

Third Annual Report (October '23 - October '24) on the Project „Inclusivity Norms to Counter Polarization in European Societies (INCLUSIVITY)“

The INCLUSIVITY project is focused on studying inclusivity norms, which we define as social norms based on equality-based respect, dialogue, and unity, and how these norms help in dealing with harmful consequences of polarization in Europe. We use an interdisciplinary and mixed-methods approach, which combines laboratory and online experiments, social network analysis, a cross-European survey, and school-based intervention to study how inclusivity norms may change individuals' attitudes and behavior toward opposing groups. We seek to advance knowledge on how to enhance the adoption and transmission of inclusivity norms in contemporary Europe. In the first two years of the project, we completed the first critical steps to achieving this goal by jointly developing an interdisciplinary understanding of inclusivity norms, setting up all infrastructures to implement and collect all data in the five work packages (WPs).

During the third year of the project, we have completed data collections in almost all WPs, including the large international data collection of Work Package 1 (WP1), led by the team Hagen. We (a) met in international meetings (joined by members of our external advisory board) and discussed first results from our completed data collections on how inclusivity norms affect tolerance, intergroup contact and collaboration in polarized contexts, and under which conditions; (b) started to implement our dissemination strategy on how to disseminate the main findings from our project (e.g., based on WP1, a joint publication in a high impact peer-reviewed international journal, and through a joint special issue, edited by the PIs; each of the WPs will also publish one article each in this Special Issue); and (c) started collaborations with practitioners and planned methods for communicating and also implementing our key findings beyond the scientific audience.

1. Scientific results

We have outlined below 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 has received the data of the cross-national European survey collected by a renowned international survey company (INFO GmbH, Berlin). After validating the psychometrics of all survey measures, testing for measurement invariance between the included European countries, and preparing the data for analyses (writing up data documentation), Team Hagen is currently working on the main paper based on survey data that will be submitted for publication in a top-tier multidisciplinary outlet (e.g., Nature Communications). Preliminary results show that inclusivity norms are associated with the outcome measures as hypothesized. The associations were tested against boundary conditions such as participants' degree of disapproval as well as their identification levels. In most countries, associations held, suggesting that inclusivity norms hold promise in promoting intergroup tolerance, as well as the willingness to engage in contact and cooperate with people holding divergent views. Team Hagen presented first results based on the survey data at the University of St. Andrews during the research stay of the ECR in May 2024, the MIDEM lecture series in June 2024 [1], the DGPs/ÖGP Congress in September 2024 [2], and the 24 Hours of Political Psychology Conference in September 2024 [3]. Currently, Team Hagen is working on three additional papers based on the survey data.

Team Krakow (WP2) has been working on a manuscript that summarizes the main findings of WP2 thus far. We developed an experimental paradigm that manipulates equality-based respect norms on social media to promote tolerance toward homosexuals in Poland. Across three studies (Study 1: N = 98; Study 2: N = 381; Study 3: N = 377) and also in a pilot study detailed in the supplementary information (N = 85), the manipulations consistently influenced perceptions of both descriptive and injunctive norms in a Facebook post and within Polish society. Moderation analyses revealed that the manipulation's effect on tolerance was evident only among participants with less positive attitudes toward homosexuals (Study 1) or stronger opposition to same-sex marriage (Study 3). The manuscript is currently in its third round of internal review, and after feedback from all co-authors is incorporated, it will be submitted for publication in a high-impact journal [5]. The findings were presented by Team Krakow at the 47th Annual Scientific Meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology, held in Santiago de Chile in July 2024 [6] but also in two invited talks (at the SWPS University in Wroclaw [7] and Gdansk University [8]), as well as in the conference “Miki Wesołowska. In memoriam” organized by the University of Warsaw in May 2024 [9].

Building on the outcomes of these previous studies, a new manipulation was developed in collaboration with Team Hagen and Team Osnabrück. The goal was to create a manipulation that participants would perceive as an ingroup norm, regardless of whether they were exposed to the respect or non-respect condition, and that

would also be seen as more realistic. This manipulation was pretested ($N = 52$), with results showing that participants in the respect ingroup norm condition perceived the interaction as more respectful and reported stronger respect norms than those in the non-respect condition. The content of the manipulation focused on the controversial topic of implementing unisex bathrooms in university buildings. However, in the main study ($N = 174$), we did not find a significant effect of the manipulation on the tolerance expressed by supporters of unisex bathrooms toward opponents of the policy. The discrepancy between the pretest findings (regarding perceived norms) and the main study results (regarding tolerance) may point to a potential issue with the far transfer effects of the manipulation. Therefore, the next steps in WP2 will address this by focusing on more specific outcomes that are more closely aligned with the manipulation. One correlational study ($N = 445$) was conducted to explore potential distinctions among various levels of tolerance—namely general, and specific tolerance—and types of tolerance (coexistence, respect, or appreciation). The findings demonstrate that participants reported significantly higher levels of tolerance when presented with abstract statements compared to more concrete examples. The studies provide evidence that tolerance is more strongly associated with norms derived from one's immediate social network (acquaintance norms) than with national norms, or the perceived norms of Polish citizens in general and also contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex relationship between inclusivity norms and the multiple dimensions of tolerance across various contexts. The findings were presented at a conference in Szczyrk, Poland [10]. In addition, a preliminary experimental study ($N=144$) was conducted (through an external panel) to investigate how norms based on equality and respect affect tolerance. The results showed that political orientation plays a key role: left-leaning participants perceived norms as we hypothesized (more respectful in the respect vs. control condition), while right-leaning participants exhibited no such effect.

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

Team Barcelona (WP3) is examining how individuals in a deeply divided political environment adopt inclusivity norms that facilitate their engagement with individuals holding contrasting political views in their daily lives. After having completed the data collection for Stage 1 of WP3 (the personal network interviews) during the second year of the project, six manuscripts/reports were written based on these rich quantitative and qualitative data. Also, plans were finalized for the survey questionnaire envisioned for Stage 2 (cultural consensus web survey). First, they published a comprehensive fieldwork report that summarizes the most important characteristics of the data collected through in-depth personal network interviews and informs the study participants and other interested people about the preliminary findings [13]. To increase impact and dissemination, the report is publicly available in three languages (English, Spanish, and Catalan) in the open scientific repository *SocArxiv* and the institutional repository of the Autonomous University of Barcelona. Additionally, the report was also directly shared via email to all study participants who indicated their interest in receiving updates about the results at the time of the interviews. Second, together with team Utrecht, we wrote a paper showing that when highly politicized and controversial topics are discussed, similarities in political opinions outweigh relationship-based factors for selecting political conversation partners among social contacts. The foundations of this manuscript were laid during the 3-month research stay that the postdoc conducted at Utrecht University between September and December 2023. Preliminary versions of this manuscript have been presented at Utrecht University's Sociology Departmental Colloquium (December 2023) [14], at the annual conference of the Internal Network for Social Network Analysis (June 2024) [15], and at the Spanish Congress of Political Science (July 2024) [16]. The manuscript is currently being finalized and will be submitted in the coming months to a high-impact journal in the field of political communication. Third, team Barcelona analyzes the extent to which politically active citizens 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 more likely than non-activists to experience politically-motivated relationship decay in their personal networks, though the qualitative examination of these experiences show that the consequences of these conflictive experiences for activists' private and political lives tend to be milder than for non-activists. This manuscript has already been submitted for publication to the journal *American Behavioral Scientist*, where it is currently under peer review, and a pre-print is publicly available in the scientific repository *SocArxiv* since June 2024 [17]. Fourth, they examined the role of individual motivations and perceptions of inclusivity norms in fostering political conversations with social contacts who hold contrasting views. This manuscript will be submitted for consideration to the journal *Social Inclusion* as part of the special issue on (de)polarization and social norms that is guest-edited by the PIs and presented online at the University of South Carolina's Networks Consortium speaker series during the spring of 2025. Fifth, Team Barcelona wrote a manuscript that focused on the factors that facilitate or hinder cross-cutting political conversations, comparing the different traits of activists' and non-activists' political

discussion networks and their associations with the discursive strategies that participants deploy in such conversations. The manuscript is currently under elaboration and will be presented in November 2024 at the workshop “Contentious Politics within Civil Society” organized by the WZB Berlin Social Science Center [18]. Finally, a paper led by Sophie de Lede from team Osnabrück (co-authored by Alejandro Ciordia, Miranda Lubbers, Maarten van Zalk) under the supervision of Alejandro Ciordia from team Barcelona, which examines the role of socio-psychological and personal network factors in explaining the mobilization of climate-aware individuals into collective climate action. Preliminary results of these analyses were presented in an invited talk at the Maastricht Sustainability Institute (MSI) in November 2023 [18] and at the International QCA Paper Development Workshop in December 2023 [20], where it was distinguished as a runner-up of the Best Paper Award. These findings have been refined and consolidated in Sophie de Lede’s master’s thesis, finalized in September 2024 [21]. The Barcelona and Osnabruck teams will now work together to expand and refine the findings of this thesis in a scientific manuscript to be submitted to a high-impact journal in the fields of environmental politics and/ environmental psychology.

The Utrecht team (WP4) The Utrecht team (Work Package 4) concentrates on the question how inclusivity norms spread within polarized social networks. Over the past year, the team has conducted two systematic reviews with a meta-analysis to provide a foundation for developing an empirically calibrated agent-based model to provide an answer to this research question. The first review investigates how various socializing agents and social norms influence interethnic attitudes among ethnic majority members within their social networks. This analysis, based on 298 zero-order correlation coefficients from 75 articles, covering 78 unique datasets and $N = 48,956$ respondents, reveals small to medium positive effect sizes ($r = .17-.31$). Peers are shown to have a more significant impact than parents or teachers in shaping interethnic attitudes. Additionally, norms encouraging or discouraging intergroup contact have a stronger influence on attitudes than norms that merely describe or prescribe sentiments or promote inclusivity. Norms that combine both descriptive and injunctive elements are more effective than those limited to one type, and norms perceived by the respondents themselves are found to be more influential than those measured directly from socializing agents. This review has been submitted to the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* and is currently under review.

The second review focuses on the role of the media in shaping ethnic majority out-group attitudes, specifically examining the influence of media salience, framing, and consumption. Salience refers to the emphasis media place on particular issues, determining *what* the audience should think about. Framing involves the tone or perspective with which the media evaluate issues such as immigration or integration, shaping *how* the audience should think about these topics. Preliminary findings suggest that framing has a small effect ($r = .15$) on interethnic attitudes. No other significant effects or differences have been identified thus far, though this is based on preliminary analysis. The review, which draws on 464 zero-order correlation coefficients from 52 articles, is nearing completion, with additional analysis of standardized mean difference effect sizes from approximately 70 more articles underway. This review will be submitted to *Public Opinion Quarterly*. In addition to these systematic reviews, the team has completed the theoretical underpinnings of the agent-based model (ABM). This model will simulate the coevolution of opinion and affective polarization in response to social network interventions that promote inclusivity norms under different conditions. This represents a novel contribution to the existing research. The implementation phase of the ABM is scheduled between October 2024 and January 2025, with plans to develop this work into a publication during that period. Eva Jaspers presented the ongoing work with Miranda Lubbers (WP3) on political networks of people with extreme opinions at the European Sociological Association meeting in August in Porto [11], and the European Consortium for Sociological Research meeting in Barcelona in September. The resulting paper will be submitted to the *European Journal for Political Research* [12].

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

Building upon the insights gained from the feasibility study conducted in the first two years of the project, Team Osnabrück (WP5) has successfully completed a large randomized waitlistcontrol study involving four schools ($n = 2,585$ students in grades 5-12) with three waves: pre-intervention, immediately post-intervention, and four months post-intervention. All four schools have now received the intervention; the two intervention schools in May and June 2023; the two waitlist control schools in May and June 2024 (after the last posttest). We have implemented qualitative interviews in the two waitlist control school (both with social referents who participated in the focus groups and also other adolescents who did not participate to compare their views, e.g., on effectiveness of the interventions and how social referents were perceived). The intervention comprised of 12 to 15 sessions with a focus group of social referents, selected in each school based on their

network positions (i.e., receiving most nominations by others, on various network measures, such as friendships and status). These social referents were then stimulated to discuss and engage in dialogue about inclusivity norms through school-wide actions, which were designed and implemented as interactive exhibitions on discrimination prevention that engaged the entire school community. The intervention design was significantly changed based on the feasibility study findings. We included a more comprehensive measurements by additionally including a surveys filled out by parents ($n = 187$). Additionally, we conducted complementary qualitative research, involving interviews with intervention facilitators and students (both social referents and non-referent participants; $n = 24$). This multi-faceted approach will allow for triangulation and provides a richer understanding of the intervention's impact and dynamics. Preliminary results from both qualitative and quantitative data are promising, showing high satisfaction and perceived importance among participants, which aligns with positive feedback from youths, school staff, parents, and other stakeholders. Initial analyses reveal decreased tendency to segregate among non-migrant students in the diverse intervention school (i.e., they were less likely to select other non-migrant students as friends) and a significant increase in prescriptive norms from Wave 2 to Wave 3 in the intervention school compared to the control school. Notably, positive changes were observed primarily among initially intolerant students, though the overall picture is complex and requires further analysis of potential boundary conditions. Furthermore, longitudinal social network analysis provides evidence supporting the effectiveness of the social referent approach, indicating that students connected to intervention-leading social referents are more likely to exhibit positive changes post-intervention. We have submitted an abstract to a special issue on community network intervention in the journal *Social Networks*, a leading journal in the field of network science, where we expect an answer on whether we are able to submit our contribution by the end of November 2024. We will also continue disseminating the study results in scientific journals, aligning with our goal of contributing to the broader understanding of inclusivity norms and their role in countering polarization in European societies.

2. Contribution towards the funding initiative's specific goals

In the third year of the project, we finished planned datacollections in most of the WPs and other data collections are proceeding as planned, which means we have achieved salient milestones to reach the funding initiative's main goals: these data are a critical empirical source for understanding the role of social norms in polarization in Europe, a clear threat to cohesion within and across European countries. Through our increased and most extensive international collaborations, both inside our core team and with the external advisory board and other scientists, we have also accomplished our goal of establishing and using an international hub of scientific experts. We have started to extend these collaborations by also including non-scientific practitioners and experts from the field (e.g., policy makers, especially in education and governmental agencies aimed at prevention of discrimination, racism, and radicalization). We have also continued to present our initial insights on international conferences and also to write and publish these findings in peer-reviewed international journals from these disciplines.

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. Team Hagen (WP1) is behind of schedule because of the delay in hiring a survey company as explained in last years' reports. We are now working on the paper that we plan to submit to a highly impactful journal by the end of 2024. 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 (WP3) is slightly behind schedule regarding the data collection for Stage 2 of WP3 (cultural consensus web survey), which was originally planned to take place during the third year of the project. The reason for this delay is that more time than initially planned has been employed in the analyses of the very rich quantitative and qualitative data collected, which results in 6 distinct scientific outputs. Furthermore, the elaboration of the cultural consensus survey questionnaire builds upon a time-intensive qualitative coding of over 2,000 pages of interview transcripts which is currently being finalized. The Barcelona team has already made several consultations with a number of survey companies operating in Catalonia with suitable representative online

panels and has received budgets. These previous steps will, therefore, speed up the formalization of the survey contract and the collection of the data once the questionnaire is finalized by the end of 2024, allowing the start of the analyses of Stage 2 data in the first few months of 2025. 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 finalized the theoretical underpinnings and are currently programming the ABM's for which the meta-analyses provide essential input. WP5 is following the original plan, and has now completed the data collections which had been delayed for various reasons, as explained in last year's report. Our feasibility (pilot) study indicated ceiling effects in the schools we targeted, as the adolescents in the schools already had high intergroup tolerance before the start of our intervention, and there was limited evidence for polarization in these schools. We therefore included schools which had indications of being more at risk for polarization (i.e., schools in neighborhoods with lower socioeconomic status indicators, consisting of lower tracks of educational systems, and also being highly diverse (in migration, ethnic, and religious background)). We assess that this more labor-intensive strategy paid off as it maximizes the ecological validity of our intervention and also successfully resulted in more variation in intergroup tolerance and contact. Our additional aim of improving and implementing a revised intervention with teenagers and also evaluating this with a randomized waitlist control trial (with a pretest, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest) has succeeded, and the first results indicate that our intervention was successful in increasing variation in intergroup tolerance and its aim to target social referents.

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

We intensified our international and interdisciplinary collaboration within the core team and through the broader network of researchers, which has proved highly fruitful for the implementation of data collection, planning dissemination of our first results, and discussing the wider impact of our findings. We had regular online and in-person subgroup meetings to focus on specific issues. We held one larger joint meeting to discuss first findings and our planned international survey in Krakow (4th of September until the 6th of September 2024), where one advisory board member (e.g., Tobias Stark) attended online. To further solidify our existing collaborations, Team Hagen has led a large collaboration for WP1 to publish a joint publication including both the entire core team, members of our advisory board, and several experts among our external collaborators we have now almost finished the first draft and plans to submit this by the end of 2024. Our ECRs also increased collaborations and started the planned international research visits (e.g., Laura Schäfer visited advisory board member Nicole Tausch (University of St Andrews from April 2024 to May 2024) to work on the main paper resulting from the cross-European survey; Alejandro Ciordia visited the WP4 Team at Utrecht University during the fall term of the academic year 2023-24, from September 10th to December 10th 2023, to work on a joint publication on the relational determinants of informal political discussion within personal networks.

5. Inclusion of junior researchers

We continue to include junior researchers and also expanded our team by the inclusion of new junior members. For example, in Team Barcelona, two of the four student research assistants who were temporarily hired during the second year to undertake the personal network interviews of Stage 1 of data collection continue their research careers affiliated with the COALESCE Lab research group. Marc Alcalà-i-Rams has participated as a co-author of the fieldwork report [13] and started his contract as a PhD student after having obtained competitive funding from the Catalan government. Noé Gras is continuing his academic trajectory as a master's student while being involved as a member of the COALESCE Lab. Both of them are currently leading (under the supervision of the PI and the postdoc) some supplementary qualitative analyses of the interviews focused on the limits of the inclusive dialogue norm, with the aim of publishing some short dissemination pieces on project's website and other scientific dissemination websites. Additionally, two other PhD students from the local research group (Núria Targarona and Alexi Quintana) have been involved as co-authors in two of the manuscripts currently in progress [17, 22]. In team Osnabrück, we hired two additional student assistants (Anna Adamczyk and Muazzez Deniz Barut) to develop and implement science communication about the intervention targeting teenagers, such as via our online webtool and online social media. We also hired a new PhD student, Sophie de Lede, who is a new external collaborator, who has completed her MA thesis under joint supervision of Maarten van Zalk (WP5) and Alejandro Ciordia (WP3), which is planned to result in a peer-reviewed international publication. She also will be working on implementing mixed social network methods to assess to potentials and limits our network intervention and also work on the impact of our main research findings and communicate them through a webtool we started to develop (see next point). Finally, Charlotte

Demandt and Mareike Zappe both will write their (MA and BA, respectively) theses on evaluating our workshops in which we use our newly developed webtool and accompanying handbook for school personnel (see also next point).

6. Further perspectives and sustainable effect of the project

As we enter the last year of our project, we seek to further intensify collaboration to disseminate the findings from our data with various experts in both science and outside of science. The rich data has already proved to be highly fruitful to enhance collaboration with national and international scholars, as evidenced by the increase in our international collaborations and the start of the joint papers based on this work which are being written or have been submitted. Moreover, as some of our initial findings are highly relevant for policy (especially in education), we have set up several collaborations with relevant stakeholders to first discuss and explore the meaning and also feasibility of using this knowledge in the field yet we also have already begun to implement our plans for sustainable effects. For instance, in WP5, we have continued to work together with various practitioners (schools, the Verein Niedersächsische Bildungsinitiativen) and policy makers (e.g., the Ministry of Justice in Lower Saxony). One example is that we have developed a prototype of an interactive webtool, which visualizes and helps explain how and why we selected of social referents in our intervention (i.e., adolescents with central positions in school networks of social relationships). This webtool was developed in collaboration with practitioners and also Prof. Dr. Markus Chimani (Computational Science, Osnabrück University) and we plan to validate and further develop and refine this tool. We have finished our educational (in-class) curriculum and have written a handbook [23], specifically written for school personnel, which we plan to publish to be openly and freely accessible via a dedicated website Open Science frameworks. Importantly, the language used in this handbook was co-written by practitioners experienced in writing handbooks for teachers and other school personnel, namely our collaborators from the Verein Niedersächsische Bildungsinitiativen (VNB). Based on this handbook and the webtool, Lena Bergs together with the VNB will also teach two workshops for school personnel in Lower Saxony (October 20-21 and December 9-10 in 2024, both taught in Hannover). The aim of these workshops is to train school personnel to implement our intervention, as they learn to use the webtool, the handbook the curriculum. We also plan a scientific study (pre- and post workshop survey measures, but also tracking of online behavioral markers while using the webtool, such as via Mouseflow and other app tracking tools). Additionally, workshop participants will be interviewed to give us further critical feedback on the handbook, the webtool, and the workshops themselves. Finally, we also created and disseminated (e.g., via the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education in Lower Saxony) a report on key results written for policy makers and educators [24] and are finalizing reports for other non-scientific audiences, specifically adapted to the target audience; e.g., for youths (online on our website), for schools and for parent).

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

None.

References

References are found in the attachment "references.pdf"