</sup> Table 1 displays the assignment into small groups.

The deliberations took place during one weekend (31 March–1 April 2012). Each participant took part during one day, either on Saturday or on Sunday. Each day, the event followed the same procedures and lasted from 9.30 am until 3 pm. The day started with a short 15-item quiz measuring knowledge on immigration and general politics. After the knowledge quiz, the participants were given factual information about immigration in Finland. The briefing was designed to be balanced and focused on basic facts, such as the number of immigrants and their country of origin, and was presented as a slide show in an auditorium with all participants. All controversial material or material that could simulate empathy toward immigrants or would be likely to diminish it was left out, including statistics about crime and unemployment, or stories about individual immigrants. A copy of the information was also handed out to each participant.

The group discussions lasted for four hours, including a lunch break of 45 minutes. In each small group, trained moderators facilitated the discussion. A written description of the rules of the discussion was handed out to the participants in the beginning, emphasizing respect for other people's opinions, the importance of justifying one's opinions and openness to others' points of view. The moderators also read aloud these rules. In the beginning of the group discussion, each group member proposed a theme related to the immigration issue which they wished to be discussed. The moderator wrote these themes down on a blackboard. The proposed themes covered issues such as work-based immigration, humanitarian-based immigration, acculturation, multiculturalism, unemployment, crime and security, language and education, immigration attitudes and the costs of immigration. There were no major differences between the themes

Table 2. The Phases of the Experiment

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<i>Pre-surveys (January 2012)</i>
1. Short survey to form enclaves (T1)
2. Second survey with invitation (T2)
<i>The deliberation event (31 March–1 April 2012)</i>
3. Quiz measuring knowledge (T3)
4. General instructions and briefing on the immigration issue
5. Small group discussions (four hours, including 45-minute lunch break)
6. The fourth survey measuring opinion and knowledge changes and experience of the event (T4)
<i>Debriefing (20 April 2012)</i>
7. A follow-up survey measuring the stability of opinion changes (T5)
8. Participants debriefed about the experiment and given their remuneration for participation

---

proposed by the *pro* and *con* immigration participants, with the exception that none of the *con* participants suggested Finnish people's negative attitudes toward immigrants (i.e., prejudices and racism) as a discussion topic. After this, a free discussion on the themes followed. The moderators interfered only if any of the group members dominated or completely withdrew from the discussion. Furthermore, the moderator could propose a theme for discussion from those written down on the board in case the discussion stalled, and interfere if there were any rude or disrespectful utterances toward other participants. The idea was to keep discussion as free as possible and the role of the moderator rather minor. The moderators were instructed not to lead the discussion to any specific direction or to take part in discussion.

The group discussions ended with a survey (T4) where each participant was given an opportunity to donate €5 of their €90 remuneration to the Finnish Red Cross, either to the International Catastrophe Fund or to the Domestic Fund.<sup>7</sup> Those who decided to donate collected a gift certificate of €85. The Red Cross was chosen as the receiver of the donation because it is a well-known and largely trusted organization, engaged in both international and domestic charity work. Although donating to the Red Cross is not directly linked to immigration, we decided to use this particular charity as we were unaware of another organization with a connection to immigration that was comparable in terms of reputation and trustworthiness. Participants made their donation choice when filling in the T4 survey right after deliberation. The phases of the experiment are listed in Table 2.

## Results<sup>8</sup>

We begin our analysis by looking at *general empathy* measured with three survey items (listed under Heading A in Table 3). The first two are from

Table 3. The Survey Items Used to Measure General Empathy and Outgroup Empathy

- 
- A. *Three items measuring empathy (perspective-taking and empathetic concern based on Davis's measure)*
1. Before judging anyone, I try to imagine myself in that person's position.
  2. I believe that there are two sides to everything and I try to look at things from both sides.
  3. I feel sympathy whenever someone is being treated unfairly.\*
- B. *Three items measuring consideration for an outgroup perspective (immigrants)*
1. One should try to place oneself in the position of immigrants in the immigration debate.
  2. In the immigration debate the opinions of immigrants are rarely taken sufficiently into account.
  3. The Finnish immigration debate should primarily consider the viewpoint of Finns (reverse coding).
- 

Note: \*In Davis (1980) the formulation is slightly different: 'When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.'

Davis's perspective-taking scale and the third is based on the scale measuring empathetic concern, in a slightly modified form (Davis 1980). These items measure both cognitive and emotional aspects of empathy – that is, the capacity and willingness to understand others' positions as well as empathetic concern for those who are in disadvantaged positions. In the analysis, they are used as sum variables for *general empathy*.<sup>9</sup> Under Heading B, three additional items are listed. A sum variable of them attempts to capture participants' willingness to consider immigrant perspectives and functions as a proxy for *outgroup empathy*.<sup>10</sup> In terms of the distinction between cognitive and emotional empathy, our measure for outgroup empathy pertains to cognitive aspects of empathy (i.e., perspective-taking).

Each item was asked through a statement with a standard Likert scale consisting of four values. In order to code them into an index, every item was first recoded into a scale from 0 to 1, after which two means, respectively for items under the Headings A and B, were calculated for each individual at T2 and T4. Thus, the indices can vary between 0 (least empathetic) and 1 (most empathetic).

In Table 4, comparisons of general empathy (the items under Heading A in Table 3) and outgroup empathy (items under Heading B in Table 3) are carried out between the two enclaves (*HI*). Furthermore, the table shows the empathy levels of those who were invited but dropped out, as well as those who were in the control group.

Table 4 shows the baseline levels of general empathy (measured at T2) for eight groups. Looking at the two enclaves as a whole (*HI*), *con all* (n = 415) and *pro all* (n = 390), we see that the *con* enclave scores 0.70 and the *pro* enclave 0.75 prior to deliberation. By means of t-test, the difference is found to be significant (two-tailed tests are used throughout the analysis)

Table 4. Baseline General Empathy and Outgroup Empathy in Different Groups

	<i>Con</i>	<i>Pro</i>	Diff.	S.E.	t	p	<i>Con</i>	<i>Pro</i>
<i>General empathy</i>								
All	0.70	0.75	0.05	0.01	5.97	***	415	390
Invited	0.70	0.75	0.05	0.01	3.11	**	183	183
Abstained	0.69	0.75	0.06	0.02	2.49	*	97	62
Participated	0.72	0.75	0.03	0.02	1.52		86	121
Control group	0.69	0.75	0.06	0.01	4.69	***		
<i>Outgroup empathy</i>								
All	0.36	0.65	0.29	0.01	25.48	***	414	390
Invited	0.37	0.66	0.29	0.02	17.78	***	183	183
Abstained	0.34	0.67	0.33	0.03	13.16	***	97	62
Participated	0.41	0.65	0.24	0.02	11.03	***	86	121
Control group	0.36	0.64	0.28	0.02	16.72	***	194	175

Notes: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ . S.E. = Standard error; Diff. = Difference.

( $t$ -value 5.97,  $p = 0.000$ ). This means that even though the difference between means was small, the respondents in the *pro* enclave were on average somewhat more empathetic than the respondents in the *con* enclave. This observation seems to be in line with the findings of Newman et al. (2015), who detect an association between empathy and positive attitudes toward immigration. Furthermore, we see that there are no differences in empathy levels within enclaves between the surveyed (labeled ‘all’) and invited samples. This was expected because of a random selection of participants within the enclaves. We also notice that general empathy in the control group corresponds to the empathy levels among the participants in both enclaves.

Next, a similar comparison is carried out in relation to outgroup empathy (also *HI*), which is measured through the questions listed under Heading B in Table 3. These questions capture how much consideration the participants show for immigrants’ perspectives. The comparison follows the same logic as the analysis of general empathy above. First, we establish differences in outgroup empathy between the enclaves, after which we look at those who were invited, who abstained and who participated within the enclaves. Bearing in mind the construction of the outgroup empathy index, the differences between the two enclaves come as no surprise. The non-permissive *con* enclave shows a clearly lower level (0.36) of consideration for immigrant perspectives than the permissive *pro* enclave (0.65), and the difference is statistically significant ( $t = 25.48$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). Once again, due to random selection, there are no differences between all participants and the invited participants within the two enclaves.

Perhaps the most interesting result in Table 4 is the difference in outgroup empathy within the *con* enclave between those who abstained (0.34) and those who attended (0.41) the deliberation event. Even though

Table 5. The Development of Outgroup Empathy.

	Pre (T2)	Post (T4)	T4–T2	S.E.	t	p
All	0.55	0.58	0.03	0.01	3.39	**
<i>Con</i>						
Like-minded	0.42	0.46	0.04	0.02	1.61	
Mixed	0.39	0.47	0.07	0.02	3.98	***
Difference	0.02	-0.01	-0.04	0.03	-1.21	
<i>Pro</i>						
Like-minded	0.67	0.71	0.04	0.02	2.63	**
Mixed	0.63	0.60	-0.03	0.02	-1.51	
Difference	0.03	0.10	0.07	0.02	2.77	**
Control group						
<i>Con</i>	0.36	0.36	0.00	0.12	-0.22	
<i>Pro</i>	0.64	0.64	0.00	0.01	0.29	

Notes: \* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ . S.E. = Standard error.

the difference is small (0.07 units), it is statistically significant ( $t = 2.86$ ,  $p < 0.01$ , this  $t$ -value is not displayed in Table 3) and reflects, indirectly, the fact that at the very final stage, it was somewhat more difficult to attract people with the most anti-immigrant views to the deliberation event. Because of this pattern in attrition, the *con* control group was slightly less understanding of immigrant views (0.36) than those from the *con* enclave who actually participated in deliberation. The *pro* control group, however, corresponds to the *pro* participant group in terms of outgroup empathy. *H1* gains support: in the whole sample and among the invited respondents empathy levels, both general empathy and especially outgroup empathy were lower in the *con* enclave than in the *pro* enclave. For some reason, however, among the invited persons of the *con* enclave, the ones who opted out at the final stage had lower levels of outgroup empathy than the ones who attended. Thus, there is no statistically significant difference when it comes to general empathy between the *con* and *pro* enclaves among the ones who participated.

Having established the baseline differences between different groups regarding their outgroup empathy, or consideration of immigrants' views, we now turn to the possible development in the willingness to consider immigrants' views.<sup>11</sup> We expect deliberation on immigration to increase the participants' understanding for immigrants' views (*H2a*). The non-permissive *con* participants are expected to gain outgroup empathy when they deliberate in mixed groups, facing pro-immigration participants and their argumentation (*H2b*). Table 5 shows the development of outgroup empathy among all participants and within the four groups based on enclave and treatment, as well as the control group.

Looking at the development among all participants, outgroup empathy increases from 0.55 to 0.58 ( $t = 3.39$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), supporting *H2a*. Combining



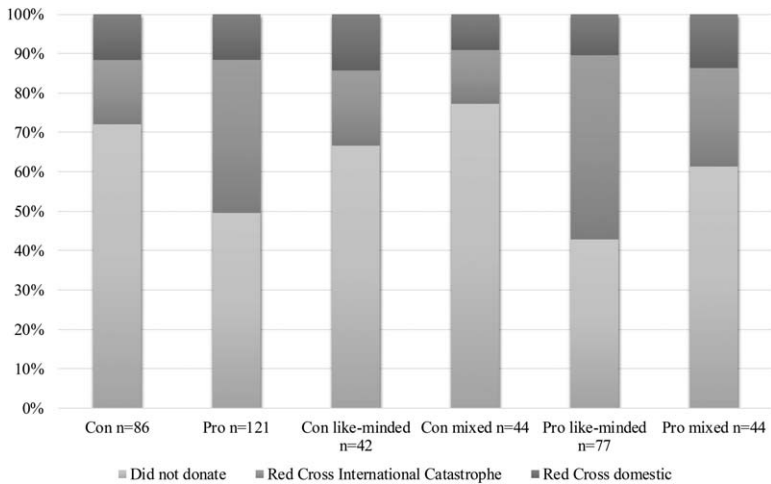
treatments and enclaves, we find that the slight increase among the *con* participants in the like-minded groups is not significant, whereas the increase from 0.39 to 0.47 among the *con* participants in mixed groups is significant ( $t = 3.98, p = 0.000$ ). The increase from 0.67 to 0.71 in the *pro* like-minded groups is significant ( $t = 2.63, p < 0.01$ ), whereas the minor decrease among the *pro* participants in mixed groups is not ( $t = -1.51, p < 0.14$ ). The results seem to confirm our expectation that taking part in deliberation on immigration increases concern for immigrants' perspectives (*H2a*). Moreover, the increase seems to be especially large among participants in the *con* enclave deliberating in mixed groups (*H2b*).<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, when we look at the differences-in-difference, we find that the *con* participants' larger increase in outgroup empathy in the mixed treatment is not statistically higher than the increase in the like-minded treatment.

This finding was also confirmed through separate regression analyses within the two enclaves (not shown here) where the development of attitudes toward immigration was added to the dummy variables of *treatment*, *time (post-deliberation)* and *treatment\*time*. Within the *con* enclave, only the increase of tolerant attitudes explains increase in outgroup empathy. Within the *pro* enclave, outgroup empathy was found to increase by the like-minded treatment but not by change in attitudes toward immigration. In the control group, outgroup empathy did not change. In conclusion, *H2a* gains support, but the increase occurs among all participants, with the exception of the *pro*-immigration participants in the mixed treatment. Thus, we cannot confirm *H2b*, stating that the participants with non-permissive views on immigration would have gained more outgroup empathy in mixed groups.

These results are in line with the findings by Grönlund et al. (2015), which show an overall development into more permissive *attitudes* toward immigration among the participants. Attitudes were measured with 14 items such as 'Finland should take more immigrants. Do you think this is a bad or a good suggestion?'. Development into more permissive attitudes happened in both treatments. Also at the individual level, the change in outgroup empathy is positively correlated with the change in immigration attitudes toward a more tolerant view (Kendall's tau 0.183,  $p = 0.000$ ). Moreover, it is notable that, on average, the *con* participants deliberating in like-minded groups became more tolerant of immigration, which is contrary to earlier findings on discussion in like-minded groups, labeled by Sunstein (2002) as group polarization. Our results support the view that deliberation is different from other forms of talk, and that discussion procedures can have a strong impact on outcomes. The 'deliberative package', including information and facilitated small group discussions, seems to have an impact on how groups discuss and how attitudes develop (Grönlund et al. 2015; Strandberg et al. 2017).

So far, the analysis has been based on attitudinal items. We will now turn to altruistic behavior among the participants (*H3*). At the end of the

Figure 3. The Distribution of Donations to the Red Cross at the End of the Experiment.



deliberation, the participants had an opportunity to donate €5 of their €90 remuneration to the Finnish Red Cross. This opportunity to donate was neither framed nor primed in any way; and the participants were not told about this in advance. The donation itself was included as a question at the end of Survey T4, and the participants could make their donation by ticking a box in the questionnaire. In this respect, the donation was entirely at the participants' discretion and the possible intervention of social desirability or group pressure was minimized. Figure 3 shows the distribution of donations within the two enclaves and treatments.<sup>13</sup>

As Figure 3 shows, the altruistic act of donating was clearly more common in the *pro* enclave. Half of the participants in the *pro* enclave made the donation, whereas the proportion of those who donated in the *con* enclave was 28 percent. The difference is statistically significant ( $t = 3.13$ ,  $p = 001$ ).<sup>14</sup> At the individual level, there is a weak positive correlation between general baseline empathy and donating (Kendall's tau 0.13,  $p < 0.05$ ). The bivariate correlation between outgroup empathy (after the experiment) and donating is slightly stronger and statistically significant (Kendall's tau 0.19,  $p < 0.01$ ). Among those who donated, participants in the *pro* enclave were more likely to give money to the International Catastrophe Fund than those in the *con* enclave, as expected. In the *pro* enclave, 47 individuals (77.0 percent of the donors within the enclave) donated to the catastrophe fund, compared to 14 persons in the *con* enclave (58.3 percent). The number of donors to the domestic fund was 14 in the *pro* and 10 in the *con* enclave. The differences in where people

Table 6. Binary Logistic Regression

	B	Odds ratio	S.E.	p
General baseline empathy	0.83	2.30	1.10	0.450
Outgroup baseline empathy	2.61	13.59	0.98	0.007
Outgroup empathy change	0.92	2.50	1.27	0.472
Immigrant in small group	0.17	1.19	0.30	0.557
Constant	-2.54	0.08	0.90	0.005
Nagelkerke pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.075			
% correctly predicted	62.3			

Notes: Dependent variable: Donated to the Red Cross. S.E. = Standard error.

donated to is not, however, statistically significant between the two enclaves ( $t = 1.61$ ,  $p = 0.116$ ).

Regarding the differences in terms of donating between the two treatments, the difference is significant within the *pro* enclave but not within the *con* enclave. When pro-immigration people discussed with each other, this seems to have affected their willingness to donate to charity in a significant way: 43 persons donated, 33 did not, compared to 17 donating in mixed groups and 27 not donating. ( $t = 1.97$ ,  $p = 0.051$ ).<sup>15</sup> Somewhat surprisingly, *con* participants deliberating in like-minded groups donated (14 donated, 28 did not) more often than their peers discussing in mixed groups (ten donated, 34 did not), although this difference is not statistically significant ( $t = 1.09$ ,  $p = 0.28$ ). Within the *con* enclave, Figure 3 would suggest that there is variation in the extent to which donations are targeted to domestic or international aid. However, these differences are not statistically significant (the difference is close to being significant in the like-minded treatment,  $p < 0.12$ ).<sup>16</sup>

In order to verify the patterns found in bivariate analyses between empathy and prosocial behavior, we also conducted a binary logistic regression analysis where empathy, outgroup empathy, change in outgroup empathy and the presence of a participant with an immigrant background in the small group were included as covariates. Table 6 shows the results of the regression. The only statistically significant variable is baseline outgroup empathy, which has an odds ratio of over 13. Overall, the model does not predict donations very well (62 percent correct). In other words, we did not find a link between general empathy and altruism, which has been established in some other studies (Batson 1997; Batson et al. 1997, 2002), but the willingness to consider immigrants' views increased the likelihood of altruistic donating, as assumed by *H3*.

## Conclusions

It has been convincingly argued that both cognitive and affective aspects of empathy are essential elements for democratic deliberation (e.g.,

Krause 2008; Morrell 2010). In addition, it seems plausible to assume that the role of empathy varies according to the type of issue deliberated – the issue of immigration is certainly an issue that requires an understanding of others people's positions (cf. Newman et al. 2015). Moreover, deliberation about immigration can be expected to raise concerns regarding the perspectives of the relevant outgroup (i.e., immigrants).

Our analyses show that respondents with pro-immigration attitudes had a somewhat higher baseline level of general empathy than respondents with restrictive attitudes toward immigration. General empathy was not, on the other hand, connected with attrition in the experiment. Empathetic people were not more inclined to take part in deliberations on immigration, and we did not find significant changes in the participants' general empathy levels in the course of the experiment. Neither deliberating in small-n groups, nor being subject to the like-minded or mixed treatment had any effect on the participants' general empathy at the aggregate level.

There were, however, more prominent differences in the subjects' willingness to take into account immigrants' perspectives. This second index, which was created as a proxy for outgroup empathy, consists of three items on respondents receptivity toward immigrants' viewpoints. The *pro*-immigration enclave was far more willing to consider immigrants' views than the less permissive *con* enclave. It is also notable that those *con* enclave respondents who were less willing to consider immigrants' perspectives were also less prone to participate in deliberation. Among those who participated in deliberation, there was an increase in outgroup empathy within the *con* enclave. Even though the increase seemed to be more evident in the mixed treatment, the difference-in-difference analysis showed no statistically significant difference between the treatments. The results suggest that people whose initial attitudes toward immigration were restrictive were especially affected by taking part in deliberations in groups with mixed opinions; their willingness to understand immigrants' perspectives increased notably. Also in the like-minded treatment, deliberation led to somewhat increased outgroup empathy, especially within the *pro* enclave

In other words, deliberation on the immigration issue seems to have enhanced a specific type of perspective-taking. Because our measure of outgroup empathy only taps into cognitive aspects of empathy, it remains possible that the increased receptivity to immigrants' perspectives was instrumental or even self-interested in character. For example, participants could have started to think that immigrants' viewpoints should be considered more carefully in order to reduce the risks of terrorism. However, the fact that greater willingness to hear immigrants' viewpoints was associated with an increased permissiveness (i.e., tolerant attitudes) towards

immigration, especially within the *con* enclave, suggests a more profound change in participants' attitudes.

When it comes to the behavioral dependent variable – that is, whether to donate to charity or not – we found in accordance with *H3* that the anti-immigrant *con* enclave was less willing to donate a portion of their remuneration to the Red Cross. Participants in the *con* like-minded groups donated much less (two thirds did not donate) than participants in the *pro* like-minded groups (43 percent did not donate). We did not find a link between general empathy and likelihood to donate, whereas our measure of outgroup empathy was positively linked to the likelihood of donation. There was also a significant difference within the *pro* enclave between those deliberating in like-minded groups (43 percent did not donate) and those deliberating in mixed groups (61 percent did not donate). This finding seems to be in line with studies in political behavior (e.g., Mutz 2002, 2006; also Karpowitz et al. 2009) showing that discussions with like-minded people foster willingness toward collective action, whereas cross-cutting exposure decreases people's willingness to act.

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#### NOTES

1. For results regarding opinion changes in the experiment, see Grönlund et al. (2015).
2. We are aware of the critique related to measuring empathy through self-report scales. In particular, such scales are likely to increase the likelihood of socially desirable answers. In the present study, Davis's measure was used because it fitted well with the general survey with many items. Due to the large number of survey items, we could not use all the questions from Davis's measure, which includes four scales – namely a 'fantasy scale', a 'perspective-taking scale', an 'emphatic concern scale' and a 'personal distress scale'. Instead, we used those that in our view best represent the kind of empathy and perspective-taking relevant in democratic deliberation. It is also noteworthy that because of random allocation, social desirability should not vary between the experimental treatments.
3. The questions were first pilot tested with students at two universities in order to measure the appropriateness of the questions for the purpose of the experiment. All survey items worked well both in the pilots and in the actual survey conducted among the random sample (T1). In the surveyed sample, all 14 items loaded on a single factor and Cronbach's Alpha of the sum variable reached 0.94. Therefore, we were able to construct a sum variable of the 14 items. Each item was first recoded into a scale from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating the most immigration-friendly attitude.
4. After the experiment, each participant in deliberations received a gift certificate worth €90, whereas everyone in the control group received €15.
5. For a more detailed account of recruitment and attrition, see Rapeli and Karjalainen (2015).
6. T3 was only completed by those who took part in the deliberation event.

7. According to the webpages of the Finnish Red Cross (<https://www.redcross.fi/>), domestic work is about counselling in health-related issues, provision of first aid in large public events and provision of voluntary 'friends' to lonely people, such as to the elderly. The most visible part of the Catastrophe fund is to aid people in catastrophes all over the world, but actually the fund also finances domestic work, like helping victims of fires. We believe, however, that the general public understanding in Finland would be that the Catastrophe fund is for foreign work and the domestic fund for the work in Finland.
8. The data analyzed in the in the present article, including questionnaires, are deposited at the Finnish Social Science Data Archive (Grönlund 2014). They can be ordered free of charge for research and teaching purposes.
9. Cronbach's Alpha for these three items is 0.66 at T2 and 0.69 at T4.
10. Cronbach's Alpha for these three times is 0.67 at T2 and 0.64 at T4.
11. Even though we do not have a hypothesis on general empathy, we also looked at the development of general empathy before and after taking part in deliberation. The results are shown in Appendix Table 1. General empathy remained stable among those who took part in the deliberative experiment. There were no changes in any comparisons among those who deliberated or in the control group.
12. In a separate test, we discovered that the increase in outgroup empathy occurred among male participants, especially in the *con* enclave. Although this increase among *con* male participants was more evident in the mixed treatment ( $p = 0.001$ ), it also occurred in the like-minded treatment ( $p = 0.03$ ). Among women, no statistically significant changes in outgroup empathy can be traced in any of the groups.
13. Kruskal-Wallis H-test reveals a significant difference in donations between the four groups depicted in Figure 3 ( $p = 0.010$ ).
14. When considering their donations to the Red Cross, participants were engaged in a so-called 'dictator game', which is a technique frequently used to test subjects' inclination to prosocial action. In the standard form of the game, the dictator and the recipient are student subjects, whereas in our experiment the recipient is a charity organization. Previous results on such games show that subjects tend to share a larger part of their endowment when the recipient is considered as deserving or needy, compared to the standard form of the game (Engel 2011). A comparable study to our own was conducted by Eckel and Grossman (1996), who found that about 73 percent of experimental subjects made an allocation to the American Red Cross. Overall, participants in our experiment donated considerably less than the participants in Eckel and Grossman's study. This might be due to our participants' experience of having earned the reward from taking part in the experiment, which involved many stages and took place for quite a long time. This interpretation is in line with the results of Engel's (2011) meta-study over dictator games.
15. According to the Mann-Whitney U-test, the difference between the two treatments within the *pro* enclave is not statistically significant ( $p = 0.137$ , exact one-tailed  $p = 0.072$ ).
16. According to the Mann-Whitney U-test, the difference between the two treatments within the *con* enclave is not statistically significant ( $p = 0.272$ , exact one-tailed  $p = 0.155$ ).

## Appendix

The main items measuring attitudes on immigration are:

1. Finland should take more immigrants. Do you think this is a bad or a good suggestion?
2. Migration of foreigners into Finland should be restricted as long as there is unemployment in Finland. [r]

3. Do you think Finland will change into a better or a worse place to live when people from other countries move to Finland?

Questions 1–3 were presented on a scale from 0 to 10.

4. It is good for the Finnish economy that people from other countries move to Finland.
5. Immigrants take away jobs from native Finns. [r]
6. Immigrants should have the same right to social security as Finns even if they are not Finnish citizens.
7. The state and the municipalities use too much money to aid immigrants. [r]
8. Immigration poses a serious threat to our national originality.
9. Everyone who wants to come to Finland to live and work should be allowed to do so.
10. Immigration policy should primarily favor Christians instead of other religions. [r]
11. Generally speaking, immigrants adapt well into the Finnish society.
12. I would be happy to have an immigrant as a co-worker.
13. I would accept an immigrant as a family member.
14. I would accept immigrants in my neighborhood.

Questions 3–14 were presented as a standard Likert scale with four values. [r] = Reversed coding in the sum variable.

Appendix Table 1. The Development of General Empathy

	Pre (T2)	Post (T4)	T4–T2	p
<i>Con</i>				
All	0.72	0.72	0.00	
Like-minded	0.72	0.73	0.01	
Mixed	0.73	0.71	–0.02	
<i>Pro</i>				
All	0.75	0.75	0.00	
Like-minded	0.74	0.75	0.01	
Mixed	0.77	0.76	–0.01	
Control group				
<i>Con</i>	0.69	0.68	–0.01	
<i>Pro</i>	0.75	0.74	–0.01	

Note: \*p < 0.05; \*\*p < 0.01; \*\*\*p < 0.001.

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