

How do Children and Adolescents Reason About Excluding an Unhelpful In-group Member?

Sabrina Ortiz, Madison Badua, Alizée Jean Jacques, and Aline Hitti
University of San Francisco

Introduction

- Past research indicates children and adolescents reason about excluding in-group members by referencing concerns for how the group functions (Hitti, Mulvey, Rutland, Abrams, & Killen, 2013).
- Such concerns become more frequent during adolescence.
- Less is known about how children and adolescents reason about exclusion of in-group members who distribute resources in ways that come at a cost to one's own group.
- The current study examined reasoning for excluding an in-group member who helps an out-group at varying levels of need for each group.

Method

Participants:

- 125 responses from 4th and 8th graders
- (Mage = 11.54)
- 60% female

Vignettes:

The children and adolescents responded to three different stories regarding their own group and an out-group going on a camping trip and needing water. An in-group member finds water and then distributes the water to each group.

Design:

Within-Subject Factor:

Need: (1) in-group needs more, (2) outgroup needs more, (3) both need equal water.

Between-Subject Factors:

Distribution: Equal water for both groups, Give the out-group more water.

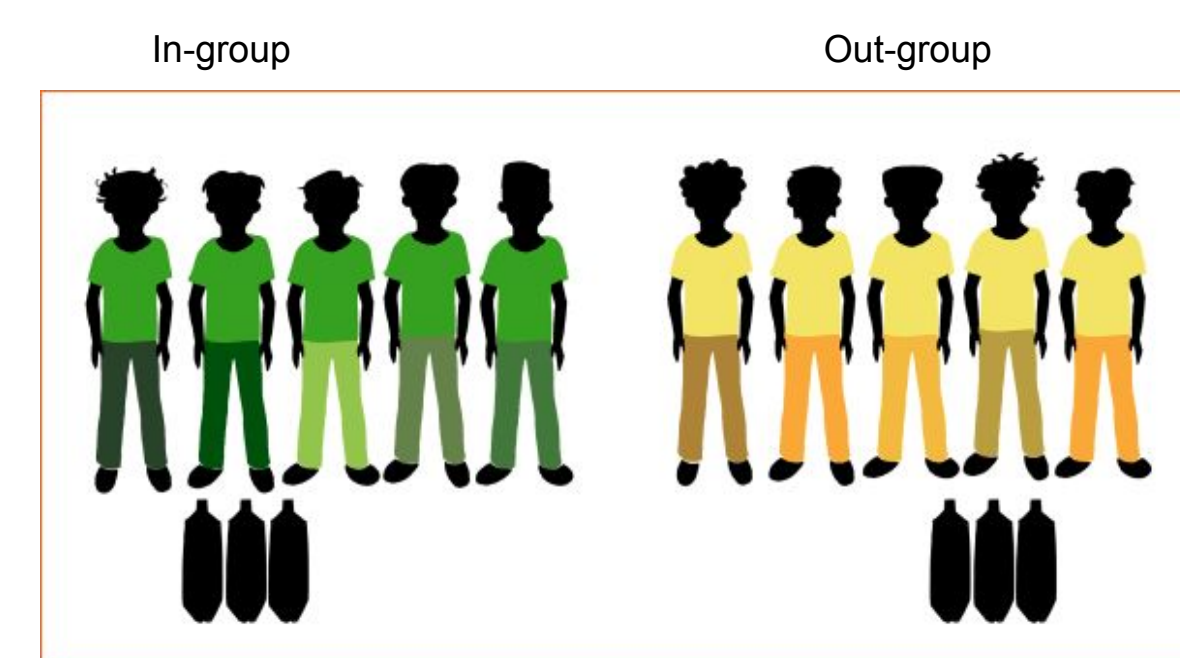
Age Group: 4th graders, 8th graders

Measures

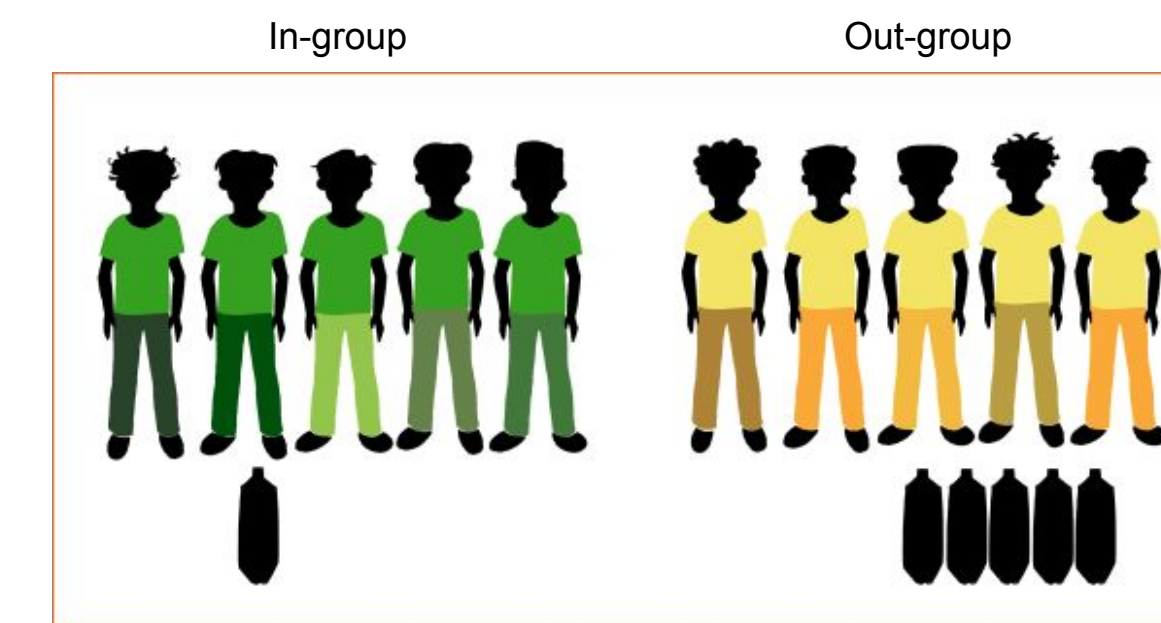
After distributing the water the group then decides to exclude this member. Participants were asked:

“Do you think it was okay or not okay that the group decides that they do not want Sam in the group anymore?”, 0 = Not Okay, 1 = Okay; Reasoning: “Why?”

Five reasoning categories were examined: *Empathy, Generosity, Group Functioning, Group Loyalty, or Low Salience*



Distribution 1:
Helping the out-group equally as the in-group



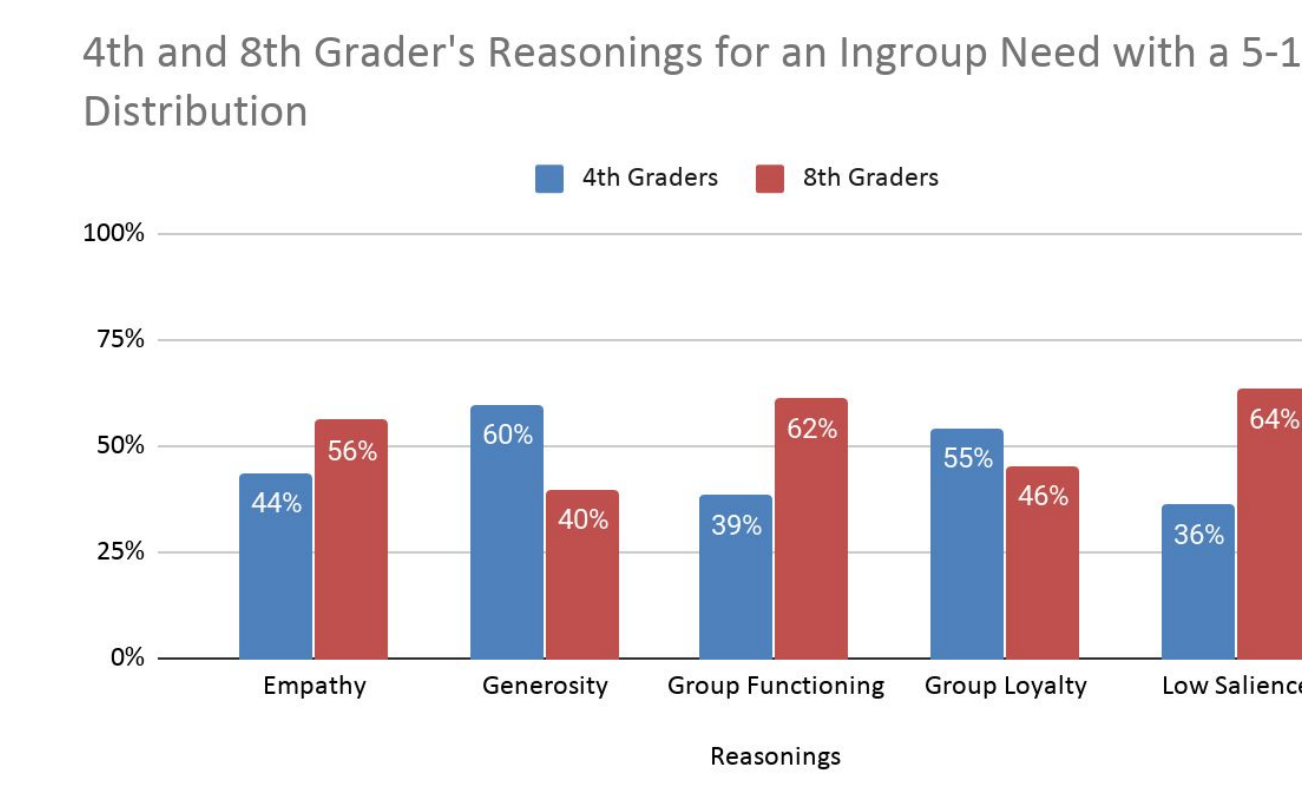
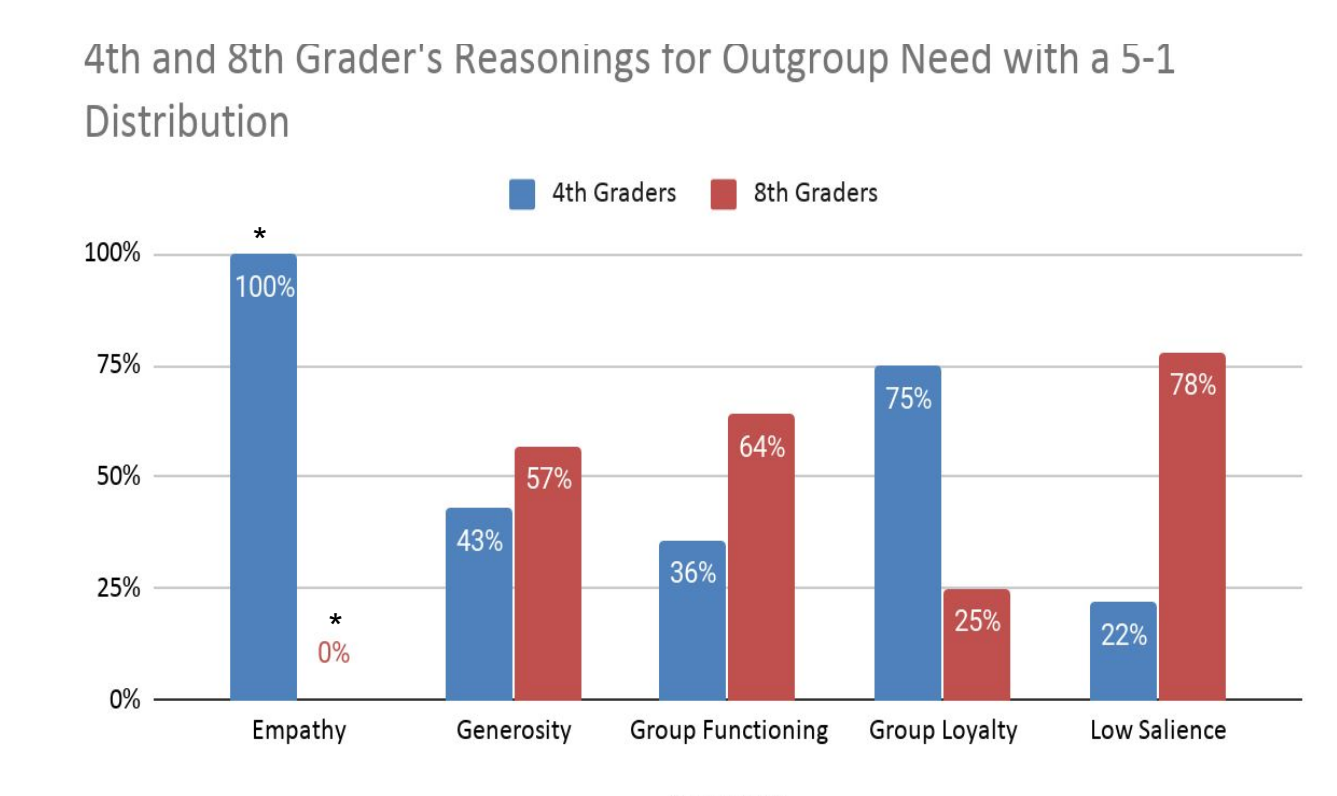
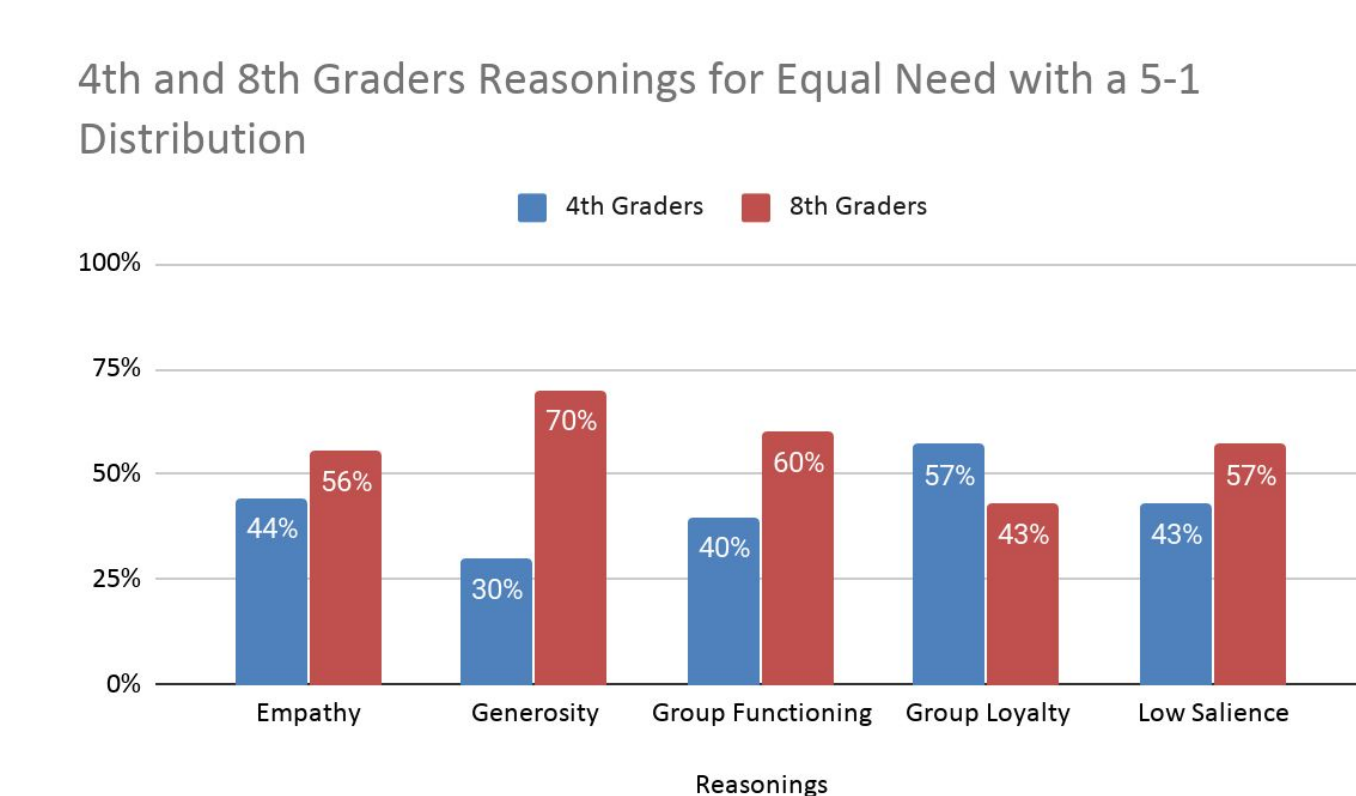
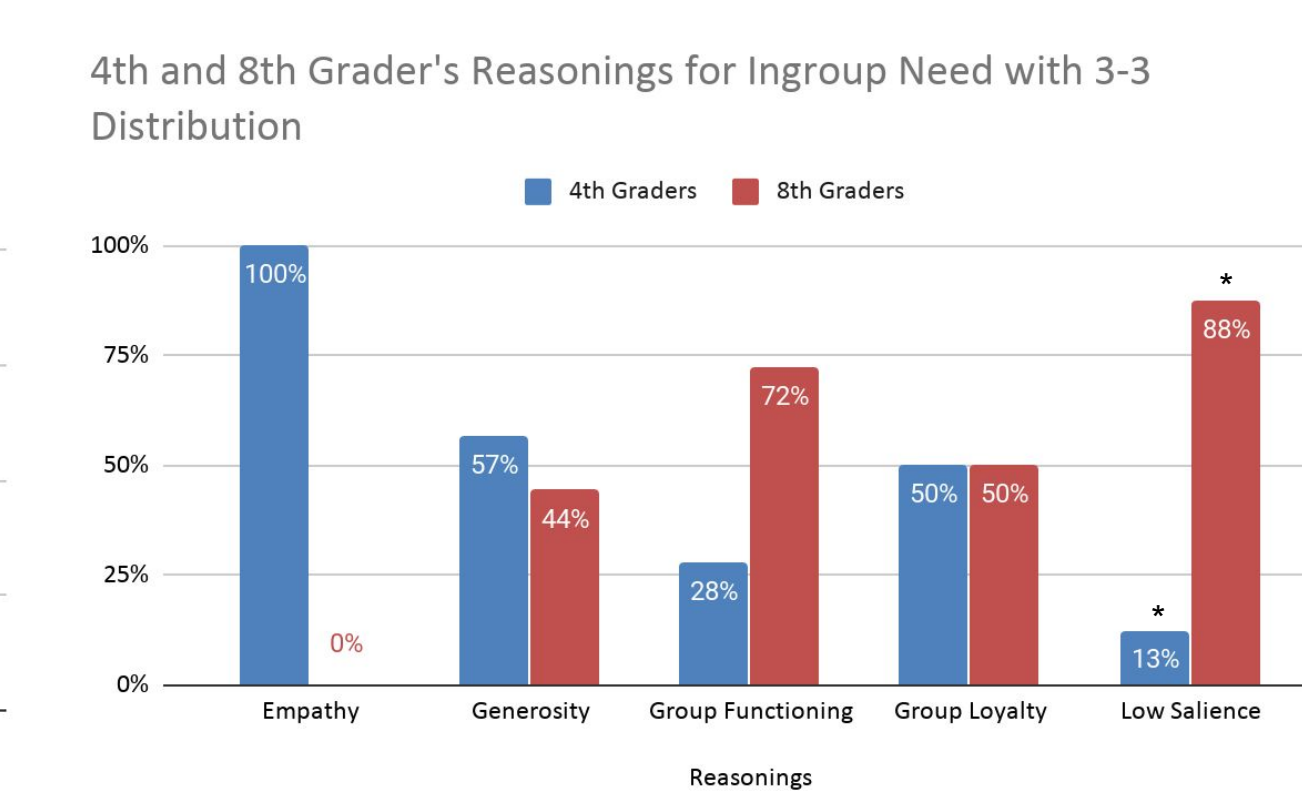
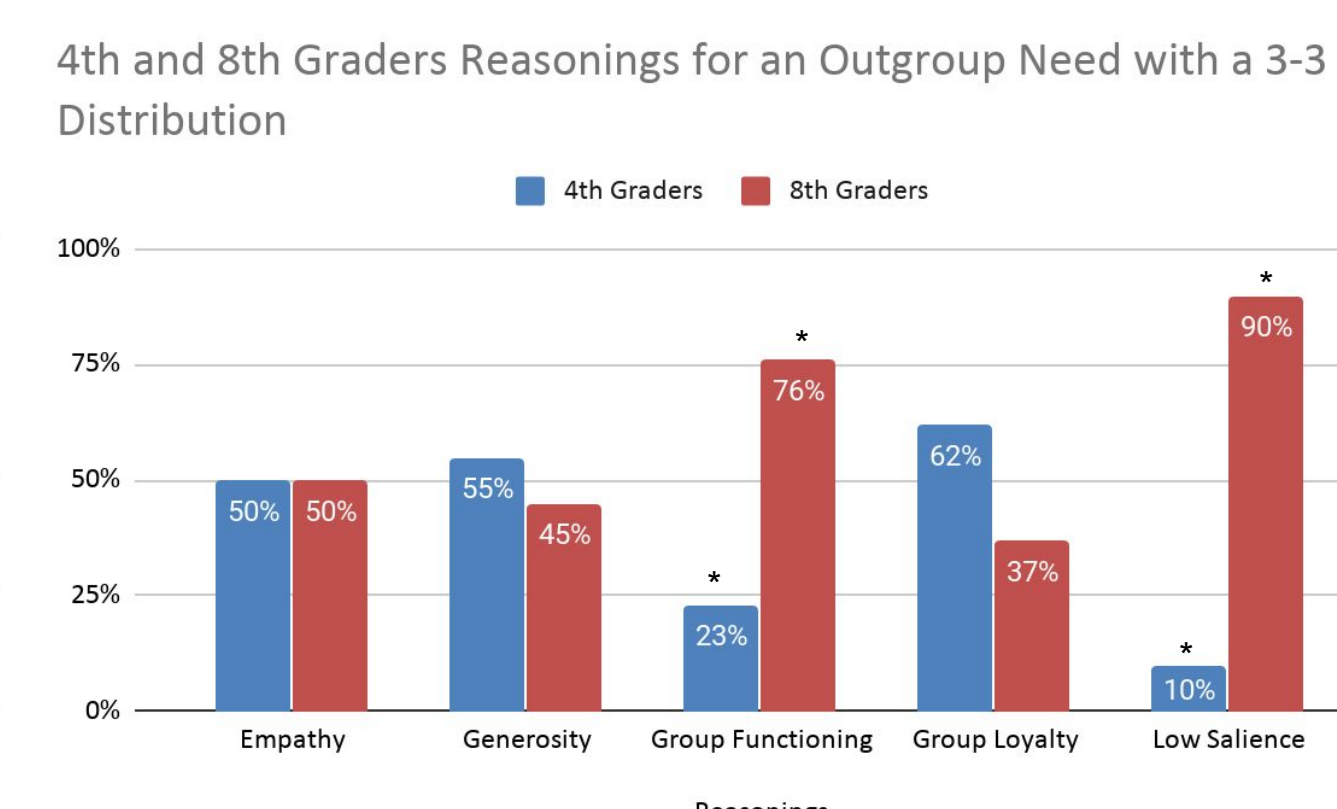
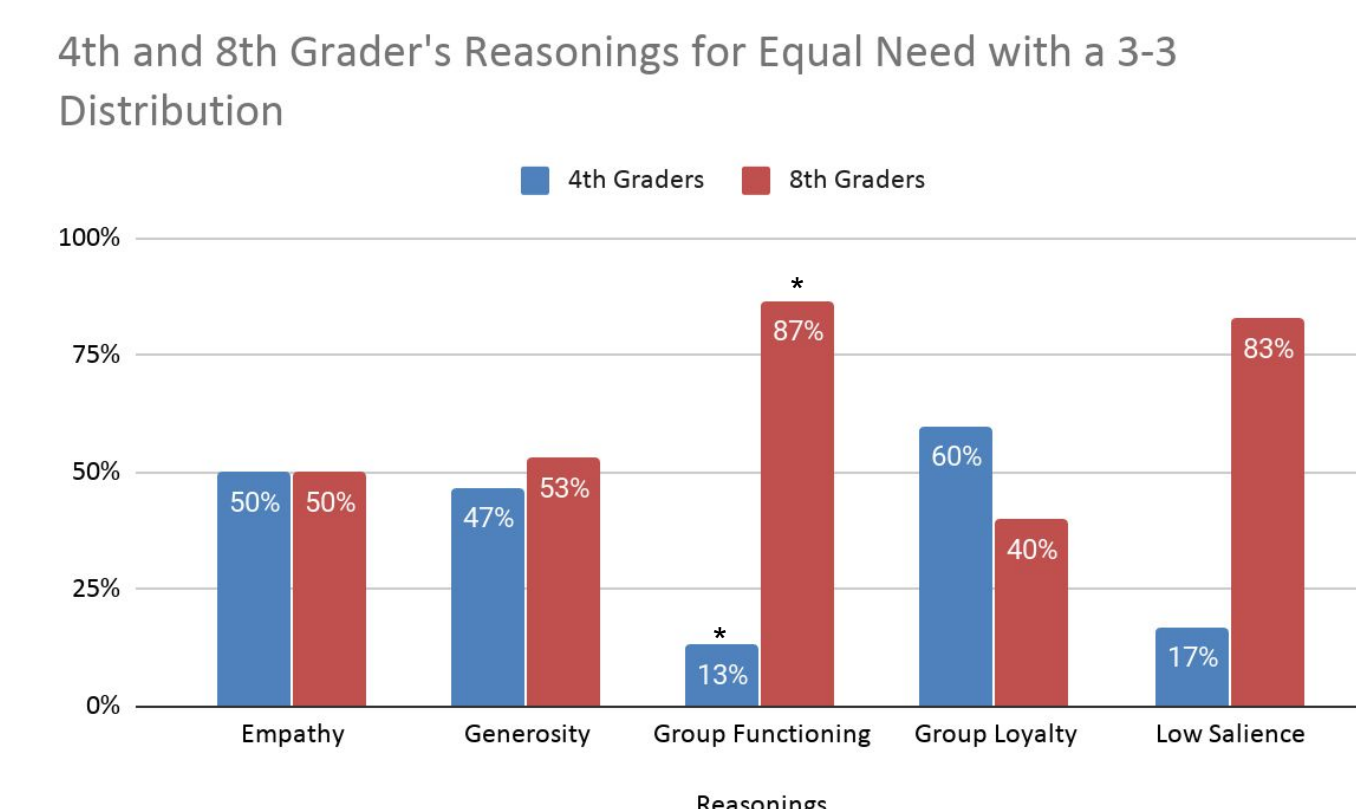
Distribution 3:
Helping the out-group more than the in-group

Results

Table 1
Percentages of 4th and 8th graders said okay or not okay regarding exclusion

Conditions	4th Graders		8th Graders	
	Not Okay	Okay	Not Okay	Okay
3-3 Distribution				
Equal need	100%	0%	88.90%	11.10%
Outgroup need	88.50%	11.50%	88.90%	8.30%
Ingroup need	96.20%	3.80%	83.30%	13.90%
5-1 Distribution				
Equal need	83.30%	16.70%	85.30%	14.70%
Outgroup need	93.30%	6.70%	88.20%	2.9%
Ingroup need	80%	20%	76.50%	20.60%

- Chi-Square tests showed children were more likely to judge exclusion as not okay than okay in all scenarios ($ps < .001$)
- Fisher's exact tests were conducted to compare how often 4th and 8th graders used different reasonings to justify their judgement regarding exclusion of the in-group member.



Discussion

- 4th and 8th graders in all scenarios were more likely to view exclusion as not okay, even when the distribution of the water did not favor their own group and used several forms of reasoning when judging this exclusion.
- In an equal distribution of water in all situations of need, 8th graders used *low salience* and *group functioning* significantly more than 4th graders, when reasoning about the in-group member that distributed water evenly between the two groups.
- In a distribution that gave more water to the outgroup when there was a greater outgroup need, 4th graders used empathy reasoning while 8th graders did not.

Conclusion

- While all participants do not condone excluding an in-group member, children and adolescents differ in how they reason about it.
- Adolescents emphasize there is no reason for the exclusion and are more concerned with how groups should function, while 4th graders are more likely to empathize with the excluded in-group member.

References

Hitti, A., Mulvey, K. L., Rutland, A., Abrams, D., & Killen, M. (2014). When is it okay to exclude a member of the ingroup? Children's and adolescents' social reasoning. *Social Development, 23*(3), 451-469.