

First Annual Report (October '21 - October '22) on the Project „Inclusivity Norms to Counter Polarization in European Societies (INCLUSIVITY)“

The INCLUSIVITY project aims to advance research on inclusivity norms, which we define as social norms that promote equality-based respect, dialogue, and unity, in efforts to prevent the harmful consequences of polarization in European communities. We use an interdisciplinary and mixed-methods approach, which combines a cross-European survey, laboratory experiments, social network analysis, and an evaluation of a school-based intervention to study how inclusivity norms may change individuals' attitudes and behavior toward opposing groups. With this project, we intend to provide knowledge on how to optimize the transmission and adoption of inclusivity norms in contemporary Europe.

During the first year of the project, we (i.e., all PIs and ECRs funded directly by the Challenges for Europe scheme) developed an interdisciplinary understanding of inclusivity norms. The core team met regularly online and in person to discuss existing literature and our own pilot studies and to improve our understanding of inclusivity norms, polarization, and intergroup relations. Members of our advisory board joined us in these meetings, as did external collaborators (both junior and senior) who helped us to further enhance the quality of our work and refine our theoretical and empirical insights. As planned, these ongoing discussions will continue to accompany our empirical studies throughout the project. Furthermore, in our meetings, we established communication patterns and working logistics such as data management, which will be used throughout the project. Within each WP, we successfully obtained ethical approval from the respective institutes, designed and implemented data collection materials, and hired ECRs. Taken together, we have taken the first critical steps towards implementing our overall project goals. Below, we detail some of the main results, achievements, small deviations from the initial plan, and the future directions of the project for the upcoming three years.

1. Scientific results

Initial findings from first pilot studies provide insights into the social nature of inclusivity norms and their effects. We have outlined these below according to our research questions.

1.1 Research Question 1: To what degree, when, and why do inclusivity norms increase tolerance and willingness to come into contact and collaborate with members of other groups in polarized settings?

To address this question, the core team has jointly designed the cross-European Survey in WP1, led by team Hagen. Required subsequent steps including the design and validation of quality measures such as cognitive pretesting and the call for tenders were taken. Currently, team Hagen is on the verge of issuing the contract with a professional partner company for data collection and will proceed to implement the cross-country survey. Team Hagen presented this part of the project during a Spring School hosted by the Mercator Graduate School in Duisburg and the German Peace Psychology Forum Annual Conference in Marburg [1, 2].

Team Kraków (WP2) has also started exploring this research question in a controlled, experimental setting, and successfully reviewed the most state-of-the-art norm manipulation techniques, to prepare for the planned novel experiments where they will induce inclusivity norms among individuals. This resulted in two literature overviews: whereas the first one reviews methods used to prime and measure norms in experimental and correlational studies, the second one reviews methods designed to measure individuals' interest in normative information and recognition, as well as context-specific norm manipulations. Team Kraków also prepared a third literature review on how a person's perception of social threats interacts with this person's intentions to adopt inclusivity norms. Based on these reviews, a new experimental manipulation of inclusivity norms has been developed. Results of work on social norms in a political context were presented by team Kraków at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP) Annual Convention in San Francisco in February 2022 [3]. Team Kraków is currently conducting two pilot studies to pre-test the

experimental manipulation in Germany and in Poland. They also worked intensively together with team Hagen on WP2, and used input from WP1 for further development of WP2.

1.2 Research Question 2: How are inclusivity norms adopted and spread in polarized social networks?

The Barcelona (WP3) and the Utrecht (WP4) teams jointly address this research question. The Barcelona team uses an inductive, personal network approach to study how individuals navigate polarized networks in Catalonia. It conducted a literature review on political polarization in social networks, leading to a methodological paper about the conceptualization and measurement of polarization in social networks. Drafts were presented at the annual conferences of the Spanish Federation of Sociology (FES) and the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) [4, 5]. Team Barcelona currently collects personal network data from a qualitative sample of 75 citizens and community leaders (Stage 1 of their consensus analysis). For this aim, they have designed the sampling strategy, recruitment protocols, structured and unstructured interview modules, and fieldwork materials, implemented the structured modules in the CAPI software Network Canvas, tested transcription conditions, established contact with stakeholders, conducted pilot tests, and trained the fieldwork team. In Stage 2, they will administer a web survey for the general population (intended sample size of 1,000 respondents).

The Utrecht team (WP4) employs an experimental approach to test how inclusivity norms can spread in polarized networks and uses simulations testing various within and between group structures. During the first year, they focused on a systematic review to assess the relative efficacy of group threat, group contact, socialization, media, and demographic variables in explaining attitudes between ethnic groups. In this study, they first develop and use a quasi-automated, quasi-reproducible search strategy. Second, from the resulting sample, data are then retrieved and presented in a systematic review and meta-analysis. The intended analysis strategy is a meta-analytic structural equation model (MASEM), using zero-order correlation coefficients as the primary and partial correlation coefficients as the secondary effect size (further details and documentation are available at: <https://github.com/jwgsim/A-systematic-review-and-meta-analysis-of-seven-determinants-of-inter-ethnic-attitudes>).

The PIs Jaspers and Lubbers have started a joint project together with an international expert in extremism, Dr. Marcel Lubbers (University of Utrecht) to better understand whether core discussion networks vary across the political spectrum, using a national survey dataset in Spain from 2013. Initial findings provide important insights into how extremism and network characteristics are associated with each other; for example, they found that extremists were significantly *more* exposed to opposing views in their core networks than moderate individuals, even after taking into account differences in opportunity structures. In July 2022, Dr. Eva Jaspers presented the first draft of this paper at the conference of the International Network for Social Network Analysis in Australia [6].

1.3 Research Question 3: How can a network intervention transmitting inclusivity norms increase contact and collaboration between groups in polarized settings?

Team Osnabrück (WP5) has developed and piloted all research and intervention materials for the intervention study that will include three waves of data collection in four high schools. They (A) completed a literature review of school interventions targeting key outcomes (*e.g.*, tolerance, intergroup contact), (B) held regular discussions with the core team and several educational collaboration partners to design the intervention and its curriculum, (C) successfully completed pre-tests and pilot studies to develop the materials and pre-test the effects of the intervention with adolescents (*e.g.*, ten focus group studies with small groups of adolescents, parents, and teachers; one online survey with 68 parents; and one online experiment with 328 adolescents); (D) are completing a feasibility study (started in January 2022; expected to be completed the end of November 2022) with a four-wave quasi-experimental design in two matched secondary schools (with 1,337 adolescents in total). Taken together, initial results showed positive feedback and provided critical input on the large intervention.

In preparation for the large-scale intervention study that is planned to begin in January 2023, team Osnabrück also successfully recruited new schools and have now 21 schools that confirmed interest. The larger pool of interested schools allowed them to match on important characteristics, such as school level characteristics (*e.g.*, school size and school system), intergroup diversity, and a variety of other demographics, and to design the study accordingly. Team Osnabrück presented initial findings from our studies at an online conference [7] hosted by the La-EU-MiDi network (aimed at facilitating dialogue and collaborations between researchers and practitioners working on prejudice-reduction and inclusion).

2. Contribution towards the funding initiative's specific goals

The funding initiative "Challenges for Europe" aimed to stimulate scientific debate on fundamental issues relating to Europe and the European Union, to open up new perspectives for comparison and to strengthen scientific cooperation within Europe. Our research consortium has started to contribute to this aim in three ways. First, we are in the final stages of reviewing the state-of-the-art literature and have collected extensive pilot data about inclusivity norms in a polarizing Europe, to gain a more up-to-date insight into contemporary issues and adapt our materials accordingly. All pilot studies are either completed or near completion at the time of writing, and we have therefore prepared to implement the larger data collections in the five WPs. Second, we have started to disseminate initial results to the scientific community via conference presentations, both for scientists and for practitioners, and by starting to write scientific reports and articles. Third, our project has started to strengthen scientific collaboration within Europe, with online and in-person meetings as well as jointly conducting studies and writing scientific articles. We did this within the consortium and with the advisory board members as well as external researchers, including both junior and senior researchers.

3. Self-assessment in comparison with the original goals and planned objectives (e.g. unexpected findings, other intrinsic/methodological divergence)

Overall, progress on the project is according to the time schedule, with a slight general deviation: to be able to hire all personnel under ongoing restrictions on mobility, we had to prolong our project by four months. We have, however, succeeded in filling all planned positions with highly qualified international candidates, from both EU and non-EU (Israel) countries. Work on the specific WPs is also generally proceeding as planned. The Hagen Team's (WP1) work is generally on schedule, but the time plan has slightly deviated so as to ensure the quality standards the core team as a whole has committed to. There were two specific reasons for this delay: first, the Hagen team aims to cooperate with more experienced and professional partner companies for the data collection than initially planned; second, they have decided to implement additional, partly time-consuming, quality measures, such as cognitive pre-tests of the survey. Additional financial resources (not from the VW grant) were made available for this purpose.

The Kraków team's work (WP2) is going according to plan as they have developed experimental methods to induce inclusivity norms for the planned experiments. One small deviation is that they decided to postpone data collection for two correlational studies until we have jointly collected and analyzed data from WP1. This will provide fundamental insights into the measurement and basic correlations between inclusivity norms and their potential outcomes (*i.e.*, contact willingness, collaboration, and tolerance).

Work in the Barcelona team on WP3 is being conducted as planned: data collection in Stage 1 stage is expected to be concluded before April 2022. Small deviations in the original plan were made. First, they incorporated not one but two future-oriented political name generators in the Stage 1 data collection, to allow for systematic comparison between name generators. Second, the Stage-1 quota group of people with intermediate political positions (in between pro- and anti-independence) was divided into two groups, distinguishing between those who have mixed, fluid, or

ambiguous positions, and those who are politically mobilized along other dimensions, who likely navigate polarized networks differently.

The Utrecht team (WP4) has expanded the original plans because there was a need to get more systematic and up-to-date insights into the interdisciplinary literature on interethnic attitudes to inform the Agent-Based Modelling. The ECR took a course in ABM's. The paper on extremists' personal networks also provides a necessary foundation for the work in WP3. Establishing a groundwork for understanding polarization between ethnic groups from a social network perspective is a worthwhile step in informing subsequent simulation, survey, and experimental studies on that topic.

The Osnabrück team (WP5) is largely following the original time plan, but deviated in two ways. First, they are conducting a feasibility study with adolescents, which was found necessary considering the uniqueness of the intervention they developed and the gap in studies on inclusivity norms with adolescent samples. Second, they decided to closely collaborate with the *Verein Niedersächsischer Bildungsinitiativen* (VNB) from the start of the project onward, because the recruitment and subsequent collaboration with schools were more challenging than planned, especially due to the COVID-related restrictions. This proved essential for developing and implementing the new intervention, because the VNB has extensive experience in (A) acting as a liaison between academic researchers, schools, and governmental officials (e.g., the Ministry of Education in Lower Saxony, necessary to gain permission to implement the intervention), and other relevant stakeholders (e.g., teachers, parents, and their teenage children), (B) implementing intervention programs through workshop sessions in high schools, and (C) recruiting enough high schools to be able to examine the intervention with matched control (this was extremely successful, as we now have 21 schools who confirmed interest). Together with the VNB, they created suitable materials for German adolescents, including a detailed curriculum for in-class implementation of workshops.

4. Gain in knowledge as a result of interdisciplinary and international cooperation

The close international collaboration within the core team and through the broader network of researchers has proven to be essential for the implementation of the project. To facilitate this, we organized three (instead of two) meetings in the first year, in Utrecht (October 6-8, 2021), Osnabrück (March 23-25, 2022), and Barcelona (September 28-30, 2022). Most participants attended in person to facilitate core team cohesion and the quality of the discussion, but we used a hybrid format, because of the COVID restrictions and to allow advisory board members to flexibly attend. These meetings have been critical for network formation, the preparation of the WP1 questionnaire, and the interdisciplinary integration and coordination of the five work packages. We additionally received feedback on data collection plans, materials, and first results from Prof. Maykel Verkuyten (Utrecht University), Prof. Elizabeth Paluck (Princeton University), Prof. Nicole Tausch (University of St Andrews), Prof. Małgorzata Kossowska (Jagiellonian University), and Prof. Soledad de Lemus (University of Granada, Spain). We plan to continue to discuss with them the preliminary results of the WPs in the coming months. Collaboration has also taken place bilaterally. For instance, Dr. Eva Jaspers spent four months with the group of Dr. Miranda Lubbers at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (October 2021-March 2022), and Jan Willem Simons, PhD student in Dr. Jaspers' team, also paid a brief visit to the group during that period. This allowed the members of the teams of WP3 and 4 to work on the network analytic aspects of their work packages together (and with the WP5 team online).

5. Inclusion of junior researchers

We hired all ECRs according to OTMR guidelines and each ECR is supervised by a PI, which includes regular and personal mentoring, and in-depth discussion of oral and written work. Through our joint meetings and regular exchanges online and in-person, the ECRs are part of every aspect of the project and closely collaborate with each other and the core team. Moreover, the ECRs meet (often in smaller focus groups, when issues arise) to discuss any challenges they face in the project, and also

meet members of the advisory board, who are specialized experts in their fields, when needed. We have planned research visits for each ECR at one of the other research groups during the next years. Additionally, several junior researchers and graduate students collaborate with us as external researchers (e.g., in WP2, on the development of experimental methods: Tobias Ihle, Freie Universitaet Berlin, Dominika Gurbisz, Jagiellonian University in Kraków). At Utrecht University, starting Assistant Professor Manja Coopmans has an advisory role in the WP5 project. Furthermore, three PhD students (not directly funded by this grant, but by internal departmental funds) are working on projects related to the INCLUSIVITY Project, and are therefore included in team discussions and activities. Specifically, at Osnabrück University, Wilma Marie Middendorf plans to further extend the social intervention and adapt it to target parents, and Malin Kleukers will work on creating a curriculum for teachers and social workers. In Barcelona, Nuria Targarona Rifà, a PhD student on a thematically related project, learns the basics of personal network data collection in the INCLUSIVITY project. As planned, each team has hired and started to train student assistant(s) to work on the project preparation and data collection. Finally, several bachelor and master students are currently writing their theses on the pilot data collected in the various WPs, and students from the participating Universities are currently doing their internships in three of the research groups.

6. Further perspectives and sustainable effect of the project

In our preparation for WP1, we discussed intensively the fundamental nature of inclusivity norms, based on the most up-to-date literature from various social science (sub)disciplines, initial findings from pilot studies, and expert input from our advisory board and collaborators. One methodological challenge we are addressing concerns the disentanglement of the three norm dimensions we proposed, namely equality-based respect, dialogue, and unity. In our first set of analyses, participants seem to have difficulties distinguishing between these three (theoretically distinct) dimensions. We are currently adapting measures (in WP1, 2, and 5) to further examine this important issue, as it informs us about the very nature of inclusivity norms. The various ways in which descriptive versus prescriptive inclusivity norms, as well as actual versus perceived inclusivity norms, are theoretically similar and distinct, and subsequently operationalized, is a major challenge to be addressed jointly by the team. In the next years of the project, we will apply the developed experimental methods in the context of more complex study designs, placed in realistic polarizing contexts. Such controlled, experimental studies inform us what type of interventions to counter polarization work in real-life settings across Europe. Finally, with our social network approach, we will better understand the complex and dynamic nature of how inclusivity norms are constructed, negotiated, and spread in polarized networks. We are confident that we have the resources and expertise to address these issues during the next years of the project. The creation of our research network on norms, polarization, intergroup relations, and networks, has already proven to be very fruitful.

In WP5, we have invested in creating various ways of maximizing the impact of our social intervention and establishing an ongoing dialogue with and outreach to various stakeholders, including the ministry of education in Lower Saxony, teachers, parents, and youths themselves. Together with the VNB, we developed a curriculum for high school classes based on our intervention and refined this curriculum based on our focus group and online surveys. Once our feasibility project finishes, we will evaluate how to further optimize the curriculum and make it publicly available via the websites we will develop (see below) and the Open Science Framework (OSF). One external collaborator from the Osnabrück team, PhD student Stefanie Richters, taught a workshop [8] on our school intervention for teachers, parents, and other relevant adult stakeholders, together with a member from the VNB, which was received very positively.

Based on this work, the Osnabrück team and VNB are jointly applying for a project to further train teachers and social workers in high schools to extend and further develop the social intervention at the *Landespräventionsrat Niedersachsen* for two years (45.000 EUR; expected to be submitted in October 2022). Osnabrück is also developing two websites (one for adolescents, one for their parents) to communicate a summary of the main findings together with the VNB and

“Netzbewegung GmbH” (a website developer with experience in working with youths). We will also apply for additional funds for the scientific communication module of the Volkswagen Foundation, necessary to disseminate the upcoming results more widely and to give it a sustainable effect in the future. We plan to start this application when data collections are completed. Finally, we will publish our findings according to open and reproducible science guidelines, which the systematic review seeks to implement by documenting key aspects of the process on GitHub and the Open Science Framework and providing access to this documentation to all interested parties.

7. Other aspects (e.g. any particular advantageous or constraining circumstances, appraisal of cooperation, integration in the scientific or institutional environment)

The cooperation with all of our partners is going smoothly and according to plan. Thanks to the interdisciplinary nature of the team, the advisory board, and collaboration partners, our discussions have already provided new, insightful, and innovative perspectives on the topic of interest. Importantly, one unexpected constraint has been that the Autonomous University of Barcelona suffered a massive ransomware cyberattack on October 11th, 2021. The initial delay caused by this event has been caught up, however, and the UAB has implemented increased safety measures.

References

- [1] Schäfer, L. F. [2022, March, 23–April, 01]. *Inclusivity Norms to counter Polarisation in European Societies* [Spring School presentation]. Openness, tolerance, and sense of community – narratives and realities of contemporary society, Duisburg, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany
- [2] Schäfer, L., F. [2022, September, 23–24]. *Inclusivity Norm to counter Societal Polarisation: How can challenges of polarisation be tackled and social cohesion be preserved?* [Conference presentation]. 33rd Meeting of the German Peace Psychology Forum, Marburg, Hesse, Germany.
- [3] Potoczek, A., Bukowski, M., de Lemus, S., Jiménez-Moya, G., Rodríguez-López, Á., & Jasko, K. [2022]. *Walk This Way: Ingroup Norms Determine Voting Intentions for Those Who Lack Sociopolitical Control* [Symposium Talk]. Annual Convention of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology Annual Convention. San Francisco, CA, United States.
- [4] Ciordia, A., & Lubbers, M. [2022, June 29–July 2]. *Assessing polarization in relational terms: Diversity, homophily and communities* [Conference presentation]. XIV Congreso Español de Sociología, Murcia, Spain.
- [5] Ciordia, A., & Lubbers, M. [2022, August 22–26]. *Assessing polarization in relational terms: Diversity, homophily and communities* [Conference presentation]. Annual Conference of the European Consortium for Political Research, Innsbruck, Tirol, Austria.
- [6] Jaspers, E., Lubbers, M., & Lubbers, M. [2022, July 12–16]. *When discussing important matters and politics, extremists’ networks do not resemble echo chambers* [Conference presentation]. Annual Conference of the International Network for Social Network Analysis, Cairns, Queensland, Australia.
- [7] de Lede, S., & Middendorf, W. M. [2022, September 1–3]. *Together for tolerance: How can a social network prevention transmitting inclusivity norms increase contact and collaboration between groups in school settings* [Conference presentation]. La-EU-MiDI Conference, online.
- [8] Richters, S., & Liedtke, J [2022, June 13–14]. A peer project to strengthen prosocial behavior (Ein Peerprojekt zur Förderung von prosozialem Verhalten) [Workshop]. Prevention week (Präventionswoche) organized by *Landespräventionsrat Niedersachsen*, Hannover, Lower Saxony, Germany.