THE INFLUENCE OF COMMUNICATION TACTICS ON HELPING SYRIAN REFUGEES

Does common ingroup identification and empathy
for the outgroup have a positive effect on helping behavior?

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Abstract

Todays' refugee crisis causes enormous diversity in societal attitudes about migration. World leaders are making strong pleas for European unity and demand that Europe steps up to help the millions displaced. The present study tested whether several communication strategies positively influenced helping behavior toward refugees originating from Syria. In particular, we examined the effect of common ingroup identification as well as the experience of empathy and their interaction on willingness to help and help in the form of a monetary donation. Also underlying psychological processes that may enhances these relationships were tested. 242 Subjects, representing a sample of the general population, participated in this experimental study.

The results showed that, in line with previous research (Beaton and Deveau, 2005), common ingroup identification positively influenced overall willingness to help. The perception of symbolic threat mediated this relationship. Our findings also revealed a difference in effect on willingness to help indirectly via the government and directly in person. Common ingroup identification solely effected willingness to help indirectly. On the other hand, it did not influence the amount of money donated to charity who help Syrians in need.

Moreover, the current research did not reveal a positive effect of empathy on willingness to help. In contrast, it did show a positive effect of empathy on the amount of money donated to charity. Nor the perception of threat or intergroup attitudes mediated this effect, suggesting that empathy can have a direct bearing over the amount of money donated to members of a less fortunate group. In addition, we found no support for the theory that common group identification between the helper and the target facilitate empathy-motivated helping behavior.

In conclusion, this study showed that common ingroup identification and empathy have positively influenced different aspects of helping behavior. Based on the results of this study, we state that people who want to influence others to give support to Syrians may best do so by inducing common ingroup identification and empathy for them.

The influence of communication tactics on helping Syrian refugees

According to Dimitris Avramopoulos, the European Commissioner for Migration, today the world finds itself facing the worst refugee crisis since the Second World War (Holehouse, 2015). UN figures show that 50 million people have been driven from their homes by violence in the Middle East and Africa, with Syria hardest hit (Holehouse, 2015). Last year, over one million refugees and migrants have fled to Europe by sea, many on board dangerously inadequate vessels run by human traffickers. One in every two of those crossing the Mediterranean last year - half a million people - were Syrians escaping the war in their country (Clayton, 2015). Every year these movements continue to demand a devastating toll on human life.

The arrival in Europe of more than 1 million asylum seekers in 2015 unsettled the EU like no crisis before it. The EU's current institutional and legislative arrangements were clearly not up to dealing with the huge influx of migrants, and the crisis laid bare deep divisions among the member states. In light of this collective weakness of the EU, member states increasingly resorted to individual actions such as re-imposing border controls or building fences along their frontiers. The crisis also revealed an enormous diversity in societal attitudes about migration. The largely globalized societies of Western and Northern Europe, which already hosted large immigrant communities, contrasted with the societies of Central Europe, which had lived in relative isolation over decades and were consequently much less prepared to deal with a large influx of foreigners.

As Europe struggles with the largest influx of migrants, world leaders and well respected public figures are making strong pleas for European unity and demand the European Union's asylum rules to be revamped. They plea for accountability and demand that Europe steps up to help the millions displaced. Multiple studies have highlighted the importance of communication as a tool of influence for change-oriented leaders (Holladay & Coombs, 1994; Mio, Riggio, Levin, & Reese, 2005; Seyranian and Bligh, 2008; Shamir, Arthur, & House, 1994). Leaders may use a set of communication tactics to harness follower support for a vision of social change

(Seyranian & Bligh, 2008). In April, 2015, UNHCR Special Envoy Angelina Jolie Pitt appeared in front of the UN Security Council in New York to raise awareness on the ongoing refugee crisis in Syria. In her speech, she gave emphasis to the atrocities Syrian refugees endured as well as to the UN responsibility to end the conflict in the hope to reach a settlement that brings justice and accountability for Syrians. Unfortunately, it is not clear whether her speech brought change to people's motivation to provide support for Syrians.

Social psychology has provided a range of insights into potential factors that enhances helping behaviors. For example, research shows that those high in empathy or perspective taking are more likely to provide help to a "needy target" (Batson, O'Quin, Fultz, Vanderplas, & Isen, 1983; Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978). Empirical work has also shown that people give more help when they share a common ingroup with the target of help (e.g., Levine, Cassidy, Brazier, & Reicher, 2002; Levine, Prosser, Evans, & Reicher, 2005). The aim of this study is to extend previous research on the potential effects of empathy and a common identity on helping others.

The first objective is to investigate the influence of empathy and a common identity on helping a disadvantaged minority group specifically refugees originating from Syria. We induce empathy for Syrian refugees and the perception of a common ingroup identity by means of a speech presented by the Dutch prime minister who pleas for support. These communication tactics are not only explored separately but also in combination with each other. Addressing this objective contributes to the debate concerning how levels of empathy and common ingroup identification affects motivation for helping an disadvantaged group. It also gives an idea over which communication tactic best to apply in order to influence others to support Syrians. The second objective is to examine the mechanisms by which empathy and a common identity can enhance helping behaviors. Previous work has primarily focused on the role of intergroup attitudes (Kunst, Thomsen, Sam & Berry, 2015; Dovidio, Gaertner, Validzic, Motoka, Johnson & Frazier, 1997). This study will additionally focus on the role of intergroup threat. The third

objective is to test whether the communication tactics not merely increase willingness to help but also increase actual help in the form of a monetary donation.

Common group identity

With respect to the influence of a common ingroup identity, there is robust evidence that a common identity can foster favorable attitudes toward former outgroups and sets stage for positive intergroup relations (Dovidio et al., 1997; Gaertner, Mann, Dovidio, Murrell, & Pomare, 1990). An approach, which proposes that intergroup bias can be reduced by influencing the ways in which group members conceive of group boundaries, is the Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993). The Common Ingroup Identity Model proposes that recategorization may provide an effective strategy for reducing intergroup bias. Recategorization refers to using an alternative, superordinate social category to think about both the ingroup and the outgroup. Indeed, majority members holding national identities that include both the in-group (e.g. American citizens) and the out-group (e.g. immigrants) tend to have more positive attitudes toward immigrants than those with more narrowly defined identity concepts do (Billiet, Maddens, & Beerten, 2003; Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001; Esses, Dovidio, Semenya, & Jackson, 2005).

Research indicates that common group identities may not only improve out-group attitudes but also lead to more favorable behavior toward out-groups (Dovidio, Gaertner, Shnabel, Saguy, & Johnson, 2009; Dovidio et al., 1997; Levine et al., 2005). For instance, common group identity predicted football fans' willingness to help each other across team affiliations (Levine et al., 2005), and students' willingness to help a fellow student in need (Dovidio et al., 1997). It also played a role in instigating collective action intended to help disadvantaged outgroups (Beaton and Deveau, 2005). This suggests that majority members with a high common group identity that "makes room" for Syrians in the in-group will be more interested in helping them.

However, the Common In-Group Identity Model has also received some criticism. For example, researchers have shown that the induction of a common identity can increase intergroup hostility because the shared superordinate identity itself can turn into a battleground on which groups strive to assert their dominance (van Leeuwen, van Knippenberg, & Ellemers, 2003; Wenzel, Mummendey, & Waldzus, 2007). A common identity can also threaten valued subgroup identities, causing resistance and attempts to restore group distinctiveness (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004). Furthermore, creating a strong sense of a common ingroup identity has elements that may undermine disadvantaged-group members' motivation for collective action toward social change (Ufkes, Calcagno, Glasford, & Dovidio, 2016).

A study conducted by Van Leeuwen (2012) highlighted an important exception to the rule that a lack of shared group membership makes helping unlikely. Her findings advocated that when the reason for helping another group is strategic, aimed at presenting the own group in a more favorable light, a lack of shared group membership makes helping more likely than a salient common identity. Groups may be motivated to help other groups in order to present their group in a favorable light. To this end, it is important that people think and act in terms of that particular group membership and that their behavior can be recognized as originating from that group. Emphasizing a common identity will reduce the likelihood that the act will be viewed as descriptive of the helper's group.

The current research extends past work by examining whether the communication tactic that induces levels of common group identification positively affects helping behavior toward Syrians who are in need of support. Although scientific studies have never focused on this relationship in context of today's refugee crisis, there is major scientific support that common group identification positively predicts prosocial behavior in other situations (Dovidio et al., 2009; Dovidio et al., 1997; Levine et al., 2005). Therefore we hypothesize that common ingroup identification positively affects helping behavior toward Syrian refugees. Moreover, we expect that perceived intergroup attitudes mediate this relationship.

Empathy

In addition to the first objective, several studies have also advocated the benefits of empathy as an emotion that can underpin the development of positive attitudes toward an outgroup. Encouraging group members to empathize with a single member of an outgroup (e.g. to experience emotions such as compassion and sympathy for that member) has been shown to lead to an increased caring for that member. When the member is to be perceived as a member of the outgroup, this caring extends and is seen in the form of more positive attitudes toward this group (Batson et al., 1997). Feelings of empathy can be stimulated by taking the perspective of a person in need, imagining how that person is affected by his or her plight (Coke, Batson, & McDavis, 1978; Stotland, 1969). Empathy induced in this way has been used to improve attitudes toward racial and ethnic minorities (Batson et al., 1997; Dovidio, Gaertner, & Johnson, 1999; Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Stephan & Finlay, 1999).

This ability of empathy to affect attitudes across a wide range of stigmatized groups as well as the ability to affect the relative insensitivity to information about responsibility and the endurance over time all suggest that inducing empathy may be a potent and valuable technique for increasing pro-social behavior toward groups who are in distress. However, there may be a limitation to this hopeful suggestion. Attitude do not always translate into action (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998; Fazio, 1990). Research on the use of empathy to enhance response to the plight of other groups has primarily focused on attitudes. It is easy to adjust one's response on self-report attitude scales; to do so involves no real cost to oneself or to anyone else. If inducing empathy for a member of a outgroup leads to more positive attitudes but not to action to improve the welfare of the group, then there is little reason for optimism.

This current research focuses on whether empathy has a direct bearing over behavior designed to help a less fortunately group. There is considerable evidence that feeling empathy for a person in need increases the motivation to help that person (Batson, 1991; Eisenberg & Miller,

1987). For example, a study of Batson, Chang, Orr and Rowland (2002) revealed that those induced to feel empathy for a convicted user and seller of drugs, were more willing to allocate Student Senate funds to help drug addicts, than those not induced to feel empathy. The purpose of this study is to replicate and extend past work that highlights empathy's role in prosocial behavior by examining empathy in relationship to help Syrian refugees. We hypothesize that the communication tactic that induces the experience of empathy positively affects helping behavior. Moreover, we expect that perceived intergroup attitudes mediate this relationship.

The facilitation of empathy-motivated help through common group identification

According to Park & Schaller (2005) ingroup and outgroup relationships between helpers and people who need help influences the link between empathy and helping behavior. An important factor that can facilitate empathy-motivated helping behavior is the perception of a common identity between the helper and the target (Park & Schaller, 2005). When groups perceive group similarity it indicates that the members of the other group are 'of one's kind', which renders his or her welfare of immediate self-relevance. Subsequently this can increase the likelihood that as people experience empathic concern because the other's welfare is threatened, they follow this emotion and invest their personal resources on the other's behalf. The perception of self-other dissimilarities on the other hand should make empathy-motivated helping less likely. When differences between groups are salient, these perceived self-other dissimilarities may function as a warning signal and possibly evoke negative emotions such as feelings of anxiety, insecurity, or threat (Pryor, Reeder, Yeadon, & Hesson-McInnis, 2004). Therefore, when people consider helping outgroup members, they often may do so in a more systematic and controlled way. They will consider potential costs and benefits from their help more carefully (Pryor et al., 2004; Stürmer et al., 2006). This in turn should make it less likely that, even if people experience empathy from reading about an outgroup member suffering, they let themselves be guided by this emotion to help.

Several studies have pointed to the role of social categorization in the experience of empathy. Maner et al. (2002) manipulated participants' perceptions of self-other 'oneness' to test competing hypotheses concerning the relationship between empathy and helping. An examination of the mean scores suggested that empathy for a target was experienced most strongly when participants perceived they were highly similar to that target (i.e. when perceived self-other oneness was high). Similarly, Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, Luce, and Neuberg (1997) demonstrated that as relationship closeness between participants and a target person increased (e.g. from a stranger to a family member), so too did empathy concern for that person. Overall recent research and theorizing suggest that the magnitude of feeling empathy itself can be influenced by social categorization. The present study presents a direct test of this idea. We expect that the communication tactic that induces both common group identification and empathy has a greater influence on helping Syrians than the other communication tactics described earlier.

Intergroup threat

In terms of the second objective, in addition to the direct positive influence of a common identity and empathy, research indicate that they also positively affect helping indirectly by decreasing perceived intergroup threat. According to the intergroup threat theory (Stephan, Ybarra & Morrison, 2009), intergroup threat is experienced when members of one group perceive that another group is in a position to cause them harm. In the original version of the intergroup threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), four types of threats were included, but this number has been reduced to two basic types - realistic and symbolic threats (Stephan & Renfro, 2003). Symbolic threats refer to the beliefs and values of the group which may be at risk. They primarily involve "perceived group differences in morals, values, standards, beliefs, and attitude" (Stephan, Renfro, Esses, Stephan, & Martin, 2005). Realistic threats include threats to ingroup members' political or economic power, general welfare and other tangible resources.

Pew Research Centre (2016) revealed that the refugee crisis and the experience of threat are very much related to one another in the minds of many Europeans. Many belief that incoming refugees increase the likelihood of terrorism in their country. Many are also worried that they will be an economic burden. They say refugees will take away jobs and social benefits. Hungarians, Poles, Greeks, Italians and French identify this as their greatest concern. Fears linking refugees and crime are much less pervasive, although nearly half of those polled in Italy and Sweden say refugees are more to blame for crime than other groups.

Previous studies have shown that the consequences of feeling threatened are connected to the magnification of negative responses (Riek, Marnia & Gaertner, 2006; Stephan, Renfro, Esses, Stephan & Martin, 2005) as well as the decrease of positive intergroup behavior specifically outgroup helping (Li and Zhoa, 2012). Therefore, reducing feelings of threat would seem to be essential if outgroup helping is to be achieved. Geartner and Dovidio (2000) revealed that one psychological process that could reduce intergroup threat is the perception of a common identity. Since realistic threat involves perceptions of competition over valued resources, a common ingroup identity could create an impression of cooperation and shared fate (Brewer, 1979) which in turn could decrease realistic threat. Another psychological process that could reduce intergroup threat is the experience of empathy (Finlay & Stephan, 2000).Viewing the world from the perspective of members of the outgroup promotes better intergroup understanding which in turn could also reduce the experience of threat. This current research investigates whether common ingroup identification and experiencing empathy could foster helping behavior through its effect on reduced intergroup threat.

Help

Given the large volume of research on helping it is surprising that very little research has focused on more refined conceptualizations that differentiate varieties in help. To our knowledge, previous research directed to explore the influence on helping merely focused on willingness to

help with the implication that the will to help predicts actual helping behavior. Researchers have indeed argued that behavioral intentions predict subsequent behaviors (Fishbein and Ajzen 1975, McGuire 1969, Oskamp 1977). Suggesting that in order to predict whether an individual will act in a certain way, the simplest and probably most efficient approach is to ask that person whether he/she intends to do so. However, empirical studies have also revealed conflicting results (Bonfield 1974, Ryan and Bonfield 1975, Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). They have found that behavioral intention may not necessarily be an accurate and consistent measure of behavior.

The failure of general behavioral intention to predict specific or single acts has led researchers to introduce various personal and situational factors as moderating variables to explain the intention-behavior discrepancy issue (e.g. Triandis, 1977, 1980). The cost-benefit model of Dovidio et al. (2006) emphasizes the role of costs and benefits in predicting helping behavior. According to their model (Dovidio et al., 2006), potential helpers engage in a cost–benefit analysis before getting involved. If the needed help is of relatively low cost in terms of time, money, resources, or risk, then help is more likely to be given.

This recent study examines whether the communication tactics have different effects on willingness to help and actual help in the form of a monetary donation. In addition, we extend previous research on potential effects on helping behavior by focusing on several varieties of help. Potential differences in effect could give us a clearer vision of the magnitude of influence. For example, we examine whether the communication tactics have more effect on willingness to help indirectly via the Dutch government or directly in person. Costs to help in person could potentially inhibit the effect of common group identification and the experience of empathy which in turn may lead to a difference in help being offered. Therefore, we hypothesize that the communication tactics affect various forms of help differently.

Method

Participants

Participants for the study were recruited personally at the University of Twente (the Netherlands), through social media via the researcher's social network or via the university's recruitment platform SONA systems. We decided to collect as many participants as feasible in a period of 1 month. Students following the bachelor's program Psychology or Communication Sciences at the University of Twente could receive 0.5 credit for participation of this study. The criterion on which participants were selected included the comprehension of the Dutch language and the possession of the Dutch nationality. We collected 295 surveys of which 53 were removed from the data set due to incomplete responses. See Table 1 for the number of participants per completed measure. 242 Participants successfully participated in this study (75.6% were aged 16-35 years, 15.3% were aged 36-55 years and 9.1% were aged 56+; 71.9% were women; 56.2% had no religion, 2.1% were Muslim and 41.7% had a different religion).

In order to examine whether the means of the variables gender, age, education and religion are equal among the conditions, we executed one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests (Huizingh, 2007). The results showed that there is no single category overrepresented within one of these demographic variables (Fs < 0.98, ps > .72).

Procedure

This study was based on a 2×2 between-subjects design. We manipulated the perception of a common ingroup identity (activated to perceive a common ingroup identity versus deactivated to perceive common ingroup identity) and feelings of empathy for the outgroup (activated to feel empathy versus no activation). Participants read an online news article that highlighted a speech given by Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte in which he advocated support for refugees. The text in each condition was comparable except for specific sections designed to emphasize the different manipulations. In order to activate the perception of a common ingroup identity by the

Dutch we manipulated the salience of a common ingroup identity by referring to a commonality between the ingroup (Dutch) and the outgroup (Syrian refugees). The commonality that is noted in the speech is a common enemy namely the Islamic State (IS). This enemy may be perceived by Dutch citizens as a common ingroup identity between themselves and Syrian refugees. Participants were shown the following phrase that enhanced the common ingroup identity salience.

> *"Just as Syrian refugees, we Dutch citizens are also victims of IS."*

> *"IS is our common enemy that threatens both the Syrian war refugees as our current Western modern values."*

In contrast, participants who were deactivated to perceive a common ingroup identity were shown the following phrase that referred to a dissimilarity between the ingroup and the outgroup.

> "*Just as Syrian refugees, IS members are also followers of the Islam."*

> *"The Islam, which is primarily seen as a doctrine that fully stands against the current Western, modern values."*

The dissimilarity that was shown in the speech is a potential difference in religion between Dutch citizens and Syrian refugees. The emphasis of a dissimilarity may counteract a perceived common ingroup identity.

Empathy was manipulated by given the following instruction by Dutch premier Mark Rutte in his speech.

> *"Try to imagine how these refugees must have felt and how the war has influenced their lives. Try to comprehend their emotions and the complete impact of these events."*

The empathy instructions employed in this study were similar to those used in past empathy studies (Stotland, 1969). These instructions asked students to imagine themselves in the situation and experience the emotions of the protagonist in the scenarios. To ensure that the subject could apply the instructions given by the Dutch premier, a few stories of refugees who experienced war in their own country and had to flee for their lives were told.

Following reading the online news article, participants had to answer a few questions about this article, in order to provide them with an incentive as an encouragement to read the article attentively and to help them focus on the relevant manipulations. After finishing reading the article and the corresponding questions, participants completed the dependent measures.

Measures

Intergroup attitude. Intergroup attitude were measured with a scale developed for earlier studies (Stephan et al., 1998, 1999). The participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they felt 12 different evaluative or emotional reactions toward refugees on 9-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*). The evaluations and emotions included hostility, admiration (reversed scored), disliking, acceptance (reversed scored), superiority, affection (reversed scored), disdain, approval (reversed scored), hatred, sympathy (reversed scored), rejection, and warmth (reversed scored).

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the 12 items with oblique rotation. The results showed that all the items loaded heavily on only one factor. The analysis revealed that the intergroup attitude measure contained two correlated factors: one representing positive evaluations (eigenvalue = 5.97, lowest factor score = .64) and one representing negative evaluations (eigenvalue = 1.60, lowest factor score = .65). The positive evaluative items were reversed scored where upon all the items were summed to create an index reflecting the negativity of the attitude ($\alpha = .90$).

Symbolic threat. To capture the threats posed by perceived differences in values and beliefs between our participants and the refugees, a measure that was developed for earlier studies (Stephan et al., 1999) was used. The items were rated on 9-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*).

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the 7 items with oblique rotation. The results showed that all of the items loaded heavily on only one factor. The analysis revealed that

the symbolic-threat measure contained two correlated factors: one including items referring to value and belief differences (eigenvalue = 3.00, lowest factor score = .62) and one including items referring to the accommodation of the Dutch way of life (eigenvalue = 1.19, lowest factor score = .80). Items were reverse scored where necessary and summed to create an index reflecting symbolic threat (α = .78).

Realistic threat. Realistic threats were measured with a scale developed for earlier studies (Stephan et al., 1999). The measure consisted of 8 items including such threats as crime, drugs, disease, job loss, and economic costs for health, education, and welfare. The response format consisted of a 9-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*).

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the 8 items with oblique rotation. The results showed that all of the items loaded heavily on only one factor. The analysis revealed that the realistic threat measure contained two correlated factors: one referring to a shift in Dutch resources (eigenvalue = 1.15, lowest factor score = .45) and one referring to the refugees' right to these resources (eigenvalue = 3.90, lowest factor score = .78). Items were reverse scored where necessary and summed to create an index reflecting realistic threat (α = .84).

Empathy. Feelings of empathy were measured with a scale developed for earlier studies (Oceja & Jimeŕnez, 2007; Oceja, Heerink, Stocks, Ambrona, Lopez-Perez, & Salgado, 2014). Immediately after the intervention, participants completed the empathy scale, on which they indicated the degree to which they were currently experiencing a number of emotions for the outgroup on the 7-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*). This scale consisted of five adjectives (i.e., softhearted, moved, compassionate, warmed, and tender) and three sentences (i.e., ''I feel very sorry for her about how they are feeling,'' ''I feel pity for them over what has happened,'' and ''I feel sympathy for them''). By averaging responses to the five adjectives and three sentences an empathy scale is formed (α = .89).

Common ingroup identity. To measure participants' group representations, they were asked how much they perceived Dutch and Syrian refugees as one group and as two separate groups on the 7-point Likert scales from 1 (*not at all*) to7 (*very much*).

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the 2 items with oblique rotation. The results showed that the items loaded .96 on one factor (eigenvalue = 1.83). The item that measured the perception of two separate groups was reversed scored where upon both items were summed to create an index reflecting perceived common ingroup identity ($\alpha = .91$).

Willingness to help. In order to measure overall willingness to help outgroup members, a new scale is developed. Several questions were derived from a scale developed for earlier studies (Kunst, Thomsen, Sam, & Berry, 2015) as well as newly designed to serve the purpose of this study. Participants were asked to rate their willingness to help on the 7-point scales ranging from 1 (*not at all)* to 7 (*very much*). Their willingness was measured on several types of help such as donation for refugees in the Netherlands and for refugees in the own region, active support for refugees in the Netherlands and for refugees in the own region, support for the refugee policy that enables war refugees to seek asylum in the Netherlands, support for changes that improves the position of refugees in the Netherlands and support for government policy that provides refugees social welfare and subsidized housing.

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the 8 items with oblique rotation. The analysis revealed that the overall willingness to help measure contained two correlated factors: one including the items referring to the willingness to help in person (eigenvalue = 1.09, lowest factor score = .43) and one including the items referring to the willingness to help via the government (eigenvalue = 5.07, lowest factor score = .73). Items were summed to create an index reflecting overall willingness to help ($\alpha = .91$).

In order to examine whether there is a difference between the willingness to help in various ways, more indexes were formed with the previous mentioned items. Various items were summed to create the following indexes: an index that measures the willingness to help via the

Dutch government ($\alpha = .92$), one that measures willingness to help in person ($\alpha = .85$), one that measures willingness to actively help ($\alpha = .78$), one that measures the willingness to donate ($\alpha = .90$), one that measures the willingness to help refugees who are situated in their own region ($\alpha = .64$) and one that measures the willingness to help refugees in the Netherlands ($\alpha = .76$).

Donation. During the study participants were informed that they would receive a €10 reward upon completion of the experiment and were asked to select a value (0 to 10) corresponding to the amount of money they would like to donate, to charities who help refugees in need, in order to measure actual helping behavior.

The promise of a reward was part of this study. No actual reward was given to participants and no amount of money was donated to charity. After completion of the study, participants were informed about the deception and the reason why they were deceived in order to examine an important element of this study. Important to note is hat participants were not informed of the reward during the recruitment process. The protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of the faculty of Behavioral Sciences at the University of Twente.

Leader prototypicality. Participants rated their prime minister on ingroup prototypicality with 6 items taken from Platow and van Knippenberg (2001). These items were as follows: "Overall, I would say that the prime minister from the Netherlands (a) "represent what is characteristic about Dutch citizens," (b) "is representative for Dutch citizens," (c) "is a good example of the kind of people who live in the Netherlands," (d) "stands for what citizens in the Netherlands have in common," (e) "is not representative of the kind of people who live in the Netherlands" (reversed scored), and (f) "is not similar to most people who live in the Netherlands." (reversed scored).

An exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the 6 items with oblique rotation. The results showed that the items loaded .79 or higher on one factor (eigenvalue = 4). The negative formulated items were reverse scored where upon all the items were summed to create an index reflecting perceived prototypicality ($\alpha = .90$).

See Table 1 for scale means, standard deviations, and inter-scale correlations.

Table 1

Scale means, standard deviations, and inter-scale correlations.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Intergroup attitude (N = 242)	3.43 (1.15)	0.52**	0.61**	-0.70**	-0.41**	-0.72**	-0.50**	-0.21**
2. Symbolic Threat (N = 241)		5.75 (1.18)	0.58**	-0.43**	-0.46**	-0.52**	-0.31**	-0.09
3. Realistic Threat (N = 239)			4.50 (1.32)	-0.56**	-0.43**	-0.53**	-0.33**	-0.20**
4. Empathy for the outgroup (N = 239)				4.67 (0.89)	0.35**	0.74**	0.38**	0.22**
5. Perceived common ingroup identity (N = 237)					3.65 (1.40)	0.40**	0.40**	0.07
6. Overall willingness to help (N = 236)						4.48 (1.17)	0.47**	0.22**
7. Donation (N = 242)							4.84 (4.60)	0.13*
8. Leader prototypicality (N = 233)								3.96 (1.04)

Note. The numbers on the table diagonal represent the scale means with the standard deviations within parentheses. Higher numbers indicate greater perceived threat or more negative attitude.

$* p < .05$

$** p < .001$

Results

Manipulation effectiveness

In order to explore whether the activation of a common ingroup identity did indeed increase the Dutch perception of a common ingroup identity between themselves and Syrian refugees, a two-way between subject ANOVA was conducted with both manipulations as fixed factors and perceived common ingroup identity as dependent variable.

The main effect of the common ingroup identity manipulation on perceived common ingroup identity was significant, $F(1,233) = 17.35$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = 0.07$. Participants rated higher on perceived common ingroup identity when they were activated to perceive a common ingroup identity ($M = 3.81$, $SD = 1.27$) than when they were not ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.35$). The main effect of the empathy manipulation on perceived common ingroup identity was not significant, $F(1,233) = 1.21$, $p = .27$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$. The interaction effect of the independent variables was also not significant, $F(1,233) = 1.93$, $p = .17$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$. In response to these results, we confirmed the effectiveness of the common ingroup manipulation.

In order to explore whether the activation of empathy did indeed increase feelings of empathy for Syrian refugees, a two-way between subject ANOVA was conducted with both manipulations as fixed factors and empathy as dependent variable. The main effect of the empathy manipulation on empathy was significant, $F(1,235) = 5.64$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = 0.02$. Participants rated higher on empathy when they were activated to feel more empathy for Syrian refugees ($M = 4.63$, $SD = 1.03$) than when they were not ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.82$). The main effect of the common ingroup identity manipulation on empathy was not significant, $F(1,235) = 2.01$, $p = .16$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$. The interaction effect of the independent variables was also not significant, $F(1,235) = 3.17$, $p = .08$, $\eta^2 = 0.01$. In response to these results, we confirmed the effectiveness of the empathy manipulation.

Helping behavior

In this study, we hypothesized that helping behavior towards Syrian refugees increases when Dutch citizens are activated to perceive a common ingroup identity. We tested this prediction with a two-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with both manipulations as fixed factors. The dependent variables were overall willingness to help, amount of money donated and the subcategories of willingness to help. The tests of between-subject effects showed that the main effect of the common ingroup identity manipulation on overall willingness to help was marginal significant, $F(1,232) = 3.59$, $p = .06$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.02$. Cohen (1969) suggested that small, medium, and large effects would be reflected in partial η^2 values of .0099, .0588, and .1379, respectively (pp. 278–280). According to these benchmarks the effect of the common ingroup manipulation on overall willingness to help was small. Participants rated higher on overall willingness to help when they were activated to perceive a common ingroup identity ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 0.96$) than when they were not ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.12$).

Furthermore, the results showed a positive effect of the common ingroup manipulation on the subcategory willingness to help via the Dutch government, $F(1,232) = 5.38$, $p = .02$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.02$. Participants rated higher on willingness to help via the Dutch government when they were activated to perceive a common ingroup identity ($M = 4.90$, SD = 1.03) than when they were not ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 1.30$). In contrast, the effect of the manipulation on the other subcategories of willingness to help and the amount of money donated was not significant, ps > .16.

The two-way between subject MANOVA was also used to test our prediction that helping behavior towards Syrian refugees increases when Dutch citizens are activated to feel more empathy for them. The results showed that the main effect of the empathy manipulation on overall willingness to help was not significant, $F(1,232) = 0.34$, $p = .56$, partial $\eta^2 < 0.01$. Furthermore, the analysis showed no positive effect of the empathy manipulation on all the subcategories of willingness to help, ps > .45. In contrast, the main effect of the empathy

manipulation on donation was marginal significant, $F(1,238) = 3.35$, $p = .07$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.01$.

According to Cohen (1969) the effect size of the empathy manipulation on donation was small.

Participants donated more money when they were activated the feel more empathy for the

outgroup ($M = 4.83$, $SD = 4.64$) than when they were not ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 4.82$).

The results obtained from the MANOVA gave us also insight in the interaction effect of

both manipulations on helping behavior. The interaction effect on overall willingness to help was

not significant, $F(1,232) = 0.42$, $p = .52$, $\eta^2 < 0.01$. The interaction effects on the subcategories

were also not significant, ps > 0.31, as well as the interaction effect on donation, $F(1,238) = 0.91$,

$p = .34$, $\eta^2 < 0.01$.

Potential mediators

The current research used a multiple mediation analysis (based on 1,000 bootstraps; Schrout &

Bolger, 2002) to investigate the hypothetical assumption that perceived symbolic threat, realistic

threat and intergroup attitude mediate the effect of the common ingroup manipulation on overall

willingness to help. As previously described, the total effect of the common ingroup

manipulation on overall willingness to help was marginal significant, $b = 0.28$, $SE = 0.15$, $p =$

.06. With respect to symbolic threat and intergroup attitude, participants who were activated to

perceive a common ingroup identity reported less symbolic threat and less negative intergroup

attitudes, $b = -0.32$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = .04$; $b = -0.26$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = .08$. The effect of the common

ingroup identity manipulation on realistic threat was not significant, $b = -0.21$, $SE = 0.17$, $p = .22$.

Furthermore, the results showed that when participants felt more symbolic threat and

negative intergroup attitudes, they were less willing to help Syrian refugees, $b = -0.17$, $SE = 0.05$,

$p < .01$; $b = -0.61$, $SE = 0.06$, $p < .01$. The relation between realistic threat and overall

willingness to help was not significant, $b = -0.08$, $SE = 0.05$, $p = 0.14$. Figure 1 illustrates the
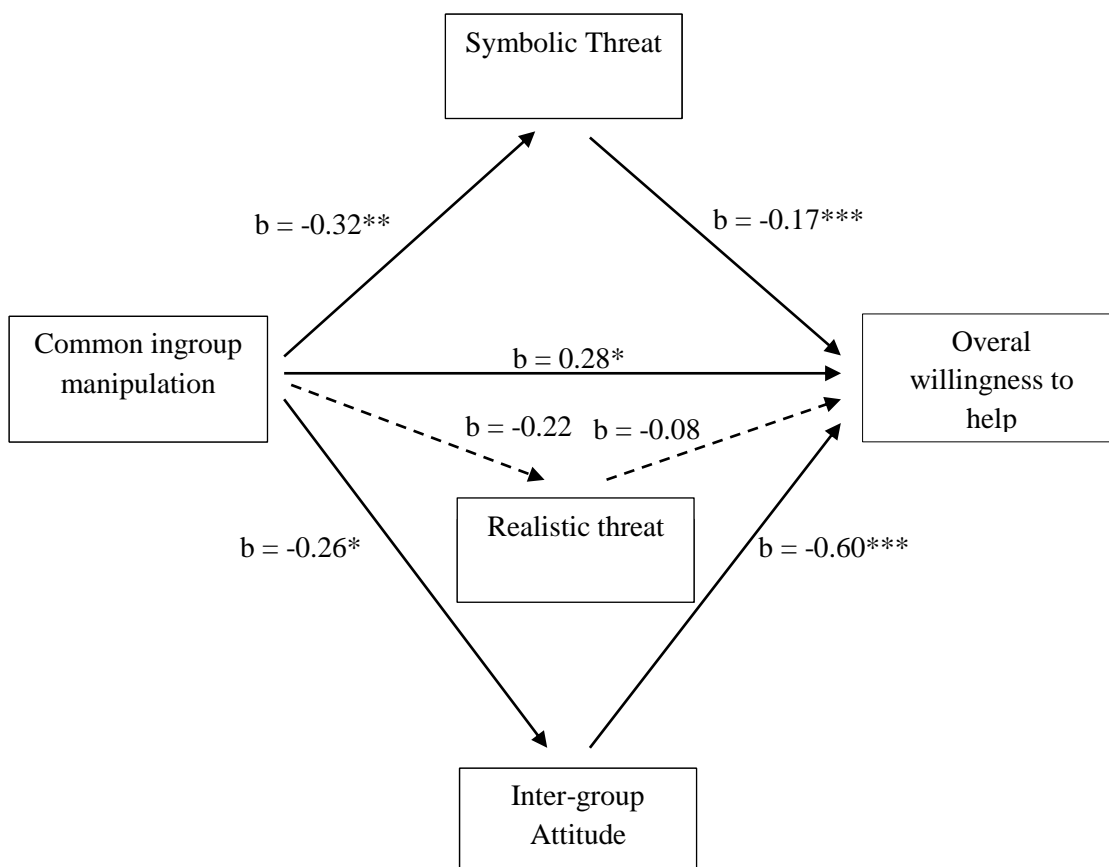
total effect model.

Figure 1. Total effect model.
Significant effects (p < .1) are represented by solid arrows, whereas non-significant effects (p ≥ .1) are represented by dashed arrows. * p < 0.1,** p < .05, and *** p < .01.

The direct effect on overall willingness to help was no longer significant after controlling for the mediators, b = 0.05, *SE* = 0.10, *p* = 0.60. The indirect path of the manipulation on overall help intention through symbolic threat, *b* = 0.06, 95% CI (.0042, .1464), was significant, consistent with full mediation. In contrast, the indirect path of the manipulation on overall help intention through intergroup attitude, *b* = 0.16, 95% CI (-.0.149, .3327), was not significant. These results revealed that the effect of the common ingroup manipulation on overall willingness to help was only mediated through the experience of symbolic threat.

We also used a multiple mediation analysis (based on 1,000 bootstraps; Schrout & Bolger, 2002) to investigate the hypothetical assumption that perceived symbolic threat, realistic threat and intergroup attitude mediate the effect of the empathy manipulation on amount of money donated. As previously described, the total effect of the empathy manipulation on amount of money donated was marginal significant, $b = 1.10$, $SE = 0.59$, $p = .07$.

The effects of the empathy manipulation on the potential mediators, symbolic threat, realistic threat and intergroup attitude, were not significant, $b = 0.20$, $SE = 0.1,5$ $p = .20$; $b = 0.10$, $SE = 0.17$, $p = .56$; $b = 0.04$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = .77$. In addition, the results showed no significant effects of symbolic en realistic threat on the amount of money donated, $b = -0.28$, $SE = 0.28$, $p = .30$; $b = -0.07$, $SE = 0.27$, $p = .78$. On the other hand, the relation between intergroup attitude and the amount of money donated was significant. Participants who felt more negative intergroup attitudes donated less money, $b = -1.81$, $SE = 0.29$, $p < .01$.

The effect on the amount of money donated to help was still significant after controlling for the mediators, b = 1.24, $SE = 0.51$, $p = 0.02$. These results are consistent with the assumption that the effect of the empathy manipulation on the amount of money donated was not mediated. Figure 2 illustrates the total effect model.
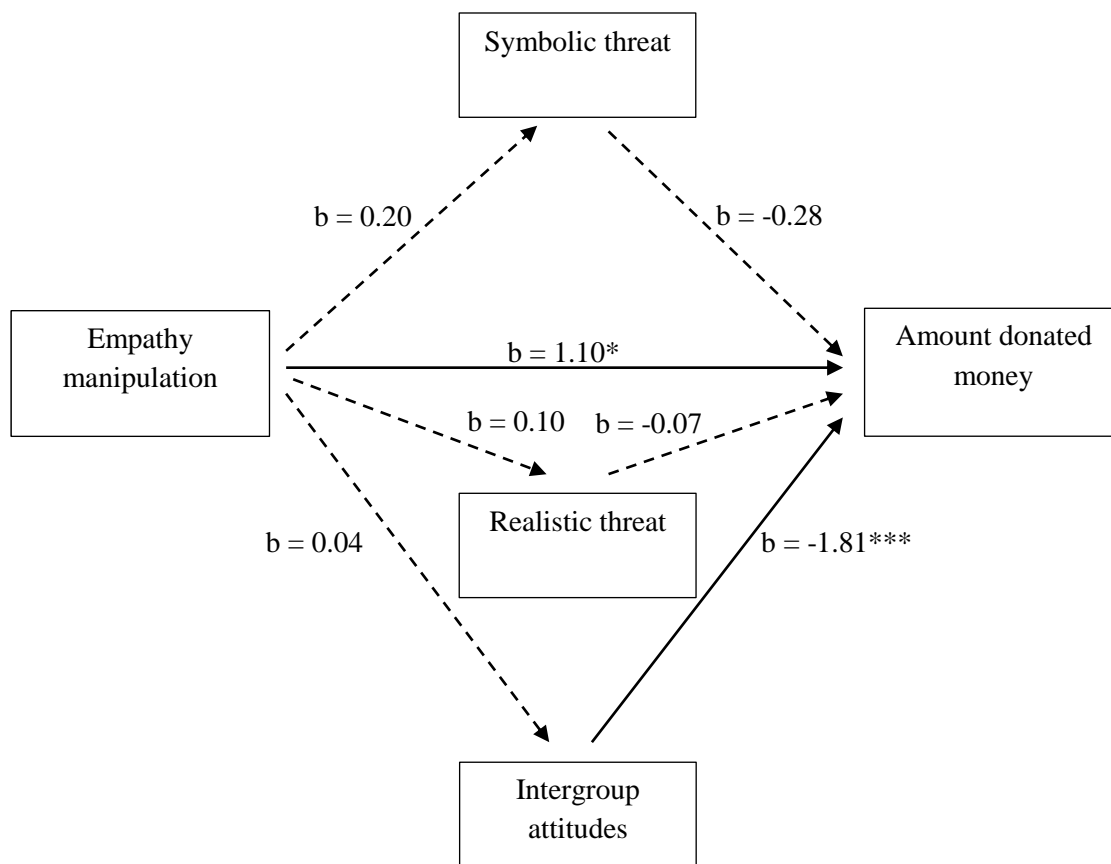
Figure 2. Total effect model.

Significant effects (p < .1) are represented by solid arrows, whereas non-significant effects (p ≥ .1) are represented by dashed arrows. * p < 0.1,** p < .05, and *** p < .01.

Discussion

This study examined whether the communication tactics positively influence helping behavior toward refugees originated from Syria. The results revealed that the individual tactics were successful in increasing levels of common ingroup identification or empathy. We hypothesized that common ingroup identification, the experience of empathy as well as their interaction with one another has a positive effect on helping behavior. Also underlying mechanisms were tested and the effect on various forms of helping behavior.

The present study revealed that common ingroup identification indeed increased the Dutch overall willingness to help Syrian refugees. On the other hand it did not effected the amount of money donated to charity. Participants who perceived greater levels of common group identification did not donated more money to charity. These results support the theory that behavioral intention may not necessarily be an accurate and consistent measure of behavior (Bonfield 1974, Ryan and Bonfield 1975, Fishbein and Ajzen 1975). The absence or presence of "facilitating conditions" may have affected participants' efforts to help. One of these facilitating conditions could be a person's ability to act. Especially in today's economic crisis, Dutch citizens may have less money to spend (Elsevier, 2015) which affect the ability to help and in turn may influence the likelihood of helping in the form of a monetary donation.

Second, this study identified that common ingroup identification has more influence on the will to help indirectly through government acts than on the will to help directly in person. A psychological process that could cause people to be more inclined to help Syrian refugees through a third party is diffusion of responsibility (Latane & Darley, 1970). The more potential helpers there are, the less personal responsibility an individual will feel consequently decreasing their motivation to help. Likewise, the individual will only feel responsible for a fraction of the cost to the victim associated when help is not offered. It is also plausible that a negative cost-benefit analysis (Dovidio et al., 2006) outweighed the influence of common ingroup identification. Although people identify with Syrian refugees, they can't oversee the potential

costs such as money, effort or time and therefore are less willing to help in person. Future research that wants to create a clearer picture of how different mechanisms inhibit or encourage willingness to help, could focus on factors such as financial status and potential costs and benefits.

The current research began with the prospect that inducing empathy for Syrian refugees might be a potent and valuable technique for creating more positive intergroup responses. We hypothesized that the experience of empathy would increase willingness to help refugees originated from Syria. Unfortunately, the results of this study rejected this hypothesis. Dutch citizens who experienced more empathy were not more willing to help. It also didn't influence the subcategories of willingness to help. The following psychological process may be the cause of these negative results.

Alongside the communication tactic that increased the experience of empathy, the experiment simultaneously counteracted common ingroup identification by making potential differences between Dutch citizens and Syrian refugees more salient. However, research has shown that these perceived self-other dissimilarities may function as a warning signal and possibly evoke negative emotions which in turn can make it less likely that even if people experience empathy from reading about an outgroup member suffering, they let themselves be guided by this emotion to help (Pryor, Reeder, Yeadon, & Hesson-McInnis, 2004). Causing disappointing results regarding the effect of empathy. Future research that might further examine the influence of empathy on helping behavior could take the psychological process described above in consideration and make potential differences less salient. Although the results showed that empathy did not increase overall willingness to help, it did increase the amount of donated money to charity.

Moreover, the study findings revealed no effect of the communication tactic, that induced common ingroup identification and the experience of empathy simultaneously. Participants who experienced high levels of both common ingroup identification and empathy were not more

willing to help or did not donated more money than participants who experienced solely high levels of identification or empathy. Therefore, in contrast with earlier studies (Park & Schaller, 2005), we found no support for the theory that common group identification between the helper and the target facilitate empathy-motivated helping behavior.

The current study also recognized the underlying psychological processes that could influence the effect of our communication tactics. The positive effect of common ingroup identification on overall willingness to help has not been mediated through the perception of intergroup attitudes toward Syrian refugees. Common group identification was negatively correlated to intergroup attitudes whereas intergroup attitudes was negatively correlated to overall willingness to help. These relations form the foundation for positive mediation. However, the indirect effect between common ingroup identification and overall willingness to help was not significant indicating that intergroup attitudes did not mediate this relation. These results extend earlier work on recategorization and prosocial behavior and directly illuminate this underlying mechanism. That is, consistent with the research of Stürmer, Snyder, and Omoto (2005), prosocial behavior toward others categorized as members of one's ingroup does not necessarily have to be motivated by favorable attitudes. A common ingroup identity can have a direct bearing over the will to help members of a less fortunate outgroup.

This study also recognized the experience of threat as an underlying psychological process. We found support for the assumption that symbolic threat mediates the positive effect of common ingroup identification on overall willingness to help. When participants identified more with Syrians, they experienced less symbolic threat and were consequently more willing to offer help. In contrast with earlier studies (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), the experience of realistic threat did not mediate this relationship. Common group identification did not predict the experience of realistic threat. Perhaps Dutch citizens experience more realistic threat in todays' refugee crisis which makes these feelings less susceptible for the influence of a common identity.

Regarding the established effect of empathy on the amount of money donated to charity, the current research revealed that this relationship has not been mediated by intergroup attitudes. The most surprising factor is that empathy did not predict the perception of intergroup attitudes, in contrast to results in earlier studies (Batson et al., 1997; Dovidio, Gaertner, & Johnson, 1999; Finlay & Stephan, 2000; Stephan & Finlay, 1999). These contradicting results may be due to increased feelings of intergroup anxiety during the experiment. The emphasized difference in the prime ministers' speech may have caused participants to perceive a negative relation between themselves and Syrian refugees which in turn may have increased participants' experience of intergroup anxiety (Thomas, Bonieci, Vescio, Biernat and Brown, 1996). Consequently, these feelings of intergroup anxiety may have decreased potential positive attitudes toward the outgroup (Riek, Mania & Gaertner, 2006), ultimately reducing the positive effect between empathy and intergroup attitudes.

Furthermore, this study also explored whether symbolic threat and realistic threat mediated the effect of empathy on the amount of money donated to charity. The results indicated that this is not the case. Empathy did not affect the experience of symbolic and realistic threat whereas the experience of threat also did not affect the amount of donated money. These findings may suggest that in today's refugee crisis, people experience high levels of intergroup threat that can't be influenced by the experience of empathy for Syrians. It does however suggest that empathy can have a direct bearing over the amount of money donated to members of a less fortunate group.

Important to note is that the results of this study revealed only very small effects of common group identification and empathy on helping behavior. The reliability of our interpretations may therefore be questioned. As described in the method section, this study used only a few sentences to influence people's perception of a common ingroup identity and experience of empathy for the Syrian refugees. Although, findings suggest that these manipulations were effective, greater manipulations could have more influence and in turn

produce superior effects. For future research, it will be interesting to explore whether higher levels of common group identification and empathy have more impact on helping behaviors toward a disadvantaged group and will lead to different results.

In addition to examining the effect of intergroup attitudes and threat, we also examined whether perceived prototypicality of Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte influenced our established relationships. According to Silvia (2005), similarity with the communicator is of great importance in the encouragement of other group members because they can have multiple effects relevant to deflecting reactance. The findings of this study revealed that perceptions of whether Mark Rutte was seen as an ingroup member or as an outgroup member did not weaken nor strengthen the effects.

In conclusion, although the main effects were small, this study showed that common ingroup identification and empathy have positively influenced different aspects of helping behavior. The communication tactic of introducing a common ingroup identity between Dutch citizens and Syrian refugees, successfully increased common ingroup identification and consequently increased willingness to help especially in a more indirect manner. The established psychological mechanism explaining this process is a decrease in the perception of symbolic threat. The communication tactic of instructing people to take the perspective of the disadvantaged group, successfully increased the experience of empathy and consequently increased the amount of money donated to charity who help Syrian refugees in need. The results showed no underlying psychological mechanism influencing this relationship. Indicating that empathy has a direct bearing over the amount of money donated.

Based on the results of this study, we state that people who want to influence others to give support to Syrian refugees may best do so by inducing common ingroup identification and empathy for them. Only a small message could help reach their goal.

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