

# Group Relational Accounting: Why Do We Harm Those Who Have Not Harmed Us?



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## Why does our study matter?

- Although existing social exchange theories predict that individuals behave following the norm of reciprocity, there are cases of intergroup behaviors which violate the principle at the individual level.
- An example of this phenomenon is the killing of Vincent Shin, a Chinese American, in 1982. Around this time, strong anti-Japanese sentiment grew in the United States as Japanese car imports dominated the U.S. auto industry, causing job losses among auto-workers in the U.S. Two white auto workers, Ronald Ebens and Michael Nitz, beat Vincent to death during his bachelor's party because they presumed he was Japanese. Other examples of this phenomenon include vicarious revenge, hate crime, terrorist attack, and sympathy strike.
- These examples suggests that individuals keep track of social exchange at the group level over time and that such mental accounts influence how individuals treat those who are presumed to be out-group members, even violating the norm of reciprocity.
- Given that there are no current theories explaining this phenomenon, we launched a multi-method research program.

## Theory generating inductive work

- To generate a comprehensive theory explaining this phenomenon, we used the theory-building-from-cases-method.
- We examined the archival records of the collective bargaining records between the United Auto Workers and the Big Three Corporations (GM, Ford, Chrysler) from 1978 to 1986, which resulted in more than 3,000 pages archival records.

## Sample derived propositions

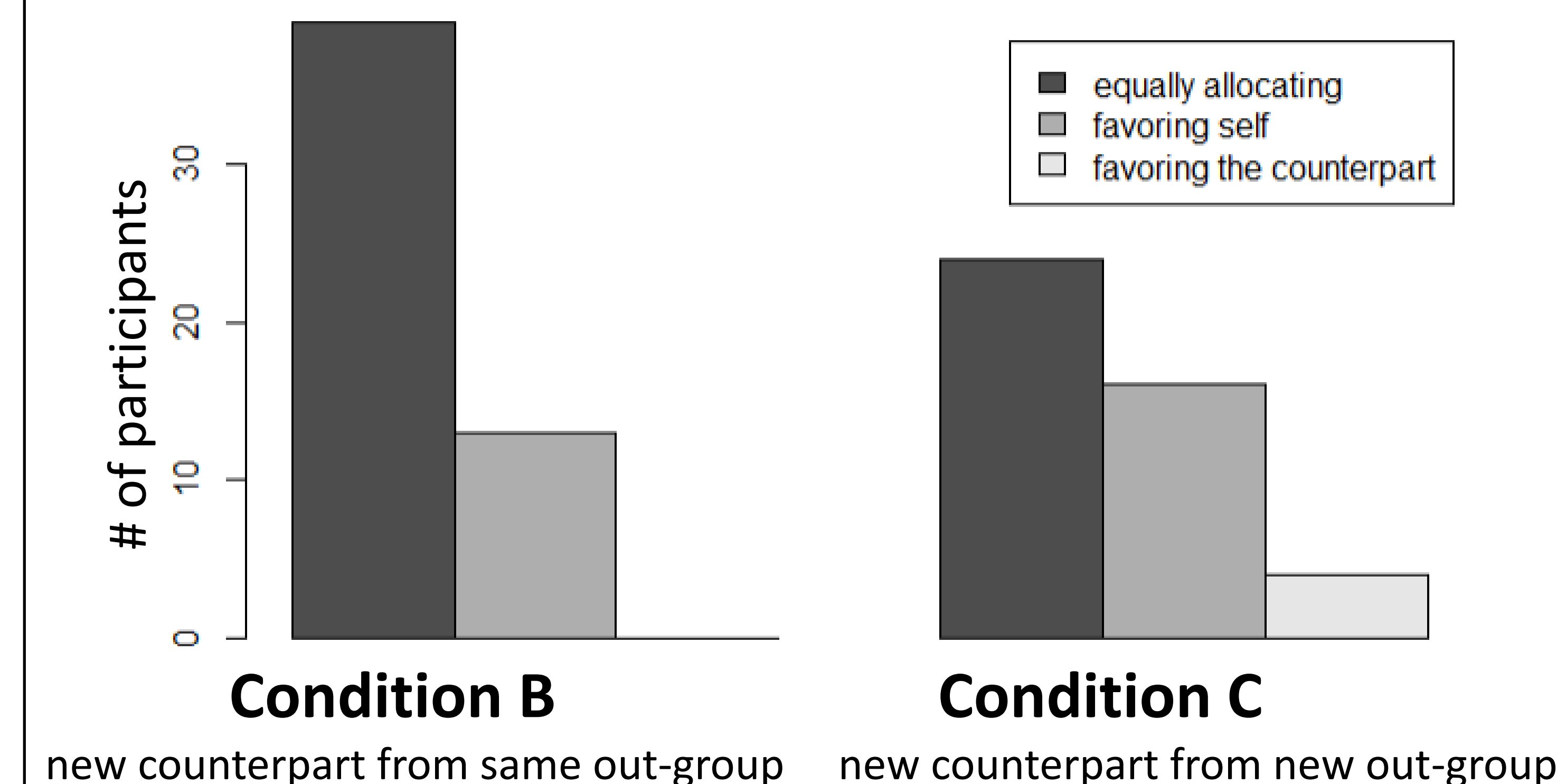
- H1: Individuals keep track of, maintain, and update mental accounts for their in-group's social exchange with other groups over time.
- H2: Perceptions of the group level exchange accounts influence how individuals treat out-group members, following the norm of the reciprocity at the group level.
- H3: loss aversion influences the degree to which perceptions of the group level exchange accounts influence how individuals treat out-group members.
- Specifically, perceptions of one's in-group's losses in its exchange with an out-group have a greater impact on how we treat out-group members than perceptions of their in-group's gains.

## Experimental study 1

- **From our pre-registered experimental study (N= 595), we found support for H1,2, and 3.**
- **Experimental design:**
  - After taking a bogus personality test, participants were told that they are assigned to Group A with other participants who share similar personality traits.
  - Participants played the dictator game as *Player 2* who passively receives the distribution of \$5 from their counterpart with a *fictional counterpart* from group B.
    - Condition 1: receiving \$1 (negative inequity)
    - Condition 2: receiving \$2.5 (equity)
    - Condition 3: receiving \$4 (positive equity)
  - Then, they played *Player 1* who distributes \$5 in round 2 in one of the conditions:
    - Condition A: playing with the same counterpart from round 1.
    - Condition B: playing with a new counterpart from the same group as the round 1 counterpart
    - Condition C: Playing with a new counterpart from a new group (Group C).
  - We measured how they distributed \$5 in round 2.

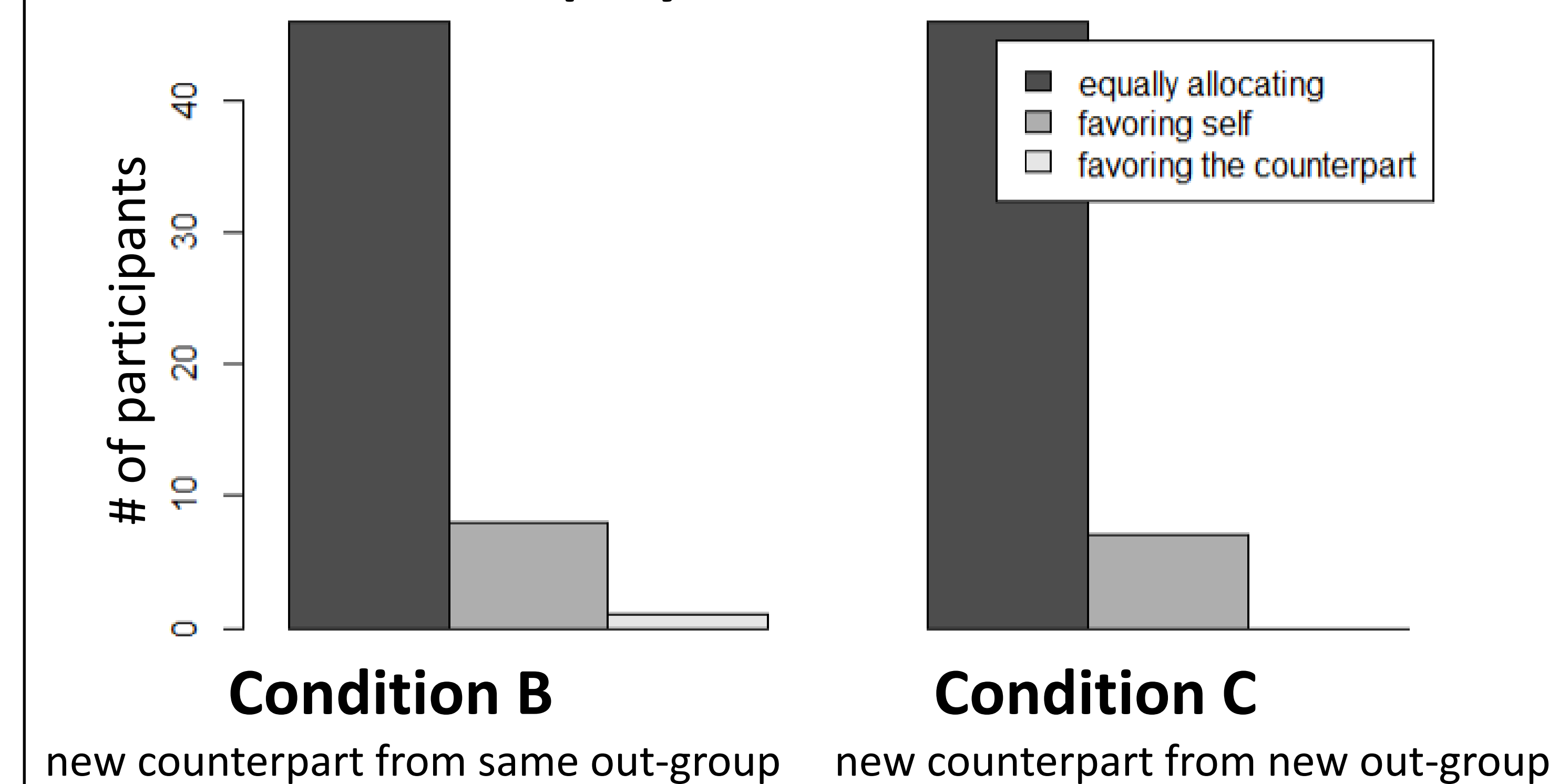
## Experimental study 1

### Condition 1: negative inequity in round 1



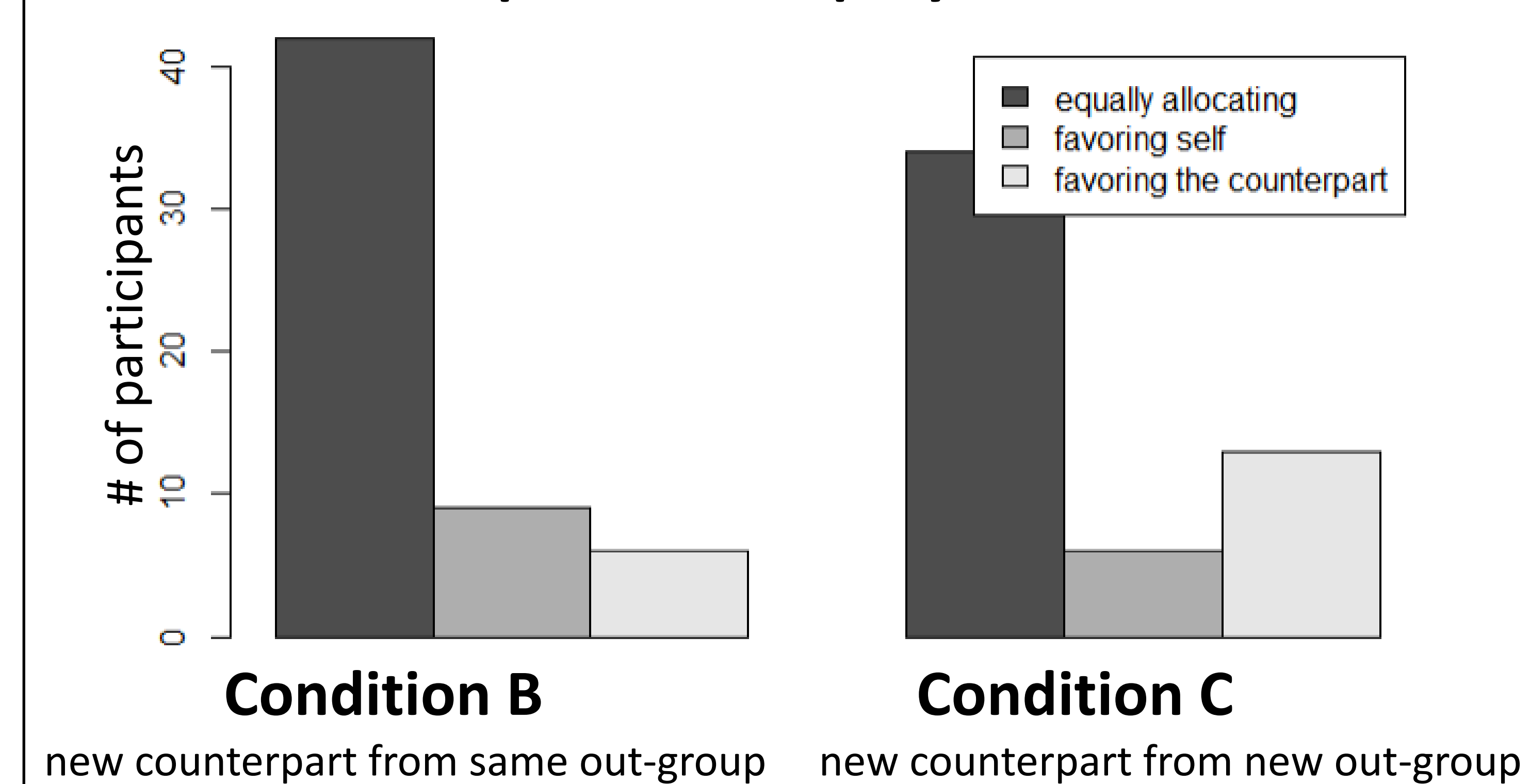
Chi-squared test:  $p < 0.05$

### Condition 2: equity in round 1



Chi-squared test:  $p = 0.60$

### Condition 3: positive inequity in round 1



Chi-squared test:  $p = 0.14$