



| inclusivity

***Interdisciplinary Conference on
Social Norms, Cohesion, and
(De)Polarization***

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

Utrecht
May 22 + 23, 2025



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Thursday, May 22nd, 2025

9:00 – 10:30 Thematic sessions with oral presentations

Group Dynamics, Belief Systems, and Social Networks as Drivers of Polarization.

Room: Jan van Scorel

1. **How Group Interactions Moralize Political Attitudes: Contextual (Normative) Effects of Group Attitudes and Emotions on Moralization.** Chantal D'Amore, Namkje Koudenburg and Martijn van Zomeren.

Within structurally polarized contexts, the moralization of individual attitudes on specific topics (e.g., refugees) can dangerously escalate political disagreements between groups into hostile, zero-sum conflict. Despite its potential, however, little is known about how individuals develop strong moral convictions within polarized contexts, and even less is known about the dynamic social mechanisms that may facilitate its development in everyday life. To understand the emergence and potential spread of attitude moralization in social networks, the present study builds on recent work suggesting that perceived political bubbles (i.e., attitudinally homogeneous networks) can strengthen individual attitude moralization tendencies in response to potentially harmful outgroup actions. But how does this work within those bubbles? A better understanding of the mechanisms underlying this social influence processes in moralization requires a close examination of the conversations people have within those bubbles about salient political matters.

2. **Attitude networks as intergroup realities: Using network-modelling to research attitude-identity relationships in polarized political contexts.** Adrian Lüders, Dino Carpentras, Mike Quayle

We present a newly developed attitude network-modelling technique (ResIN, Carpentras et al., 2024) suitable to study attitude–identity relationships in the context of polarizing hot-button issues. Unlike traditional belief-system models, which rely on inter-item correlations and implicitly assume symmetry in belief structures across groups, ResIN models correlations between item responses. As a result, ResIN provides detailed information about the specific belief-systems that separate different groups apart as well as about potential cross-cutting beliefs that could foster depolarization. We demonstrate the functionality of ResIN based on different datasets. Using US data (Lüders et al., 2023), we demonstrate how ResIN can map competing belief-systems between rivaling partisan groups (i.e., Democrats and Republicans). The resulting network reveals a compact and relatively isolated belief-system with strong attitudinal positions among Democrats, compared to more diffuse belief-system among Republicans, that encompasses neutral-to-strong opinions. Using the same data, we further demonstrate how people rely on normative representations of attitude-identity relationships to structure and evaluate social ecosystems. We illustrate how in highly

structured (i.e. polarized) opinion-environments, even expressing a single attitude can intentionally or accidentally signal group membership and produce group biases. Comparing these findings with research on vaccination attitudes (Carpentras et al., 2022), we showcase how the isolation of belief-systems from moderate viewpoints may influence opinion dynamics in society and contribute to societal pushback.

3. Regional Impact on Socioeconomic Assortativity of Acquaintanceship Ties.

Zhiyi Jin, Marijtje A.J. van Duijn, Christian Steglich, Michał Bojanowski, Miranda Lubbers

Inequality has been a social problem in Europe. The economic crises, technological changes, demographic shifts and migration flows of the past few decades have exacerbated the wealth and income gaps between different social groups. This may lead to the division of society into different economic and social groups with limited interaction with each other. This division could reduce trust and solidarity among citizens and weaken the social fabric and the cohesion of a sustainable society. From the social network perspective, inequality is rooted in the segregated network structure or assortative mixing, where nodes in networks tend to be connected to other nodes that are like them in some way (Newman, 2003). The observed assortativity along the socioeconomic dimension can perpetuate inequalities by increasing the tendency towards cumulative advantages (DiMaggio and Garip, 2012). For example, social capital – resources embedded in social relationships (Lin, 1999) – is likely to be concentrated within high-status groups, while low-status individuals remain trapped in low-status groups. This limits the formation of bridging ties, which are essential for transferring opportunities, information, and resources between different social classes, especially through looser, more casual connections with acquaintances rather than strong ties (Granovetter, 1973). One drive of assortativity is homophily, the principle that "birds of a feather flock together" (McPherson et al., 2001). However, assortativity may not only stem from this preference but also from the opportunities individuals can have. As Blau (1977) argued, the social structures individuals inhabit—particularly the availability and distribution of resources and opportunities—shape their social networks. To this end, this study examines the observed consequence of homophily – “assortativity” – in acquaintance networks and raises the neglected question of whether preferences or opportunities drive observed assortativity, aiming to explore how inequalities are generated. This study uses Spain – with its decentralized autonomous community system and diverse geographical and economic landscapes – as a case study. It uses BRIDGE data from a nationally representative survey of 1,500 individuals, collected in 2021. The survey applies items of “How many X’s do you know?” (McCarty et al., 2001) across diverse occupational groups to collect the aggregated relational data. By analyzing the occupational composition of acquaintance relations and the regional opportunity structures, the findings reveal the interplay between preference and opportunity in shaping ties, with significant regional variation in assortativity patterns. In densely populated areas, low-status individuals exhibit stronger socioeconomic assortativity, while high-status individuals maintain ties with peers in similarly prestigious occupations, regardless of location. Under favorable economic conditions, high-status individuals expand their acquaintanceships within similarly high-status groups, while low-status individuals present a much smaller increase or even decrease in their acquaintance numbers in these occupations. This study contributes to the understanding of acquaintanceship networks (e.g. Lubbers et al., 2019) and the literature on inequality and

social mobility (e.g. Chetty et al., 2022), ultimately implying social fragmentation along class lines and across geography.

4. The Echoes from Social Media Platforms: an Agent-Based Model of Echo Chambers' Emergence. Cristina Chueca Del Cerro

The extent of echo chambers in social media and their impact on polarisation is an open debate in the political science literature. Social simulation scholars have explored this topic using opinion dynamics models, yet the mechanisms behind the emergence of echo chambers and their influence on polarization remain unclear. This paper employs a social simulation approach that draws on political communication and social influence theories to explain how echo chambers can emerge on social media platforms. The agent-based model developed here integrates individual social networks (online and offline) with opinion dynamics to untangle the respective roles of social media algorithms and social network structure. Simulation conditions separately manipulated (1) the homophily or group similarity in personal networks and (2) the level of selective exposure to confirming information through filter bubbles on social media. We found that individuals' information exposure significantly influenced echo chamber emergence, particularly in initially random social networks where people are surrounded by a diverse group of others. At the same time, artificially creating echo chambers did not ensure their persistence over time in the presence of filtering algorithms. Overall, we need to reconsider how we understand echo chambers and the mechanisms responsible for this phenomenon.

Examining Partisan Engagement in Shared Political Spaces.

Room: Immuneit

1. Corrosion of Common Ground: Dynamics of Partisan Division in Shared Political Spaces. Laima Baldina, Russell Spears, Hedy Greijdanus, Leah Henderson

Four years after the U.S. Capitol riot, Republicans and Democrats still remember it in conflicting ways, revealing the polarized social realities between these partisan groups far beyond political opinion differences. Theoretical approaches to political polarization research have expanded their conceptual scope to account for these group processes, often drawing on social identity approach to explain how partisan groups grow apart. Yet despite this recognition of group-level dynamics, we still lack understanding of how partisan divisions shape observable collective behaviors over time. Our study investigates Reddit data from five major U.S. political subreddits (2012-2021; 144 million comments) to examine how right-wing and left-wing partisan communities engage with shared political discussion spaces during a period of intensifying polarization. With two complementary studies, we track rates of participation by partisan subreddit users in the shared r/politics forum (S1) and the collective aggregated ratings their comments receive there (S2), uncovering systematic asymmetries in partisan group behaviors. Cross-participation of right-wing communities in shared discussions gradually declined, interrupted only by temporary spikes during key political events, while left-wing participation remained stable. Correspondingly, right-wing comments in these shared spaces received increasingly negative ratings compared to both

left-wing contributions and the r/politics average, suggesting growing misalignment between right-wing communication patterns and prevailing discourse norms among the broader r/politics audience. These parallel trends in participation and reception reveal interrelated group dynamics behind right-wing community departure from broader co-partisan contexts, observable at both individual and collective levels. By examining long-term collective dynamics through digital trace data, we provide new insights into asymmetric polarization processes where partisan communities follow divergent trajectories in their relationship with broader political discourse. While recognizing limitations inherent in social media data, our findings emphasize the importance of studying polarization at a group-level and suggest new directions for understanding how partisan divisions develop and persist in contemporary democratic societies.

2. Negative Ties Highlight Hidden Extremes in Social Media Polarization. E.

Candellone, S.A. Babul, O. Togay, A. Bovet, J. Garcia-Bernardo

Online social networks have changed how people form opinions from news content. This new mechanism for communication plays a key role in facilitating increased polarization on controversial issues [1]. The growing data availability on online social media interactions has made polarization a key study area. Despite the extensive research on online polarization, researchers have been limited by the data type available. Social media platforms primarily provide information on positive interaction. Consequently, most previous research has studied structural polarization using unsigned networks made of positive ties. However, online interactions can be incredibly diverse, representing sentiments ranging from support to hostility. Signed network representations, which assign positive or negative weights to edges to reflect friendship or animosity, provide a powerful tool for capturing this complexity. Here, we assess the value of including negative interactions in measuring polarization in online spaces. We collect and make available data on the Menéame platform, a Spanish social media site that facilitates engagement with news stories through comments and (positive and negative) voting. Using a dual-method embedding approach---Signed Hamiltonian Eigenvector Embedding for Proximity (SHEEP) [2] for signed networks and Correspondence Analysis (CA) [3] for unsigned networks, which is often used in polarization studies [4]---we quantify the level of structural polarization on the platform across different conversation topics. We find that Menéame users can be grouped into two main ideological factions that exhibit polarization, more pronounced in controversial topics, such as the Ukraine-Russia conflict. The two methods identify similar ideological groups and their overall polarization. However, negative ties reveal critical patterns at the extremes that remain hidden when only positive interactions are analyzed. For example, when applied to the network of users' votes on news posts, SHEEP identifies pro-Russia users and Russian propaganda outlets. However, they remain hidden within "general left-wing" outlets and users in CA. More broadly, we show that only SHEEP can detect extreme users who engage in high levels of antagonism. Our results reveal how negative interactions can provide unique insights into the social dynamics of online platforms and help identify hidden, extreme actors.

3. Talking in Polarized Contexts: a Social Dynamics Approach to (mediated) communication. Namkje Koudenburg, Carla Roos

Polarization is often studied either at the societal macro-level or at the micro-level of individual psychology. The current perspective aims to bridge these perspectives by zooming into the meso-level of (online) group dynamics, to show how communication between individuals and the formation of opinion-based groups instigate societal polarization. In this perspective, we extend a theoretical model that explains how subtle conversational dynamics affect the emergence and maintenance of social structures (Koudenburg et al., 2017). This model is based on empirical evidence that shows that the smooth flow of conversation serves as a proxy for the relations between interactants. A disruption of this flow, for instance because of a brief silence, a frown, or interruption, signals a threat to the social unity and the shared reality of conversation partners. While these moments are threatening, they are also a moment in which social norms, and hierarchies can be reinforced. Or changed. Because this model originates from the study of relatively close-knit groups in mostly face-to-face interactional contexts, the current presentation aims to broaden this model by exploring how it can be applied to 1) highly polarized societies, and 2) online communities. In the first part, we focus on how our perceptions of polarization in society can influence small group dynamics and people's communication with others. We provide empirical evidence showing that conversational dynamics can reinforce polarization in an already divided societal context (Koudenburg & Kashima, 2022). The second part will focus on the reverse process: how may social dynamics within different communication media build up to affect societal change. By analyzing the way people manage disagreement in their everyday face-to-face interactions, we gain crucial insight in the fertile grounds for (mis)understandings and conflict in online contexts. Here, we extend the model by proposing a Social Dynamics Approach to mediated communication, in which online social behavior unfolds in a continuous interaction between medium and users (Roos et al., 2024). This approach integrates social constructivist ideas into the computer-mediated-communication literature. In short, we propose that, within an interaction context, the technological possibilities (and constraints) of the medium, personal goals, and social norms are jointly constructed by interaction partners through a dynamic process in which they make sense of the situated social structure: their shared ideas about their relationship and collective goals within the interaction. I conclude with a discussion of the vicious circle in which (online) polarized discourse may catalyze (actual and perceived) polarization in society.

4. Discussions with whom or how? Considering the quality of online cross-partisan chats in relation to affective polarization. Mathijs Kros, Manja Coopmans, Pascale van Zantvliet, Tjitske de Groot

Affective polarization, or an animosity towards people with a different political opinion, is increasing, particularly in the U.S. but also in several European countries. Even in countries where such a trend is less clear, worries about polarization are still abound. One concern is that polarization lowers social cohesion. In fact, political disagreement may fuel dislike more than other social divides, such as ethnicity or religion. A strong dislike for out-partisans can foster 'us versus them' mentalities, leading people to

become entrenched in opposing political identities. A lack of attention for common ground may even render political decision-making more difficult, as compromises become less likely. Politicians may prioritize opposing the other side of the political divide over solving important issues. This can ultimately weaken democratic institutions. The ‘remedy’ for affective polarization that is often put forward is cross-group discussion. Online chat platforms might be particularly important in establishing these discussions. Due to homophily, segregation, and a tendency to avoid political conversations if people anticipate disagreements, day-to-day life offers limited opportunities for sustained interactions with people who think differently about societal issues. Online discussions help circumvent these obstacles. They are a form of intergroup contact, which can improve outgroup attitudes. Discussions with out-partisans can also help reduce people’s misperceptions. People tend to perceive other groups’ positions as more extreme and unfounded than they actually are. Correcting these misperceptions, by way of deliberation, can reduce outgroup animosity. That said, empirical evidence on the potential of online cross-group discussions to reduce affective polarization is mixed. One potential explanation for the incongruent findings is that studies often overlook what actually goes on in the chats. A positive chat experience may be more likely to reduce polarization. This alludes to something that has long been recognized in the intergroup contact literature: The ‘quality’ of an interaction is crucial for its potential to improve (or worsen) outgroup attitudes. This has not yet been given the scholarly attention it deserves in studies on online chats and polarization. This paper aims to fill this caveat. We collected a unique dataset which contains close to 800 conversations between people who expressed different, sometimes opposing, opinions about issues like climate change, LGBTQ+, and immigration. The dataset also included pre and post surveys on, i.a., affective polarization, and other important covariates. We made use of recent advancements in language processing models to characterize the chats in terms of, i.a., affect, authoritarian tone, authenticity, and (un)civility. We use these models to test whether there are certain characteristics of online cross-group chats that increase its potential to reduce polarization. In particular, we test the idea that ‘quality’ chats have a relatively strong depolarizing effect. Our preliminary findings show that chatting with people with a different opinion can reduce affective polarization and increase willingness to have future discussions on, potentially sensitive, societal issues with people who think differently. We further find preliminary evidence that these relations are stronger for ‘quality’ chats.

The Role of Youth and Intergroup Dynamics in Shaping Divides.

Room: KW3

1. Youth Norm Deviation and Intolerance: Pathways to Polarized Political Attitudes and Behavioral Intentions. Sebastian Lutterbach, Andreas Beelmann

This presentation explores the relationships between norm deviation, intolerance, and their roles as critical risk factors in shaping political and social attitudes during adolescence. The study investigates how deviations from established social norms and the adoption of intolerant attitudes contribute to political polarisation, manifesting in

the rejection of democratic principles and human rights, an affinity for political violence, conspiracy thinking, and hostility towards foreigners.

Drawing on a diverse sample of 1,220 adolescents and young adults (aged 15 to 25 years, $M = 16.7$, $SD = 1.5$), we utilise structural equation modelling with latent variables to examine these dynamics. By incorporating multi-group structural equation modelling, the analysis delves into the moderating effects of key sociodemographic factors, including gender, age, and migration background.

Our findings highlight the significant contributions of norm deviation and intolerance to pathways of political polarisation. These pathways include democratic disengagement, heightened susceptibility to conspiracy beliefs, and the endorsement of politically motivated violence. Notably, the results underscore how sociodemographic factors differentially shape the intensity and nature of these relationships, with distinct patterns emerging for individuals based on their age, gender and migration background. The study's findings also offer numerous insights for prevention and intervention strategies that can be effectively and developmentally tailored to adolescents. These approaches aim to reduce the risk of political polarisation and foster social cohesion during this sensitive developmental stage. To conclude the presentation, several particularly effective strategies will be introduced and critically discussed.

2. The Social Roots of Perceived Polarization: How Attitudinal Extremity in Social Networks Relates to Perceptions of Polarization. Tom Nijs, Tobias H. Stark

Although the literature is mixed on the question to what extent attitudinal polarization is increasing in Western societies, scholars agree that polarization is very prevalent in people's minds. In fact, studies consistently show that people overestimate the level of attitudinal polarization in society. Surprisingly, systematic explorations of why some individuals perceive more polarization than others remain relatively scarce.

Understanding these perceptions is necessary to develop effective interventions, given the real-life consequences of perceived polarization. In this study, we propose that people base their perceptions of societal polarization, in part, on the perceived norms of attitudinal extremity within their social network. We test two competing hypotheses: Individuals who perceive more extreme attitudes within their social networks may also perceive more attitudinal polarization in society, because they project their daily encounters with extreme attitudes onto society at large. In contrast, individuals who perceive less extreme attitudes in their social networks might perceive more attitudinal polarization. This could occur if they recognize that their social bubble of moderate, like-minded people cannot be projected onto society, leading them to rely on the strongly polarized picture portrayed in the media. We test our pre-registered hypotheses in a diverse sample of 879 Dutch people, in relation to immigration attitudes, as immigration is consistently shown to be among the most polarizing issues in Europe. We found that perceived polarization was not predicted by the average attitudinal extremity among strong ties (i.e., close contacts) in the social network, nor by the number of weak ties (e.g., acquaintances, neighbours) with extreme attitudes. However, exploratory analyses indicated that having at least one extremely conservative strong tie was strongly associated with perceiving more polarization while having at least one extremely progressive strong tie was not. In line with this, the number of weak ties with

extremely conservative attitudes also related to perceiving more polarization. These results suggest that perceptions of strong polarization of the immigration debate are primarily driven by exposure to strong anti-immigration voices. Since prior research shows that individuals with conservative immigration stances attach more importance to this topic than progressives, they might express their opinions more frequently, assertively, or provocatively. Following the availability heuristic, such voices might be most readily available when participants construct their perceptions of polarization. Future research could explore whether extremely progressive voices might play a more pronounced role in perceived polarization of, for example, climate change attitudes, as progressives attach more importance to this topic than conservatives. Concluding, this research sheds novel light on the social roots of perceived polarization and contributes to a deeper understanding of how individual experiences within social networks shape perceptions of social reality.

3. Group norms and Affective (De)Polarization: Political and intergroup

outcomes. Roberto González, Siugmin Lay, Federico Díaz, Daniel Fuenzalida, Andrés Álvarez, Héctor Carvacho, Gloria Jiménez and Jorge Manzi

Affective polarization, a phenomenon that refers to the expression of negative feelings towards the outgroup and positive feelings towards the ingroup, has been the subject of attention in social sciences and media due to its increased presence in different countries and political contexts (Iyengar et al., 2019; Levendusky & Stecula, 2021), generating detrimental consequences for social cohesion and democracy (Harteveld & Wagner, 2023; Lee, 2022; Jost et al., 2022). From social psychology, it can be conceived that the source of affective polarization lies in people's social identities (Iyengar et al., 2019; Huddy & Yair, 2021), as people tend to cling to extreme views in order to maintain internal coherence and a sense of shared identity with their ingroup. This connection between affective polarization and social identities suggests the importance of social norms in shaping and maintaining polarization (González, 2024; Jost et al., 2022). Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) posits that people, by identifying themselves as members of a group, internalize group norms and seek to act in accordance with them. Thus, any deviation by a group member from the established norm implies not expressing his or her social identity (Jetten et al., 1996) and could even trigger rejection by the other members of the ingroup (Abrams et al., 2014). In this sense, social norms constitute a mechanism through which groups influence the feelings, thoughts and behaviors of their members, maintaining group unity and social cohesion (González, Carvacho & Tausch, in press). For example, if group members perceive that the group values a position of openness towards people from outgroups with different ideologies (prescriptive norm), they will tend to act in a manner aligned with those norms, reducing affective polarization. On the other hand, if the majority of the group is perceived as not interacting with outgroup individuals (descriptive norm), then affective polarization would be enhanced, or at least sustained, by the group norm. Thus, social norms have the potential to maintain, increase, or reduce affective polarization (Jost et al., 2022; González, 2024; González et al., in press). Furthermore, based on previous research (Brewer, 2016), we hypothesize that perception of threat (Renström et al., 2023) and feelings of moral superiority (Grubbs et al., 2020) could moderate the relationship between social norms (descriptive/prescriptive) and affective polarization and impact

on both political and intergroup outcomes. In the current study we will report on the impact of four different form of norms on affective (de)polarization in the context of Chile involving political ideologies: (1) norms promoting openness to diverse ideas (Wojcieszak and collaborators, 2020); (2) norms encouraging positive contact with members of the political out group ((Huddy & Yair, 2021; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Santoro & Broockman, 2022); (3) norms fostering the inclusion of the outgroup within a common national identity (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Wojcieszak & Warner, 2020) and (4) norms aimed at correcting misperceptions about the out group (Ruggeri et al., 2021; Yudkin et al., 2019). Chile society has experienced in recent years, high levels of affective polarization, which is strongly tied to the left-right divide, which acts as a significant group identifier. Citizens perceive ideologically similar parties as in-groups and opposing parties as out-groups, contributing to affective polarization (Comellas & Torcal, 2023). Historical and ongoing tensions, such as those surrounding reconciliation after the dictatorship, further exacerbate ideological divisions (Carvacho et al., 2013; González et al., 2013). This study analyzes the impact of social norms on affective (de)polarization and subsequent political and intergroup outcomes by focusing on individuals - women and men over the age of 18 from all socioeconomic levels nationwide, ensuring broad and diverse demographic representation - who clearly identify along the left-right spectrum (N= 500). Participants were recruited through a professional data collection company on an online platform. Preliminary results testing these ideas and conceptual discussion are addressed.

4. Simulating Downward Spirals of Outgroup Dislike in Empirical School Networks. Alla Loseva, Christian Steglich, Andreas Flache

As ethnic diversity grows in Western countries due to migration and refugee flows, concerns about negative outgroup attitudes – evaluations that individuals hold about entire groups – and interethnic attitude polarization are intensifying. Intergroup hostility also arises in smaller settings, such as in local events organized for bringing together youth from different ethnic backgrounds (e.g., Stark & Flache, 2012), or in school classes. Understanding the conditions that may trigger sudden shifts in intergroup attitudes is crucial to prevent such disruptive instances. Adolescence is a key period for shaping outgroup attitudes, particularly within friendship networks in multiethnic classrooms. Positive and negative contact, peer influence, homophily, and initial prejudice all impact outgroup attitudes. The individual-level attitude as well as relational dynamics depend sensitively on the strength and interaction of these network and behavioral processes. Given longitudinal data on the simultaneous change of attitudes and social ties between students, the extent to which these processes occur and their effects on social relations and attitudes can be disentangled through simulation-based statistical modelling with stochastic actor-oriented models (SAOM). To understand how individual attitude shifts driven by these processes scale to group-level polarization, complex interactions must be studied over time. Agent-based models (ABMs) help map these interactions but are often theoretical, work with stylized networks and/or overlook changing network relations, even though attitudes and social ties affect each other. Using empirically calibrated SAOMs in ABMs could bridge this gap, though such models remain rare in polarization studies. This paper presents the first study of intergroup attitude polarization in multiethnic school cohorts using an

empirically calibrated SAOM. Using publicly available data from the project “Friendship and Identity in Schools”, we focus on secondary school cohorts in a diverse German region. We model interethnic attitude dynamics and analyze the relative strengths of individual processes of social influence, intergroup contact, and friendship tie changes in cohorts with different ethnic compositions. To examine conditions that might drive polarization, we use empirically calibrated ABM to conduct artificial experimental manipulations simulating effects of macro-level shocks, such as violent incidents or inflammatory political speeches, and hypothesize their effects on behavioral and network mechanisms. By adjusting the strength of these mechanisms, namely ethnic homophily and peer influence, we evaluate changes in interethnic attitude polarization in otherwise realistic settings. Findings suggest that peer influence, heightened by an external “shock”, amplifies even small outgroup bias and rapidly induces polarization, overriding other behavioral and network mechanisms. We discuss the exceptions from this trend, and detail how these results arise from the empirical context we study, and the incorporated interacting processes. This study contributes to network analysis by illustrating how coevolution of networks and interethnic attitudes shapes macro-level polarization, and advances agent-based modeling by integrating dynamic, empirically based networks of influence and contact.

11:00 - 12:45 Thematic sessions with oral presentations

Political Behavior, Identity, and Polarization.

Room: Jan van Scorel

1. From Cohesion to Division: Macrostructural Factors Driving Class Homogeneity. Alejandro Plaza

This paper investigates the influence of economic inequality and welfare states on class-based homogeneity in social networks. Class homogeneity refers to the tendency of individuals to establish relationships predominantly with others from the same social class, reinforcing social boundaries and limiting interclass interactions. Our hypothesis posits that economic inequality increases class homogeneity by accentuating social barriers and restricting network diversity. However, we argue that welfare state regimes moderate this relationship. Specifically, universal welfare states, with their redistributive and inclusive policies, foster more heterogeneous social networks compared to conservative and residual welfare regimes, which tend to reinforce social segmentation (crowding-in hypothesis). To test these hypotheses, we use data from the 2017 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) module on “Social Networks and Social Resources,” covering 31 countries. We apply multilevel regression models to analyze the impact of macrostructural conditions on social network composition. Contrary to our expectations, we find that inequality and welfare states have a relatively small effect on the class-based composition of social networks, indicating that this phenomenon is predominantly explained at the individual level. Additionally, and in contrast to similar research, we find that individuals in the service class (or individuals with higher status) tend to have less homogeneous networks, challenging previous studies suggesting that the middle class exhibits the lowest levels of network homogeneity due to its intermediate position. Furthermore, we discuss potential

indirect effects of the welfare state on class homogeneity in social networks, as greater welfare state generosity is positively associated with increased participation in leisure-oriented social organizations (as opposed to instrumental social organizations like political parties or charity organizations), which in turn increases network diversity. These findings underscore the role of welfare states in promoting social cohesion and provide new insights into the mechanisms through which inequality and institutional arrangements influence social network structures. This study contributes to the literature on class politics, social capital, and welfare state theory, emphasizing the potential of inclusive welfare policies to reduce class-based social segregation."

2. Exploring the Dual Roots of Patriotism: How Political Satisfaction and Threat Perception Shape National Pride Across Democratic Contexts. Miaofang Guan

Patriotism, a powerful force that unites citizens around a shared national identity, is shaped by both reason and emotion. A sense of pride for one's country can stem from an instrumental attachment, based on a country's ability to meet its citizens' needs, as well as a sentimental attachment, rooted in a shared collective identity. These two forms of attachment can coexist within individuals, shaping their patriotic feelings in different ways. This study explores how political satisfaction and perceived external threats influence patriotic sentiment through these dual mechanisms and examines how these effects vary across democratic contexts. Using data from 60 countries in the World Values Survey (2017–2022), the analysis finds that both political satisfaction and threat perception significantly contribute to higher national pride. However, political satisfaction plays a stronger role in democracies, suggesting that government performance is more critical in fostering patriotism within democratic societies than in authoritarian regimes. In contrast, fear-driven patriotism remains consistent across all regime types. These findings offer new insights into the relationship between individual perceptions and political contexts in shaping patriotism.

3. Extreme Political Candidates Mobilize Supporters (and Opponents) More than Moderates Particularly in a Polarized Society. Anna Potoczek, Katarzyna Jaśko

Political polarization has increasingly shaped electoral outcomes, yet little is known about how extreme versus moderate political candidates influence voter engagement. While some research suggests that voters prefer candidates who align closely with their own ideological positions, others propose that more extreme candidates can be more effective in mobilizing support. The present study examines the dual effects of ideological extremity on voter mobilization, considering both supporters and opponents, and investigates the moderating role of social norms in shaping these dynamics. Across five preregistered experiments (N = 3,532), we tested the hypothesis that extreme political candidates - compared to moderates - are more effective in energizing both their supporters and their ideological opponents. Our findings confirmed that ideological extremity significantly increased mobilization among voters who shared a candidate's views, leading them to engage in supportive political actions such as campaigning and voting. However, extremism also heightened opposition: voters who disagreed with extreme candidates were more likely to mobilize against them compared to their reactions toward moderates. This suggests that extreme candidates act as

polarizing figures who simultaneously strengthen their base while provoking heightened resistance. We further investigated the psychological mechanisms underlying these effects. Results indicated that support for extreme candidates was driven by their perceived commitment to their ideological goals. Voters viewed extremists as more devoted to their cause than moderates, which increased the perceived importance of supporting them. However, extremism also lowered the perceived attainability of political goals - people believed that extreme positions were harder to implement, which in some cases tempered enthusiasm. This mediation suggests that while extremism signals dedication, it also carries a strategic risk due to perceived impracticality. We also examined how the broader distribution of social norms influenced voter responses to extreme versus moderate candidates. We found that the advantage of extreme politicians was contingent upon the structure of societal opinion. When public opinion was bimodal (highly polarized), meaning society was already divided into two ideological camps - extreme candidates were more successful in mobilizing their base. In contrast, when social norms followed a normal distribution, with most people holding moderate views, the appeal of extremists diminished. This suggests that the success of political extremism is not absolute but rather depends on the normative environment. In deeply polarized societies, extremism may serve as a rallying force, but in contexts where moderation prevails, extreme candidates are less likely to gain traction. These findings have significant implications for both political behavior and democratic stability. As societies become more polarized, extreme candidates may be increasingly successful in mobilizing their supporters. However, they also intensify political conflict by activating strong opposition. Understanding the role of social norms in shaping these effects is crucial, as it highlights the conditions under which extremism flourishes or falters. By integrating insights from political psychology and social norm theory, this research provides a nuanced understanding of why and when extreme political candidates succeed, shedding light on the broader consequences of political polarization in contemporary democracies.

4. How Segregation Fuels the Far Right: Cross-Class Relationships Buffer the Politically Radicalizing Effect of Economic Insecurity. Jona de Jong, Tarek Jaziri Arjona

Support for far right parties has been rising steadily for decades, fuelling partisan polarization and eroding democratic norms. Scholars broadly agree that economic insecurity is an important contributing factor to the rise of the far right: as Western societies transitioned from industrial economies to knowledge economies, significant numbers of especially lower-educated citizens became economically insecure, making them ripe for mobilization by far right actors. At the same time, individuals and regions similarly affected by structural change still vote differently. This article proposes that lower-educated citizens will be more likely to respond to economic insecurity by moving to the far right when they are embedded in a social network that consists of only lower-educated others. Cross-class ties, on the other hand, should serve as buffers, preventing individuals to vote for the far right. Building on insights from classical work in political sociology and from more recent work on the importance of social norms and interpersonal discussions for the translation of economic change into political beliefs, we theorize and test several mechanisms through which the socio-economic composition of one's network should moderate the effect of economic insecurity on far

right voting. To test our main hypothesis that the socio-economic composition of one's network moderates the politically radicalizing effect of economic insecurity, we use original and existing data from the US, Germany and the Netherlands. In each case, we use established quasi-exogenous measures of economic insecurity combined with matching and weighting methods to balance respondents with same and cross-class ties on a series of potential confounders. In the Netherlands, we use panel data of social networks to follow citizens from the onset of the Great Recession, a period of economic insecurity and growing far right support. We find that citizens embedded in lower-educated networks, compared to citizens with at least one higher-educated tie, were less likely to respond economic insecurity by moving to the far right. Similarly, in the US, we use an original survey and find that cross-class ties diminish the effect of increased import competition from China on Trump voting. We aim to replicate these findings in Germany, where we will field a survey in the run-up to the February 2025 election, another period of economic turmoil and a growing far-right party. We then probe mechanisms using panel survey data linked to register data of the entire Dutch population, and an original survey in Germany. In the Netherlands, we find evidence that social influence in networks is more likely to account for their effect than the enhanced economic resources that higher-SES relationships can provide. In Germany, we additionally test the role of social norms, status competition, economic information, social influence and resources. Our results suggest that far right support crystallizes in socioeconomically segregated societies.

5. On the quadratic relationship between political significance and affective polarization. Paulina Górka, Wojciech Podsiadłowski, Martyna Pałys, Anna Czerwińska, Maciej Górski.

Previous studies on affective polarization have documented that partisans who lose a sense of political significance are more likely to hold more negative attitudes towards the political outgroup. However, this research did not consider status discrepancies and possible curvilinear effects. We hypothesized a quadratic relationship, whereby partisans with lowest and highest values of political significance should demonstrate the highest level of affective polarization, operationalized as negative outgroup-directed attitudes and outgroup dehumanization. We predicted that this curvilinear effect would be driven by relative status - the relationship between political significance and affective polarization should be negative among supporters of the opposition but positive among supporters of the ruling party. In Study 1 we confirmed our predictions in a nationwide Polish sample. In Study 2 we replicated both effects in a longitudinal study in the United States run before and after the 2024 presidential election. Before the election, affective polarization was positively predicted by political significance among Democrats and negatively among Republicans and after the elections, the effects were reversed, confirming our hypothesis pertaining to relative status. Our studies demonstrate that depending on the current status of the political party one supports, either being deprived of political significance, or experiencing it in excess may fuel affective polarization.

Dialogue, Media Narratives and Social Norms.

Room: Immunität

1. The Causal Effect of an Intergroup Contact Intervention on Affective Polarization around Brexit: A Randomized Controlled Trial. Nicole Tausch, Michèle D. Birtel, Paulina Górka, Sidney Bode and Carolina Rocha

With mounting evidence of the increase and harmful societal consequences of affective polarization, it is crucial to find ways of addressing it. This proof-of concept study tested the effects of a theory-based intervention on affective polarization in the context of Brexit. Sixty Leaver-Remainer dyads were randomized to engage in either a facilitated intergroup interaction or a control interaction, which was equivalent in structure and tone but was unrelated to Brexit identities. The structure and content of the contact intervention were based on the literatures on optimal intergroup contact (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011) and insights from work on the communication principles of respectful dialogue (Flick, 1998). Different aspects of opinion and affective polarization, including measures of opinions about Brexit, intergroup stereotypes and attitudes, outgroup contempt, and willingness to compromise over Brexit-related issues were assessed one month prior, immediately after, and one month after the intervention. Results indicate short-term intervention effects on intergroup affect and cognition, and willingness to compromise with the outgroup, but these mostly decayed over time. Evidence of selective attrition suggests that Remainers and those with more extreme baseline opinions were more likely to drop out. The findings provide novel insights for efforts to reduce affective polarization and highlight the challenge of engaging those who could benefit the most.

2. Framing Social Threats: Analysing Topics and Sentiments in 30 Years of Swiss Media Coverage of Extremism. Anina Schwarzenbach, Livia Zöbeli

Extremism poses a complex security threat to contemporary democracies and challenges established social norms of inclusivity and peaceful coexistence. Terrorist events, and the individuals and groups carrying them out, are often widely covered in the news, even in countries with little history of terrorism. Despite the importance of media narratives for shaping perceptions of extremist threats and related societal conflicts, we know little how these narratives evolve over time and how they interact with broader social and political dynamics. This study examines 30 years of Swiss media coverage of extremism, focusing on how extremism is constructed, interpreted, and contested in public discourse. Recognizing extremism as a significant social threat, Switzerland has invested heavily in counter-radicalization strategies to pre-empt potential threats. In addition, Switzerland's rich and diverse media landscape offers a unique perspective on how extremism is framed and discussed. Drawing on Habermas's theory of communicative action, I analyze how media framing reflects broader societal conflicts, constructs moral understandings of justice, and reinforces or challenges exclusionary norms. Using natural language processing techniques, including topic modeling and sentiment analysis, I examine 280,000 articles to track shifts in media narratives. The results show that the public discourse on extremist threats in contemporary democracies follows a set of well-defined framing patterns. They also show that identity-related frames become more pronounced following

terrorist attacks in neighboring countries, often in ways that reinforce exclusionary norms. The findings of this study contribute to debates about media accountability and the social construction of threat in contemporary democracies. I argue that prevailing media frames often perpetuate divisive narratives, necessitating a critical reassessment of how extremism is represented in public discourse.

3. Unmasking Implicit Bias: Examining News Media's Role in Shaping Covert Discrimination through a Conjoint Experiment. Steeman Lise-Lore, De Coninck David, De Cock Rozane & d'Haenens Leen

Social norms play a crucial role in shaping societal cohesion and polarization, often operating implicitly through covert discriminatory preferences. This study examines the dynamics of covert discrimination in Belgium, focusing on multiple grounds of discrimination, including ethnicity, religion, gender, age, physical characteristics, sexual orientation, and disability. Recognizing the role of news media as a key socialization agent, shaping and reflecting public attitudes toward social groups and issues, our study also looks at the relationship between discriminatory preferences, news media consumption, and trust in news media. We apply a differentiated view of news media consumption, including public and commercial television, quality and popular newspapers, and social media news consumption. By examining these diverse sources, we provide a more nuanced understanding of how media consumption and trust interact with discriminatory preferences. Moreover, by examining discrimination across different social categories, this study goes beyond traditional focus on single-target groups and offers a broader understanding of the complexity and interplay of various factors driving discriminatory preferences. The study situates itself within Belgium's unique socio-political context, characterized by linguistic and regional diversity and the influence of far-right political discourse—factors that amplify polarization and complicate societal cohesion. We collected data through an online survey of 3,000 participants representative of the Belgian adult population in terms of age, gender, education, and region. The survey, conducted between December 2023 and January 2024, used a conjoint experimental design in which participants evaluated hypothetical scenarios regarding seating preferences on public transport. Participants were asked to indicate their seating preference while being offered two different profiles of passengers, described by six attributes based on the discrimination grounds, and this four times. In addition, news media consumption and trust were measured, covering both traditional and social media news use. The results show that both news media consumption and trust significantly shape covert discriminatory preferences. Public television viewers showed biases favoring native-origin and heterosexual individuals, while commercial television consumption correlated with preferences for males. Newspaper and online news consumption showed nuanced effects, with quality newspapers eliciting aversion to individuals of Nigerian origin and popular newspapers revealing bias against individuals of Moroccan origin. Social media consumption showed significant interactions; for example, high news consumers through Facebook favored native-origin and female candidates, while TikTok consumers favored Nigerian-origin individuals. Trust in news media also moderated preferences: high trust in public television and quality newspapers reduced biases against individuals with distinctive physical characteristics, while low trust increased preferences for individuals with

tattoos or overweight. Similarly, trust in popular newspapers and websites influenced preferences along religion and physical characteristics. Possible explanations for these findings relate to the framing of groups in the media. This research aligns with the conference's focus on social norms and their impact on societal cohesion or polarization. It highlights the need for media literacy interventions and the importance of fostering trust in credible media. These findings offer valuable insights for policymakers, media professionals, and societal interventions aimed at promoting inclusivity and understanding how media consumption shapes social norms and influences polarization.

4. The Role of Social Norms in Shaping Attitudes Toward Gender-Fair Language.

Jil Ullenboom, Sarina J. Schäfer

Language plays a crucial role in shaping social reality (Sczesny et al., 2012), influencing career aspirations (Vervecken & Hannover, 2015), the visibility of non-binary and intersex individuals (Matsuno, 2019), and attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals (Pérez & Tavits, 2019). Despite its potential to foster inclusivity, gender-fair language (GFL) remains a highly polarized topic. In two studies conducted at a large university in Germany, we examined the role of social norms in shaping attitudes toward GFL. The first study (N = 1,308) employed a correlational design to investigate differences in GFL attitudes across faculty disciplines, gender, and political orientation. Consistent with prior research, attitudes toward GFL were strongly associated with hostile sexism, sex/gender beliefs, and right-wing authoritarianism. Social norms played a significant role: Participants who perceived that others used GFL (descriptive norm) or perceived that others believed that GFL should be used (prescriptive norm) reported more positive attitudes. These effects were moderated by group identification, sexism, and political ideology. Building on these findings, Study 2 (N = 557) used a vignette-based experimental design to test whether different types of norm communication influence GFL attitudes and reactance. Participants were randomly assigned to one of seven conditions: two control groups (no text or a text with generic masculine language) and five experimental groups varying in norm source (institutional vs. peer) and norm type (descriptive vs. prescriptive). While norm exposure did not significantly alter self-reported attitudes, it affected behavioral measures of GFL use: Participants exposed to institutional guidelines or peer norms were more likely to use gender-inclusive terms than those in the generic masculine condition. Reactance effects varied depending on prior attitudes: Individuals favoring GFL showed greater resistance to generic masculine language, whereas those opposing GFL exhibited stronger reactance in experimental conditions. Descriptive norms triggered slightly less reactance than prescriptive norms ($p = .058$), suggesting a marginal trend. These findings highlight the complexity of social norm interventions in language change. While brief norm exposure may not immediately shift attitudes, it can influence linguistic behavior. Future research should explore long-term institutional strategies, such as sustained campaigns and policy implementation, to promote the acceptance and use of gender-fair language across different disciplines.

5. Mitigating Perceived Polarization and Stimulating Constructive Dialogue by Acknowledging Subjectivity in Online News Discussions. Carla Anne Roos, Liesje van der Linden, and Emiel Krahmer

Many people perceive society as more polarized than it actually is. Arguably, one prominent reason for this false polarization is the apparent hardening of online debates, raising the question whether something can be done to make online discussions more constructive. The current paper tests the effectiveness of subjective phrasing (e.g., “I think”) in reducing perceived polarization and stimulating constructive discussion online. We ask participants (N = 175; repeated-measures) to read and evaluate subjectively and non-subjectively phrased online news discussions about societally polarized and non-polarized topics. In line with our hypotheses, we find that participants perceive discussions with subjectively phrased comments as less polarized and think discussants are less disinhibited, feel more heard and experience more solidarity. Results additionally show that participants are more willing to join such a constructive discussion themselves and tend to copy the prevalent phrasing in formulating their own reaction. Auxiliary analyses show that participants’ perceptions of the discussion climate were also strongly related to whether the discussion topic was considered polarized in society, which indicates interesting links between macro-societal perceptions and micro-level discussion dynamics. We discuss the study’s implications for realizing deliberative democracy online: adding ‘I think’ before expressing an opinion might help reduce perceived polarization.

Unity and Group Identity in Political Contexts.

Room: KW3

1. How our ideological out-group norms shape our emotional response to our shared socio-political reality. Julia Elad-Strenger, Amit Goldenberg, Tamar Saguy, Eran Halperin

What shapes our emotional responses to socio-political events? Following the social identity approach, we suggest that individuals adjust their emotional responses to socio-political stimuli based on their ideological out-group's responses, in a manner that preserves the comparative and normative fit of ideological in-group–out-group categories. In Study 1 and Study 2 (pre-registered), Jewish-Israeli leftists and rightists were exposed to their ideological out-group's alleged emotional response to a stimulus associated with Israeli-Palestinian relations, which was either stereotypical (leftists expressing low anger and rightists expressing high anger) or non-stereotypical (leftists expressing high anger and rightists expressing low anger). Across studies, participants reported more positive affect towards their ideological out-group when its response to the stimulus was non-stereotypical versus stereotypical, yet their own response to the stimulus became more “extreme” (towards the low end of the anger scale for leftists, and towards the high end of the anger scale for rightists), shifting farther away from their ideological out-group norm. Our findings suggest that in highly polarized contexts, where “leftist” and “rightist” identities are largely defined in comparison to one another, the “positioning” of ideological groups relative to one another plays a role in shaping their responses to their shared socio-political reality.

2. Towards the limits of tolerance in polarized societies: A matter of simple reciprocity? Laura Frederica Schäfer, Nicole Tausch, & Oliver Christ

Perceived respect from an outgroup increases individuals' own respect for its members, and vice versa. This mutual respect is closely linked to tolerance and thus serves as a crucial foundation for the functioning of modern democracies. Yet in heterogeneous societies, many societal debates that call for tolerance toward those with opposing views often center around at least one additional group. Here, we move beyond the ingroup–outgroup dyad in respect perceptions and distinguish between perceived respect from the outgroup toward both the ingroup (respect reciprocity) and a third group (respect generality). We argue that both perceptions shape the development – and define the boundaries – of tolerance in complex intergroup contexts, such as polarized settings. In an experimental study (N = 500), we examine how individuals define their boundaries of tolerance, particularly in the context of differing opinions on migration policy. Our focus is on liberal individuals who support progressive migration policies and their (in-)tolerance toward those with more restrictive opinions on migration policies. We expected – and find – that both perceived respect of the opinion-based outgroup toward the ingroup (respect reciprocity) and perceived respect from the outgroup toward migrants (respect generality) reduce intolerance. Moreover, results reveal that tolerance toward the opinion-based outgroup is constrained even when it is perceived as respectful toward one's own group if it does not extend the same respect to a third group (i.e., migrants).

3. Identifying as Other in Northern Ireland: Defiance, belonging, and perceptions in the presence of division. Tara Pouryahya, Danielle Blaylock

Approximately 1 in 5 individuals self-identify as 'other' in modern Northern Ireland (NI), outside of the traditional, polarised communities (NISRA, 2022), however, studies of identity and intergroup relations continue to focus almost exclusively on the traditional ethnoreligious identities of Catholic and Protestant. Though these individuals represent a significant percentage of the population, little is known about what it means to be 'other' in this divided context and whether it reflects a shift to a highly complex social identity, where the category domains of ethnicity, religion, politics, and nationality are not as overlapped as in ethnoreligious identities. To understand the motivations behind 'other' identity formation, four focus groups (N = 16) were carried out with adults who self-identify as 'other' in NI. A semi-structured topic guide was created to provide loose structure to discussions. The topics included were motivations to adopt 'other' identity, experiences which made identity salient, and values encapsulated by the identity. Participants were prompted to expand on relevant and interesting responses. Transcripts were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) through the lens of the social identity approach. Three main themes were constructed to capture identified codes. Theme 1: 'Claiming identity and attempting to belong' represents the journey participants described to self-identification. Participants were motivated to claim 'other' identity in efforts to achieve a sense of belonging that could not be provided by traditional identities. Theme 2: 'Defiance against polarised narratives and social norms' examines perceptions of traditional identities. Participants described traditional identities as upholding social norms of division based on background, and narratives of conflict, which they described as detracting from issues in health, education, and social care. 'Other' identifiers spoke frustrations at the lack of

progress in these areas, their apathy towards polarised topics, and saw their identity as a form of protest. Theme 3: 'Valuing a united people' explores the sentiment that it is necessary for the people of NI to become one cohesive group; however, this ideal came at the exclusion of traditional groups. Participants felt the populace could only unite if everyone relinquished markers of traditional identity. These themes are discussed in relation to the social identity approach, determining that though a heterogeneous group, 'other' share a core value of all people working together beyond segregated lines of community background. 'Other's' relinquishing of division as a social norm may have positive implications in intergroup relations, however, it may also signify the development of new group norms to exclude traditional identifiers. Additionally, while 'other' describe their ability to be removed from historically polarised topics in the region in favour of promoting health, education, and social care, it is unclear if they mobilise civically in these domains or hold polarised opinions about what changes are necessary. One-to-one interviews will be carried out with 'other' identifiers to further explore whether the ideals held by 'other' represent progression towards depolarisation and inclusivity, or if 'other' comes with new challenges in intergroup relations and civic participation which have not yet been researched in NI.

4. Unpacking the consolidation of beliefs and identities: A macro-experiment.

Marijn Keijzer, Vincenz Frey, Marion Hoffman, Peter Bayer & Maria Kleshnina

Consolidation of beliefs and identities—the observation that beliefs and identities have become more predictive of each other over time—has created ever-strengthening disagreement, conflict and dislike across partisan and ideological lines. Identity-belief consolidation, too, plays an important role in rising affective polarization, frustrating the ability of heterogeneous political decision groups to find consensus, in turn. Naturally, belief-disagreement can prevent efficacious decision-making, but group distinction processes and affection seem less reasonable drivers of political stalemates. When it comes to political decision-making, should we worry about the consolidation of beliefs and identities? Do opinion differences, partisan identities and their salience prevent groups from reaching decisions that would be mutually beneficial and socially optimal? Empirically, the consolidation of beliefs and identities makes it near-impossible to disentangle the effects of either on a group's ability to find agreement. That is why we turn to the lab, and estimate the causal effect of both, in a controlled environment with monetary incentives. Here, we capture political decision-making as a four-player coordination game—a 'battle of the sexes'—where actors with heterogeneous preferences aim to arrive at a common course of action. While the optimal outcome may differ between individuals, reaching a decision by consensus is beneficial for everyone involved. In an online experiment, UK citizens who voted either 'leave' or 'remain' in the 2016 Brexit referendum are asked to select one of two charities for a donation. The subjects decide simultaneously, and get the chance to update their decision if no consensus is found. Only when the group is unanimous, the researchers make the donation. Payoffs therefore only depend on players' preferences for charitable giving and (dis)alignment with the in- or the out-group. We vary (1) group homogeneity in political identity as the ratio of 'leave' to 'remain' voters, (2) ideological stakes at play in the choice between the charities and their association to an identity group, (3) identity salience as whether the political identities of the players are revealed to the

others. In other words, and from an individual perspective, this means we control who you are playing with, whether the others believe what you believe, and whether you know their political identity. The results show that both the ideological stakes and identity salience matter significantly for a groups' efficacy. While we observe large differences in donation size between groups of different compositions, these effects are generally mediated by preferences and identities. Participants fail to coordinate because of a lack of switching (i.e., through 'stubbornness') rather than through erratic miscoordination. While the differences on the group-level are considerable, these seem to be driven by only a small minority of stubborn actors. In other words, participants' micro-level intentions do not scale linearly to their macro-level consequences. This study highlights the importance of identity in political decision-making, and suggest that besides traditional persuasion-through-argumentation efforts, depolarization may also be achieved through identity-based interventions.

5. When Young People Discover Their Shared Values: Effects on Social Connection, Hope, and Environmental Action. Lukas Wolf, Philip Howlett, Gregory Maio, Elizabeth Marks, Lorraine Whitmarsh

There is robust evidence that people across the world show overwhelming similarities in their values like equality, freedom, and wealth, but they often fail to recognise these shared values (see Paul Hanel's abstract). This value misperception gap forms a core aspect of people's perceptions of polarisation, standing in the way of social cohesion and people's ability to tackle common challenges like climate change. I present two pre-registered studies that (1) examine the consequences of this value misperception gap among young people in an environmental context, and (2) test whether the gap can be reduced. Study 1 recruited 1141 young people aged 12-24 from across the UK. 95% of participants agreed that self-transcendence values like helpfulness or caring for nature are among their most important values, but they perceived their peers to care much less about these values. Participants who perceived a greater gap reported feeling more disconnected, more hopeless about environmental issues, less motivated to tackle these issues, and to engage less frequently in environmental activism. Study 2 (expected N=1000) is a 5-wave longitudinal experiment that seeks to reduce the value misperception gap among 12-24 year olds. Data collection is currently taking place across UK schools and online platforms, to be completed in March 2025. The study helps young people to discover their shared values and gives them an opportunity to exchange ideas on concrete, local environmental action (e.g., reducing waste in schools). Multilevel analyses will test our expectation that the intervention elicits more social cohesion, and greater environmental hope, motivation, and action. By showing young people that together they can make a difference, we hope to break a cycle of polarisation, dwindling hope, and environmental disengagement, which is vital in an age group that will require resilience to deal with the climate crisis.

13:45 – 15:30 Thematic sessions with oral presentations

Understanding the Disconnect Between Equality Ideals and Actions.

Room: Jan van Scorel

1. **The aversive bystander effect whereby egalitarian bystanders overestimate the confrontation of prejudice.** Hanna Szekeres, Eran Halperin, Anna Kende, Tamar Saguy

Everyday expressions of prejudice continue to pose significant challenges across societies, impacting social cohesion. It is commonly assumed that individuals who hold strong egalitarian values are more likely to confront prejudice when they encounter it; however, this assumption may not necessarily reflect actual behavior. In this study, we explored the dynamics of social norms and their influence on the confrontation of prejudice. We conducted four experiments (N = 1,116) across two countries—the United States and Hungary—focusing on majority group members. Participants were exposed to prejudiced remarks directed at various minority outgroups: African Americans, Muslims, and Latinos in the U.S., and Roma individuals in Hungary. Using a behavioral paradigm to measure actual confronting behavior, we assessed whether egalitarian (anti-prejudiced) values predicted the likelihood of confronting prejudice. Our findings revealed that while egalitarian values were associated with intentions to confront prejudice hypothetically, they did not translate into actual confronting behavior. Stronger egalitarians were more likely to overestimate their confronting actions compared to weaker egalitarians, yet both groups engaged in confrontation at similar, relatively low rates. This phenomenon, termed the "aversive bystander effect," was influenced by internal motivations to respond without prejudice rather than external social pressures, suggesting that internalized social norms shape self-perception more than they influence actual behavior. Behavioral uncertainty—uncertainty about how to intervene—emerged as an important factor explaining this overestimation. Strong egalitarians, despite their intentions, hesitated in real-life scenarios partially due to situational ambiguity. These results highlight the complex role of social norms in influencing behavior and underscore a gap between egalitarian ideals and actions. Understanding this gap is crucial for developing intergroup interventions aimed at promoting social cohesion. Encouraging self-reflection among egalitarians and providing clear strategies for effective intervention may help bridge this gap. By empowering individuals to act on their values, we can foster social norms that support inclusion across different societal contexts.

2. **Mind the Gap: Equality-based Respect Norms and the General vs. Specific Divide in Tolerance.** Dominika Gurbisz, Anna Potoczek, Marcin Bukowski, Lucía Estevan-Reina, Oliver Christ

Although national surveys indicate increasingly positive attitudes toward Jews in Poland, such abstract endorsements of tolerance do not necessarily translate into consistent support for inclusion in specific social contexts. This study examines the principle–implementation gap by investigating how equality-based respect norms are reflected in both general attitudes and context-dependent expressions of tolerance. Challenging the assumption that

declared acceptance equates to actual behavioral intent, we revisit the principle–implementation gap to uncover potential discrepancies between general attitudes and specific reactions. Across two correlational studies and a pretest (N = 818), we show that perceived equality-based respect within national and acquaintance ingroup norms is positively linked with tolerant attitudes, even when controlling for outgroup attitudes and disapproval of specific practices. However, our findings reveal a striking pattern: tolerance is often significantly overstated when measured abstractly, compared to more nuanced, situational judgments. This research underscores the role of societal norms and their connection to tolerance, in fostering more inclusive communities. It offers a nuanced understanding of the ethnic majority’s perspective on tolerance within the broader framework of inclusion.

3. **Tolerant Group Norm Mitigates Biased Political Information Sharing on Social Media.** Xinyao Zhang, Gijs Schumacher, Marte Otten, Bert Bakker, Christin Scholz

Research showed that biased political information sharing behaviors, where users disproportionately share pro-attitudinal over counter-attitudinal content, can contribute to ideologically narrow information flows, the spread of fake news, and an ever more dividing online environment (Shin & Thorson, 2017; Osmundsen et al., 2021; Törnberg, 2022). Past studies revealed that biased political information sharing can be explained by both the individuals’ pre-existing political attitudes, and their (partisan) political group identity (Johnson et al., 2020; Rathje et al., 2021). Yet these studies were largely either based only on observational data alone, or examined only one of the two independent variables. To fill in this research gap, we designed an online experiment to examine how both variables independently and interactively shape political information sharing, and whether a tolerant group general norm - in the form of tolerance towards dissenting opinions - can help mitigate biased political information sharing. A nationally representative sample of N = 402 Dutch citizens completed the experiment. During the experiment, each participant completed four blocks of a sharing task. In each block, participants were introduced to the chat history of an online group engaging in political conversations. In each conversation, one member would voice an opinion that does not align with the group’s majority, and the rest of the group would respond to this opinion. These groups would differ in (1) group political leaning, i.e., whether its majority is left-leaning or right-leaning; and (2) general group norm, i.e., whether the group is tolerant or punitive towards dissenting voices. Then, in each block, participants rated the sharing intention of two left-leaning and two right-leaning messages on two sociopolitical topics: refugee policy and climate change. Confirming prior studies, we found experimental evidence of biased political information sharing behaviors. First, people tended to share information aligning (vs. against) their existing political attitudes, independent of the groups they were sharing with. Second, people also tended to share with their political ingroups (vs. outgroups), independent of what messages they were sharing. Further, we found that a tolerant (vs. punitive) group general norm could mitigate the sharing bias towards pro-attitudinal messages. Taken together, our findings identified biased sharing behaviors driven by both individual-attitude and group-identity, and revealed the potential of a tolerant group general norm to help de-bias political information sharing. However, group-level effects, especially the mitigating effect from tolerant group general norm, were shown to be smaller than the individual-level effect. We reasoned that this may

be due to the relatively weak group general norm manipulation implemented in the stimuli design. We improved the existing stimuli to enhance group norm perceptions. A pre-test on the new stimuli set proved stronger manipulation of the group general norm than in Study 1. As the next step, we will conduct Study 2 with the improved stimuli design to replicate and extend our findings.

4. **The Social Architecture of Prejudice: How Shared Norms Drive Both Consensus and Polarization.** Thomas Kessler, Pascal Gelfort, Clemens Lindner & Julia Elad-Strenger

Social psychological research on prejudice has predominantly focused on individual-level variance in prejudice toward specific groups, such as ethnic minorities, emphasizing psychological differences between individuals as primary explanatory factors. While this approach has yielded valuable insights, we propose a complementary framework that examines prejudice as a socially shared phenomenon, emphasizing its collective nature. Our research advances this perspective by investigating prejudice towards multiple prejudice targets simultaneously, enabling a sophisticated analysis of both within-target variance (i.e., how individuals differ in their prejudices toward any specific group) and between-target variance (i.e., how different target groups are systematically evaluated relatively more or relatively less favorably across the population). This dual-variance approach uniquely positions us to quantify the degree of consensus in prejudicial attitudes across participants — a critical indicator of prejudice's socially shared nature. By examining these patterns of convergence in prejudice profiles (i.e., different individuals are highly similar in their prejudices), we can better understand how prejudices emerge not just as individual psychological dispositions, but as a collective social product. We provide evidence for the socially shared nature of prejudice across multiple studies. Study 1 demonstrates strong correlations between descriptive and injunctive norms and prejudicial attitudes towards a broad range of prejudice targets in a between-subject design. Moreover, within each condition, participants show remarkably high profile-correlations ($r_s > .60$) across participants, indicating robust social consensus in both normative understanding of prejudice and prejudicial attitudes. Study 2 illuminates an intriguing pattern in the relationship between right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and prejudice: while individuals who are high vs. low in RWA show “mirror-image” patterns of prejudice towards a variety of target groups, their overall prejudice profiles maintain a strong positive correlation ($r = .72$), further supporting the socially shared foundation of these attitudes. This pattern is validated and expanded in Study 3 through the analysis of representative samples from 29 countries (European Social Survey, Round 4, $N = 56,752$). The findings reveal high within-country similarity of prejudice profiles (mean $r = .71$) contrasted with low between-country correlations (mean $r = -.04$), suggesting that prejudice patterns are country specific and socially shared within national boundaries. Study 4 adds an analysis of media representation of prejudice targets, revealing that frequently discussed prejudice targets exhibit bimodal attitude distributions, while less discussed targets show unimodal distributions. This pattern suggests that increased societal discourse about certain targets catalyzes the emergence of distinct societal subgroups with conflicting attitudes, potentially contributing to societal polarization. Taken together, our findings demonstrate that understanding prejudice requires expanding beyond individual psychological processes to incorporate a collective perspective that recognizes how prejudices are shared within societal groups, which indicates that social

norms play a crucial explanatory role in prejudice formation and maintenance. Notably, our research reveals that certain contested prejudices can significantly diminish societal cohesion, by the emergence of subgroups with divergent group norms and partisan prejudices. These insights open new avenues for understanding both the normative influences on prejudice and innovative approaches to prejudice reduction and social change.

Social change, threat and collective behavior.

Room: Immuneit

1. Universalisation and Group Agency: Distinguishing Kantian Optimisation from Team Reasoning. Bronagh Dunne

A recognised limitation of standard game theory is its difficulty explaining cooperation and coordination in collective action problems. In classic games such as the Prisoner's Dilemma and Hi-Lo, mutually beneficial strategies exist, yet standard game-theoretic reasoning deems their pursuit individually irrational. However, empirical evidence shows that people frequently cooperate in both experiments and real-world situations, challenging these theoretical predictions. Addressing collective action problems within the framework of individual rationality is challenging. One response to this problem is to move beyond the individualistic framework of classical game theory. The literature on team reasoning highlights a crucial distinction between individuals acting alone and groups acting collectively. This perspective modifies the standard model by treating groups as agents with shared goals and preferences (Sugden 2003, Gold and Sugden 2007). Under this approach, decision-makers ask, "What should we do?" rather than "What should I do?" However, a recent theory by John Roemer—Kantian optimisation—suggests that departing from methodological individualism may be unnecessary (Roemer 2010, 2015, 2019). Kantian optimisation retains the individual as the locus of agency but assumes universalisation of action. An individual asks, "What would I like that all did?" and then acts accordingly, assuming that others will do the same. This presents a novel way to explain cooperation in non-cooperative games while maintaining an individualist framework. Shedding light on how these two theories relate is relevant, as, despite their differences, team reasoning and Kantian optimisation share an intuitive similarity. Both involve reasoning that considers the outcome of agents acting together i.e., the actions of a group and the actions of all respectively. This resemblance has led some scholars to suggest that Kantian optimisation could be understood as a special case of team reasoning (Gold 2021, Sher 2020). If true, this would imply that Kantian optimisation fits within the group agency framework and can take the team as a unit of agency. This paper aims to investigate whether Kantian optimisation could be understood in terms of team reasoning. I argue will argue against this. While both theories aim to explain cooperative behaviour, they operate on incompatible principles. Kantian optimisation focuses on the individual's preferences and considers how the universalisation of individual actions would impact the individual. On the other hand, team reasoning focuses on team preferences and goals and assigns roles to individual team members based on what the team would deem beneficial.

2. When do we claim free speech to justify our prejudices? Expressive Threat and the reactance to social norms. Pascal Gelfort, Clemens Lindner, Maret Weimann, Paula Sill, Marco Klug, & Thomas Kessler

While social norms serve as powerful determinants of human behavior and attitudes, a fascinating paradox emerges in their implementation: the very act of introducing new norms or rigidly enforcing established ones can trigger psychological reactance, leading to unexpected backlash effects. This phenomenon, documented across numerous social psychological studies, reveals how attempts to strengthen normative influence can paradoxically weaken its effectiveness, challenging our fundamental assumptions about social control mechanisms. These processes are specifically prevalent in public discourse about prejudiced remarks, which reflect polarized norms in the expression of prejudice between societal subgroups. The present work investigates mechanisms that can consolidate societal polarization regarding prejudices and thereby inhibit the influence of social norms and punishment of norm deviance on prejudice expressions. The Expressive-Threat-Hypothesis identifies Freedom of Speech as a potential suppressor of normative influence, by showing that individuals are more likely to endorse free speech arguments if the expression of their attitudes is vicariously threatened. We replicated evidence for the Expressive-Threat-Hypothesis by White and Crandall (2017) in three experimental studies by manipulating which expressions are punished and how this affects the relation of free speech endorsement and prejudice. Study 1 shows that people endorsing xenophobic attitudes (a right-wing attitude) claimed the right for free speech as a justification of their attitudes when confronted with a punishment of xenophobic remarks. If a behavior unrelated to prejudice was punished (i.e., a person getting fired over offensive remarks towards a particular coworker), xenophobic attitudes did not predict the support of the right of free speech. Study 2 replicated and extended this finding in the context of a left-wing prejudice (i.e., negative attitudes towards soldiers). In Study 3, we found that also overly positive attitudes towards a group predict the endorsement of Freedom of Speech, if participants observe punishment of such attitudes. Besides extending the evidence for the Expressive-Threat-Hypothesis to a new population (German sample) and testing the generalizability of this mechanism to a broader conceptualization of prejudice, we assessed, to which extend the relation between individual prejudice and vicarious free speech endorsement is mediated by feelings of reactance. We find a moderated mediation of the effect of prejudice on free speech endorsement via experimental condition and reactance in Study 1 and a mediation of the effect of prejudice on free speech endorsement via reactance in Study 2 and 3, suggestive of an important role of vicariously experienced reactance. By expanding the theoretical framework of prejudice, our findings illuminate fundamental mechanisms underlying both prejudicial attitudes and the social norms that govern them. This broader conceptualization provides novel insights into the dynamic interplay between prejudice formation and normative influences. Furthermore, it opens the discussion of the circumstances under which normative information fail to influence individual attitudes and to which extend societal polarization is reflected in the tendency to justify the prejudice under the threat of being punished. This work extends our understanding of how the punishment of prejudice related norm violations evokes reactance and has implications for norm-based interventions on prejudice.

3. Threat to personal control as a reinforcer of conformity to radical climate protest norms. Fabian Hess, Torsten Masson, Immo Fritsche

The climate crisis is motivating (especially young) people to take collective action, including radical climate protest (e.g., blocking roads; Buzogány & Scherhauser, 2023). Radical climate protest can raise public awareness of the urgent crisis, but it can also deepen polarization between ideological groups, threatening social cohesion. From a social psychological perspective, acting in line with the norms of one's group (either supporting or opposing radical climate protest) could be an attempt to cope with feelings of threat, such as climate threat. Group-based control theory (Fritsche, 2022) proposes that conformity to salient ingroup norms is a means to restore a sense of control through one's social self as a group member, particularly when one's sense of personal control is deprived. Thus, by increasing ingroup norm conformity, salient threat to personal control could even motivate support of radicalism if radicalism is normative for one's ingroup (Barth et al., 2018). We wanted to test this assumption using an experimental 2 × 2 design. In two studies among young people in Germany (total N = 1,033), we manipulated the salience of threat to personal control and whether or not the clear majority of the fellow "young generation" would support radical climate protest. The induction of proradical (vs. nonradical) ingroup protest norms increased support of radical action across studies. Although salient personal control threat did not accelerate this effect for the overall samples, exploratory analyses of Study 2 found this interaction effect for individuals highly invested in climate protection, indicating deterrent effects of ingroup radicalism among those less committed. In times of fierce public rejection of radical climate protest, conforming to radicalism norms might be a viable means to demonstrate ingroup agency only for people seeing climate action as "top priority," leading to radicalization under personal helplessness. Although not for the entire samples, but for a highly-committed subgroup, we detected a social psychological mechanism that may drive polarization in society.

4. RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR: MORAL HIBERNATION AS A TOOL FOR (DE)POLARIZATION OF SOCIETY. Olga Kochubeinyk

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has created complex social dynamics that require careful attention. Ukrainian society in the pre-war period was not homogeneous. The most prominent divisions were based on economic inequality, differing political preferences (whether to prioritize cooperation with the European Union or Russia), and diverse linguistic identities. The invasion had a significant impact on social dynamics, which can be understood by examining the key phenomena that emerged as a result. The first phenomenon observed is the extremely rapid military mobilization of society, which led to the formation of territorial defense groups. This mobilization resulted in a significant increase in national cohesion and identity, as seen, for example, in the sudden refusal to use the Russian language in nearly all areas of life. Additional examples include the rise of numerous volunteer organizations and the practice of donating to the armed forces of Ukraine. A key psychological outcome during this period was resilience, which enabled individuals to endure the direct stresses of war. The second phenomenon can be described as the polarization of society, which stems from the unequal distribution of opportunities related to the saving of life, as well as the specific ways in which social and material resources are redistributed. This polarization

can also be seen as a form of psychological adjustment to rapidly changing living conditions. These new circumstances have led to the development of a different system of moral norms and values. The social consequences of this polarization are evident in the conflicting evaluations of the actions of Ukrainian political and military leaders, as well as the events unfolding in the war, whether at the frontlines or in the rear. The third phenomenon of war, linked to the disappointment over expectations for a quick end of war, is called moral hibernation. We use this term to describe the intention of certain individuals to avoid open conflicts that may arise as the revelation of smouldering low-intensity contradictions of a moral or axiological nature. Emotional and physical exhaustion, a constant fear of death and injury, uncertainty about how long the war will last, and a lack of complete information contribute to a high level of self-censorship, social frustration, and a decrease in both institutional and interpersonal trust. The social consequence of moral hibernation is the tendency to soften and smooth over assessments in everyday interpersonal communication about sensitive topics related to war, such as economic mobilization or the idea of "peace in exchange for territories." Acquaintances, neighbors, and colleagues often avoid making strong value judgments about actions, events, or predictions concerning the war. However, in public spaces where communication is more impersonal and mediated, we can observe the opposite — intense debates and offensive comments. One could argue that moral hibernation acts as a mechanism to prevent further polarization within society, helping to maintain cohesion for the purpose of resisting military intervention. However, the consequences of moral hibernation can be quite dangerous once peace is achieved. Suppressed contradictions, once freed from the need for self-censorship, may lead to significant open conflicts in interpersonal relationships and among various groups.

5. Blood, Sweat and Talking: A Field Study on Physiological Responses during Conversations with Representatives of Societal Change. Maaïke Homan, Daniël Scheepers, Madelijn Strick, Joyce Snijdwint, Marty Colombo, Félice van Nunspeet, Naomi Ellemers

Societal changes, such as increased migration, environmental challenges, shifting gender roles, and globalization, can induce stress for some individuals, leading to defensive or rigid attitudes and contributing to social conflict. Understanding how people respond to these changes is essential for developing strategies to foster adaptability and reduce polarization. To examine how individuals respond to social change, we conducted a field experiment at a music festival (Lowlands; August, 2024), in which participants in groups of 15 (maximum) were allowed to 'ask anything' to a representative of societal change (i.e., a climate change activist or refugee). During these sessions, participants' psychophysiological responses were recorded using EmbarcePlus wearables. With this experimental field study (N=121), we address several key questions: (1) what types of physiological responses are elicited when individuals interact with representatives of societal change? Do individuals exhibit a physiological freeze response, positive engagement or stress? (2) Do this type of 'ask-them-anything' interactions with a representative of societal change increase positive attitudes and behavioral intentions? And finally, (3) do individuals' physiological responses to societal change influence their attitudes and behavioral intentions? Do we need a bit of discomfort (physiological stress) in order to bring about change? By integrating psychophysiological data with social interaction dynamics, this project seeks to deepen our understanding of how

individuals respond to societal change and inform interventions that promote constructive engagement in the face of social transformation.

Social Norms, Collective Action and Trust.

Room: KW3

1. Oppression/inclusion: Norms, social structure and bargaining power. Béla Janky

In this theoretical paper, I present a model of the individual incentives and structural conditions that sustain moral orders that underpin social oppression (vs. social inclusion) – such moral orders in which social inequalities and oppression are maintained partly through the moral behavior of the oppressed. On the one hand, the model builds on a line of research on social norms and institutions that has developed at the interface of moral philosophy, psychology and the social sciences (e.g. Bicchieri 1993, 2006, 2016, Bicchieri & Sontuoso 2020, Binmore 1998, 2005, 2010, Gintis 2009, 2016, Gintis & Helbing 2015, Guala 2016, Hindriks & Guala 2014, O'Connor 2019, 2024). This line of research uses the analytical tools of game theory to interpret moral situations, and in its models, interactive epistemology plays a prominent role. On the other hand, the model is also grounded in the new sociology of morality (Hitlin & Vaisey 2010, 2013; Simpson & Willer 2015) and the concept of thick morality (Abend 2011; Tavory 2011) in particular. This concept emphasizes that morally relevant situations cannot be isolated from the broader social system, which shapes not only the content of social norms but also the incentives to adhere to moral rules. Dealing with this kind of 'intersituationality' only requires a slight modification of current game theoretic models of dilemmas related to norm compliance. According to the proposed model, players' decisions in a morally relevant situation affect their subjective well-being in two separate games. One game is the concrete moral situation itself, and is modeled as a one-shot (or finitely repeated) game. The other one is the aggregate game of community life, modeled as an infinite ensemble of the games played by the players of the current moral situation in the future in the community (a kind of an infinitely repeated game). The moral force that drives compliance with the norms comes entirely from the aggregate community game. This modeling framework distinguishes the situations where conventions and norms that support inequality and oppression emerge as a result of – or at least in line with – unequal bargaining power within the situation from those ones where pressure for promoting and accepting oppression comes only from outside the situation. A two-person bargaining game serves as a case study, demonstrating how the contents of conventions or social norms, the structure of the wider moral community, and the moral relevance and the characteristics of the situation influence behavioral and discursive dynamics and players' well-being. Namely, the analysis shows, among others, when would inequity/oppression/exclusion be strong (weak) in a bargaining situation in spite of inclusive (oppressing) norms in the society. It also shows when would changes in the content of norms or the strength of social pressure lead to the sudden shifts, slow changes or persistence of the players' strategies in the bargaining situation.

2. Understanding the Role of Descriptive Norms for Participation in Collective Action: The Case of the Housing Movement in Portugal. Joana Cidades, Sven Waldzus.

Collective action (CA) based on grassroots movements can foster societal change. Such movements are assumed to gain momentum when a lot of individuals join. However, while some authors argue that individual's beliefs about others' protest participation increase own engagement (complementary strategy), others argue that individuals may also abstain from participation, because they see others as substitutes (substitutability strategy). Additionally, evidence about social norm adherence and social influence is scarce and inconsistent in CA literature in Social Psychology. In two experiments, using a self-persuasion technique, descriptive norms of a relevant reference group were manipulated in the context of the housing movement in Portugal. In Experiment 1, individuals received information about the high vs. low participation of young people in comparison to other age groups (N=235). Experiment 2 (N=330) was similar except that the reference group was changed to Portuguese people vs other European countries, and a control condition was added. In both studies after reading fictitious information about others' participation in the housing movement, individuals were asked for the reasons behind the high/low participation of the group, according to the experimental condition. This latter part of the experimental design allowed complementary qualitative analysis, while also strengthening the norm manipulation. Individuals in the high participation norm group estimated that their close group also participated more in the housing movement indicating successful manipulation. Based on the Dual-Chamber Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA), we hypothesized that descriptive high-participation norms increase CA intentions (i.e., general, conventional, non-normative and violent behaviors) and that these effects should be mediated by the relevant concepts of the model (identification, morality, injustice and efficacy), resulting in a parallel and sequential path mediation model. Results in both studies demonstrated that the SIMCA-model, as a whole, mediated the relationship between descriptive norms and all CA intention measures. However, contrary to our predictions, there was no total effect of the norm manipulation on intentions to participate. Surprisingly, in Experiment 1, a negative direct effect was found after controlling for all mediators. Moreover, specific distinct indirect effects occurred via politicized identification in Experiment 1 and via moral convictions in Experiment 2. Unexpectedly, efficacy and injustice did not predict CA, two relevant concepts both mentioned in participants written responses and CA literature. As the reference group affected by shared grievances differed between the two studies (young in Experiment 1; Portuguese in Experiment 2), we suggest that the relevance attributed to descriptive norms regarding specific SIMCA factors is context and social identity dependent. Moreover, we speculate that individuals respond to others' protest adherence with specific interdependence strategies (complementary or substitutability) according to their psychological motivations as well as their group membership. Thus, social movements may tailor the use of descriptive norm information in their communication strategies to specific audiences they intend to mobilize.

3. How do normative views and expectations affect social trust? An empirical test of the moralistic and rationalistic theories of social trust on the case of Covid-19 distancing norms. Ula Nikolaja Ratajec, Wojtek Przepiorka, Eva Vriens

Social trust is the perception that other members of society are trustworthy. It has many societal benefits including promoting social cohesion, social belonging and equality. Different micro-level theories of social trust offer no general agreement about what causes individuals to perceive other members of society as trustworthy. Moralistic accounts of social trust describe it as a consequence of a person's perception that other societal members share the same moral values, whereas rationalistic accounts equate trust with a person's rational evaluation that others will behave in line with her interests. Despite their differences, both theories agree on the premise that social trust depends on beliefs about others: what others value, think, or do. Because social norms prescribe what each member of society should think or do, they are likely the basis for forming related beliefs about most other members of society. Consequently, a person's perception of social norms will be related to their social trust, however, studies investigating this relationship are rare. Our study contributes to disentangling this relationship in two respects: First, we test whether a person's norm-related beliefs induce social trust according to the moralistic or rationalistic theory of trust. Second, we propose and test a novel mediation mechanism through which beliefs about others' normative behaviour affect social trust. To study the relation between norm-related beliefs and social trust, we follow Bicchieri's framework that distinguishes between one's personal normative beliefs, one's expectations about others' normative beliefs, and one's expectations about others' behaviour. Our study uses survey data measuring social trust and norm-related beliefs about different Covid-19 distancing norms gathered by The Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies of the Italian National Research Council between June 2021 and February 2022 among N = 1997 residents of Rome, Italy. We use regression analysis to test whether beliefs about distancing norms affected social trust according to the moralistic or rationalistic theory, and structural equation modelling to test whether perceived distancing behaviours affected social trust via informing perceived support of distancing behaviours. Our analysis shows that a respondent's belief that other people have similar support for distancing norms significantly increased her social trust, whereas a respondent's belief that other people support distancing norms did not affect her social trust. Thus, the perception that others have similar values was positively related to social trust, whereas the perception that members of society have other-regarding preferences did not affect social trust, favouring the moralistic over rationalistic theory. Furthermore, we found that perceived disregard for distancing norms among others had a negative effect on social trust partly because it informed respondent's belief about others' support for distancing norms. Thus, a person's perception of others' behaviour matters for social trust because she perceives it as an indicator of others' normative beliefs which have, only in relation to her own normative beliefs (moralistic theory), a significant effect on social trust. This study presents and tests new mechanisms of how social norms affect social trust and offers novel directions for further research on this relationship.

4. Vegetarianism as a Norm-Governed Social Practice: Conflicting Norms and Commitment Dynamics. Fernando Sanantonio

Several quantitative studies and large-scale surveys have shown that the number of self-identified vegetarians and vegans who report consuming animal products at least occasionally is higher than expected (Rosenfeld & Tomiyama, 2019). Additionally, numerous identity-based studies indicate that vegetarians and vegans hold strong

normative beliefs about the appropriateness of their dietary choices (Salehi, Díaz, & Redondo, 2023). On the other hand, the general population also holds normative beliefs regarding these dietary practices, often viewing them negatively in terms of their perceived impact on society, values, and traditions (Dhont & Hodson, 2014). In this paper, we argue that vegetarian and vegan dietary practices, along with related social phenomena, can be effectively analyzed through the lens of contemporary social norms theory, particularly the frameworks proposed by Cristina Bicchieri (2005) and, more recently, Frank Hindriks (2019). We conceptualize adherence to vegetarian dietary patterns as a norm-governed social practice, where two key normative forces interact: (1) a narrow, favorable norm—"It is forbidden to eat animals (and animal-derived products)"—and (2) a set of broader, opposing norms—linked to traditional cuisine, social etiquette, and culinary customs. To describe this dynamic, we develop a theoretical model in which both intergroup and intragroup constraints shape individuals' commitment to these dietary norms. The concept of commitment is central to our approach, as it allows us to:

- Characterize vegetarian and vegan diets as institutionalized, rule-based practices.
- Examine how identity interacts with internal and external constraints.
- Highlight the role of reference group behavior and normative beliefs.
- Situate vegetarian and vegan diets within a broader framework of eating-related normative systems, including religious dietary prohibitions.

To support our argument, we present empirical findings from two studies conducted on samples of vegetarians and vegans in Spain. The first study (N=150) examined the relationship between homophily in social networks, outgroup sanctions, and commitment to vegetarian and vegan dietary rules. The second study (N=500) analyzed key components of social norms—normative beliefs, empirical expectations, and normative expectations—and their impact on commitment using a survey experiment with vignettes. Both studies provide robust evidence that these normative dimensions influence eating behavior, reinforcing the notion that vegetarianism functions as a normative system.

15:45 – 17:00 Keynote Speaker: Cristina Bicchieri on Norms and Trust: exploring poverty roots in the US.

Friday, May 23rd, 2025

9:00 – 11:00 Thematic sessions with oral presentations

Youth, Social Norms, and Intergroup Contact.

Room: Jan van Scorel

1. **Divided Communities: The Impact of PEACE4Youth on Marginalised Young People's Personal Development, Good Relations, and Citizenship.** Danielle L. Blaylock, Patrick F. Kotzur, Alexander W. O'Donnell, Rhiannon N. Turner, Stephanie Burns, Laura K. Taylor, and Linda Tropp

Within conflict and post-conflict societies marred by entrenched divisions, promoting meaningful interactions is essential for peacebuilding efforts (McKeown & Taylor, 2017). However, sustainable peace requires more than positive attitudes; it demands interventions that equip individuals with skills and attitudes to engage constructively within their communities, ultimately helping to reduce the risk of recurring conflict. This is particularly the case in Northern Ireland, a historically divided context where young people from marginalised communities face significant social, emotional, and relational challenges, and where paramilitary groups, particularly those opposed to the peace process, continue to organise and recruit (Browne & Dwyer, 2014; Byrne et al., 2016; Hamber & Gallagher, 2015; McAllister et al., 2013). In line with recent theory and research on the far-reaching impact of intergroup contact (e.g., Hodson et al., 2018; McKeown & Taylor, 2018; Meleady et al., 2019), we test the proposition that interventions framed by contact theory (Allport, 1954) can be particularly impactful, offering benefits beyond prejudice reduction. We do so by examining the impact of intergroup contact on a suite of interconnected outcomes within a large-scale, cross-community programme in Northern Ireland. Bringing together more than 7,900 participants from both Catholic and Protestant communities. PEACE4Youth, prioritised marginalized young people aged 14-24 who faced significant social, emotional, and relational challenges and were at risk of becoming involved in antisocial behaviour, violence, or dissident paramilitary activity; many of these young people were disengaged from the peace process and not in formal education, training, or employment. All young people in Phase 2 of the programme (N = 6,307) were encouraged to complete participant surveys pre-, mid-, and post-intervention. We used a Latent Growth Curve Models approach to examine the extent more pronounced growth in intergroup contact co-occurred with more pronounced changes in intergroup relations (attitudes and future behavioral intentions), personal development (self-confidence and leadership), and civic engagement indicators. Subsequently, we fitted parallel process models to investigate the extent to which slopes (i.e., change) in intergroup contact co-varied with slopes in other variables under investigation. Findings reveal that show positive trajectories in intergroup contact, positive attitudes towards members of the “other” community and future behavioural intentions, along with growth in personal development by strengthening self-confidence and leadership and encouraging active citizenship through increased civic engagement. Further, those who

reported higher increases in contact showed the strongest growth in the good relations, personal development, and citizenship outcomes. Our findings underscore the potential of contact interventions to influence outcomes that reach beyond mere prejudice reduction to the promotion of personal development, good relations, and citizenship skills. Discussions will focus on how interventions underpinned by contact can contribute to a more comprehensive framework for peacebuilding, offering a blueprint for creating sustainable societal change in divided societies.

2. To be a social Referent - Listening to the Perspectives of Students within the Framework of a qualitative exploratory Approach. Lena Bergs, Seyma Parlak, Elyo Beyer, Maarten van Zalk.

The "Together for Tolerance" project, which is part of the Europe-wide INCLUSIVITY project (van Zalk et al., 2023), seeks to foster prosocial norms of equality-based respect and belonging within school environments. This intervention enlists social referents—wellconnected students—to disseminate social norms through school-wide actions. Implemented from April 2022 to October 2024 in selected schools in Lower Saxony, the study utilizes qualitative interviews to evaluate the intervention's impact, focusing on two key questions: What opportunities and challenges do students perceive in relation to the intervention? And how do they experience the role and influence of social referents, both from the perspective of the referents themselves and their peers? Two focus group interviews with social referents (n=10) and individual interviews (n=9) with other students at their schools were conducted at the intervention schools, with data analyzed exploratively using Mayring's qualitative content analysis (2015). The findings underscore the importance of understanding student perspectives in evaluating social-network-based interventions in schools to foster prosocial behavior. By capturing these insights, the study illuminates how social referents contribute to creating a supportive school climate, highlighting both the potential and limitations of peer-driven efforts.

3. Voices of Anger & Hope: Researching Urban Youth's Grievances and Hopes to Foster Depolarisation and Social Cohesion. Alexander Van Leuven, Ans De Nolf

Rising social and political polarisation, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, misinformation and global crises have profoundly affected the mental health and social cohesion of urban youth (Irnat et al., 2024; Pykett et al., 2022). This weakens critical social bonds with peers and families and ultimately intensifies feelings of alienation, particularly among marginalised youth (Blum et al., 2022; Yousafzai, 2022). In polarised environments compromise is often depicted as weakness, fuelled by biased media consumption and clashing social norms, thereby undermining social cohesion and democratic resilience (Froman, 2020; Dimant, 2024). In response, this research examines mechanisms of polarisation and depolarisation among urban youth (aged 13–24), with a particular focus on the emotional dimensions of 'anger' and 'hope'. To understand these feelings we did ethnographic fieldwork, based on participant observation, including interviews and participatory research, collecting emic voices and narratives to explore how grievances, aspirations and coping strategies are articulated in polarised urban settings. The main field site is Mechelen (Belgium), through the EFRO funded ORPHEUS project, which reconstructs

a preventative framework and examines how safe spaces foster social cohesion across marginalising communities. Our analysis combines in-depth ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews with both youth and youth workers to research how youth navigate polarised environments. By collecting the lived experiences of urban youth, particularly those from migration backgrounds, we deepen understanding on how intersectional discrimination, religiosity and adaptation strategies impact their emotional responses to societal tension. Safe spaces emerge as a critical tool to encourage open dialogue, mutual understanding and empathy. As such, youth are encouraged to articulate their grievances and hopes without fear of judgment or retaliation, enabling them to co-create narratives of inclusion and resilience (Van Leuven & Trappers, 2023). Comparative insights from ORPHEUS and preliminary insights from our collaboration in the CRSH project “Colère et espoir chez les jeunes adultes,” led by Laval University, highlight the contextual specificities and shared patterns of anger and hope narratives among youth in segregated settings. For example, while offline safe spaces in the city of Mechelen’ show the emancipatory benefits of neighbourhood dialogue among youth with migration backgrounds, ORPHEUS findings suggest that online safe spaces can foster a cross-cultural solidarity and mitigate polarisation. These complementary approaches enrich our understanding of how inclusive spaces can mediate the tensions inherent in polarised environments. Our findings contribute to both theoretical and practical discussions on depolarisation by highlighting the transformative potential of safe spaces. The research underscores how these spaces promote the psychological well-being of urban youth and strengthen their capacity to navigate complex social dynamics. Additionally, we offer actionable strategies for policymakers, educators, and community leaders to enhance social cohesion by addressing the emotional underpinnings of polarisation. In conclusion, this study advances the discourse on inclusivity norms and the role of youth agency in depolarisation processes. By integrating the emic perspectives of marginalised youth with comparative empirical evidence, we aim to inform interventions that foster more empathic and cohesive societies.

4. Poles Apart? Effects of Group Membership on the Consumption and Transmission of Polarized Information Among Youth in a Divided Society.

Jocelyn Dautel, Bethany Corbett, Eva Grew, and Christin Scholz

In divided societies, adolescents from historically opposing groups are exposed to divergent political and historical narratives. Exposure to such divergent ‘truths’ may perpetuate intergroup conflict. We examined consumption and transmission of polarized information through relational chains among adolescents in Northern Ireland.

Adolescents (N = 396, age 12-18 years; 41.9 % Protestant, 58.1 % Catholic) read three narratives about polarized topics and were subsequently asked to write down their recollection of this narrative for the next participant, a procedure called the “diffusion chain”. Two of the narratives presented polarized information relevant to conflict-related group identities (the partition of Ireland and Irish Language Act) and the other narrative was polarized, but neutral to group identity (social media). Of interest was the fidelity of the original information across the chains. We investigated if the type of chain, either homogeneous (four adolescents from the same ethno-religious background) or mixed (alternating Catholic and Protestant backgrounds), would be linked with fidelity. Adolescents also reported the strength of their religious identities and cross-group friendship. We found

that fidelity was significantly lower in the conflict narratives compared to the non-conflict polarized narrative, and in mixed (vs. homogeneous) chains. Nevertheless, this might be moderated by adolescent religious-ethnic background. We found no evidence for group-congruence bias in fidelity. Age influenced transmission patterns, suggesting that adolescence is an important period for further study on how narratives evolve through social transmission. We will further discuss the social factors which may be used to investigate conditions under which polarized information may be exacerbated or ameliorated amongst adolescents.

5. Pathways to Involvement: How Culture, Naturalization, and Sense of Belonging Shape Immigrant Integration into Associational Life Across Generations. Mia Stenbro Lorenzen, Anders Bastrup Jørgensen, Hans-Peter Y. Qvist

Involvement in associational life is widely recognized as a key indicator of immigrant integration, as it can foster economic, social, and cultural inclusion. Yet, research shows that immigrants from culturally distant, non-Western countries often exhibit lower engagement in associations, and these disparities persist over time. Because integration unfolds gradually across generations, understanding how involvement in associational life evolves among different immigrant groups and generations is crucial. Existing evidence generally suggests that second-generation immigrants are more engaged than their first-generation counterparts; however, the scope of these generational shifts varies, with some groups showing little or no change. One challenge is that many studies lack the sample size to analyze these intra-group differences. This gap is significant because immigrants' norms, values, and legal status—which are linked to their countries of origin and migration circumstances—can shape their participation in associational life. Our study addresses these issues by examining how associational involvement—measured through membership, participation, and volunteering—changes across generations of immigrants. We also investigate how cultural legacies, group composition, and sense-of-belonging might explain these generational trends. Using pooled cross-sectional survey data from the Danish Citizenship Survey (2013, 2016, 2019), oversampling immigrants and descendants from non-Western countries ($n=6903$), we merge these data with administrative records on years of residence, region of origin, residence permit types, and citizenship status. Multilevel linear probability models then reveal generational variations in participation patterns. Our descriptive results show that immigrants and their descendants are significantly less likely than natives to become association members or to actively participate in associations. However, among those who do join, volunteering rates are similar for second-generation immigrants and natives, with only modest gaps for first-generation immigrants. Preliminary findings suggest limited intergenerational assimilation in both membership and participation. While factors such as cultural proximity, naturalization, and sense-of-belonging do increase involvement, they do not fully bridge the gap: second-generation immigrants from non-Western backgrounds remain less engaged than natives. These results challenge prevailing assumptions about the strength of intergenerational assimilation in associational life and raise questions about how effectively associations can serve as vehicles for broader immigrant integration.

How to Intervene: Peer Influence and Social Networks.

Room: Immuneit

1. **Can We Be Friends? Examining Adolescents' Friendships and Peer Influence Regarding Opinions on Highly Debated Topics Through Longitudinal Social Network Analysis.** Wilma Middendorf, Anna Adamczyk & Maarten van Zalk

The extent to which adolescents polarize around highly debated social topics is receiving increasing attention from scholars and politicians alike. While a number of studies have examined the negative consequences of polarized opinions in adolescence (e.g., voting behavior), less is known about the role of socialization in leading to this trend. Thus far, research has primarily focused on parent-child socialization, suggesting that parent's partisan identities shape their children's polarized views. However, the influence of peers on adolescents' opinion formation and potential polarization tendencies remains understudied. In line with political socialization research, we suggest that, parents may lay the groundwork of opinion formation, while peers become increasingly influential during adolescence. Our study aims to contribute to this discourse by examining friendship networks regarding opinions on two highly debated social topics (i.e., LGBTQIA+ issues and migration), in two German high schools and across three waves of data collection. We focus on how initial opinions impact the formation of friendships and the extent to which peers drive changes in each other's opinions. Through this research, we hope to contribute to a better understanding of youth's polarization around highly debated social topics and thereupon inform targeted intervention strategies.

2. **Choosing Wisely: An Agent-Based Model on How Actor Selection Shapes the Efficacy of a Social Norm Intervention for Increasing Interethnic Cooperation through Tolerance.** Jan-Willem Simons, Jochem Tolsma, Eva Jaspers

Social norm interventions aimed at promoting interethnic tolerance are increasingly being applied as strategies to strengthen social cohesion. However, their outcomes have been mixed, and little is known about how individual-level selection and social influence dynamics shape macro-level effects. This project addresses this gap through an agent-based modeling framework grounded in stochastic actor-oriented models (SAOMs), examining how the selection of intervention targets—based on individual attributes (e.g., ethnic prototypicality) and network positions (e.g., centrality)—influences the effectiveness of a hypothetical intervention designed to enhance interethnic cooperation via tolerance. We explore three key questions: (1) How does the selection of individuals for intervention affect the emergence of interethnic cooperation and friendship? (2) How do assumptions about intervention strength and the nature of social influence (simple vs. complex contagion) moderate intervention outcomes? (3) Under what conditions do such interventions promote, fail to affect, or even inhibit interethnic cooperation and friendship? Our model simulates the co-evolution of two attitudes—outgroup tolerance and ingroup bias—and two behaviors—cooperation and friendship—within an interethnic school-based social network. Drawing on a repulsion–attraction model of social influence, we explore how individuals shape, and are shaped by, their social environments through dynamic friendship and cooperation ties. By systematically varying intervention parameters—including target

selection, attitude shift magnitude, and contagion complexity—we identify the conditions under which interventions are most likely to succeed, fail, or backfire. These insights aim to inform the design of future real-world interventions aimed at improving intergroup relations through interethnic tolerance.

3. The Identification of Influential Adolescents Using Empirically-Anchored Simulations. Tibor Zingora, Andreas Flache

Adolescence is a crucial period for the formation of attitudes and behaviors, with peers playing a central role in this process. Understanding how attitudes and behaviors spread among adolescents requires identifying the most influential individuals in schools—those who can effectively shape the behaviors of their peers. Our aim is to identify common indicators of especially influential adolescents in different schools, thereby improving our ability to target key individuals in social influence processes. Whether influence reinforces existing divisions or promotes attitudinal convergence depends on the nature of the influencers and the specific context. A network-based perspective on social influence provides valuable insights into the mechanisms that shape intergroup dynamics, the persistence of social boundaries, and the potential for cohesion or fragmentation within schools and beyond. Identifying especially influential adolescents is crucial for designing network-based interventions that strategically leverage peer influence to promote positive attitude change. Our study enhances the identification of the most influential adolescents across different attitudes and behaviors by integrating theories of social influence with a social network approach. We extend previous research in four key ways: (1) by incorporating different forms of social influence beyond friendship-based influence, particularly normative pressure, which captures the ability to influence peers within the same social group (e.g., gender group); (2) by studying influence not only in dyadic relationships but also at the network level using empirically anchored simulations; (3) by distinguishing between absolute and relative influence mechanisms, where absolute influence suggests that the extent of influence is directly related to an individual's characteristics, while relative influence posits that influence is context-dependent and varies based on local social hierarchies; and (4) by assessing multiple indicators of social influence and their generalizability across two attitudes and behaviors, namely academic drive and prejudice. For our investigation, we applied stochastic actor-oriented modeling and analyzed data from 29 school grades in Germany (approximately 2,700 students) across three time points (using FIS data). After estimating empirical models, we conducted simulated interventions (i.e., agent-based models) grounded in our empirical findings. We tested a range of potential indicators of social influence, such as indegree (the number of friendship nominations), popularity, centrality within a group, and bridging positions connecting subgroups. Our preliminary results revealed that students frequently identified as having high-quality relationships with their peers exerted greater relative influence than others. Additionally, students with high indegree had greater absolute influence in shaping normative behaviors, suggesting that in certain school grades, peer norms exert particularly strong influence over individual students. We identified these school grades based on their network properties. Our preliminary findings provide promising indicators for identifying especially influential adolescents in schools. In the next phase, we will conduct hypothetical network interventions to assess how influence

can be strategically leveraged to promote attitude change. These insights contribute to a deeper understanding of how network structures shape social cohesion and attitudinal divides, offering a foundation for designing interventions that harness peer influence to foster positive social change.

4. The Strength of Being Marginal - The Role of Marginal Group Members in Network Integration and Norm Divergence. Bleen Abraham, Hedy Greijdanus, Russell Spears

Past research on marginality has typically portrayed marginal group members as individuals who are either newly entering or striving to attain a more central position within their group. Recent perspectives however, suggest a more nuanced understanding of marginality considering the individuals' and groups' negotiations about inclusion, as well as the marginal group members' potential role as connectors across different groups and sources of norm divergence. Building on these insights and complementing them with concepts from Social Network Theory, the present research examines the roles of different kinds of marginals in bridging their ingroup with outgroups and offering norm-diverging views. In two cross-sectional survey studies (N=534), we investigated students' group and individual inclusion goals within their own study tracks (Dutch vs. International) as predictors of their connectedness with both their own and the other track. Further, we examined the relation between students' inclusion goals and their propensity to deviate from ingroup norms. We expected students scoring high on individual inclusion goals to be more well-connected with the ingroup and those scoring low on individual inclusion goals to be more well-connected with the outgroup. While we do not find support for the relationship between low individual inclusion goals and norm divergence, we find partial support for students with high individual inclusion goals as being more well-connected with the ingroup and those scoring low on individual inclusion goals as being more well-connected with the outgroup. Findings are discussed in the context of the groups' composition and the time at which the study tracks were examined. Future research should further investigate the role of marginals in integrating different groups and facilitating information transfer.

5. The Link Between Social Norms and Reconciliation and Behavioral Intentions in Post-Conflict Societies. Shpend Voca, Mirjana Rupar, Sylvie Graf

Societies with a history of past conflict are frequently segregated, thus lacking opportunities for direct contact with former adversaries that could improve the troubled intergroup relations. In such contexts, reconciliation and behavior toward former adversaries can be rather guided by social norms, both descriptive (i.e., observed interactions between the ingroup and former adversaries) and injunctive (i.e., group attitudes toward the former adversary). Focusing on the post-conflict Kosovo, we considered the perspective of both Albanians (N = 220) and Serbs (N = 129), to test the links between social norms (both descriptive and injunctive, as well as their interaction) and outcomes related to reconciliation (i.e., trust, forgiveness, and support for war reparations) and behavioral intentions toward former adversaries (i.e., social distance, willingness to engage in contact with, and to help former adversaries). In both samples, positive and negative descriptive norms were related to all outcomes (except for trust in Albanians) in the expected direction. Ingroup injunctive norms (i.e., ingroup attitudes

towards the outgroup) were associated with greater support for reconciliation (except for trust) and more positive behavioral intentions in Albanians. Outgroup injunctive norms (i.e., outgroup attitudes towards the ingroup) were positively associated with all outcomes in Serbs and with social distance and willingness to engage in contact in Albanians. While descriptive norms were linked to reconciliatory outcomes in both samples, ingroup injunctive norms guided reconciliation and behavior in Albanians and outgroup injunctive norms in Serbs. Our results underscore the importance of considering the perspective of distinct sides of past conflicts for more generalizable results regarding reconciliation. Following our results that Albanian and Serb participants witnessed little intergroup contact due to limited contact opportunities between Albanians and Serbs, we will shortly examine the effects of injunctive norms in Albanians and Serbs on reconciliation with experimental designs. Specifically, we will test how both ingroup and outgroup injunctive norms about attitudes independently and in interaction shape reconciliation. Additionally, considering that Albanians are an acknowledged victim group and Serbs a perpetrator group in the Kosovo conflict and drawing on the needs-based model of reconciliation, we will test whether the concern for power mediates the link between injunctive norms and reconciliation in Albanians and the perception of moral acceptance mediates the same link in Serbs. We will present the results from the study in Serbia carried out in March 2025 in the conference.

Norm Violations and Social Responses.

Room: KW3

1. **Social Networks and the Emergence of Informal Norms and Metanorms in Transient Working Groups.** Eszter Vit, Eliza Bodor-Eranus, Béla Janky, Zsuzsanna Szvetelszky, Beáta Lázár, Károly Takács

Social networks and informal sanctions play a crucial role in maintaining cooperation within organizations, yet little is known about how these mechanisms function in temporary settings where traditional enforcement tools like reputation systems and repeated interactions are absent. While we understand that attitudes toward sanctioning depend on how violations are perceived in terms of their operational disruption and harm to others, and how embedded individuals are in their social networks, we know little about how these factors operate in temporary settings. This study investigates how social network positions and violation characteristics shape attitudes toward sanctioning norm violations in transient organizational contexts, specifically examining volunteer communities at three major Hungarian music festivals in 2023. Our research addressed two key questions: (1) How does the type and severity of norm violations affect the acceptance of sanctioning behavior in transient organizational settings? (2) How do social ties shape volunteers' attitudes toward sanctioning norm violations in such contexts? The study utilizes survey data (N=421) on attitudes toward sanctioning various norm violations, complemented by ego-centric network data capturing the structure of personal ties among volunteers. Additionally, qualitative interviews provide contextual insights into how volunteers perceive and justify violations and sanctions. Our findings reveal complex patterns in sanctioning attitudes that challenge conventional understanding of social control mechanisms. Overall, the perceived severity and consequences of norm violations shape attitudes toward sanctioning, with stronger support observed for infractions that have an immediate negative impact on group

functioning. Violations causing direct harm to others or disrupting functioning (e.g., working in an unfit state, taking other volunteers' belongings from the communal fridge) received the strongest support for sanctions. In contrast, behaviors more closely associated with festival culture and atmosphere, such as excessive drinking at volunteers' social spaces or inviting volunteers' friends there, received more lenient and ambivalent responses. However, being late for shifts showed unexpected complexity—despite being commonly cited as disruptive and frequently occurring, it received only moderate support for sanctions. Qualitative data suggest the development of informal adaptive systems for managing minor cases of infractions such as lateness in these temporary settings. The relationship between social network position and sanctioning attitudes also yielded complex results. While individuals in bridging positions showed stronger support for sanctions, particularly for violations threatening group cohesion, well-connected and popular volunteers displayed more lenient attitudes toward various norm violations. This contrasts with findings from permanent organizations, where well-connected individuals typically advocate strict sanctioning to protect their social standing. Our results suggest that in temporary settings, these individuals may prioritize immediate social harmony over cooperation concerns. Overall, our findings reveal how sanctioning attitudes in organizations are shaped by both temporal constraints and cultural context. The relationship between network positions and sanctioning attitudes, along with the varying responses to different types of violations based on their cultural and operational significance, demonstrates the context-dependent nature of social control mechanisms. This research advances the understanding of norm enforcement in settings where traditional enforcement tools are limited with implications for managing temporary work arrangements, volunteer coordination, and project-based organizing.

2. **Emotions and behavioral intentions in response to norm violations.** Annika K. Karinen, Gerben A. van Kleef

Although norms are essential for the functioning of society, norm violations commonly occur. Emotions elicited by a norm violation likely influence how observers respond, which may in turn determine whether the norm violation spreads or is contained. In three studies, we examined emotional reactions and behavioral intentions in response to norm violations. UK participants, recruited via Prolific, were presented with a scenario of a norm violation (or norm adherence), whose disruptiveness, threat, and benefit were manipulated across conditions. Following an intersubjective approach, participants rated the emotions they believed observers witnessing the norm violation would experience, and the behavioral intentions they believed the observers would undertake (opposition, acquiescence, support). We predicted that a disruptive norm violation elicits (perceived) anger and opposition, a threatening norm violation elicits (perceived) fear and acquiescence, and a beneficial norm violation elicits (perceived) admiration and support. In Study 1 (N = 498), the predictions were largely confirmed, although a beneficial norm violation did not differ in admiration or support from a scenario in which no norms were broken. In Study 2 (N = 496), the predictions were confirmed for the emotions elicited, and partially confirmed for behavioral intentions. In Study 3 (N = 493), the predictions were partially confirmed for emotions elicited and fully confirmed for behavioral intentions. In a meta-analysis across the studies, we found support for two mediation pathways: the disruptiveness condition affected opposition via perceived disruptiveness and anger and the benefit condition affected support via perceived benefit and admiration. These results give insight into the

emotional dynamics of norm violations, and help to understand how emotions elicited contribute to the spread or containment of norm violations.

3. How the Political Climate Shapes Right-Wing Attitudes and Anti-Immigrant Prejudice: Examining Individual and Contextual Effects on Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Prejudice. Clemens Lindner, Pascal Gelfort, Deliah Wagner, Frank Asbrock, Thomas Kessler

The dramatic surge of right-wing populist parties across Europe over the past decade has reshaped the political landscape, with anti-immigration policies emerging as their central topic. Despite the profound societal implications of this shift, current social psychological research on anti-immigrant prejudice remains largely focused on individual-level explanations. Among these, right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) has emerged as a particularly powerful predictor, consistently demonstrating robust associations with anti-immigrant attitudes across numerous studies. However, an overreliance on individual level explanations of prejudice overlooks the social context, such as the normalization of anti-immigrant prejudice in society. Hence, we do not know whether individuals are prejudiced because of their individual characteristics (e.g., level of RWA) or because they live in a context in which other individuals hold these prejudices (e.g., regional prevalence of right-wing party votes). To address this gap, we examine the relative influence of individual characteristics (such as RWA) and regional anti-immigration norms (as indicated by right-wing populist party voting patterns) on individual anti-immigrant prejudice. Furthermore, we also investigate whether the social context shapes individual RWA, exploring specifically whether individuals develop stronger right-wing authoritarian tendencies when living in regions characterized by right-wing climates. To investigate these questions, we used multilevel modeling to analyze longitudinal data (four waves, data collected in half-year intervals from spring 2022 to fall 2023) from the German survey Panel zur Wahrnehmung von Kriminalität und Straftäter:innen (PaWaKS, $N = 1134$) and the Politbarometer 2022 and 2023. The PaWaKS survey included measures of RWA and anti-immigrant prejudice at each measurement time point. To assess the right-wing climate in a social context independent of the PaWaKS data, we included a ratio of right-wing party votes at the regional level (Bundesländer) from the Politbarometer (cross-lagged, the two months prior to each PaWaKS wave were used). Results show that, first, an individual's RWA score at t is the strongest predictor of the individual's RWA score at $t+1$, suggesting a high intra-individual stability of RWA. Second, we find that beyond the intraindividual stability of RWA, the prevalence of contextual right-wing attitudes (i.e., right-wing attitudes constitute a local descriptive norm) also predict an individual's RWA at $t+1$, suggesting that an individual's RWA is also shaped by the social context. Third, contextual right-wing attitudes are a stronger predictor of individual anti-immigrant prejudice than individual RWA, suggesting that the right-wing climate and normalization of anti-immigrant prejudice shape the prejudices of individuals living in that context. Our results highlight the importance of social context for individual prejudice, which in light of our findings might be more readily discussed as collective prejudice. Hence, individual anti-immigrant prejudice may not be considered an individual product alone, as it is strongly shaped by the social context and its political climate (e.g., strong support for anti-immigrant policies). We discuss the downstream implications of our findings for prejudice research and for interventions on prejudice reduction. We also discuss the pitfalls of overreliance on the individual difference approach in prejudice research.

11:30 – 13:45 Keynote Speaker David Garcia on Polarization and coordination: between online discussions and AI agents.

Polarization is an essential element of democratic systems, but can also threaten their existence if it becomes too intense. This happens particularly when most political issues become aligned along the same major fault line, splitting society into two antagonistic camps. This talk presents the FAULTANA (FAULT-line Alignment Network Analysis) pipeline, a computational method to uncover major fault lines in data of signed online interactions. FAULTANA makes it possible to quantify the degree of antagonism prevalent in different online debates, as well as how aligned each debate is to the major fault line. This makes it possible to identify the wedge issues driving polarization, characterized by both intense antagonism and alignment. We apply our approach to large-scale data sets of Birdwatch, a US-based Twitter factchecking community and the discussion forums of DerStandard, an Austrian online newspaper. We find that both online communities are divided into two large groups and that their separation follows political identities. This way, we can track how this fault line manifests across issues and over time. Beyond social media, we are investigating coordination and cohesion among AI agents driven by Large Language Models, in particular how group cohesion among AI agents depends on group size and language understanding capabilities of the models.

13:45 – 15:30 Thematic sessions with oral presentations

Social Cohesion, Trust, and Collective Action.

Room: Jan van Scorel

1. **Converging Ethnicity and Class: A Strategy for Fostering Interethnic Solidarity and Mitigating Income Inequality.** Eduardo Campbell-Bethancourt, Özge Bilgili, Lieselotte Blommaert, Marcel Lubbers

A dominant political narrative in the Netherlands and Europe posits that migration and ethnic minorities threaten the interests of non-migrants, particularly those in lower socio-economic positions. This welfare chauvinistic narrative fuels intergroup tensions, fostering an “us vs. them” mentality and undermining social cohesion. Critics argue that emphasizing migration and ethnic minorities as a threat diverts attention from various challenges, including income inequality, which is a major issue primarily affecting the working class. Framing migrants and ethnic minorities as threats prevents both ethnic majority and minority working-class people from building solidarity and working together to drive social change and address their shared economic hardships. Building upon literature on social identity and boundary-making processes, this study investigates whether an alternative political narrative that merges class and ethnicity — invoking an ethnically diverse working class — promotes interethnic class solidarity to improve the income positions of both citizens with and without a migration background. We also examine whether it does so more effectively than a general social class narrative and a ‘welfare-chauvinism’ narrative. Additionally, we investigate whether the impact of the narratives varies by type of solidarity and participants’ social class and migration background. Our study uses an original and

preregistered survey experiment, incorporated in the 2023 Dutch Parliamentary Election Study (N=4,981). The sample is representative of the Dutch population eligible to vote. Contrary to expectations, the merge-class-and-ethnicity narrative did not increase interethnic solidarity. However, it decreased levels of welfare chauvinist solidarity. In other words, the merge-class-and-ethnicity narrative did not contribute directly to higher levels of interethnic solidarity but only indirectly by fostering a stronger rejection of exclusionist ingroup solidarity. This suggests that while inclusive narratives may not directly foster interethnic class solidarity, they can diminish support for radical-right rhetoric that prioritizes “natives first.” These findings differ from earlier studies conducted in the U.S., highlighting the need for a better understanding of the conditionality of responses to political narratives that promote intergroup solidarity. This paper is part of the Horizon RAISE project, which aims to better understand to what extent European citizens draw boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’ and how these boundaries can be reduced to enhance social cohesion among different ethnoracial groups.

2. The Effects of Different Types of Social Norms in Highly Strained Intergroup Relations. Sylvie Graf, Roman Koky, David Lacko

The Roma minority is the largest and most stigmatized ethnic minority in Europe, facing severe discrimination. Intergroup contact is one of the most effective strategies for improving intergroup relations, however, opportunities for direct contact in highly strained intergroup relations are lacking. In four cross-sectional and two experimental studies in majority and Roma minority members, we investigated the role of social influence exerted through indirect forms of intergroup contact – observing casual intergroup interactions and knowledge of others’ cross-group friendships. Employing the theoretical background of social norms theory, we operationalized and contrasted all types of the complex social influence – in the form of positive and negative, descriptive and injunctive norms; coming from the ingroup or outgroup; directed at individuals or on the general level—and tested the role of intergroup emotions in the link between indirect contact and outgroup attitudes. The pattern of results differed in minority and majority. In Roma participants (N = 412 in 2 cross-sectional studies), observing positive (and negative) casual intergroup interactions of ingroup members (but not cross-group friendship) was linked to perceived (dis)approval of intergroup contact by the ingroup and more positive (negative) outgroup attitudes. Observing positive intergroup interactions of outgroup members was linked to perceived approval of intergroup contact by the majority, higher intergroup trust, and better attitudes toward the majority. In majority participants (N = 1,079 in 2 cross-sectional studies) observing positive (but not negative) casual intergroup interactions of both ingroup and outgroup members and cross-group friendships were linked to perceived approval of intergroup contact by both the ingroup and outgroup, higher intergroup trust, and better attitudes toward the Roma. Next, we tested these links in two experimental studies in minority and majority. In majority participants (N = 656), manipulating observed casual intergroup contact (i.e., descriptive norm) as (highly vs. slightly) increasing vs. (highly vs. slightly) decreasing did not lead to a change in outgroup attitudes toward the Roma. However, the post-hoc test showed a significant difference between the two extreme experimental conditions: highly increased (vs. highly decreased) amount of observed intergroup contact led to a positive change in (pre- and post-treatment) attitudes toward

the Roma. In the Roma minority sample (N = 190), we manipulated the amount of cross-group friendships (i.e., descriptive norm) as increasing vs. decreasing and found that a news report about an increasing amount of cross-group friendships between the Roma and majority (vs. control), led to higher perceived approval of intergroup contact (i.e., ingroup injunctive norms), more positive, and less negative emotions. The decrease in negative emotions toward the majority mediated the link between the increased amount of cross-group friendships (vs. control) and lower social distance toward the majority. In conclusion, we discuss implications of our findings for future studies and interventions for improving intergroup relations.

3. Deindustrialization and the decay of social infrastructure. Laura Silva, Franco Bonomi Bezzo, Anne-Marie Jeannet, Paul Maneuvrier

Social infrastructure, the physical and institutional spaces that enable social interactions and community cohesion, has been a subject of increasing scholarly attention. From Eric Klinenberg (2018)'s work on the role of libraries in fostering resilience to Robert Putnam's *Bowling Alone* (2000) and subsequent literature, which highlights the decline of communal engagement, numerous studies have highlighted how the erosion of social infrastructure contributes to weakening social bonds. At the same time, Shaefer et al. (2023) emphasise the path-dependent nature of these processes showcasing how, in the United States, the poorest communities of the past remain the most deprived today. This continuity is maintained through various mechanisms, including restricted social mobility, cycles of violence, and systemic corruption. Our research extends this perspective to the United Kingdom, investigating how historical transformations in material and social infrastructure have shaped, and are still shaping, socio-economic inequalities. We focus particularly on the consequences of deindustrialization, which altered the economic and social fabric of many British towns and cities. Our project seeks to systematically document and analyse the evolution of neighbourhood-level social infrastructure across the UK, tracing its transformation from industrial plant closures to the present day. We adopt a historical and place-based approach and structure our research around two main objectives: 1) Examining the long-term legacy of deindustrialization The decline of industrial employment in the UK from the mid-20th century onwards significantly impacted social infrastructure. Factories, labor clubs, working men's associations, and other communal spaces once served as hubs for social cohesion, political organization, and mutual aid. As industries were shut off, many of these spaces disappeared or fell into disrepair. Our study aims to map these changes, identifying which areas suffered the most and how different localities adapted, or failed to adapt, to the decline of industrial employment. By combining historical data on industrial plant closure with a set of contemporary data on public spaces, libraries, swimming pools and pubs among the others, we plan to describe the uneven distribution of social infrastructure decline and its persistence over time. 2) Assessing the impact on individual outcomes Beyond mapping historical transformations, we explore how the decline of social infrastructure has influenced individual life chances. Research in social science has demonstrated that access to strong social networks, communal institutions, and public resources significantly affects opportunities for education, employment, and upward mobility. By exploiting our contextual database in combination with individual-level data from the

UK Household Longitudinal Study (UKHLS), we look into if and how the legacy of de-industrialised contexts influences individual life chances, possibly exacerbating inequalities related to health, education, political attitudes and behaviours, and economic stability. As we are now starting data collection, we invite feedback and suggestions on our theoretical and methodological approach.

4. Intergroup contact with refugees shapes levels of social fear of crime. Patrick F. Kotzur, Anna Bruns, Ulrich Wagner, Maarten H. W. Van Zalk

Intergroup contact does not only affect prejudice, but also how people see society more broadly. For instance, previous research has indicated that intergroup contact might be able to affect the way we think about and value diversity (Kauff et al., 2023, Wallrich et al., 2022) or perceptions of societal inequality and make-up of society (Bobowik et al., 2023), with positive downstream consequences for societal cohesion. Contributing to this emerging field of inquiry, we argue that intergroup contact has the capacity to change social fear of crime, defined as people's worry about crime in society (Armborst, 2017), a construct that has been suggested to be predictive of a host of negative outcomes, including negative individual and community behaviors, as well as reduced societal cohesion (Amerio & Roccato, 2005). We propose that the reason why intergroup contact affects social fear of crime levels is that intergroup contact changes prejudice towards criminally-stigmatized groups, which in turn predict social fear of crime levels. We test our predictions across 4 studies and a total of N = 1,743 participants. Studies 1 (cross-sectional) and 2 (longitudinal) showed an indirect effect of positive contact on reduced social fear of crime via reduced prejudice, and an opposite indirect effect of negative contact. Studies 3-4 (experiments) provided a causal test of our prediction. Study 4 additionally showed that intergroup contact effects on social fear of crime were mediated via crime-related prejudice towards refugees, a highly criminally-stigmatized group, yet not via crime-related prejudice towards homosexual people, a less criminally-stigmatized group. We contributed by providing the first causal evidence that positive contact is an intervention strategy to reduce social fear of crime, and expand the growing literature on transfer effects of intergroup contact.

5. Rebuilding trust: the impact of citizen assemblies on citizen-government relations. Anne Eichholtzer, Lise Jans and Namkje Koudenburg

Amid declining trust in governments, public participation is increasingly presented as a means to foster trust, engage citizens and enhance policy acceptability. Citizen assemblies are gaining traction across Europe, including in the Netherlands, where the government has introduced two new laws to strengthen citizen involvement in decision-making. However, research remains mixed on their effectiveness in achieving these goals, with conflicting evidence on their impact on direct participants (mini-public) or the broader population (maxi-public). Notably, little attention has been given to their role in polarization, whether among citizens or between citizens and governing bodies. In this presentation, we share the results of impact evaluations on both mini- and maxi-publics from two citizen participation initiatives: (1) a four-month citizen assembly on housing with 150 participants, led by the Province of Drenthe in 2024, and (2) preliminary findings from a citizen assembly on waste management, organized by the Gemeente Groningen, which will involve 120 participants starting in March 2025.

Through the first controlled experiments, we examined how participation in - or simply knowing about the initiative - affects respondents' policy acceptability, trust in and connection to local government, sense of being heard, and perception of polarization - whether among citizens, or between citizens and their government. Additionally, we explored how active participants experience group deliberations and how these dynamics influence overall outcomes. The second pre-registered study aims to replicate and extend these findings by exploring potential changes in social norms and perceived responsibility to act. By shedding light on the societal impact of citizen assemblies, this research offers valuable insights into what public participation signals about citizen-government relations. A better understanding of these dynamics is key to designing participatory processes that foster meaningful engagement, social cohesion and minimize polarization. We discuss both theoretical and practical implications.

Value Alignment and Perspective-Taking.

Room: Immuneit

1. **Polarization Through Partisan Lenses: Representations of Democracy, Values, and Economy in Contemporary Türkiye.** Ayşe Gül İÇİN, Gülden SAYILAN

This study explores the dynamics of cultural and political divides in the highly polarized context of Türkiye. Specifically, it examines how political polarization in contemporary Türkiye is constructed by perspectives on democracy and economic conditions, value-driven judgments, and issue positions (i.e., key concerns). Based on a qualitative methodology, we conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with 75 individuals supporting various political parties represented in the Turkish Grand National Assembly (i.e., AK Party, CHP, HDP, İYİ Party, MHP) and the parties representing distinct ideological traditions (i.e., TIP, TKP, YRP, Felicity Party and Victory Party), ensuring a broad political and ideological spectrum. We conducted the interviews between April 2022 and April 2024 and analyzed the data using the content analysis method with the MAXQDA software. Our findings reveal partisan identities function as critical identities in shaping perceptions of social and political conditions. Firstly, loneliness and alienation in social relationships, driven by modernity and digitalization, emerged as widely shared experiences among all participants. On the other hand, differences arose between ideological groups: the supporters of right-wing parties expressed concerns about declining moral values and traditional family structures, while the supporters of left-wing parties emphasized the growing influence of religion in politics and the erosion of democratic rights alongside rising authoritarianism. Secondly, economic challenges were a common concern across all groups, but income inequality and financial hardship were more prominent among left-leaning individuals. The findings further reveal fundamental differences in issue priorities: the supporters of left-wing parties emphasize justice-related problems such as inequality, political oppression, and concerns about education quality. In contrast, the supporters of right-wing parties prioritize security, terrorism, immigration, and the perceived disconnect from national values in education. These issue priorities reflect more profound value divides, with left-wing supporters prioritizing egalitarian values while right-wing supporters emphasize hierarchy, national strength, and stability. The study highlights how party affiliations function as strong social identities, influencing individuals' evaluations of societal and political change and contributing to cultural and political polarization in Türkiye.

2. Polarizing political orientations, well-being, and societal harmony. Vera Vogel

Many Western societies are currently characterized by an increasing level of polarization, driven by issues like migration, climate change, and social inequality (Hainmueller & Hopkins, 2014; Kriesi, 2020). This polarization has made differences in political orientations and value preferences highly visible, affecting individuals' daily lives, well-being, and interactions with others (Jost et al., 2009; Yousafzai, 2022). Thus, understanding how political polarization impacts individual well-being and social cohesion is crucial. Specifically, the alignment or misalignment between personal values and those of political parties influences a person's life satisfaction and mental health, as well as social harmony and stability. This study examines how the alignment of personal values with those of a preferred or opposing political party impacts (a) individual well-being and (b) societal harmony. We hypothesize that alignment with a preferred party's values leads to greater life satisfaction and belonging, while misalignment causes dissatisfaction and negative intergroup attitudes. In contrast, alignment with an opposing party may harm well-being but reduce negative intergroup attitudes, while misalignment with an opposing party could improve well-being but intensify negative intragroup attitudes. To examine our hypothesis, we will conduct an experimental study in Germany shortly after the 2025 national election, when political orientation and value alignment is especially salient. We aim to recruit 500 participants representing the full political spectrum. Using an adapted minimal norm paradigm (Eck & Gebauer, 2022), we will manipulate whether participants' values align or misalign with the values of two polarized political parties: Bündnis90/Die Grünen (left-wing) and AfD (right-wing). Participants' political orientation will be assessed with a left-right scale (Kroh, 2007). The experiment will be framed as part of a larger multi-study project on "value preferences and politics." The procedure is as follows: Participants will provide informed consent and demographic information, report on their personal political orientation, complete the value alignment manipulation (i.e., the alignment vs. misalignment to a left vs. right-wing political party), rate their state well-being and intragroup attitudes, and finally complete two manipulation-check items. For example, in the match condition with Bündnis90/Die Grünen, participants will receive feedback indicating that their values align with the party's values for 14 out of 18 value pairs. In the mismatch condition, they will receive feedback showing minimal alignment. The value pairs, such as "having an exciting life" vs. "creativity," are selected to avoid prior value preferences (Eck & Gebauer, 2022). In summary, the study has four key features: (1) focus on the role of value alignment in times of political polarization on well-being and societal harmony, (2) exploration of the effects of aligning with two polarized political parties (Bündnis90/Die Grünen and AfD), (3) the experimental manipulation of value alignment and misalignment to establish causality of these effects, and (4) investigation of how personal political orientation moderates these effects. By doing so, this research has significant theoretical implications for understanding the impact of political polarization on well-being and social cohesion, with practical relevance for developing interventions to improve well-being and societal harmony in increasingly divided times. Message: I was initially undecided about which of the listed categories would be the best fit for my research. After careful consideration, I decided to go with the intervention theme, as my study offers practical strategies to bring people together by emphasizing shared value preferences. I believe

these insights could be valuable for promoting social cohesion in times of political polarization and I would be excited to attend the conference and share my findings.

3. Different reliability expectations as a driver for belief polarisation. Leah Henderson, Alexander Gebharder

Several classic psychological studies have shown that belief polarisation can arise when subjects are presented with mixed evidence. For example, Lord et al. looked at how people updated their beliefs about the effectiveness of the death penalty as a crime deterrent after reading two fictional studies, one of which supported the idea that the death penalty is an effective crime deterrent, and the other which supported the idea that it is not (Lord, Ross and Lepper, 1979). It was found that beliefs could update in opposite directions depending on the prior views of the participants, even though the evidence received was the same. In cases like this, even though people move in the same direction with respect to each individual piece of evidence, one person may weight positive evidence more heavily than negative evidence, whilst the other does the reverse. There have been a number of proposals concerning what the exact mechanism is that drives this differential weighting of evidence. For example, it has been attributed to affective processes, to selective attention, or to confirmation bias. We show that another possible explanation of this kind of phenomenon is that the differential weighting is attributable to different prior expectations about the reliability of the sources of evidence (Henderson and Gebharder 2021). We do this using a special class of what we call 'reliability-based Bayesian network models' which represent situations in which we learn evidence from sources with different reliabilities (Bovens and Hartmann 2003). We build on the work of Kemp et al. 2014 to provide the first systematic exploration of the conditions under which reliability-based Bayesian network models can produce belief polarisation. Some of the key results are the following. In the psychological literature, it has been proposed that polarisation on mixed evidence is driven by subjects taking more account of evidence that supports their pre-existing attitudes. However, in our model, polarisation cannot arise simply because of a difference in pre-existing attitude unless it is accompanied by different expectations regarding the reliability of the sources. On the other hand, a difference in prior expectations about the reliability of sources is sufficient to produce polarisation, even without any difference in initial attitude towards the hypothesis in question. In certain social settings, differing initial attitudes towards source reliability may be a consequence of differing norms or identity in the social group, and they may also be actively promoted by certain kinds of disinformation. Our model shows how, even if the initial differences are very small, they can in certain circumstances be amplified into significant divergence of opinion.

4. Why it matters that actual polarisation in values is small. Paul Hanel, Lukas Wolf

Several studies found that affective polarisation between left-wingers and right-wingers increased the past years and decades. However, the extent to which polarisation actually increased is unclear. To close this gap, we investigated whether left-wingers and right-wingers have really become more dissimilar between 2002 and 2022 across

15 European countries ($N = 300,000$). Specifically, we found that left-wingers and right-wingers are overall more similar than different in their values (e.g., equality, freedom, safety) and their attitudes towards political institutions. Together, our findings indicate that political polarisation is more perceived than real. Additionally, we found in the USA ($N > 2,500$) that there are still substantial similarities in values between voters of the Democratic and Republican party. In Part 2, we investigate the impact of showing those similarities to US citizens as an example. Part 2: Perceived polarization between U.S. Democratic and Republican voters has grown over past decades, and this polarization underpins a dwindling sense of hope about the future. Contrary to this trend, the present three experiments (one pre-registered) with 2,529 U.S. participants found substantial similarities between the groups in their fundamental values. We tested whether depicting these real value similarities in overlapping distributions can correct misperceptions of group differences and increase hope. Republicans and Democrats who saw overlapping distributions perceived the groups as more similar and expressed more hope in open-ended comments, compared with seeing commonly used barplots or receiving no information. The effect on qualitative hope was partially explained by a sense of shared reality and potential for compromise between groups. We call on the social sciences to report the amount of group overlap when communicating research findings on group comparisons to the media and public to help reduce harmful perceptions of polarization.

5. Bridging the Divide: Can Perspective-Taking Reduce Affective Polarization in Germany's 2025 National Election? Ronja Demel, Lucas Köhler, Hanna Frenzl, Jule Specht

Affective polarization, defined as the tendency to harbor positive feelings toward one's ingroup and negative feelings toward one's outgroup, is a globally observed phenomenon that intensifies during volatile periods, such as elections. Empathy has been identified as a possible mitigating factor as higher trait empathy is related to reduced intergroup hostility and increased understanding for opposing views. A key mechanism of empathy is perspective-taking, the ability to imagine oneself in another person's position. First studies show that intervention inducing perspective-taking can reduce polarization in intergroup settings. The present study investigates the effect of a perspective-taking task on issue-based affective polarization during Germany's national elections on February 23, 2025. Among 500 participants, 250 will complete a writing task that involves adopting the perspective of an individual with opposing views on migration, a particularly divisive topic in the current political climate. The remaining 250 participants in the control group will complete a writing task focused on generating arguments to support their own views on migration. We hypothesize three main outcomes. First, individuals with higher trait empathy are expected to exhibit lower levels of affective polarization prior to the election. Second, the perspective-taking task is anticipated to reduce outgroup hostility, measured through a feeling thermometer, with effects observed immediately after the intervention, and two weeks later post-election. Third, we hypothesize that individuals with higher trait empathy will respond more effectively to the perspective-taking intervention. The results of this study and its implications will be presented at the conference.

Legal Changes, Gender Norms, and Social Pressures.

Room: KW3

1. **Navigating Workplace Polarization: Employing Deontological and Utilitarian Moral Appeals to Tackle Disparaging Humor.** Sylvia Xu; Laetitia Mulder; Floor Rink; Jan-Willem van Prooijen

Disparaging workplace jokes that make fun of someone's gender, ethnicity, or sexual preferences in the workplace can perpetuate stereotypes and reinforce discriminatory attitudes. While moral appeals could be powerful tools to combat such joke use, they may also fuel polarization by splitting people's attitudes in opposite directions. As opinions on whether such humor should be taken seriously can vary a lot, moral appeals addressing this issue may simultaneously increase support and reactance. To investigate this possibility, the current research aims to test whether moral appeals will cause polarized attitudinal changes towards the uses of those jokes, and fuel interpersonal conflict by making people less prosocial towards those with different stands on this issue in organizational settings. We also investigated the effect of different moral framings (Deontological vs. Utilitarian) and tested whether deontological (as compared to utilitarian) moral appeal will be more likely to induce polarization. Using a between-subject design, participants (Study 1: N = 288; Study 2: N = 421) were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions (Control message vs. Deontological vs. Utilitarian moral appeal) in which they read an email from their department board addressing workplace diversity issues. A range of polarization-related variables (e.g., moral judgment and emotional reactions towards the use of certain jokes, hurting & helping behaviors towards people with different stands on joke use) were measured and we expected to find evidence supporting the polarizing effect of moral appeals at both attitudinal and behavioral levels. Moreover, we expected to find a stronger polarizing effect of deontological, as compared to utilitarian, moral appeal. Across studies, we found that both deontological and utilitarian appeals increased trust in organization benevolence and decreased future joke use intentions. However, results also showed that deontological moral appeals, as compared to utilitarian moral appeals, could induce polarization and trigger intergroup conflict (i.e., make people less tolerant and more aggressive to those who have different opinions about disparaging jokes) via negative emotional responses towards such joke use. In conclusion, our findings suggest that morally charged messages, if not carefully crafted, may facilitate polarization in the workplace. However, our results also highlight the potential of utilitarian moral appeals as effective interventions for reducing inappropriate workplace jokes without triggering adverse backfiring effects. Theoretically, this research enhances our understanding of the effect of moral appeals and how subtle everyday influences (i.e., moral communications) may fuel polarization. Practically, the results help authorities and companies in better decision-making and use moral appeals in more effective ways.

2. How to Measure Gender Norms: Examining the Need for Social Norm Items and the Impact of Item Sequence. Annelie Brüning, Wojtek Przepiorka, Tali Spiegel & Tanja van der Lippe

Most survey-based studies on the normative underpinnings of gendered practices rely on measures of personal attitudes (i.e. gender roles) only. This involves the attitudes people have towards statements such as “Men should participate in housework to the same extent as women”. However, recent advancements in the measurement of norms suggest that (1) measuring social norms also requires the elicitation of people’s beliefs about what other people think and do, and that (2) these beliefs exert a greater influence on respondents’ behavior than their attitudes. Yet, there is little evidence on how the elicitation of these attitudes and beliefs in surveys affect each other. We conduct a survey experiment on a diverse sample of 1484 Dutch respondents that are employed and 24 to 65 years old. First, we explore to what extent discrepancies exist between respondents’ attitudes towards traditional gender roles and these respondents’ expectations regarding the prevalence of these attitudes and practices in their social environment. Large discrepancies would indicate that current gender role measures insufficiently capture the normative underpinnings of gendered practices. Second, we examine sequence effects – whether eliciting attitudes and beliefs after each other prompts respondents to align or distinguish their attitudes and beliefs. Third, we assess if sequence effects vary based on the closeness of the reference group used in social norm inquiries. We find respondents hold, on average, significantly less traditional gender role attitudes than they believe to be held or practiced in their social environment. Moreover, our results indicate a small sequence effect in one of the three gender spheres we studied. We find no evidence for a moderating role of the reference group on sequence effects. Our results demonstrate the need for measuring attitudes and beliefs in gender norm inquiries and point to potential caveats when measuring them in surveys.

3. Motherhood, Gender Ideologies, and Social Cohesion: Beyond Dichotomies. Vilma Razauskiene

Social norms play a pivotal role in shaping the experiences of new mothers, often generating conflicting pressures that influence their identities and decisions. This study examines how first-time mothers navigate competing societal expectations, particularly the tension between egalitarian and traditional gender norms, which is further compounded by the ideology of intensive mothering. Women experience these pressures from multiple sources—family, workplace, state policies, and broader cultural narratives—creating an accumulation of normative demands. As a result, mothers often find themselves striving to fulfil contradictory roles, expected to be both fully engaged caregivers and active labour market participants. Competing narratives about ideal gender roles and motherhood contribute to societal polarization, weakening social cohesion as rigid ideological divides hinder a more integrated and inclusive understanding of caregiving responsibilities. This study employs a longitudinal mixed-methods approach to examine how first-time mothers perceive gender roles and caregiving responsibilities at different stages of early parenthood. The research consists of two components: a qualitative longitudinal study involving ten in-depth interviews conducted in two waves—during pregnancy and 4–6 months postpartum—to capture how maternal perspectives on gender roles vary in relation to childcare

responsibilities. The qualitative findings were further examined through a quantitative survey, with 79 pregnant respondents participating in two waves of data collection. A key focus of the survey was to investigate attitudes toward caregiving by asking respondents who they consider to be the primary caregiver of a child at different developmental stages—infant, toddler, and child of four years and older. This design enables a nuanced analysis of how gendered caregiving expectations are constructed and negotiated, moving beyond rigid dichotomies. Empirical findings suggest that individuals may not adhere strictly to either of these opposing categories. A more cohesive society can be fostered by acknowledging the complexity of gender norms and moving beyond binary classifications, facilitating a more inclusive and context-sensitive understanding of caregiving responsibilities and social roles.

4. Cultural Legacies and Gender Gaps in Association Participation among Children of Immigrants. Hans-Peter Y. Qvist, Anders Bastrup Jørgensen, Frank van Tubergen

This study examines how cultural legacies shape gender gaps in civic association participation among children of immigrants—a critical yet understudied dimension of immigrant integration into Western societies. Combining V-Dem data on gender traditionalism in immigrant origin countries with survey data from four Western European destination societies (N≈18,000), we analyze how origin country cultural legacies and parental and peer socialization of traditional gender values influence children of immigrants' association participation. The findings reveal that girls originating from more gender-traditional countries participate markedly less in associations than their peers from gender-egalitarian countries, underscoring the persistent influence of cultural legacies. At the micro-level, parental socialization of traditional gender values significantly shapes immigrant girls' association participation. However, it only partially mediates the influence of cultural legacies, indicating that other social dynamics—such as ethnic community norms and pressures—also play a substantial role in transmitting cultural legacies. Additionally, peers independently influence gendered behaviors, often amplifying or mitigating gender gaps in association participation among children of immigrants, highlighting the dual and overlapping cultural pressures of parental and peer environments. Overall, these findings contribute to long-standing debates on immigrant integration while offering novel insights into the intersections of gender, culture, and civic engagement.

16:00 – 17:30 Inclusivity project presentations

Inclusivity norms to counter Polarization in European Societies - presentation and discussion of project results

The INCLUSIVITY Team

Prof. dr. Eva Jaspers, Utrecht University

Prof. dr. Marcin Bukowski, Jagiellonian University Krakow

Prof. dr. Oliver Christ, Hagen University

Prof. dr. Miranda Lubbers, Autonomous University Barcelona

Prof. dr. Maarten van Zalk, Osnabrück University

Conference location:

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