

Second Annual Report (October '22 - October '23) 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 based on equality-based respect, dialogue, and unity, and their role in prevention of 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 aim to gain knowledge on how to optimize the transmission and adoption of inclusivity norms in contemporary Europe. In the first year of the project, we took the first critical steps to achieving this goal by jointly developing an interdisciplinary understanding of inclusivity norms, hiring all personnel, and starting with pilot studies and the design of all data collection projects.

During the second year of the project, we have started data collections in almost all WPs and are on the verge of starting the large international data collection of Work Package 1 (WP1), led by the team Hagen. Together with various members from our advisory board and external collaborators, we, in the core inclusivity team (all PIs and ECRs hired in the initiative), regularly met both online and in person to further discuss (a) personnel and administrative issues; (b) the design and implementations of our data-collections, especially WP1; and (c) first results from pre-tests on the meaning of inclusivity norms, their boundaries and potential impact on tolerance, intergroup contact and collaboration in polarized contexts; (d) how to disseminate the results from our project (e.g., through a joint special issue, edited by the PIs); (e) plans for further funding applications to maximize sustainability and impact (e.g., through a joint application for the VW Foundation Science Communication Module).

1. Scientific results

Findings from second year's studies provided further insights into the ingredients of inclusivity norms which are potentially most impactful, the social and individual's boundaries showing under what conditions and how these norms are impactful, and the social intricacies and complexities of inclusivity norms from an everyday social network perspective. We have outlined the specific WPs findings 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?

Team Hagen (WP1) has set up a contract with a renowned international survey company (INFO GmbH, Berlin) that has strong expertise in conducting cross-national European surveys. Two pretests in Germany and the UK were used to validate the measures and showed very promising results. For example, participants were able to differentiate between different sources of normative information (i.e., social network and societal norms) and types of social norms (i.e., descriptive vs prescriptive social norms) and all further measures have good psychometric qualities. Thus, we were able to develop a questionnaire to assess all constructs in a reliable and valid way. Professional translations of all measures are currently being completed and we anticipate to start with the international survey in October and November 2023 in the following 12 countries: the Czech Republic, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Spain, Sweden, and the UK. Team Hagen presented first results based on the pretest data at the General meeting of the European Association of Social Psychology in July 2023 [3] and the Biannual Meeting of the Section Social Psychology of the Germany Psychological Society in September 2023 [4].

Team Krakow (WP2) further developed experimental manipulations to promote tolerance with regard to the polarizing issue of homosexual rights in Poland. A total of seven studies were completed in Year 2. Two pilot studies were done to pre-test two different manipulations followed by two main studies to test these manipulations and their impact on tolerance. In these studies, the effectiveness of the norm manipulation was moderated by participant's initial attitudes, which stresses the importance of situational and personal factors that modulate the impact of inclusivity norms on the main outcome variables. The results of these studies were presented by team Krakow at the Spring/Summer Institute-wide Poster Session of the Institute of Psychology in the Jagiellonian University in 2023 [5], at the General meeting of the European Association of Social Psychology (EASP) in Kraków 2023 [6] and at the Annual Meeting of Polish Social Psychology Association held in Łódź (PSPS) in September 2023 [7]. In an additional study, the experimental manipulations were tested in Germany, where we focused on manipulation of equality-based respect norms in the context of rainbow family rights [8].

Finally, a sixth study was conducted to help uncover whether there are discernible differences in various types of tolerance, namely social, political, general, and specific tolerance, and what specific contextual factors influence tolerance. Thus, this study serves the goal of understanding the multifaceted relationship between inclusivity norms and different dimensions of tolerance across various contexts. Based on the findings from the six studies, team Krakow designed and completed data collection for a new study with a revised manipulation and is currently analyzing the data.

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

The Barcelona team (WP3) studies how citizens in a highly polarized context adopt inclusivity norms that help them connect and interact with people with different political opinions in their everyday lives. The postdoc and a team of four interviewers conducted the data collection. Interviews had structured (survey) and semi-structured (qualitative interview) modules to collect data about their social and political discussion networks, focusing on three different political topics (general political discussion, Catalan independence, and climate change) as well as their narratives of network activation, maintenance, and breakdown. Based on these data, the Barcelona team started to work on a first paper together with the Utrecht team to examine to what extent personal beliefs about dialogue norm and its perceived descriptive strength fosters citizens to engage in political discussion with people they politically disagree with, and whether this effect changes with topic. In a second paper, leveraging the rich personal accounts of citizens' everyday experiences of informal political discussion, the team investigates the motivations that lead people to engage in and maintain potentially 'risky' political conversations with people around them with opposite political identities and views, as well as the discursive strategies that people deploy in such conversations. Preliminary analyses of this paper were presented at an international conference on Social Network Analysis held in Portland (USA) in June 2023 [2]. In a third paper, the team analyzed the extent to which individuals may experience a deterioration of their personal relationships with less politically committed or ideologically-opposed acquaintances in severely polarized contexts. Preliminary results show evidence that activists are slightly more vulnerable than non-activists to politically-motivated social estrangement, though these damaged relationships tend to concentrate much more on outer layers (weak ties) in comparison with non-activists. A first draft of these results was presented in a Social Movement Studies conference held in Florence (Italy) in March 2023 [1]. Finally, a fourth paper was initiated by Sophie de Lede from team Osnabrück under the supervision of Alejandro Ciordia from team Barcelona, which focuses on network patterns of interpersonal discussion about climate change and their association with individual climate action. Preliminary results will be presented in an invited talk at Maastricht Sustainability Institute (MSI) on November 2, 2023 [10].

The Utrecht team (WP4) studies how inclusivity norms spread through networks. The PhD student, together with 11 student assistants from master programs at Utrecht University, have carried out a meta-analytic review on normative influences on ethnic out-group exclusion (attitudes, avoidance) from both the social environment and the media. They have collected, screened, and scraped 20,000 initial studies, using the ASReview program. Over 150 studies qualified for the meta-analysis on socialization effects, and around 300 for the one over media effects. The Utrecht team is currently analyzing and writing up the results of these meta-analyses that will subsequently serve as input for the Agent Based Models which are the next step in the project. In this project, the Utrecht team is able to compare effect sizes of inclusivity norms to those of other, related norms, for instance norms on intergroup contact, or more general political ideology of the environment (peers, parents, wider in-group), and the media content. Initial results indicate small to medium effect sizes of inclusivity norms on positive outgroup attitudes, and intentions for contact with the outgroups. The PhD student spent furthermore three months at the Autonomous University in Barcelona (April-July 2023), to develop the ideas for the Agent Based Models, together with Miranda Lubbers and Alejandro Ciordia. The primary benefit of this collaboration between WP3 and WP4 was to reframe an inclusivity norm as something that is endogenous to the social network (i.e., as something that arises between people when they interact with each other), which will allow for building the ABM's in an efficient and relevant manner. Identifying the inclusivity norms as an endogenous process, allows to build the ABM's in an efficient and relevant manner. Eva Jaspers organized two sessions on Negative Ties and Signed Graphs at the European Social Networks conference in September 2023 in Ljubljana, that included studies on polarization and avoidance between groups. Both Eva Jaspers and Jan Willem Simons presented on topics (related to) the INCLUSIVITY project during these sessions [11, 12].

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) analyzed results from a longitudinal feasibility study aimed to empirically explore the acceptability, feasibility and effectiveness of our planned social network intervention. The study was conducted in two schools (one intervention school, and one control school) in Lower Saxony, with a total sample size of 1,339 adolescent participants (5th to 12th graders), and four longitudinal waves of large batteries of surveys and additional focus group meetings with youths and their parents. Findings showed high acceptability among the targeted teenagers. However, the intervention and the control school showed no systematic differences in perceptions of norms or tolerance development. The intervention school also showed high levels of initial tolerance, which perhaps resulted in ceiling effects. Findings were published in a special issue on adolescents' political attitudes and behaviors in the *International Journal of Developmental Science* [9]

To revise the intervention based on the feasibility study, we worked intensively together with the *Verein Niedersächsische Bildungsinitiativen* (VNB) and regularly met with their team to discuss results and evaluations, and also obtained renewed feedback from teachers, school personnel, and focus groups of youths and their parents. Through this collaboration, we also successfully recruited another 21 high schools who wished to participate. From this pool of schools, we matched two pairs of schools (on various dimensions, such as school type, demographic characteristics of student population and geographical and social economical contexts of the school) and started data collection in all four schools in January 2023. We also refined selection process for social referents based on literature reviews, and further revised our intervention curriculum to empower students in their implementation of impactful, school-wide actions. To further bolster community engagement and acceptance, a multilingual website was launched (<https://togetherfortolerance.de/>) with versions for adolescents and parents (<https://togetherfortolerance.de/eb>), accompanied by targeted social media campaigns (e.g., on Instagram, TikTok and X). Data from the feasibility study was also used to validate and create new measures, including a new vignette-based measure to gain a more nuanced evaluation of the intervention's direct and indirect impact on polarization. We completed the first wave (pre-test) in all four schools in January and February 2023 and are currently implementing the intervention. Preparations are currently underway for the second wave (post-test, November 2023), and a third wave (delayed post-test, March 2024).

2. Contribution towards the funding initiative's specific goals

The second year of work on the project focused on the pursuit of the main initiative's goals of facilitating European scientific collaborations and by starting to study and share scientific knowledge on how to deal with polarization in Europe, a clear threat to cohesion within and across European countries. We increased international collaboration by intensifying our joint work in our consortium, consisting of the inclusivity core team and various (mainly European) advisory board members and external collaboration partners, who actively contributed to shaping and implementing the now ongoing data collections. Through these collaborations and meetings, we further elaborated on the interdisciplinary meaning of inclusivity norms, as members of our teams and with external partners specialize in different disciplines of social sciences (e.g., psychology, sociology, political science, and network science). We have also started to present our initial insights on international conferences and also to write and publish these findings in peer-reviewed international journals from these disciplines [9].

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

Work on the specific WPs is generally proceeding as planned. As explained in last years' interim report, team Hagen's (WP1) work is behind schedule because of the delay in hiring a survey company and to ensure the high-quality standards (i.e., validation of survey measures; quality of translation) the core team as a whole has committed to. We are confident that this delay will pay out in the end because of having a unique and high-quality cross-European data that will result in impactful publications. The work for team Krakow (WP2) is going according to the plan, because team Krakow has successfully developed experimental methods to induce inclusivity norms and they were tested in experiments. As noted in last year's interim report, one smaller divergence for WP2 is that we decided to postpone data collection for two correlational studies until after WP1, in order to gain better insight into the measurement and basic correlations between inclusivity norms and its potential outcomes (i.e., contact willingness, collaboration intentions, and tolerance) and moderating variables (e.g., attitudes, group identification, threat perceptions etc.). Team Krakow expects to have enough time to finish the data collection for these two correlational studies after WP1 completion. Team Barcelona (WP4) is on track has collected the data of Stage 1 between October 2023 and January 2023, obtaining a quota

sample of 76 citizens (one more than initially planned) from Catalonia. Team Barcelona expects to collect the Stage 2 data in the third year, as planned. They have also started to prepare the planned papers. As indicated in the previous report, WP4 is deviating from the original plan by performing the meta-analyses prior to the start of the simulations with Agent Based Models, yet this is not expected to change the overall time plan significantly, especially since we have already started with designing the ABM's for which the meta-analyses provide essential input. WP5 is following the original plan, with the deviations as explained in last year's report. Furthermore, our feasibility study delayed the start of the first data collection, but it has already shown to be a vital prerequisite for designing and implementing an intervention targeting the notoriously difficult group of adolescents. The main reason is that such an intervention was never designed or carried out before, especially with this age group, and the feasibility study implementation revealed serious pitfalls and also possibilities for the intervention which would have missed otherwise. For instance, it pointed toward the necessity of intense collaboration with educators and partners with expertise in adolescent school interventions, multiple feedback sessions with the adolescents themselves and their parents to maximize chances of acceptability and effectiveness, and to tailor survey measures to German adolescent populations with various migration and religious backgrounds. In WP5, we also had to hire more student assistants and intensify collaboration with external partners in order to have a large enough team to implement the intervention, because data collections and interventions in high schools (and especially two of the targeted schools, which include student populations with low financial means) are characterized by high unpredictability. We used internal departmental funds to hire these additional personnel, originally dedicated to the organization of a conference in the last year of the project. We will attempt to seek additional funds for this conference. Finally, because of the challenges of creating and implementing a new intervention with teenagers, we decided to simplify the design of our intervention; we originally planned to select four different types of social referents in four corresponding schools, and also one control group with no intervention. Instead, we now focus on two pairs of four schools (two intervention schools, where the same intervention is implemented, and two control schools), because we learned from the feasibility project that it is important to vary school and its student population characteristics; we purposefully included one pair of more diverse (in migration and religious background), urban schools, and also one pair of less diverse and more rural schools. This variation is likely to maximize ecological validity of our intervention and also to lead to more variation in our key outcome measures (such as intergroup contact and tolerance).

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

The close international and interdisciplinary 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 had regular online and in-person subgroup meetings to focus on specific issues. For instance, team Hagen and team Krakow met at the University of Granada in February 2023 to discuss their collaboration in WP2 and consult research outcomes with Soledad de Lemus (advisory board member); team Osnabrück and Utrecht met in Osnabrück in June 2023 to discuss science communication. We held one larger joint meeting to discuss first findings and our planned international survey in Berlin (4th of October until the 6th of October 2023), where advisory board members (e.g., Nicole Tausch; Maykel Verkuyten; Tobias Stark) attended online or in person this hybrid meeting on the Hagen Campus in Berlin. To create more spaces for exchanging ideas with researchers within and outside the team, the researchers have also proposed a special issue to the interdisciplinary journal "Social Inclusion" on Social norms, intergroup contact, and polarization. Specifically, the thematic issue aims to address the gap in the literature on how social norms can regulate intergroup contact, by investigating how the transmission of and conformity to social norms can help increase tolerance, foster willingness to interact and collaborate with other social groups in polarized contexts, and if and how they can decrease polarization. The proposal has been accepted by the journal.

5. Inclusion of junior researchers

We continue to include junior researchers and also expanded our team by the inclusion of new junior members. Team Hagen included one new junior researcher: Jil Ullenboom, a very promising M.Sc. student close to finish their studies and planning to start as a PhD student in the Hagen team. Moreover, throughout the development of the survey questionnaire in WP1, master students participated in conducting small pretests as part of writing her master thesis in our group. All of them were trained in data analysis and writing of short reports. Team Krakow included two new junior researchers: Dominika Gurbisz (PhD Student at the

Jagiellonian University in Krakow, who will focus on different aspects of tolerance in her thesis) and Tobias Ihle (external collaborator, University of Greifswald, who as part of his master thesis developed a prototype of an experimental manipulation of inclusivity norms and will be further collaborating within WP2). In Team Barcelona, four student assistants have participated in the data collection, and were trained in the topic of conducting interviews, personal networks, and research ethics. Two of the assistants are still active in the group as a newly starting PhD student (Marc Alcalà i Rams) and a Master student (Noé Gras). The group has also hosted Alicia Lozano Ferrer (BSc student in anthropology), Sophie de Lede (Master student in cross-cultural psychology who participates in the Osnabrück team), and Jan-Willem Simons (PhD student in sociology and an ECR in the Utrecht team), for three months each. They collaborated in the research of the INCLUSIVITY project and presented their findings at the group's biweekly seminar. These exchanges have led to collaborative writing. In team Utrecht, 11 student assistants were trained on how to carry out meta-analytic reviews. They received training in working with *ASReview* (<https://asreview.nl>), as well as hands-on workshops on coding and extracting information from published articles. They were also involved in and informed about reliability test of reliability of their coding. The group hosts Alejandro Ciordia from September–December 2023. In team Osnabrück, we hired a total of eleven student assistants to implement the challenging social intervention in high schools. All student assistants were trained to either (a) conduct professional surveys adhering to ethical conduct guidelines for minors and/or (b) implement the social intervention sessions with minors. Some of these student assistants have started to work in the project as external collaborators. For instance, in addition to her role in team Barcelona outlined above, Sophie de Lede did a four-and-a-half-month internship at the team Osnabrück to coordinate data collections for the feasibility study and to help revise the intervention curriculum. She currently continues to work as a student assistant to evaluate the social intervention and anticipates a start of a PhD position in the team in 2024. Sophie de Lede has also, jointly with Seyma Parlak, Kristina Krämer and Charlotte Demandt, helped to design and coordinate the ongoing three-wave data collection and are also involved in developing various means of science communication about the intervention targeting teenagers, such as via online social media and in-school campaigns. Finally, team Osnabrück also hired a new PhD student, Lena Bergs, who is a new external collaborator and who will be working on sustainable development of our social interventions targeting intergroup tolerance, discrimination and racism in adolescence (see next point for further details).

6. Further perspectives and sustainable effect of the project

Our research consortium with its joint thematic focus on social norms and polarization has become very important in the continuation of our interdisciplinary approach to understanding inclusivity norms and their impact on salient outcomes in polarized settings. The in-depth and ongoing discussions about the core concepts of our project, such as tolerance and inclusivity norms, showcase the dynamic and challenging nature of these interdisciplinary projects with a great myriad of different approaches. Despite these challenges, we see the collaborations as very fruitful because they have led already to new insights in our project's core theoretical concepts and also to actual results, as evidenced, for instance, by jointly organizing symposia at international conferences (e.g., the EASP General Meeting in Krakow), the starting of joint papers, and our joint special issue. As we enter the second half of our project, we have become convinced that the intense and effective collaboration is the key drive behind achieving the next phases of our project, which focus on finalization of data collections and dissemination of results. Through this collaboration, we also anticipate a variety of ways in which we can create and maintain a sustainable effect of our project. An important example of this can be seen in our plans for science communication. In WP5, we have started to develop an educational (in-class) curriculum based on insights from the social intervention together with the VNB and educators from the various schools. Team Osnabrück plans to make this curriculum openly available (e.g., through Open Science frameworks and our website) and also teach this curriculum in workshops together the VNB for educators and school personnel by the end of 2024, together with the new PhD student Lena Bergs. These plans also include an additional funding application for the Science Communication Module by the VW Foundation: The core inclusivity team has met online and also in person in Berlin to strategize and lay out a plan for an innovative project that goes beyond making our scientific results more understandable for non-scientists, and instead focus on dialogue between various scientific and non-scientific stake holders, especially those who work with teenagers (e.g., educators, parents). To carry out these plans, the Osnabrück and Utrecht teams met with Thomas Martens on the 30th of May and the 1th of June 2023 in person in Osnabrück, who works with team Utrecht and is the Knowledge Valorisation Officer at Utrecht University. He aims to integrate science communication and impact at early stages of the scientific process, to heighten chances of successful impact, and we have gratefully included him in the ongoing planning of scientific communication in our project.

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

The continued problems and even partial absence (from April 2023 until October 2023) of child care support in the region of Osnabrück has heavily constrained the work of Maarten van Zalk; unfortunately, alternatives in the region are lacking. An emergency child care support (to be booked at least three days in advance) was offered by the University of Osnabrück which alleviates some of the problems.

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