

**The Gratitude of Disadvantaged Groups:  
A Missing Piece in Research on Intergroup Power Relations**

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## Abstract

While a large body of social psychological literature is devoted to studying helping behavior between social groups, the study of *gratitude* as the most common reaction to help is virtually absent from the intergroup literature. However, gratitude has been a constant theme in the history of intergroup relations, particularly in the history of the systematic oppression of socially disadvantaged groups by socially advantaged groups. The “grateful slave” trope that justified the oppression of Black people in North America or modern narratives of “ungrateful” immigrants in Europe exemplify advantaged groups’ attempts to evoke gratitude among disadvantaged groups to secure their conformity and loyalty, or to receive recognition for apparent benefits they provide - even for equal rights. Not only do these examples question the undisputed positivity of gratitude, but they also suggest that disadvantaged groups’ gratitude expressions might be involved in the regulation of power relations between social groups.

The present research introduces the empirical study of gratitude to intergroup relations. The specific aim of this dissertation was to examine how disadvantaged groups’ gratitude expressions in response to advantaged group help might function to promote social inequality. At the same time, the present work addresses gaps within previous research that studies how advantaged group help itself affects status relations. Based on a synthesis of the literature on gratitude and intergroup relations, across three manuscripts, it was examined whether disadvantaged groups’ gratitude expressions, alongside advantaged group help, affect intergroup power relations through a) influencing psychological pathways to social change, b) regulating group-specific needs, and c) enacting and transmitting paternalistic ideology.

In Manuscript #1, the novel idea of a potentially harmful side of gratitude expressions for low power groups was tested. Using correlational, experimental, between- and within-subjects designs, the results from five studies showed across different contexts that when low-power group members expressed gratitude for a high-power group member’s help, they were less willing and less likely to protest against the high power group members’ previous transgression. Forgiveness and system justification mediated this pacifying effect, providing insights into the underlying psychological process.

In Manuscript #2, results from two correlational studies demonstrate that ideological beliefs can guide advantaged groups to provide help that differs in its potential to bring about social change. Paternalistic beliefs parsimoniously distinguished whether members of the receiving society provide dependency- or autonomy-oriented help to refugees. Both groups indicated that autonomy-oriented help has a higher potential for social change than

dependency-oriented help. Reflecting group-specific needs and convictions that underlie paternalism, receiving society members' concern for a positive moral image of the ingroup was positively related to their willingness to provide dependency-oriented help, and beliefs about refugees' competence were positively related to their willingness to provide autonomy-oriented help.

In Manuscript #3, it was investigated why advantaged group members react negatively to refugee protests and demand more gratitude from the refugees. The results of two experiments showed that refugees' protest decreased perceptions among receiving society members that they are socially valued, but expressions of gratitude from refugees increased perceptions of being socially valued. Refugees were perceived as more agentic when they protested, however, not when they expressed gratitude. Perceptions of social worth determined receiving society members' attitudes toward refugees on other dimensions. In a third experiment, the underpinnings of gratitude demands were examined. The results of a third experiment showed that receiving society members, who endorsed paternalistic beliefs, labeled protesting refugees as ungrateful and demanded gratitude from them.

In sum, besides theoretically and empirically advancing several areas of intergroup relations (e.g., intergroup helping, intergroup contact, intergroup reconciliation, and paternalism), the present research suggests that gratitude expressions, which occur in intergroup contexts that are characterized by social injustice, can have negative consequences for disadvantaged groups. Implications for theory and social change are discussed, and promising avenues for future research are suggested.

*Keywords:* gratitude, intergroup helping, social change, group needs, paternalism

## Zusammenfassung

Während sich ein großer Teil der sozialpsychologischen Literatur der Untersuchung von Hilfsverhalten zwischen sozialen Gruppen widmet, ist die Erforschung von *Dankbarkeit* als häufigste Reaktion auf Hilfe in der Intergruppenliteratur praktisch nicht vorhanden.

Dankbarkeit ist jedoch ein fortwährendes Thema in der Geschichte der Intergruppenbeziehungen, insbesondere in der Geschichte der systematischen Unterdrückung sozial benachteiligter Gruppen durch sozial privilegierte Gruppen. Der Tropus der "dankbaren Sklaven", der die Unterdrückung schwarzer Menschen in Nordamerika rechtfertigte, oder moderne Narrative von "undankbaren" Einwanderern in Europa, veranschaulichen Versuche privilegierter Gruppen, Dankbarkeit unter benachteiligten Gruppen hervorzurufen, um ihre Konformität und Loyalität sicherzustellen, oder um Anerkennung für Wohltätigkeiten zu erhalten – sogar für gleiche Rechte. Diese Beispiele stellen nicht nur die unbestrittene Positivität von Dankbarkeit infrage, sondern legen auch nahe, dass Dankbarkeitsäußerungen benachteiligter Gruppen an der Regulierung von Machtverhältnissen zwischen sozialen Gruppen beteiligt sein könnten.

Die vorliegende Arbeit führt die empirische Erforschung von Dankbarkeit in das Feld der Intergruppenbeziehungen ein. Das spezifische Ziel dieser Dissertation bestand darin, zu untersuchen, wie Dankbarkeitsäußerungen benachteiligter Gruppen, als Reaktion auf die Hilfe privilegierter Gruppen, zur Verfestigung sozialer Ungleichheit beitragen könnten. Gleichzeitig adressiert die vorliegende Arbeit Lücken bisheriger Forschung, welche untersucht, wie die Hilfe privilegierter Gruppen selbst Statusbeziehungen beeinflusst. Basierend auf einer Synthese der Literatur zu Dankbarkeit und Intergruppenbeziehungen, wurde in drei Manuskripten untersucht, ob Dankbarkeitsäußerungen benachteiligter Gruppen, neben Hilfestellungen privilegierter Gruppen, sich auf die Machtverhältnisse zwischen Gruppen auswirken, indem sie a) psychologische Pfade zum sozialen Wandel beeinflussen, b) gruppenspezifische Bedürfnisse regulieren und c) paternalistische Ideologie bedienen und vermitteln.

In Manuskript #1 wurde die neue Idee einer potenziell problematischen Seite von Dankbarkeit für Mitglieder niedriger Statusgruppen getestet. Über verschiedene Kontexte hinweg zeigten die Ergebnisse von fünf Studien, korrelativ und experimentell, in between- und in within-subjects Designs, dass Mitglieder statusniedriger Gruppen, die sich für die Hilfe eines Mitglieds einer statushohen Gruppe bedankten, weniger bereit waren, gegen die vorherige Transgression des statushohen Gruppenmitglieds zu protestieren und auch weniger

protestierten. Vergebung und Systemrechtfertigung vermittelten diesen sedierenden Effekt und liefern Einblicke in den zugrundeliegenden psychologischen Prozess.

In Manuskript #2 zeigen die Ergebnisse zweier Korrelationsstudien, dass ideologische Überzeugungen privilegierte Gruppen dazu verleiten können, Hilfe zu leisten, die sich in ihrem Potenzial, soziale Veränderungen herbeizuführen, unterscheidet. Paternalistische Überzeugungen differenzierten, ob Mitglieder der Aufnahmegesellschaft Geflüchteten gegenüber abhängigkeits- oder autonomieorientierte Hilfe leisten wollten. Dabei schrieben beide Gruppen autonomieorientierter Hilfe ein höheres Potenzial für sozialen Wandel zu, als abhängigkeitsorientierter Hilfe. Außerdem hing die Sorge der Mitglieder der Aufnahmegesellschaft über ein positives moralisches Bild der Eigengruppe positiv mit der Bereitschaft zusammen, abhängigkeitsorientierte Hilfe zu leisten. Überzeugungen über die Kompetenz von Flüchtlingen hingen dagegen positiv mit der Bereitschaft zusammen, autonomieorientierte Hilfe zu leisten. Dies spiegelt Gruppenbedürfnisse und Überzeugungen, die dem Paternalismus zugrunde liegen, wieder.

In Manuskript #3 wurde untersucht, warum Mitglieder der Aufnahmegesellschaft negativ auf Proteste von Geflüchteten reagieren und mehr Dankbarkeit von Geflüchteten fordern. Die Ergebnisse zweier Experimente zeigten, dass der Protest Geflüchteter bei Mitgliedern der Aufnahmegesellschaft die Wahrnehmung verringerte, dass sie sozial wertgeschätzt werden, aber Dank von Geflüchteten die Wahrnehmung erhöhte, sozial wertgeschätzt zu werden. Geflüchtete wurden als handlungsbestimmt wahrgenommen, wenn sie protestierten, jedoch nicht wenn sie sich bedankten. Die wahrgenommene soziale Wertschätzung war ausschlaggebend für weiteren Einstellungen gegenüber Geflüchteten seitens der Mitglieder der Aufnahmegesellschaft. Im dritten Experiment wurde die ideologische Grundlage von Dankbarkeitsforderungen untersucht. Die Ergebnisse zeigten, dass wenn Mitglieder der Aufnahmegesellschaft Paternalismus befürworteten, sie protestierende Geflüchtete als undankbar bezeichneten und von ihnen Dankbarkeit forderten.

Neben der theoretischen und empirischen Weiterentwicklung mehrerer Bereiche der Intergruppenforschung (z. B. Intergruppenhilfe, Intergruppenkontakt, intergruppale Versöhnung und Paternalismus) deutet die vorliegende Arbeit darauf hin, dass Dankbarkeitsausdrücke in Intergruppenkontexten, die durch soziale Ungerechtigkeit gekennzeichnet sind, negative Konsequenzen für benachteiligte Gruppen haben können. Implikationen für Theorie und sozialen Wandel werden diskutiert und vielversprechende Ideen für die zukünftige Forschung vorgeschlagen.

## **List of attached studies**

This dissertation is based on the work described in the following studies:

### **Manuscript #1:**

Ksenofontov, I., & Becker, J. C. (2019). The Harmful Side of Thanks: Thankful Responses to High-Power Group Help Undermine Low-Power Groups' Protest. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167219879125>

### **Manuscript #2:**

Becker, J. C., Ksenofontov, I., Siem, B., & Love, A. (2019). Antecedents and consequences of autonomy- and dependency-oriented help toward refugees. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 49(4), 831–838. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.2554>

### **Manuscript #3:**

Ksenofontov, I., & Becker, J. C. (2019). “They Should Be Grateful!” The Needs-Based Functions and Consequences of Protest versus Gratitude Expression within Intergroup Helping Relations. Manuscript submitted for publication.

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## Introduction

In John Reed's short story, "Another Case of Ingratitude" (1913/2002), the narrator comes across a homeless man who, worn out from restless nights and hunger, is walking in his sleep to endure the biting cold. He wakes the man and offers to pay for his meal and find him a bed, and the homeless man follows him. When the food is brought, the narrator is touched by the homeless man's "humble look of gratitude, love, and devotion" and feels "a warm thrill of Christian brotherhood". While watching him eat, he enjoys witnessing a "marvelous change" in the homeless man's body and manners: "where there had been a beast, a spirit lived; he was a man!" (p. 198). He offers him a cigarette and asks how much it costs to pay for a bed, to which the homeless man thanks him. The narrator is eager to learn how the man became homeless, but notices hesitation in his answers. "Just because you got money you t'ink you can buy me with a meal", the homeless man finally says. Surprised, the narrator exclaims that he was helping him completely unselfishly, "What do you think I get out of feeding you?" - "You get all you want. [...] don't it make you feel good all over to save a poor starvin' bum's life? God! You're pure and holy for a week!" Now the narrator is angry. "I don't believe you've got a bit of gratitude in you." - "Gratitude Hell!" says the homeless man, "Wot for? I'm t'anking my luck, not you - see? It might as well 'a' been me as any other bum. [...] you just had to save somebody tonight", to which the narrator leaves the "ungrateful" man (pp. 198 - 199).

Helping each other is a core element of social life. Through helping, people can take care of each other when they cannot satisfy their needs on their own (van Leeuwen & Zagefka, 2017). Early on, we are taught that it is our ethical and civic responsibility to help those who are in need; and people help a lot - they help each other in emergencies, share their knowledge, give to charities, or volunteer (e.g., González & Lay, 2017; Philpot, Liebst, Levine, Bernasco, Lindegaard, 2020). Reading John Reed's short story summarized above, most people would probably regard the narrator's helping act toward the homeless man as a noble behavior that needs to be encouraged. With helping being so central to human social life, social psychologists have sought to understand when and why people help each other. Most of this research focuses on helping among individuals; however, helping is usually more than that (van Leeuwen & Zagefka, 2017). Often, the entities involved in the helping act are members of different social groups, or whole groups, organizations or nations. Further, they usually differ in their social power, that is, in their potential to influence the fate of their group or other groups (Jones, 1972). Usually, the party that provides help holds higher power

compared to the party that receives help, because the former has the necessary resources to bestow (Nadler, 2010). In the short story, the narrator helps a homeless man who belongs to a social group of people whose lives differ from that of the narrator in many ways due to the divide in their socioeconomic status - which enables the protagonist to help in the first place. Such cases of *intergroup helping* have increasingly interested social psychologists, with researchers tackling questions of when and why cross-group helping occurs. Intergroup helping is often contrasted with intergroup conflict and considered an amicable and cooperative way to sustain harmonious intergroup relations (van Leeuwen & Zagefka, 2017). The assumption underlying charity or volunteerism, and parts of the intergroup helping literature has been that intergroup helping occurs out of benevolent intentions. It should help groups to overcome status divides, build bonds and reduce social inequality through the distribution of wealth or knowledge to the less fortunate. This direction has received empirical support, for example, showing that people provide substantial help to outgroup survivors of disasters, that they do not necessarily help outgroup members less than ingroup members, and that they can do so out of empathetic concern (James & Zagefka, 2017; Saucier, Miller, & Doucet, 2005; Willer, Wimer, & Owens, 2015).

However, it has also been theorized that, sometimes, intergroup helping can perpetuate social inequality because helping relations are inherently unequal relations (Nadler & Halabi, 2006). While helping can be associated with a higher status because it implies generosity and competence, being helped is usually associated with a lower status because it signifies a lack of the ability to help oneself and, thus, dependency on the helper. The aforementioned divide of social power between social groups usually enables socially advantaged groups to take on the role of helpers and disadvantaged groups the role of the helped. Having fewer resources, disadvantaged groups usually cannot reciprocate the help to the same extent, resulting in symbolic dominance for the advantaged group (Bourdieu, 1990). Thus, intergroup helping that occurs in the context of unequal power relations, besides its positive allure, can also intensify social disparities. This argument, encompassed by the Intergroup Helping as Status Relations Model (IHSR; Nadler, 2002), has received some, though indirect, empirical support. For example, helping low power groups has been found to depend on how much advantaged group members endorse social hierarchies or on how secure people perceive social hierarchies to be (Halabi, Dovidio, & Nadler, 2008; Nadler & Halabi, 2006). Yet, no matter whether intergroup helping has been conceived as positive or problematic within psychological research, one key piece has been missing throughout: the study of *gratitude*.

Although help exchanges between groups are framed as interactions consisting of providers and recipients of help, most of this research has focused on *help-giving* and barely on how help-recipients *react* to it. This provides only a partial account of the phenomenon of intergroup helping, as reactions to help can differ and affect the realization of the helping transaction – which is contingent on whether help is accepted or rejected (Fisher, Nadler, Whitcher-Alagna, 1982; Wakefield & Hopkins, 2017). Moreover, the question arises whether the power-related effects of intergroup helping such as, for instance, proposed by the IHSR model, might work independently of reactions to helping or whether reactions to helping might be playing a decisive part in maintaining or challenging intergroup power relations as well.

Previous research has studied strategic approaches to help on the part of disadvantaged groups, such as when their members seek help to achieve a certain goal or reject help to refute the impression of their group as dependent (e.g., Nadler & Chernyak-Hai, 2014; Wakefield, Hopkins, & Greenwood, 2012). However, the *expression of gratitude* as the most common reaction to help (Gallup, 1999) has been overlooked almost completely within intergroup research. Expressions of gratitude are probably almost unquestioningly considered positive, which is perhaps why gratitude research is dominantly rooted in positive psychology. This research mostly suggests that expressing gratitude is both beneficial to the expresser and the recipient of “thanks” (e.g., Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Watkins, 2014).

However, expressions of gratitude seem also to be subject to social norms. Just as we are taught from early on that we should help those who require assistance, so too, early on, do we learn that it is very important to express gratitude to those who help us or benefit us in some other way (Becker & Smenner, 1986; Greif & Gleason; 1980). Displays of gratitude are expected while failure to express gratitude can have far-reaching repercussions (Visser, 2009). As Reed’s short story exemplifies, displays of gratitude might affect both the giver and recipient of help and influence how members of different social groups continue to get along with each other: As the narrator perceives gratitude in the homeless man’s expression, he feels joy and connectedness with him. However, once the homeless man does not comply in disclosing his personal story, the narrator accuses him of ingratitude and angrily leaves him. One can speculate that the protagonist of the story will probably think twice before helping out a homeless person the next time, just as the homeless man will be cautious about accepting help from pedestrians in the future. Thus, the display or the omission of gratitude might have implications for advantaged and disadvantaged groups’ appraisals of each other

and the sustainment of the relationship. However, this perspective has not been investigated by previous research.

Importantly, gratitude might be involved in the negotiation and regulation of power between social groups. Again, taking the short story as an example, the homeless man's gratitude evokes feelings of God-like superiority within the narrator who perceives to have saved the homeless man, turning him from a "beast" into a "man", and thus expects his cooperation. The homeless man, as he comes to realize that the help came with strings attached, feeling the threat to his autonomy, withdraws his gratitude and refuses to conform to the interrogation. While it is important for the helper to convey the impression that he helped selflessly, the homeless man refuses to be "bought" so that the helper can boost his image. Thus, gratitude expressions might not only be involved in how advantaged and disadvantaged groups manage positions of superiority and inferiority but also in how they attend to their needs of appearing moral and sustain independence.

Although it is virtually absent from the psychological intergroup literature, gratitude has been a constant topic in the history of intergroup relations, specifically, the history of the systematic oppression of socially disadvantaged groups by socially advantaged groups. For example, Eighteenth-century popular American and British literature (e.g., *Robinson Crusoe* or *Colonel Jack*) promoted romanticized images of "grateful slaves", who allegedly voluntarily yielded to their masters, and this trope strongly contributed to discourses that justified the oppression of Black people (Boulukos, 2008). Accusations of ingratitude have been employed to silence Black people in the United States who after the Civil Rights achievements continued to fight for racial equity (Davis, 2016). Suffragettes who protested for women's right to vote faced identical reactions (Wright, 1913). Refugees, who protest inhumane living conditions and treatment, are still being accused of ingratitude (Asylum: De Maizière, 2015). Volunteers have quit their service claiming they have not been shown enough gratitude by clients (e.g., refugees, Kehler, 2018) and immigrants who have gained citizenship lament that they are still expected to show gratitude toward the receiving nation (e.g., Nayeri, 2017). Meanwhile, women are encouraged to be grateful to the men who do not oppress them and LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) people are being told to be grateful for the rights that they have and reminded that they could do worse elsewhere (Klein, 2018; Valenti, 2014).

These examples illustrate that, historically, within intergroup contexts, much attention has been given to evoking gratitude among the disadvantaged group as a tool to induce conformity and pacify them, or as a source from which advantaged groups might derive

appreciation and recognition for their care – even for “benefits” to which disadvantaged groups are equally entitled, such as rights. These examples suggest that gratitude might also have a “dark side” within intergroup relations. Is this anecdotal evidence or does gratitude systematically contribute to unequal intergroup relations – and if so, how? Psychological research has not provided any answers to these questions yet.

The previous considerations and examples suggest that, both from a theoretical and an applied perspective, the study of intergroup helping or intergroup relations might be incomplete without an investigation of the psychological processes and behaviors associated with gratitude. The present work aimed to add this missing piece. The overarching aim of the present research was to provide an empirical analysis of gratitude expressions within contexts of intergroup helping. Connecting to historical examples that depict the relevance of gratitude within intergroup relations, the present work centers on the effects surrounding *expressions of gratitude from members of socially disadvantaged groups* in response to advantaged group help – for disadvantaged group members themselves as well as for members of socially advantaged groups. Although the emotion of gratitude certainly plays an important role in helping exchanges, helping relations occur through visible communication. Thus, the focus within this research is on *expressions* of gratitude as the communicative counterparts to the provision of help.

Although the IHSR model has received some empirical support, this literature has neglected the topic of gratitude almost completely. Moreover, empirical research that more directly connects intergroup helping to its proposed potential to regulate status relations, or to ideological beliefs that encompass assumptions about the structure of status relations, is scarce. To fill these gaps, the focal goal of the present research was to provide an empirical account of the role of disadvantaged groups’ gratitude expressions as concomitants of social inequality, besides advantaged group help. Therein, the objective was to empirically identify how disadvantaged groups’ gratitude expressions in response to advantaged group help might be contributing to regulating power relations between social groups. Specifically, this dissertation capitalizes on how gratitude expressions might be affecting disadvantaged group members’ advocacy for their group; on how they might influence the status-related social perceptions and needs of advantaged and disadvantaged groups, and determine the advantaged groups’ attitudes, cooperation or resistance toward supporting the disadvantaged group; on how the groups perceive the potential of advantaged group help to bring about social change; and on identifying ideological variables that might be involved in the regulation of exchanges of help and gratitude between groups in contexts of social inequality.

To approach this investigation, in the first part of the Introduction, I review the previous psychological literature on gratitude, which is dominantly located within the positive psychology literature and focuses on intra- and interpersonal benefits of gratitude. The purpose of this review is to outline how gratitude stands out from other positive emotions and delineate mechanisms through which gratitude and its expression strengthen the bond with benefactors and enable reciprocity, as I employ these features and mechanisms to derive predictions for the intergroup level. Then I will highlight a previously neglected aspect of gratitude: its normativity. Outlining how social norms allow to expect expressions of gratitude and condemn the omission of gratitude (i.e. ingratitude), I will discuss how the normativity surrounding gratitude expressions can contribute to the maintenance of unequal power relations, and thereby lay the bridge to social inequality.

To further the understanding of how gratitude might be functioning within intergroup contexts of unequal power, in the second part, I introduce the study of gratitude to intergroup research by connecting gratitude to relevant intergroup theories. Specifically, I establish the potential of gratitude expressions to influence power relations by highlighting how gratitude connects to aspects of these intergroup theories that have been found to affect power relations. Moving on to the level of ideology, I propose that paternalism is the overarching belief system involved in regulating intergroup power relations through helping and gratitude.

In the final part, based on the synthesis of the literature on gratitude and intergroup relations, I point out the major shortcomings of previous research in considering how disadvantaged groups' gratitude expressions and advantaged groups' help shape group hierarchies. I identify three dimensions to which gratitude and helping might mutually dock to regulate power relations. These are a) psychological pathways to social change (such as disadvantaged and advantaged members' participation in measures intended to improve the status of the disadvantaged group, and more positive cognitive, affective and behavioral appraisals of disadvantaged groups on part of the advantaged group), b) group-specific needs, and c) paternalism. Finally, I outline how the three manuscripts of this dissertation connect to these dimensions and present the research questions, which form the basis of each manuscript.

## I Gratitude

Although gratitude is omnipresent in human life and has been cultivated in virtually all major cultures and religions (Watkins, 2014), psychological research on gratitude is still very new. In particular, strikingly little is known about the role of gratitude *expressions* within the variety of social interactions. Thus, although the present work focuses on expressions of gratitude in response to benefits, at this stage of research, insights from research on gratitude as a state or a trait will need to be drawn on as well to create an understanding of how to expressions of gratitude might be functioning within social interactions and influencing social relations.

### 1. What Is Gratitude and What Good Is It?

A common definition of gratitude is that it is an emotion experienced when a person perceives that something good has happened to them and they recognize that an external human or non-human benefactor is largely responsible for this benefit - which can be material, immaterial or the prevention of an unpleasant event (Watkins, 2014). Most of the existing research has focused on gratitude in this sense of a benefit-triggered emotion or a generalized appreciative orientation toward life as a personality trait. Empirical data has reflected that these are two ways of how laypeople usually conceive of gratitude (Lambert, Graham, & Fincham, 2009; Watkins, 2014). When it comes to the question of what role gratitude and its expression might be playing within social life, at least three approaches can be identified within the literature: an economic perspective, a social-functioning perspective, and a well-being perspective.

The economic perspective relates to the sociobiological concept of “reciprocal altruism” (Trivers, 1971), which describes the phenomenon that people invest resources to help each other, even when this entails costs and no apparent benefits (Algoe, 2012). It has been suggested that, on the one hand, gratitude expressions in response to others’ gifts, help or favors serve the purpose of restoring the balance within resource distribution and motivate humans to perform consecutive altruistic acts to increase harmony, cohesion and secure the survival of communities (Mauss, 1950/1990; Nowak, 2006). Supporting this perspective, it was found that expressions of gratitude can promote future prosocial behavior among beneficiaries (for a review, see Ma, Tunney, & Ferguson, 2017) and benefactors alike, for instance, by prompting helping, volunteering or tipping in restaurants (e.g., Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006; Grant & Gino, 2010; Rind & Bordia, 1995; Tsang, 2006a).

The social-functioning perspective is more recent and suggests that gratitude and its expression serve to strengthen social bonds. In her *find, remind and bind* theory of gratitude, Algoe (2012) proposes that gratitude arises when we notice that someone else has been responsive to our needs. In this way, gratitude could be functioning to identify or remind us of trustworthy people who would make high-quality relationship partners. It is suggested that gratitude exerts this effect by causing shifts in cognition, affect and behavior that orient and bind beneficiaries to benefactors. In turn, benefactors are assumed to be drawn into the relationship by the other-orientation inherent in gratitude: Through expressing gratitude, beneficiaries convey that they are able to appreciate others' benefits and respond to the benefactors' potential wish for the benefit to be appreciated (Algoe, Dwyer, Younge, & Oveis, 2019). Thus, gratitude is assumed to drive mutually responsive behaviors among beneficiaries and benefactors. In support of this perspective, beneficiaries perceived an enhanced communal strength of the relationship after having expressed thanks, that is, they felt more responsible for the well-being of the benefactors (Lambert, Clark, Durtschi, Fincham, & Graham, 2010), and benefactors were more likely to spontaneously leave their contact information for the beneficiaries (Williams & Barlett, 2015).

The well-being perspective emphasizes that gratitude serves to promote the well-being of those who express it and those who receive it. The basic assumption is that gratitude amplifies the good in a situation or one's life and this positive experience enhances well-being and health (Watkins, 2014). This research has mostly focused on relationships with trait gratitude, showing robust positive associations with a range of subjective measures of well-being (such as subjective life satisfaction and positive affects) and negative associations with psychopathology (for a qualitative review, see Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010). Interventions designed to promote gratitude through experimentally inducing grateful mood (e.g., through counting blessings or writing a letter of gratitude to someone) initially appeared to be promising avenues to improve well-being, until more critical analyses have cast doubt on their efficacy based on the problematic choice of control conditions (Davis et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2010). Although a majority of people report that expressing gratitude makes them happy (Gallup, 1999), more systematic and fine-tuned research is needed to determine whether feeling gratitude and expressing it actually increases well-being.

Several insights can be drawn from these three perspectives on the function of gratitude to understand the *nature* of gratitude. In turn, delineating the unique features of gratitude allows forming assumptions about the role and social consequences of gratitude expressions for intergroup relations. Thus, in the following, I will characterize gratitude

through reviewing the literature that associates and dissociates gratitude from other emotions, action tendencies, and personality traits, while outlining the possible mechanism of how gratitude expressions might affect the parties that are involved in the helping act.

## **2. The Nature of Gratitude**

The literature on gratitude for the intra- and interpersonal level suggests that the nature of gratitude can be particularly characterized as positive, reciprocal and other-oriented. This characterization can be derived from an integration of the research focusing on the psychology of the person who experiences or expresses gratitude, and research that focuses on the psychology of the person who receives or witnesses expressions of gratitude.

### ***The Positive Nature of Gratitude***

Traditionally, gratitude has been grouped among the positive emotions. Supporting this characterization, empirical research has linked trait gratitude positively to positive affect and negatively to negative emotions (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002). In line with Frederickson's *broaden-and-build* theory of positive emotions (2001), which states that positive emotions fundamentally differ from negative emotions by broadening, instead of narrowing, one's perspective and repertoire of actions, gratitude has also been associated with an enhanced endorsement of thought and action tendencies to approach and build bonds with benefactors (Watkins, Scheer, Ovnicek, & Kolts, 2006). Further, trait gratitude was positively associated with positive reframing, the tendency to see negative events or aspects of a situation in a positive light (Lambert, Graham, Fincham, & Stillmann, 2009). Similarly, when asked to recall unpleasant memories, participants who were instructed to write about how they can be grateful for this experience showed more emotional closure than in the experimental conditions that did not induce gratitude (Watkins, Cruz, Holben, & Kolts, 2008). These effects have been suggested to account for gratitude's effects on well-being (Watkins, 2014). Benefactors also seem to be targets of positive appraisals triggered by gratitude: When instructed to express gratitude to a friend, participants perceived their friend in more positive terms (Lambert et al. 2010).

Gratitude is accompanied by similar physical sensations, motivations and action tendencies as other positive emotions such as joy, elevation, and admiration. However, gratitude also stands out from these emotions through its enhanced relation to motivations and behaviors aimed at improving the relationship with the benefactor (Algoe & Haidt, 2009). Relatedly, attempts have been made to counter claims that it is simply the positivity inherent

in gratitude that drives its effects. In this line of research, effects of gratitude and gratitude expression on variables related to social affiliation and prosocial tendencies have robustly predicted effects above and beyond measures such as positive affect, expressivity, positive feelings about the benefit, and warmth (Algoe, Haidt, & Gable, 2008; Algoe et al. 2019, Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006; DeSteno, Bartlett, Baumann, Williams, & Dickens, 2010).

Taken together, the literature suggests that gratitude is positive in that it prompts the grateful person to attend to the positive aspects of events and people or positively reappraise unpleasant experiences, resulting in an amplification of “the good”. Further, while gratitude is related to other positive emotions, it also can be differentiated from them through unique patterns of associations with thought and action tendencies and incremental predictive value. Thus, gratitude seems to contain other “active ingredients” beyond positivity.

### ***The Reciprocal Nature of Gratitude***

Psychological research has documented gratitude’s role in regulating social exchange dominantly within the domain of prosociality. In that sense, gratitude has been described as a moral emotion, specifically in that it functions as a *moral barometer* in assessing others’ moral behaviors (i.e. helping acts or gifts), a *moral motivator* in motivating the grateful person to engage in prosocial behavior, and a *moral reinforcer* in motivating benefactors to engage in future prosocial behavior (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001). In this proposition, “moral” should be understood in the sense of “virtuous” as upholding a high moral standard, but I will later outline another implication of the connection between gratitude and morality.

In line with the suggested function of gratitude as a promoter of reciprocity, a recent meta-analysis has established a small to medium-sized positive association between experiencing gratitude and engaging in prosocial behavior (Ma et al., 2017). Further, experimental research shows that expressers of gratitude are more likely to return favors to their benefactors, even if by doing so they incur costs or forgo individual gains (Bartlett & DeSteno 2006, DeSteno et al., 2010), and that recipients of “thanks” are more likely to help again (e.g., Grant & Gino, 2010).

Little theory exists about the mechanisms of how gratitude expressions promote reciprocal behavior, but some insights might be gained from politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1978/1987). According to this theory, through expressing thanks, a beneficiary signals that they have accepted a debt, which they will pay off with another benefit to restore balance in line with the reciprocity norm. At the same time, by signaling that the benefit is

welcomed, the gratitude expression positively affirms the benefactors' generosity and competence in providing a benefit, which might motivate the benefactor to engage in prosocial behavior in the future. The theory partly relies on indebtedness to explain reciprocation among benefactors, an unpleasant state of feeling obligated to repay the benefit (Greenberg, 1980) that is associated with distancing from benefactors and antisocial tendencies toward them (Watkins et al., 2006). However, a simple adherence to reciprocity norms due to indebtedness does not sufficiently explain why expressers of thanks engage in affiliative behaviors toward their benefactors (Watkins et al., 2006), reciprocate to them in private (Baumeister & Ilko, 1995; DeSteno et al., 2010), or give to strangers who are not benefactors (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006).

Gratitude expressions might have implications beyond the payment of debt because people have mixed feelings about expressing gratitude (Kashdan, Mishra, Breen, & Froh, 2009; Parker, Majid, Stewart, & Ahrens, 2017). Particularly, gratitude expressions might convey reliance on the benefactor. This could explain why men, for whom gender roles emphasize independence and power (e.g., Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000), find it more conflicting to express gratitude than women (Kashdan et al., 2009), and why people who endorse an autonomous interpersonal style experience gratitude as less positive (Parker et al., 2017). Thus, beyond reducing discomfort surrounding indebtedness, gratitude expressions might enable reciprocity by communicating dependency. Consequently, they might set forth submissive reactions among expressers that are in accordance with dependency.

In support of this, politeness theory implies that reciprocity is triggered by gratitude expressions through orienting the expresser's focus from gains for the self to gains for the benefactor. In expressing thanks, the expresser engages in a behavior that might limit their freedom of action to save the "face" of the benefactor (through affirming that the benefactor has provided a "good" benefit). Although it might sometimes indirectly serve the expresser to cultivate a desired behavior within the benefactor through positive reinforcement (McCullough et al., 2001), self-interest does not sufficiently explain reciprocation because benefactors' gifts or favors are not always beneficial to the self. As others have suggested (DeSteno et al., 2010), gratitude might function to override a simple cost/benefit calculation by forgoing the "ego" (Algoe & Stanton, 2011) and decrease the likelihood of selfish economic action. Supporting this, gratitude was found to be negatively related to measures of "selfism" that involve feelings of indebtedness, envy, materialism, and narcissism (Solom, Watkins, McCurrach, & Scheibe, 2016; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003). Therefore, gratitude expression might drive reciprocation even if the benefit is not beneficial

to the self. These contemplations also suggest that, first and foremost, expressing thanks is an other-focused action (Algoe et al., 2019) – an aspect that I will capitalize on in the next section.

On the part of benefactors, politeness theory suggests reputation building as a mechanism involved in reciprocation. Backing this proposal, gratitude expressions elicited feelings of self-efficacy and social worth among recipients of thanks (Grant & Gino, 2010). This touches upon the most prominent dimensions of self- and other-perception: agency (or competence) and communion (or warmth; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007). However, because social worth alone drove reciprocation, Grant and Gino (2010) concluded that gratitude expressions operate through a communal mechanism. Through receiving thanks, benefactors can satisfy basic needs to feel socially valued and needed by others. As the appreciative expresser of thanks proves to be a reliable source for social worth, benefactors might want to invest in the relationship by helping again, thus driving the circle of social exchange.

### ***The Other-Focused Nature of Gratitude***

In line with the mentioned definition of gratitude, gratitude centers on the two attributions 1) that one has received something that is potentially for their benefit, 2) due to someone else's effort (Algoe et al., 2019). Based on this view, one aspect of gratitude touches upon the self and another one upon the other person. While the focus on the benefit for the self could be a relevant factor in driving well-being effects, the part of gratitude expression that focuses on the benefactor has been proposed to not only drive reciprocation but also been identified as the “active ingredient” in promoting relationship formation and maintenance (Algoe et al., 2019; Algoe, Kurtz, & Hilaire, 2016). For example, benefactors' perception of the quality of the interaction with beneficiaries depended on the extent of how much beneficiaries' gratitude expression involved praise toward the benefactor - and not how much their actions have benefitted the self (Algoe et al., 2016). In light of these findings, gratitude has been characterized as an *other-praising* emotion (Haidt, 2003). Distinct from similar other-praising emotions such as elevation and admiration, gratitude was found to be characterized by a wish to reward and acknowledge the benefactor (Algoe & Haidt, 2009). Several findings point to a picture of gratitude and its expression as other-oriented, and at the same time, selfless. For example, gratitude was found to be inhibited by self-focus (Mathews & Green, 2010), associated with enhanced humility (a willingness to accept one's weakness that is also characterized by low self-focus; Kruse, Chancellor, Ruberton, & Lyubomirsky, 2014; Weidman, Cheng, Tracy, 2018), empathy and lower aggression (DeWall, Lambert,

Pond, Kashdan, & Fincham, 2012), modesty (Rowatt et al., 2006), cooperation, forgiveness, agreeableness (e.g., McCullough et al., 2002), trust toward the benefactor (Dunn & Schweitzer; 2005), and an enhanced tendency to yield to benefactors (Watkins et al. 2006). Moreover, grateful people were rated as helpful, generous and unselfish (McCullough et al., 2002). The aspect of other-orientation within gratitude could also help explain why women are more likely to express gratitude than men and enjoy gratitude more (e.g., Kashdan et al 2009; Ventimiglia, 1982), as gender roles for women prescribe a communal orientation (Eagly et al., 2000). In short, gratitude seems to move the focus from the self toward the benefactor and to motivate adaptation toward the benefactor and their needs.

### *Mechanisms of Gratitude Expressions*

As empirical research cited before shows, gratitude has implications for the expresser's cognitions, affect, and behavior in relation to the self as well as in relation to the benefactor, and - when expressed - also on the cognitions, affect, and behavior of the benefactor. How might gratitude expressions be affecting the expresser and the recipient?

It has been proposed that expressions of gratitude influence how expressers of gratitude see benefactors and their relationship with them because expressions of gratitude communicate that one has welcomed the benefit both to the benefactor and to the self (Lambert et al, 2010). Self-perception and cognitive dissonance reduction processes (Bem, 1972; Festinger, 1957) might be involved in how expressers of gratitude appraise the situation. With expressions of gratitude being positive, expressers can convince themselves that benefactors have done them good and thereby affirm a positive perception of the benefactor to the self. Supporting that view, upon expressing thanks, beneficiaries had a more positive perception of their benefactors (Lambert & Fincham, 2011). However, the special features of gratitude expressions are likely to be involved in determining what expressers do next, beyond positivity. The literature mentioned before suggests that the reciprocal nature of gratitude funnels expressers' behavior toward reciprocation. Expressions of gratitude could thus function to communicate to expressers and benefactors that they have taken on debt and will return the favor. The process of communication to the self is underscored by findings showing that expressing gratitude prompts prosocial behavior toward benefactors but also toward uninvolved others (e.g. Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006).

Reciprocation, however, seems not to be solely based on a cost/benefit calculation. The other-oriented nature of gratitude is assumed to guide expressers' focus to the well-being of the benefactor and facilitate adaptive and responsive behaviors toward them, even at the

expense of self-interest. Previous research underlines that expressing gratitude instructs the self to be responsive toward the benefactor: People felt more responsible for the well-being of their benefactors upon expressing gratitude to them (Lambert et al., 2010) and engaged in unselfish cooperation (DeSteno et al., 2010). Recipients of thanks, on the other hand, seem to be most sensitive to the praise within the gratitude response. Hearing that expressers are responsive to their needs and conveying social worth to them, they are more likely to help them again, to the point that they take electric shocks for them (Grant & Gino, 2010; McGovern, Ditzian, & Taylor, 1975). Thus, expressions of gratitude can bind beneficiaries and benefactors to one another. However, besides the positive consequences of gratitude expressions, there might also be negative outcomes associated with it, which I discuss next.

### **3. The Normativity of Gratitude: A Harmful Side?**

Expressions of gratitude are commonly considered as the behavioral outcomes of gratitude (see Algoe & Haidt, 2009; Lambert, Graham, & Fincham, 2009). The operationalization of gratitude expressions within gratitude research has therefore been implicitly tuned to selectively capture the positively and emotionally loaded part of gratitude expressions. However, people are not always moved and experience gratitude when they give thanks (Gordon, Arnette, & Smith, 2011; Visser, 2009). Greif and Gleason (1980) observed that young children have difficulty to spontaneously express thanks despite intensive prompting from parents. Thus, although people seem to know that expressions of gratitude are not always behavioral outcomes of authentic gratitude, they find it important that gratitude is expressed and are outraged when an expected “thank you” fails to appear (see McGovern et al., 1975; Visser, 2009). These observations indicate that expressing gratitude is tied to stable norms of acceptable behavior (Mills, 2005) – a perspective on gratitude that has been largely neglected within the gratitude literature.

A literature review by Eibach, Libby, and Wilmot (2015) touches upon the contents and restrictiveness of gratitude norms. The authors outline that accepting gifts, favors or help, and rewarding benefactors through expressing gratitude constitutes normative behavior while rejecting or failing to acknowledge benefits constitutes a violation of the norm. Although people might not always want to express thanks because benefits not always benefit them (Fisher et al., 1982), in line with the saying “Don’t look a gift horse in the mouth”, expressions of dissatisfaction with benefits or benefactors are disallowed and elicit negative reactions (Eibach et al., 2015). In particular, while gratitude expressions are routinely encouraged as the appropriate moral response to benefits, failing to express gratitude is seen

as immoral because one has not fulfilled the obligation to reward the benefactor (Carr, 2015; McCullough et al., 2001).

Importantly, unfavorable outcomes of a helping interaction are often intrinsically attributed to deficits within the beneficiary (Rosen, Mickler, & Collins, 1987). Those who fail to express thanks often face accusations of being rude and having moral deficits (Carr, 2015; Eibach et al., 2015). People like grateful responders and dislike ungrateful individuals (Anderson, 1968; Dumas, Johnson, & Lynch, 2002; McGovern et al., 1975). For these reasons, people might express thanks even if they do not want to satisfy the relational needs of being liked and affiliated with, and to maintain harmonious relationships (e.g., Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000). Therefore, relational needs, the linking of gratitude with morality, and the application of gratitude expressions as politeness formulae as outlined in politeness theory, might function to guarantee compliance with gratitude norms.

The problem with gratitude norms is that they do not differentiate between relations of equal power and relations of unequal power. This allows gratitude expressions to be expected and to occur in abusive relationships or contexts of unequal power relations as well. Where withdrawing from abusive or controlling high power benefactors might seem more appropriate, people might still feel pressured to express gratitude for benefits from such benefactors. These gratitude expressions, through their other-oriented (e.g., Algoe, 2012), positive (e.g., Algoe & Haidt, 2009) and reciprocal nature (e.g., Bartlett & DeSteno 2006), can backfire for expressers in tying them closer to benefactors and prompting cooperative, selfless behavior. In situations where benefactors have power over beneficiaries, expressing gratitude might protect expressers from worse: Insecure high-power holders denigrated subordinates less when subordinates thanked them for previous help (Cho & Fast, 2015). Selfless cooperation within unequal power relations, however, is not very likely to lead to changes in the unequal relationship, as it leaves the inequalities unaddressed. Witnessing that expressers of thanks are forgiving and cooperative might encourage exploitation on the part of the benefactor (Yip, Lee, Chan, Brooks, 2017). Thus, expressions of thanks might signal that beneficiaries are willing to accept the dependency and activate humble behavior, which might lead to a perpetuation of the unequal relationship. Psychological literature has only recently acknowledged that in contexts of unequal power relations, expressions of gratitude might be misplaced (Eibach et al. 2015, Wood, Emmons, Algoe, Froh, Lambert, & Watkins, 2016). However, no empirical research had investigated potentially harmful effects of gratitude expressions for the expressers in these contexts.

As illustrated at the beginning of the Introduction, members of socially disadvantaged groups seem to face particular demands to express gratitude toward members of advantaged groups. Similar to interpersonal contexts of unequal power relations, social inequality is based on chronically unequal power relations between social groups. Therefore, gratitude expressions might have harmful consequences for disadvantaged groups. Considering the nature of gratitude and consequences of gratitude expressions for expressers outlined before, communicating gratitude might encourage disadvantaged group members to engage in behaviors that accommodate the advantaged groups' needs, which can be contrary to their ingroup-interests given that advantaged groups usually benefit from a system of inequality (e.g., Sidanius & Pratto, 2004). Before the present work, no research has empirically investigated this possibility.

In making assumptions about how gratitude expressions might affect intergroup power relations, relevant intergroup theories should be taken into account. Analogous to Eibach and colleagues' (2015) suggestion that gratitude norms function on the system-level (i.e., sociopolitical institutions) in a similar way as they function on the interpersonal level, I apply the mechanisms of gratitude and gratitude norms that operate at the interpersonal level to form my predictions for the effects surrounding gratitude expressions for the intergroup level.

## II Introducing Gratitude to Intergroup Relations

The intergroup literature has not yet investigated which role gratitude might be playing within intergroup relations. The focal question of the present work is how disadvantaged groups' expressions of gratitude for advantaged group help might influence power relations between social groups in the context of social inequality. The present research assessed how disadvantaged groups' gratitude expressions might influence intergroup power relations for three dimensions: the dimensions of social change, group-specific needs, and ideology.

Two models of social change prominent in social psychological literature very broadly provide the conceptual framework for the social change dimension. The model of *prejudice reduction* focuses on enhancing positive attitudes, emotions, and behaviors toward disadvantaged groups on the part of the advantaged group. The model of *collective action* focuses on the mobilization of disadvantaged groups to act on behalf of their group to improve their status (Wright & Baray, 2012). These two psychological pathways to social change represent the social change dimension in the present work. Motivation in the form of group-specific needs and ideology in the form of paternalistic beliefs represent the other two dimensions that might regulate intergroup power relations through gratitude expressions. As the focus is put on gratitude expressions as an affirmative response of advantaged group help, this analysis is supplemented by considering how advantaged group help itself might be involved in the challenge or maintenance of power relations.

In the following, I present the intergroup research on power relations in which gratitude might play an important role but is missing. Regarding the ability of gratitude to foster cooperation and harmonious relations, these are research areas that describe how these kinds of relations might be challenging and maintaining power relations. This is in line with the perspective that relations between socially advantaged and disadvantaged groups have not only been characterized by antipathy and conflict but affection and collaboration as well. As mounting evidence suggests, such relations might be insidiously involved in the reproduction of inequality (Dixon, Levine, Reicher, & Durrheim, 2012; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Halabi & Nadler, 2010; Jackman, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004; Wright & Lubensky, 2009).

To outline the link between gratitude expressions and the social change dimension, I present research on intergroup contact and intergroup helping; to connect gratitude expressions to the group-needs dimension, I review research on intergroup reconciliation; to delineate links between gratitude expressions and the ideology dimension, I discuss research that pertains to paternalism.

## 1. Intergroup Contact

For a long time, the prevailing view in social psychology was that social inequality could be reduced primarily by improving the attitudes of historically advantaged groups toward historically disadvantaged groups. The most prominent perspective on how to improve cross-group attitudes is through intergroup contact (Allport, 1954). Positive intergroup contact was found to be robustly associated with improved attitudes toward outgroups (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), and an enhanced willingness among advantaged groups to support measures aimed at improving the status of the disadvantaged group (Kotzur, Schäfer, & Wagner, 2019; Reimer et al., 2017). On the part of disadvantaged groups, however, positive contact was mostly found to undermine disadvantaged groups' support of policies or their participation in actions aimed at improving their groups' status (Becker, Wright, Lubensky, & Zhou, 2013; Cakal et al., 2011; Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2007; Tropp, Hawi, van Laar, & Levin, 2012; Wright & Lubensky, 2009). The isomorphic effects of intergroup contact were questioned when contact was found to be associated with decreased awareness of discrimination and inequality (Dixon, Durrheim, Tredoux, Tropp, Clack, & Eaton, 2010; Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2009; Sengupta & Sibley, 2013). It has been argued that the "irony" of positive intergroup contact is that it enforces an illusion of harmony between the groups. This ameliorates any grievances experienced by the disadvantaged groups and demobilizes them (Saguy et al., 2009).

However, situational factors influence this effect: When advantaged group members communicated that the intergroup inequality was legitimate or did not convey their opinion, positive contact undermined disadvantaged groups' collective action. However, when they communicated that the intergroup inequality was illegitimate, positive contact did not undermine collective action (Becker et al., 2013). Thus, the content that is communicated in the contact situation and perhaps bits of communication like gratitude expressions might influence the demobilizing effects of positive contact. Gratitude expressions from disadvantaged groups could be positive messages transmitted during contact that construe it as positive. Alternatively, gratitude could be one of the mechanisms of how demobilizing effects of contact occur: Disadvantaged groups might feel grateful that advantaged groups' are being kind. The positivity surrounding gratitude expressions could prompt disadvantaged groups to engage in the positive reframing of even ambivalent situations, which could fuel the illusion of harmony. Moreover, the reciprocal and other-oriented nature of gratitude expressions could lead disadvantaged group members to refrain from actions that benefit their ingroup or calling out unfair treatment, and instead engage in adaptive behaviors. Previous

intergroup contact research had not considered gratitude expressions and thus neither positive nor insidious implications had been proposed for gratitude expressions.

The positive effects of positive contact on advantaged groups' attitudes toward disadvantaged groups might be explained through a possible transmission of social worth through gratitude expressions. Conversely, criticism of the advantaged groups' benefits ("ingratitude") might be perceived as a lack of appreciation, and thus, as negative contact. Negative contact is related to increased prejudice (e.g., Barlow, Paolini, et al., 2012; Bagci & Turnuklu, 2019) and, sometimes, decreased collective action tendencies (Reimer et al., 2017). Previous research has, however, not investigated how expressions of gratitude or "ingratitude" might affect advantaged groups' attitudes toward disadvantaged groups or their advocacy for disadvantaged groups.

In sum, gratitude expressions might be involved within the maintenance of power differences between social groups via pacifying disadvantaged groups and demobilizing them from challenging the social hierarchy. For advantaged groups, gratitude expressions might elicit positive attitudes and advocacy toward disadvantaged groups. However, ingratitude as negative contact could provoke negative attitudes and antisocial action. These assumptions have not been tested by previous research.

## **2. Intergroup Helping**

As outlined at the beginning of the Introduction, helping acts between social groups can be generally considered positive. However, research on the Intergroup Helping as Status Relations model (Nadler, 2002) suggests that intergroup helping is also a "status-organizing process" by which power differences between social groups are reproduced (Nadler, Halabi, Harpaz-Gorodeisky, 2009). The following sections take a closer look at the empirical findings underlying this assumption and outline the shortcomings of previous research. These concern the role of gratitude expressions within the status-organizing process and the study of proximal indicators of the social change potential and parsimonious individual-difference-level predictors of advantaged group help.

### ***Gratitude Expressions as Signals of Dependency***

According to the IHSR model, high power groups can demonstrate their power, warmth, and competence through providing help, while low power groups appear incompetent to help themselves, and thus needy and reliant (Nadler, 2002). Previous research shows that high power groups can "strategically" provide help to low power groups out of a concern for the ingroup, at the expense of the low power groups' needs (strategical does not refer to the

intention but implies a primary focus on the ingroups' needs; see van Leeuwen, 2017; Nadler et al., 2009). Empirical research documents advantaged groups' motivations to help "selfishly" out of concerns for power or gaining a reputation as moral or warm (e.g., Hopkins et al., 2007; Nadler, Harpaz-Gorodeisky, & Ben-David, 2009; see also Wakefield & Hopkins, 2017).

Ignoring the needs of recipients when providing help, intentionally or not, can hurt their self-esteem and increase perceptions of incompetence and dependency (Graham & Barker, 1990; Deelstra et al., 2003; Halabi, Nadler, & Dovidio, 2011; Schneider, Major, Luhtanen, & Crocker, 1996). Due to concerns about dependency or dissatisfaction with benefits, disadvantaged groups may be unwilling to accept help or express gratitude for it (Täuber & van Leeuwen, 2012; van Leeuwen, Täuber, & Sassenberg, 2011). However, previous research shows that people react negatively to disadvantaged groups' rejections of help, even when it is patronizing (Becker, Glick, Ilic, & Bohner, 2011; Rosen et al., 1987; Wang, Silverman, Gwinn, & Dovidio, 2015). Normative pressure to display gratitude for benefits independent of their value, together with concerns about the stigma of ingratitude and negative repercussions, might motivate low power group members to express thanks, even if they do not want to.

Thus, whether enforced by norms or voluntary, disadvantaged group members' expressions of gratitude could communicate –beyond the mere acceptance of high power group help – that they relied on the advantaged groups' help and that they are willing to accept the dependency on the advantaged group. In accordance with the other-oriented and reciprocal nature of gratitude expressions, this could set forth behaviors in line with dependency. For example, disadvantaged groups might then refrain from criticism of the high power group and engage in self-censorship that leaves their group interests unaddressed (see Eibach et al., 2015).

### ***Advantaged Group Help and Social Change***

The research on strategic helping cited beforehand demonstrates that help from advantaged groups cannot be viewed as beneficial per se, as some instances of helping might be contributing to cementing power divides, whereas others might be contributing to social change. In this respect, empirical support of the potential of intergroup helping to regulate status relations has been largely based on the IHSR model's distinction of two basic forms of help: autonomy- and dependency-oriented help (Nadler, 2002). Similarly to the meaning of the saying "Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed

him for a lifetime”, dependency-oriented help describes assistance that provides the full solution to a problem, while autonomy-oriented help describes the provision of skills and tools to solve the problem on one’s own to eventually free oneself from the need for help. Hence, autonomy-oriented help is said to boost help recipients’ sense of efficacy and facilitate status improvement, which could potentially bring about social change. Dependency-oriented help, on the other hand, is assumed to solidify unequal relations, as recipients remain tied to the goodwill of the helping group (Nadler & Fisher, 1986), and is said to have a lower potential to bring about social change.

Demonstrating indirectly how the two help forms might be differentially related to the challenge or maintenance of power relations, advantaged group members were increasingly motivated to provide dependency-oriented help to disadvantaged group members when the status hierarchy was perceived to be under threat (Nadler et al., 2009). Helping low power groups through dependency-oriented help might hence constitute a way for high power groups to secure their dominant position. In the prospect of social change, disadvantaged group members were more skeptical about the advantaged group members’ intentions and preferred autonomy-oriented help or no help at all (Nadler & Halabi, 2006; van Leeuwen et al., 2011). However, when status relations were perceived as stable and legitimate, and chances for change were low, disadvantaged groups’ were more ready to accept dependency-oriented help (Nadler & Halabi, 2006).

The relationship between social dominance orientation, which is the endorsement of rigid social hierarchies (SDO; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), and the two help forms has also been interpreted as indicative of the potential of the two help forms to influence power relations. Advantaged group members high in SDO were generally reluctant to provide both forms of help but when they had to choose, preferred to provide dependency-oriented help (Halabi et al., 2008). In other studies, SDO was not related to dependency-oriented help and negatively related to autonomy-oriented help (Jackson & Esses, 2000), but associations with opposition to helping altogether were stronger (Maki, Vitriol, Dwyer, Kim, & Snyder, 2017). Thus, SDO has not reliably distinguished engagement in dependency- and autonomy oriented help.

### ***Shortcomings***

Taken together, although research on the IHSR model has provided indirect support to how helping relations might be involved in the regulation of intergroup hierarchy, helping had not been more proximally empirically associated with its potential to affect social hierarchies. Recent research indicates that recipients of autonomy-oriented help feel more empowered and

autonomous compared to recipients of dependency-oriented help (Alvarez, van Leeuwen, Montenegro-Montenegro, & van Vugt, 2018). This points to an increased potential of autonomy-oriented help to shift the low status of disadvantaged groups. Still, it has been unclear whether advantaged groups provide dependency- or autonomy- oriented help because they might be seeing contrasting potential for social change within these help forms, and how disadvantaged groups conceive of help in terms of their potential for social change.

Further, testing connections between helping and individual difference variables that encompass peoples' attitudes about hierarchies could help to understand how helping acts might be involved in the negotiation of power differences. SDO as an individual-difference-level indicator of ideology has not sufficiently explained how the two helping forms connect to the maintenance of power relations. Thus, other constructs needed to be proposed.

Last but not least, the domain of intergroup helping lacks theoretical considerations and empirical tests of the role of gratitude expressions in general, and in regulating power relations, in particular. Combinations of the literature on intergroup helping relations and gratitude outlined beforehand, and recent theoretical work on gratitude norms (Eibach et al., 2015), suggest that gratitude expressions in response to advantaged group help might signal dependency and induce processes of self-censorship within disadvantaged group members.

### **3. Intergroup Reconciliation**

#### ***The Needs-Based Model of Reconciliation***

Another approach to improving intergroup cooperation toward social change deals with the matter of intergroup reconciliation through the restoration of threatened group identities. Developed in the context of interpersonal transgressions, the Needs-Based-Model of Reconciliation (e.g. Shnabel & Nadler, 2015) proposes that long-term social inequality constitutes a conglomeration of many incidents of structural transgressions. This results in stereotypes of disadvantaged groups, as the “victims” of social inequality, as warm but incompetent (“paternalistic stereotypes”) and advantaged groups, as the “perpetrators” of social inequality, as cold but competent (“envious stereotypes”; Fiske et al., 2007). In that sense, social inequality can be conceptualized as an asymmetry of *symbolic* resources beyond material resources (see Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). According to the Needs-Based model, in egalitarian societies that stress ethical relationships between disadvantaged and advantaged groups (see Moscovici & Pérez, 2009), these groups experience divergent psychological needs. Advantaged groups, as the beneficiaries or “perpetrators” of inequality, strive for affirmation of their morality and social acceptance, and disadvantaged groups, as the

“victims” of social inequality, strive for affirmation of their agency and sense of power. The logic of the model is that satisfying these divergent group-specific needs (for example, through messages that affirm morality and agency, respectively, or through apologies and forgiveness, respectively; Shnabel & Nadler, 2015) can motivate groups to form a more positive view of the respective outgroup and reconcile.

Supporting the model, empirical research shows that disadvantaged group members are primarily concerned with defying negative stereotypes about the ingroup as incompetent and with being respected, while advantaged group members are interested in being perceived as less discriminatory and want to be liked by the disadvantaged group (Bergsieker, Shelton, & Richeson, 2010; Saguy, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2008; Siem, von Oettingen, Mummendey, & Nadler, 2013). Further, while motivation to protect the moral image of the ingroup lead to defensive reactions about privilege among advantaged groups, affirmation of them as good and acceptable people increased their willingness to support redistributive measures designed to counteract inequality (Lowery, Knowles, & Unzueta, 2007). Finally, messages that conveyed warmth to the advantaged groups and competence to the disadvantaged group improved outgroup attitudes and increased willingness to engage in measures aimed toward social change (Shnabel, Ullrich, Nadler, Dovidio, & Aydin, 2013).

### ***Helping and Group-Specific Needs***

Previous research has identified outgroup helping as one way of how ingroups can manage concerns about the ingroups’ warmth (e.g., van Leeuwen & Täuber, 2012). Siem and colleagues (2013) found that, under a perception of insecure status relations, advantaged group members experienced a higher need to be socially accepted by disadvantaged groups. This might help to explain why advantaged group members tend to provide dependency-oriented help when the status quo is perceived to be under threat (Nadler et al., 2009). Dependency-oriented help, contrary to autonomy-oriented help, provides a more sustainable opportunity for advantaged groups to attenuate concerns about warmth or morality because it does not provide help recipients with skills to help themselves, so their need for help persists. On a conceptual level, dependency-oriented help, therefore, contradicts empowerment needs but aligns with advantaged groups’ moral image concerns. However, previous research had not examined whether concerns for the moral image of the advantaged ingroup are associated with an increased willingness to provide dependency-oriented help to disadvantaged groups.

Disadvantaged groups’ wish to defy stereotypes of incompetence and dependency might indirectly play into the provision of autonomy-oriented help in the form of needs-based

perceptions. Recent findings show that perceptions of competence or agency motivated advantaged groups to engage in solidarity-based collective action (Kotzur et al., 2019), and provide autonomy-oriented help (Schroeder, Waytz, & Epley, 2017). Thus, counter-stereotypical needs-based perceptions of disadvantaged groups as competent might encourage advantaged groups to provide autonomy-oriented help.

### ***Gratitude Expressions and Group-Specific Needs***

Upon providing help, in line with gratitude norms, advantaged groups might expect that disadvantaged groups express gratitude. Gratitude expressions were found to convey social worth to benefactors (Grant & Gino, 2010; Cho & Fast, 2015), and hence might help to satisfy advantaged groups' needs for moral affirmation. In turn, members of disadvantaged groups who express gratitude might be viewed in a more positive light and be more likely to receive support from the advantaged group (Shnabel et al., 2013). Conversely, when disadvantaged groups protest their situation, this could augment the threat to the advantaged groups' social worth because it could signify that they were unable to take proper care of the disadvantaged group. This, in turn, might lead advantaged groups to attribute the negative outcome to the disadvantaged group, possibly resulting in more negative attitudes, less support of and maybe even intentions to harm the disadvantaged group (Rosen et al., 1987). Thus, although advantaged groups' primary concerns might not explicitly be centered on power maintenance, indirectly, failure on part of the disadvantaged group to satisfy advantaged groups' needs for moral approval through the protest of help could result in attempts to sustain their superiority.

In society, this penalty is visible when disadvantaged group members' protest is met with demands for gratitude or accusations of ingratitude, as it was the case when Black people continued to fight for racial equality in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Act (Davis, 2016), when women continued to fight for gender equality (Burton Brown, 2014), or when refugees demanded better living conditions (Kastner & Szymanski, 2014). Such reactions on the part of advantaged groups could reflect moral image concerns. However, if disadvantaged groups refrain from protesting inequalities or criticizing help that is offensive or not aligned with their need for empowerment, and instead express gratitude, status hierarchies are likely to persist.

However, protest as the active resistance to the status quo could enhance perceptions of disadvantaged groups' agency, which in light of prevailing stereotypes of them as dependent and incompetent, would constitute prejudice reduction. Due to the primacy of

warmth within social perception (Wojciszke & Abele, 2008), the lack of social worth within the omission of gratitude or criticism of help should, however, determine how advantaged groups behave toward disadvantaged groups. Previous research had however not investigated how gratitude expressions or protest might influence advantaged groups' needs and how this would affect attitudes and behaviors toward disadvantaged groups. Further, it had not been studied whether advantaged group members systematically demand gratitude in response to disadvantaged groups' protest, and if so, why.

Taken together, advantaged groups' need for moral approval and perceptions of disadvantaged groups' competence might affect whether advantaged groups provide help that is said to challenge status relations (e.g., autonomy-oriented help), in line with disadvantaged groups' fundamental needs, or help that is said to solidify unequal status relations (e.g., dependency-oriented help). Gratitude expressions, in turn, might be involved in determining whether the advantaged groups' needs are satisfied, which could be why some advantaged group members demanding gratitude in response to disadvantaged groups' protest. However, because of their other-oriented nature, gratitude expressions should be unlikely to affect needs-related perceptions of the disadvantaged groups' agency.

#### **4. The Ideology: Paternalism**

So far, I have discussed how disadvantaged groups' gratitude expressions and advantaged groups' helping acts might be involved in influencing disadvantaged and advantaged groups' needs, attitudes and behaviors to operate in a hierarchy-stabilizing or -challenging manner. However, the question remains whether these effects are incidental or systematic and how they could be permanently anchored in a culture to promote or stabilize social inequality. This calls for addressing ideological beliefs about the roles of gratitude expressions and helping between social groups of relative power.

Social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) proposes that human systems characterized by group-based social hierarchies are subject to *hierarchy-enhancing* or *-attenuating* forces. "Forces" constitute aggregated acts by individuals or institutions that asymmetrically allocate positive and negative social value (i.e., material or symbolic resources) between social groups, resulting in social inequality - the structural oppression of "subordinate" groups by "dominant" groups. According to the theory, these hierarchy-enhancing or -attenuating acts are partly guided by legitimizing myths, which can represent values, ideologies, beliefs or religious doctrines. Legitimizing myths are moral and intellectual explanations for how the social world functions that, in the case of hierarchy-

enhancing forces, justify and defend the hierarchical order and oppressive practice. Some legitimizing myths configure the hierarchy as fair and inevitable, allowing for (passive or active) consensus among dominant and subordinate groups about oppressive practices. Thus, systems of group-based oppression can be cooperatively sustained by dominant and subordinate social groups (Sidanius & Pratto, 2004).

One such form of legitimizing myths that connects to issues of intergroup helping and gratitude is *paternalism* (Sidanius, 1993). Paternalism has been conceptualized as “the principle or system of governing or controlling a country, group of employees, etc. in a manner suggesting a father’s relationship with his children” (Webster, 1975). In the sense of guardianship, paternalism is characterized by a duality of control and benevolence within the dominant groups’ attitudes and behaviors toward subordinate groups (Wagstaff, Colella, Triana, Smith, & Watkins, 2015). Stereotypes of subordinates as too incompetent to look out for themselves provide justification for the inevitability of the dominant groups’ power and control (Sidanius, 1993). Thus, restrictions on subordinates’ freedom are considered to be for their “own good”. The arrangement is such that dominant groups care and provide for subordinate groups, while the subordinate groups are expected to express gratitude and loyalty in return (Aycan, 2006). Subordinates’ conformity to this role is rewarded with protection and affirmation, which can lead them to identify with this role. Meanwhile, disconformity can be met with punitive aggression (Jackman, 1994). Chattel slavery in North America is one example of how paternalistic myths enabled the systematic oppression of Black people. Slavery was considered to operate in the interest of Black people, who were deemed incapable to care for themselves, thus drafting slavery as “benevolent” and morally required in attempts to justify it (Sidanius, 1993). While slaveholders found “dutiful slaves” to be deserving of paternal care, those who did not conform to subordination were harshly penalized (Fox-Genovese & Genovese, 2005).

Within gender relations, two forms of sexism corresponding to the paradoxical duality of paternalistic care and punishment haven been identified (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Benevolent sexism encompasses seemingly supportive attitudes about women as the “weak and fair gender” that requires protection from men. While benevolent sexism is expressed when women conform to such a traditional gender role, when women disconfirm to that role and challenge the dependency on men, they can face derogation and social exclusion, hostile sexism. Jackman (1994) illustrates this phenomenon as the iron fist that emerges from the velvet glove (of benevolent sexism). Although benevolent sexism is patronizing, through its superficially warm tone and the ostensible benefits that it appears to deliver to women, it is

difficult to recognize and resist (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Becker & Wright, 2011; Hopkins-Doyle, Sutton, Douglas, & Calogero 2019). Thus, women themselves can endorse benevolent sexism, mirroring the consensus involved in the stabilization of social hierarchies.

Social dominance theory stresses the endorsement of self-demeaning ideologies by oppressed groups as a crucial mechanism within the regulation of social hierarchies because it renders force unnecessary. According to Jackman (1994), in historically unequal societies, paternalism is a more effective way to maintain stable societal patterns of dominance and subordination than deterrent hostility, because the dominants' status depends on the cooperation of subordinates (e.g., through labor and services, or within gender relations, affection, and reproduction; Dixon et al., 2012). Because dominant groups appear to invest their resources in the interests of subordinate groups, social inequality can seem justified to subordinates as well and they might be willing to enact the subordinate role. This harmonizes with system justification theory, which describes how motivational processes to regard the social system as fair are involved in the rationalization of unequal status relations (e.g., Jost et al., 2004). System justification has been applied to partly explain why disadvantaged groups so rarely protest their oppression. Demonstrating this connection, paternalism (in the form of benevolent sexism) was found to undermine disadvantaged groups' collective action toward social change, partly through processes of system justification (Becker & Wright, 2011).

Paternalism as a legitimizing myth that upholds and idolizes unequal social arrangements might help explaining how cooperative behaviors such as expressing gratitude and helping can be systematically involved in the regulation of social hierarchies. This relationship is implied in a qualitative study of domestic laborers and their employers. Durrheim, Jacobs, and Dixon (2014) observe that when the working relationship was constructed in paternalistic terms, employers' little acts of "generosity" elicited gratitude from the domestic workers, which they expressed through construing the power differential in positive terms and justifying the status quo.

Moreover, for some, gratitude expressions constitute indicators that paternalism is justified (Kasachkoff, 1994). Hence, expressions of gratitude as affirmations of advantaged group help could act to stabilize a paternalistic system. Voluntary expressions of gratitude for advantaged group help might arise from the internalization of subordinate roles that prescribe acceptance of dependency. Gratitude norms can function to motivate expressions of thanks even when they might be misplaced. Relatedly, it has been proposed that gratitude norms have a system-justifying function (Eibach et al., 2015). Possibly, the role differentiation of advantaged groups as providers of care and disadvantaged groups as grateful beneficiaries is

what justifies the particular imposition of gratitude norms on disadvantaged groups in the first place.

Theory and research on paternalism in intergroup relations is scarce, which is for example mirrored in the absence of individual-difference measures of paternalistic beliefs for the intergroup context. However, the aforementioned few findings and sociological theory suggest that paternalism might be the system of beliefs and behaviors that plays into the insidious effects of intergroup helping relations. Paternalism seems to be ideal for advantaged group members who wish to maintain the hierarchy while appearing generous and admirable. In contrast to SDO, paternalistic beliefs might be driving helping behavior to achieve this goal. However, as the advantaged groups' hegemony is contingent on a hierarchical structure, advantaged group members who endorse paternalistic beliefs should prefer giving help that does not challenge disadvantaged groups' lower status. Thus, on an individual-difference level, paternalistic beliefs might be able to distinguish engagement in dependency- and autonomy oriented help. Specifically, as paternalistic beliefs encompass convictions that disadvantaged groups lack competence, they should be negatively related to autonomy-oriented help. As paternalistic beliefs construe advantaged group helpers as disadvantaged groups' saviors, concerns to uphold a positive moral image might motivate the provision of dependency-oriented help. The role of paternalism in connection to advantaged group help and possible processes underlying this relationship had not been empirically examined. Some indirect support can be found in previous work showing that appraisals of help recipients' competence as low led to paternalistic help and that benevolent sexism increased men's provision of dependency-oriented help to women (Schroeder et al., 2017; Shnabel & Nadler, 2015). However, studying paternalistic beliefs as predictors of intergroup helping would allow testing the thesis that intergroup helping is connected to power relations more directly than it had been done before.

The role of paternalism in connection to disadvantaged groups' gratitude expressions had not yet been empirically examined either. As gratitude expressions might be another way for advantaged groups to receive moral affirmation while maintaining the status quo, paternalistic beliefs might help to explain advantaged group members' call for restrictions on disadvantaged groups who do not display gratitude (Mehta, 2019; Nayeri, 2017). Further, paternalism might help explaining why advantaged group members demand gratitude of disadvantaged group members who attempt to challenge their low power position through protest (see Kastner & Szymanski, 2014). For advantaged groups holding paternalistic beliefs, these behaviors might constitute disconformity to the subordinate role of disadvantaged

groups and pose threats to their moral image and the paternalistic system overall. Therefore, intergroup helping acts and gratitude expressions might not only be ideologically motivated behaviors but also constitute vehicles through which paternalistic ideology continues to be transmitted.



## The Present Research

Just as gratitude research has neglected the intergroup level, so has intergroup research neglected the study of gratitude. This dissertation introduces the empirical study of gratitude to intergroup relations. A synthesis of the literature on gratitude and intergroup relations suggests that there might be a problematic side to gratitude within contexts of social inequality. Specifically, disadvantaged groups' gratitude expressions for advantaged group help, besides advantaged groups' helping acts, might be involved in the solidification of the power differential between the groups.

The synthesis has identified several shortcomings within previous research in considering how intergroup helping relations shape group hierarchies. These dominantly concern the role of gratitude expressions in response to advantaged group help as positive intergroup contact, as behavioral counterparts to intergroup helping, as possible regulators of group-specific needs, and targets and transmitters of paternalistic ideology. The present research aimed at closing these gaps. Cumulatively, in three manuscripts we have tested with empirical data from ten studies whether disadvantaged groups' gratitude expressions, alongside advantaged group help, are involved in the regulation of intergroup power relations through affecting a) psychological pathways to *social change* (such as both groups' advocacy for the disadvantaged group and advantaged groups' positive attitudes toward disadvantaged groups), b) group-specific *needs*, and c) the enactment and transmission of *paternalism*. Corresponding to these three dimensions, this analysis is supplemented by a more direct investigation of the social change, needs-based and ideological dimensions of providing dependency- and autonomy oriented help. This addresses the shortcomings of previous research concerning the role of advantaged group help in shaping group hierarchies.

Figure 1 summarizes the foci of the three manuscripts (gratitude expressions vs. helping) and highlights how the manuscripts incorporate the three conceptual dimensions of social change, group-specific needs, and paternalistic ideology. The figure shows that just as helping is likely to affect social change, so should gratitude expressions affect pathways to social change; just as helping is likely to be affected by group-specific needs, so should gratitude expressions affect group-specific needs; just as paternalistic beliefs are likely to be involved in determining forms of helping, so should paternalistic beliefs be involved in enforcing gratitude expressions. This illustrates the basic assumption behind this work that gratitude expressions constitute an important missing piece of intergroup helping relations.

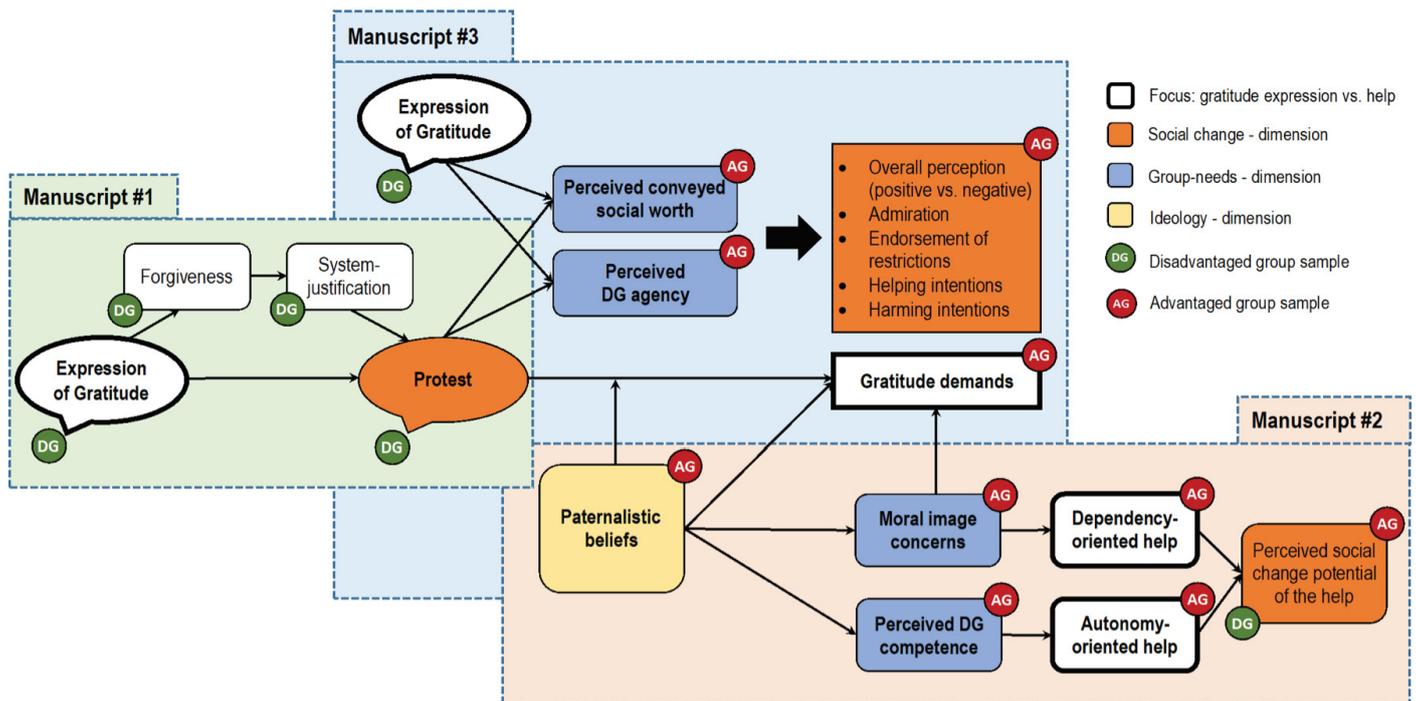


Figure 1: Overview of the Manuscripts.

## Overview of the Manuscripts

Manuscript #1 targets the collective action pathway of the social change dimension. Across five studies using different designs and contexts, we investigated whether expressions of gratitude for high power group help demobilize low power group members by undermining their protest for their ingroup interests. Thus, we developed and tested the idea of a harmful side of gratitude expressions. Assumptions for this “pacifying” effect of gratitude expressions were drawn from those strands of research discussed in the Introduction that pertain to the positive, reciprocal, and other-oriented nature of gratitude expressions; to gratitude norms, which might facilitate gratitude expression in power contexts and guide successive behaviors toward self-censorship; to demobilizing effects of positive intergroup contact; and to gratitude expressions as dependency-affirming reactions in the sense of the IHSR model. Based on a conceptualization of social inequality as a conglomerate of systemic and advantaged group transgressions, the studies of this manuscript measured the pacifying effect of gratitude expressions following high power group transgressions. In that sense, the manuscript proposed and tested forgiveness (e.g., Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010) and system-justification (e.g., Jost et al., 2004) as psychological mechanisms underlying the pacifying effect of gratitude expressions.

Across two correlational studies that include an expert sample of help recipients (refugees), we tested in Manuscript #2 how advantaged group helping can affect intergroup power relations for all three dimensions. Germans and refugees rated the social change potential of dependency- and autonomy-oriented help. This addressed the social change dimension. Addressing the ideology dimension, we tested whether paternalistic beliefs can distinguish whether advantaged group members (Germans) want to provide dependency- or autonomy-oriented help to disadvantaged group members (refugees). Following considerations about the hierarchy-enhancing nature of paternalism, we predicted that paternalistic beliefs positively predict intentions to engage in dependency- oriented help and negatively intentions to engage in autonomy-oriented helping. Following considerations about the convictions underlying paternalism (i.e., “dominant” groups’ concern to uphold a positive moral image and beliefs about “subordinate” groups’ incompetence), we tested concerns for a positive moral ingroup image and beliefs about disadvantaged groups’ competence as mediators between paternalistic beliefs and the two forms of help. This addressed the group-needs dimension.

Finally, across three experiments, Manuscript #3 investigated why some members of an advantaged group demand gratitude in response to disadvantaged groups’ protest. Thereby, this manuscript addresses how disadvantaged groups’ gratitude expressions can relate to group-specific needs, ideology and affect the prejudice reduction pathway of social change – targeting all three dimensions. Based on the Needs-Based Model of Reconciliation, we proposed that gratitude expressions enhance advantaged groups’ (Germans’) perception of being conveyed social worth, while protest decreases it. We proposed that due to their other-focus and other-profitability, gratitude expressions would not affect the perception of disadvantaged groups (refugees) agency (i.e., a counter-stereotypical perception), but protest would enhance it. Connecting to the primacy of warmth effect (Wojciszke & Abele, 2008), we predicted that advantaged groups’ positive attitudes, admiration and help versus harm- and restriction tendencies are contingent on perceptions of conveyed social worth. Finally, we investigated the idea that gratitude expressions might be enforced in the service of the hierarchy-enhancing ideology of paternalism. Thus, we tested whether advantaged group members holding paternalistic beliefs would demand gratitude in response to disadvantaged groups’ protest and examined moral ingroup image concerns as a mediator between paternalistic beliefs and gratitude demands.



**MANUSCRIPT #1**

**The Harmful Side of Thanks:**

**Thankful Responses to High Power Group Help  
Undermine Low Power Groups' Protest**

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### Abstract

Giving thanks has multiple psychological benefits. However, within intergroup contexts, thankful responses from low power to high power group members could solidify the power hierarchy. The other-oriented nature of grateful expressions could mask power differences and discourage low power group members from advocating for their ingroup-interests. In five studies ( $N = 825$ ), we examine the novel idea of a potentially harmful side of ‘thanks’, using correlational and experimental designs and a follow-up. Across different contexts, expressing thanks to a high power group member who transgressed and then helped undermined low power group members’ protest intentions and actual protest. Thus, the expression of thanks can pacify members of low power groups. We offer insights into the underlying process by showing that forgiveness of the high power benefactor and system-justification mediate this effect. Our findings provide evidence for a problematic side of gratitude within intergroup relations. We discuss social implications.

*Keywords:* expressions of thanks, protest, intergroup helping, system justification, forgiveness

How can you thank a man for giving you what's already yours? How then can you thank him for giving you only part of what's already yours?

– Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet", 1964

Not a single day goes by without us expressing thanks. Saying “thank you” seems indisputably positive, universal and multifunctional. Amongst others, it can constitute an expression of appreciation of someone else’s investment in our well-being, an act of courtesy, or simply reciprocation (Carr, 2015; Watkins, 2014). Psychological research has largely documented the intra- and interpersonal benefits of giving thanks. In a nutshell – it makes us feel better and brings us closer together (Watkins, 2014; Wood, Froh, & Geraghty, 2010). However, lately, there has been rising doubt in the psychological and philosophical literature that expressions of thanks, or gratitude, are always beneficial (Carr, 2015; Eibach, Wilmot, & Libby, 2015; Wood et al., 2016). Expressions of thanks in abusive relationships (Wood et al., 2016) or for benefits provided by otherwise exploitative institutions (Eibach et al., 2015; for example, welfare capitalism) are noted illustrations of how giving thanks might be misplaced. It has been argued that in contexts of unequal power, the reciprocal and harmonious nature of giving thanks could backfire for those holding lesser power in that it could unintentionally perpetuate their dependency on a controlling benefactor. In spite of these considerations, research has largely neglected the study of possible negative effects of expressing thanks.

To our knowledge, the present research is the first to empirically examine the harmful consequences of expressing thanks within an intergroup context marked by unequal power relations. We approach this investigation by combining gratitude literature with the literature on the problematic effects of intergroup contact and helping for the disadvantaged. Our analysis centers on the question of whether expressions of gratitude by low power group members for favors given to them by the high power group can demobilize low power groups to challenge the status quo. Additionally, we investigate the underlying psychological processes. In focusing on everyday behavior, our empirical account of harmful effects of expressing thanks in the intergroup context helps us to understand how and why disadvantaged groups often tolerate their unjust social standing (e.g., Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004).

### **The Normativity of Thanks**

Expressions of thanks can yield beneficial psychological outcomes both in the giver and recipient of thanks (for an overview, see Watkins, 2014). Giving thanks can increase happiness and decrease depressive symptoms (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005),

strengthen social bonds (Algoe, Fredrickson, & Gable, 2013) and motivate recipients of thanks to show prosocial behavior (Grant & Gino, 2010).

Within that research, giving thanks is largely considered a behavioral outcome of gratitude, which is a positive and other-oriented moral emotion (cf. Watkins, 2014). However, people do not have to experience gratitude when saying “thank you” (Visser, 2009). This becomes apparent when observing the difficulty young children have expressing thanks, despite persistent prompting from their parents (Greif & Gleason, 1980). Thanks-saying not only transmits authentic gratitude but is also socially expected (Mills, 2005). For one, expressions of thanks are prescribed to enable social reciprocation. According to politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987), expressing thanks signals acceptance of a gift or a favor. This limits the beneficiary’s freedom of action because it implies that they have taken on debt and will have to reciprocate. Therefore, giving thanks can cause indebtedness (Watkins, Scheer, Ovnicek, & Kolts, 2006) which can, in turn, be dissolved through the beneficiary paying off their debt with another benefit.

Second, failure to express thanks is socially undesirable. While displays of thankfulness when receiving benefits is encouraged, displays of dissatisfaction, no matter how unattractive the benefit is, signifies rudeness and moral defect (Carr, 2015; Eibach et al., 2015). This might explain why people are more likely to express thanks when there is an audience (Baumeister & Ilko, 1995).

In contexts of inequality, gratitude norms can be especially restrictive. A German federal minister labeled refugees who left shelters because of unbearable conditions as “ungrateful” and demanded “a culture of adaptation” (“De Maizièrè”, 2015). In the United States, with the Civil Rights achievements of the 1960s, many Whites viewed racism as eroded and Black activists who continued fighting for racial equality were stereotyped as “ungrateful” (Davis, 2016, p. 220). Gratitude norms can accordingly be applied to justify restrictions on disadvantaged groups’ autonomy. Empirical research underlines that failure to express thanks to a high power benefactor is a punishable offense: insecure high power holders denigrated low power holders more when they were not thanked than when they received thanks (Cho & Fast, 2012). Therefore, members of low power groups could be motivated to express thanks to even unfair high power benefactors to escape penalties. Situational demands to express gratitude are prevalent on a daily basis through gratitude norms which of course also affect disadvantaged group members. But above that, disadvantaged group members face demands that target them in particular. Such as when

women and LGBTI are encouraged to be grateful for their rights because they could “have it worse” (Klein, 2018; Valenti, 2014).

In the context of social inequality, communicating gratitude could negatively affect members of disadvantaged groups: Findings on the other-oriented nature of gratitude show that being grateful encourages yielding to the benefactor (Watkins et al., 2006), fosters cooperation and increases forgiveness (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002). Joined with the imposition to reciprocate a benefit, expressing thanks could lead low power group members to put their resentments aside and demonstrate their appreciation through engaging in behavior that may be contrary to their group’s interests.

In line with our reasoning, Eibach and colleagues (2015) argue that gratitude norms motivate system justification - the rationalization of unfair sociopolitical arrangements (Jost et al., 2004). In an extensive literature review, the authors propose (but do not empirically test) that interpersonal gratitude norms overgeneralize to a system-level and oblige citizens to display gratitude for benefits provided by sociopolitical institutions through statements that approve of the system, and by refraining from voicing dissent about its injustices.

We extend this reasoning to the intergroup level and test these ideas with empirical data. We predict that when members of low power groups express thanks for help from high power groups, they will self-censor their criticism. Because system justification comes at the expense of status improvement for the low power group, which could potentially be achieved through protest, the status quo remains unchallenged, and thus, solidified. The empirical test of this pacifying effect of expressing thanks is the core objective of our research. Next, we illustrate how two intergroup theories lead to our reasoning.

### **The Pacifying Effect of Thanks**

Research shows that social hierarchies have not only been stabilized through intergroup conflict and hostile practices by groups in power, but through collaborative intergroup relations as well (Dixon, Levine, Reicher, & Durrheim, 2012; Jackman, 1994; Jost et al., 2004; Halabi & Nadler, 2010; Wright & Lubensky, 2009). Theories of intergroup contact and intergroup helping have captured how intergroup hierarchies can be upheld under an appearance of benevolence and fairness.

### **Intergroup Contact**

Mounting evidence points to the status-maintaining side effects of specific forms of positive intergroup contact for disadvantaged groups (cf. Dixon, Tropp, Durrheim, &

Tredoux, 2010; Dixon et al., 2012; Wright & Lubensky, 2009). It has been found that positive contact with the respective advantaged group can be accompanied with members of disadvantaged groups' lower support for governmental measures aimed toward social change (Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2007; Sengupta & Sibley, 2013), lower efforts to engage in collective action on behalf of one's group (Becker, Wright, Lubensky, & Zhou, 2013; Wright & Lubensky, 2009) and decreased awareness for inequality and discrimination (Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2009; Sengupta & Sibley, 2013). In that they create an illusion of harmony (Saguy et al., 2009), positive encounters with advantaged group members, which leave power relations unaddressed (Becker et al., 2013), can undermine disadvantaged groups' efforts toward social change. We suggest that the pacifying effect of thanks might be one of the mechanisms explaining these findings. Within positive intergroup encounters, disadvantaged group members might feel grateful because the advantaged group members behave kindly, and thus feel motivated to express their gratitude. Integrating the literature on intergroup contact with the literature on the benefits of expressing gratitude, we can expect that thankful responses for benefits from high power group members might create a harmonious atmosphere and divert members of low power groups from self-serving protest to other-oriented, cooperative reciprocation.

### **Intergroup Helping**

Exchanges of help between groups can also be generally viewed as positive. Yet, besides its caring and redistributive nature, helping can create a power disparity (Halabi & Nadler, 2010): While helping is associated with independence and competence, receipt of help signals dependence and inferiority. Helping can therefore sometimes serve more the helper's needs, at the expense of the one helped (van Leeuwen & Täuber, 2010). Helping relations can hence be viewed as unequal relations, which is especially insidious when they occur between groups of socially unequal status. With more resources at hand, advantaged groups can provide help to disadvantaged groups as a means to maintain dominance and foster cooperation while upholding an image of generosity (Halabi & Nadler, 2010). As an illustration, it has been found that when status relations were identity threatening for members of a high power group, they increasingly provided help to members of a low power group to protect their group's superiority (Nadler, Harpaz-Gorodeisky, & Ben-David, 2009). At the same time, recipients can be punished when they reject help (Rosen, Mickler, & Collins, 1987) and this still holds when the help is patronizing (Becker, Glick, Ilic, & Bohner, 2011; Wang, Silverman, Gwinn, & Dovidio, 2015). It is therefore not unlikely that members of

disadvantaged groups express thanks for even patronizing help to escape negative consequences.

It follows that when low power groups thank for high power groups for help, they might signal acceptance and, figuratively, agree to dependency (Nadler et al., 2009). This could result in reciprocal behavior that feeds the interests of the high power group, for example, in the form of self-censorship of protest (Eibach et al., 2015).

### **From Thanks to Silence: Mediators**

Which psychological processes may underlie the relation between expressions of thanks and the curbing of protest? We propose that expressions of thanks function as acts of forgiveness of the transgressions that elicit protest. By transgressions, we mean single discriminatory actions by high power group members or social inequality in a broad sense, as a set of chronic, structural transgressions. Benefits provided by a high power group member could represent compensation and expressing thanks could imply its acceptance and communicate forgiveness of the former transgression.

Previous research suggests that forgiveness is a crucial step for the restoration of justice in victims of interpersonal or intergroup transgressions. Forgiveness ameliorates the symbolic threats caused by transgressions, such as the fact that the transgressor illegitimately harmed and disempowered the victim. Accepting compensation alone does not resolve concerns around status and power (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010). Forgiveness, however, helps to restore power because the victim can determine their own and the transgressor's moral image (Shnabel & Nadler, 2015). Moreover, forgiveness indicates morality, and by forgiving, victims can (temporarily) elevate their status (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010, 2015). Communicating forgiveness through expressions of thanks might induce the perception among low power group members that power differences are straightened and justice has been restored. If there is justice, there should be no need to protest. Consequently, we predict that forgiveness mediates the inhibiting effect of thanking on protest. This assumption is informed by research which found that gratitude and forgiveness were positively associated (McCullough et al., 2002) and that forgiving caused a sense of power and reduced perceptions of injustice in victims and members of low power groups, increasing their willingness to reconcile (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2010, 2015).

Additionally, we propose that this perception of justice reflects in system-justification because it creates the impression among low power group members that "everyone benefits" from the interaction, and therefore, the system seems fair (Jost & Kay, 2005). If the system

seems fair, protest will be less likely. In support of our reasoning, previous research found that balancing of group disadvantage with ostensibly positive group stereotypes or benefits has a palliative effect on members of disadvantaged groups' protest (Becker & Wright 2011; Jost & Kay, 2005). Because the sense of justice is contingent on forgiveness, as illustrated above, we propose system justification as a subsequent mediator to forgiveness.

### **The Present Research**

Our research program delivers the first empirical test of the harmful effects of expressions of thanks in an intergroup context that is characterized by power relations. We integrate the literature on interpersonal benefits of expressing thanks with problematic effects of positive intergroup contact and help for low power groups while following recent theorizing on the system-justifying function of gratitude norms (Eibach et al., 2015). We outlined that members of disadvantaged groups are encouraged to express thanks for benefits from members of advantaged groups through restrictive gratitude norms and intra- and interpersonal benefits of expressing thanks. While helping can perpetuate the high power groups' dominance, acceptance of help through the expression of thanks can affirm the low power groups' subordination. The seeming benevolence of helping and the harmonizing, reciprocal nature of thankful responses should lower perceptions of inequality. Forgiveness and justification of the status relations should move members of low power groups away from voicing dissatisfaction.

In five studies, we tested the hypothesis that expressing thanks to a member of a high power group for their help undermines low power group members' protest against them (*H1*, Studies 1-4). We expected that the negative effect of the expression of thanks on protest intentions is mediated by forgiveness (*H2*, Studies 2a, 2b, 3) and system-justification (*H3*, Study 3).<sup>1</sup>

### **Study 1**

First, we conducted a conservative test of our main hypothesis. We designed Study 1 to test whether expressions of thanks to a high power group member would inhibit low power group members' protest in a minimal group – type manner before extending our findings to more naturalistic settings. In a laboratory experiment, we induced an intergroup context and assigned participants to a low power group position (employee) in a simulated organizational scenario.

## Method

**Participants.** Participants were recruited on campuses of two German universities. The final sample consisted of 95 participants (63 women, 32 men;  $M_{age} = 23.07$ ,  $SD_{age} = 2.95$ , 98.9% German).<sup>2</sup>

Because this was a lengthy lab study and we tested a novel effect, we aimed to recruit at least 50 participants per cell. Using G\*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007), we determined with a sensitivity analysis that, to reach 80% power, a sample of  $N = 95$  would require an effect of  $g_{Hedges} = 0.58$ .

**Design and Procedure.** Detailed information on the method and analyses can be found in the supplemental online material (SOM).

Participants were supposedly working with another employee and a manager (high power group member) through the computer. All members of the team had to individually complete problem-solving tasks and the difficulties of the tasks were assigned by the manager. For every solved task, participants would collect tickets for a lottery where they could win 5€. The manager behaved unfairly by assigning all easy tasks to himself, while the employees failed to complete the difficult tasks. Then, the manager contacted the participant and offered help, saying that he will give them more easy tasks in the next round.

Participants were then randomly assigned to either the experimental condition ( $n = 53$ ), in which they could choose between three rated expressions of thanks (“Thank you”, “Thank you very much”, “Great, thank you very much”) or the control condition ( $n = 42$ ) where they could choose between neutral responses (“I have received the message”, “I have read the message”, “I have received the information”). We next measured with nine items how willing participants will be to protest against the manager on behalf of the employees (e.g., “demanding that the manager hands over lottery tickets to the employees.”).

Additionally, we measured whether participants will directly confront the manager in a message.

## Results and Discussion

Results showed that the induction of an intergroup context and relative power, as well as the manipulation were effective. In line with expectations, protest intentions were lower for participants who expressed thanks ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 1.24$ ) than for participants who did not express thanks ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ),  $t(92.99) = 2.03$ ,  $p = .045$ , 95% CI [0.01, 0.91],  $g_{Hedges} = 0.42$ , 95% CI [0.01, 0.83]. Moreover, expressions of thanks indirectly affected protest behavior through protest intentions ( $B = -0.38$ ,  $SE = 0.25$ , 95% CI [-1.06, -0.04]).

Study 1 provides the first evidence that expressing thanks to a high power group member for their help inhibits low power group members' intentions to protest on behalf of their group. This study tested our hypotheses strictly because participants in the experimental condition *had* to express thanks, which might have caused reactance. However, we chose this manipulation to circumvent self-selection effects. We expected that the sedating effect will be even stronger when participants express thanks voluntarily, as in Study 2.

## Study 2

Study 2 is divided into Study 2a and its conceptual replication with increased power, Study 2b. We tested whether voluntary expressions of thanks to a member of a high power group would be negatively associated with members of low power groups' protest intentions and extended our investigation to forgiveness as a mediator.

In an online vignette study, students (low power group members) imagined interacting with a professor (high power group member) who transgressed and then helped. We then assessed whether participants expressed thanks, forgave the professor and how much they were willing to protest.

### Study 2a

#### Method.

**Participants.** Participants were recruited through student mailing lists and postings on bulletin boards of two German universities, in exchange for taking part in a voucher raffle. The final sample consisted of 125 students (81 women, 41 men, one other, two not indicated;  $M_{age} = 22.82$ ,  $SD_{age} = 2.58$ , 93.6% German).<sup>2</sup>

An a priori power analysis (power  $\geq 80\%$ ,  $\alpha = .05$ , two-tailed) using a medium-sized effect size, showed that we needed 128 participants.

**Procedure.** The study ostensibly assessed how students cope with feedback, which they would receive for presentations in seminars. Participants read a vignette about a student's experience and imagined being a part of the scenario. In this scenario, they had intensively prepared for a very important group presentation with two other students. In a meeting, their professor advised the group on how to make their presentation even better. Although the students followed his recommendation, the professor graded them much lower than expected, apparently because of the changes they had made. When the group reminded the professor that these exact changes were his idea, he said that he strongly doubted that and could not remember giving that advice. However, he gave them a slightly higher grade because he knew

of its impact on their Bachelor's degrees. This formed our operationalization of help. Participants could then choose the one out of two answers which they would most likely give to the professor in that situation (*expression of thanks*, see below).

Moving on in the scenario, participants read that outside, one student from their group said that the professor acted unfairly and suggested not letting his behavior pass without comment. The other student said that the professor's behavior was appropriate and that they do not want to take any action against him. Both students asked for the participant's opinion. At this point, we administered our *protest intentions* measure. Next, participants were asked to explain their stated behavioral intentions, supposedly based on statements provided by previous participants. The statements contained the *forgiveness* measure embedded in distractor items. Specifically, forgiveness referred to excusing the professor's failure to fully compensate the students for the fact that it was his advice that had put them at a disadvantage.

Participants then responded to a power perception check and demographic questions. They were debriefed and compensated.

### **Measures.**

*Expression of thanks.* Participants could pick one out of two answers to the professor, aligned side by side in a randomized order, which either contained an expression of thanks (in italics) or not: "You respond: 'Yes, this grade is very important for the Bachelor's degree. *So thank you very much for your favor!*', and say goodbye: 'Bye, see you next week.'"

*Forgiveness.* Participants indicated forgiveness on two items ("I forgive the professor, no matter whether his behavior was right or wrong" and "I excuse the professor's behavior",  $r = .68, p < .001$ ; 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*).

*Protest intentions.* Protest intentions were assessed with eight items adapted from Study 1 (1 = *would definitely not participate in*, 7 = *would definitely participate in*). Actions were, for example, "calling out the professor together with the presentation group" or "jointly complaining about the professor to the student council" ( $\alpha = .80$ ; for the complete scale see SOM). We adapted the power perception check from Study 1.

### **Results.**

*Power perception check.* Participants attributed more power to the professor ( $M = 4.50, SD = 0.57$ ) than to themselves ( $M = 1.76, SD = 0.59, t(120) = 34.27, p < .001$ ).

*Expression of thanks and protest intentions.* Forty-two (33.6%) participants expressed thanks, while 83 participants did not express thanks. An independent samples *t*-test revealed a significant effect of thanking on protest intentions ( $t(123) = 2.04, p = .043, 95\% CI$

[0.01, 0.86],  $g_{Hedges} = 0.39$ , 95%CI [0.01, 0.76]). In line with expectations, protest intentions were lower for participants who expressed thanks ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ) than for participants who did not express thanks ( $M = 4.22$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ).

**Mediation.** To examine the indirect effect of the expression of thanks on protest intentions through forgiveness, we conducted a mediation analysis.<sup>3</sup> As expected, expressing thanks positively predicted forgiveness ( $b = 0.85$ ,  $SE = 0.23$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.39, 1.30]) which in turn negatively predicted protest intentions, approaching significance ( $b = -0.15$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $p = .075$ , 95% CI [-0.32, 0.02]). The mediation was confirmed by a significant indirect effect ( $B = -0.13$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ , 95% CI [-0.33, -0.01]). The direct effect was not significant ( $b = -0.31$ ,  $SE = 0.22$ ,  $p = .168$ , 95% CI [-0.75, 0.13]).

## Study 2b

### Method.

**Participants.** Participants were recruited on social media platforms and at three German universities, in exchange for course credit or participation in a voucher raffle. The final sample consisted of 264 students (187 women, 74 men, three participants did not indicate their gender; 95.5% German,  $M_{age} = 22.86$ ,  $SD_{age} = 3.84$ ).<sup>2</sup>

An a priori power analysis (power  $\geq 80\%$ ,  $\alpha = .05$ , two-tailed) using the effect size found in Study 2a ( $g_{Hedges} = 0.39$ ), showed that we needed a sample of 210 participants.

**Procedure.** The procedure was identical to Study 2a except that, now, we measured forgiveness before protest intentions.

**Measures.** Measures were identical to Study 2a, except for an additional item in *forgiveness* ("I forgive the professor",  $\alpha = .85$ ). Reliability for *protest intentions* was  $\alpha = .81$ .

### Results.

**Power perception check.** Participants attributed more power to the professor ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ) than to themselves ( $M = 1.89$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ,  $t(259) = 34.72$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Four participants had missing values.

**Expression of thanks and protest intentions.** Sixty-four (24.2 %) participants expressed thanks, while 200 participants did not express thanks. An independent samples *t*-test revealed a significant effect of the expression of thanks on protest intentions ( $t(262) = 2.40$ ,  $p = .017$ , 95% CI [0.07, 0.75],  $g_{Hedges} = 0.41$ , 95%CI [0.13, 0.69]). Again, protest intentions were lower for participants who expressed thanks ( $M = 3.62$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ) than for participants who did not express thanks ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ).

**Mediation.** As expected, expressing thanks positively predicted forgiveness ( $b = 1.04$ ,  $SE = .18$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.68, 1.40]) which in turn negatively predicted protest intentions ( $b = -0.28$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-0.39, -0.17]). The mediation was confirmed by a significant indirect effect ( $B = -0.29$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ , 95% CI [-0.46, -0.16]). The direct effect was non-significant ( $b = -0.12$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ ,  $p = .225$ , 95% CI [-0.46, 0.22]).

## Study 2 Discussion

We confirmed our hypotheses in two different samples: expressing thanks to a high power helper was associated with lower willingness to protest against unjust treatment among low power group members. In line with our assumptions, forgiveness mediated this relation: thanking increased forgiveness, which in turn reduced protest intentions. It could be argued that this evidence is correlational and that the effect is driven by third variables, for instance, agreeableness.<sup>4</sup> To address potential self-selection bias regarding the effect of thanking on forgiveness, we conducted another experiment. Finally, we extended our investigation to a socially disadvantaged group.

## Study 3

In Study 3, we tested our hypotheses in an online experiment with social groups of relative power: All participants were women (as members of a socially disadvantaged group) and imagined an interaction with a male colleague (as member of a socially privileged group), who behaved in a sexist way. We manipulated whether participants thanked him for subsequent help and measured how that affected forgiveness and protest intentions. Additionally, we tested system-justification as a subsequent mediator to forgiveness.

## Method

**Participants.** The final sample consisted of 248 female MTurk workers who reside in the United States (98.4% U.S. Americans,  $M_{age} = 36.33$ ,  $SD_{age} = 11.14$ ).<sup>2</sup>

In determining sample size a priori (power  $\geq 80\%$ ,  $\alpha = .05$ , two-tailed), we used the effect size found in Study 2b ( $g_{Hedges} = 0.41$ ). The necessary sample size was 190.

**Procedure.** The study ostensibly examined interactions in the workplace. Participants read about an interaction that someone supposedly experienced at work and were asked to imagine being a part of the scenario. In this scenario, they and a male colleague had completed a very important project into which they had put equal amounts of hard work. Because her contract expires soon, it is very important for the female protagonist (i.e. the

participant) to impress her boss when she and her colleague present the results. The next morning, the participant learns that her colleague already talked to the boss because he thinks that “these things are often more effectively communicated between guys, fewer misunderstandings and such”. This sexist remark represented the transgression and was followed by help: “...but I made sure to put in a good word for you to help with your contract renewal. I’ve got to run. I’ll be around later.” For the *experimental manipulation*, participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental condition, in which they imagined expressing thanks: “You say: ‘*Thank you so much for putting in a good word for me! Bye.*’”, or not: “You say: ‘*Bye.*’”. To approximate behavior and strengthen the manipulation, participants were asked to copy the response word for word into a text box. Participants then indicated to what extent they experienced certain thoughts and emotions. The statements, which were supposedly provided by previous participants, contained the *forgiveness* and *gender-work-specific system justification* measures embedded in distractor items.

Moving on in the scenario, participants read that they were considering what to do next by thinking about what their two female best friends, who have similar jobs, would do. One friend was portrayed as approving and the other as disapproving of the colleague’s behavior. At this point, we administered the *protest intentions* measure, which again supposedly consisted of randomly selected statements expressed by previous participants. To increase credibility, participants could add statements.

Participants responded to demographic questions, a manipulation check and a measure aimed to examine whether participants perceived the colleague’s transgression as an intergroup transgression. Finally, participants were fully debriefed and compensated.

### **Measures.**

For the complete scales, see SOM.

***Forgiveness.*** Forgiveness was assessed with three items, e.g., “I forgive my colleague”, ( $\alpha = .89$ , 7-point scales, 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*).

***Gender-work-specific system justification (GWSJ).*** We adjusted the *gender-specific system justification* measure from Jost and Kay (2005) to a work context. Five items measured gender-work-specific system justification, e.g., “In general, work relations between men and women are fair.” ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

***Protest intentions.*** Protest intentions were assessed with eleven items adapted from the previous studies (7-point scales, 1 = *I would definitely not engage in*, 7 = *I would definitely engage in*). Actions were, for example, “calling out my colleague” or “complaining about my colleague to the women’s representative” ( $\alpha = .83$ ).

**Manipulation check.** As a manipulation check, we administered the item “In the described interaction, did you thank your colleague for his help?” to which participants could respond “yes” or “no”.

**Intergroup check.** Participants indicated how strongly ( $1 = not\ at\ all$  to  $7 = very\ much$ ) they perceived their colleague’s transgression within the interaction as “an interpersonal transgression” and “a gender-related transgression”.

## Results and Discussion

**Manipulation check.** A  $\chi^2$  test showed a significant association between the condition and the expression of thanks-indicator variable, confirming the different nature of the two conditions, ( $\chi^2(1) = 158.43, p < .001$ ).

**Intergroup check.** A paired samples  $t$ -test showed that the colleague’s transgression was significantly more perceived as a gender-related transgression ( $M = 5.51, SD = 1.84$ ) than an interpersonal transgression ( $M = 4.58, SD = 1.85, t(247) = -5.51, p < .001$ ).

Table 1 displays means, standard deviations and correlations among study variables.

**Expression of thanks and protest intentions.** The two experimental conditions were coded 0 = no thanks ( $n = 127$ ) and 1 = thanks ( $n = 121$ ). Against expectations, an independent samples  $t$ -test showed no significant effect of the expression of thanks on protest intentions,  $t(246) = 0.30, p = .763, 95\% CI [-0.25, 0.34]$ .

**Mediation.** To examine the indirect effect of the expression of thanks on protest intentions through forgiveness, we conducted a mediation analysis. As expected, expressing thanks positively predicted forgiveness ( $b = 0.43, SE = 0.18, p = .021, 95\% CI [0.06, 0.79]$ ) which in turn negatively predicted protest intentions ( $b = -0.34, SE = 0.05, p < .001, 95\% CI [-0.43, -0.25]$ ). The mediation was confirmed by a significant indirect effect ( $B = -0.15, SE = 0.07, 95\% CI [-0.31, -0.02]$ ). The direct effect was non-significant ( $b = 0.10, SE = 0.14, p = .467, 95\% CI [-0.17, 0.37]$ ).

Next, we included GWSJ as a subsequent mediator to forgiveness (see Figure 1). The indirect effect was significant ( $B = -0.01, SE = 0.01, 95\% CI [-0.05, -0.001]$ ; for detailed results, see SOM). Expressing thanks positively predicted forgiveness, which in turn positively predicted GWSJ, which negatively predicted protest intentions. The direct effect was not significant ( $b = 0.07, SE = 0.13, p = .615, 95\% CI [-0.19, 0.32]$ ).<sup>5</sup>

**Post hoc analysis.** An explorative analysis revealed that a large number of participants perceived the sexist transgression as very unfair (69.8% had a mean value of 1 on a 1-7 scale) and the sample mean was  $M = 1.57 (SD = 0.07)$ . Compared to the value distributions of

fairness in the other studies, which detected significant main effects, the scenario in Study 3 probably was too “unfair” to detect the main effect. We explored this assumption post hoc.

The interaction between the expression of thanks and fairness perception approached significance ( $b = -0.23$ ,  $SD = 0.12$ ,  $p = .057$ , 95% CI [-0.463, 0.007],  $f^2 = 0.01$ ). Using the Johnson-Neyman technique (see Hayes, 2013), we found that the undermining effect of thanks expression on protest intentions was in fact significant for fairness values above 4.46 (at 95.5<sup>th</sup> percentile:  $B = -.76$ ,  $SD = .39$ ,  $p = .049$ , 95% CI [-1.663, -0.004]), and not significant for values of 4.46 and below (at 4.5<sup>th</sup> percentile:  $B = 0.06$ ,  $SD = .16$ ,  $p = .714$ , 95% CI [-0.249, 0.363]).

In sum, we found support for the sequential mediational process: Expressing thanks motivated forgiveness, which enhanced system justification, which undermined protest intentions. Although we did not find the main effect of expressions of thanks on protest intentions, we illustrate that this was probably due to a floor effect in perceptions of fairness: the pacifying effect occurred only for those with values above the mid-point of the fairness-scale. We can speculate that a more normally-distributed perception of fairness might have revealed the main effect. Therefore, in our next study, we chose a transgression, which would not be perceived as completely unfair by the majority of the sample.

#### Study 4

So far, we have shown that expressions of thanks undermined protest intentions when the idea of expressing thanks was raised by us. Hence, it is unclear whether disadvantaged group members would express thanks spontaneously in the context of unequal treatment, and whether these natural expressions of thanks would inhibit protest intentions. Second, we wanted to test whether the pacifying effect would translate to real-life situations and behaviors and, finally, whether it is more than just a short-lasting effect. To address these limitations of ecological validity, we conducted Study 4.

To connect our findings to a richer context, we examined the pacifying effect for naturalistic expressions of thanks in an experiential context using real protest behavior. To show that the pacifying effect of thanks is not a fleeting phenomenon, we included a follow-up.<sup>6</sup>

#### Method

**Participants.** Participants were recruited on the campus of a German university in exchange for course credit. The final sample consisted of 93 female undergraduate psychology students ( $M_{age} = 22.12$ ,  $SD_{age} = 3.44$ , 96.8% German.)<sup>2</sup>

Because this was a lengthy lab study for which we explicitly needed undergraduate psychology students, we aimed to recruit at least 30 participants per cell. A sensitivity analysis showed that to reach 80% power, a sample of  $N = 93$  would require an effect of  $g_{Hedges} = 0.61$ .

**Procedure.** The study was advertised to undergraduate psychology students as supposedly assessing evaluations of the previous application procedure for research assistants at our department. While participating in the study, students could also apply for a research assistant position at our lab (and we have contacted those students who were interested in the position). Two independent evaluators ostensibly preselected candidates based on their task performance and mutual evaluations among the participants.

As in Study 3, we targeted women as the lower power group because we could recruit female students feasibly without having to reveal that gender is the targeted dimension. Participants came into the lab and were supposedly interacting with another female and male student, who were apparently in the adjoining rooms, and would communicate with the participant through the computer. During a task, in which participants suggested improvements to the procedure, the male participant made a sexist remark. He suggested a quota for male research assistants because psychology was female-dominated and men were beneficial to psychology, given that they won all the Nobel prizes. This indicated the high power group members' transgression.

In a later task, he wrote in a chat that he will be a gentleman and transfer his course credits to the "ladies" because he did not need them and was only participating to apply for the research assistant position. This formed the high power group members' help. Participants saw that the female student expressed thanks for the male student's help. This was meant to incorporate naturalistic demands to increase the salience of gratitude norms.

Then, we experimentally manipulated the opportunity to express thanks: Two-thirds of participants were given a line of communication in response to that chat where they could write to the group. The other third could not respond to the chat. We used a 2:1 ratio because we expected that some participants would not express thanks although they could. Thus, we had three conditions: 1) expressing thanks when there is an opportunity to express thanks, 2) not expressing thanks when there is an opportunity to express thanks, and 3) no opportunity to express thanks.

Afterward, participants could evaluate the other two participants regarding their suitability as research assistants. These statements included protest behavior measures. Next, participants could write a message to the other students, which assessed another protest

behavior. Supposedly, participants' statements were then directly sent to one of the independent evaluators. Because the male student was interested in applying for the research assistant position, whether participants protested or not mattered in real life and supposedly jeopardized the success of his application.

Participants were contacted again about one week later and responded to the same protest measures online ( $M_{days} = 6.81$ ,  $SD_{days} = 1.45$ ). To justify the follow-up, we told participants that their statements will be sent to the other evaluator to guarantee an independent preselection. After the follow-up, participants were fully debriefed and compensated (details of the procedure can be found in the SOM).

### Measures.

**Protest behaviors.** Participants indicated protest behavior on by responding “yes” (1 = protest) or “no” (0 = no protest) to whether they 1) argue against or 2) veto the male student getting the position, 3) protest or 4) recommend (reversed) that he is nominated, or 5) want to file a complaint against him. Participants could 6) write out the complaint and 7) directly confront the male student in a message. Two raters who were blind to the hypotheses coded the open format answers. Interrater reliability was  $\kappa_{complaintT1} = 1.00$ ,  $\kappa_{confrontationT1} = 0.97$ ,  $\kappa_{complaintT2} = 1.00$ ,  $\kappa_{confrontationT2} = 0.86$  (all  $ps < .001$ ). Discrepancies were resolved by a third independent rater. All seven indicators were averaged to a scale with higher scores indicating stronger engagement in protest behavior ( $\alpha_{T1} = .79$ ,  $\alpha_{T2} = .75$ ).

### Results and Discussion

Out of those participants who had the opportunity to express thanks, 35 (58%) expressed thanks spontaneously, while 26 did not. Thirty-two participants had no opportunity to express thanks. There was no significant difference in protest levels among those who could not thank and those who did not express thanks although they could at both measurement times. Therefore, we collapsed the two control conditions into one to increase test power ( $n = 58$ ),  $t_{T1}(56) = -0.16$ ,  $p = .871$ , 95% CI [-0.16, 0.14],  $t_{T2}(56) = 0.98$ ,  $p = .333$ , 95% CI [-0.07, 0.20].<sup>7</sup>

The expression of thanks was negatively associated with protest behaviors shown immediately at T1 ( $r = -.34$ ,  $p = .001$ ) and in the follow-up at T2 ( $r = -.28$ ,  $p = .007$ ). Protest at T1 was positively associated with protest at T2 ( $r = .75$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Expression of thanks and protest behavior.** Welch's  $t$ -test showed a significant effect of expression of thanks on protest behavior for both measurement points,  $t_{T1}(90.50) = 3.98$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.09, 0.27],  $g_{HedgesT1} = 0.74$ , 95% CI [0.31, 1.18],  $t_{T2}(88.89) = 3.18$ ,  $p$

= .002, 95% CI [0.05, 0.20],  $g_{HedgesT2} = 0.61$ , 95% CI [0.18, 1.04]. In line with expectations, participants who expressed thanks showed less protest behavior ( $M_{T1} = 0.09$ ,  $SD_{T1} = 0.16$ ;  $M_{T2} = 0.10$ ,  $SD_{T2} = 0.13$ ) than participants who did not express thanks ( $M_{T1} = 0.27$ ,  $SD_{T1} = 0.28$ ;  $M_{T2} = 0.23$ ,  $SD_{T2} = 0.25$ ).<sup>8</sup>

In sum, Study 4 extended the generalizability of our findings. We replicated the pacifying effect of thanks in a real-life context beyond hypothetical scenarios and behavioral intentions, targeting participants' real social identities as women and students. Importantly, we found the effect for naturally occurring expressions of thanks, while limiting self-selection effects, experimental demands, and reactance. Moreover, our results show that the pacifying effect persists one week later, suggesting that it affects real and on-going relationships as well as.

### General Discussion

The present work pioneers research on the harmful side of expressing thanks. Our investigation indicates that the positive act of thanking can be problematic within an intergroup context marked by social injustice. Across five studies, we provide direct evidence for a pacifying effect of “thanks” on members of low power groups. Specifically, we show that expressions of thanks for benefits provided by high power groups can directly, or indirectly, undermine their efforts to challenge the intergroup hierarchy. Results of Studies 2 and 3 further highlight that the underlying processes are forgiveness of the high power group member's transgression and system-justification.

Taken together, our research program provides a cumulative understanding of the pacifying effect of gratitude expressions. We tested and overall supported our hypotheses in multiple and heterogeneous ways: in the lab and online, with correlational data and different experimental manipulations, a within-study replication, for behavioral and longitudinal data, and across different contexts. This speaks to the generality of our findings. Finally, we showed that the pacifying effect of thanks affects real-life protest. With this, our findings question the universal appropriateness and benefits of expressing thanks and identify it as an everyday mechanism through which members of low power groups might be unintentionally endangering improvement of their status position.

### The Power of ‘Thanks’

Our findings emphasize the power of expressions of thanks and show how their restrictiveness manifests in the expressers' behavior. In support of prior theorizing (Lambert, Clark, Durtschi, Fincham, & Graham, 2010), the sole act of thanking not only communicated

acceptance of help to the helper but also the self. Studies 1 and 3 especially back this interpretation, because they yielded the pacifying effect even when the expression of thanks was not voluntary. This implies that the *act* of thanking seems to override levels of gratitude or willingness to thank.

Second, our findings place the expression of thanks as a determinant of reciprocal, cooperative behavior within intergroup interactions: thanking participants “paid it back” through mitigating a potential threat to the high power helper’s power position. We provide experimental evidence showing that this effect is not due to self-selection based on individual characteristics. Expressions of thanks are consequential, even in the absence of gratitude. This speaks to their normative nature as outlined in the introduction.

### **Pacification Through Forgiveness and System Justification**

We found that forgiveness of the high power benefactor explained the decrease in low power group members’ protest intentions observed after thanks were expressed. For example, women who thanked a sexist colleague for subsequent help, forgave him and were less willing to stand up for themselves (and other women), even though his help was patronizing.

Expressing thanks and thereby granting forgiveness could be a way for low power group members to cope with inequality or situations where protest is dangerous or costly, for example in abusive relationships (Wood et al., 2016). However, the experience of situational power via forgiveness might reinforce the translation of the thankful stance into a hierarchy-supporting belief system. For instance, some conservative Christian women who were abused by their husbands reported that they viewed forgiveness as the duty of a good Christian wife (Nash, Faulkner, & Abell, 2013). Such narratives should encourage attention to behaviors within power contexts which might promote the representation of the low power group through complementary stereotypes: A representation which crosses a low status in a power dimension with a high status in a moral dimension (here: “powerless but grateful/forgiving”) has been found to increase system-justification (Kay & Jost, 2003). Indeed, we found support for this compensatory effect: Expressing thanks signaled forgiveness, which triggered the perception among low power group members, that unequal status relations are fair. With this, we also provide the first empirical evidence that expressions of thanks can have a system-justifying function (Eibach et al. 2015). Thus, although the sense of justice and fairness should positively influence well-being (e.g., Reis, Sheldon, Gable, Roscoe, & Ryan, 2000), our research suggests that it could also mask the structural injustice between the helper and

the one helped. This diverts from protest, which bears the potential to improve sociopolitical conditions for the low power group in the long run.

Instead of providing benefits to secure forgiveness, high power transgressors could choose to apologize. Although apologies can also result in forgiveness, when they contain certain elements (Kirchhoff, Wagner, & Strack, 2012), they might be more beneficial for members of low power groups than help. By explicitly acknowledging their wrongdoing, transgressors commit to a consensus of values with the victims and this could increase chances that the transgressor will not transgress again. However, if transgressors do not want to give up transgressing at the expense of their power, they might choose to instead provide benefits to pacify victims, while appearing generous (Okimoto, Wenzel, Hedrick, 2013).

### **Theoretical and Practical Implications**

Within psychological literature, the problematic role of gratitude or its expression has not yet been studied. Thus, the most novel contribution of our work is that it shows that gratitude and expressions of thanks, which are concepts almost everyone perceives in positive terms, can have negative effects. With this, we provide direct evidence for the claim that the “positivity” of positive psychological phenomena cannot be established independent of context (McNulty & Fincham, 2012). Moreover, our research not only connects but also advances the literature on intergroup contact, intergroup helping and gratitude.

First, our work has implications for intergroup contact research, because it suggests a mechanism that could be central in explaining the demobilizing effect of positive intergroup contact on members of disadvantaged groups. Positive contact with the advantaged group could pacify disadvantaged group members because they might be feeling grateful for the advantaged groups’ kindness. This idea has neither been considered nor studied within intergroup contact research.

Our work further advances research on intergroup helping by empirically laying the bridge to protest research. We go beyond the effects of receiving help for low power groups and show that expressing thanks for it can inhibit protest on behalf of the ingroup and (unintentionally) signify agreement to dependency.

Third, we contribute to answering the call voiced by gratitude researchers for empirical evidence for harmful effects of gratitude (expression) which might help to 1) explain null effects or negative effects on well-being related outcomes of gratitude interventions, and 2) identify situations in which gratitude (expression) can be harmful (see Davis et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2016). Based on our findings, the major implication for

gratitude research and exercises in clinical contexts and mindfulness practice is to acknowledge the relative power difference between the target of thankfulness and the expresser of thanks. Encouraging members of socially disadvantaged groups to be grateful for what they have has many positive consequences for the individual (cf. Wood et al., 2010) but may derail from perceiving structural inequality and depress entitlement to just treatment. Researchers and practitioners could also attend to the restrictiveness of gratitude norms which members of low power groups face and the status-reinforcing character of certain benefits.

Finally, the present research has implications for social change. Within societies, which privilege certain social groups above others, it seems crucial that members of disadvantaged groups advocate for their group if they aim to achieve status improvement. Our findings suggest that expressing gratitude toward those who are already privileged instead silences those holding lesser power and encourages cooperation with the high power group. This is problematic given that members of disadvantaged groups are already discouraged from communicating anger about discrimination (e.g., Kaiser & Miller, 2001). Additionally, through the receipt of thanks, members of high power groups might feel affirmed and remain unchallenged in providing help, which boosts their dominance and maintains the social hierarchy.

How can members of disadvantaged groups escape the pacifying effect of expressions of thanks? Our research shows that advocacy for their ingroup was higher when thanks were not expressed. This does not imply that members of disadvantaged groups should stop thanking. Displaying gratitude is a kind and considerate act, which can improve well-being and enrich social interactions. Members of disadvantaged groups should not be denied these benefits. Withholding thanks might lessen non-harmful help from advantaged groups. Members of disadvantaged groups seem to face a dilemma: while thanking the advantaged group might inhibit advocacy for their ingroup, not thanking might deprive them of individual benefits and attach to them the stigma of ingratitude.

However, withstanding demands to express gratitude at least poses an opportunity for resistance for low power group members. Thus, when, for example, users of soup kitchens do not express thanks for food, this should not be judged as a sign of “attitude” (cf. Stein, 1989) but could be seen as an attempt to preserve and communicate a critical stance on the differences in privilege between volunteers and users. The present research suggests that it might be protective for members of low power groups at times to display “ingratitude” to avoid self-censorship, boycott unwanted assistance or resist dependency (cf. Eibach et al., 2015). This argumentation parallels with the reasoning that, although it might yet seem

antithetic to the tradition in health psychology, “psychological [...] discomfort can be psychologically and politically healthy” (p. 332, Allen & Leach, 2018).

Indeed, former immigrants from relatively poorer countries have started to publicly resist continuous demands to be grateful for their citizenship, criticizing that these demands prescribe submissiveness and otherness (e.g., Gorelik, 2012; Nayeri, 2017). Thanking advantaged groups for being granted rights, which they naturally enjoy, could encourage perceptions that equal rights for the disadvantaged are gifts and not a natural course of action (cf. Eibach et al., 2015).

### **Limitations and Future Research**

In our research, we implemented direct transgressions to stimulate protest in a study setting. Therefore, one limitation could be that the forgiveness process is specific to the context of advantaged group transgressions because, without a transgression, there is nothing to forgive. However, this should neither imply that this specific process is rare or that the pacifying effect of thanks is contingent on proximal transgressions. First, intergroup relations between groups of unequal power are often marked by transgressions, because high power groups chronically possess more resources, social rights and status than low power groups (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Transgressions are not always direct and tied to a specific transgressor, like in our studies. They can be subtle or structural, but they are part of hierarchical intergroup contexts (e.g., Autin & Butera, 2016; Fiske, Dupree, Nicolas, & Swencionis, 2016). Of course, not all advantaged group members transgress and many advocate for social equality and support disadvantaged group members’ protests. Nevertheless, we can infer from the intergroup helping literature that the mere existence of social inequality or unequal power relations should be sufficient to find pacifying effects of gratitude. Help or benefits can appear as compensation for disadvantage as long as there is relative power between the groups involved in the helping act. For example, one way how advantaged group members can sustain their high power position is by providing benefits or help to disadvantaged group members (for an overview, see van Leeuwen & Täuber, 2010). We would therefore also expect the pacifying effect of thanks in cases where help is not preceded by a direct transgression and this could be tested in the future.

Another interesting future research question is whether *receiving* thanks from high power groups would have a pacifying effect on members of low power groups. People in high-power positions evaluate generous acts from people with less power more cynically and ascribe instrumental intentions to them, reducing power-holders’ desire to reciprocate (Inesi,

Gruenfeld, & Galinsky, 2012). Thus, advantaged group members might prefer expressing gratitude when the generous acts are not threatening to the power hierarchy, such as service or unpaid labor. Thanking the disadvantaged for their services could constitute a paternalistic appeasement gesture to ensure the latter's loyalty (Jackman, 1994). Receipt of thanks increases feelings of being socially valuable, which in turn prompts prosocial behavior (Grant & Gino, 2010). Therefore, disadvantaged groups might feel pleased that they are needed and loyally avoid protest.

Finally, the type of gratitude expressions that we study should not be confused with a strategic type of gratitude expression, by which, through calculating deliberation, members of disadvantaged groups might attempt to advance their individual status. This can be classified as an individual mobility strategy, which does not address changing the unfair conditions of existing power relations (Ellemers, 2001). Moreover, our findings show that the pacifying effect persists over time and that those who did not protest immediately, also did not protest later.

## **Conclusion**

When social groups are deprived of rights and resources and put into a state of disadvantage and need, they might be led to believe that anything advantaged groups offer beyond hostility is a gift for which one should be thankful. Our research shows that members of low power groups voluntarily thank for benefits that reinforce their weakness. Moreover, the communication of thankfulness can unknowingly prevent them from voicing dissent with unjust treatment and undermine their involvement in status-advancing measures. This implies that, in practice, it is essential to stimulate a critical reflection of gratitude norms and a redefinition of appropriate situations when to express thanks. As previous research suggests, giving thanks entails many benefits and is the grease in the wheels of socioeconomic interactions. Therefore, we do not prescribe to stop thanking altogether but encourage low power groups to be more cautious of the power context and the type of help before expressing thanks. By focusing on everyday behavior, we hope to propose an accessible opportunity for members of disadvantaged groups to regain control. Our findings support what the opening quote by civil rights activist Malcolm X implies: refusing to say "thank you" can in itself be a form of protest.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> In Studies 1-3, we also assessed justice sensitivity, perceived fairness of the high power benefactor and gratitude, and additionally in Studies 2 and 3 connectedness, indebtedness and gender identification, and Study 4 legitimacy of the transgression for exploratory reasons.

<sup>2</sup> For details on participant exclusion, see SOM.

<sup>3</sup> All mediation analyses were conducted in PROCESS (Hayes, 2013), using 10,000 bootstrap samples for bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals. We report unstandardized regression coefficients.

<sup>4</sup> It could be argued that forgiveness is the starting point in the process. We tested the reverse causal relation post hoc using the correlational data in Study 2 and found that the indirect effect through thanks was not significant (see SOM), which supports the causal direction we propose.

<sup>5</sup> We additionally checked a parallel model post hoc and found no significant indirect effect. For the analysis, see SOM.

<sup>6</sup> We also assessed forgiveness and system justification but the sample size was too small to test the mediation model. When we tested it anyway, the mediation was not significant (see SOM for more information).

<sup>7</sup> The pattern of results did not change when we tested the effect with each one of the two control conditions (see SOM).

<sup>8</sup> The pattern of results did not change when we controlled for whether participants wanted to apply for the position or needed credit points.

Table 1

*Study 3: Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations (Pearson's  $r$ )*

| Variables                                       | No thanks   | Thanks      | 1    | 2      | 3      |
|---|-------------|-------------|------|--------|--------|
|   | $M (SD)$    |             |      |        |        |
| 1. Expression of thanks <sup>a</sup>            |             |             | –    |        |        |
| 2. Forgiveness                                  | 2.34 (1.38) | 2.77 (1.53) | .15* | –      |        |
| 3. Gender-work-specific<br>system justification | 3.79 (1.87) | 3.69 (1.61) | -.03 | .13*   | –      |
| 4. Protest intentions                           | 4.24 (1.11) | 4.20 (1.24) | -.02 | -.42** | -.37** |

<sup>a</sup> Coded 0 = no thanks and 1 = thanks\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

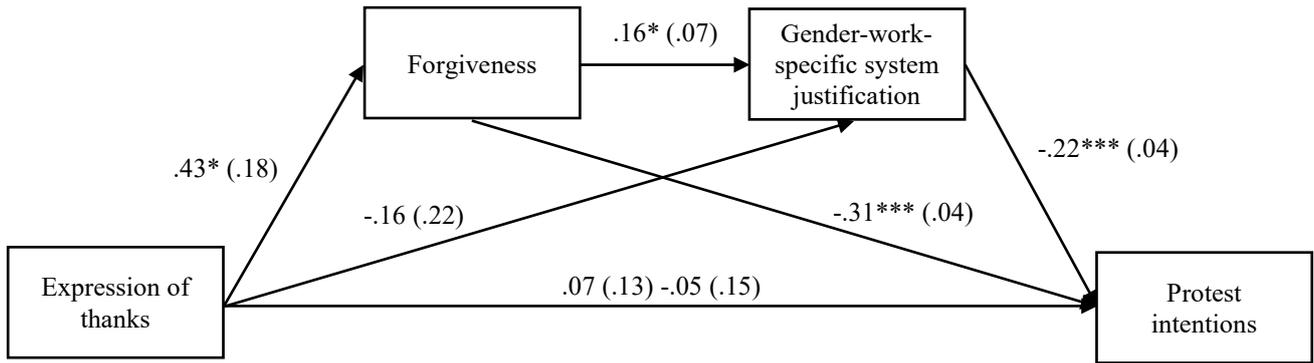


Figure 1. Serial mediation model tested in Study 3.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

**Supplemental Material**

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## Study 1

### Methods

**Participants.** Participants were recruited on campuses of two German universities. The final sample consisted of 95 participants (63 women, 32 men;  $M_{age} = 23.07$ ,  $SD_{age} = 2.95$ , 98.9% German).

Because this was a lengthy and complicated lab study and we tested a novel effect, we aimed to recruit at least 50 participants per cell. Using G\*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007), we determined with a sensitivity analysis that, to reach 80% power, a sample of  $N = 95$  would require an effect of  $g_{Hedges} = 0.58$ .

### Procedure.

Participants were told that they would be taking part in an investigation of "the influence of the spatial distance between team members on their performance", in a team of three. As part of the cover story, participants learned from the experimenter that their team had randomly been placed into one of three conditions. In their condition, team members were in different rooms of the same building with different experimenters and could communicate with each other through the computer. The other two fictional conditions comprised all members being in the same room and all members working from home. To prevent suspicion, participants were already told at the time of recruitment that they would be either asked to come to the laboratory or complete the study from home. The experimenter rehearsed their role based on a standardized script, which can be obtained in German from the first author.

Participants arrived at the laboratory individually. As part of the cover story, they learned from the experimenter that the other participants were in different rooms and that they could communicate with each other through the computer. In reality, the other team members were fictitious and all of their messages had been programmed in the survey software. Participants were told that they would randomly be assigned the role of either the manager or one of the two employees. The experimenter explained that all team members would individually work on two rounds of eight problem-solving tasks of high and low difficulty. The tasks were mathematical and verbal problem-solving tasks. Participants had 60 seconds to complete each task. To prevent potential feelings of frustration, the experimenter added that only very few participants had been able to solve the difficult tasks.

The task difficulties would be distributed by the manager. We designed tasks that were either easy to solve or unsolvable within the given time frame. For every correctly solved task, participants would collect tickets for a lottery between team members, where they could win 5€ in addition to the 5€ every member received as compensation for participation.

Therefore, the more tasks they solved correctly, the more tickets they received and the higher their chances became to beat the other two team members in the lottery. The lottery was implemented to increase participants' interest in a fair task difficulties distribution. Because tangible resources were at stake, participants were given a reason for potential protesting.

After participants gave their informed consent and completed a demographic questionnaire, the experimenter asked them to follow instructions on the computer screen where they would learn about their assigned role and went into the second room of the laboratory.

All participants were assigned to a low power role as “employee #1”. As an expression of high power, the manager could distribute task difficulties and give performance feedback to the employees (the power induction procedure was inspired by Anderson & Berdahl, 2002). After they learned about their role, participants were presented with the manager’s task difficulty distribution for the first round in which he assigned the tasks unfairly. Out of 12 easy and 12 difficult tasks, the manager assigned eight easy and zero difficult tasks to himself and two easy and six difficult tasks to each employee. Participants were next directed to the tasks. Upon completion of the last task, the program displayed a table, which informed them how many tasks everyone solved and their current chances to win the lottery. Independent of the participants’ performance, the table always displayed that each employee had solved two tasks correctly and that the manager had succeeded in all eight. Next, in disguise of performance feedback, participants received a message from the manager that contained *help*: “Hey, you seem to have trouble with the tasks, they were probably too difficult...Let me help you – I’ll give you more easy ones in the next round”.

The help offer was followed by the *experimental manipulation*. Participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental condition, in which they had to choose one out of three predetermined expressions of thanks or the control condition where they chose one out of three neutral responses. In consideration of our experimental manipulation, the experimenter told the participants that they could only address the manager through predetermined answers to prevent the employees from influencing his distribution of task difficulties. The neutral responses were “I have received the message”, “I have read the message” and “I have received the information”. Expressions of thanks were ascending in the strength of expressiveness of thanks: "Thank you", "Thank you very much", "Great, thank you very much". We employed the ascending order as an attempt to minimize reactance. We established in a pretest with a separate sample ( $N = 50$ ) that all three thankful responses were perceived as significantly more expressive of thanks than the three neutral responses (detailed

analyses can be obtained from the first author). Within both conditions, the respective three responses were presented side by side in a randomized order.

Before the second round, participants saw a (programmed) message saying that the experiment was aborted due to an internal error and were forwarded to the last page which instructed them to contact the experimenter. The experimenter was prepared to inform them that she had just received a text from the other two experimenters, reporting the same problem. She explained that the study was in its starting phase, that this error had happened before, and that participants would still keep their lottery tickets. However, because the study needed improvement, participants could fill out an evaluation questionnaire, in which they could state what they would do to change the study. This questionnaire assessed *protest intentions* against the manager, on behalf of the employees. To increase the realism of the scenario, the instruction stated that the proposed actions were based on criticism about managers and employees that previous participants had left in the comments window below.

Upon completion of the “evaluation questionnaire”, participants received a message from “employee #2” who complained that the manager had been unfair. They planned to confront him in their next message and encouraged the participant to do the same. Hereby we aimed to set a social norm, which should facilitate protest against the manager. Participants’ messages to the manager formed the *protest behavior* measure.

Next, participants filled out a paper-pencil questionnaire containing the manipulation and power and intergroup - induction checks. Finally, they were debriefed and reimbursed with 10€ for participation.

### **Measures.**

***Protest intentions.*** Protest intentions on behalf of the employees were measured with nine items ( $\alpha = .81$ ; 7-point scales, 1 = *would definitely not participate in*, 7 = *would definitely participate in*). Actions were:

1. ...demanding that the manager hands over lottery tickets to the employees.
2. ...not taking action against the manager.
3. ...calling out the manager together with the other employee.
4. ...leaving the manager alone.
5. ...telling the manager that his decisions were unfair.
6. ...demanding that the manager hands over lottery tickets to me and the other employee.
7. ...demanding that the manager is punished for his unjust distribution of tasks.

8. ... advocating for all people, who participate in the experiment in the future, to have equal power and influence over decisions.

9. ... demanding that the tasks are randomly assigned by the computer.

One item was excluded because of extreme skewness and kurtosis.

**Protest behavior.** Two research assistants who were blind to the study hypotheses coded the messages to the manager as “protest”, “no protest” or “ambivalent”. The “ambivalent” category was later on merged with the “no protest” category, because ambivalent messages often started with an expression of discontent, but ended with a justification of the manager's behavior. Our measure of protest can, therefore, be considered conservative. Interrater reliability was  $\kappa = .72$  and discrepancies were resolved by the first author.

**Manipulation, power and intergroup induction checks.** As a manipulation check, we administered the item “I thanked the manager for his feedback” to which participants could respond “yes” or “no”.

To establish that the relative power induction was effective, we asked participants to rate on 7-point scales (from 1 = *none at all* to 7 = *very much*) how much power they had over the manager and how much power the manager had over them.

To establish that the induction of an intergroup context was effective (i.e. the other employee is perceived as a member of the ingroup and the manager as a member of the outgroup), we asked participants to indicate how they experienced the interaction with the other employee by choosing whether they experienced it as an interaction between a) two members of the same group, b) two members of two different groups, or c) two individual students.

## Results and Discussion.

### Preliminary analyses.

**Expression of thanks.** Gabriel's pairwise comparisons test showed no significant mean differences in protest intentions between the expressions of thanks ( $ps > .662$ ). Therefore, we aggregated all expressions of thanks into one condition. However, the means for two neutral expressions significantly differed in protest intentions ( $p = .039$ ). Because these cells could neither be aggregated nor treated as separate conditions (due to small cell sizes, 12 and 17), we decided to exclude participants in the smaller cell (“I have read the message”). We excluded the smaller cell to keep as many participants in the sample as possible and also because the responses in the other two cells were more similar in content,

both being about having received the message. The remaining two neutral expressions were collapsed and the sample size was reduced to 95.

**Protest behavior.** Fifty-eight (59.2%) participants expressed protest against the manager (e.g., “Hello, too bad that your task assignment wasn’t very fair”) and 25 (30.9%) did not express protest (e.g., “Hello dear manager, I’m going home now. See you tomorrow!”). Responses from three participants could not be categorized and therefore the three participants were excluded. Twelve participants did not write to the manager. Because values were not missing completely at random (Little’s MCAR test:  $X^2(2) = 8.16, p = .017$ ), nonresponse was handled with full-information maximum likelihood in *Mplus*.

**Manipulation, power and intergroup induction checks.** Four participants had missing values. A  $X^2$  test showed a significant association between the condition and the manipulation check variable, confirming the different nature of the two conditions, ( $X^2(1) = 66.92, p < .001$ ).

A paired samples *t*-test showed that the manager was perceived as having significantly more power over the participant ( $M = 5.51, SD = 1.75$ ) than the participant over the manager ( $M = 1.62, SD = 1.05$ ),  $t(94) = 16.13, p < .001$ .

A significant  $X^2$  test showed that the majority of participants (69.47%) perceived the interaction with the employee as an interaction between a) two members of the same group compared to b) two members of two different groups (9.47%) and c) two individual students (21.05%),  $X^2(1) = 14.41, p < .001$  (b and c are collapsed).

A  $X^2$  test approached significance in showing that the majority of participants (60%) perceived the interaction with the manager as an interaction between b) two members of two different groups compared to a) two members of the same group (17.89%) and c) two individual students (22.11%),  $X^2(1) = 3.80, p = .051$  (a and c are collapsed).

**Expression of thanks and protest intentions.** The two experimental conditions were coded as 0 = no thanks ( $n = 42$ ) and 1 = thanks ( $n = 53$ ). Welch’s *t*-test showed a significant effect of expression of thanks on protest intentions,  $t(92.99) = 2.03, p = .045$ , 95% CI [0.01, 0.91],  $g_{Hedges} = .42$ , 95% CI [0.01, 0.83]. In line with expectations, willingness to protest was lower for participants who expressed thanks ( $M = 3.89, SD = 1.24$ ) than for participants who did not express thanks ( $M = 4.35, SD = 0.97$ ).

**Expression of thanks and protest behavior.** We conducted a mediation analysis in *Mplus 7.3* (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012, 10,000 bootstrap samples for bias corrected bootstrap confidence intervals) in order to test for an indirect effect of thanking on protest behavior mediated by protest intentions. There was no significant total effect of thanks on

protest behavior ( $b = -0.77$ ,  $SE = 0.64$ ,  $p = .233$ , 95% CI [-2.05, 0.42]). However, as expected, expressing thanks negatively predicted protest intentions ( $b = -0.46$ ,  $SE = 0.22$ ,  $p = .040$ , 95% CI [-0.90, -0.02]) which in turn positively predicted protest behavior ( $b = 0.83$ ,  $SE = 0.32$ ,  $p = .009$ , 95% CI [0.301, 1.52]). The analysis was confirmed by a significant indirect effect ( $b = -0.38$ ,  $SE = 0.25$ , 95% CI [-1.06, -0.04]). The direct effect of the expression of thanks on protest behavior was non-significant ( $b = -0.38$ ,  $SE = 0.60$ , 95% CI [-1.55, 0.74]).

The present results provide the first evidence that expressions of thanks to a member of a high power group for help inhibit protest intentions on behalf of their ingroup in members of a low power group. There was no main effect on protest behavior, maybe because some participants already expressed protest by indicating protest intentions. However, expressions of thanks indirectly affected behavior through protest intentions.

## Study 2

### Study 2a

#### Method.

**Participants.** Eight participants who indicated that they were non-students or already possessed a graduate degree were excluded from analyses. We expected that an undergraduate scenario would be less relevant to them and that some of them could be already teaching. We excluded another participant who gave the same response to many consecutive items. The data revealed similar outcomes of analyses when these participants were included.

#### Measures.

**Protest intentions.** Scale: “would definitely not participate in ...“ (1) to “would definitely participate in...” (7).

1. ...not taking action against the professor.
2. ...leaving the professor alone.
3. ...calling out the professor together with the presentation group.
4. ...jointly telling the professor that his grading was unfair.
5. ...jointly complaining about the professor to the student council.
6. ...jointly describing the incident to the dean.
7. ...jointly addressing the incident at the faculty board meeting.
8. ...jointly writing an anonymous letter to the head of the department complaining about the professor.

Four items were excluded because they had low communalities and to improve reliability.

## Study 2b

### Method.

**Participants.** Thirteen participants who indicated that they were non-students or already possessed a graduate degree were excluded from analyses. We expected that an undergraduate scenario would be less relevant to them and that some of them could be already teaching. We further excluded one participant who had 48% missing values on the main variables and another three who gave the same response to many consecutive items. Three participants who indicated previous participation in a similar study were also excluded. The data revealed similar outcomes of analyses when these participants were included.

### Measures.

**Forgiveness.** Scale: 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*.

1. I forgive the professor.
2. I forgive the professor, no matter whether his behavior was right or wrong.
3. I excuse the professor's behavior.

## Results Study 2

**Alternative causal direction of the mediation model.** In order to test the reverse causal direction of the mediation model with forgiveness as the independent variable, expression of thanks as mediator and protest intentions as the dependent variable, we conducted a mediation analysis in *Mplus 7.3* (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012, 10,000 bootstrap samples for bias corrected bootstrap confidence intervals). We collapsed the data from Studies 2a and 2b to have a sufficient sample size for using structural equation modeling ( $N = 389$ ). Forgiveness positively predicted expressing thanks ( $b = 0.40$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.28, 0.52]) but expressing thanks did not predict protest intentions ( $b = -0.07$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $p = .309$ , 95% CI [-0.22, 0.06]). The indirect effect was not significant ( $b = -0.03$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $p = .317$ , 95% CI [-0.09, 0.02]). The direct effect of the expression of thanks on protest behavior was significant ( $b = -0.27$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-0.43, -0.14]).

In order to also confirm the hypothesized direction of the indirect effect for the aggregated sample (IV: expression of thanks, mediator: forgiveness, DV: protest intentions), using structural equation modeling, we conducted a mediation analysis in *Mplus 7.3* (Muthén & Muthén, 1998-2012, 10,000 bootstrap samples for bias corrected bootstrap confidence intervals). Expressing thanks positively predicted forgiveness ( $b = 1.03$ ,  $SE = 0.16$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.73, 1.35]), which in turn negatively predicted protest intentions ( $b = -0.29$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ ,  $p = .008$ , 95% CI [-0.54, -0.11]). The analysis was confirmed by a significant indirect

effect ( $b = -0.30$ ,  $SE = 0.12$ ,  $p = .013$ , 95% CI [-0.61, -0.11]). The direct effect of the expression of thanks on protest behavior was non-significant ( $b = -0.11$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ ,  $p = .540$ , 95% CI [-.55, 0.15]).

### Study 3

#### Method

**Participants.** The initial sample consisted of 283 female MTurk workers who reside in the United States. We excluded thirteen participants, who failed to correctly copy the response that formed the experimental manipulation (see measures). Two participants responded carelessly and were also excluded. We embedded an attention test-item in the protest intentions items: “telling my colleague that I am disappointed with his behavior. Please ignore this question and choose number 4 as your response.” Twenty participants who failed the attention check were excluded, reducing the final sample to 248 participants.

#### Measures.

**Forgiveness.** Scale: 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*.

1. ...I forgive my colleague.
2. ... I forgive my colleague, no matter whether his behavior was right or wrong.
3. ... I excuse my colleague's behavior.

**Gender-work-specific system justification.** Scale: 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*.

1. ... The division of labor between men and women in the workplace generally operates as it should.
2. ... Gender roles in the workplace need to be radically restructured.
3. ... Work environments are set up so that men and women usually get what they deserve.
4. ... Sexism at work is getting worse every year.
5. ... In general, work relations between men and women are fair.

The three other items from the *gender-specific system justification* measure from Jost and Kay (2005) could not be rephrased for a work context.

**Protest intentions.** Scale: “*I would definitely not engage in ...*” (1) to “*I would definitely engage in...*” (7).

1. ...not taking action against my colleague.
2. ...leaving my colleague alone.
3. ...calling out my colleague.
4. ... telling my colleague that his behavior was unfair.
5. ... writing an email to my colleague explaining why his behavior was not okay.

6. ... complaining about my colleague to the women's representative.
7. ... describing the incident to the boss.
8. ... reporting the incident to Human Resources.
9. ... writing an anonymous letter to Human Resources complaining about my colleague.
10. ...not making an issue out of the incident.
11. ...criticizing my colleague in the next anonymous performance review.

## Results

**Serial mediation analysis.** We conducted a serial mediation analysis in PROCESS (Hayes, 2013, Model 6, 10000 bootstrap samples for bias corrected bootstrap 95% confidence intervals) to examine the indirect effect through forgiveness followed by GWSJ. Figure 1 displays the regression coefficients. The specific indirect effect through forgiveness and GWSJ reached significance ( $b = -.01$ ,  $SE = .01$ , 95% CI [-0.05, -0.001]). The specific indirect effect through forgiveness alone also reached significance ( $b = -.13$ ,  $SE = .07$ , 95% CI [-0.29, -0.02]), while the specific indirect effect through GWSJ did not ( $b = .04$ ,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI [-0.06, 0.14]). The contrast of the significant indirect effects (forgiveness minus forgiveness → GWSJ) was significant ( $b = -.12$ ,  $SE = .06$ , 95% CI [-0.27, -0.02]), with the specific indirect effect through forgiveness being the stronger effect. The direct effect was not significant ( $b = 0.07$ ,  $SE = .13$ ,  $p = .615$ , 95% CI [-0.19, 0.32]).

**Post hoc parallel mediation analysis.** We conducted a parallel mediation analysis in PROCESS (Hayes, 2013, Model 4, 10000 bootstrap samples for bias corrected bootstrap 95% confidence intervals) in order to explore whether forgiveness and GWSJ will mediate the effect simultaneously. The indirect effect was not significant ( $b = -.11$ ,  $SE = .09$ , 95% CI [-0.30, 0.05]). The direct effect was not significant ( $b = 0.07$ ,  $SE = .13$ , 95% CI [-0.19, 0.32]).

## Study 4

### Method

**Participants.** The initial sample consisted of 103 female undergraduate psychology students. We excluded four participants, who had dropped out in the follow-up and four who indicated on a check-item that they did not take participation in the study seriously or did not answer truthfully. We also excluded one who did not believe that the other two students existed (as can be inferred from their open format answers) and one participant who accidentally participated in the first part of the study twice. This reduced the final sample to 93 participants. Three participants failed the manipulation check and three participants were

undergraduate cognitive science students, but because the pattern of results did not change when including those participants, we kept them in the final sample.

**Procedure.** The study was advertised to undergraduate psychology students as supposedly assessing evaluations of our current application procedure for research assistants at our social psychology department. While participating in the study, students could additionally apply for a research assistant position at our lab that would open up in a year (we chose a distal time point to minimize competition). Students could really apply and we have contacted those students who indicated their interest in the position. As in Study 3, we targeted women as the lower power group because we could recruit female students feasibly without having to reveal that gender is the targeted dimension.

Participants came into the lab and were supposedly interacting with two other students through the computer to ensure anonymity. These two participants were apparently in the adjoining rooms with other experimenters, as indicated by signs on the doors. To increase credibility that the other participants existed, they were considered while scheduling lab appointments with the participants. Additionally, at the start of a session, the experimenter (who was blind to the hypotheses) would pretend to communicate with the other two experimenters to synchronize the start of the tasks. We pre-programmed the other students' responses.

The study also ostensibly tested a new procedure for the application process, where applicants were preselected by an independent evaluation team of two, by means of individual and group performance and mutual evaluations among the participants. Supposedly, the participants' test results and statements, and their evaluations of the other two participants were immediately submitted to one member of the evaluation team. To justify the follow-up, participants were told that, in about a week, they will receive a questionnaire by email requesting them to provide further details that will be sent to a second member of the evaluation team for independent pre-selection. We asked participants to take part in the study even if they were not interested in applying for the position because their opinion about the other participants was important for the preselection.

After participants gave their consent to participate and answered demographic questions, they received a female fantasy name as a pseudonym and learned the pseudonyms of the other two students. Fantasy names and gender symbols indicated the participants' gender. Participants saw that one student was a female psychology student called "Jileen" (female, therefore same low power group member) and the other a male cognitive sciences student called "Khyron" (male, therefore high power group member). We chose a cognitive

sciences student instead of a psychology student because trial runs showed that it did not seem credible that a male psychology student would say something this sexist (→ transgression), because male students are the gender minority in psychology and because it was likely that participants knew most of them.

First, participants read that one important goal of the study was to improve the selection process for research assistants in social psychology. For this, they read about the previous application procedure and were asked to make suggestions for improvements to the procedure. These would be considered in the ongoing procedure. Participants sent their suggestions and could see what the other students suggested. We implemented time intervals so that participants would get the impression that the others were really writing a text. In his suggestion, the male participant made a sexist remark. He suggested a quota for male research assistants because psychology was female-dominated and men were beneficial to psychology, given that they won all the Nobel prizes. This sexist remark indicated the high power group members' transgression. He also wrote that he will apply for the position as a research assistant.

This was followed by the job advertisement, which also informed about the kind of tasks they will engage in as research assistants (e.g., translation tasks). Fittingly, next, the group had to jointly translate an item from English to German. The other two participants were apparently randomly assigned to the roles of the translators and the participant had to evaluate their translation. While the other participants worked on the translation, the participant completed another filler task (where they had to come up with a solution to how they, as research assistants, would deal with a situation, in which a professor and a Ph.D. student had given them an urgent task at the same time).

After participants received and rated the other students' translation, they could see the chat between them showing the process of the translation. We instructed participants to read the chat carefully so that it is possible for them to evaluate the participants later. In the chat, the male student wrote that he will be a gentleman and transfer his course credits to the "ladies" because he did not need them and was only participating to apply for the position. He had checked with this experimenter who said that this was possible and shared out his credit points between the female participants. This formed the high power group help. Participants then read in the chat that the female student expressed thanks for the male student's help. This was meant to incorporate naturalistic demands to increase the salience of gratitude norms, which should motivate participants to express thanks.

Then, we experimentally manipulated the opportunity to express thanks: Two-thirds of participants were given a line of communication in response to that chat where they could briefly write to the group if they wished to. The other third could not respond to the chat. We used a 2:1 ratio because we expected that some participants will not express thanks. Thus, this created another control group condition, where participants did not express thanks although they could.

Next, participants were asked to indicate what they felt when thinking about the other two participants. This measured whether participants felt forgiveness. To measure system justification, participants responded to statements regarding university life. Instructions stated that this information would not be sent to the evaluators, and merely served to capture an opinion. Then we implemented the manipulation check.

Next, participants could state their assessment of the other participants regarding their suitability as research assistants. Participants' statements were supposedly immediately sent to the first member of the independent evaluation team. These statements included protest behavior measures among filler items. Because the male student was interested in applying for the research assistant position, whether participants protested or not mattered in real life and supposedly jeopardized the success of his application. After participants rated the current application procedure, they could directly write to the other two students, which formed another protest behavior measure. Afterward, participants indicated their interest in applying for the position as a research assistant and whether they took participation in the study seriously and answered everything truthfully. Then, their responses were sent to the first independent evaluator. We asked participants not to exchange information about the study with their fellow students to ensure fairness and anonymity of the application process, until a specific date.

Participants responded to the same protest measures online about one week later ( $M_{days} = 6.81$ ,  $SD_{days} = 1.45$ ). They learned, that the male, but not the female participant has applied for the research assistant position so that they only had to evaluate the male participant. Again, participants indicated whether they responded truthfully and their answers were supposedly sent to the second independent evaluator. After the follow-up, participants were fully debriefed and once again asked to indicate their consent. In addition to the credit points that corresponded with the duration of participation, they were compensated with those credit points, which they had "received" from the male student.

### Measures.

**Felt forgiveness.** Feelings of forgiveness were assessed with three items, e.g., “Forgiveness”, ( $\alpha = .81$ , 7-point scales, 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*).

**Gender-academia-specific system justification (GASJ).** We adjusted the *gender-specific system justification* measure from Study 3 to the university context. Four items measured gender-academia-specific system justification, e.g., “In general, gender relations at universities are fair.” ( $\alpha = .81$ ).

**Manipulation check.** Before assessing protest behaviors the first time, we asked participants whether they yet had a chance to write to the other students to which they could respond “yes” or “no”.

### Results

**Manipulation check.** A  $X^2$  test showed a significant association between the condition and the variable indicating the opportunity to express thanks, confirming the different nature of the two conditions, ( $X^2(1) = 80.14, p < .001$ ).

**Expression of thanks vs. no opportunity to express thanks.** Welch’s *t*-test showed a significant effect of expression of thanks on protest behavior for both measurement points,  $t_{T1}(44.56) = 2.86, p = .006, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.05, 0.30], g_{HedgesT1} = 0.76, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.27, 1.26], t_{T2}(42.14) = 2.82, p = .007, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.04, 0.26], g_{HedgesT2} = 0.66, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.17, 1.15]$ . In line with expectations, participants who expressed thanks showed less protest behavior ( $M_{T1} = 0.09, SD_{T1} = 0.16; M_{T2} = 0.10, SD_{T2} = 0.13$ ) than participants who did not express thanks ( $M_{T1} = 0.28, SD_{T1} = 0.32; M_{T2} = 0.26, SD_{T2} = 0.28$ ).

**Expression of thanks vs. no thanks when opportunity was given.** An independent samples *t*-test showed a significant effect of expression of thanks on protest behavior for both measurement points,  $t_{T1}(59) = 3.68, p = .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.09, 0.29], g_{HedgesT1} = 0.96, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.43, 1.50], t_{T2}(59) = 2.11, p = .039, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.005, 0.17], g_{HedgesT2} = 0.55, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.03, 1.07]$ . In line with expectations, participants who expressed thanks showed less protest behavior ( $M_{T1} = 0.09, SD_{T1} = 0.16; M_{T2} = 0.10, SD_{T2} = 0.13$ ) than participants who did not express thanks ( $M_{T1} = 0.28, SD_{T1} = 0.24; M_{T2} = 0.19, SD_{T2} = 0.20$ ).

**Serial mediation analysis.** We conducted a serial mediation analysis in PROCESS (Hayes, 2013, Model 6, 10000 bootstrap samples for bias corrected bootstrap 95% confidence intervals) to examine the indirect effect through forgiveness followed by gender-academia-specific system justification (GASJ). The positive effect of expressing thanks on forgiveness approached significance ( $b = 0.56, SE = 0.30, p = .063, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.03, 1.16]$ ). Forgiveness did not predict GASJ ( $b = 0.03, SE = 0.08, p = .686, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.13, 0.19]$ ) and GASJ did not

predict protest behavior ( $b = -0.03$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ ,  $p = .153$ , 95% CI [-0.08, 0.01]). Thus, the specific indirect effect through forgiveness and GASJ was not significant ( $b = -.001$ ,  $SE = .003$ , 95% CI [-0.011, 0.002]). The specific indirect effects through forgiveness alone ( $b = 0.01$ ,  $SE = .01$ , 95% CI [-0.01, 0.05]) or GASJ alone ( $b = 0.01$ ,  $SE = .01$ , 95% CI [-0.01, 0.05]) also did not reach significance. The direct effect was significant ( $b = -0.20$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-0.31, -0.09]). The pattern for the follow-up was similar.

This time, we could not find a mediation for forgiveness, and consequentially, not for system justification. Besides the small sample size, the reason for this could be that we used different measures than in the previous studies to assess forgiveness and system justification and measured a different outcome, protest behaviors instead of protest intentions. We strongly put our focus on realizing an ecologically valid study design and chose measures and outcomes based on that purpose.

We used a different measure for forgiveness because the old measure might have revealed that the experiment was preprogrammed and that the other participants were not real. Specifically, in this study, we could not ask participants directly whether they forgave the male student because it would have implied that the experiment programmers had anticipated a transgression. This would have threatened the naturalistic setting of the study. Instead, we asked participants more indirectly to indicate what they *felt* at the moment when thinking about the respective other participant and administered, among distractors, “forgiveness”, “leniency” and another German word for forgiveness. Compared to the old items, these items are very abstract. Importantly, they assessed whether participants felt forgiveness, but not whether participants actually forgave, like in the old items. Thus, we found that expressing thanks increased feelings of forgiveness, but “just” feeling forgiveness was not related to system justification or protest behaviors. For system justification, we modified the previous measure for an academic context and had to present it as a separate opinion survey to make it fit in the study. Future research should, therefore, measure whether people actually forgave the transgressor, beyond feeling forgiveness.

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**MANUSCRIPT #2****Antecedents and Consequences of  
Autonomy- and Dependency-Oriented Help Toward Refugees**

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### Abstract

We tested antecedents (paternalistic beliefs; Study 1) and consequences (social change potential; Study 2) of autonomy- and dependency-oriented help and developed scales assessing paternalistic beliefs and both forms of help. In Study 1 ( $N = 143$  Germans), we focused on paternalistic beliefs as an antagonist to social change and a key distinguishing variable between engagement in both forms of help. As expected, paternalistic beliefs were positively related to dependency-oriented help, mediated by concern for a positive national moral image, but negatively related to autonomy-oriented help, mediated by perceived competence of refugees. In Study 2, both refugees ( $N = 80$ ) and Germans ( $N=97$ ) perceived autonomy-oriented help to have more potential for social change than dependency-oriented help.

*Keywords:* dependency-oriented help; autonomy-oriented help; paternalistic beliefs; refugees; social change

The recent arrival of refugees in Germany has resulted in a voluntary aid movement that has been described as “welcoming culture” (Funk, 2016). Regarding certain forms of help (e.g., donations in kind), some even observed signs of overhelping (Kallenbrunnen, 2015; Police Munich, 2015). Meanwhile, refugees were criticized when they demanded support for their autonomy and respectful treatment (Taz, 2017), and volunteers expressed their disappointment when refugees refused support (Eckardt, 2015).

One prominent model explaining why members of advantaged groups engage in some, but not other, forms of help towards members of disadvantaged groups, is the Intergroup Helping as Power Relations model (Jackson & Esses, 2000; Nadler, 2002; Nadler & Halabi, 2006). According to this model, when members of advantaged groups are motivated to maintain their powerful position, they prefer providing help that keeps the disadvantaged dependent. The model differentiates between autonomy- and dependency-oriented help, which have different implications for social change. Dependency-oriented help gives help-recipients the full solution to a problem, while autonomy-oriented help offers them the right tools to help themselves. Dependency-oriented help is assumed to contradict social change, because the low-status group remains in a state of needing help. Contrastingly, autonomy-oriented help is assumed to result in status improvement, because low-status group members learn how to help themselves and thus come closer to self-determination. The contrasting social change potential of autonomy- and dependency-oriented help is a prominent but not sufficiently empirically tested assumption in the literature (for preliminary evidence see Alvarez, van Leeuwen, Montenegro-Montenegro, & van Vugt, 2018).

In the present research we examined antecedents (paternalistic beliefs) and consequences (social change potential) of both types of help. First, we focused on helpers’ paternalistic beliefs as a novel predictor for helping activities. Paternalistic beliefs target the motivation to care for low-status groups while maintaining the social order and can therefore be seen as antagonistic to social change. Second, we asked an expert sample of help recipients (refugees) and help providers (Germans) to evaluate the perceived social change potential of both forms of help.

### **Paternalistic Beliefs as Antagonists of Social Change**

We argue that the major difference between the two forms of help can be seen in their overlap with paternalistic beliefs and their corresponding potential to produce social change. Originally, paternalism has been defined as a system-level variable: “the principle or system of governing or controlling a country, group of employees, etc. in a manner suggesting a

father's relationship with his children" (Webster, 1975). In line with this definition, paternalism has been mainly studied in the context of leadership. There, paternalism can be observed when leaders provide care and protection, whereas the followers are expected to be loyal and deferential (Ayca, 2006). Thus, paternalism is characterized by a duality of control and care (Ayca, 2006; Baker, 2015; Schroeder, Waytz, & Epley, 2017). Prior work illustrated that paternalism (here, benevolent sexism) prevents support for social change (e.g., Becker & Wright, 2011).

In the present research, we focus on paternalistic beliefs. These beliefs represent support for a system of social inequality in which social inequality is accepted so long as the advantaged take care of the disadvantaged (e.g., Jackman, 1994). Because paternalistic beliefs encompass acceptance of power differences and the aspect of care, they can be viewed both as antagonistic to social change and as determinants of dependency- vs. autonomy-oriented help. Previous research on the determinants of dependency- vs. autonomy-oriented help neglected individual difference variables and mainly focused on how socio-structural variables (e.g., the perceived stability of status relations) affect people's willingness to provide different forms of help. For example, the more members of advantaged groups perceive status relations to be unstable, the more willing they are to provide dependency-oriented help to members of disadvantaged groups (Nadler, Harpaz-Gorodeisky, & Ben-David, 2009). Adding to the sparse literature on the role of individual difference variables in autonomy- and dependency-oriented help is therefore another important addition to previous work.

Paternalistic beliefs can be differentiated from related concepts. Paternalistic beliefs are different from the two helping types because 1) they are blatant beliefs indicating the appreciation of social inequality and 2) do not specify the nature of care that is granted to low power groups. In contrast, dependency-oriented and autonomy-oriented help are behaviors that do not explicitly address the social inequality dimension, but specify the actions of care in terms of their boundaries and possibilities for future self-help of low-status groups.

Paternalistic beliefs differ from social dominance orientation (SDO; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001) because individuals high in SDO conceive of the world as a competitive jungle and thus do not see any need to care for disadvantaged groups. The difference to system justification (e.g., Jost, 2017) is that, although individuals endorsing system justification beliefs accept a system of social inequality because it fulfills epistemic, existential, and relational needs, this acceptance of the system is not connected to the belief that the advantaged have to take care of the disadvantaged. Thus, neither SDO nor system justification allow for explicit predictions concerning the two helping forms. This imprecision is reflected in the results of three studies

we know of that focus on individual differences in SDO and helping. In one study, SDO negatively predicted *both* forms of helping (Halabi, Dovidio & Nadler, 2008); in the two other studies, SDO was negatively related to autonomy-oriented help but unrelated to dependency-oriented help (Jackson & Esses, 2000; Maki, Vitriol, Dwyer, Kim, & Snyder, 2017). Thus, SDO does not represent a distinguishing feature between both forms of help and cannot explain why individuals often show a high willingness to help although they wish to maintain hierarchies. We argue that the concept of paternalistic beliefs should help to predict which one of the two helping “patterns” individuals prefer. Specifically, we expect, that paternalistic beliefs will be positively related to the willingness to provide dependency-oriented help,<sup>i</sup> whereas they will be negatively related to autonomy-oriented help because this form of help has the potential to threaten power relations.

### **Psychological Processes Underlying Helping Intentions of Paternalists and Non-Paternalists**

We examined two variables that are important when it comes to helping across status divides: perceived target competence and moral image concerns. First, we predicted that individuals low in paternalism engage in autonomy-oriented help because they perceive the help-recipient to be competent, whereas individuals high in paternalism might engage in dependency-oriented help because they perceive the help-recipients to be incompetent. This is because paternalism is based on the belief that the group in need is less competent. Moreover, there is evidence suggesting that people are more likely to provide dependency- (vs. autonomy-oriented) aid when they believe the target is less competent (Schroeder et al., 2017).

Second, we expected that high-status individuals endorsing paternalistic beliefs engage in dependency-oriented help in order to maintain a positive moral image of their ingroup. This is based on evidence indicating that advantaged group members are concerned with defying negative moral stereotypes about their ingroup and help disadvantaged groups in order to bolster their moral image (e.g., Bergsieker, Shelton, & Richeson, 2010; Siem, von Oettingen, Mummendey, & Nadler, 2013). What distinguishes (high-status) paternalists from non-paternalists, is that the former support the care for disadvantaged groups but do not see the help recipients as equals (cf. Schroeder et al, 2017). Caring for and protecting “the weak” is a central aspect of paternalism, and this concern could justify providing help which keeps recipients in their lower status position. Therefore, we can expect that it is important to paternalists to publicly portray a form of selfless care for the help recipients’ wellbeing (“It’s

for your own good”), thus construing a positive moral image of their ingroup. Further, moral image concerns should be related to dependency-oriented help, because this form of help perpetuates the need for help and thus continuously provides opportunities to satisfy image concerns.

### **The Present Research**

Our research program and all hypotheses are outlined in Figure 1. In Study 1, in a sample of help providers (Germans), we test whether paternalistic beliefs (but not SDO) are the distinguishing feature between autonomy- and dependency-oriented help and examine the underlying motives explaining why (non-) paternalists help. Study 2 presents a direct test of the perceived social change potential of autonomy- and dependency-oriented help among a sample of help recipients (refugees) and help providers (Germans). We predicted that both Germans and refugees perceive autonomy-oriented help to be more conducive to social change than dependency-oriented help. However, refugees as help-recipients were expected to generally attest more social change potential to all helping activities than Germans, because help directly benefits their ingroup and might thus generally be evaluated favorably.

To summarize, the present work goes beyond prior work by 1) introducing paternalistic beliefs as an individual difference variable showing opposing effects on autonomy- and dependency-oriented help; 2) comparing the perceived social change potential of the two forms of help among a sample of help recipients (refugees) and potential help providers (Germans); 3) examining why (non-)paternalists help; 4) developing a scale assessing paternalistic beliefs outside the leadership context; and 5) developing novel rating scales to assess autonomy- and dependency-oriented help.

## **Study 1**

### **Method**

**Participants.** The sample consisted of 143 Germans who were recruited in the city center and university campus of a German city (70% female), aged 18 to 74 years ( $M = 29.96$ ,  $SD = 13.59$ ) and completed an online study. More information is provided in the supplementary online material (SOM).

**Measures.** The full scales are provided in the SOM. Items were answered on seven-point rating scales (1 = *do not agree at all*, 7 = *fully agree*).

**Paternalistic beliefs.** We developed a new scale assessing paternalistic beliefs. Similar measures had thus far appeared almost exclusively in the leadership literature (Aycan, 2006). We assessed paternalistic beliefs with nine items (e.g., “Social inequality in society is okay if the weak are protected by the strong”). We deleted one item to improve reliability ( $\alpha = .86$ ).

**Autonomy-oriented and dependency-oriented help.** Reliable scales assessing the two different types of help while considering helping requirements (e.g., length of involvement in a helping activity) are lacking in the literature (for an exception, see Maki et al., 2017). Scale construction is described in the SOM. We developed one 11-item scale that assessed autonomy-oriented help ( $\alpha = .90$ , e.g., “I would sign a petition that demands that refugees receive financial support from the government, so that they can provide for themselves”) and one 11-item scale that assessed dependency-oriented help ( $\alpha = .87$ , e.g., “I would sign a petition that demands that refugees are provided with everything they need to live through payments in kind – such as food coupons, clothes.”)

**SDO.** SDO was assessed with four items (e.g., “Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups”, Ho et al., 2015,  $\alpha = .73$ ).

**Concern for national moral image (image concerns).** We adapted six items from different scales to assess image concerns (e.g., “It is important for me that others have a positive moral image of Germans”, van Leeuwen & Täuber, 2012,  $\alpha = .90$ ; see also Shnabel, Halabi, & Noor, 2013).

**Perceived relative refugee competence.** Refugee competence was assessed with two questions asking for relative competence (for more information see SOM). Participants evaluated the relative competence (item 1) and intelligence (item 2) of Germans and refugees (1 = *Germans are much more competent/intelligent than refugees*, 5 = *Refugees are much more competent/intelligent than Germans*,  $r = .57$ ).<sup>ii</sup>

## Results and Discussion

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and correlations. Whereas SDO was negatively related to both forms of help, paternalistic beliefs were negatively related to autonomy- and positively to dependency-oriented help. First, we conducted two multiple regression analyses testing whether paternalistic beliefs would explain variance when controlling for SDO. The two help scales were the criteria, and SDO and paternalistic beliefs were predictors. Autonomy-oriented help was negatively predicted by SDO,  $b = -0.81$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t(142) = -8.60$ ,  $p < .001$ , and paternalistic beliefs,  $b = -0.14$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $t(142) = -2.13$ ,  $p = .035$ .

Dependency-oriented help was negatively predicted by SDO,  $b = -0.63$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $t(142) = -6.14$ ,  $p < .001$ , and positively by paternalistic beliefs,  $b = 0.28$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $t(142) = 4.01$ ,  $p < .001$ .

We then conducted two mediation analyses using PROCESS (Hayes, 2013, Model 4, bias-corrected 95% confidence intervals, 10,000 bootstrap samples) to test whether image concerns and the perceived competence of the target mediate the relationship between paternalistic beliefs (predictor) and the two forms of helping (criteria). For a strong test, we included the two mediators in both analyses and controlled for SDO. Details of these analyses are provided in the SOM.

The indirect effect of paternalistic beliefs on autonomy-oriented help was significant through refugee competence,  $B = -0.05$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95%CI [-0.12, -0.01], but not through image concerns,  $B = 0.03$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ , 95%CI [-0.03, 0.12]. Thus, higher paternalistic beliefs result in more autonomy-oriented help because refugees are perceived as less competent (see Figure 2). In contrast, the indirect effect of paternalistic beliefs on dependency-oriented help was significant through image concerns,  $B = 0.14$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ , 95%CI [0.06, 0.26], but not through refugee competence,  $B = -0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.01$ , 95%CI [-0.04, 0.01]. Thus, individuals endorsing paternalistic beliefs are more likely to provide dependency-oriented help, partly because it helps to establish a positive national moral image (see Figure 3).

In sum, results show that paternalistic beliefs have contrasting effects on both forms of help over and above SDO. Both mediations were supported, illustrating that different processes account for the effect of paternalistic beliefs on the two forms of helping. In Study 1, we assessed the social change potential of both forms of help indirectly via endorsement of paternalistic beliefs. In Study 2, we asked participants directly whether the different forms of help would lead to an improved status of refugees.

## Study 2

### Method

**Participants.** The sample consisted of 94 Germans (57% female, 38% male, 4% other) and 80 refugees (11% female, 89% male). Most refugees came from Syria (88%), 2.5% came from Iraq, 2.5% from Sudan, 2.5% from Lebanon, 1% were Kurdish, and 1% Palestinian. Germans' age ranged from 20 to 83 ( $M = 41.47$ ,  $SD = 26.83$ ). Refugees' age ranged from 19 to 48 ( $M = 27.30$ ,  $SD = 7.00$ ), seven did not indicate their age. Most participants were highly educated (80% Germans and 76% refugees had a high school or university degree). Refugees had been living in Germany for between six months and four

years (80% 1-2 years, 17% 6-12 months, and 4% 2-4 years). Length of residence in Germany did not correlate with any scale.

**Procedure.** Participants completed the survey either online or as a paper-pencil version. Data from Germans were collected via an online-platform of a German university and in the city center of a medium-sized town. Data from refugees were collected at language courses for refugees and at a German university (via the tandem-mentoring and the guest student program). All participants had the chance to win one of ten 25 Euro vouchers. Germans completed the questionnaire in German. For refugees the questionnaire was translated into Arabic and back translated.

**Measures.** We used the same help activities as in Study 1 but slightly adapted the items: Every activity was presented as one that Germans engage in. For instance, “Germans sign a petition that demands that refugees are provided with everything they need to live through payments in kind (such as food coupons, clothes).” On seven-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*), participants indicated to what extent they thought this activity helps improve the societal status of refugees in Germany.<sup>iii</sup> We confirmed the two-factor solution for Germans and mostly confirmed the two-factor solution for refugees (see SOM) and created the same 11-item autonomy-oriented scale ( $\alpha = .80$  refugees;  $\alpha = .87$  Germans) and 11-item dependency-oriented scale ( $\alpha = .81$  refugees;  $\alpha = .85$  Germans) as before. Both scales were correlated (refugees:  $r = .71, p < .001$ /Germans:  $r = .38, p < .001$ ).<sup>iv</sup> Missing values (< 10%) were completely at random and estimated via expectation maximization.

## Results and Discussion

A repeated measures ANOVA, with the two help scales as within factors and group (refugees vs. Germans) as between factor, confirmed that refugees attested more social change potential to autonomy- and dependency-oriented help activities compared to Germans,  $F(1,172) = 158.22, p < .001, \eta^2 = .48$  (see Table 2). Moreover, both Germans and refugees attested more potential for social change to autonomy-oriented activities than to dependency-oriented activities; Germans:  $F(1,172) = 118.38, p < .001, \eta^2 = .41$ ; refugees:  $F(1,172) = 50.08, p < .001, \eta^2 = .23$ . The interaction between the within factor and group was significant,  $F(1,175) = 3.69, p = .056, \eta^2 = .02$ , indicating that although the difference in perceived social change potential between both help activities was significant for both groups, it was stronger for Germans than for refugees.<sup>v</sup>

### **General Discussion**

This research extends the literature on strategic motives of helping behavior in several ways. First, to our knowledge this work is the first to empirically assess the perceived social change potential of autonomy- and dependency-oriented help. We demonstrated that help recipients (refugees) and help providers (Germans) both see that autonomy-oriented help has more potential for social change than dependency-oriented help. Second, we introduced the concept of paternalistic beliefs to the social psychological literature by developing a scale assessing paternalistic beliefs outside of the leadership context. We showed that paternalistic beliefs present a parsimonious predictor that relates in opposite ways to the provision of autonomy- and dependency-oriented help – and thus clearly differs from SDO. Further, we illustrated different psychological processes: Whereas paternalistic beliefs were negatively related to autonomy-oriented help because individuals perceived refugees as less competent than Germans, paternalistic beliefs were positively related to interest in dependency-oriented help because individuals were more concerned with establishing a positive national moral image. Third, we developed two separate scales assessing autonomy-oriented and dependency-oriented help towards refugees.

### **Theoretical Implications and Distinctions from Related Concepts**

To our knowledge, the present work is the first showing that an individual difference variable (paternalistic beliefs) relates in opposite ways to both forms of help. Research so far illustrated that SDO either negatively predicts both forms of help, or is negatively related to autonomy-oriented help but unrelated to dependency-oriented help (e.g., Halabi et al., 2008; Maki et al., 2017). Importantly, we illustrated that paternalistic beliefs relate to helping activities over and above SDO.

Critics could argue that paternalistic beliefs simply represent system justifying ideologies. Although, we believe that they are closely linked (e.g., Becker & Wright, 2011), we have theoretical as well as empirical evidence that they are distinct concepts. Individuals endorsing system justification beliefs accept a system of social inequality because it fulfills epistemic, existential and relational needs. However, this acceptance of the system is not connected to the core idea of paternalistic beliefs whereby the advantaged have to take care of the disadvantaged. Additional analyses (see SOM) indicated that system justification and paternalistic beliefs load on different factors, and that system justification predicted neither autonomy- nor dependency-oriented help.

### **Practical Implications**

It is a strength of the paper to include the evaluation of help by refugees. Refugees were more likely than Germans to see social change potential in both forms of help. This finding could simply mean that they are more optimistic of both forms of help because their ingroup directly benefits from it. However, it is also possible that social desirability concerns played a role, because this research was done by Germans, the help providing group. Accordingly, refugees might have tried to avoid being perceived as ungrateful. However, and most importantly, both refugees and Germans perceived more social change potential in autonomy-oriented than dependency-oriented help. Thus, refugees see that the improvement of their societal position is more likely when they have equal rights compared to when, for example, they are provided with vouchers.

Based on these findings, we would suggest that volunteers and practitioners carefully think about the help they offer. If they have the freedom to decide which type of help to provide and wish to contribute to the improvement of refugees' status, we recommend providing autonomy-oriented help. However, below, we discuss that the amount of time that refugees have been living in Germany might be an important aspect to consider when deciding on appropriate helping behaviors.

### **Limitations and Future Work**

One limitation of this work is its correlational design and the possibility of alternative causal models. Figure 1 depicts a causal model that is in line with many psychological models in which attitudes predict behavior, for instance the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985). However, other causal models are possible. From self-perception theory (Bem, 1972), we know that behaviors can impact our cognitions. For instance, when individuals engage in autonomy-oriented help, they might be more likely to see the competence of refugees and this might reduce their endorsement of paternalistic beliefs. Thus, future research could use an experimental approach and examine the relationship between the key variables more closely. Another limitation is that most refugee participants had already received help (e.g., via language courses). We plan to examine more diverse samples in the future.

Finally, we are aware that there are benefits and disadvantages of both forms of helping – depending, among other things, on the time frame. Although refugees' length of residence in Germany did not correlate with evaluations of any helping behavior, it would be interesting to investigate potential time effects more systematically with longitudinal designs. Initially, for instance, refugees might evaluate help that directly impacts their lives positively,

including dependency-oriented help (e.g., help with housing, food, clothing), and might find political support via autonomy-oriented activities less important (e.g., political empowerment). Over time, refugees might become more interested in autonomy-oriented help (e.g., receiving rights). This would suggest that dependency-oriented help is not problematic per se, but that autonomy- and dependency help may be more and less appropriate at certain times.

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## Footnotes

<sup>i</sup> Consistent with this reasoning, Shnabel, Bar-Anan, Kende, Bareket, and Lazar (2016) demonstrated that benevolent sexism (which includes protective paternalism) increases engagement in dependency-oriented cross-gender helping (see also Hammond & Overall, 2015).

<sup>ii</sup> We also assessed identification and disidentification with Germans, system justification, and different emotions towards refugees for exploratory purposes.

<sup>iii</sup> We added two further questions: “How respectful is this activity?” and “To what extent can this activity help in the short run, but does not change the societal position of refugees in the long run?” However, factor analyses did not support the two factors-model, and therefore these variables are not further discussed.

<sup>iv</sup> In addition, we measured paternalistic beliefs, SDO, acquiescence, system justification, perceived stability, legitimacy, permeability, ingroup identification, and ingroup disidentification for exploratory purposes. Correlations with paternalistic beliefs are reported in the SOM.

<sup>v</sup> Results did not change when controlling for age, gender, and acquiescence. Only the interaction is not significant anymore.

Table 1

*Means (M), Standard Deviations (SD), and Correlations among Variables, Study 1*

|                            | Mean | SD   | 2     | 3      | 4      | 5     | 6      |
|----------------------------|------|------|-------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
| 1 Autonomy-oriented help   | 5.01 | 1.25 | .46** | -.62** | -.30** | -.05  | .46**  |
| 2 Dependency-oriented help | 4.54 | 1.20 | -     | -.39** | .18*   | .37** | .07    |
| 3 SDO                      | 1.66 | 0.90 |       | -      | .27**  | .03   | -.35** |
| 4 Paternalistic beliefs    | 3.82 | 1.31 |       |        | -      | .45** | -.29** |
| 5 Image concerns           | 4.02 | 1.46 |       |        |        | -     | -.22*  |
| 6 Competence refugees      | 2.79 | 0.44 |       |        |        |       | -      |

*Note.* \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$  (two-tailed)

Table 2

*Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) of the Perceived Impact on Social Change of Autonomy- and Dependency-Oriented Help, Study 2*

|                          | <i>M</i>          | <i>SD</i> | <i>M</i>          | <i>SD</i> |
|--------------------------|-------------------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
|                          | Germans           |           | Refugees          |           |
| Autonomy-oriented help   | 4.64 <sub>a</sub> | 1.12      | 6.05 <sub>a</sub> | 0.85      |
| Dependency-oriented help | 3.54 <sub>b</sub> | 1.06      | 5.24 <sub>b</sub> | 1.00      |

*Note.* Within column and within dependent variable, means not sharing subscripts differ at  $p < .05$ .

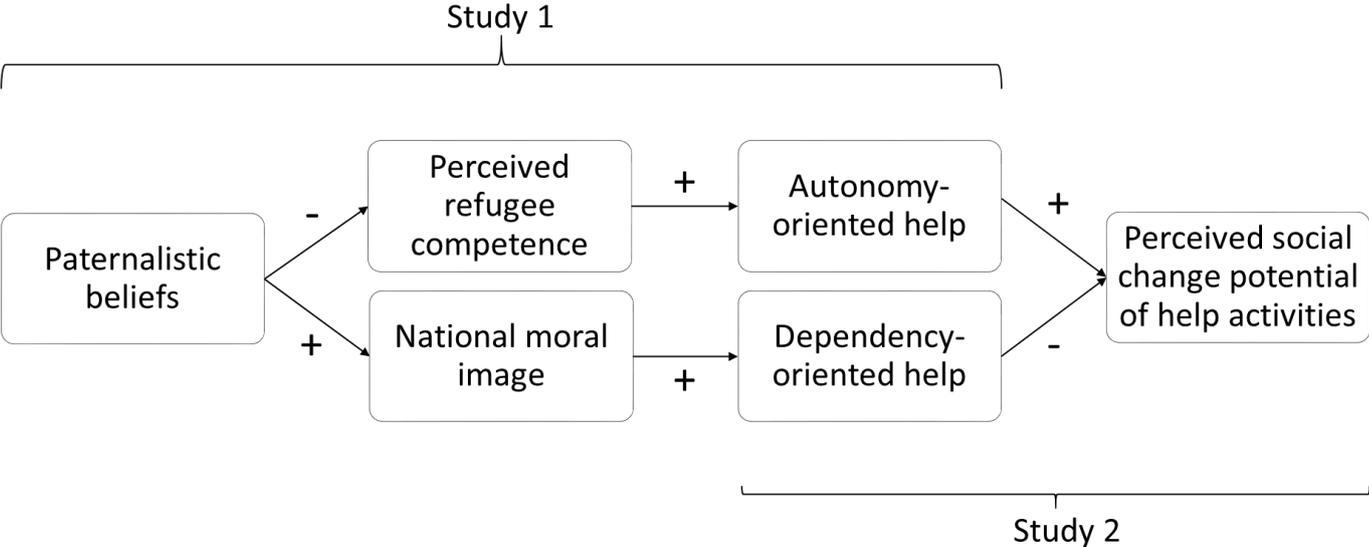
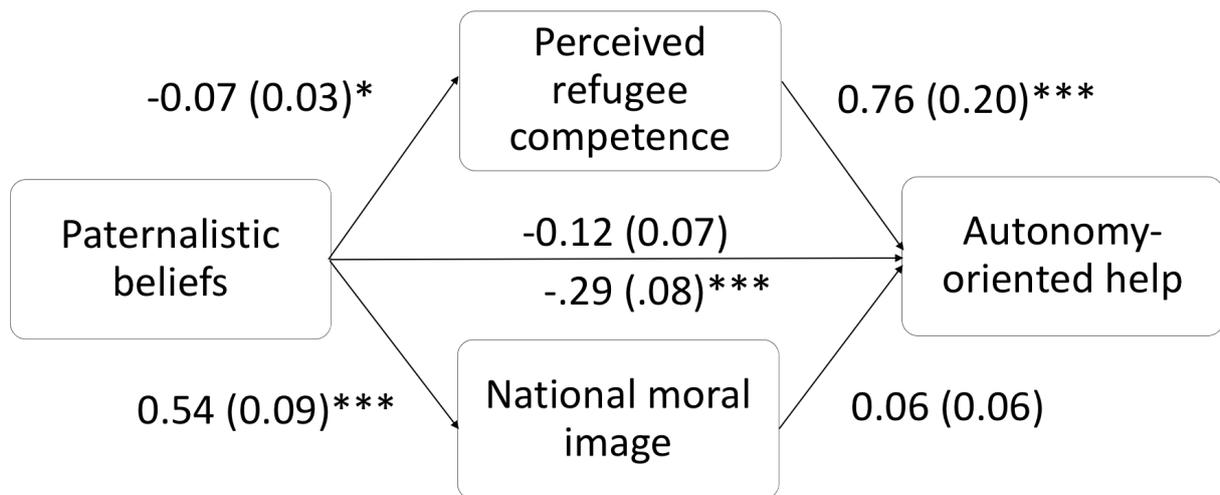
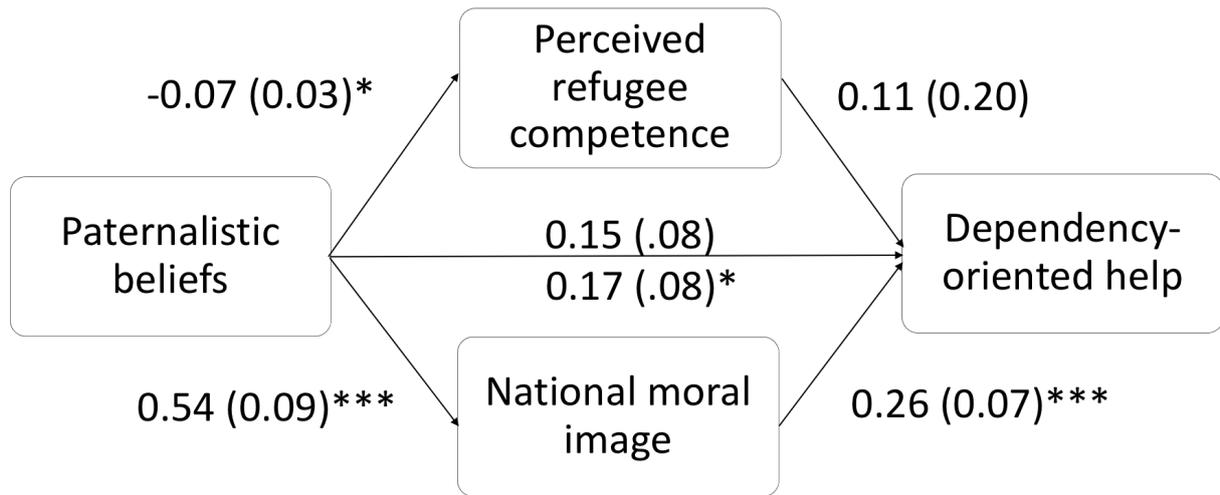


Figure 1. Overview of Hypotheses



*Figure 2.* Perceived refugee competence (but not national moral image concerns) mediated the effect of paternalistic beliefs on autonomy-oriented help. Unstandardized coefficients with standard errors in the brackets; \* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ . The direct effect is reported above the line, the total effect below the line.



*Figure 3.* National moral image concerns (but not perceived refugee competence) mediated the effect of paternalistic beliefs on dependency-oriented help. Unstandardized coefficients with standard errors in the brackets;  $*p < .05$ ,  $***p < .001$ . The direct effect is reported above the line, the total effect below the line.

## **Supplementary material**

### **Table of Contents**

- I) Additional information regarding the Method and Results Sections of Study 1**
- II) Additional information regarding the Method and Results Sections of Study 2**
- III) Full scales**

## I) Additional information regarding the Method and Results Sections of Study 1 and Study 2

### Study 1

#### Method

**Participants and procedure.** Data was initially collected from 151 participants. Research assistants collected email-addresses in the city center and at the university of a medium-sized city in Germany. Once participants agreed to participate, they received a link to the online study. We excluded five participants who were not born in Germany (2x Russia, 2x Kazakhstan, 1x Sri Lanka, 1x Austria, 1x Switzerland). We excluded one multivariate outlier based on Mahalanobis distance. The final sample consisted of 143 Germans (70% female), aged 18 to 74 years ( $M = 29.96$ ,  $SD = 13.59$ ). The sample size was determined a priori using G\*Power (moderate effect size  $f^2 = .15$ , power = .95,  $\alpha = .05$ ; Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007).

#### Measures.

**Autonomy-oriented and dependency-oriented help.** Reliable scales assessing the two different types of help while considering helping requirements (e.g., length of involvement in a helping activity) are missing in the literature (for an exception see Maki et al., 2017). We developed 14 items assessing dependency-oriented help and 14 items assessing autonomy-oriented help that were matched for activity. For example, dependency-oriented help was assessed with “I would sign a petition that demands that refugees are provided with everything they need to live through payments in kind (such as food coupons, clothes)” and autonomy-oriented help was assessed with “I would sign a petition that demands that refugees receive financial support from the government, so that they can provide for themselves” (adapted from Siem & Mazziotta, 2017). Additionally, we paired these items to create a forced-choice scale measuring people’s preference for autonomy- over dependency-oriented help. That is, participants were exposed to two different helping activities (one autonomy-related and one dependency-related helping activity that were matched according to activity) and had to indicate their preference for engaging in either the autonomy- or the dependency-oriented help activity. Factor analyses on the 28 continuous items supported the two-factor structure but suggested to delete three item pairs (see below). Thus, one 11-item scale assessed autonomy-oriented help ( $\alpha = .90$ ) and one 11-item scale assessed dependency-oriented help ( $\alpha = .87$ ). The factor analysis on the forced-choice items suggested one factor, and we averaged the 11 items to assess a preference for autonomy- over dependency-oriented help ( $\alpha = .78$ ).

***Perceived relative competence of refugees.*** We measured perceived competence and intelligence of refugees in relation to Germans to have a relative measure of competence. The reason to include a relative measure was to avoid confounds with absolute competence perceptions derived from a comparison to all social or national groups. For instance, participants could say, they perceive refugees to be medium competent and intelligent, but this might be driven by their belief that all groups are medium competent and intelligent. Thus, they would not distinguish between Germans and refugees. A relative measure was more informative for us in this context and allowed us to assess the strength of the competence-related stereotype.

Participants evaluated the relative competence (item 1) and intelligence (item 2) of Germans and refugees (1= Germans are much more competent/intelligent than refugees, 5 = refugees are much more competent/intelligent than Germans,  $r = .57$ ).

***Complete factor analyses: Autonomy-oriented and dependency-oriented help.*** We first ran a principal component analysis with promax rotation to test whether autonomy and dependency items load on different factors. Six Eigenvalues  $> 1$  emerged (9.89, 3.20, 1.63, 1.57, 1.31, 1.10), the Screeplot suggested a two-factor solution. The first factor represented autonomy-oriented help, the second factor dependency-oriented help. One item loaded on the wrong factor (D1) and one item had weak loadings on both factors (A10). Furthermore, one item with the weakest loading on the dependency factor (D9) was also problematic in reliability analyses and did not map onto the theoretical concept of dependency-oriented help very well. All three items (D1, A10, D9) and their three corresponding items (A1, D10, A9) were deleted. A second principal axis analysis without the six items indicated that all items loaded on their respective factor (all loadings  $> .40$ ). The two factors explained 49.97% of the variance. We created one scale assessing autonomy-oriented help ( $\alpha = .90$ ) and a second scale assessing dependency-oriented help ( $\alpha = .86$ ).

We also conducted a principal axis analysis with promax rotation with the remaining eleven forced-choice items. Three Eigenvalues  $> 1$  emerged (3.51, 1.33, 1.05), the Screeplot suggested a one factor solution. We averaged the 11 items to assess a preference for autonomy-oriented over dependency-oriented help ( $\alpha = .78$ ).

## Results

***Complete mediation analyses.*** Paternalism predicted perceived refugee competence,  $b = -0.07$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ ,  $t(141) = -2.58$ ,  $p = .011$ , 95%CI [-0.12, -0.02] and image concerns,  $b = 0.54$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $t(141) = 6.13$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [0.36, 0.71]. Perceived refugee competence

predicted autonomy-oriented help when paternalistic beliefs were controlled for,  $b = 0.76$ ,  $SE = 0.20$ ,  $t(141) = 3.86$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [0.37, 1.15], whereas image concerns did not,  $b = 0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $t(141) = 1.01$ ,  $p = .313$ , 95%CI [-0.06, 0.18]. The total effect was reduced to a non-significant direct effect,  $b = -0.12$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $t(141) = 1.68$ ,  $p = .096$ , 95%CI [-0.26, 0.02]) The indirect effect of paternalistic beliefs on autonomy-oriented help was significant through refugee competence,  $B = -0.05$ ,  $SE = 0.03$ , 95%CI [-0.12, -0.01], but not through image concerns,  $B = 0.03$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ , 95%CI [-0.03, 0.12]. Thus, higher paternalistic beliefs result in less autonomy-oriented help because refugees are perceived as less competent.

Image concerns predicted dependency-oriented help when paternalistic beliefs were controlled for,  $b = 0.26$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $t(141) = 3.94$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [0.13, 0.39], whereas refugee competence did not,  $b = 0.11$ ,  $SE = 0.21$ ,  $t(141) = .50$ ,  $p = .619$ , 95%CI [-0.32, 0.53]. The direct effect was not significant,  $b = 0.15$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $t(141) = 1.95$ ,  $p = .053$ , 95%CI [-0.002, 0.30]. The indirect effect of paternalistic beliefs on dependency-oriented help was significant through image concerns,  $B = 0.14$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ , 95%CI [0.06, 0.26], but not through refugee competence,  $B = -0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.01$ , 95%CI [-0.04, 0.01]. Thus, individuals endorsing paternalistic beliefs are more likely to provide dependency-oriented help, partly because it helps to establish a positive national moral image.

**Regression analyses and mediation analysis forced-choice scale.** The preference for autonomy- over dependency-oriented help on the forced choice scale was negatively predicted by SDO ( $b = -0.10$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ ,  $t(142) = -4.72$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.10, -0.04]) and paternalism ( $b = -0.07$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ ,  $t(142) = -4.78$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [-0.14, -0.06]). It was also negatively predicted by image concerns ( $b = -0.03$ ,  $SE = 0.01$ ,  $t(141) = -2.12$ ,  $p = .036$ , 95%CI [-0.05, -0.002]), and positively predicted by refugee competence ( $b = 0.17$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ ,  $t(141) = 4.03$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95%CI [0.09, 0.26]) when paternalism was controlled for. The direct effect was still significant ( $b = -0.04$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ ,  $t(141) = -2.470$ ,  $p = .008$ , 95%CI [-0.07, -0.01]). The indirect effects of image concerns ( $B = -0.02$ ,  $SE = .01$ , 95%CI [-0.03, -0.003]), and refugee competence ( $B = -0.01$ ,  $SE = 0.01$ , 95%CI [-0.02, -0.003]) were significant. Thus, less paternalistic individuals are more likely to provide autonomy- relatively to dependency-oriented help, partly because they lack image concerns and because they perceive refugees to be competent.

### **Conceptual Distinction Between Paternalistic Beliefs and System Justification and Additional Analyses Using the System Justification Scale (Study 1)**

System justification represents the belief that society is fair, the system operates as it should and that all people have the same chance for success and happiness. Accordingly, we assessed system justification with three items from the Kay and Jost (2003) system justification scale (“Society is set up so that people usually get what they deserve”; “In general, the German political system operates as it should”; “Everyone has a fair shot at wealth and happiness”). Individuals high in system justification often deny discrimination and social inequality, because they believe in a just world. Furthermore, system justification does not include the aspect that high power groups should take care of low power groups. In contrast to system justification, a precondition for paternalism is the consciousness about the existence of social inequality in our society and the implication for action to care for the disadvantaged. This consciousness and the conditional approval of social inequality were part of each of our paternalism items (e.g., “Social inequality is okay for me as long as the strong take care of the weak. “, “It is okay that there are rich people and poor people, as long as the rich ensure that the poor live well.”).

A principal axis analysis with promax rotation including the eight paternalism items and the three system justification items resulted in a two factor solution (Eigenvalues: 4.64, 1.86, .98...). The first factor represents paternalism (all eight paternalism items have loadings  $\geq .45$ , none of the system justification items load on this factor, all factor loading  $\leq .06$ ). The second factor represents system justification (all three system justification items load on this factor  $\geq .60$ , whereas the paternalism items do not have substantial loadings on this factor, all factor loadings  $\leq .19$ ). These results show that paternalism and system justification are not only different theoretical concepts but can be also empirically differentiated.

We have conducted further analyses to test whether system justification leads to the same associations with the two types of helping as paternalistic beliefs. System justification neither predicted dependency-oriented help ( $b = 0.08$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $t(142) = 0.93$ ,  $p = .354$ ) nor autonomy-oriented help ( $b = -0.13$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $t(142) = -1.44$ ,  $p = .154$ ). This clearly shows that paternalistic beliefs play a key role in predicting the two types of help, whereas system justification does not.

### **Conceptual and Empirical Distinction Between Paternalistic Beliefs and Dependency-Oriented Help**

Paternalistic beliefs contain beliefs that the privileged should care for the disadvantaged while endorsing a social hierarchy. Thus, this concept is closely linked to dependency-oriented help, which is defined as behavior where the advantaged group help the disadvantaged groups through providing the full solution to a problem without giving the latter direct access to resources that would enable them to help themselves. This leaves the disadvantaged in a state of dependency from the privileged. Based on this close link between paternalistic beliefs and dependency-oriented help, we predicted that people endorsing paternalistic beliefs would be most likely to show dependency-oriented help. However, although both concepts are closely connected, they are also different. First, dependency-oriented help reflects a behavior, not a belief. Importantly, paternalistic beliefs are blatant; they indicate the appreciation of social inequality, which is why they predict autonomy-oriented help negatively. Contrastingly, although dependency-oriented help appears positive on the surface, because helping refugees (in our context) is first and foremost something positive, it is a subtle approval of social inequality. The provision of the full solution to low power help recipient – in contrast to tools for self-help as in autonomy-oriented helping – withholds knowledge and resources that could help the disadvantaged to achieve self-determination. The social consequences of dependency-oriented help can therefore be harmful. In our research, paternalistic beliefs and engagement in dependency-oriented help are weakly correlated ( $r = .22$ ) suggesting that they are separate constructs. Furthermore, a factor analysis indicates that both scales can be clearly separated:

A factor analysis with promax rotation with all eight items assessing paternalistic beliefs and all 11 items assessing dependency-oriented help resulted in a two factor solution (Eigenvalues: 5.39, 4.02, 1.17, 1.05...). The first factor represents dependency-oriented help (all eleven dependency-oriented help items loadings  $\geq .34$ , none of the paternalism items had a main loading (all factor loadings  $\leq .32$ ). The second factor represents paternalistic beliefs (all eight paternalism items load on this factor  $\geq .46$ , whereas the dependency-oriented help items did not have substantial loadings on this factor, all factor loadings  $\leq .20$ ). These results show that paternalism and dependency-oriented help are not only different theoretical concepts but can be also empirically differentiated.

**II) Additional information regarding methods and results, Study 2****Study 2****Method**

**Participants.** Data was initially collected from 187 participants. We excluded six participants from the German-speaking sample who were not born in Germany (Syria, Turkey, Croatia, Switzerland, Austria) and seven participants from the refugee sample because they failed to complete the attention check. As attention check, we used the helping scenario „Germans help with making refugees well prepared for a deportation.” We excluded those refugees who fully agreed with this action’s potential for refugees’ status improvement in Germany through this helping activity. In addition, these individuals responded with 7, the highest score, to almost all items suggesting that they did not read the questions with care.

The final sample consisted of 94 Germans (57% female, 38% male, 4% other) and 80 refugees (11% female, 89% male). The sample size was determined a priori using G\*Power (moderate effect size  $\eta_p^2 = .06$ , power = .95,  $\alpha = .05$ ). Participants in the German sample were born in Germany (the others were excluded). Most refugees came from Syria (88%), 2.5% came from Iraq, 2.5% from Sudan, 2.5% from Lebanon, 1% was Kurdish and 1% Palestinian. Germans’ age ranged from 20 to 83 ( $M = 41.47$ ,  $SD = 26.83$ ). Refugee’s age ranged from 19 to 48 ( $M = 27.30$ ,  $SD = 7.00$ ), seven did not indicate their age. Most participants were highly educated (80% of Germans and 76% of refugees had a high school or university degree). Refugees have been living in Germany for six months to four years (80% 1-2 years, 17% 6-12 months and 4% between 2-4 years). Length of residence in Germany did not correlate with any scale. Because the two samples differed in age and gender, we controlled for age and gender (and acquiescence).

**Measures.**

***Social change potential.*** In terms of the first question (social change potential), we first ran two principal axis analyses with promax rotation to test whether the two factors replicate in the context of status improvement among the German and the refugee sample. In the German sample, five Eigenvalues  $> 1$  emerged (3.37; 3.15; 1.49; 1.23; 1.07), the Screeplot suggested a two factor solution. All items loaded on their respective factor ( $\geq .31$ ). Only D12 loaded on both factors. In the refugee sample, six Eigenvalues  $> 1$  emerged (7.30, 1.88, 1.56, 1.39, 1.22, 1.04), the Screeplot suggested a one or two factor solution. When extracting two factors, all items loaded on their respective factor with the following exceptions: the three dependency-items referring to legal guardians (D3, D7, D14) loaded on the autonomy factor, the autonomy-item referring to driver’s license (A14) loaded on the dependency factor and

two items had weak loadings on both factors (D13, A7). To be as consistent as possible with Study 1, we kept the items A7, A14 and D13 and created the same 11-item autonomy scale as in Study 1 ( $\alpha = .80$  refugees;  $\alpha = .87$  Germans) and the same dependency scale as in Study 1 ( $\alpha = .81$  refugees;  $\alpha = .85$  Germans).

**SDO.** SDO was assessed with the same items as in Study 1, but only two items created a reliable scale in the refugee sample (“Some groups of people are simply inferior to other groups”, “Inferior groups should stay where they belong”, refugees:  $r = .41$ /Germans:  $r = .64$ )

**Acquiescence.** We assessed acquiescence because prior work suggested different response styles among individuals of different cultures (e.g., Fischer, 2004) and we wanted to control for it. We used two items from He and van de Vijver (2013): “I think that it is good to always agree with others” (1=*strongly disagree*, 5=*strongly agree*) and: “Do you think it is bad to always agree with others?” (1=*extremely bad*, 5=*not bad at all*);  $r = .26$  /  $r = .41$  (for refugees and Germans, respectively).

Correlations among variables are depicted in Table SM1.

Table SM1

Correlations Among Variables, Study 2

|  | 1 | 2     | 3    | 4     |
|--|---|-------|------|-------|
| Refugees   |   |       |      |       |
| 1 Social change potential autonomy-oriented help   | - | .71** | .09  | .41** |
| 2 Social change potential dependency-oriented help |   | -     | .18  | .51** |
| 3 SDO  |   |       | -    | .36** |
| 4 Paternalistic beliefs                            |   |       |      | -     |
| Germans  |   |       |      |       |
| 1 Social change potential autonomy-oriented help   | 1 | .38** | -.02 | -.20  |
| 2 Social change potential dependency-oriented help |   | -     | .13  | .30** |
| 3 SDO  |   |       | -    | .23** |
| 4 Paternalistic beliefs                            |   |       |      | -     |

Note. \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$  (two-tailed).

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### III) Full Scales

#### 1) Likert scale assessing autonomy-oriented help (1 = *do not agree at all*, 7 = *fully agree*)

- I would sign a petition that demands that refugees receive financial support from the government, so that they can provide for themselves. (A2)
- I would donate money to an organization that makes it easier for refugee students to continue their studies in Germany. (A3)
- I would donate money to an initiative that encourages refugees to exercise their rights in Germany. (A4)
- I would volunteer in a project where refugees and citizens meet weekly to collectively form ideas and demands for refugee policy. (A5)
- I would donate money to an organization that advocates that refugees have equal rights on the job market. (A6)
- I would participate in a protest against the ban on work for refugees. (A7)
- I would participate in a demonstration to prevent deportations of refugees. (A8)
- I would sign a petition that advocates that refugees are able to move freely in Germany. (A11)
- I would participate in a donation night where donations are collected for free legal aid to refugees. (A12)
- I would sign a petition that supports the acknowledgement of refugees' degrees. (A13)
- I would sign a petition that demands that refugees, who already have a driver's permit, do not have to go through another driving test. (A14)

**2) Likert scale assessing dependency-oriented help** (1 = *do not agree at all*, 7 = *fully agree*)

- I would sign a petition that demands that refugees are provided with everything they need to live through payments in kind (such as food coupons, clothes). (D2)
- I would donate money to an organization that arranges guardians for adult refugees, who take care of their legal issues. (D3)\*
- I would donate money to an initiative, in which volunteers hand out hot tea and fresh fruit to refugees in front of refugee accommodation centers in the evenings. (D4)
- I would volunteer in a project like a soup kitchen, where upon production of an ID card, food is given weekly to refugees. (D5)
- I would donate money to an organization that advocates that highly qualified refugees can at least work as interns or 1€-workers. (D6)
- I would participate in a protest by an initiative that advocates that all refugees are assigned German guardians. (D7)\*
- I would participate in a demonstration where people speak out for direct neighborhood help such as the unsolicited donation of returnable bottles to refugees. (D8)
- I would sign a petition that advocates for a reward system for refugees that gives financial rewards depending on the achieved language level. (D11)
- I would participate in a donation night where neighbors donate and refugees cook meals from their home countries. (D12)
- I would sign a petition that ensures a probationary period to refugees where they are given a chance to show their will to integrate. (D13)
- I would sign a petition that demands that even after a successful asylum proceeding, refugees are assigned guardians that help them to integrate. (D14)\*

*Note.* Items with an asterisk were part of the guardian scale in Study 2.

**3) Paternalistic beliefs** (1 = *do not agree at all*, 7 = *fully agree*)

- 1) Social inequality is okay for me as long as the strong take care of the weak.
- 2) It is okay that there are rich people and poor people, as long as the rich ensure that the poor live well.
- 3) It is okay if some have more power than others in society, as long as the others are well taken care of by those in power.
- 4) A well-functioning society is characterized by the strong protecting the weak.
- 5) There's nothing wrong with some groups having more influence than others in society, as long as they take responsibility for the welfare of those with less influence.
- 6) I think it is okay when more dominant groups make decisions for weaker groups, as long as their objective is the welfare of the weaker.
- 7) In an ideal society, the wealthy should take care of the poor like parents take care of their children.
- 8) Social inequality in society is okay if the weak are protected by the strong.

**4) Concern for national moral image** (1 = *do not agree at all*, 7 = *fully agree*)

- 1) I want others to internalize that Germans are honest, warm and trustworthy (cf. Leach et al., 2007).
- 2) It is important to me that others have a positive moral image of Germans (cf. van Leeuwen & Täuber, 2012).
- 3) It is important to convince others that Germans act ethically (cf. SimanTov-Nachlieli & Shnabel, 2014)
- 4) I wish that the welcoming culture will restore the German's moral image within the international community (cf. Barlow et al., 2015).
- 5) It is important to me to protect the moral image of Germans, (cf. Shnabel, Halabi & Noor, 2013).
- 6) I wish that the Germans receive more credit for their generosity (cf. Wojciszke et al., 1998).



**MANUSCRIPT #3**

**“They Should Be Grateful!”**

**The Needs-Based Functions and Consequences of Protest versus Gratitude  
Expression within Intergroup Helping Relations**

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### Abstract

Refugees who protest are often accused of ingratitude and told to be grateful for what they have. We examined effects of protest versus gratitude expression from a needs-based perspective arguing that protest threatens receiving society members' social worth but increases refugees' perceived agency. In Studies 1 and 2 ( $N = 102$ ,  $N = 259$ ), Germans read that refugees protested, expressed gratitude, or did both. As expected, protest threatened while gratitude expression affirmed perceptions that Germans are socially valued. Further, protest increased while gratitude expression did not affect perceptions of refugees' agency. Conveyed social worth had a greater impact on attitudes toward refugees than their perceived agency, reflecting advantaged group members' heightened need for moral affirmation. Going beyond the needs-based perspective, Study 3 ( $N = 193$ ) tested the ideological underpinnings of gratitude demands. Results confirmed that receiving society members label protesting refugees ungrateful and demand gratitude as a function of paternalism.

*Keywords:* gratitude, protest, social worth, agency, paternalism

In November 2014, a group of refugees, who were holding a protest camp in the city center of Munich, Germany, went on a hunger strike. The protest primarily targeted the mass accommodation of refugees in shelters and their prison-like conditions but also made demands for a right to stay and better living conditions for refugees and asylum seekers in Germany in general (Kastner & Szymanski, 2014). In connection with the recent large-scale refugee migration to Europe, there has been an unprecedented wave of self-organized refugee protests across the EU from 2012 onwards. Although these protests vary in their form, they all target the issues of rights and inclusion - like the protest in Munich (Saunders, 2018).

Reactions to refugee protests have ranged from solidarity to violent attacks (Kitsantonis, 2018; Rosenberger, 2018). In the case of the hunger strike in Munich, Bavarian government representatives accused the protesting refugees of ingratitude. It was incomprehensible that the refugees, "considering their situation", would complain about the conditions in Germany. A year later, in response to refugees' growing protest, the then interior minister claimed on public television that refugees in Germany have become ungrateful and demanded more gratitude and recognition for Germany's efforts (Asylum: De Maizière, 2015). Currently, Lower Austria plans to introduce the so-called "Ten Commandments of Immigration", which newcomers have to sign and adhere to. Next to compliance with the law or learning German, stands the commandment: "You should exercise gratitude toward Austria." (Schiltz, 2019).

Despite these observations, to date, empirical research has not investigated why some members of the receiving society respond to refugees' (or other disadvantaged groups') protest by prescribing gratitude or ascribing ingratitude. Overall, psychological research has neglected to study advantaged group members' reactions to disadvantaged groups' protests or expressions of gratitude and psychological outcomes of these. To close these gaps, we investigate whether receiving society members systematically demand gratitude from refugees or accuse them of ingratitude in response to protest, and why. Applying a needs-based perspective, we propose that refugees' protest behavior and gratitude expression antagonistically affect group-specific needs and perceptions, which in turn influence receiving society members' attitudes toward refugees. Additionally, we test the ideological underpinnings of gratitude demands.

### **Great Expectations: Ingratitude Accusations and Gratitude Demands in Response to Refugee Protest**

As the 1951 Refugee Convention does not oblige the states to provide for refugees (Saunders, 2018), humanitarian state aid is more a moral duty that is guarded by an

international (institutionalized, e.g. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, UNOCHA) moral community. Therefore, state responses (i.e. logistic and material assistance) could be perceived as altruistic favors, akin to volunteerism. To the extent that receiving society members view aid as favors, they might expect gratitude from refugees. Because cultural norms disallow to express dissatisfaction with gifts or benefactors (Eibach, Wilmot, & Libby, 2015), they might also expect that refugees will not criticize the gifts. However, when refugees voice dissent about inadequate accommodation or insufficient allowances, this could be perceived as a criticism or rejection of help. Thus, protest might constitute a violation of expectations, or, of gratitude norms.

A violation of the expectation that their help will be valued is stressful because it might threaten helpers' image as caring and efficacious (Rosen, Mickler, & Collins, 1987). Considering that refugee protest might constitute an expectancy violation for some members of the receiving society, we propose that they will "cope" by demanding gratitude from refugees or accuse them of ingratitude. Moreover, we propose that these reactions are grounded in the antagonistic effects that protest and gratitude expressions from refugees have on receiving society members' fundamental needs to be socially valued.

### **The Needs-Based Functions and Consequences of Protest and Gratitude for Members of the Receiving Society**

Following structural differences in the distribution of social power and resources between groups in society, members of socially advantaged and disadvantaged groups experience divergent threats and needs. Because they have fewer privileges and power than members of advantaged groups, members of disadvantaged groups strive for empowerment and self-determination. Usually stereotyped high in the moral-social dimension (*warmth* or *communion*) but low in the agency-competence dimension (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007), they attempt to reaffirm their threatened group identities by gaining respect and self-efficacy. Advantaged group members, in contrast, are usually stereotyped as agentic and competent, but being the beneficiaries of social inequality, they can be stereotyped as cold and immoral. Advantaged group members are therefore concerned with appearing moral and warm. These are the fundamental assumptions of the Needs-Based Model of Reconciliation for the intergroup context (for a review, see Shnabel & Nadler, 2015). According to the model and empirical evidence, satisfying needs on both sides of the hierarchy via acceptance and empowerment messages, respectively, can restore group images and improve the groups' attitudes toward each other (Shnabel, Ullrich, Nadler, Dovidio, & Aydin, 2013).

Advantaged group members can also manage their moral image by providing help to disadvantaged group members. Helping the disadvantaged can create the impression of generosity and refute negative group stereotypes (for a review, see van Leeuwen & Täuber, 2010). This can in turn help to reduce anxiety about being excluded from the moral community and increase chances to receive moral approval. According to the Needs-Based Model, receiving society members as the advantaged group should be especially concerned with the affirmation of their social worth. Thus, if refugee protest is viewed as a criticism of the receiving country's assistance, its members might experience threats to their group image as being able to act communally and provide competent assistance to those in need. In turn, expressions of gratitude from refugees could be a source of reaffirmation because gratitude communicates acceptance of the benefit, its success, and appreciation toward the benefactor (Lambert, Clark, Durtschi, Fincham, & Graham, 2010). Gratitude's potential of communal reaffirmation has been demonstrated within interpersonal interactions: Helpers who received thanks experienced feelings of social worth, which encouraged them to engage in subsequent prosocial behavior (Grant & Gino, 2010). Therefore, in receiving society members' perception, gratitude from refugees could primarily function to convey social worth to them – which is why they might demand it. In turn, refugee protest create the impression among receiving society members that their group is being conveyed little social worth.

As people derive their well-being from their social identities (Greenaway, Cruwys, Haslam, & Jetten, 2016), they should be motivated to safeguard them by advocating for their group needs. Because criticism or approval of help influences receiving society members' needs for moral approval, whether refugees protest or express thanks should determine perceptions of and attitudes toward refugees. For example, receiving society members who felt that the incoming refugees threatened their personal needs, displayed more ingroup defense, negative bias and prejudice against refugees (Lueders, Prentice, & Jonas, 2019). In turn, an affirmation of advantaged groups' warmth (but not competence) improved their attitudes toward disadvantaged groups and increased their willingness to change the status quo toward equality (Shnabel et al., 2013). Consequently, protest might lead to negative attitudes toward refugees among receiving society members, because the refugees might be perceived to convey little social worth, while gratitude expressions should lead to positive attitudes because refugees might be perceived to convey great social worth to receiving society members.

### **The Effects of Protest and Gratitude for Need-Based Perceptions of Refugees**

Refugees have usually fled their homes to escape war, suppressive regimes, or economic hardship, in the hope to find a better, self-governed life in the receiving countries. Their stories usually speak of courage, assertiveness, and stamina, traits that are ascribed to agency (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007). However, the dominant conception of refugees in receiving countries is that of passive, dependent, apolitical beings (Saunders, 2018). This may be owed to their status within the social system. Refugees' agency is often limited by long waiting times for their asylum decision and state regulations, such as restrictions on work possibilities or dependency on welfare policies. Meanwhile, being the objects of volunteerism and social work, the image of refugees as dependent help recipients is often reproduced in "benevolent" settings as well (Halabi & Nadler, 2010).

This social construction of refugees is challenged when refugees self-organize to protest against their situation. Protesting is agentic because the protesters become active to advocate for the goals of their group by trying to influence decision-makers (Rosenberger, 2018). Considering the predictions of the need-based model, but also refugees' flight history and dependent status in the receiving countries, refugees should be strongly concerned with their groups' agency. Protesting could not only function to saturate needs of self-governance and autonomy but increase the perception of the group as agentic. Agency is a positive, desired trait (Suitner & Maass, 2008) that is indicative of a higher status (Carrier, Louvet, Chauvin, & Rohmer, 2014), and is associated with higher respect and liking (Wojciszke, Abele, & Baryla, 2009). Thus, if protest increases perceptions of agency, because agency is positive, protest should lead to positive attitudes toward refugees among receiving society members.

However, within the social judgment of others, perceptions of warmth dominate perceptions of agency (Wojciszke and Abele, 2008). While agency informs observers about the outgroups' ability to advance their group (self-profitability), warmth informs to what extent their ingroup might benefit from the outgroup's actions (other-profitability, Abele & Wojciszke, 2007). Thus, receiving society members, on top of their heightened need for socio-moral approval, should be more interested in how refugees' protest affects their feelings of conveyed social worth than in how it affects refugees' agency. Because conveyed social worth benefits the receiving society members directly, the extent to which refugees convey social worth should determine receiving society members' reactions toward protesting refugees over perceptions of their agency (Abele & Bruckmüller, 2011).

Gratitude expressions also benefit receiving society members directly because they convey social worth to them (Grant & Gino, 2010). Gratitude expressions are primarily focused on rewarding benefactors. Through thanks, beneficiaries save benefactors' face because they communicate that the benefactors had the ability and goodwill to provide a sufficient benefit. Meanwhile, beneficiaries communicate that they "owe" the benefactors, imposing upon themselves the debt to return the favor, which could limit their freedom of action (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Considering this, gratitude expressions can be described as other-profitable, communal, rather than self-profitable, agentic acts (see Kruse, Chancellor, & Lyubomirsky, 2014). Therefore, gratitude expressions should not affect perceptions of refugees' agency. Gratitude expressions, on the contrary, could elicit the impression that the refugees are satisfied with the benefits and accept their dependency. Thus, when refugees express gratitude, receiving society members' attitudes toward them should be determined by conveyed social worth alone.

### **The Ideology behind Gratitude Demands**

So far, we have argued that receiving society members demand gratitude when faced with refugee protests because they perceive a lack of conveyed social worth. However, going beyond the Needs-Based Model, we argue that ideological variables can explain who is more likely to demand gratitude. While affirmation of social worth might be a proximal outcome of gratitude demands, the paramount goal could be to maintain the social hierarchy while bolstering the ingroup image. It was found that people holding paternalistic beliefs are particularly concerned with the ingroups' moral image and tend to provide help that maintains refugees' dependency (Becker, Ksenofontov, Siem, & Love, 2019). Paternalism describes an ideology, in which social inequality is justified by the advantaged groups' care for the disadvantaged group. In a "fatherly" way, the advantaged group claims to act in favor of the disadvantaged group, while the disadvantaged group is expected to be grateful and loyal. Instead of drawing on force to maintain the hierarchy and risking appearing hostile, paternalists can uphold their generous image by methods of "sweet persuasion" - for example by providing aid to the disadvantaged group (Jackman, 1994).

Considering paternalists' concern for a positive moral group image and advantaged groups' need for moral reaffirmation, the expectancy violation via protest should be stronger for receiving society members who endorse paternalistic beliefs. Because they more strongly want and expect their efforts to be rewarded, paternalists should be more likely to demand gratitude from protesting refugees or accuse them of ingratitude. This is in line with research showing that helpers, who considered the success of the helping interaction important for their

self-image, had especially negative reactions against help-recipients when their help was resisted (Cheuk & Rosen, 1987). Thus, gratitude demands and ingratitude accusations should function to reduce paternalists' concerns about upholding a positive moral image of their nation.

### **The Present Research**

We conducted three studies in which we manipulated whether refugees protested or expressed thanks and examined the effects on perceptions of refugees' agency, perceptions of conveyed social worth, and how these perceptions affected receiving society members' attitudes toward refugees (Studies 1 and 2). We predicted that refugee protest should decrease the perception among receiving society members that they convey social worth to them but should increase perceptions of refugees' agency (Hypothesis 1). Contrastingly, refugees' expression of gratitude should increase the perception that they convey social worth to receiving society members, but should not affect perceptions of refugees' agency (Hypothesis 2). Further, as an effect of protest, decreases in conveyed social worth should lead to negative attitudes toward refugees, while increases in perceived agency should elicit positive attitudes (Hypothesis 3a). However, perceptions of conveyed social worth should determine reactions toward refugees (Hypothesis 3c). As an effect of gratitude expression, increases in conveyed social worth should lead to positive attitudes toward refugees (Hypothesis 3b). Finally, in Study 3, we tested whether refugee protest elicits gratitude demands and ingratitude accusations among receiving society members (Hypothesis 4) – particularly among those high in paternalism (Hypothesis 5).

### **Study 1**

We manipulated in a bogus newspaper article whether refugees protested or expressed gratitude and tested how protest and gratitude expression, respectively, affected perceptions of social worth and agency, and how these perceptions affected receiving society members' attitudes toward refugees. Specifically, we measured their overall perception of the refugees, admiration, which was found to be an inhibitor of anti-immigrant political action (Sweetman, Spears, Livingstone, & Manstead, 2013), and endorsement of restrictions for refugees, which is antithetical to goals of refugee protest.

### **Method**

#### ***Participants***

Participants were recruited through social media and online survey platforms in exchange for course credit or participation in a voucher raffle. The final sample consisted of

102 Germans (61 women, 41 men;  $M_{age} = 29.23$ ,  $SD_{age} = 8.82$ ).<sup>1</sup>

A sensitivity analysis conducted with G\*Power (Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007) showed that to reach  $\geq 80\%$  power, a sample of  $N = 102$  would require an effect of Hedges  $g_s = 0.62$ .

### ***Design and Procedure***

The study was advertised as assessing opinions about society and refugees in Germany. After answering demographic questions, participants were randomly assigned to read one out of three bogus online media articles that were ostensibly published by a well-known national broadcasting station: an article in which refugees protested without expressing gratitude (protest,  $n = 36$ ), an article in which refugees expressed gratitude but did not protest (gratitude,  $n = 32$ ), or an article in which refugees protested and expressed gratitude (protest & gratitude,  $n = 34$ ) that formed the control condition. We used this control condition because, compared to a “no action”-condition where the refugees neither protest nor express gratitude, comparisons to the protest & gratitude condition offer more unbiased insights, particularly for agency, by holding constant the action-dimension.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, this allowed us to measure the isolated effects of the experimental conditions because they form the units of the control condition.

The articles can be found in the supplemental materials (SOM). Each article described a refugee shelter in a rural area and first gave an objective account of the housing conditions, the volunteer aid and standard financial support, which the refugees receive, and included a picture of refugees in a dormitory.

In the protest condition, participants continued reading that the residents of the shelter gathered for a protest at the town hall to criticize the housing conditions, and demanding better financial support and apartments in the city so they get a better chance to integrate. In the gratitude condition, the residents gather at the town hall to express their gratitude to Germany and Germans for taking them in and for the financial help. In the protest & gratitude condition, the refugees gather to express their gratitude but also to protest. This condition combined the exact elements of the gratitude and the protest condition.

Next, participants indicated how positively or negatively they perceived the refugees mentioned in the article and rated their agency. Then we measured admiration, endorsement of restrictions for refugees and perceptions of conveyed social worth. To ensure that the effects were not due to differences between the articles unrelated to the manipulation, we asked participants to assess the article’s features (Täuber & van Zomeren, 2012). Participants

responded to a manipulation check and a seriousness check and were debriefed and compensated.<sup>3</sup>

### **Measures**

For the complete scales and factor analyses, see SOM.

**Social Worth.** We adapted Grant and Gino's (2010) social worth measure and asked participants to what extent they felt that Germans are valued by the refugees and receive recognition from them (7-point scales 1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). We excluded the third item to improve reliability ( $r(101) = .88, p < .001$ ).

**Agency.** We assessed the refugees' perceived agency on three items adapted from Abele and Wojciszke (2007) and Wojciszke and Abele (2008), assertive, self-confident, active, and added synonyms and antonyms (determined, passive, capable of acting) to increase reliability ( $\alpha = .76$ ; 7-point scales 1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*).<sup>4</sup>

**Overall Perception.** Participants indicated how they overall perceived the refugees mentioned in the article on a 7-point scale ranging from -3 = *very negatively* to 3 = *very positively*.

**Admiration.** We assessed admiration with two items from Sweetman and colleagues (2013). Participants indicated on 7-point scales whether they felt admiration and respect toward the refugees (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*,  $r(102) = .69, p < .001$ ).

**Restrictions.** We measured restrictions against refugees with five items (7-point scales, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Examples were "These refugees should have fewer rights",  $\alpha = .90$ .

**Manipulation Check.** We administered the items "In the report, the refugees expressed their gratitude" and "In the report, the refugees engaged in protest" to which participants could respond "yes", "no" or "I don't remember".

**Article Features.** Participants indicated to what extent they agree that the article is serious, credible, comes from a politically neutral and reliable source, and is written coherently ( $\alpha = .90$ , 7-point scales, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Manipulation Check**

More participants indicated that the refugees expressed gratitude in the conditions containing gratitude expression than in the conditions not containing gratitude expression,  $X^2(1) = 89.25, p < .001$ . Similarly, more participants indicated that the refugees protested in the conditions containing protest than in the conditions not containing protest,  $X^2(1) = 59.72,$

$p < .001$ . There was no significant effect of condition on article features,  $F(2,99) = 0.31, p = .735$ .

Table 1 summarizes the expected pattern of results. Table 2 displays means, standard deviations, correlations among study variables, and results from the planned comparisons and post hoc tests (see Figures S1a – S1e in the SOM). We tested our predictions in two ways: with planned contrasts between the experimental conditions and with planned contrasts between the experimental conditions and the protest & gratitude control group.

### ***Social Worth***

Planned contrasts revealed that social worth was perceived to be lower in the protest condition ( $M = 3.22, SD = 1.42$ ) compared to the gratitude condition ( $M = 4.58, SD = 1.76; t(99) = 3.67, p < .001$ , Hedges'  $g_s = 0.86, 95\% CI [0.36, 1.35]$ ) and the protest & gratitude condition ( $M = 4.21, SD = 1.37; t(99) = 2.71, p = .008$ , Hedges'  $g_s = 0.71, 95\% CI [0.23, 1.19]$ ). Social worth was perceived to be higher in the gratitude condition when compared to the protest condition, but not when compared to the protest & gratitude condition,  $t(99) = 0.99, p = .323$ .

### ***Agency***

Planned contrasts revealed that agency was perceived to be higher in the protest condition ( $M = 4.64, SD = 1.00$ ) when compared to the gratitude condition ( $M = 4.00, SD = 1.01; t(99) = 2.84, p = .006$ , Hedges'  $g_s = 0.64, 95\% CI [0.15, 1.13]$ ), and not when compared to the protest & gratitude condition ( $M = 4.00, SD = 1.01; t(99) = -0.24, p = .812$ , Hedges'  $g_s = 0.64, 95\% CI [0.15, 1.13]$ ). Agency was perceived to be lower in the gratitude condition compared to the protest condition, and compared to the protest & gratitude condition,  $t(99) = 3.03, p = .003$ , Hedges'  $g_s = 0.78, 95\% CI [0.28, 1.28]$ .

### ***Mediations***

To examine whether perceived social worth and agency as a function of protest or gratitude expression determine attitudes toward refugees we conducted parallel mediation analyses in PROCESS (Hayes, 2013, 10,000 bootstrap samples for bias-corrected bootstrap 95% confidence intervals). To isolate the effects of protest, we compared the gratitude condition to the protest & gratitude condition, and to isolate the effects of gratitude expression, we compared the protest condition with the protest & gratitude condition. Details of the mediation analyses are reported in the SOM.

**Effects of protest.** Against expectations, social worth did not mediate effects of protest on any of the dependent variables, because isolated effects of protest did not significantly predict social worth. The specific indirect effect via increased agency was

positive for the overall perception of refugees ( $b = 0.24$ ,  $SE = 0.12$ , 95% CI [0.05, 0.53]) and admiration ( $b = 0.35$ ,  $SE = 0.15$ , 95% CI [0.10, 0.69]), but not significant for restrictions for refugees ( $b = -0.20$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ , 95% CI [-0.54, 0.08]).

**Effects of gratitude expression.** The specific indirect effect of gratitude via increased social worth was positive for the overall perception of refugees ( $b = 0.54$ ,  $SE = 0.22$ , 95% CI [0.16, 1.03]), for admiration ( $b = 0.55$ ,  $SE = 0.21$ , 95% CI [0.17, 1.004]), and negative for restrictions for refugees ( $b = -0.40$ ,  $SE = 0.20$ , 95% CI [-0.83, -0.08]).

In sum, we showed that protest is indicative of lower perceived social worth and higher perceived agency and that gratitude expression is indicative of higher levels of perceived social worth, but is not indicative of perceptions of agency, confirming Hypotheses 1 and 2. Gratitude expression led to positive attitudes toward refugees via increases in conveyed social worth, confirming Hypothesis 3b. Partly confirming Hypothesis 3a, protest led to positive attitudes via increased agency. However, isolated effects of protest did not yield significant differences in social worth and, hence, no indirect effects. This might be because the refugees in the protest & gratitude condition might have conveyed social worth when they expressed a wish to integrate as a byproduct of their demands. Consequentially, we could not test Hypothesis 3c. Because the conditions containing protest, but not the gratitude condition, informed about deficits in the refugees' living conditions, it could be argued that the effects are confounded with this knowledge. To account for these limitations, we conducted Study 2.

## Study 2

Study 2 was a conceptual replication of Study 1 with increased test power and an improved experimental manipulation. Additionally, we studied how social worth and agency perceptions affected helping and harming intentions, as two basic types of discriminatory intergroup behaviors (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007).

### Method

#### *Participants*

We recruited participants from Prolific. The final sample consisted of 259 Germans (121 women, 137 men, 1 other;  $M_{age} = 30.93$ ,  $SD_{age} = 9.48$ ). The average score on the left (1) - right (7) political orientation dimension was  $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ .

We based the a priori power analysis on finding at least medium-sized effects (Hedges  $g_s \geq .50$ ) as detected for the planned contrasts in Study 1. To ensure that we have  $\geq 80\%$  test

power to detect those effects at  $\alpha = .05$  (two-tailed), we sampled at least 64 participants per condition.

### ***Design and Procedure***

The procedure was identical to Study 1 except that, now, we measured agency and social worth before the dependent variables. Again, participants were assigned to read one out of three bogus newspaper articles (protest:  $n = 67$ ; gratitude:  $n = 128$ ; protest & gratitude,  $n = 64$ ).<sup>5</sup>

The articles were almost identical to the ones used in Study 1. However, now, there was no picture and no information about the refugees' intention to integrate. This time, all articles informed about deficits in the refugees' living conditions. To avoid the impression that refugees criticized the benefits in all conditions, participants now read that the volunteers complain about the housing conditions and finances. To avoid the impression that the volunteers were complaining on behalf of the refugees, the volunteers state that they have not been able to assess what the refugees think about their housing situation, because they visit them too rarely. Then, participants continued reading that the refugees either protested, expressed gratitude, or did both.

### ***Measures***

Measures were identical to Study 1 except for the manipulation check and helping and harming intentions. Reliabilities were: agency,  $\alpha = .81$ ; social worth,  $r(259) = .88, p < .001$ ; admiration,  $r(259) = .73, p < .001$ ; restrictions,  $\alpha = .88$ ; article features,  $\alpha = .88$ .

**Helping and Harming Intentions.** We asked participants how likely (7-point scales, 1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*) they were to participate in various activities, which would also concern the refugees mentioned in the article. Activities targeting help were, for example, "I would do something that could help to make the refugees happy",  $\alpha = .89$ . Activities targeting harm were, for example, "I would donate to a project that finances the repatriation of refugees to their home countries",  $\alpha = .81$ .

**Manipulation Check.** Participants indicated their agreement to the items a) "In the report, the refugees engaged in protest", b) "In the report, the refugees expressed their gratitude", and c) "In the report, the refugees both expressed their gratitude and protested" (7-point scales, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Manipulation Check***

Pairwise comparisons revealed that agreement to a) was highest for the protest condition ( $ps < .001$ ), agreement to b) was highest for the gratitude condition ( $ps < .001$ ), and

agreement to c) was highest for the protest & gratitude condition ( $ps < .001$ ). There was no significant effect of condition on article features,  $F(2,256) = 0.66, p = .516$ .

Table 3 displays means, standard deviations, correlations among study variables, and results from the planned comparisons and post hoc tests (see Figures S1a-S1g in the SOM).

### ***Social Worth***

Planned contrasts revealed that social worth was perceived to be lower in the protest condition ( $M = 3.18, SD = 1.26$ ) compared to the gratitude condition ( $M = 5.23, SD = 1.42, t(256) = 10.31, p < .001, Hedges' g_s = 1.50, 95\%CI [1.17, 1.83]$ ), and the protest & gratitude condition ( $M = 4.73, SD = 1.14, t(256) = 6.73, p < .001, Hedges' g_s = 1.29, 95\%CI [0.91, 1.67]$ ). Social worth was perceived to be higher in the gratitude condition compared to the protest condition, and compared to the protest & gratitude condition,  $t(256) = 2.48, p = .014, Hedges' g_s = 0.38, 95\%CI [0.07, 0.68]$ .

### ***Agency***

Planned contrasts revealed that agency was perceived to be higher in the protest condition ( $M = 4.41, SD = 1.13$ ) compared to the gratitude condition ( $M = 4.04, SD = 0.91, t(112.36) = 2.35, p = .021, Hedges' g_s = 0.37, 95\%CI [0.08, 0.67]$ ), and tended to be lower when compared to the protest & gratitude condition ( $M = 4.70, SD = 0.78, t(117.73) = -1.70, p = .091$ ). Agency was perceived to be lower in the gratitude condition compared to the protest condition, and compared to the protest & gratitude condition,  $t(145.32) = 5.23, p < .001, Hedges' g_s = 0.76, 95\%CI [0.45, 1.07]$ .

### ***Mediations***

We used the same type of analysis as in Study 1. Details of the mediation analyses are reported in the SOM.

**Effects of Protest.** Protest predicted the *overall perception of refugees* negatively via social worth ( $b = -0.28, SE = 0.11, 95\% CI [-0.51, -0.07]$ ) and positively via agency ( $b = 0.15, SE = 0.06, 95\% CI [0.03, 0.27]$ ). Protest predicted *admiration* negatively via social worth ( $b = -0.29, SE = 0.12, 95\% CI [-0.53, -0.07]$ ) and positively via agency ( $b = 0.17, SE = 0.08, 95\% CI [0.02, 0.34]$ ). Protest predicted *restrictions for refugees* positively via social worth ( $b = 0.33, SE = 0.13, 95\% CI [0.08, 0.57]$ ), but not via agency ( $b = -0.04, SE = 0.06, 95\% CI [-0.17, 0.08]$ ). Protest predicted *helping intentions* negatively via social worth ( $b = -0.24, SE = 0.09, 95\% CI [-0.43, -0.06]$ ), but not via agency ( $b = 0.07, SE = 0.06, 95\% CI [-0.04, 0.21]$ ). Protest predicted *harming intentions* positively via social worth ( $b = 0.26, SE = 0.11, 95\% CI [0.06, 0.50]$ ), but not via agency ( $b = -0.04, SE = 0.09, 95\% CI [-0.22, 0.12]$ ).

**Effects of Gratitude Expression.** The specific indirect effect of gratitude via increased social worth was positive for the *overall perception of refugees* ( $b = 1.10, SE = 0.21, 95\% CI [0.73, 1.54]$ ), for *admiration* ( $b = 1.24, SE = 0.23, 95\% CI [0.83, 1.72]$ ), and *helping intentions* ( $b = 0.81, SE = 0.20, 95\% CI [0.47, 1.22]$ ), and negative for *restrictions for refugees* ( $b = -1.13, SE = 0.22, 95\% CI [-1.61, -0.73]$ ), and for *harming intentions* ( $b = -0.78, SE = 0.21, 95\% CI [-1.22, -0.39]$ ).

Overall, the results were consistent with the findings of Study 1. Again, we were able to confirm Hypotheses 1 and 2 by showing that is indicative of lower perceived social worth and higher perceived agency and that gratitude expression is indicative of higher levels of perceived social worth, but is not indicative of perceptions of agency. This time, we could confirm Hypotheses 3a and 3b by showing that protest led to positive attitudes via increased agency and negative attitudes via decreases in social worth and that gratitude expression led to positive attitudes via increases in social worth. In line with Hypothesis 3c, effects on attitudes were mediated by either social worth alone or indirect effects via social worth were larger than via agency.

### Study 3

In Study 3, we examined the antagonistic relationship of gratitude and protest by testing whether receiving society members directly demand gratitude from refugees in response to their protest or label them ungrateful (Hypothesis 4). We also examined whether this effect is moderated by paternalism (Hypothesis 5). Moreover, to understand how paternalism relates to these reactions, we examined concerns for a national moral image as a mediator.

### Method

#### *Participants*

Participants were recruited on social media and online survey platforms in exchange for course credit or participation in a voucher raffle. The final sample consisted of 193 Germans (139 women, 54 men;  $M_{age} = 29.09, SD_{age} = 9.40$ ). The average score on the left (1) - right (7) political orientation dimension was  $M = 3.37, SD = 1.12$ .

Because the effect was novel, we based the a priori power analysis on finding at least a medium-sized effect (Hedges  $g_s \geq .50$ ). To ensure that we have  $\geq 80\%$  test power to detect it at  $\alpha = .05$  (two-tailed), we aimed to sample at least 64 participants per condition.

### ***Design and Procedure***

The procedure was similar to the one in Study 2, except for, now, participants were assigned to read either an article where the refugees did not engage in any action (after reading about the volunteers' account of the refugees' situation, they moved on to the measures;  $n = 91$ ) or where they protested ( $n = 102$ ). Then we measured to what extent participants demanded gratitude from refugees or accused them of ingratitude, paternalistic beliefs, and concern for the national moral image.

### ***Measures***

For the complete scales and factor analyses, see SOM.

**Gratitude Demands.** We measured how strongly participants demanded gratitude from refugees or accused them of ingratitude with six and five items, respectively (7-point scales, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). Examples were “German society deserves more gratitude from these refugees” and “These refugees lack gratitude”. An exploratory factor analysis suggested a one-factor solution (see SOM). Thus, we combined the scales ( $\alpha = .97$ ).

**Paternalistic Beliefs.** We assessed paternalistic beliefs with eight items from Becker et al. (2019), for example, “Social inequality is okay for me as long as the strong take care of the weak.” ( $\alpha = .85$ ; 7-point scales, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

**Concern for the National Moral Image.** We assessed concerns for the moral national image with six items from Becker et al. (2019), for example, “It is important to me to protect the moral image of Germans” ( $\alpha = .88$ ; 7-point scales, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

**Article Features.** We used the same measure as in Studies 1 and 2 ( $\alpha = .86$ , 7-point scales, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

**Manipulation Check.** Participants indicated their agreement to the items a) “It was just a report about a refugee shelter. Further activities of the refugees were not reported” and b) “In the report, the refugees engaged in protest” on 7-point scales (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Manipulation Check***

Pairwise comparisons revealed that agreement to item a) was highest in the no action condition and agreement to item b) was highest in the protest condition ( $ps < .001$ ). There was no significant effect of condition on article features,  $t(191) = 1.19$ ,  $p = .235$ .

Gratitude demands correlated positively with paternalistic beliefs ( $r(193) = .30, p < .001$ ) and concerns for the national moral image ( $r(193) = .28, p < .001$ ). Paternalistic beliefs correlated positively with concerns for the national moral image ( $r(193) = .24, p = .001$ ) and did not significantly differ between conditions,  $t(193) = -1.48, p = 0.141, 95\% \text{ CI} [-0.57, 0.08]$ .

### ***Gratitude demands***

As expected, gratitude demands were higher when refugees protested ( $M = 3.63, SD = 1.54$ ) than when they did not engage in any action ( $M = 3.02, SD = 1.41$ ),  $t(191) = -2.84, p = .005, 95\% \text{ CI} [-1.03, -0.18], d = 0.41, 95\% \text{ CI} [0.13, 0.70]$ .

The interaction between condition and paternalistic beliefs approached significance,  $F(1, 189) = 3.44, p = 0.065, 95\% \text{ CI} [-0.02, 0.69]$ . Protest tended to trigger gratitude demands among those who scored high on paternalistic beliefs (1 *SD*:  $b = 0.90, SE = 0.29, p = .002, 95\% \text{ CI} [0.32, 1.47]$ ) but not among those who had low scores on paternalistic beliefs (-1 *SD*:  $b = 0.11, SE = 0.30, p = .714, 95\% \text{ CI} [-0.48, 0.70]$ ).

Following up on this effect, we tested whether concerns for the national moral image mediate the relationship between paternalistic beliefs and gratitude demands. The indirect effect was significant,  $b = 0.07, SE = 0.03, 95\% \text{ CI} [0.01, 0.14]$ .

Confirming Hypothesis 5, participants responded to refugee protest by demanding gratitude from refugees or accusing them of ingratitude. This effect tended to apply to receiving society members who held stronger paternalistic beliefs, which might indicate that gratitude demands function to maintain a paternalistic relationship with low power group members. Results further showed that receiving society members holding paternalistic beliefs demand gratitude from refugees because they are concerned about holding up a positive moral image of their nation.

## **General Discussion**

The present research provides the first empirical evidence and a potential explanation for the observation that receiving society members react to refugee protests by demanding gratitude or accusing refugees of ingratitude. Overall, our set of studies speaks to the needs-based functions of these reactions by suggesting that, through demanding gratitude, receiving society members attempt to restore their social worth that they perceive to be damaged by protest. Specifically, our studies consistently show that receiving society members perceive protesting refugees as more agentic but as conveying lack of social worth to them, while grateful refugees are not perceived as more agentic but as conveying social worth. In line with the primacy-of-warmth effect, receiving society members formed their attitudes toward the

refugees based on how much the refugees' actions profited their ingroup, that is, conveyed social worth, above perceptions of how these actions profited the refugees, that is, improved their agentic image. Receiving society members who perceived appreciation from refugees, perceived them more positively, admired them more and were more willing to help and less willing to harm refugees or impose restrictions on them. Finally, extending the needs-based perspective, we showed that gratitude demands and needs satisfaction can be a matter of paternalistic ideology.

Although protests by refugees usually address political and policy authorities, our findings indicate that protests, as well as expressions of gratitude, affect receiving society members' group-based psychological needs. Supporting a social identity perspective, this might suggest that, by extension, members of the receiving society regard themselves as benefactors, which, through of gratitude norms, entitles them to the refugees' gratitude – and which enables them to demand it. Extending previous findings in the interpersonal domain (Grant & Gino, 2010), we show that gratitude is a desired source for social worth in the intergroup context as well. Moreover, we test how members of advantaged groups react to disadvantaged group members' gratitude expressions, which has not been studied before.

Our research shows that protest and gratitude expression target opposite points of the same continuum, perceptions of the ingroups' social worth. Because gratitude can be conceived of as approval and acceptance of a benefit (Lambert et al., 2010), protest could indeed be conceived of as criticism or rejection of a benefit. The findings further support previous research showing that members of disadvantaged groups who reject advantaged group help can be perceived in negative terms (e.g., Wang, Silverman, Gwinn, & Dovidio, 2015). Overall, our studies yield a consistent pattern in which refugees were judged best when they expressed gratitude, and worst when they protested (see Figures S1a – S1g in the SOM). Our research, however, extends previous findings by showing the *mechanism* of this relation - social worth - and providing the first test of *reactions* to protest - gratitude demands and ingratitude accusations - beyond perceptions (Teixeira, Spears, & Yzerbyt, 2019).

Together with previous research on the Needs-Based Model, these findings convey the impression that satisfying receiving society members' needs, given that they are in power, will result in better outcomes for everyone involved. However, our research also suggests that this assessment is incomplete because it ignores issues of power involved within need satisfaction. Next, we discuss how the antagonism of need satisfaction found in our data can give rise to ideological influences, particularly paternalism. Then we propose more ways to

how gratitude demands and ingratitude accusations might contribute to maintaining relative power differences. Finally, we consider the implications of our findings for refugees.

### **Beyond Need Satisfaction: Issues of Power**

Our studies indicate that demanding gratitude within unequal intergroup helping settings could be an issue of social power. The receiving society members' wish to receive gratitude to gain social worth might jeopardize the potential to increase the perceived agency of the refugees and can cause backlash when they protest. The possibility that an action aimed at fulfilling one groups' needs can come at the expense of fulfilling the other groups' needs, as in the case of gratitude expression for disadvantaged group members, or hurt a threatened identity even more, as in the case of protest for the advantaged group, has not yet been recognized by the literature on the Need-Based Model and thus our research constitutes its extension. The question of how both groups' needs can be affirmed when this has antagonistic consequences for the involved groups poses a challenge to the model and calls for a system-level approach to the issue of reconciliation. If one group's needs come at the expense of the other's, need affirmation cannot result in mutual neutralization of damaged identities, and thus decisions about whose needs "come first" might be sensitive to the dominant ideological climate. Our research confirms that measures to satisfy group needs can be guided by ideology - in the context of intergroup helping, by paternalism.

Within a paternalistic climate, dominant groups thrive on social hierarchy because it provides them with the opportunity to improve their moral image. To maintain the social order, it is important to paternalists that both groups at the two ends of the hierarchy enact their roles, that is, receiving society members as providers of care and protection, and migrants as providers of gratitude and loyalty (Jackman, 1994). Therefore, receiving society members holding paternalistic beliefs might be particularly offended by rejection or criticism of their help (Cheuk & Rosen, 1987). Because they regard gratitude from subordinate groups as an obligation, they appeal to it by demanding gratitude from the refugees. Our findings suggest that, within a paternalistic belief system, demands for gratitude from disadvantaged groups seem to be an appropriate way to manage moral image concerns while maintaining the social order. This is consistent with previous research showing that paternalists prefer to engage in help aimed to keep the disadvantaged dependent to respond to their concerns for the national moral image (Becker et al., 2019). Thus, within a paternalistic system, the needs of the receiving society will probably take precedence over the needs of refugees.

Issues of power also concern gratitude demands and ingratitude accusations themselves. That receiving society members would demand gratitude for help that they have

not provided personally might relate to convictions that the original inhabitants of a territory are most entitled to its rights and resources, autochthony (Martinovic & Verkuyten, 2013). To the extent that receiving society members feel that refugees are less entitled to the resources of their nation, they might view state aid as something that they as a special exception share with the refugees as a favor, and therefore demand gratitude. The conception that migrants should settle for less than the original inhabitants is also depicted in the Bavarian government representatives' bewilderment mentioned above, that refugees would complain and ask for more despite their situation of need.

Ingratitude accusations, on the other hand, might constitute a form of outgroup derogation that negatively stereotype refugees on a moral dimension. This is consistent with research showing that would-be helpers whose help offer was rejected internally attributed the unfavorable outcome to the help-rejecters (Rosen et al., 1987). Ingratitude could be seen as failure to fulfill the moral obligation to reward the benefactor (McCullough, Emmons, Kilpatrick, & Larson, 2001). As morality is central to a groups' identity (Brambilla & Leach, 2014), ingratitude is a powerful accusation. In fact, "ungrateful" is one of the most disliked qualities (Dumas, Johnson, & Lynch, 2002). This does not help increase the acceptance of refugees among the receiving society. With this implication of moral failure, refugees might be shamed into refraining from protest (Gausel & Leach, 2011).

### **Why Can't They Just Be Grateful?**

Refugees and other migrants have claimed that they bear a "burden of gratitude" toward the receiving nation and its members (e.g., Nayeri, 2017). So, would refugees not be "better off" if they just expressed gratitude toward receiving society members? Our research suggests that, for low power groups, expressing gratitude toward high power groups is not trivial. Although they could benefit from gratitude on measures of individual well-being and relatedness to the advantaged group (Watkins, 2014), expressing gratitude should do little to satisfy refugees' empowerment needs and increase their perceptions of agency - which otherwise could benefit the refugees in gaining status and respect (Carrier et al., 2014). Moreover, expressing gratitude can be problematic because it can undermine low power groups' protest against unfair treatment from high power groups (Ksenofontov & Becker, 2019). Further, when refugees express thanks for help that does not really help them, this might indicate that they accept the dependency and social inequality (Halabi & Nadler, 2010). This is not only contradictory to refugees' status improvement but also violates the

humanitarian responsibility to end need (UNOCHA, 2019) - which could eventually also reflect negatively on the receiving society's image.

Although we included the protest & gratitude as a control group merely for methodological reasons, readers might wonder if expressing gratitude while still protesting might be a way to go for refugees. If their goal is to mitigate potential backlash effects while keeping perceptions of agency at a similar level as in the case of protest, this combination might seem advantageous for refugees. This finding connects to literature showing that harsh confrontations and polite confrontations can be equally advantageous to disadvantaged confronters (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006). However, recommending expressing thanks while protesting might resonate with convictions that disadvantaged group members can express criticism as long as they do it nicely (see Oluo, 2019). When people experience anger about their disadvantage, protesting nicely might not always be possible and we do not know how often this combination occurs in real life. Moreover, we cannot claim with certainty how advantageous protest vs. gratitude vs. both is to disadvantaged groups until we measure their perspective.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

As refugee protests are still rare, the newspaper format, which we used, is a common medium through which most people learn about refugee protests. Nevertheless, replicating the effects for natural observations of protest and gratitude expressions and behavioral outcomes would be essential to establish external validity. Moreover, our findings strongly call for a study of these effects from the refugee perspective.

We base our implications on the combination of our studies. However, a future study testing a moderated mediation model, with protest as the predictor, gratitude demands as the outcome, social worth and agency as mediators and paternalistic beliefs as the moderator, would not only allow for replication of our results but also examine effects that we have not studied. For example, because paternalists' image of generous helpers relies on refugees' dependency, the perceived agency of refugees could lead to negative attitudes toward refugees. This idea is in line with research showing that paternalists have an aversion to providing autonomy-oriented help to refugees, preventing that help-recipients learn how to help themselves (Becker et al., 2019).

Another avenue for future research could be to target more closely the relationship between perceptions of agency and conveyed social worth. We find a positive relationship at face value. This is plausible because both constructs target refugees and have positive

valence. However, as others have suggested (Suitner & Maass, 2008), this relation could be confounded with valence. Although controlling for valence would eliminate an important aspect of both constructs, it could reveal insights into how these perceptions are related and uniquely affect attitudes toward refugees.<sup>6</sup> Further, it is worth considering that these perceptions might work in sequence, in that, due to advantaged groups' need for moral approval, social worth determines agency, resulting in a halo effect. For disadvantaged groups, this sequence might be reversed. Due to their increased need for agency, perceptions of how much agency advantaged groups convey could determine how much disadvantaged groups decide to convey social worth to them. This idea is supported by research showing that, sometimes, agency needs have to be satisfied before groups can behave pro-socially toward each other (Simantov-Nachlieli & Shnabel, 2016). A potential sequential process could be tested in a longitudinal study.

## **Conclusion**

Affirmation of diverging group needs does not come without risks. Our findings indicate that, while protest could help refugees to be viewed as more agentic, the lack of social worth that they are perceived to convey to receiving society members can result in backlash for the refugees. At the same time, while gratitude expressions from refugees could help members of the receiving society to gain social worth, they do not increase perceptions of refugees' agency, which might be important in their attempt to gain equal status. One example that most clearly represents the antagonism of group-based needs is when disadvantaged groups are told to be grateful or accused of ingratitude when they protest unfair treatment or demand equal opportunities. As our research suggests, these reactions could help to sustain a paternalistic system, in which socially powerful groups can stay at the top by justifying that the disadvantaged "are doing well" under their care. However, when disadvantaged groups voice that they are not doing well, advantaged groups' hurt feelings of social worth can determine how much support they will receive from them. Previously, volunteers have withdrawn from volunteering because they took demands and perceived impatience on the side of refugees as signs of ingratitude (Kehler, 2018). Importantly, when concluding our findings for the real-life context, it should be recognized that, historically, advantaged group members' needs have been prioritized and this still happens today, even within the fight for social equality (Oluo, 2019).

Our research shows that the issue of gratitude within the intergroup context is an issue of power. Thus, it seems problematic to humanize expectations for gratitude from

disadvantaged groups as needs. This becomes clear when considering that advantaged groups could demand gratitude for anything that they might consider a benefit for disadvantaged group members - even rights. This, in turn, could feed into the narrative that migrants can stay as long as they show gratitude to their receiving nation - such as Austria's "commandment" for newcomers to exercise gratitude to Austria (Schiltz, 2019).

Thus, when it comes to supporting refugees and acting in their interest, gratitude expectations can backfire. While refugees' opportunities to improve their life in the receiving countries are limited, receiving society members could surely find other resources for social worth that do not come at the expense of migrants' needs.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> For details on participant exclusion, see SOM.

<sup>2</sup> Originally, we had included such a “no action”-condition (Study 1,  $n = 31$ ; Study 2,  $n = 62$ ). However, for more clarity, we excluded this condition because it differed from the protest and gratitude conditions in too many aspects. These differences arose because we focused on making the protest and gratitude conditions more comparable. Otherwise, the comparability between the no action and the protest and gratitude condition, respectively, would have been to the detriment of the comparability between the protest and gratitude condition. Effects in comparison to the “no action” condition are documented in the SOM.

<sup>3</sup> We also measured national identification (Studies 1-3), perceived national moral image threat (Studies 1-3), perceived warmth (Studies 1-3), anger toward the refugees (Study 1), willingness to provide autonomy- and dependency-oriented help (Study 3), and solidarity with refugees (Study 3) for explorative reasons.

<sup>4</sup> When assessing agency, we focused on assertiveness-related items rather than competence-related items due to their stronger connection to high status (Carrier et al. 2014).

<sup>5</sup> By accident, we sampled twice the amount of participants in the gratitude condition.

<sup>6</sup> The pattern of results was similar when we controlled for the respective other need-dimension in explorative analyses.

Table 1

*Studies 1 & 2: Expected Pattern of Results for Social Worth and Agency in Reference to the Protest & Gratitude Control Condition*

| Units of conditions  | Condition           |         |           |                     |         |           |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------|-----------|---------------------|---------|-----------|
|                      | Social worth        |         |           | Agency              |         |           |
|                      | Protest & gratitude | Protest | Gratitude | Protest & gratitude | Protest | Gratitude |
| Protest              | Low                 | Low     | /         | High                | High    | /         |
| Gratitude expression | High                | /       | High      | 0                   | /       | 0         |
| Sum                  | 0                   | -       | +         | +                   | +       | 0         |

*Note.* The cells inform about whether and how the units of the conditions are indicative of social worth and agency, respectively. “0” = not indicative, “/” = does not apply to condition. “Sum” denotes the expected differences between the conditions.

Table 2

*Study 1: Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations (Pearson's r)*

| Variables             | <i>M (SD)</i>            |                          |                           |      |                  |        |         |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|------|------------------|--------|---------|
|                       | Protest                  | Gratitude                | Protest & gratitude       | 2    | 3                | 4      | 5       |
| 1. Social worth       | 3.22 <sub>a</sub> (1.42) | 4.58 <sub>b</sub> (1.76) | 4.21 <sub>bc</sub> (1.37) | .21* | .68***           | .64*** | -.52*** |
| 2. Agency             | 4.64 <sub>a</sub> (1.00) | 4.00 <sub>b</sub> (1.01) | 4.70 <sub>a</sub> (0.78)  | -    | .19 <sup>†</sup> | .42*** | -.30**  |
| 3. Overall perception | 3.42 <sub>b</sub> (1.76) | 5.50 <sub>c</sub> (1.32) | 4.56 <sub>a</sub> (1.11)  |      | -                | .58*** | -.53*** |
| 4. Admiration         | 3.65 <sub>a</sub> (1.64) | 4.06 <sub>a</sub> (1.56) | 4.16 <sub>a</sub> (1.35)  |      |                  | -      | -.65*** |
| 5. Restrictions       | 3.17 <sub>a</sub> (1.69) | 2.50 <sub>a</sub> (1.51) | 2.50 <sub>a</sub> (1.46)  |      |                  |        | -       |

*Note.* Different subscripts within rows represent statistically significant differences at  $p < .05$  in the Games-Howell comparison and, when hypothesized, in planned contrast comparison.

<sup>†</sup> $p < .10$ . \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 3

*Study 2: Descriptive Statistics and Intercorrelations (Pearson's  $r$ )*

| Variables             | <i>M (SD)</i>             |                           |                          | 2    | 3      | 4      | 5       | 6       | 7       |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|------|--------|--------|---------|---------|---------|
|                       | Protest                   | Gratitude                 | Protest & gratitude      |      |        |        |         |         |         |
| 1. Social worth       | 3.18 <sub>a</sub> (1.26)  | 5.23 <sub>b</sub> (1.42)  | 4.73 <sub>c</sub> (1.14) | .13* | .74*** | .66*** | -.67*** | .53***  | -.42*** |
| 2. Agency             | 4.41 <sub>a</sub> (1.13)  | 4.04 <sub>b</sub> (0.91)  | 4.70 <sub>a</sub> (0.78) | –    | .13*   | .21**  | -.17**  | .23***  | -.15*   |
| 3. Overall perception | -0.25 <sub>a</sub> (1.44) | 1.62 <sub>b</sub> (1.18)  | 0.70 <sub>c</sub> (1.27) |      | –      | .74*** | -.65*** | .47***  | -.38*** |
| 4. Admiration         | 3.50 <sub>a</sub> (1.59)  | 4.61 <sub>b</sub> (1.43)  | 4.32 <sub>b</sub> (1.41) |      |        | –      | -.71**  | .65***  | -.46*** |
| 5. Restrictions       | 3.04 <sub>ac</sub> (1.53) | 2.37 <sub>bc</sub> (1.36) | 2.51 <sub>c</sub> (1.25) |      |        |        | –       | -.64*** | .64***  |
| 6. Helping intentions | 5.03 <sub>a</sub> (1.45)  | 5.41 <sub>a</sub> (1.31)  | 5.52 <sub>a</sub> (1.00) |      |        |        |         | –       | -.36*** |
| 7. Harming intentions | 3.45 <sub>a</sub> (1.63)  | 3.28 <sub>a</sub> (1.59)  | 3.26 <sub>a</sub> (1.41) |      |        |        |         |         | –       |

*Note.* Different subscripts within rows represent statistically significant differences at  $p < .05$  in the Games-Howell comparison and, when hypothesized, in planned contrast comparison.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

## Supplemental Material

### Study 1

#### Participants

Participants were recruited through social media and online survey platforms in exchange for course credit or participation in a voucher raffle. We excluded seven participants who did not meet inclusion criteria (under 18 years old, not German, not born in Germany), four who gave the same response to almost all items, one who indicated on a check-item that they did not take participation in the study seriously or did not answer truthfully, one who withdrew their consent after the debriefing, and one who had figured out the hypothesis. The pattern of results did not change when we excluded those participants who failed the manipulation check ( $n = 17$ ), so we kept them in the sample to retain test power. The final sample consisted of 102 Germans (61 women, 41 men; 61.8 % students,  $M_{age} = 29.23$ ,  $SD_{age} = 8.82$ ).

#### Experimental manipulation

January 20, 2019

Exactly one year ago, the approximately 170 refugees of various origins moved into the “Blitz” refugee shelter in Meinbeck, Lower Saxony. Last spring, the shelter briefly hit the headlines as the fastest-built residential unit in Germany.

In addition to a large common room, the property consists of a total of ten dormitories, three bathrooms and a canteen, where full-time staff serve three meals a day for little money. The residents receive irregular visits from volunteers from the neighboring city who offer leisure activities or bring donations. The accommodated refugees have no work and receive government benefits. The state pays for rent, monthly passes and health care, while a further 416 euros are available to a single person as allowance.

#### *Protest*

##### **Protest among residents of the “Blitz” refugee shelter**

On the anniversary of their move, the residents of the shelter gathered in front of the town hall *to express their criticism of the living conditions in the shelter.* “We have fled our countries and are looking for protection and a better life in Germany,” said one refugee, “*However, the conditions in the shelter are inhumane. We would like extended visiting times, overnight stays for guests and better internet access, for example, to be able to search for apartments and jobs - and better food!*” And a refugee standing next to him adds: “*The money from the state is not enough for us and we cannot find good work either. How should we integrate when we*

*are always disadvantaged? We do not feel comfortable in this shelter and in this village. We would like to get more money from Germany and large apartments in the city. Then we can integrate better."*

### **Gratitude**

#### **Gratitude among residents of the "Blitz" refugee shelter**

On the anniversary of their move, the residents of the shelter gathered in front of the town hall to express their gratitude. "We have fled our countries and are looking for protection and a better life in Germany," said one refugee. "We are really grateful to Germany and the Germans for taking us in." And a refugee standing next to him adds: "We are also very grateful to Germany for the financial support."

### **Protest & gratitude**

#### **Gratitude and protest among residents of the "Blitz" refugee shelter**

On the anniversary of their move, the residents of the shelter gathered in front of the town hall, on the one hand, to express their gratitude, but at the same *time to express their criticism of the living conditions in the shelter*. "We have fled our countries and are looking for protection and a better life in Germany," said one refugee. "We are really grateful to Germany and the Germans for taking us in. *However, the conditions in the shelter are inhumane. We would like extended visiting times, overnight stays for guests and better internet access, for example, to be able to search for apartments and jobs - and better food!*" And a refugee standing next to him adds: "We are also very grateful to Germany for the financial support. *But the money from the state is not enough for us and we cannot find good work either. How should we integrate when we are always disadvantaged? We do not feel comfortable in this shelter and in this village. We would like to get more money from Germany and large apartments in the city. Then we can integrate better*".

## **Measures**

### **Social worth**

7-point scales 1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*.

1. To what extent do you feel that Germans are valued by these refugees?
2. To what extent do you feel that Germans receive recognition from these refugees.
3. How much do you feel that Germans have made a positive difference in the lives of these refugees?

### ***Agency***

We removed three additional items, which were confounded with either the protest or the gratitude condition (e.g., capable of achieving their goals). We further excluded two items dealing with independence, because we found them to be inappropriate in the refugee context, given that refugees strongly depend on the system.

A factor analysis using direct oblimin rotation revealed two factors with Eigenvalues  $>1$  (2.82, 1.06). The screeplot suggested a one- or two-factor solution. To be consistent with Study 2 we extracted one factor. The factor explained 64.59% variance. The item loadings ranged between .45 and .68.

### ***Restrictions***

A factor analysis using direct oblimin rotation revealed one factor with an Eigenvalue  $>1$  (3.61). The screeplot confirmed the one-factor solution. The factor explained 72.13% variance. The item loadings ranged between .75 and .86.

(7-point scales, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*.)

1. These refugees should go back to their home countries.
2. These refugees should receive less support.
3. These refugees should have fewer rights.
4. These refugees should pull themselves together a bit more.
5. These refugees must make a greater effort to adapt.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Results regarding the no action-condition***

**Manipulation check.** A significant  $X^2$  test showed that the amount of participants who indicated that the refugees expressed gratitude was higher in the conditions containing gratitude expression than in the conditions not containing gratitude expression,  $X^2(1) = 114.00, p < .001$ . Similarly, the amount of participants who indicated that the refugees engaged in protest was higher in the conditions containing protest than in the conditions not containing protest,  $X^2(1) = 83.32, p < .001$ . The pattern of results did not change when we excluded those participants who failed the manipulation check ( $n = 33$ ), so we kept them in the sample to retain test power. There was no significant effect of condition on article features,  $F(3,129) = 1.43, p = .236$ .

The expected patterns of results in reference to the no action condition is summarized in Table 1. Table 2 displays means, standard deviations, and results from the planned comparisons and post hoc tests for the main effects of the manipulation (see also Figures S1a – S1e).

Table 1

*Studies 1 & 2: Expected Pattern of Results for Social Worth and Agency in Reference to the No Action Control Condition*

| Units of conditions  | Condition    |         |           |           |         |           |
|----------------------|--------------|---------|-----------|-----------|---------|-----------|
|                      | Social worth |         |           | Agency    |         |           |
|                      | No action    | Protest | Gratitude | No action | Protest | Gratitude |
| Protest              | /            | Low     | /         | /         | High    | /         |
| Gratitude expression | /            | /       | High      | /         | /       | 0         |
| Sum                  | 0            | -       | +         | 0         | +       | 0         |

*Note.* The cells inform about whether and how the units of the conditions are indicative of social worth and agency, respectively. “0” = not indicative, “/” = does not apply to condition. “Sum” denotes the expected differences between the conditions.

**Social Worth.** Planned contrasts between the no action condition and the experimental conditions revealed that social worth was perceived to be higher in the no action condition ( $M = 3.85$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ) compared to the protest condition ( $M = 3.22$ ,  $SD = 1.42$ ),  $t(59.59) = -2.22$ ,  $p = .031$ , Hedges'  $g_s = 0.52$ , 95%CI [0.04, 1.01]), and lower when compared to the gratitude condition ( $M = 4.21$ ,  $SD = 1.37$ ;  $t(46.04) = 2.07$ ,  $p = .045$ , Hedges'  $g_s = 0.52$ , 95%CI [-1.02, -0.02]).

**Agency.** Planned contrasts between the no action condition and all the experimental conditions revealed that agency was perceived to be lower in the no action condition ( $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ) compared to the protest condition ( $M = 4.64$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ;  $t(129) = 5.14$ ,  $p < .001$ , Hedges'  $g_s = 1.28$ , 95%CI [0.75, 1.81]) and the gratitude condition ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ;  $t(129) = 2.08$ ,  $p = .040$ , Hedges'  $g_s = 0.54$ , 95%CI [0.04, 1.04]).

Table 2

*Study 1: Descriptive Statistics*

| Variables                | <i>M (SD)</i>              |                          |                            |   |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|---|
|                          | No action<br><i>n</i> = 31 | Protest<br><i>n</i> = 36 | Gratitude<br><i>n</i> = 32 | Protest &<br>gratitude<br><i>n</i> = 34 |
| 1. Social worth          | 3.85 <sub>a</sub> (0.89)   | 3.22 <sub>b</sub> (1.42) | 4.58 <sub>c</sub> (1.76)   | 4.21 <sub>ac</sub> (1.37)               |
| 2. Agency                | 3.54 <sub>a</sub> (0.66)   | 4.64 <sub>b</sub> (1.00) | 4.00 <sub>c</sub> (1.01)   | 4.70 <sub>b</sub> (0.78)                |
| 3. Overall<br>perception | 4.42 <sub>a</sub> (1.12)   | 3.42 <sub>b</sub> (1.76) | 5.50 <sub>c</sub> (1.32)   | 4.56 <sub>a</sub> (1.11)                |
| 4. Admiration            | 4.10 <sub>a</sub> (1.37)   | 3.65 <sub>a</sub> (1.64) | 4.06 <sub>a</sub> (1.56)   | 4.16 <sub>a</sub> (1.35)                |
| 5. Restrictions          | 2.83 <sub>a</sub> (1.33)   | 3.17 <sub>a</sub> (1.69) | 2.50 <sub>a</sub> (1.51)   | 2.50 <sub>a</sub> (1.46)                |

*Note.* Different subscripts within rows represent statistically significant differences at  $p < .05$  in the Games-Howell comparison and, when hypothesized, in planned contrast comparison.

*n* = cell size

When compared to the no action condition, gratitude expression increased agency. We believe that this increase in agency is due to the special case of our scenario: to make the protest and gratitude conditions as comparable as possible, in both conditions, the refugees gather in front of the town hall to address the respective issue. A self-organized gathering is of course more agentic than not engaging in any action. Thus, the protest and gratitude condition is a more appropriate control condition and comparisons to this condition should yield more reliable interpretations.

### **Mediations**

**Effects of Protest.** Against expectations, social worth did not mediate effects of protest (gratitude vs. protest & gratitude) on any of the dependent variables, because protest did not significantly predict social worth ( $b = -0.37$ ,  $SE = 0.39$ ,  $p = .340$ , 95% CI [-1.15, 0.40]), unless we controlled for agency.

**Overall Perception.** As expected, protest positively predicted agency ( $b = 0.70$ ,  $SE = 0.22$ ,  $p = .002$ , 95% CI [0.26, 1.14]) which in turn predicted a positive overall perception of refugees ( $b = 0.34$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ ,  $p = .016$ , 95% CI [0.07, 0.61]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = 0.24$ ,  $SE = 0.12$ , 95% CI [0.05, 0.51]). The specific indirect effect via social worth was not significant ( $b = -0.16$ ,  $SE = 0.16$ , 95% CI [-0.48, 0.17]). The direct effect was significant ( $b = -1.02$ ,  $SE = 0.25$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-1.52, -0.52]).

**Admiration.** As expected, protest positively predicted agency which in turn positively predicted admiration ( $b = 0.51$ ,  $SE = 0.16$ ,  $p = .002$ , 95% CI [0.19, 0.82]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = 0.35$ ,  $SE = 0.16$ , 95% CI [0.10, 0.70]). The specific indirect effect via social worth was not significant ( $b = -0.18$ ,  $SE = 0.19$ , 95% CI [-0.55, 0.20]). The direct effect was not significant ( $b = -0.07$ ,  $SE = 0.29$ ,  $p = .802$ , 95% CI [-0.66, 0.51]).

**Restrictions.** Against expectations, agency did not mediate the effect of protest on restrictions against refugees ( $b = -0.20$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ , 95% CI [-0.54, 0.08]). The specific indirect effect via social worth was not significant ( $b = 0.13$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ , 95% CI [-0.15, 0.42]). The direct effect was not significant ( $b = 0.08$ ,  $SE = 0.37$ ,  $p = .840$ , 95% CI [-0.69, 0.11]).]

**Effects of Gratitude Expression.** As expected, agency did not mediate effects of gratitude on any of the dependent variables, because gratitude did not significantly predict agency ( $b = 0.05$ ,  $SE = 0.21$ ,  $p = .804$ , 95% CI [-0.38, 0.48]).

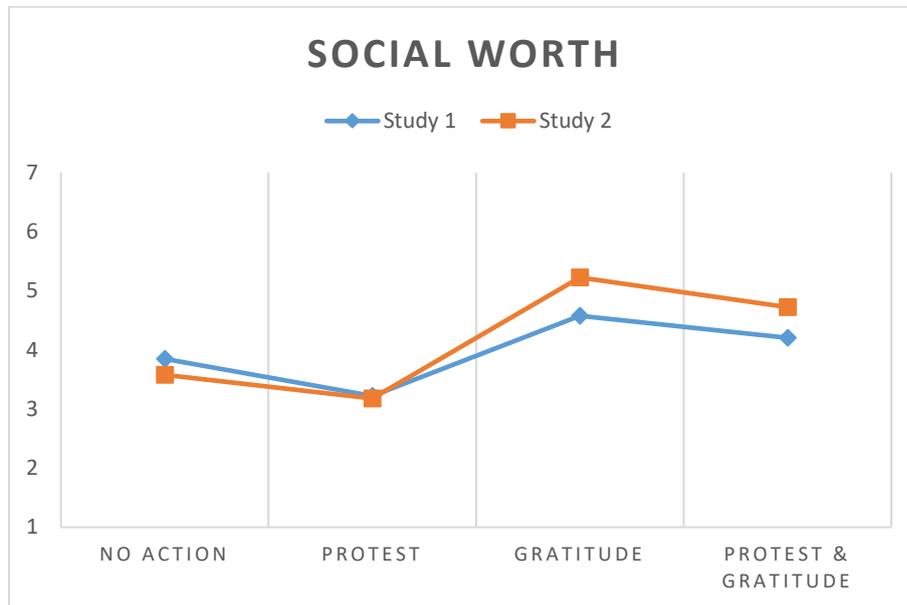
**Overall Perception.** As expected, gratitude expression positively predicted social worth ( $b = 0.98$ ,  $SE = 0.33$ ,  $p = .004$ , 95% CI [0.32, 1.65]) which in turn predicted a positive overall perception of refugees ( $b = 0.55$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.33, 0.76]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = 0.54$ ,  $SE = 0.22$ , 95% CI [0.16, 1.03]). The direct effect approached significance ( $b = 0.59$ ,  $SE = 0.30$ ,  $p = .057$ , 95% CI [-0.02, 1.19]).

**Admiration.** As expected, gratitude expression positively predicted social worth which in turn predicted admiration ( $b = 0.56$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.35, 0.77]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = 0.55$ ,  $SE = 0.21$ , 95% CI [0.17, 1.004]). The direct effect was not significant ( $b = -0.07$ ,  $SE = 0.29$ ,  $p = .821$ , 95% CI [-0.65, 0.52]).

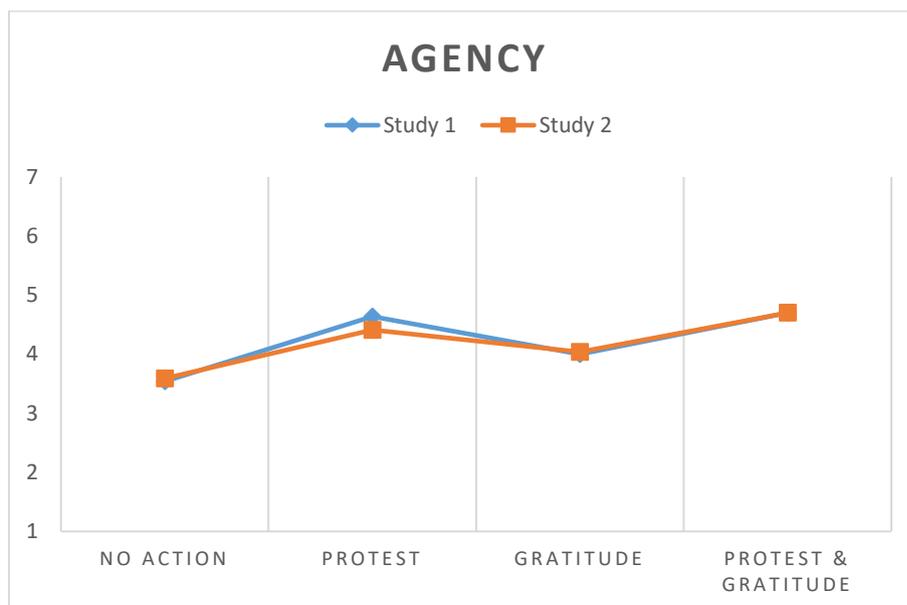
**Restrictions.** As expected, gratitude expression positively predicted social worth which in turn predicted restrictions against refugees ( $b = -0.40$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ ,  $p = .003$ , 95% CI [-0.66, -0.15]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = -0.40$ ,  $SE = 0.20$ , 95% CI [-0.83, -0.08]). The direct effect was not significant ( $b = -0.25$ ,  $SE = 0.36$ ,  $p = .487$ , 95% CI [-0.97, 0.47]).

**Figure S1a**

*Main Effects of Refugees' Protest and Gratitude Expression on Perceived Conveyed Social Worth in Studies 1 and 2*

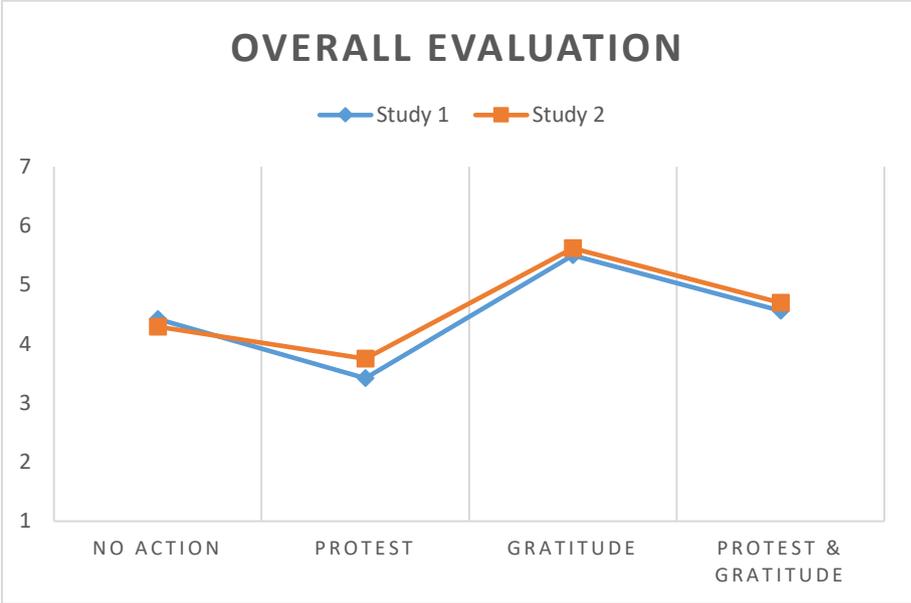
**Figure S1b**

*Main Effects of Refugees' Protest and Gratitude Expression on their Perceived Agency in Studies 1 and 2*



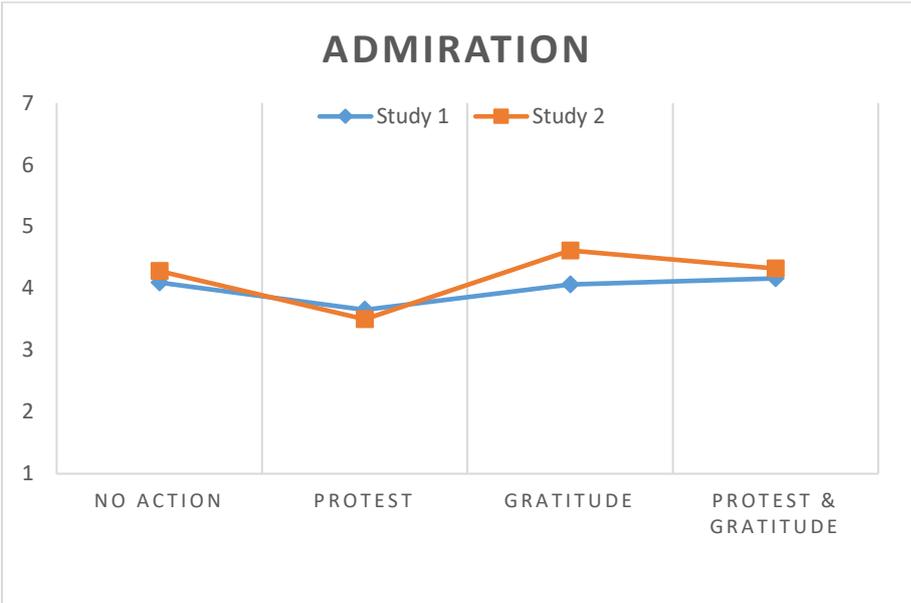
**Figure S1c**

*Main Effects of Refugees' Protest and Gratitude Expression on the Overall Evaluation of Refugees in Studies 1 and 2*



**Figure S1d**

*Main Effects of Refugees' Protest and Gratitude Expression on Admiration toward Refugees in Studies 1 and 2*

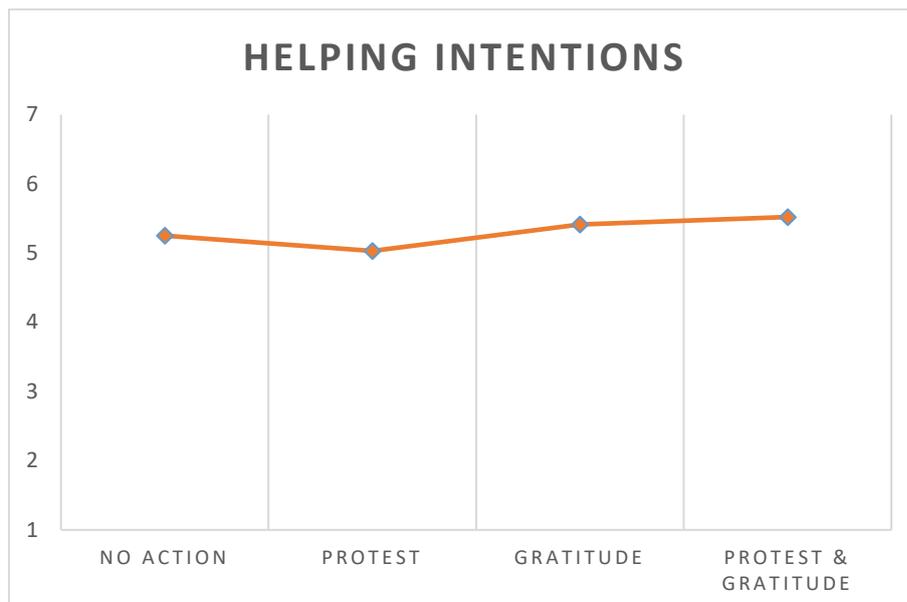


**Figure S1e**

*Main Effects of Refugees' Protest and Gratitude Expression on the Endorsement of Restrictions for Refugees in Studies 1 and 2*

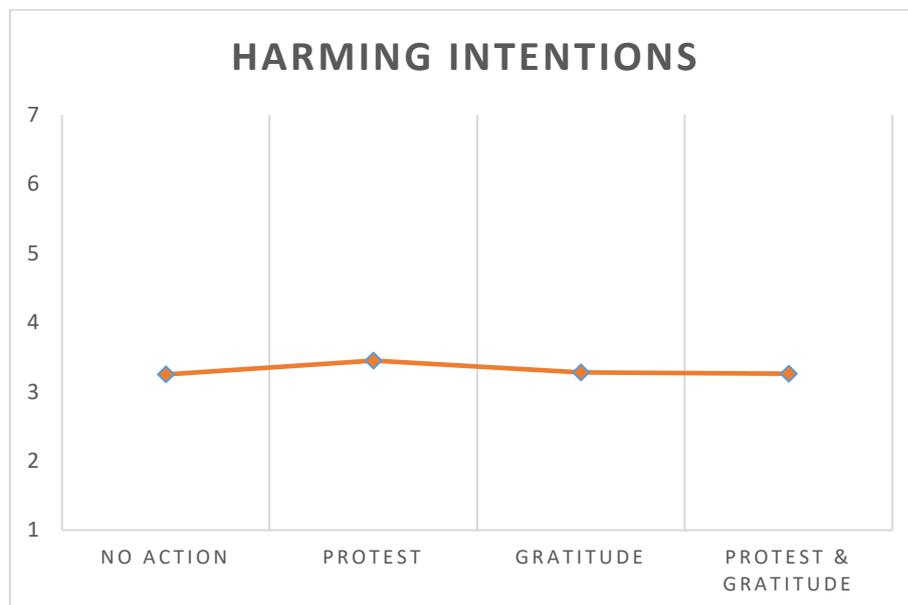
**Figure S1f**

*Main Effects of Refugees' Protest and Gratitude Expression on Intentions to Help Refugees in Study 2*



**Figure S1g**

*Main Effects of Refugees' Protest and Gratitude Expression on Intentions to Harm Refugees in Study 2*

**Study 2****Participants**

We recruited participants from Prolific. Selection criteria were German nationality, Germany as the country of birth, and age 18 and above. We excluded four participants who were not born in Germany. The final sample consisted of 259 Germans (121 women, 137 men, 1 other; 34 % students,  $M_{age} = 30.93$ ,  $SD_{age} = 9.48$ ). The average score on the left (1) - right (7) political orientation dimension was  $M = 3.12$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ .

**Experimental Manipulation**

August 02, 2019

Exactly one year ago, the approximately 170 refugees of various origins moved into the “Blitz” refugee shelter in Meinbeck, Lower Saxony. Last summer, the shelter briefly hit the headlines as the fastest-built residential unit in Germany. At the time, the residents reported that they had fled their countries to find protection and a better life in Germany.

In addition to a large common room, the property consists of a total of ten dormitories, three bathrooms and a canteen, where full-time staff serve three meals a day for little money. The accommodated refugees have no work and receive government benefits. The state pays for rent, monthly passes and health care, while a further 416 euros are available to a single person as allowance.

The residents receive irregular visits from volunteers from the neighboring city who offer leisure activities or bring donations. The volunteers complain about the living conditions in the accommodation and find that the allowance that is available to the refugees is too tight. One of the helpers said that the money that the city had invested in the rapid construction of the “Blitz”-shelter should have been invested in better living conditions for the refugees. However, what the refugees themselves think of their housing situation has so far been difficult to assess, as the volunteers are too rarely on site.

### ***Protest***

#### **Protest among residents of the “Blitz” refugee shelter**

On the anniversary of their move, the residents of the shelter gathered in front of the town hall *to express their criticism of the shelter. The conditions in the shelter were inhumane. The refugees demanded extended visiting times, better internet access and better food. In addition, the financial support was insufficient. The residents would like to receive more money and apartments in the city.*

### ***Gratitude***

#### **Gratitude among residents of the “Blitz” refugee shelter**

On the anniversary of their move, the residents of the shelter gathered in front of the town hall to express their gratitude for the shelter. They were really grateful that they lived there. The refugees also expressed their deep gratitude for the financial support.

### ***Protest & gratitude***

#### **Gratitude and protest among residents of the “Blitz” refugee shelter**

On the anniversary of their move, the residents of the shelter gathered in front of the town hall, on the one hand, to express their gratitude, but at the same time *to express their criticism of the shelter. They were really grateful that they lived there. However, the conditions in the shelter were inhumane. The refugees demanded extended visiting times, better internet access and better food. The refugees also expressed their deep gratitude for the financial support. But it was insufficient. The residents would like to receive more money and apartments in the city.*

### **Measures**

#### ***Agency***

A factor analysis using direct oblimin rotation revealed one factor with an Eigenvalue >1 (3.11). The screeplot confirmed the one-factor solution. The factor explained 51.74% variance. The item loadings ranged between .51 and .78.

### ***Restrictions***

A factor analysis using direct oblimin rotation revealed one factor with an Eigenvalue  $>1$  (3.60). The screeplot confirmed the one-factor solution. The factor explained 67.21% variance. The item loadings ranged between .71 and .83.

### ***Helping and Harming Intentions***

A factor analysis using direct oblimin rotation revealed two factors with an Eigenvalue  $>1$  (3.92, 1.64). The screeplot confirmed the two-factor solution. The first factor (help) explained 49.03% variance and the second factor (harm) 20.48%. The item loadings for the first factor ranged between .68 and .95. The item loadings for the second factor ranged between .54 and .84. The correlation between the factors was -.46.

*Help* (7-point scale, 1 = not at all, 7 = very much.)

1. I would behave kindly so that the refugees in my town feel comfortable.
2. I would behave in such a way that the refugees realize that they are welcome in Germany.
3. I would do something that could help to make the refugees happy.
4. I would act in a supportive manner to make the refugees happy.

*Harm* (7-point scale, 1 = not at all, 7 = very much.)

1. I would sign a petition demanding to check exactly how much refugees have before they can receive state benefits.
2. I would sign a petition demanding to check the refugees' financial expenses before raising their allowance.
3. I would sign a petition to ensure that refugees do not automatically get more money if the monthly unemployment money standard rate is raised.
4. I would donate to a project that finances the repatriation of refugees to their home countries.

## **Results and Discussion**

### ***Results Regarding the No Action-Condition***

**Manipulation Check.** A mixed ANOVA with the manipulation check variables as within factor and condition as between factor showed a significant interaction  $F(7.78, 819.49) = 148.94, p < .001$ . Pairwise comparisons revealed a congruent pattern, confirming the different nature of the conditions: agreement to item a) "It was just a report about a refugee shelter. Further activities of the refugees were not reported", was highest for the no action condition ( $ps < .001$ ), agreement to item b) "In the report, the refugees engaged in protest", was highest for the protest condition ( $ps < .001$ ), agreement to item c) "In the report, the

refugees expressed their gratitude”, was highest for the gratitude condition ( $ps < .001$ ), and agreement to item d) “In the report, the refugees, the refugees both expressed their gratitude and protested”, was highest for the protest & gratitude condition ( $ps < .001$ ). There was no significant effect of condition on article features,  $F(3,317) = 1.54, p = .205$ .

Table 3 displays means, standard deviations, and results from the planned comparisons and post hoc tests for the main effects of the manipulation (see also Figures S1a – S1g).

Table 3

*Study 2: Descriptive Statistics*

| Variables             | <i>M (SD)</i>              |                           |                             |   |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---|
|                       | No action<br><i>n</i> = 62 | Protest<br><i>n</i> = 67  | Gratitude<br><i>n</i> = 128 | Protest &<br>gratitude<br><i>n</i> = 64 |
| 1. Social worth       | 3.58 <sub>a</sub> (1.21)   | 3.18 <sub>a</sub> (1.26)  | 5.23 <sub>b</sub> (1.42)    | 4.73 <sub>c</sub> (1.14)                |
| 2. Agency             | 3.59 <sub>a</sub> (0.85)   | 4.41 <sub>b</sub> (1.13)  | 4.04 <sub>c</sub> (0.91)    | 4.70 <sub>b</sub> (0.78)                |
| 3. Overall perception | 4.29 <sub>ac</sub> (1.18)  | 3.75 <sub>a</sub> (1.44)  | 5.62 <sub>b</sub> (1.19)    | 4.70 <sub>c</sub> (1.27)                |
| 4. Admiration         | 4.28 <sub>a</sub> (1.53)   | 3.50 <sub>b</sub> (1.59)  | 4.61 <sub>a</sub> (1.43)    | 4.32 <sub>a</sub> (1.41)                |
| 5. Restrictions       | 2.67 <sub>a</sub> (1.53)   | 3.04 <sub>ab</sub> (1.53) | 2.37 <sub>ac</sub> (1.36)   | 2.51 <sub>a</sub> (1.25)                |
| 6. Helping intentions | 5.25 <sub>a</sub> (1.54)   | 5.03 <sub>a</sub> (1.45)  | 5.41 <sub>a</sub> (1.31)    | 5.52 <sub>a</sub> (1.00)                |
| 7. Harming intentions | 3.25 <sub>a</sub> (1.65)   | 3.45 <sub>a</sub> (1.63)  | 3.28 <sub>a</sub> (1.59)    | 3.26 <sub>a</sub> (1.41)                |

*Note.* Different subscripts within rows represent statistically significant differences at  $p < .05$  in the Games-Howell comparison and, when hypothesized, in planned contrast comparison.

**Social worth.** Planned contrasts between the no action condition and the experimental conditions revealed that social worth was perceived to be higher in the no action condition ( $M = 3.58, SD = 1.21$ ) compared to the protest condition, approaching significance ( $M = 3.18, SD = 1.26; t(317) = -1.76, p = .080, \text{Hedges' } g_s = 0.32, 95\%CI [-0.02, 0.67]$ ), and lower compared to the gratitude condition ( $M = 5.23, SD = 1.42, t(317) = 8.21, p < .001, \text{Hedges' } g_s = 1.22, 95\%CI [0.89, 1.54]$ ).

**Agency.** Planned contrasts between the no action condition and the experimental revealed that agency was perceived to be lower in the no action condition ( $M = 3.59, SD = 0.85$ ) compared to the protest condition ( $M = 4.41, SD = 1.13; t(122.15) = 4.69, p < .001, \text{Hedges' } g_s = 0.82, 95\%CI [0.46, 1.18]$ ) and compared to the gratitude condition ( $M = 4.04, SD = 0.91; t(129-03) = 2.08, p < .001, \text{Hedges' } g_s = 0.51, 95\%CI [0.20, 0.81]$ ).

Contrary to Study 1, the difference in social worth between the no action and protest condition only approached significance. We suspect (and infer from the means) that the

volunteers' account of deficits in the refugees' housing condition might have created a general atmosphere of depressed social worth and this might have unknowingly affected, in a manner of a transfer effect, how the refugees were evaluated.

### *Mediations*

#### **Effects of Protest.**

**Overall Perception.** As expected, protest negatively predicted social worth ( $b = -0.50$ ,  $SE = 0.20$ ,  $p = .015$ , 95% CI [-0.90, -0.10]) which in turn predicted a positive overall perception of refugees ( $b = 0.56$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.47, 0.66]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = -0.28$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ , 95% CI [-0.51, -0.07]). As expected, protest positively predicted agency ( $b = 0.66$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.40, 0.93]) which in turn predicted a positive overall perception of refugees ( $b = 0.22$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $p = .005$ , 95% CI [0.07, 0.37]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = 0.15$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ , 95% CI [0.03, 0.27]). The direct effect was significant ( $b = -0.78$ ,  $SE = 0.15$ , 95% CI [-1.07, -0.48]).

**Admiration.** As expected, protest negatively predicted social worth which in turn positively predicted perceptions of refugees' status-related emotions ( $b = 0.57$ ,  $SE = 0.07$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.44, 0.70]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = -0.29$ ,  $SE = 0.12$ , 95% CI [-0.53, -0.07]). As expected, protest positively predicted agency which in turn positively predicted status-related emotions ( $b = 0.26$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $p = .010$ , 95% CI [0.06, 0.46]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = 0.17$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ , 95% CI [0.02, 0.34]). The direct effect was not significant ( $b = -0.18$ ,  $SE = 0.19$ ,  $p = .356$ , 95% CI [-0.56, 0.20]).

**Restrictions.** As expected, protest negatively predicted social worth which in turn negatively predicted endorsement of restrictions against refugees ( $b = -0.67$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-0.78, -0.56]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = 0.33$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ , 95% CI [0.08, 0.57]). As expected, protest positively predicted agency, but agency did not significantly predict restrictions against refugees ( $b = -0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $p = .470$ , 95% CI [-0.23, 0.11]). The specific indirect effect was not significant ( $b = -0.37$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ , 95% CI [-0.63, -0.10]). The direct effect was not significant ( $b = -0.15$ ,  $SE = 0.16$ ,  $p = .375$ , 95% CI [-0.47, 0.18]).

**Helping Intentions.** As expected, protest negatively predicted social worth which in turn positively predicted intentions to help refugees ( $b = 0.66$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.40, 0.93]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = -0.24$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ , 95% CI [-0.43, -0.06]). As expected, protest positively predicted agency, however, agency did not predict helping intentions ( $b = 0.11$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $p = .203$ , 95% CI [-0.06, 0.29]). The specific indirect

effect was not significant ( $b = 0.07$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ , 95% CI [-0.04, 0.21]). The direct effect was not significant ( $b = 0.28$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ ,  $p = .108$ , 95% CI [-0.06, 0.61]).

**Harming Intentions.** As expected, protest negatively predicted social worth which in turn negatively predicted intentions to harm refugees ( $b = -0.53$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-0.68, -0.37]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = 0.26$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ , 95% CI [0.06, 0.50]). As expected, protest positively predicted agency, however, agency did not predict harming intentions ( $b = -0.07$ ,  $SE = 0.12$ ,  $p = .580$ , 95% CI [-0.30, 0.17]). The specific indirect effect was not significant ( $b = -0.04$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ , 95% CI [-0.22, 0.12]). The direct effect was not significant ( $b = -0.24$ ,  $SE = 0.23$ ,  $p = .301$ , 95% CI [-0.69, 0.22]).

**Effects of Gratitude Expression.** As expected, agency did not mediate effects of gratitude on any of the dependent variables, because gratitude did not significantly predict agency ( $b = 0.29$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ ,  $p = .094$ , 95% CI [-0.05, 0.62]).

**Overall Perception.** As expected, gratitude expression positively predicted social worth ( $b = 1.55$ ,  $SE = 0.21$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [1.13, 1.96]) which in turn predicted a positive overall perception of refugees ( $b = 0.71$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.56, 0.86]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = 1.10$ ,  $SE = 0.21$ , 95% CI [0.73, 1.54]). The specific indirect effect via agency was not significant ( $b = 0.05$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ , 95% CI [-0.02, 0.14]). The direct effect was not significant ( $b = -0.19$ ,  $SE = 0.22$ ,  $p = .380$ , 95% CI [-0.62, 0.24]).

**Admiration.** As expected, gratitude expression positively predicted social worth which in turn predicted admiration ( $b = 0.80$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.64, 0.97]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = 1.24$ ,  $SE = 0.23$ , 95% CI [0.83, 1.72]). The specific indirect effect via agency was not significant ( $b = 0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.05$ , 95% CI [-0.01, 0.18]). The direct effect was significant ( $b = -0.48$ ,  $SE = 0.24$ ,  $p = .048$ , 95% CI [-0.95, -0.004]).

**Restrictions.** As expected, gratitude expression positively predicted social worth which in turn negatively predicted restrictions against refugees ( $b = -0.73$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-0.89, -0.57]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = -1.13$ ,  $SE = 0.22$ , 95% CI [-1.61, -0.73]). The specific indirect effect via agency was not significant ( $b = -0.04$ ,  $SE = 0.04$ , 95% CI [-0.14, 0.02]). The direct effect was significant ( $b = 0.64$ ,  $SE = 0.23$ ,  $p = .005$ , 95% CI [0.19, 1.09]).

**Helping Intentions.** As expected, gratitude expression positively predicted social worth which in turn positively predicted intentions to help refugees ( $b = 0.53$ ,  $SE = 0.08$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.37, 0.68]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = 0.81$ ,  $SE = 0.20$ , 95% CI [0.47, 1.22]). The direct effect approached significance ( $b = -0.39$ ,  $SE = 0.22$ ,  $p = .074$ , 95% CI [-0.83, 0.04]).

**Harming Intentions.** As expected, gratitude expression positively predicted social worth which in turn negatively predicted intentions to help refugees ( $b = -0.50$ ,  $SE = 0.10$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-0.71, -0.30]). The specific indirect effect was significant ( $b = -0.78$ ,  $SE = 0.21$ , 95% CI [-1.22, -0.39]). The direct effect was significant ( $b = 0.62$ ,  $SE = 0.30$ ,  $p = .038$ , 95% CI [0.04, 1.20]).

### Study 3

#### Participants

Participants were recruited on social media and online survey platforms in exchange for course credit or participation in a voucher raffle. Selection criteria were German nationality, Germany as the country of birth, German as native language and age 18 and above. We excluded 20 participants who had indicated that they had participated in a very similar study, six who indicated on a check-item that they did not take participation in the study seriously or did not answer truthfully, six who withdrew their consent after the debriefing, and one who gave the same response to almost all items. The final sample consisted of 193 Germans (139 women, 54 men; 60.6 % students,  $M_{age} = 29.09$ ,  $SD_{age} = 9.40$ ). The average score on the left (1) - right (7) political orientation dimension was  $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ .

#### Measures

##### *Gratitude Demands and Ingratitude Accusations*

A factor analysis using direct oblimin rotation revealed two factors with Eigenvalues  $>1$  (8.19, 1.01). The screeplot suggested a one-factor solution. The factor explained 78.65% variance. The item loadings ranged between .73 and .91.

(7-point scales, 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*.)

1. I think these refugees should be grateful to be allowed to live in Germany.
2. I think these refugees should be grateful for what they have here.
3. These refugees should show more appreciation.
4. German society deserves more gratitude from these refugees.
5. Refugees should be happy with what they get here.
6. I think these refugees could show a little more gratitude.
7. I think that these refugees are ungrateful.
8. In my opinion, these refugees are simply insatiable.
9. These refugees are not grateful for what they have here.
10. These refugees lack gratitude.
11. These refugees are never satisfied.



## General Discussion

Although gratitude expressions are constant elements of daily interactions, they have been largely neglected by psychological research. This lack of research concerns the field of intergroup relations in particular. While the literature on prosocial behavior between social groups is abundant, the study of gratitude expressions within intergroup contexts as the behavioral counterparts to help and other kinds of benefits is virtually absent. However, this is not representative of the “real world” of intergroup relations. Acknowledging historical and current examples of the oppression of socially disadvantaged groups, such as chattel slavery (Boulukos, 2008) or the discourse on the (in)gratitude of immigrants in the Western world (see Kastner & Szymanski, 2014; Nayeri, 2017) this dissertation follows up on recent suggestions voiced in the philosophical and psychological literature to study potentially harmful effects of gratitude expressions (Carr, 2015; Eibach et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2016).

The present dissertation introduces the empirical study of gratitude expressions to intergroup relations and more specifically demonstrates how gratitude expressions can affect the power differential between groups. Across three manuscripts, we have tested with empirical data whether disadvantaged groups’ gratitude expressions in response to advantaged group help, alongside advantaged group help itself, influence intergroup power relations through a) affecting psychological pathways to social change, b) regulating group-specific needs, and c) enacting and transmitting paternalistic ideology. The next section summarizes and integrates the results pertaining to the effects of disadvantaged groups’ gratitude expressions and advantaged groups’ help along these three dimensions, for disadvantaged and advantaged groups. This is followed by a discussion of the theoretical implications of the present research and the implications for social change. After pointing out the general limitations of the present work, I conclude with outlining ideas for future research.

### 1. Summary and Integration of the Results

Considering the positive, reciprocal and other-oriented nature of gratitude expressions in combination with gratitude norms and the problematic effects of intergroup contact and helping for disadvantaged groups, the first purpose of this work was to investigate for the first time whether there is a harmful side to gratitude expressions (Manuscript #1, M#1). Five studies provided evidence that simply expressing gratitude to a high power group member can demobilize low power group members from protesting against high power group transgressions. Moreover, mediation tests revealed the psychological processes underlying this pacifying effect: gratitude expressions led expressers to forgive the benefactor, which increased system-justification, which in turn inhibited protest intentions. The results of this

manuscript speak to the potential of gratitude expressions to affect psychological pathways to social change on part of the disadvantaged group, however, in the direction to stabilize the power hierarchy.

Besides gratitude expressions being the key piece that had been missing within the intergroup helping relations literature, another shortcoming of the previous research concerns the study of the ideological framework of intergroup helping relations that encompasses assumptions about advantaged and disadvantaged groups' roles regarding helping and gratitude expressions: paternalism. Paternalistic beliefs reflect convictions that the social hierarchy is justified as long as dominant groups take care of the subordinate groups. In return, subordinate groups are expected to express their gratitude and be loyal or face negative consequences (Aycan, 2006). Manuscript #2 (M#2) targeted paternalism within advantaged group helping, while Manuscript #3 (M#3) targeted the paternalistic content within gratitude demands and ingratitude accusations in response to disadvantaged groups' protest.

Previous research showed that advantaged groups can provide help to disadvantaged groups that is said to promote disadvantaged groups' autonomy or dependency and thus, by proxy, social change. However, what drives advantaged groups to provide one help form over the other or the social change potential of these two help forms had not been studied. Thus, the second purpose of the present research was to "assess" the ideological and social change-dimensions of these two help forms in the context of help provided by members of the receiving society (Germans) to refugees (M#2). We identified paternalistic beliefs as a possible distinguishing variable between the two forms of help. Paternalists' wish to maintain the social hierarchy while appearing generous was reflected in their enhanced willingness to provide dependency-oriented help via concerns for a positive national moral image. Non-paternalists were more inclined to provide autonomy-oriented help via enhanced perceptions of refugees' competence. Suggesting that paternalistic beliefs are antagonistic to social change, both Germans and refugees ascribed to autonomy-oriented help a higher potential to bring about social change than to dependency-oriented help.

The third mission of the present work was derived from observations that advantaged groups sometimes respond to disadvantaged groups' protest with demands for their gratitude and accusations of ingratitude. This phenomenon had not been studied before. Building on a synthesis of the literature on interpersonal gratitude expressions, the Needs-Based Model of Reconciliation and paternalism, we proposed that disadvantaged groups' gratitude expressions might constitute a source for advantaged groups to satisfy needs for the approval of their ingroups' social worth, which is threatened when disadvantaged groups engage in protest.

Results of three experimental studies (M#3) provided first evidence for the antagonistic effects of gratitude expressions and protest on advantaged groups' needs and needs-based perceptions of disadvantaged groups: while protest increased perceptions of refugees as agentic, it decreased perceptions of conveyed social worth to Germans; while gratitude expressions enhanced perceptions of conveyed social worth, they did not affect perceptions of refugees' agency. Conveyed social worth positively mediated effects on Germans' attitudes toward refugees. Thus, while gratitude expressions on the surface can positively affect pathways to social change through improving advantaged groups' attitudes, in contrast to protest, gratitude expressions do not address disadvantaged groups' group-based needs for empowerment. Moreover, depicting how disadvantaged groups' gratitude might be incorporated in the net of ideology, results showed that receiving society members label protesting refugees ungrateful and demand gratitude as a function of paternalistic beliefs.

Overall, the results of the present research underline the need to consider gratitude expressions as an intergroup phenomenon. Expressions of gratitude affected or were affected by group dimensions, for example, protest on behalf of the ingroup (M#1), group-specific needs for social worth and group-needs related perceptions of agency (M#3) and beliefs that encompass assumptions about the relationship between *groups*, paternalistic beliefs (M#3). This extends previous gratitude research on the intrapersonal, dyadic, and intragroup level to the intergroup level.

Moreover, the results indicate that gratitude expressions need to be considered as important elements of intergroup helping relations as status relations. Just as advantaged groups' help was perceived to have (different) potential to bring about social change (M#2), so did disadvantaged groups' gratitude expressions affect pathways of social change, that is, prejudice reduction (Germans' attitudes and help vs. harm tendencies toward refugees, M#3) and (collective) mobilization (low power groups' protest intentions and behavior, M#1). Just as helping was motivated by group-specific needs and group-needs related perceptions (concerns for the national moral image and perceptions of refugees' competence, M#2), so did gratitude expressions differentially satisfy group-specific needs and group-needs related perceptions (perceptions of conveyed social worth but not of refugees' agency, M#3). Just as paternalistic beliefs were involved in determining advantaged groups' engagement in opposing forms of helping (autonomy- and dependency- oriented help, M#2), so were paternalistic beliefs involved in enforcing gratitude expressions from disadvantaged groups (M#3).

The present work examined the proposed effects surrounding gratitude expressions across different domains of social inequality (e.g., gender relations, relations between members of the receiving society and refugees), online and in the lab, for behavioral and longitudinal data, using correlational and experimental designs, within-study replications, assessing real-life behavior and targeting the perspectives of both advantaged and disadvantaged groups. The diversity of methods and samples supports the theoretical integration of the literature on gratitude and intergroup relations and suggests that the effects of gratitude expressions are systematic and can be viewed as an intergroup phenomenon.

## **2. Theoretical Implications**

One of the challenges of the present work was to open up a new vein of research through the integration of several existing theoretical approaches (i.e., intergroup contact, intergroup helping, intergroup reconciliation, and paternalism). Therefore, multiple implications of the findings of the present research can be drawn for a theoretical level. These are outlined in the following.

### ***A New Characterization of Gratitude Expressions***

The present research suggests a reconfiguration and extension of the characteristics of gratitude expressions as positive, reciprocal and other-oriented. Findings of the present research underline the nature of gratitude as reciprocal and other-oriented. Gratitude expressions triggered attitudes and behaviors among expressers that were in favor of the “other”: Low power group members who expressed gratitude were less likely to protest against the high power group member and thus less likely to advocate for their group (M#1). Therefore, through mitigating a potential threat to the high power helper’s status, low power group members “returned the favor”. The association between gratitude expressions and perceptions of conveyed social worth and the dissociation to perceptions of the expressers’ agency (M#3) underscores that gratitude expressions are, at least in others’ perceptions, profitable to others and less so to the self. This is congruent with research showing that when a gratitude expression was followed by attempts to gain profit (i.e. expressed to customers to increase sales of the jewelry store), this did not encourage recipients of thanks to reciprocate (i.e. spend more) as they probably interpreted the gratitude expression as insincere (Carey, Clicque, Leighton, & Milton, 1976); or research showing that not gratitude expressions, but felt gratitude toward the partner predicted the partner’s relationship satisfaction (Gordon et al., 2011).

The present research, however, challenges the characterization of gratitude expressions as positive and solely beneficial. Especially the studies of M#1 uncover a potentially harmful side of gratitude expressions by showing that they can contribute to endangering the improvement of low power groups' status position. On an absolute scale, expressions of thanks were not "harmful" to refugees as they did not undermine perceptions of their agency and actually elicited positive reactions from members of the receiving society (M#3). However, relative to protesting, expressing gratitude resulted in losses within perceptions of agency which otherwise could benefit refugees in attempting to improve their status (Carrier et al., 2014). Further, the results on the pacifying effect of gratitude expressions jeopardize the assumptions of Frederickson's broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (2001). While the emotion of gratitude might indeed be positive, in contrast to the theory, expressions of thanks did not broaden the repertoire of behaviors but instead narrowed behavior and behavioral intentions in the direction of inaction. In sum, in line with McNulty and Fincham (2012), the present work suggests that the profitability of gratitude expressions, akin to other positive psychological phenomena, needs to be established contingent on the context. As a suggestion, the characteristics of gratitude expressions could be described in more neutral, functional and parsimonious terms, for example, as *cooperative* (instead of "positive"). Gratitude expressions in more or less equal power contexts were positively related to cooperation (DeSteno et al., 2010; McCullough et al., 2002) and we showed that gratitude expressions can lead to cooperative behaviors in unequal equal power contexts. Thus, characterizing gratitude expressions as "cooperative" could do more justice to the data than labeling them as positive or negative.

Beyond addressing previous characterizations of gratitude expressions as positive, reciprocal and other-oriented, the present research suggests that expressions of gratitude are normative behaviors. To illustrate, gratitude was expressed voluntarily even to unfair benefactors and the pacifying effect occurred even when participants "had" to express gratitude (M#1). Additionally, gratitude expression as the normative response to help was rewarded with positive reactions but protest as the expectancy-violating, non-normative response to help was penalized with negative reactions (M#3) – in the manner of reactions to conformity versus nonconformity to social norms (e.g., see McDonald & Crandall, 2015). Meanwhile, demands for gratitude and accusations of ingratitude in response to protest might be fueled by the justification that expressions of gratitude are indicated in response to help, that they are allowed to be expected. Both as active responses and as demanded responses, gratitude expressions aimed (unwillingly or not) at restricting protest behavior and keep

things “in order” in the manner of social norms. Together, these findings speak to an additional characterization of gratitude expressions as *normative*.

Taken together, the present work reconfigures the characterization of gratitude expressions as *reciprocal, other-oriented, cooperative* and *normative* behaviors. Acknowledging these facets of gratitude expressions might enable more precise predictions in the future as it does justice to different contexts, and contribute to explaining null-effects or negative effects of gratitude interventions (see Davis et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2016).

### ***Intergroup Gratitude as Status Relations***

Intergroup helping relations are considered as inherently unequal because helpers can appear competent, warm and independent while help recipients can appear dependent and incompetent to help themselves (e.g. Nadler, 2002). As discussed in the Introduction, social inequality might amplify this effect. Because social inequality enables advantaged groups to bestow resources in the first place, the symbolic power differential inherent in helping might cement the power differences.

The present research suggests that gratitude expressions are part of inherently unequal intergroup helping relations. The synthesis of the gratitude literature revealed that gratitude expressions orient expressers toward the well-being of gratitude recipients and can encourage them to behave selflessly. In other words, expressions of gratitude could boost the generous image and perpetuate the advantage of those who receive them, while expressers appear dependent by communicating their debt and humility. Similar to helping, social inequality could amplify this power differential. The present work did not assess such perceptions directly, which future research definitely should. However, results of M#1 support that a power differential might be inherent in gratitude expressions by showing that low power groups who expressed gratitude to unfair high power benefactors stood up to a lesser extent for their ingroup interests than those who did not or could not express gratitude. Under conditions of social inequality, disadvantaged groups are probably more likely to be in the position of help recipients, and consequently, gratitude expressers. This latter perspective has not been considered by research on intergroup helping relations.

However, the inherent power differential can also be seen in connection to paternalism. As the results of M#3 show, paternalists are interested in evoking gratitude expressions among disadvantaged groups. Meanwhile, M#2 shows that they are also more inclined to provide help that is perceived to have a lesser social change potential. As paternalists seem to be interested in helping disadvantaged groups to “stay where they are”,

their demands for disadvantaged groups' gratitude could suggest that gratitude expressions contribute to "staying where they are", that they are associated with lower status (which could be tested by future research as well). Thus, a strong theoretical implication of the present research is that gratitude expressions need to be considered as important elements of intergroup helping as status relations.

### *A (Re)New(ed) Perspective on the Ideology of Intergroup Helping Relations*

Research on intergroup helping relations has largely neglected the study of paternalism. However, results from the present work empirically demonstrate for the individual-difference level that paternalism is an important ideological belief system that might guide intergroup helping relations: Paternalistic beliefs were positively related to advantaged group members' willingness to help disadvantaged groups in a manner that might be less likely to challenge the disadvantaged groups' lower status (i.e., dependency-oriented help; M#2). Moreover, paternalistic beliefs determined whether advantaged group members attempted to force gratitude expressions on disadvantaged groups (M#3). These findings resonate with the perspective inherent in paternalism that the advantaged have to take care of the disadvantaged while the disadvantaged show gratitude and loyalty (Jackman, 1994). Moreover, our findings suggest that paternalistic ideology operates on different levels (see Pettigrew, 2006): culturally and politically transmitted paternalistic myths that legitimize inequality (macro-level) can entrench themselves in people's minds (micro-level) and influence interactions between members of social groups (meso-level).

Attending to paternalism as a possible belief system that regulates intergroup relations enriches our understanding of intergroup helping relations in several ways. First, it draws attention to the role of gratitude expressions, which has been neglected within intergroup research. Possibly, this occurred in the course of neglecting the disadvantaged group perspective, a prominent problem of intergroup research (e.g., Wright & Lubensky, 2009), as disadvantaged groups are the ones who are often on the side of receiving help. Within the previous intergroup helping research, the study of the disadvantaged group perspective has been limited to effects of them passively receiving help or strategically rejecting help (Becker et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2015), and to seeking help (e.g., Nadler & Chernyak-Hai; 2014), which is not a reaction to help. Affirmative, active reactions to help like gratitude expressions have barely received attention, maybe because of their "almost invisible ordinary" way (Visser, 2009; p. 1). However, the present work finds that expressions of thanks are not ordinary: Expressions of gratitude predicted low power group members' consequent lower

protest intentions or actual protest, even one week later. This illustrates that disadvantaged groups' expressions of thanks have the power to set forth behaviors that can potentially influence the intergroup relationship and the power relation.

Second, paternalism might deliver possible explanations for why members of disadvantaged groups express thanks voluntarily to unfair high power benefactors. Previous research has outlined that paternalistic relations are characterized by a consensus about the power difference between groups, which is created through framings of the unequal relations as mutually beneficial (Durrheim et al., 2014). Voluntary expressions might mirror this consensus while the omission of gratitude expressions might imply disapproval of the inequality. Alternatively or additionally, gratitude expressions might be taking part in *creating* paternalistic consensus on the part of disadvantaged group members. The identified underlying process of the pacifying effect of gratitude expressions via forgiveness and system justification (M#1) might depict one mechanism of how consensus is established on part of the disadvantaged group: There, forgiveness of the high power benefactor, triggered by gratitude expressions, possibly created a sense of power among expressers, which neutralized the one-sided advantage, and caused perceptions that everyone has benefitted from the relationship. Although we did not measure perceptions of power or the perception of a mutual benefit directly, the increases in system justification might be indicative of this mechanism, because system justification can be activated by perceptions that benefits and burdens are balanced between the groups (Jost & Kay, 2005). Hence, through system-justification processes, disadvantaged groups' expressions of gratitude might be involved in establishing approval of and, thus, a consensus about unequal power relations and contribute to transmitting the ideology of paternalism.

As remarked in the discussion of M#2, paternalism seems to have incremental value beyond system justification in explaining how oppressive intergroup relations can be maintained through cooperation. Supplementary analyses (M#2) underlined that the two constructs differ as they loaded on different factors. Importantly, contrary to paternalism, system justification does not contain the imperative that the advantaged should provide help to the disadvantaged, who should express gratitude in return. Thus, system justification may motivate *inaction* (e.g., reduction of protest intentions) while paternalism may motivate *action* (i.e. helping and expressing gratitude). It is also possible that, within intergroup helping, paternalism is what motivates system justification and that group needs that were associated with paternalism (M#2, M#3) might be mirroring the relational needs that are said to motivate

system justification. This reasoning bridges the works of literature on system justification and intergroup helping.

Further, paternalistic beliefs have incremental value in distinguishing and explaining why people provide dependency- or autonomy-oriented help (M#2), exceeding previous ideological variables such as SDO, which predicted whether people help in the first place (Halabi et al., 2008; Jackson & Esses, 2000). In an egalitarian society, not helping those in need might be seen as failing a moral obligation and elicit disapproval from the moral community. For one, in support of Jackman (1994), this suggests that in an increasingly egalitarian climate (at least on the surface), ideologies that transmit ostensibly positive messages such as paternalism might have a higher chance to survive. Second, this suggests that it is important to acknowledge that helping relations are not just as an issue of power but also an issue of group-needs, such as moral image concerns. Results of M#2 and M#3 demonstrate that advantaged groups' needs for moral and social approval and needs-based perceptions of disadvantaged groups as agentic and competent can be antagonistic. This might explain a range of intergroup phenomena where group needs are probably not aligned, such as over-helping, assumptive helping, intergroup misunderstandings, or why people stop helping when they perceive a lack of gratitude, and gratitude demands (M#3). This also challenges the optimistic predictions of the Needs-Based Model of Reconciliation and raises the question of whether reconciliation actually occurs because one group gives up on satisfying its needs for the sake of harmony.

The model of strategic outgroup helping (van Leeuwen, 2017) posits that a helping act is most desirable (i.e. the least problematic) when the groups' needs are aligned, which means that it simultaneously fulfills both groups' needs. This might be the case when advantaged groups provide autonomy-oriented help or at least help in a demand-responsive way. However, as discussed in M#3, within a paternalistic climate, disadvantaged groups' needs are likely to be ignored, which is underlined by the finding that paternalists are resistant to provide autonomy-oriented help (M#2). The present work thus extends previous research on the Needs-Based Model (e.g., Shnabel & Nadler, 2015) by delineating the importance of ideological influence. An interesting objective for future research would be to investigate whether the relationship between paternalistic beliefs and group needs is bidirectional. Similar to how advantaged groups sometimes make use of a rhetoric of needs to justify right-wing populism (see Lueders et al., 2018) they might do that as well to justify paternalistic practice.

Taken together, the present work substantially broadens the study of paternalism within intergroup relations and provides a scale assessing individual paternalistic beliefs for

the intergroup context. An important limitation of the present work is that it did not measure paternalistic beliefs from the disadvantaged group perspective. However, the above considerations suggest that paternalistic beliefs might be functioning as both motivators and transmitters (i.e. outcomes) of gratitude expressions on part of disadvantaged groups.

Further, the present work suggests that frameworks of intergroup helping should incorporate ideological perspectives through considering paternalism. A perspective that considers paternalism redraws the picture of disadvantaged group members as passive recipients of help and places them as agents of cooperative intergroup relationships. This highlights the scope for disadvantaged groups for resistance (which I will return to in the next section) and supports claims that ideological transmission can be a relational process guided by the cooperation of both parties (Durrheim et al., 2014).

### ***Gratitude Expressions, Helping and Pathways to Social Change***

The present work illustrates that gratitude expressions can affect both prominent pathways to social change but they do so in different directions: they can demobilize disadvantaged group members from advocacy on behalf of their group (M#1) but they can also improve advantaged groups' attitudes of disadvantaged groups (M#3).

Critics could argue that this simply represents documented paradoxical effects of positive contact (e.g. Saguy et al., 2008). Even if that is true, the present work still uncovers novel aspects by showing that 1) gratitude expressions, which seem unquestionably positive and beneficial, can entrain these paradoxical effects and that 2) subtle, and habitual everyday behaviors can have the power to affect intergroup relations. Previous research has empirically documented pacifying effects of contact based on forms of contact which entail the advantaged and disadvantaged groups' explicit involvement with the intergroup dimension (e.g., discussing commonalities, indicating outgroup friendship, communicating the legitimacy of the disadvantaged groups' lower status; e.g., Becker et al., 2013; Saguy et al., 2009). However, it had not studied whether spontaneous and everyday-type behavioral communication such as gratitude expressions can have social consequences for disadvantaged groups.

Further, gratitude expressions are encouraged by strong, unambiguous cultural norms (Eibach et al., 2015), which make them likely, independent of the experience of gratitude. Although researchers have previously addressed the role of divergent group-motivations (e.g., Bergsieker et al., 2010) and social context (Christ et al., 2014) for intergroup contact and identified ideological beliefs on part of advantaged groups that might discourage contact (e.g.,

Pettigrew, 2008), cultural norms and ideological factors that might *encourage* contact interactions have received little attention. Bridging the literatures of gratitude, intergroup contact and helping within the present work however has opened up promising insights (see also Dixon et al., 2012): On the one hand, it suggests that via gratitude expressions, helping relations can underlie paradoxical effects of contact and on the other hand, that advantaged groups' willingness to make contact might be influenced by paternalistic beliefs and (cultural) gratitude norms that are promissory of gratitude expressions and thus of social worth. For disadvantaged groups, the pacifying effect of gratitude expressions might be moderated by the endorsement of gratitude norms while paternalistic beliefs might predict their likelihood to express gratitude (i.e. engage in positive contact). These assumptions could be tested by future research.

Alternatively to the conception of gratitude expressions as positive contact, gratitude expressions might represent transmitted conversational elements during contact that construe the contact situation as positive. Thus, the pacifying effect of contact not only depends on what advantaged group members say (Becker et al., 2013) but also on what disadvantaged group members communicate. Moreover, findings of the present work provide a novel idea about what happens during contact that elicits the paradoxical effects. Previous research has identified processes related to common identification (e.g., Gaertner & Dovidio, 2009), decreased salience of discrimination (Saguy, & Chernyak-Hai, 2012) and suggested positive feelings (e.g., Dixon et al., 2012) as possible mechanisms of the paradoxical effects of intergroup contact. However, gratitude has not been considered or tested as a mechanism before. Disadvantaged group members might be simply grateful that advantaged group members are being kind and consequently reciprocate through refraining from "harming" advantaged group members through through protest. Researchers have suggested and provided qualitative data showing that the paradoxical effects might as well be due to system justification processes resulting from a paternalistic framing of unequal intergroup relations (see Durrheim et al., 2014). The findings of the present work extend this idea by suggesting that gratitude expressions might be *the* mechanism of how paternalism is transmitted through contact (see Durrheim et al., 2014).

Conversely, the present research suggests that the omission of gratitude or protest on part of the disadvantaged group (that targets advantaged group help) might represent forms of *negative* contact for members of advantaged groups. The helper in the short story summarized in the Introduction will probably remember the interaction with the homeless man as a negative experience. The idea that the omission of gratitude or protest might represent forms

of negative contact for members of advantaged has neither been acknowledged nor studied before and there is very little research on psychological consequences of protest in general (cf. Becker & Tausch, 2015). However, together with findings of M#3, this perspective suggests that depressed feelings of social worth might constitute the process underlying the effects of negative contact on advantaged groups' attitudes and the relatively low occurrence of solidarity-based action. Some advantaged group members might perceive collective action by disadvantaged groups as a lack of appreciation of the advantaged group and either react negatively or, as they see no profit of the protest for the ingroup, decide not to support it. This presents another new avenue for future research.

Finally, the present research differs from previous research on paradoxical effects of contact by going beyond studying how *advantaged* groups' actions can undermine protest engagement among disadvantaged groups and investigating how the *disadvantaged* groups' positive actions can undermine their protest intentions. This has implications for the question of how the pacifying effect of gratitude expressions can be avoided, which will be addressed at the end of the next section.

### **3. Implications for Social Change**

Through the empirical study of gratitude expressions, the present research illustrates the paradoxical duality of paternalistic care and punishment: when disadvantaged groups expressed gratitude, advantaged groups rewarded them with more positive attitudes (via perceptions of conveyed social worth). In turn, when disadvantaged groups did not express gratitude and instead expressed their discontent with the help, advantaged groups had less positive attitudes and more strongly endorsed measures that could harm disadvantaged group members (via perceptions of conveyed lack of social worth; M#3). Accordingly, gratitude expressions constitute behaviors that might be subject to the exploitation of disadvantaged groups. Thus, gratitude demands and ingratitude accusations from advantaged group members, that receive justification from gratitude norms, could be viewed as methods of social influence and manipulation.

However, it is questionable how "effective" gratitude demands are, as they might cause reactance among disadvantaged groups (Heider, 1958). Previous research shows that people were less grateful when benefactors expected reciprocation or had ulterior motives (Tsang, 2006b; Watkins et al., 2006). However, indebtedness increased with increasing benefactor expectations. Thus, while disadvantaged groups might have less positive feelings like gratitude toward advantaged groups who demand gratitude, they might still reciprocate in

ways that endanger the improvement of their status. Hence, gratitude demands seem unlikely to improve intergroup relations and disadvantaged group members are increasingly publicly resisting them (e.g., Gorelik, 2012; Nayeri, 2017).

Importantly, disadvantaged groups can unknowingly “self-exploit” by expressing gratitude (M#1). This might seem counterintuitive because people might have experienced that “kindness” goes a long way and can secure further benefits (Grant & Gino, 2010). Surely, strategically expressing gratitude might help disadvantaged group members achieve individual benefits that might help them move up the status ladder. Individual mobility, however, does not challenge the unfair conditions of power relations (Ellemers, 2001). Plus, the strategy might just not work: when benefactors perceived gratitude expressions as expressers’ strategy to receive more benefits, gratitude expressions were not effective (Carey et al., 1976; Gordon et al. 2011). This finding also exemplifies that people expect gratitude to be non-profit. This ascribes little cost to gratitude expressions and conceals the restrictiveness of gratitude norms. The present research finds that gratitude expression can come at a high cost for disadvantaged group members. Paternalistic ideology is particularly insidious because it goes beyond viewing gratitude expressions as costless and frames them as a moral responsibility of disadvantaged groups. Dixon et al. (2012) write about helping: “When an advantaged group caters to the needs of a disadvantaged group, and this assistance is treated as desirable and necessary, then power relations become ideologically reconstructed as moral responsibility” (p. 416). The same could be said about gratitude expressions from disadvantaged groups. As illustrated in the Introduction, framing them as a moral obligation also enables moral punishment.

Taken together, the present research shows that, although gratitude expressions can get advantaged group members to like disadvantaged group members more, that does not mean that this will result in social change (see also Dixon et al., 2012). It also shows that the kind of help that advantaged groups provide can have differing potential to promote social change. What possibilities do advantaged and disadvantaged groups have to work toward social change?

One approach is to counter the pacifying effect of gratitude expressions. Previous research, which asked how the sedating effect of positive contact can be avoided (Becker et al., 2013), identified advantaged groups’ communication of the illegitimacy of status relations as a condition where contact does not undermine collective action. This, however, again proposes what *advantaged* groups could do to counter the pacifying effect. Following that avenue, even when advantaged groups provide autonomy-oriented help to disadvantaged

groups, theoretically, this does not guarantee to erase the pacifying effect because it depends on disadvantaged groups' gratitude expressions. Nevertheless, in the case of autonomy-oriented help, disadvantaged groups should be less willing to protest in the first place, as autonomy-oriented help, at least in group members' minds, works toward social change (M#2).

Disadvantaged groups' gratitude expressions might be partly encouraged by some advantaged group members' attempts to satisfy ingroup needs, such as through gratitude demands (M#3). The literature on the Needs-Based model suggests that advantaged groups can satisfy their needs by providing morally approving messages to themselves (Barlow, Thai, Wohl, White, Wright, & Hornsey, 2015). This approach seems very promising, as it is not contingent on disadvantaged groups' gratitude expressions. Future research could experimentally test whether affirming messages to helpers from other ingroup members would reduce gratitude demands among paternalists through fulfilling needs for social worth. Real-life examples demonstrate that advantaged groups already make use of this "technique". In connection with the large-scale migration of refugees to Europe, in Germany, the narrative of advantaged group volunteers as the true heroes of the migration crisis were widely spread (Ehrenamtliche Flüchtlingshelfer, 2015). Although it is important to reward volunteers for the sake of their well-being and to promote civic engagement, this example, however, hints at a potential problem. Extreme praise might boost national glorification, encourage the rhetoric of heroes and victims that reenacts the power differential, or divert from satisfying disadvantaged groups' needs through affirming their agentic achievements (such as the refugees' flight). Moreover, the praise was not sustainable over time as, without institutionalized support and supervision, many volunteers experienced frustration, burn out and finally withdrew from volunteering (Kehler, 2018).

Sometimes, researchers need to turn to practitioners to gain ideas about how to resolve tensions between social groups. To deal with volunteers' frustrations about an apparent lack of appreciation from refugees, practitioners have started conversations about their expectations for refugees' gratitude within supervision seminars. Cognitive exercises such as perspective-taking aimed at increasing empathy for the refugees' situation. Realizing that it might be difficult for refugees to express gratitude under hard living conditions lead some volunteers to let go of their gratitude expectations, in a non-cynical way (Kehler, 2018). Based on the findings of the present research, practitioners might also want to raise the idea that, as long as members of disadvantaged groups are socially disadvantaged, it might sometimes be protective for them to *not* express gratitude as a way to psychologically resist

low status and dependency. Future research might systematically investigate the efficiency of such interventions.

Another possible approach to promoting social change might be to counter beliefs that gratitude is “free” through increasing the awareness that gratitude expressions constitute a large investment for disadvantaged groups. Gratitude is associated with humility, which is characterized as the increased willingness to accept one’s weakness (Kruse et al., 2014; Weidman et al., 2018). Thus, especially for disadvantaged group members, who might want to be agentic and feel self-efficacious (e.g., refugees), it might be particularly difficult to do the exact opposite and admit weakness to themselves through expressing gratitude. Through increased awareness that gratitude expressions constitute an investment, disadvantaged group members might become more cautious in expressing gratitude in situations where it might be harmful to them. Moreover, reframing gratitude expressions as generous *benefits* for those who receive them and not as something that disadvantaged groups owe, might weaken the insidious connection between gratitude expressions and morality. If gratitude expressions can be viewed more as a “plus”, they might be less expected and “ingratitude” might be less negatively morally loaded or disliked. In addition, valuing gratitude expressions as benefits might turn subsequent reciprocation on part of expressers obsolete and counteract the pacifying effect.

Finally, disadvantaged group members might consider that one possible way of resistance is to not express gratitude in certain situations. This constitutes a direct consequence of the findings of M#1. This, of course, bears the risk of jeopardizing relationships with advantaged group members but tackling oppressive systems that are harmonious on the surface might eventually create some discomfort (see Allen & Leach, 2018). Of course, disadvantaged groups should not stop thanking altogether, because then they could be denied the individual benefits associated with gratitude expressions (see Watkins, 2014). However, they might want to become more cautious of the power context and the type of benefit before expressing thanks. Critics could claim that this might cause an unfriendly climate and more conflict between groups. However, from a social equality perspective, some decrease within disadvantaged groups’ frequency of gratitude expression would approach equality, as they actually seem to be “overdoing” it: Compared to advantaged groups, disadvantaged groups are more likely to express gratitude (Becker & Smenner, 1986; Greif & Gleason, 1980; Ventimiglia, 1982).

#### 4. General Limitations

Besides the limitations outlined in each manuscript, some general limitations should be noted. For one, the present work did not empirically rule out that the effects of expressing gratitude might be simply based on the effects of accepting help because gratitude expressions imply acceptance of help. Similarly, it did not rule out that the effects are simply based on communicating something positive. These limitations address a general problem of previous gratitude research to implement suitable control conditions (see Davis et al., 2015; Wood et al., 2010). Previous research has provided evidence that gratitude differs from other positive emotions (e.g., Algoe & Haidt, 2009). It is likely that pacifying effects and effects on social worth and agency perceptions will be stronger for gratitude expressions compared to a mere help acceptance condition because accepting help without expressing gratitude violates gratitude norms and could be perceived as ingratitude. The effects should also be larger compared to a positive communication condition because the increment of gratitude expressions is their reciprocal and other-oriented nature. However, it might be challenging to “extract” the implied gratitude from a positive response to a benefit. For example, saying “that is great!” might seem equally positive but implicitly communicates gratitude at least for the benefit. Nevertheless, I submit that gratitude expressions will have larger effects because they more explicitly address the involvement of the benefactor in causing the positive feelings within the expresser. Moreover, they require more “effort” to be expressed than happiness as can be seen in studies with young children (Becker & Smenner, 1986; Froh, Miller, & Snyder, 2007; Park & Peterson, 2006). Thus, future research could test whether the pacifying effect of gratitude expressions can be replicated in comparison to the mere acceptance of help and another, ideally, equally positive answer to a benefit.

Further, the present work did not measure the effects of gratitude expressions in response to autonomy- versus dependency- oriented help, although this constitutes a direct consequence of the chosen set of manuscripts. As mentioned above, disadvantaged groups are probably less likely to criticize autonomy-oriented help in the first place. However, it is still possible that in some situations, they would prefer dependency-oriented help, for example, when the acquisition of the necessary skills to fulfill the task takes too long but an immediate solution is needed (e.g., filling out documents in a foreign language). Moreover, considering that dependency-oriented help can be motivated by advantaged groups’ concerns for the moral ingroup image (M#2) and less about beliefs about disadvantaged groups’ competence, advantaged groups might react more negatively to protest and more positively to gratitude in response to dependency-oriented help because it appears to be more profitable to the ingroup.

In view of the finding that the pacifying effect was triggered by the *reaction* on part of the disadvantaged group (i.e. gratitude expression), the type of advantaged group help might create only little variation within the pacifying effect. Nevertheless, future research could manipulate the forms of help in addition to the expression of gratitude to test these suggestions.

Another limitation of the present work is that we did not test reverse processes or applied more longitudinal designs. This limits claims of causality of the effects (e.g., see Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). For example, engagement in one type of help might affect group needs and needs-based perceptions, or these might affect paternalistic beliefs (M#2). Alternatively, although post hoc analysis suggested otherwise, forgiveness could be what causes gratitude expressions (M#1). Besides providing insights about causality for these effects, future research could apply longitudinal designs to test if effects of protest versus gratitude expressions affect advantaged groups' needs and needs-based perceptions over time (see Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002). Additionally, future research could examine in a "one-take"-longitudinal study how a reactive chain of responses, that is maybe more representative of real-life interactions than our quite artificial experimental designs, affects groups. For example, when advantaged groups provide help, do disadvantaged groups express or not express gratitude, how does that affect advantaged and disadvantaged groups' reactions, how do disadvantaged groups, in turn, react to advantaged groups reactions, and so on. Moreover, longitudinal studies would allow examining whether refugees' preferences for dependency-oriented versus autonomy-oriented help and perceptions of the social change potential of these help forms might be changing over time.

Apart from the refugee sample, the results of the presented studies are based on samples that were drawn from WEIRD (Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic; see Heinrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010) countries (Germany and the United States). This represents a general shortcoming of gratitude research (Merçon-Vargas, Poelker, & Tudge, 2018). However, gratitude expressions are culture-dependent to some extent. Some research suggests that gratitude might be more valued in cultures linked to collectivism that emphasizes respect for authority and harmony, than to individualism that emphasizes autonomy and a mutual concern for privacy (Kee, Chen, & Tsai, 2008; Park & Lee, 2012; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991). This reflects in a higher (but not significantly) rate of gratitude expressions followed by responsive reciprocation (*connective* gratitude) among children from East Asian and Eastern European countries compared to children from the Americas (Mendonça, Merçon-Vargas, Payir, & Tudge, 2018, but cf. Ma et al., 2017). Other research,

hower, shows that, for example, South Koreans benefitted less from gratitude expressions on measures of well-being than U.S. Americans (Layous, Lee, Choi, & Lyubomirsky, 2013). As the results on the cultural variation in the effects and frequency of gratitude expressions are mixed, at this stage of research, it can be only speculated how culture would affect the effects found in the present work. It is possible that due to a higher emphasis on responsive reciprocation (Mendonça et al., 2018), the effects involving gratitude expressions are larger in more collectivism-associated cultures. Before committing to such assumptions, future research could first examine how gratitude is characterized in different cultures (is it also characterized as positive, reciprocal and other-oriented?) and form predictions of the effects of gratitude expressions from there.

Acknowledging paternalism within the framework of intergroup helping also brings about possibilities to examine cultural variation for the findings of the present research. Previous research suggests that paternalism is valued more in collectivistic than individualistic cultures (Aycaan, 2006). This can also have implications for how immigrants from non-“Western” countries regard autonomy- and dependency-oriented help (for example, some items which loaded on the dependency-oriented help factor for the German sample loaded on the autonomy-oriented help factor in the refugee sample). To address this cross-cultural variation and counter an ethnocentric perspective, future research could examine how paternalistic beliefs affect perceptions of the social change potential of these forms of help among members of different cultures.

Finally, the present research adopted the perspective that to promote social change and counteract social inequality, disadvantaged groups’ advocacy for the ingroups’ interests needs to be encouraged. However, what are the ingroup interests of disadvantaged groups? Some philosophers argue that it is paternalistic in itself to assume that it is to the “own good” of disadvantaged groups to free themselves from paternalistic structures (see Conly, 2018). Thus, critics could argue that it might be paternalistic to assume that it is “better” for disadvantaged groups to engage in protest than to express thanks in situations of unequal power relations. Similarly, as mentioned before, in intercultural intergroup settings, it might be ethnocentric to judge the “helpfulness” of certain forms of help by the degree of their social change potential. Sometimes dependency-oriented help might seem more appropriate to disadvantaged groups or it might be protective for them to display gratitude in situations where protest is dangerous or costly. It is above the scope of the present work to provide a discursive, philosophical or political analysis of this dilemma. However, on a scientific level, outlining the potentially harmful side of gratitude expressions contributes to a more realistic

view of the effects surrounding gratitude expressions. This perspective was overdue and called for (e.g., Wood et al., 2016). This dissertation suggests that the topic of gratitude expressions is controversial. The scarce research that exists on gratitude expressions has been largely limited to intra- and interpersonal contexts and dominantly located in the field of positive social psychology. This research has confirmed gratitude expressions high profitability for the self (which in itself is paradoxical if gratitude expressions are considered altruistic; Carr, 2015) and for others. As a result, research, self-help literature and influencers have been “overselling” gratitude (Kohn, 2018) to a point that is not representative of the data. Journalistic work has associated this bias with funding sources (Ehrenreich, 2015). In neoliberal times that shift responsibility for welfare onto individuals through promoting the rhetoric of self-care and self-improvement, the importance of structural barriers and collective responsibility is diminished (e.g., Ward, 2015). This might have affected the focus of previous research surrounding gratitude. The present work aimed to counteract this blind spot in the field of psychological research by providing an empirical analysis of gratitude expressions from an intergroup perspective and with respect to the structural barriers that disadvantaged groups collectively face.

## 5. Outlook

Are gratitude expressions toward advantaged groups “good” or “bad”? Comparing previous research on gratitude and the present research suggests that, as with other positive psychological phenomena (McNulty & Fincham, 2012), such a simplistic characterization cannot be provided. Rather, whether gratitude expressions are beneficial, neutral or harmful might depend on the context. Thus, future research could identify central contextual variables that influence the outcomes of gratitude expressions and describe a taxonomy of situations that predict the possible consequences of gratitude expressions. Specifically, akin to Becker et al. (2013), future research could investigate circumstances under which the pacifying effect of gratitude expressions can be avoided or buffered. Possibly, knowing about the pacifying effect might set forth mechanisms of psychological resistance that counteract it. Building on findings of M#3, future research could study whether the pacifying effect could be at least attenuated when disadvantaged groups express gratitude and protest at the same time.

Disadvantaged groups are sometimes told to be grateful for what they have, even for the absence of hostility or things that advantaged groups receive naturally, such as rights or citizenship (e.g., Klein, 2018; Valenti, 2014). Thus, disadvantaged groups might perceive positive interactions or measures that temporarily or ostensibly balance out their disadvantage

as gifts provided by advantaged groups. Consequently, they might experience and express gratitude and refrain from addressing discrimination or fighting for sustainable equality. One way to tackle this problem could be to question the absence of hostility, “kindness” and equal rights as gifts or benefits. By definition, benefits are *relative*. Consequently, what truly represents a benefit should be established in relative terms, for example, by turning the situation around and asking whether advantaged groups are expected to be grateful for the same things, to the same extent. Although this is a political conversation, future research could experimentally manipulate the extent to which advantaged groups’ acts are framed as “benefits” in intergroup contexts. It could investigate whether disadvantaged groups are less willing to express gratitude when these acts framed as reparatory, that is, by pointing to a reference point of *equality* instead of hostility (Dumitru, 2019). In that case, the pacifying effect might become less likely.

The present research further invites to test whether the pacifying effect would occur on part of the advantaged group if they expressed gratitude to disadvantaged groups or high power benefactors such as the state or system (cf. Eibach et al., 2015). Theoretically, it would, although in the former case the ecological validity of the hypothesis would need to be established. In the latter case, rituals such as Thanksgiving or state messages that encourage gratitude for measures of national security constitute examples of how advantaged groups can be subject to gratitude expectations as well (Eibach et al., 2015). Moreover, it would be interesting to investigate whether benefits from disadvantaged groups, through gratitude expressions, would inhibit advantaged groups’ intentions to participate in antisocial protests.

What is more, future research could test the predictions of the IHSR model for gratitude expressions. Paralleling its predictions for help provision and help-seeking (Nadler, 2002), disadvantaged groups should be more likely to express gratitude when they perceive unequal status relations as legitimate and stable because the dependency on the advantaged group would not conflict with their acceptance of their low status. Similarly, advantaged groups should be more likely to demand gratitude when they perceive unequal status relations as illegitimate and unstable because gratitude expressions would diffuse the threat to their high power position by discouraging disadvantaged groups’ protest. Paternalistic beliefs might play into these effects, as they represent a motivation to keep status relations stable and legitimate, beyond perceptions thereof. Thus, future research might investigate how the interplay of individual-difference variables (i.e. paternalistic beliefs) and structural variables (i.e. perceptions of the legitimacy and stability) affect advantaged groups’ provision of autonomy- versus dependency-oriented help and gratitude demands, and

disadvantaged groups' gratitude expressions.

Finally, to tackle the potential pitfalls of gratitude expressions, future research should address the restrictiveness of gratitude norms. Internalized gratitude norms might affect disadvantaged groups' willingness to express gratitude or advantaged groups' intentions to demand gratitude and their reactions to disadvantaged groups' gratitude expressions and protest. First, a scale measuring the endorsement of gratitude norms could be developed that encompasses, for example, expectations for gratitude to be expressed unconditionally, moral appraisals of gratitude and ingratitude, and prescriptions for expressers not to hurt benefactors or criticize benefits (Ksenofontov, Becker, & Christ, 2019). From there, it could be tested whether the endorsement of gratitude norms is associated with a higher willingness to express gratitude. Alternatively, it could be tested whether disadvantaged group members who express gratitude are more strongly rewarded and those who do not express gratitude more strongly punished by advantaged group members who endorse gratitude norms. This could be as well studied for the interpersonal context. In both cases, this could shed light on the restrictive nature of gratitude norms. Moreover, comparisons to reactions toward advantaged groups could allow testing claims that gratitude norms are more restrictive for disadvantaged groups (cf. Eibach et al., 2015). It could be that gratitude is more strongly expected from disadvantaged groups. Because people might perceive disadvantaged groups to be more in need, the same benefit might seem larger when provided to disadvantaged than advantaged group members. An alternative suggestion would be that expressing gratitude constitutes a dependency confirming and thus low-status congruent behavior. This could explain why disadvantaged group members are more likely to express gratitude for the same benefits than advantaged group members (e.g., Ksenofontov & Becker, 2018; Ventimiglia, 1982).

In her seminal book "The Gift of Thanks", the anthropologist Margaret Visser writes that „[t]he simple habit of saying „thank you“, and the notion of gratitude that underlies it, can be a key to understanding many of the basic assumptions, preferences, and needs of Western culture.” (2009, p. 1). The present research contributes to this understanding by laying the foundation for studying gratitude expressions in the field of intergroup relations. The present work also addresses the need to stimulate critical reflection of our expectations surrounding the gratitude from others. The studies show that gratitude is indeed a gift, a gift of power. Therefore, those, who hold less power, should give “thanks” wisely.

Sometimes, this calls for some creativity. Returning to Reeds' short story, how does the homeless man escape the ties of “thanks”? “I'm t'anking my luck,” he says, “not you.”

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## **Erklärung über die Eigenständigkeit der erbrachten wissenschaftlichen Leistung**

Ich erkläre hiermit, dass ich die vorliegende Arbeit ohne unzulässige Hilfe Dritter und ohne Benutzung anderer als der angegebenen Hilfsmittel angefertigt habe. Die aus anderen Quellen direkt oder indirekt übernommenen Daten und Konzepte sind unter Angabe der Quelle gekennzeichnet.

Bei den folgenden Manuskripten haben mir die nachstehend aufgeführten Ko-Autorinnen in der jeweils beschriebenen Weise unentgeltlich geholfen. Die Reihenfolge der Nennung entspricht dem Grad der Beteiligung.

1. Manuskript #1: Konzeption der Studien: Inna Ksenofontov, Julia C. Becker.  
Datenerhebung: Inna Ksenofontov. Durchführung der Auswertung: Inna Ksenofontov.  
Manuskripterstellung: Inna Ksenofontov, Julia C. Becker.
2. Manuskript #2: Konzeption der Studien: Julia C. Becker, Inna Ksenofontov, Birte Siem.  
Datenerhebung: Julia C. Becker, Birte Siem. Durchführung der Auswertung: Julia C. Becker, Inna Ksenofontov, Birte Siem. Manuskripterstellung: Julia C. Becker, Inna Ksenofontov, Birte Siem, Angelika Love.
3. Manuskript #3: Konzeption der Studien: Inna Ksenofontov, Julia C. Becker.  
Datenerhebung: Inna Ksenofontov. Durchführung der Auswertung: Inna Ksenofontov.  
Manuskripterstellung: Inna Ksenofontov, Julia C. Becker.

Weitere Personen waren an der inhaltlichen materiellen Erstellung der vorliegenden Arbeit nicht beteiligt. Insbesondere habe ich hierfür nicht die entgeltliche Hilfe von Vermittlungs- bzw. Beratungsdiensten (Promotionsberater oder andere Personen) in Anspruch genommen. Niemand hat von mir unmittelbar oder mittelbar geldwerte Leistungen für Arbeiten erhalten, die im Zusammenhang mit dem Inhalt der vorgelegten Dissertation stehen.

Die Arbeit wurde bisher weder im In- noch im Ausland in gleicher oder ähnlicher Form einer anderen Prüfungsbehörde vorgelegt.

Bielefeld, 08.03.2020

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(Ort, Datum)

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(Unterschrift)