Hearing and Understanding the Other Side – Experimental Evidence on the Role of Empathy in Citizen Deliberation

Kimmo Grönlund (Åbo Akademi University, kimmo.gronlund@abo.fi)
Kaisa Herne (University of Tampere, kaisa.herne@uta.fi)
Maija Setälä (University of Turku, maiset@utu.fi)

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Abstract

The role of empathy has received increased attention in the theoretical literature on deliberative democracy. Yet, we still have limited knowledge of how empathy works in deliberation between lay citizens. We designed an experiment where a random sample of citizens was first surveyed on their immigration opinions. Based on these initial opinions, the participants were divided into permissive and non-permissive enclaves and randomly assigned into two treatments. Some deliberated in like-minded small groups, whereas others were placed in mixed groups. In the present paper we study a) differences between permissive and non-permissive participants with regard to the levels of empathy and outgroup empathy; b) whether there are differences in empathy levels between those who turned out to deliberate and those who dropped out; c) whether (outgroup) empathy increases as a result of deliberation. We also examine differences in prosocial behavior, i.e. donation to the Red Cross, between different kinds of participants. The results show that especially non-permissive participants’ outgroup empathy increased during deliberation. Permissive participants were more inclined to donate, but empathy levels did not have an impact when it comes to donations.
Introduction

While democratic deliberation is primarily a collective process of reasoning, it also requires individual processes of reflection or, as Robert Goodin (2003) calls it, ‘deliberation within’. Internal deliberation requires that people are both reflective over their own viewpoints and empathetic towards others’ positions. The ability to put oneself in others’ positions, or to empathize with other people, is thus a crucial aspect of democratic deliberation. Even Habermas (1996, 162), who mostly emphasizes intersubjective aspects of deliberation, regards ‘ideal role-taking’ as a part of moral discourse. This term, originally introduced by G. H. Mead, means that people place themselves in others’ situations. 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, the role of affect has been emphasized in democratic deliberation (see 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 reasonableness of argumentation. Moreover, he argues that democratic deliberation needs empathy understood as a process which involve both affective and cognitive components. Morrell (2010, 114-115) 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 paper, we examine the role of empathy in a process of citizen deliberation. The empirical analysis is based on an experiment designed to analyze the processes of so-called enclave deliberation, that is, deliberation among like-minded people. The experiment was held in Finland in April 2012, and the topic of discussion was immigration policies. Deliberation about immigration seems to require concern for others’ positions, also for those of out-groups. Through the experimental data, we analyze the role of empathy in democratic deliberation. We will first pay attention to the potential differences between those who were willing to participate in democratic deliberation and those who were not. Further, we examine whether those who participated are more empathetic than those who dropped out? We also look at the potential of deliberation to increase empathy in general as well as empathy toward members of out-groups,
that is, immigrants in the present context. Moreover, we investigate whether our experimental treatment influences general and specific empathy to out-groups by examining differences between like-minded and mixed groups. The paper is organized as follows. In the next section, we provide a definition of empathy, and consider its role in democratic deliberation. In the following section, we represent the experimental procedures, and thereafter present specific research questions of the study. These are followed by 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 democratic deliberation. Despite some recent contributions in this area (e.g. Morrell 2010), deliberation ‘within’ seems to be neglected in studies of deliberation and in the debate on how to enhance democratic deliberation in real world politics. Although many theorists of deliberative democracy have given some role to empathy, there are not that many empirical studies on the role of empathy or ‘ideal role-taking’ in democratic deliberation. In this respect, Morrell (2010) addresses important questions of how empathy is related to democratic deliberation and how people become willing and able to empathize with others.

There is not a single shared definition of empathy in the literature, but the term has been defined in a number of ways, and various elements have been connected to empathy (e.g. Hoffman 2000; Preston and de Waal 2002; Walter 2012). For this reason, the discussion on empathy is often elusive (Morrell 2010, 39-66). Further, there are concepts such as sympathy, compassion and empathetic concern that are closely related to empathy both conceptually and empirically. Some writers consider empathy to include only an affective element, i.e. reproducing others’ sentiments, whereas others distinguish affective empathy from cognitive empathy, i.e. understanding others’ positions (Walter 2012). For example, Davis (1980) argues that empathy is a multi-dimensional concept and that there is a need to measure both cognitive and affective aspects of empathy, i.e. 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 of others’ objective positions. Moreover, democratic deliberation calls for understanding especially
those aspects of others’ positions that are ethically relevant, e.g. those pertaining to generalizable moral principles. These ‘ethically relevant’ aspects can also be interpreted to be related to what, for example, Rawls (1971) calls ‘primary goods’. To illustrate, in the process of deliberation on income distribution, it seems relevant that people understand that living with less than minimum income can lead to shortage of nutrition. Defining empathy as a purely cognitive process seems, however, to be insufficient from the perspective of democratic deliberation. For example, Krause (2008) and Morrell (2010) argue that emotional components are necessary for deliberation. Cognitive empathy should be accompanied by certain kinds of emotional or affective elements.

One might argue that cognitive empathy pertains to the process of gaining knowledge about others’ positions, whereas the emotional part of empathy refers to affections related to that knowledge. In other words, emotional empathy comes rather close to how the concepts of empathetic concern or sympathy are understood. Batson (2011), for example, argues that empathetic concern involves a variety of feelings, including sympathy and compassion. Emotional empathy seems to require the imitation of an object’s sentiments through i) imagining one’s own sentiments in the position of the object; and/or ii) reproducing the (observed) sentiments of the object. It seems plausible to argue that both aspects of emotional empathy can be relevant for deliberation where a process of imagining oneself in others’ positions is important (e.g. Goodin 2001). Not just objective aspects of social positions, but also certain kinds of sentiments related to them can be regarded as ethically relevant. This could mean, for example, understanding that a person would feel disrespected as a citizen if denied the right to vote, or feel angry or frustrated if treated unfairly by public officials.

Emotional empathy in the second meaning, that is, the reproduction of an object’s sentiments does not mean that the subject has to go through exactly the same sentiments as the object. Rather, the subject should feel something that is in the same direction with the object’s sentiments. This kind of sympathy seems relevant for democratic deliberation because it seems to be related to pro-social attitudes.¹ 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’ feelings; second, people may also misrepresent their feelings to enhance

¹ We would not regard a person is empathetic if she uses her understanding of what causes pain to harm others; nor can we see how this kind of an attitude would help democratic deliberation.
better outcomes for themselves, although this would violate Habermas’s sincerity condition. Third, there is the problem of morally ‘wrong’ feelings, e.g. “the pain the racist feels in the face of anti-discrimination laws” (Krause 2008, 166). This kind of a feeling is hardly justifiable from a more generalizable perspective which should be the outcome of a deliberative process. The example given by Krause illustrates the ambiguous relationship between emotions and justice.²

Therefore, it remains unclear whether and what kind of a role affective aspects of empathy should have in democratic deliberation. Morrell claims that open-mindedness and sensitivity to others’ feelings 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 in the first place. If this is the case, affective components of empathy facilitate or can even be a precondition for the cognitive type of empathy. Following Davis’ multi-dimensional model of empathy, Morrell (2010, 60-63) argues for the so-called ‘process model of empathy’ which emphasized interaction between affective and cognitive elements. From the point of democratic deliberation it is, however, important that emotional reactions, whether one’s own or others’, are assessed in terms of their generalizability.

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 able and willing to empathize with those who are similar or close to them than with members of socially more distant out-groups (for references, see Cikara et al 2011). That is, friends, relatives and other in-group members are more likely to generate empathy, and this is likely to give rise to biased judgments. A single mother tends to understand the position of another single mother, a disabled person is familiar with the feelings of other disabled etc. A recent study shows also that

² For example, consider two poor single parents who are in a similar position measured in purely objective terms, e.g. their level of income is the same. Yet it is possible that one of them is deeply unhappy, whereas the other one is content with her or his situation. If empathy is interpreted in terms of understanding of others’ objective positions, they can be considered to be in an equal situation and, therefore, to deserve equal help or resources. However, if the idea of considering people’s emotions is taken seriously, they are not seen in an equal position because of different subjective experiences, and this would implicate that the unhappy needs help or extra resources, whereas the happy parent does not.
judges with daughters are likely to take a more feminist standpoint than judges who have only sons (Glynn and Sen 2015).

Out-group members, on the other hand, are not as likely to give rise to empathy, and their suffering may even create positive sentiments (for references see Cikara et al 2011). Bruneau et al (2012) show how compassion is lower for an outgroup member who represents the other side in a conflict. At the same time, 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 people to see things from others’ perspectives. Especially, it can be assumed that inclusive processes of deliberation where people are encouraged to consider others’ positions could enhance empathy towards out-groups, especially if they appear to be in a disadvantaged position.

In this paper, we are also interested in the connection between empathy and prosocial attitudes and behavior in the context of democratic deliberation. There are studies which establish a link between empathy or sympathy and prosocial attitudes (e.g. Montada and Schneider 1989, Pagano and Huo 2007). The empathy-altruism hypothesis states that empathic emotion evokes an altruistic motivation to help others, i.e. prosocial action (e.g. Batson 1997). The empathy-altruism hypothesis has gained empirical support from social psychological experiments. Several studies show that inducing empathy increases actual helping or willingness to help others even if helping is costly (e.g. Batson 1997, Batson et al. 1997, Batson et al 2002). Experimental evidence also suggests that altruistic giving might be related to the donors’ beliefs about the respondents’ worthiness of help (Fong 2007).

In sum, there is both a theoretical and empirical link between democratic deliberation and empathy, including empathy towards outgroups. Empathy is also linked to prosocial attitudes or behavior. The empathy-altruism hypothesis has been tested in social psychological studies, but we are not aware of studies connecting the hypothesis to democratic deliberation. Moreover, there are no previous studies on democratic deliberation and altruistic behavior. However, earlier studies suggest that participation in organized deliberation enhances generalized trust and willingness to contribute to collective action (Setälä & al. 2010; Grönlund & al. 2010).
Experimental procedure

The topic of the deliberation experiment was immigration which is a contested and debated issue in Finland. The main purpose of the experiment was to compare deliberation in two types of small groups: 1) groups consisting of like-minded people, and 2) groups consisting of people having different opinions on immigration. The participants of the experiment were randomly assigned to like-minded groups, mixed groups, and a control group. Subjects in the first two took part in the deliberation event, whereas the control group only filled in three mail-in surveys. Participants’ degrees of empathy were measured before and after deliberation. This means that we are looking at differences both between subjects (the comparison of like-minded and mixed groups) and within subjects (pre-test and post-test measures of the degree of empathy). The experiment was not completely randomized because we stratified people into two enclaves based on their initial opinions regarding immigration. Respondents with negative attitudes to immigration formed the con enclave, whereas respondents with a positive view on immigration formed the pro enclave.

A short survey (T1) was first mailed out to a simple random sample of 12,000 adults in the Turku region. Of the addressed sample, 39 percent (n = 4,681) responded to the survey. T1 consisted of 14 questions whose aim was to measure the respondents’ attitudes on immigration. The questions are listed in Appendix A. Figure 1 shows the initial dispersion of attitudes among those respondents (n=3,232) who allowed further contact from the research group.³

The histogram shows that the initial opinions almost followed the normal distribution. Since the design of the experiment required people with clear views on the immigration issue, we excluded moderates, i.e. respondents whose opinions on immigration were close to the middle on the 14 item scale (n= 631). The second survey (T2) with 37 items and an invitation to take part in a deliberation (and a separate debriefing) event was sent to 2,601 people who qualified as members

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 one 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, so that 1 indicates the most immigration-friendly attitude.
of either the *con* or the *pro* enclave. This survey already included the questions related to empathy listed below. At this point, it was clearly stated that the deliberation event was an integrated part of the research project and that a response to the survey meant a preliminary agreement to take part in it. Furthermore, it was clarified that only a part of those who volunteered could be included in the deliberation event and that the choice would be made by lot. Each participant who completed all stages of the project was compensated. A gift certificate worth 90 Euros was given to each participant of the deliberation and debriefing events and 15 Euros to those whose task was only to fill in the surveys (i.e. the control group).

Eventually, 805 people volunteered, and 366 were invited to take part in the deliberation event. The final target sample was 256 participants, which would have allowed for 32 small groups of eight participants (eight *pro* like-minded, eight *con* like-minded and 16 mixed groups). Stratified sampling was used in order to guarantee representation in terms of the *pro* and *con* enclaves as well as age and gender. Random sampling was used within strata. Unfortunately, the target of 256 deliberators was not achieved and only 207 people showed up. Especially people in the *con* enclave tended to abstain at this final stage (for a more detailed account of the recruitment and attrition, see Karjalainen & Rapeli 2015; Grönlund & al 2015). Figure 2 shows the phases of the recruitment process.\(^4\)

Figure 2 about here

At the deliberation event, the small groups were randomly formed within the *con* and *pro* enclaves yielding 10 *pro* like-minded groups, five *con* like-minded groups and 11 mixed groups. Each mixed group consisted of exactly eight participants, four from each enclave, whereas like-minded groups consisted of 7-9 members. The control group consisted of 369 people who were

\(^4\) Since invited participants with anti-immigrant attitudes dropped out at the final recruitment stage, we wanted to check if the sample of people turning out to deliberate was skewed when it comes to attitudes. In Table 1, comparisons between the preliminary invited sample (n=2,601), the initially volunteered respondents (n=805), the invited (n=366) and the actual participants (n=207) are made within the two enclaves. It can be seen that the participants in the *con* enclave were slightly more moderate, i.e. less anti-immigrant, compared to the whole enclave at earlier stages. In fact, the difference in opinions in the *con* enclave between the participants (n=86) and the ones who did not show up (n=97) is statistically significant at the 0.01-level. In other words, it was harder to attract people with the most anti-immigrant opinions to present their views in a deliberative event. In the *pro* enclave, the participants were slightly more liberal than the mean of the whole enclave at earlier stages. This difference is not, however, statistically significant.
initially willing to take part and who returned each of the surveys T1, T2 and T4. Table 1 displays the assignment into small groups.

Table 1 about here

The deliberation event took place during one weekend, 31 March - 1 April 2012. Each participant took part only during one day, either on Saturday or 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 briefed about some basic facts related to immigration in Finland. The briefing was designed to be balanced and focused on basic facts, such as the number of immigrants and their ethnic origin, and was presented as a slide show in an auditorium with all participants. All controversial material, e.g. statistics about crime and unemployment, were left out. A copy of the information material was also handed out to each participant.

After the briefing, facilitated small group discussions began in each group’s own location. 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 put forward 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 put forward by the pro and con immigration participants, except for that none of the con participants suggested Finns’ 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 put forward a theme for discussion from those written down on the board in case the discussion paused, and interfere if there were any rude or disrespectful utterances.
The group discussions ended with a survey (T4) repeating the questions in T1, T2 and T3, apart from socio-economic background variables. It also included questions related to the participants’ experiences of the deliberation event. As a compensation for participation, each experimental subject was granted a 90 euro gift certificate. Of this sum, subjects were given an opportunity to donate 5 euros to the Red Cross, either to its International Catastrophe Fund or its domestic work in Finland. The Red Cross was chosen as the target of the donation because it is a well-known and trusted organization which engages in both international and domestic charity. Participants decided on their contribution and chose the target of charity right after deliberating when filling in the survey T4, and the gift certificate was given to participants in a separate debriefing event. The phases of the experiment are listed in Table 2.

Table 2 about here.

**Research questions**

To sum up the theoretical discussion, empathy can be regarded as a pre-condition for democratic deliberation, but 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 as they are willing and able to understand other people’s perspectives and sentiments. Moreover, successful democratic deliberation might be expected to help people learn empathize with those who have different perspectives from their own, especially with those who are in a disadvantaged position.

The analysis in this paper is based on specific survey items that measure general empathy and empathy towards a specific outgroup, that is, immigrants. The surveys were conducted among the experimental subjects before and after deliberation (at T2 and T4). To measure general empathy, we use three items from Davis’s large empathy questionnaire. Davis’s questionnaire includes four scales, namely a ‘fantasy scale’, a ‘perspective-taking scale’, an ‘emphatic concern scale’ and a ‘personal distress scale’. We focus on items of perspective-taking and empathetic concern which
we consider relevant from the point of view of democratic deliberation. Our experiment dealt with the topic of immigration which allows us to measure attitudes and empathy towards immigrants. In addition to general empathy, we will analyze questions measuring participants’ willingness to consider immigrants’ perspectives.

Because our experiment was designed to analyze processes and outcomes of enclave deliberation, it is possible to test the levels of empathy before and after deliberation among people who had initially positive attitudes towards immigration (*pro* enclave) and those with negative attitudes towards immigration (*con* enclave). Based on earlier studies (e.g. Newman et al 2013), it may be expected that those in the *pro* enclave are more empathetic, especially when it comes to willingness to consider immigrants’ perspectives. As pointed out in the theoretical discussion, we consider empathy as a condition facilitating successful deliberation. More precisely, we can expect that those who are actually willing to participate in the deliberative experiment are more empathetic than those who drop out.

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 people to see things from others’ perspectives including outgroups such as immigrants. This kind of development is likely to take place especially among those participants with negative attitudes towards immigration who deliberate in mixed groups. This is assumed to happen because, in the course of deliberation, these participants will hear arguments in support of more permissive views towards immigration. However, according to Sunstein’s ‘law of group polarization’ (2012), people deliberating in like-minded groups can also become more extreme in their views. Especially, participants with anti-immigration attitudes can be expected to reinforce each other’s negative attitudes towards immigrants.

In addition to the survey data measuring empathy, our study yields evidence on subjects’ proneness to altruistic behavior at T4. After the experiment, the participants were given an option

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5 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. However, in the present study Davis’s measure was used because it fitted well with the general survey with many items. Further, it does not seem likely that a social desirability effect would vary between the experimental groups.
to donate five euros of their 90 euro reward to the Red Cross. They could also choose whether they wanted to support the International Catastrophe Fund or the domestic charity work. It is apparent that donating to the Red Cross is not directly linked to immigration. However, there is evidence that perspective-taking abilities learnt in one context can extend to others (Batson 2011, 175-176).

Based on earlier findings on empathy and altruism, we can assume that those experimental subjects with positive attitudes towards immigration (pro enclave) are more likely to contribute to charity than those with negative attitudes (con enclave). As people in the pro enclave can be expected to be more empathetic towards outgroups, they can also be assumed to be more willing to contribute to international aid than those belonging to con enclave. Moreover, we will make comparisons between pro and con participants deliberating in like-minded and mixed groups. On the basis of the previous discussion, we will focus on the following research questions.

RQ1. Does individual level of empathy, especially empathy towards outgroups, explain people’s willingness to deliberate on the issue of immigration?

RQ2. Does the level of empathy, especially empathy towards outgroups, vary across pro and con enclaves?

RQ3a. Does the level of empathy, especially empathy towards outgroups, increase during deliberation?

RQ3b. Are there any differences in the development of empathy between enclaves and treatments?

RQ4a. How do contributions to charity vary across enclaves and treatments?

**Results**

In the present paper, we analyze general empathy by using three items from Davis’s (1980) empathy measure. These items are listed under the heading A. in Table 3. The first two items are from Davis’s perspective taking scale and the third is from his empathetic concern scale (A1-3 in Table 3). 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. Cronbach’s Alpha for these three items reaches 0.66 at T2 and 0.69 at T4, and they are used as sum variables for empathy. Under the heading B, three additional items are listed. They measure participants’ readiness to consider immigrants’ perspectives and function as a proxy for outgroup empathy (B1-3 in Table 3, Cronbach’s Alpha 0.67 at T2 and 0.64 at T4).

Table 3 about here

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 a mean was calculated for each individual at T2 and T4. Thus, the indices can vary between 0 (least empathetic) and 1 (most empathetic).

We begin with a comparison of general empathy levels (the items listed under heading A in Table 3) between the two enclaves and between those who attended the deliberative event and those who dropped out (RQ1 and RQ2). We are interested in finding out whether people with pro-immigration views have higher levels of empathy than people who are restrictive to immigration. We also want to know whether those taking part in a discussion are more empathetic than the ones who choose to drop out. Figure 3 shows the baseline empathy levels at T2 for eight groups. We will first consider the two enclaves labeled as con all (n=415) and pro all (n=390). The con enclave scored 0.70 and the pro enclave 0.75 at T2. By means of a t-test, the difference is significant at the 0.000-level. 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 (2013) who detect a connection between empathy and positive attitudes to immigration. Furthermore, from Figure 3 we see that there are no differences in empathy levels between con all and con invited or pro all and pro invited. This was expected because of random selection of participants within the enclaves.

Is there a connection between levels of empathy and attrition? Looking at the subjects who abstained and those who participated in the deliberation event, we see that there is a small difference within the con enclave (abstained 0.69, participated 0.72) but this is not statistically
significant. Within the pro enclave, the levels are identical at 0.75 for abstained and participated. Thus, in our experiment, empathy was not related to participation in the deliberation experiment.

Figure 3 about here.

Figure 4 shows that levels of empathy remain stable among those who participated in deliberations. The first two pairs of bars represent the development of empathy among those participants who belonged to the con or pro enclaves, whereas the latter four pairs combine an enclave and treatment. The visual pattern of stability was verified through within samples t-tests.

Figure 4 about here.

Next, we move on to outgroup empathy measured by the questions pertaining to how much consideration the subjects show for immigrants’ perspectives. The comparison follows the same logic as the analysis of general empathy above. First, in Figure 5, we establish the differences in outgroup empathy between the enclaves, after which we look at those who were invited, who abstained and who participated within the enclaves.

Figure 5 about here.

Bearing in mind the construction of the outgroup empathy index, the differences shown in Figure 5 between the two enclaves surely come as no surprise. The non-permissive con enclave shows a clearly lower level (0.36) of consideration at T2 for immigrant perspectives than the permissive pro enclave (0.65), and the difference is statistically significant (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 Figure 5 is the difference in outgroup empathy within the con enclave between those who abstained (0.34) and those who attended (0.41) the deliberations. This difference is statistically significant (p<0.005) 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 actual deliberative event (Grönlund & al. 2015).
Having established the baseline differences between different groups regarding their consideration of immigrants’ views, we now turn to the possible development of willingness to consider immigrants’ views after having taken part in the deliberation experiment (RQ3). As indicated earlier, we might expect the non-permissive con participants to gain an increased understanding for immigrants’ views in the course of the experiment. This could be expected to happen especially in the mixed treatment, where people belonging to the con enclave faced pro-immigration participants and their argumentation. Figure 6 shows the development of the outgroup empathy within the enclaves and within the four groups consisting of enclave and treatment.

Figure 6 about here.

Looking at the development within the two enclaves, there is a statistically significant increase in outgroup empathy within the con enclave from 0.41 to 0.46, and a small and statistically not significant increase within the pro enclave from 0.65 to 0.67. Combining treatments and enclaves (RQ3b), 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 the mixed groups is significant (p=0.000). The increase from 0.67 to 0.71 in the pro like-minded groups is significant (p<0.01), whereas the minor decrease among the pro participants in mixed groups is not (p<0.14). This confirms our expectation that taking part in this deliberation event increases concern for immigrants’ perspectives, especially among participants in the con enclave deliberating in mixed groups.6

These results are in line with the findings by Grönlund, Herne & Setälä (2015), which show an overall development towards more permissive attitudes towards immigration among the participants. Also at the individual level, the change in outgroup empathy is positively correlated with the change in immigration attitudes (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

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6In the control group, no statistically significant changes (between T2 and T4) in general empathy or in outgroup empathy within enclaves were observed.
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 opinions develop (Grönlund, Herne & Setälä 2015).

So far, the analysis has been based on attitudinal items. We are also interested in altruistic behavior among participants (RQ4). At the very end of the deliberation day, the participants had a possibility to donate a small amount, 5 Euros, of their 90-Euro-reward. The donation was to the Finnish Red Cross, and the participants could choose to donate either to the domestic activities of Red Cross or to the International Catastrophe Fund. The possibility to donate was not framed or primed in any way; it was not mentioned before or during the discussions in the small groups. The donation itself was included as a question at the end of survey T4, and participants could make their donation by ticking a box in the questionnaire. In this respect, the donation was entirely at participants’ discretion and the possible intervention of social desirability or group pressure was minimized. Those who decided to donate collected a gift certificate of 85 Euros, whereas those who did not donate received the full remuneration. Figure 7 shows how the donations were done within the two enclaves and the treatments.7

As Figure 7 shows, the altruistic act of donating was far more common in the pro enclave. Half of the participants in the pro enclave donated 5 Euros, whereas the proportion of those who donated in the con enclave was 28 per cent. When considering their donations to the Red Cross, participants were engaged in a form of so called dictator game frequently used to test subjects’ inclination to prosocial action. In the standard for 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

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7 Kruskall-Wallis H-test reveals a significant difference in donations between the four groups depicted in Figure 7. (p = 0.010).
A comparable study to ours has been conducted by Eckel and Grossman (1996) who find that about 73 percent of experimental subjects made an allocation to the American Red Cross. Overall, participants in our experiment donated considerably less than participants in Eckel & 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 results of Engel’s (2011) meta study over dictator games.

At the individual level, the correlation between general empathy at T4 and likelihood to donate is not statistically significant (Kendall’s tau 0.092; p<0.15), whereas the correlation between outgroup empathy and donation is positive and significant (Kendall’s tau 0.186, p<0.01). Among donators, 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 donated to the catastrophe fund, compared to 14 persons in the con enclave. The difference is significant (p<0.001). The number of donators to domestic charity was 14 in the pro and 10 in the con enclave.

Moving on to differences within the treatments, we see that only one third of the participants in the con like-minded groups gave money to the Red Cross, whereas the share of donators in the pro like-minded groups was almost twice as high (57 %). This difference is statistically significant (p<0.01). Within the mixed treatment, the difference between the two enclaves is visually less obvious. In both enclaves, the share of persons donating was smaller in the mixed treatment than in the like-minded treatment. In the mixed treatment, 23 % of the con participants donated, compared to 39 % of the pro participants. The difference between the enclaves in the mixed treatment is slightly beyond the conventional threshold of statistical significance (p<0.11), yet the tendency is clear.

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8 According to the Mann-Whitney U-test the difference between the con and pro groups in the like-minded treatment is almost significant at the conventional level (p = 0.057, exact 1-tailed p = 0.030).

9 According to the Mann-Whitney U-test the difference between the con and pro groups in the mixed treatment is not significant at the conventional level (p = 0.123, exact 1-tailed p = 0.071).
Regarding the differences in terms of donating within enclaves 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 readiness to donate to charity in a significant way (p<0.05). Somewhat surprisingly, con participants deliberating in like-minded groups donated more often than their peers discussing in mixed groups, although this difference is not statistically significant. Even though Figure 7 indicates that there is variation in the extent to which donations are targeted to domestic or international aid, these differences are not statistically significant (almost significant in the like-minded treatment, p<0.12).

We also ran additional analyses in order to test whether empathy, outgroup empathy, change in outgroup empathy and the presence of a participant with immigrant background in the small group deliberation are connected with people’s prosocial behavior, i.e. donating to the Red Cross. The t-tests were run among all participants, within the two enclaves and within the four groups combining enclave and treatment. None of the abovementioned variables has an impact on whether a participant donated or not, or whether they donated to domestic or international aid. In other words, we did not find a link between empathy and altruism, which has been established in some other studies (e.g. Batson 1997, Batson et al. 1997, Batson et al 2002).

**Conclusions**

Recently, 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). Further, it seems plausible that the role of empathy varies according to the type of the issue deliberated – the issue of immigration is certainly a kind of an issue which requires understanding others’ positions (cf. Newman et al. 2015). Especially, deliberation about immigration can be expected to call for

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10 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 1-tailed p = 0.072).

11 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 1-tailed p = 0.155).
concern for the perspectives of the relevant outgroup, that is, immigrants. Moreover, earlier research has established a link between empathy and prosocial behavior.

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. 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. Nor did we find any 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 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 which are associated with the respondents’ views on immigration. Thus, 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. As anticipated, this increase was more evident in the mixed treatment. Facing counter-arguments from the pro enclave lead to more permissive views on immigration and a higher level of outgroup empathy. Overall, the results suggest that people whose initial attitudes toward immigration were restrictive were affected by taking part in deliberations in groups with mixed opinions; their willingness to understand immigrants’ perspectives increased notably.

When it comes to the behavioral dependent variable, i.e., whether to donate to charity or not, we found that the anti-immigrant con enclave was less willing to donate 5 Euros of their reward 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 per cent did not donate). However, we do not find a link between empathy and likelihood to donate. There was also a significant difference within the pro enclave between those deliberating in like-minded groups (43 per cent
did not donate) and those deliberating in mixed groups (61 per cent did not donate). This finding seems to be in line with earlier studies (e.g. Mutz 2002; 2006) showing that discussions with like-minded people foster collective action whereas cross-cutting exposure decreases people’s willingness to act.
References:


Figure 1. The initial dispersion of attitudes toward immigration
Figure 2. Recruitment and attrition

T1 survey sent to a random sample of 12 000 adults

4 681 completed survey T1

3 232 allowed further contact
   Enclaves formed

2 601 preliminary invited
   with survey T2

805 completed T2 and volunteered (415 con, 390 pro)

366 were invited to deliberations (à 183)

207 took part
   86 con
   121 pro
Table 1. Group formation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Randomization</th>
<th>Like-minded</th>
<th>Mixed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Con</td>
<td>Con like-minded</td>
<td>Con mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 42)</td>
<td>(n = 44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro</td>
<td>Pro like-minded</td>
<td>Pro mixed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(n = 77)</td>
<td>(n = 44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 2.** The phases of the experiment

| **Pre surveys** (January 2012) | 1. Short survey to form enclaves (T1)  
2. Second survey with invitation (T2) |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **The deliberation event** (March 31 – April 1, 2012) | 3. Quiz measuring knowledge (T3)  
4. General instructions and briefing on the immigration issue  
5. Small group discussions (4 hours, incl. 45 min lunch break)  
6. The fourth survey measuring opinion and knowledge changes and experience of the event (T4) |
| **Debriefing** (April 20, 2012) | 7. A follow up survey measuring the stability of opinion changes (T5)  
8. Participants debriefed about the experiment and given their reward for participation |
**Table 3.** The survey items used in order to measure empathy and out group perspective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. Three items measuring empathy (perspective-taking and empathetic concern based on Davis’ measure)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Before judging anyone, I try to imagine myself in that person's position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I believe that all things have two sides and I try to look at things from both sides.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I feel sympathy whenever someone is being treated unfairly.*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>B. Three items measuring consideration for an out group perspective (immigrants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. One should try to place oneself in the position of immigrants in the immigration debate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In the immigration debate the opinions of immigrants are rarely taken sufficiently into account.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The Finnish immigration debate should primarily consider the viewpoint of Finns (reverse coding)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In Davis (1981) the formulation is slightly different: When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them.
Comparisons of empathy levels before deliberation (T2)

- Con all (N=415) 0.70
- Con invited (N=183) 0.70
- Con abstained (N=97) 0.69
- Con participated (N=86) 0.72
- Pro all (N=390) 0.75
- Pro invited (N=183) 0.75
- Pro abstained (N=62) 0.75
- Pro participated (N=121) 0.75

Figure 3.
The development of empathy within groups and enclaves

Figure 4.
Comparison of outgroup empathy levels before deliberation (T2)

- Con all (N=414): 0.36
- Con invited (N=183): 0.37
- Con abstained (N=97): 0.34
- Con participated (N=86): 0.41
- Pro all (N=390): 0.65
- Pro invited (N=183): 0.66
- Pro abstained (N=62): 0.67
- Pro participated (N=121): 0.65

Figure 5.
The development of outgroup empathy within groups and enclaves

Figure 6.
Did the participant donate 5 Euros of the 90-Euro-reward?
(data labels show N)

Figure 7.