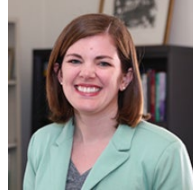
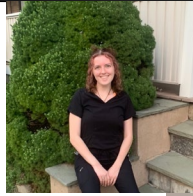


# The Influence of Gratitude on Close Relationships with Opposing Political Affiliation

## Participants:

- Sarahlouse Baldwin
- Courtney Gosnell, *PhD*
- Pace University, *PLV*



*Provost's Summer 2021 Student-Faculty  
Undergraduate Research Award*

## Methodology:

- Online MTurk Participants from Across Country
- Experimental & Correlational Studies

## Purpose:

- ❖ While a lot of research has been done exploring the relationships between democrats and republicans, little work has explored these perspectives in the context of close relationships.

## Outcomes:

- ❖ The goal of our research is to experimentally manipulate gratitude to determine if gratitude can change an individual's willingness and interest in maintaining close cross-party relationships.

# Participants

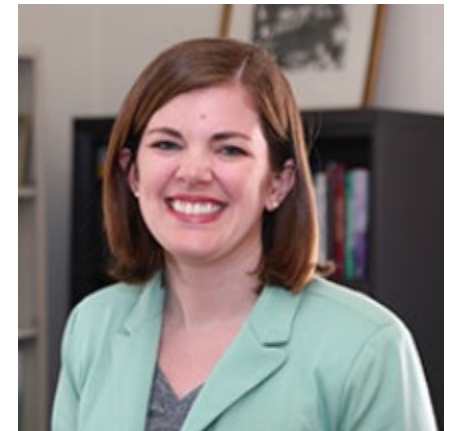
## Student Participant:

- Sarahlouse Baldwin, *BS in Biology*
- *Pace University, Class of 2022*
- *Dyson College of Arts and Sciences/ Pforzheimer Honors College*



## Project Mentor:

- Courtney Gosnell, *Assistant Professor*
- *Dyson College of Arts & Sciences, Psychology –PLV*



## Pace University – *Pleasantville*

- **Provost's Summer 2021 Student-Faculty Undergraduate Research Award**

# Context & Purpose

## Prompting this Research

- ❖ 81% of people, from both parties, have negative views of those with opposing views and have reported that the majority of their friendships are now with those who share similar political views (Foran, 2017). Political differences are increasingly leading to interpersonal conflict (Tyson, 2018)
- ❖ Past work on gratitude has shown that gratitude can offer a lot of interpersonal benefits, such as promoting forgiveness, prosocial behavior, and relationship maintenance activities (e.g., Allen, 2018). Thus, gratitude may buffer potentially politically contentious relationships from dissolving by keeping a focus on behaving in a pro-relationship orientation.
- **Hypothesis 1:** Individuals who experience higher levels of gratitude are more open to having close relationships with people from opposing political parties.
- **Hypothesis 2:** Individuals will report feeling significantly more gratitude for cross-party relationships they have maintained compared to cross-party relationships that have become strained or distant.

# Techniques/Methodology

- ❖ Total of 329 participants recruited from across the U.S. via MTurk:
  - Male (60.6%), Female (38.5%), and Non-binary/other (0.9%)
  - Average age = 38 yrs old
  - Democrat (52%), Republican (23.9%), Independent (19.9%), Other (1.2%), and None (3.1%)
  - White/caucasian (78.8%), Black or African American (9.8%), Asian (8.0%), American Indian or Alaskan Native (0.3%), from Multiple Races (1.5%), and Other (1.5%)
  
- ❖ Participants named someone they are close to with opposing political views and someone whom their relationship has been strained due to opposing political views.
  
- ❖ Participants then rated the following:
  - Gratitude Questionnaire Six-Item Form (McCullough, 2013)
  - Expression of Gratitude in Relationships Measure (Lambert, Clark, Durtschi, Fincham, & Graham, 2010): including felt and expressed gratitude
  - General openness to cross-party close relationships and perceptions of the opposite party as immoral were also assessed

# Results & Conclusions

- ❖ We were able to experimentally manipulate gratitude, so that those participants primed to feel gratitude towards someone with opposing political views would express greater commitment and interest in maintaining the relationship.
- ❖ Of the 241 participants who completed the survey, 77 were assigned the gratitude (manipulation) condition, 70 the amusement (positivity) condition, and 94 the living room (neutrality) condition.
- ❖ This research found that those participants manipulated to feel gratitude towards someone of opposing political views in the gratitude condition expressed significantly more gratitude in response to the statement “Right now I feel a strong sense of gratitude,” as compared to those in the positive emotion or control condition.
- ❖ When responding on a scale of 1 (Strongly disagree) to 7 (Strongly agree), participants from the gratitude condition conveyed a strong sense of gratitude ( $M=5.84$ ,  $SD=1.14$ ), overwhelmingly larger than the response of those in the amusement ( $M=5.31$ ,  $SD=1.36$ ) or living room conditions ( $M=5.14$ ,  $SD=1.60$ ) ( $F(2, 237)=5.660$ ,  $p=.004$ ).
- ❖ Further, we found that participants expressed more openness to learning about different political views if they felt more gratitude towards their close other with opposing views, with those in the gratitude condition ( $M=5.62$ ,  $SD=1.18$ ), expressing a strong sense of openness as compared to those in the amusement ( $M=5.14$ ,  $SD=1.61$ ) or living room conditions ( $M=5.18$ ,  $SD=1.66$ ) ( $F(2, 237)=3.176$ ,  $p=.044$ ).