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# Mind the Gap! Linking Equality-Based Respect Norms with General and Specific Tolerance

Dominika Gurbisz [1,2], Anna Potoczek [3], Marcin Bukowski [1], Lucía Estevan-Reina [4], and Oliver Christ [5]

[1] Institute of Psychology, Jagiellonian University, Poland
[2] Doctoral School in the Social Sciences, Jagiellonian University, Poland
[3] Interdisciplinary Centre for Mathematical and Computational Modelling, University of Warsaw, Poland
[4] Department of Social Psychology, University of Granada, Spain
[5] Faculty of Psychology, FernUniversität in Hagen, Germany

**Correspondence:** Dominika Gurbisz (dominika.gurbisz@doctoral.uj.edu.pl)

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## Abstract

This research investigates the extent of Poles' tolerance of Jews through the lens of equality-based respect norms and how these norms translate into general and specific tolerance. Additionally, we reexamine the principle-implementation gap, specifically highlighting the potential discrepancy between declared tolerance and actual behavioral intentions. Through our analysis, we explore the distinction between measuring tolerance as an abstract principle and its application in concrete, real-world situations. In three correlational studies ($N = 818$), we examined the relationship between perceived equality-based respect social norms and the declared endorsement of tolerant principles. Studies 1 and 2 sought to establish initial evidence of this association, hypothesizing that individuals are more likely to express tolerance towards Jewish practices when perceiving stronger societal norms emphasizing respect. Results showed that perceived prescriptive equality-based respect within both national and acquaintance ingroup norms was positively linked to tolerant attitudes. Additionally, the findings highlight the complexity of measuring tolerance, revealing a possible overestimation of tolerant attitudes when assessed at an abstract level, compared to when measured through concrete examples.

## Keywords

equality-based respect; Jews; polarization; social norms; tolerance

## 1. Introduction

Fostering tolerance is vital in increasingly diverse, polarized societies (Van Bavel et al., 2024; Vollhardt, 2012). Unlike approaches focused on changing attitudes toward outgroups—which have shown limited success in reducing anti-democratic tendencies (Voelkel et al., 2022)—tolerance does not require fostering positive feelings toward outgroups but rather accepting their rights, beliefs, and practices (Verkuyten, 2010). This is especially true for respect-based tolerance, rooted in respecting others as disapproved equals (Hjerm et al., 2019; Simon, 2023; Velthuis et al., 2021). One way to cultivate such tolerance is through equality-based respect norms. Recent research links these norms to greater tolerance toward disapproved groups (Estevan-Reina et al., 2024a, 2024b; Schäfer et al., 2024).

However, tolerance is often studied broadly (Van Doorn, 2014), focusing on general principles that may differ from assessments in specific contexts (Jackman, 1978; Lawrence, 1976; Verkuyten, 2023). Researchers have increasingly explored whether assessing tolerance through concrete examples provides a more nuanced understanding of attitudes and intentions (Adelman & Verkuyten, 2019; Van Der Noll, 2013; Verkuyten & Slooter, 2007). Building on this, this article presents two studies that examine the potential gap between general tolerance (GT) and specific tolerance (ST), specifically whether equality-based respect norms are linked with GT and ST. Previous findings revealed the link between respect norms and GT (Estevan-Reina et al., 2024a; Schäfer et al., 2024). This research extends these findings by examining whether this relationship also holds for ST. Additionally, we test how the proximity of respect norms—national vs. acquaintance—relates to both GT and ST. Since acquaintance norms may differ from national norms (Gerber et al., 2008), this proximity-based variation highlights the need of examining local vs. national norms in relation to tolerance, specifically towards Jews in Poland.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### *2.1. The Notion of Tolerance*

Tolerance is undeniably popular—reflected in politics, pop culture, academic work, and dedicated days (Verkuyten, 2023). This focus is warranted, as tolerance involves continuously weighing reasons to accept disapproved perspectives or practices (Gardner, 1993; Horton, 1996; Verkuyten et al., 2019), fostering coexistence in diverse societies. Tolerance can be understood at two levels: generally, as a principle, and specifically, as applied to concrete cases (Jackman, 1978). For both levels the same conditions apply—one cannot tolerate something to which one is indifferent, neutral, or open to (Cohen, 2004; Gibson, 2006). An additional complexity arises when individuals apply these principles in practice. This challenge is known as the "principle-implementation gap." Dixon et al. (2017) show that people may endorse abstract principles like equality but resist actions to implement them. Lawrence (1976) similarly highlights the gap between abstract commitments to tolerance and their real-world application, especially when core values are challenged. Genuine tolerance is not merely an intellectual exercise—it demands a willingness to tolerate specific, disapproved beliefs and practices. The disapproval–respect model of tolerance suggests that respect serves almost as a prerequisite for tolerance (Simon, 2023; Simon & Schaefer, 2016). However, tolerance may also be possible without respect, rooted in other values such as coexistence and esteem (Forst, 2018). Coexistence-based tolerance is driven by a pragmatic desire for peaceful interaction, without necessarily valuing differences (Forst, 2018). Respect-based tolerance is rooted in a moral acknowledgment

of others' rights and differences (Hjerm et al., 2019). Esteem-based tolerance involves an appreciation of others' beliefs or customs. In line with this, there are scales that focus on the reasons to tolerate (acceptance, respect, and appreciation; Hjerm et al., 2019). Some authors found that respect-based tolerance is a more principled approach to tolerance than pragmatic alternatives (Velthuis et al., 2022). Beyond reasons for tolerance, individuals may selectively accept certain practices of a group while rejecting others based on the values these practices reflect (Gibson & Gouws, 2003).

Measuring only abstract endorsements of tolerance risks overestimating actual societal acceptance. Verkuyten and Slooter (2007) further explored this divide through vignettes, highlighting how political tolerance can differ between values and practices. Although evidence shows tolerance depends on specific beliefs or practices rather than being a universal concept, it is often measured as if it were (Jackman, 1978; Van Doorn, 2014). Our research addresses this gap by examining concrete expressions of tolerance rather than solely abstract principles. We seek to explore the discrepancy between people's declarations of tolerance as general principles vs. specific situations. In the tolerance items, we have also embedded the types of tolerance (coexistence, respect, and appreciation), focusing on them in a combined way to offer a more comprehensive understanding of tolerance. Additionally, this research offers a unique perspective on tolerance toward Jewish practices and beliefs from the viewpoint of Poles, addressing a scarcity of data available on this topic.

### *2.2. Equality-Based Respect Norms*

Individuals are shaped by their environments. The deliberative nature of tolerance suggests that societal norms can shape and modify individual tolerance levels over time (Verkuyten et al., 2021). Building on this, the current study is grounded in two fundamental principles: that social norms influence beliefs and behaviors, and that a relationship exists between social norms and tolerance (Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Neuner & Ramirez, 2023). Norms can influence judgments based on both well-reasoned principles and heuristic understandings (Verkuyten & Yogeeswaran, 2016). This research focuses on the role of equality-based respect norms which emphasize recognizing others as equal participating members in society (Rawls, 2001; Simon & Schaefer, 2016). Respect is crucial for fostering tolerance, as it involves acknowledging others' autonomy, and ability to make independent choices, even in disagreement (Cohen, 2004; King, 1971).

This research also considers the social distance of norms, drawing on self-categorization theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), which posits that norms from closer identity groups influence attitudes and behaviors more than distant norms (Gerber et al., 2008; Gerber & Rogers, 2009). This principle also informs the Disapproval-Respect Model of Tolerance, where emphasizing shared identities strengthens the influence of respect norms across groups (Simon, 2023). Studies in Poland, Spain, and Chile confirm that norms from close social circles have a stronger impact on behavioral intentions than broader national norms (Potoczek et al., 2022). This proximity-based variation in normative influence underscores the need to examine how specific social norms shape tolerance in different contexts. The relationship between norms and tolerance is complex; exposure to intolerant descriptive norms, may not lead to more intolerance and may, in some cases, "backfire," increasing tolerance (Neuner & Ramirez, 2023). This study explores how equality-based respect norms shape tolerance, focusing on prescriptive norms, which research suggests have a stronger impact on attitudes than descriptive norms (Schäfer et al., 2024; Smith & Louis, 2008).

## 3. Current Research

Poland has historically been characterized as a land of religious and cultural coexistence, earning the label "state without stakes" (Tazbir, 2005) for its relative tolerance during periods of widespread persecution in Europe. By the 18th century, Poland was home to the majority of Europe's Jews (Tomaszewski, 1990). However, the Nazi occupation led to the near-total destruction of Jewish life, and post-war tensions, fueled by economic and ideological divisions, gave rise to enduring prejudices (Bilewicz et al., 2012). While recent reports indicate a positive shift in attitudes towards Jews (CBOS, 2021), contemporary research suggests that antisemitism in Poland has evolved into subtler, more structural forms (Bilewicz, 2020). Historically, tolerance research has emphasized abstract principles over specific cases. While people often express general support for tolerance, this tends to weaken when confronted with concrete policies or actions (Jackman, 1978; Lawrence, 1976). Previous work predominantly examined prejudice and discrimination providing a limited view of tolerance towards Jewish beliefs and customs in Poland, particularly how tolerance operates in practice. Though overt intolerance towards Jewish beliefs and practices is rare and typically isolated (ODIHR, 2023), underlying biases persist, often less visible or acknowledged. Many Poles may be unaware of, or unwilling to recognize, these latent prejudices.

To address the gap between declared support for general statements and responses in concrete situations, this research pursues two parallel goals: (a) to elaborate on the current state of knowledge related to measuring tolerance and (b) to explore the relationship between respect norms and different tolerance levels. Specifically, we compare two levels of expressed tolerance towards Jews in Poland: general (GT) and specific (ST). Moreover, we investigate the relationship between national and immediate social surroundings (Study 1: acquaintance; Study 2b: personal environment) equality-based respect norms with both levels of tolerance. An additional goal is developing and validating a new tolerance scale. Study 1 takes an exploratory approach, offering initial insights and testing a preliminary version of the scale, whereas Study 2 adopts a more confirmatory approach to further assess its reliability and validity.

Furthermore, the research explores whether the association between respect norms and tolerance holds when tolerance is measured at a specific, rather than general, level (Estevan-Reina et al., 2024a; Schäfer et al., 2024). In Study 1, we examine Polish attitudes toward Jews, equality-based prescriptive norms, and both GT and ST. In Study 2a, we refine the ST scale changing the contexts to better depict the challenges and issues Jews face, additionally, we evaluate two distinct disapproval measures. Study 2b aims to replicate the main hypotheses tested in Study 1, incorporating disapproval as an exclusion criterion. Specifically, it examines differences between GT and ST, as well as the varying relationships between respect norms at different levels of social proximity and tolerance. The terms used in Studies 1 and 2b, such as "acquaintance norms" and "personal environment norms," were intentional refinements to capture subtle variations in how individuals perceive norms within their immediate social surroundings. The primary distinction is reference group proximity: The studies examine norms derived from individuals' immediate social environment, as opposed to broader national norms, representing a more generalized reference group (Bicchieri et al., 2022). The ST scale is further refined by assessing tolerance for each context individually. Studies 2a and 2b were conducted during periods of the intensification of the Israel-Palestinian conflict (detailed information can be found in the Supplementary Materials). The hypotheses for Study 2b were pre-registered and are available on AsPredicted (https://aspredicted.org/vk4f-7w5b.pdf). We tested the following hypotheses:

H1. On average, participants will score significantly higher on the GT scale than on the ST scale (Studies 1, 2a, and 2b).

H2. The positive correlation between prescriptive acquaintance equality-based respect norms and GT will be stronger than the positive correlation between prescriptive national equality-based respect norms and GT (Studies 1 and 2b).

H3. The positive correlation between prescriptive acquaintance equality-based respect norms and ST will be stronger than the positive correlation between prescriptive national equality-based respect norms and ST (Studies 1 and 2b).

## 4. Study 1

### *4.1. Method*

#### 4.1.1. Participants

The sample was collected through a snowballing procedure on social media (e.g., Facebook), with 302 initial respondents. Participants who failed attention checks were automatically excluded. After applying exclusion criteria—failing an attention check or practicing Judaism (see Supplementary File, Table 1)—the final sample included 300 participants (for descriptive statistics see Table 1). Participants were informed that the study concerns opinions about the coexistence of social groups.

#### 4.1.2. Measures

Participants completed a feelings thermometer to rate their sentiments toward Jews on a scale from 0 (unfavorable) to 100 (favorable). This measure has been used in Poland (Marmola & Darmoń, 2022), with preliminary evidence suggesting greater reliability in online formats (Liu & Wang, 2015). Equality-based respect norms were assessed using four items (Renger et al., 2017; Schäfer et al., 2024; Simon & Schaefer, 2017), two measuring national norms (e.g., "Most Poles believe that Jews should always be treated as people of equal value"; $\alpha = .86$), while two measured acquaintance norms (e.g., "Most of my acquaintances believe that Jews should always be treated as people of equal value"; $\alpha = .95$). Respondents were given a 7-point Likert scale, from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Tolerance was measured using two 9-item scales: GT and ST, each incorporating three types of tolerance (coexistence, respect, appreciation) embedded within the items. Due to a lack of consistent distinction between types (see Supplementary File, Tables 3–9) they were aggregated into their corresponding levels: GT and ST. GT (based on Hjerm et al., 2019; Velthuis et al., 2021) assessed principle-based tolerance, e.g., "The possibility for Jews to live according to their own values, is crucial to ensure harmonious coexistence in society" ($\alpha = .94$). ST measured tolerance in three contexts: "Jews in Poland should be able to receive their own religious education in public schools"; "Jews in Poland should have access to a separate prayer room at work"; "Jews in Poland should be able to have a day off from work and school on Yom Kippur" ($\alpha = .91$). The scales captured both GT and ST with responses on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Details regarding scale development and factor structure are in the Supplementary File.

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics for Studies 1, 2a, and 2b.

| Variables | Labels | Study 1 | Study 2a | Study 2b |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of participants | | 300 | 79 | 439 |
| Gender | Male | 19% ($n$ = 57), | 17.7% ($n$ = 14) | 45.6% ($n$ = 200) |
| | Female | 79.3% ($n$ = 238) | 78.5% ($n$ = 62) | 54.4% ($n$ = 239) |
| | Other | 1.7% ($n$ = 5) | 3.8% ($n$ = 3) | 0% ($n$ = 0) |
| Age | | Not explicitly measured; participants were required to be 18 years or older as part of the inclusion criteria. | 34.38 ($SD$ = 13.98) | 42.12 ($SD$ = 13.41) |
| Disapproval towards Jewish practices/beliefs | | 0.34 ($SD$ = 1.16) | Positive/Negative: 0.67 ($SD$ = 1.59)<br>Agreement: 0.18 ($SD$ = 1.56) | −2.69 ($SD$ = 1.46) |
| | Type of Scale | 1 item used (from −3 to +3). | Two items used (−3 to 3). The first item asks for positive/negative judgment; the second for agreement. | 1 item used (from −5 to 5) as an exclusion criterion—only those who scored between −5 and −1 were allowed to continue. |
| Attitudes towards Jews | | 77.63 ($SD$ = 22.69) | Not measured | 33.29 ($SD$ = 24.28) |

Behavioral intentions were measured using a 5-item scale ($\alpha$ = .86) assessing willingness to act in accordance with tolerance, e.g., responding to anti-Semitic comments or signing a petition to help the Jewish community. Items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *very unlikely*, 7 = *very likely*) and reflect active forms of tolerance (Adelman et al., 2022).

Disapproval of Jewish practices was measured with a single item from Simon and Schaefer (2016), where participants evaluated Jewish practices/beliefs on a 7-point scale ranging from −3 (*negative*) to +3 (*positive*), with 0 as neutral.

### *4.2. Results*

To test H1, we examined the relationship between ST and GT. As GT violated the normality assumption (Shapiro-Wilk, $p < .05$), a Wilcoxon signed-rank test was conducted. GT ($M$ = 5.38, $SD$ = 1.30) was significantly higher than ST ($M$ = 4.28, $SD$ = 1.54), $Z$ = −12.89, $p < .001$, with a large effect size ($r$ = 0.75) supporting H1 (see Figure 1). Additional analyses across the three types of tolerance (coexistence, respect, and appreciation), revealed consistent patterns (see Supplementary File, page 35).

To test H2 and H3, we investigated the associations between national and acquaintance equality-based respect norms with both GT and ST (see Table 2). Using Soper's (2025) calculator, the correlation between

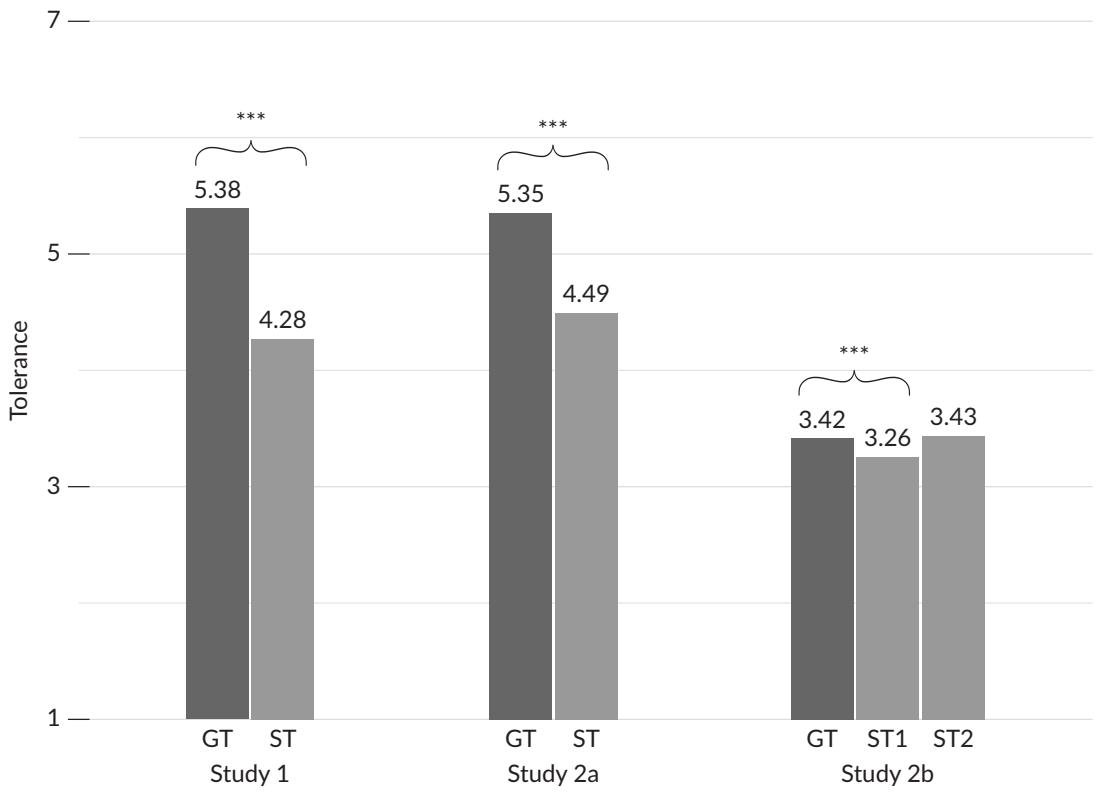


**Figure 1.** Distribution of general and specific tolerance scores in Studies 1, 2a, and 2b. Notes: General tolerance (GT), specific tolerance (ST), specific tolerance context 1 (ST1), specific tolerance context 2 (ST2).

national respect norms and GT ($r = .26$) was significantly lower than that of acquaintance respect norms and GT ($r = .51$; $z = -3.61$, $p < .001$), supporting H2.

Similarly, national norms ($r = .14$) correlated more weakly with ST than acquaintance norms ($r = .38$; $z = -3.16$, $p = .002$) confirming H3. A similar pattern was observed for behavioral intentions, with national norms ($r = .18$) showing a weaker correlation than acquaintance norms ($r = .449$, $z = -4.31$, $p < .001$). Given the religious influences within the ST contexts, we conducted additional analyses controlling for secularism, which yielded consistent findings (see Supplementary File, Additional Analyses Controlling for Secularism in Study 1).

**Table 2.** Correlations between equality-based respect norms and social tolerance for Study 1.

| Variable | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. National norms | 4.55 | 1.41 | | | | | |
| 2. Acquaintance norms | 5.79 | 1.49 | .51** | | | | |
| 3. GT | 5.38 | 1.30 | .26** | .51** | | | |
| 4. ST | 4.28 | 1.54 | .14* | .38** | .68** | | |
| 5. Behavioral intentions | 3.95 | 1.54 | .18** | .49** | .57** | .55** | |

To further investigate these hypotheses, we conducted exploratory regressions with both equality-based respect norms as simultaneous predictors (see Table 3). Acquaintance respect norms were more predictive of both GT and ST than national norms. This pattern also held for behavioral intentions.

**Table 3.** Regression analysis of national and acquaintance equality-based respect norms on tolerance in study 1.

| Outcome | Predictors | *b* | *SE* | *t* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| GT | National | 0.01 | 0.05 | 0.20 |
| | Acquaintance | 0.27*** | 0.05 | 5.37 |
| ST | National | −0.08 | 0.06 | −1.32 |
| | Acquaintance | 0.22*** | 0.06 | 3.56 |
| Behavioral intentions | National | −0.10 | 0.06 | −1.74 |
| | Acquaintance | 0.35*** | 0.06 | 5.96 |

Notes: Across this article, controlling for disapproval, education, and attitudes towards Jews; significance levels: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$; national equality-based respect norms (National), acquaintance equality-based respect norms (Acquaintance).

To assess whether respect norms relate differently to ST versus GT we conducted Fisher's Z-tests using the Soper calculator. The correlation between national norms and GT ($r = .26$) did not differ significantly from that with ST ($r = .14$), $z = 1.53$, $p = .127$. However, acquaintance respect norms showed a higher correlation with GT ($r = .51$) than with ST ($r = .38$), $z = 1.98$, $p = .047$.

Building on the factor analysis (detailed in the Supplementary File), which confirmed ST as distinct and adding explanatory value beyond GT, we evaluated the significance of this added value by testing its link with behavioral intentions. The regression analysis included the same control variables as in previous regression analyses. Both GT ($b = 0.28$, $t = 3.74$, $p < .001$) and ST ($b = 0.24$, $t = 3.77$, $p < .001$) emerged as significant predictors of behavioral intentions (see summary of analyses in Table 4).

**Table 4.** Regression analysis of GT and ST on behavioral intentions in Studies 1, 2a, and 2b.

| Study | Predictors | *b* | *SE* | *t* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Study 1 | GT | 0.28*** | 0.08 | 3.74 |
| | ST | 0.24*** | 0.06 | 3.77 |
| Study 2a | GT | 0.04 | 0.07 | 0.52 |
| | ST | 0.26*** | 0.06 | 4.53 |
| Study 2b Context 1 | GT | 0.05 | 0.03 | 1.59 |
| | ST | 0.15*** | 0.03 | 4.92 |
| Study 2b Context 2 | GT | 0.02 | 0.04 | 0.54 |
| | ST | 0.17*** | 0.03 | 5.46 |

*Notes:* Across this paper, controlling for disapproval, education, and attitudes towards Jews, except for Study 2a where attitudes were not measured; significance levels: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

### *4.3. Discussion*

Study 1 aimed to test the preliminary social tolerance scale and compare mean scores between GT and ST. Our H1 was confirmed: Participants scored higher in GT than in ST. H2 and H3 were also supported: acquaintance norms correlated more strongly with both tolerance levels than national norms. Regression analysis confirmed that acquaintance norms more strongly predict both tolerance levels and behavioral

intentions. Additionally, we have preliminary evidence that respect norms permeate tolerance even when measured at a more specific level.

Exploratory analyses showed that both GT and ST significantly predicted behavioral intentions. However, the sample was skewed, with overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward Jews and only 12% expressing disapproval. The preliminary ST measure included all three contexts within a religious framework, prompting a revision to assess one context at a time. This may have conflated ST with secularism, as items like religious holidays, religious education, and prayer spaces likely overlapped conceptually. Tolerance was measured including the disapproval-approval spectrum as in other tolerance studies (Simon & Schaefer, 2016; Velthuis et al., 2021). The data does not allow exclusion of participants with neutral, indifferent, or positive views about Jewish beliefs/practices, which could inflate tolerance levels as tolerance involves disapproval before acceptance. To address this, Study 2a pretested two disapproval measures, with one serving as an exclusion criterion in Study 2b to assess whether differences between GT and ST persist.

## 5. Study 2a

In the previous study, disapproval was measured as an exploratory variable but was not incorporated into the analysis due to sample size limitations. However, we consider disapproval a key variable. Traditionally measured using the "least liked" approach (Gibson, 1992), disapproval now extends beyond negative attitudes, informing the bases of weak and strong toleration (Verkuyten & Yogeeswaran, 2016). Current measures assess a group's practices on a good-bad continuum or disapproval of specific practices (e.g., Adelman & Verkuyten, 2019), but separating disapproval of practices from disapproval of the group is challenging. Generalized disapproval signals a deeper rejection of multiple aspects of the group's identity, making it more likely to fuel polarization. Study 2a pre-tests the refined tolerance scale for Study 2b, introducing two disapproval measures, which establish an anchor point for the disapproval exclusion criterion in Study 2b. These items reflect objections to specific beliefs and practices, contrasting with the feeling thermometer. While this distinction was not directly analyzed in Study 2a, it provided a conceptual basis for differentiating between broad group rejection and disapproval of specific practices in Study 2b. The aim of Study 2a is twofold: first, replicate findings on the distribution of GT and ST (H1); and second, refine the tolerance scale by expanding beyond religious contexts. Unlike Study 2b, Study 2a does not examine the relationship between respect norms and tolerance but focuses on pre-testing measures for Study 2b.

### *5.1. Method*

#### 5.1.1. Participants

The sample was collected through a snowballing procedure on social media (e.g., Facebook). A total of 82 respondents participated. After applying the exclusion criteria which included participants practicing Judaism or having a Jewish ethnic background (see Supplementary File, Table 1), 79 participants remained (for descriptive statistics see Supplementary File, Table 11). Participants were informed that the study examined opinions regarding the coexistence of different social groups.

#### 5.1.2. Measures

We assessed two disapproval measures: "Do you consider the beliefs, customs, and behaviors of the Jewish community in Poland to be positive or negative?" (adapted from Simon & Schaefer, 2016) and "Do you agree with the beliefs, customs, and behaviors of the Jewish community in Poland?" Both used a 7-point scale from −3 (*strongly disapprove/negative*) to +3 (*strongly approve/positive*), with 0 as neutral.

Tolerance was measured using two scales—GT and ST—each incorporating distinct types of tolerance: coexistence, respect, and appreciation. The GT scale (9 items, based on Hjerm et al., 2019; Velthuis et al., 2021) captured tolerance for Jews living according to their beliefs and traditions through broad, principle-based terms, e.g., "the possibility for Jews to live according to their own values, is crucial to ensure harmonious coexistence in society" ($\alpha = .94$). The ST scale (9 items, $\alpha = .93$) measured attitudes across three contexts: "In public places, such as the chambers of the Polish parliament, symbols of the Jewish religion, such as a menorah during the celebration of Hanukkah, should also be present" (a menorah is a traditional candelabrum with nine branches); "In all localities where synagogues and Jewish cemeteries are located, local authorities should take care of this heritage in the same way as they would any other sacred site"; "Content related to the history of Polish Jews should be included to a greater extent in Polish textbooks." Responses were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Behavioral intentions were assessed using a three-item version ($\alpha = .67$), using a 4-point Likert scale from 1 (*definitely no*) to 4 (*definitely yes*). Items ranged from liking a post promoting Jewish culture to signing a petition regarding the city covering the cost of cleaning Jewish cemeteries.

### 5.2. Results

To test H1, Shapiro-Wilk tests indicated that GT did not meet the normality assumption ($p < .05$). Wilcoxon signed-rank tests revealed a significant difference between GT ($M = 5.35$, $SD = 1.42$) and ST ($M = 4.49$, $SD = 1.56$), $Z = -6.55$, $p < .001$, with a large effect size ($r = -0.77$; see Figure 1) confirming H1. Additional analyses showed consistent patterns across all three tolerance types (see Supplement File, page 35–36).

As an exploratory analysis, we examined whether ST is more strongly associated with behavioral intentions. In the regression analysis, both ST and GT were included simultaneously as predictors, alongside education and disapproval as controls. The model explained a significant proportion of the variance in behavioral intentions ($\Delta R^2 = .57$, $F(4,74) = 30.08$, $p < .001$). The results indicated that ST was a significant predictor of behavioral intentions ($b = 0.26$, $t = 4.53$, $p < .001$), whereas GT was not ($b = 0.04$, $t = 0.52$, $p = .572$; for detailed results see Table 4).

### 5.3. Discussion

The main goal of this study was to further refine the ST scale and pretest the disapproval items. As in Study 1, participants reported higher GT than ST. Exploratory regression analysis yielded preliminary findings suggesting that ST, rather than GT, plays a more critical role in predicting behavioral intentions. This result aligns with the theoretical model, emphasizing the distinct and meaningful contribution of ST in understanding behavioral outcomes.

## 6. Study 2b

This study further examines the hypothesis that participants will score higher on the GT scale than on the ST scale (H1) and employs disapproval as an exclusion criterion. Building on the evidence from Study 1 supporting H2 and H3, we align with the self-categorization theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), emphasizing the stronger influence of local norms over national norms on attitudes and behaviors. We extend the concept of local norms from "acquaintance norms" to "personal environment norms" to explore whether the stronger link between acquaintance norms and tolerance observed in Study 1 persists in a slightly broader social context. This provides an opportunity to replicate Schäfer et al. (2024) findings, which showed that equality-based respect norms are associated with higher tolerance, even among those who strongly disapprove of these views. We aim to test these associations between equality-based respect norms and tolerance within a Polish sample and extend this to incorporate the different levels of tolerance. The content of the tolerance measures has been improved, basing them on more relevant issues. The study was pre-registered (https://aspredicted.org/vk4f-7w5b.pdf).

### *6.1. Methods*

#### 6.1.1. Participants

Using G*Power 3.1.9.6 (Faul et al., 2007), we calculated the required sample size to detect a medium effect size ($f = 0.19$) with $\alpha = 0.05$ and power = 0.95, resulting in a target sample of approximately 300 respondents. A total of 445 participants completed the online Polish-language survey, distributed via the Ariadna research panel. Participants who failed the attention checks were automatically prevented from continuing the survey. After applying the pre-registered and post-hoc criteria, six participants were excluded (based on religious affiliation and ethnicity), leaving a final sample of 439 participants.

#### 6.1.2. Measures

We used the same feelings thermometer from Study 1: 0 (indicating cool and unfavorable attitudes) to 100 (indicating warm and favorable attitudes towards Jews).

Disapproval of Jewish practices was assessed using a scale ranging from −5 to +5, with the prompt: "I approve/disapprove of the beliefs and customs of the Jewish community in Poland." Participants who indicated neutrality or approval were excluded from the analysis.

We measured equality-based respect norms using four items (Renger et al., 2017; Schäfer et al., 2024; Simon & Schaefer, 2017). Two assessed national norms, e.g., "Most Poles believe that Jews should always be treated as people of equal value" ($\alpha = .88$). Acquaintance norms were replaced with personal environment norms, such as, "Most people in my personal environment believe that Jews should always be treated as people of equal value" ($\alpha = .94$). Respondents indicated their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Tolerance was measured using three scales: a 9-item GT scale (adapted from Study 1; $\alpha = .95$) and two 9-item ST scales (18 items total), each assessing a separate context: (a) education ("Content related to the history of

Polish Jews should be included to a greater extent in Polish textbooks" [$\alpha = .97$]) and (b) cultural heritage ("In all localities where synagogues and Jewish cemeteries are located, local authorities should care for this heritage as they would any other sacred site" [$\alpha = .97$]; see factor analyses in the Supplementary File). Each item was rated on a 7-point scale. We also included three exploratory items—one for GT and two for ST—to assess respondents' attitudes toward these contexts without referencing specific types of tolerance. Descriptive statistics and additional analyses are presented in the Supplementary File, Table 10. Behavioral intentions were measured using a revised four-item scale reflecting varying difficulty levels, e.g., "Imagine you come across a post on the Internet promoting Jewish culture. Would you be inclined to like this post?" ($\alpha = .84$). Responses used the same 4-point Likert as in Study 2a. The items were based on the active tolerance measure developed by Adelman et al. (2022). We also measured passive tolerance behavioral intention items; however, low reliability led to their exclusion (see Supplementary File, Table 19.1).

### *6.2. Results*

To test the relationship between ST and GT, we used Wilcoxon signed-rank tests due to GT's non-normal distribution (Shapiro-Wilk test, $p < .05$). Results revealed a significant difference between GT and ST Context 1 which addressed the inclusion of content on the history of Polish Jews in textbooks ($M = 3.42$, $SD = 1.46$ vs. $M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.52$, $Z = -4.85$, $p < .001$, $r = -0.23$). However, no statistically significant difference was found between GT and ST Context 2 which focused on the preservation and care of Jewish heritage sites, such as synagogues and cemeteries, by local authorities ($M = 3.43$, $SD = 1.58$, $Z = -.05$, $p = .962$). These findings partially support H1 (see Figure 1). Additional analyses using types of tolerance revealed a consistent pattern (see Supplementary File, page 36).

To test H2 and H3, we examined the associations between national and personal environment equality-based respect norms with GT and ST (for both contexts; see Table 5). Using the Soper (2025) calculator, we found no significance between personal environment norms ($r = .59$) and national norms ($r = .57$) in predicting GT ($z = -.45$, $p = .656$), thus not supporting H2. Similarly, personal environment norms ($r = .49$) were not significantly more strongly correlated with ST Context 1 than national norms ($r = .49$). The same pattern was observed for ST Context 2 (National Norms: $r = .50$; personal environment norms: $r = .51$; $z = -.20$, $p = .843$), failing to confirm H3.

**Table 5.** Correlations between equality-based respect norms and social tolerance for Study 2b.

| Variable | *M* | *SD* | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. National norms | 3.44 | 1.55 | | | | | | |
| 2. Personal environment norms | 3.53 | 1.71 | .81** | | | | | |
| 3. GT | 3.42 | 1.46 | .57** | .59** | | | | |
| 4. ST Context 1 | 3.26 | 1.52 | .49** | .49** | .87** | | | |
| 5. ST Context 2 | 3.43 | 1.58 | .50** | .51** | .89** | .88** | | |
| 6. Behavioral intentions | 1.72 | 0.64 | .35** | .37** | .59** | .61** | .62** | |

To further investigate these hypotheses, we conducted exploratory regressions examining links between equality-based respect norms and tolerance. Both measures of equality-based respect norms were included as simultaneous predictors, while controlling for education, attitudes toward Jews, and disapproval of Jewish

practices. Both national ($b$ = 0.22, $p$ < .001) and personal environment norms ($b$ = 0.21, $p$ < .001) significantly predicted GT. ST showed similar patterns: In Context 1, national ($b$ = 0.21, $p$ = .001) and personal environment norms ($b$ = 0.13, $p$ = .030) significantly predicted ST; in Context 2, national ($b$ = 0.23, $p$ = .001) and personal environment norms ($b$ = 0.16, $p$ = .013) were also significant. Neither national ($b$ = 0.04, $p$ = .126) nor personal environment norms ($b$ = 0.03, $p$ = .326) significantly predicted Behavioral Intentions. Table 6 summarizes these results.

**Table 6.** Regression analysis of national and personal environment equality-based respect norms on tolerance Study 2b.

| Outcome | Predictors | *b* | *SE* | *t* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| GT | National | 0.22*** | 0.06 | 3.89 |
| | Personal env. | 0.21*** | 0.05 | 3.84 |
| ST Context 1 | National | 0.21** | 0.07 | 3.31 |
| | Personal env. | 0.13* | 0.06 | 2.17 |
| ST Context 2 | National | 0.23** | 0.07 | 3.44 |
| | Personal env. | 0.16* | 0.06 | 2.50 |
| Behavioral intentions | National | 0.04 | 0.03 | 1.53 |
| | Personal env. | 0.03 | 0.03 | 0.98 |

To assess whether the respect norm–tolerance link holds across more specific tolerance levels, we conducted Fisher's Z-tests. The correlation between national respect norms and GT ($r$ = .57) was not significantly different from ST Context 1 ($r$ = .49), $z$ = 1.65, $p$ = .100; or ST Context 2 ($r$ = .50), $z$ = 1.45, $p$ = .147. However, the correlation between personal environment respect norms, and GT ($r$ = .59) was significantly higher than with ST Context 1 ($r$ = .49), $z$ = 2.09, $p$ = .037 but not with ST Context 2 ($r$ = .51), $z$ = 1.70, $p$ = .090.

As an exploratory analysis, we examined whether ST more strongly predicts behavioral intentions. We ran two regressions: one with GT and ST for Context 1 as predictors, and another with GT and ST Context 2, controlling for education and disapproval. In both models, ST significantly predicted behavioral intentions—Context 1: ($b$ = 0.15, $t$ = 4.92, $p$ < .001); Context 2 ($b$ = 0.17, $t$ = 5.46, $p$ < .001)—whereas GT did not (Context 1: $b$ = 0.05, $t$ = 1.59, $p$ = .113; Context 2: $b$ = 0.02, $t$ = 0.54, $p$ = .592; for detailed results see Table 4), replicating Study 1's findings.

### *6.3. Discussion*

The results indicate that participants report higher scores on the GT scale than the ST scale for Context 1, which involved including more content on the history of Polish Jews in textbooks. This finding aligns with our theoretical assumptions, as GT reflects broader, less contextually demanding perspectives. Opposition to such inclusion may reflect more than curricular preference; it could indicate a reluctance to fully acknowledge Jewish history as part of national heritage, thus raising questions about the boundaries of tolerance. This is particularly relevant, as Jewish communities were a significant part of Polish society before WWII. However, this pattern was not observed in Context 2, which involved preserving Jewish heritage sites. One possible explanation for this discrepancy lies in Poland's cultural context. Caring for cemeteries may be less contentious due to the strong tradition of honoring the deceased, especially during All Saints'

Day when people visit cemeteries, decorate graves, and pay their respects. Additionally, the historical context of the Nazi Holocaust likely shapes attitudes toward preserving Jewish heritage sites. In Poland, such efforts may be seen as acknowledging the past, rooted in collective memory. A second possible explanation is that Context 2 might evoke a stronger sense of respect-based tolerance than Context 1. While the context can't be strictly categorized as respect tolerance (or any other type), it may trigger a greater inclination toward tolerance rooted in respect, coexistence, or appreciation. The cultural and historical weight of preserving Jewish heritage sites may be more intuitively linked to values like respecting the past and preserving memory. Although ST Context 2 did not significantly differ from GT, it was more predictive of Behavioral Intentions, suggesting it is more likely to translate into real-world actions.

We replicated Study 1's findings, confirming that Respect Norms are associated with both GT and ST. This is notable given the consistent pattern where participants report higher tolerance for general statements but show decreased tolerance for real-life examples. Despite this, respect norms remain relevant at the specific level, suggesting that they permeate both broad and context-dependent expressions of tolerance. While national respect norms show a stable association with both tolerance levels, personal environment respect norms demonstrate a stronger link with GT than with any specific context. Contrary to Study 1, we found no stronger link between personal environment norms and tolerance. Regression analyses showed that national norms were slightly more predictive of ST than personal environment norms. These findings may reflect limitations of the 'local norm' construct as operationalized in this context, as the high correlation between personal environment norms and national norms suggests that participants viewed them similarly. Though personal environment norms involve immediate surroundings like acquaintance norms, they may lack comparable relational depth.

## 7. General Discussion

This research explored the relationship between respect norms and tolerance, specifically examining the interplay of GT and ST across contexts. A key finding is that tolerance levels are lower at the specific level compared to general statements, aligning with the "implementation gap" (Dixon et al., 2017), and replicating Jackman's (1978) findings. While individuals may express high tolerance in principle, their acceptance diminishes in real-life scenarios. This pattern was replicated across Studies 1 and 2a, and partially in Study 2b, where the difference was observed only within the educational context.

Despite this overall decline in tolerance at the specific level, the association between respect norms and tolerance remained significant, even when tolerance was measured in more concrete contexts. This finding extends studies on respect norms and tolerance (Estevan-Reina et al., 2024a; Schäfer et al., 2024), as it suggests that equality-based respect norms consistently shape tolerant attitudes, whether assessed broadly or through concrete contexts. While the high correlation between respect norms and tolerant attitudes could reflect projection or motivated reasoning, research on socialization and social learning suggests that external influences, like peer norms, significantly shape tolerance-related attitudes (Simons et al., 2025). This provides preliminary evidence that respect norms serve as a fundamental social mechanism supporting tolerance, even when situational demands challenge individuals' willingness to be tolerant.

An additional central question was whether acquaintance norms are more strongly linked to tolerance than national norms. The findings were mixed. Study 1 supported this hypothesis, showing a stronger association

between acquaintance norms and as well as with behavioral intentions. However, Study 2b, which expanded the scope to broader "personal environment" norms, did not replicate this pattern. The stronger effect of acquaintance norms was not observed, indicating that the impact of social proximity on norm compliance may depend on how narrowly or broadly social groups are defined. This distinction suggests that while respect norms are crucial for promoting tolerance, they may not be sufficient to drive active behavioral intentions. Tolerance reflects a willingness to accept others but does not necessarily translate into emotional engagement or identification with specific practices or groups. Furthermore, these findings contribute to debates in social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982; Terry & Hogg, 1996) and social norm compliance (Bicchieri et al., 2022), emphasizing that closely tied reference groups may exert stronger normative influence on tolerance under specific conditions. However, it is worth noting that significant differences in attitudes toward Jews between Studies 1 and 2b—higher in Study 1 and lower in 2b—could have impacted the relationship between norms and tolerance.

The tolerance scale measuring both GT and ST demonstrated acceptable reliability across studies. Extensive testing, including exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses, and refinement consistently supported a two-dimensional structure (as demonstrated in the Supplementary File), revealing distinct yet correlated factors for GT and ST. A bifactor model provided the best fit, capturing both the overarching construct of tolerance and the unique contributions of each dimension. This model underscored the added explanatory value of ST, particularly in predicting behavioral intentions. Significant differences in participant scores further validated the theoretical distinctiveness of these dimensions, suggesting that while GT provides a general attitudinal foundation, ST offers crucial context-specific insights into expressions of tolerance and their subsequent impact on behavior.

A key contribution of this research is providing deeper insight into the types of norms linked to tolerance and the contextual factors that determine their effectiveness. Specifically, we examine equality-based respect norms as an extension of research linking respect with positive actions toward minority outgroups (Lalljee et al., 2008). In Studies 1 and 2b, we find that equality-based respect norms are associated with ST—a more contextual form of tolerance since it reflects support for concrete actions and policies, rather than just abstract statements. This aligns with previous research demonstrating that respect for outgroups as fellow citizens leads to greater acceptance of concrete practices (Hjerm et al., 2019; Simon et al., 2018). Our research also highlights the importance of norm proximity in shaping tolerance, as people are more likely to follow socially proximate norms without external enforcement, making them more sustainable (Bicchieri et al., 2022). This suggests that norms perceived as distant may be less effective in behavioral interventions. Additionally, understanding the reference group for a norm can help explain why some tolerance norms may backfire (Neuner & Ramirez, 2023).

Tolerance is often criticized for implying hierarchy, casting the tolerated group as deviant or subordinate. However, grounded in equality-based respect, it becomes genuine inclusion rather than permission (Forst, 2018). Unlike coexistence-based interventions focused on attitude change, respect-based norms foster tolerance without requiring such shifts. Prior research has highlighted the shortcomings of coexistence models, which, while promoting peaceful interactions, often fail to address deeper social injustices and power asymmetries (Dixon et al., 2012). For example, in the Israeli-Palestinian context, coexistence initiatives have been criticized for sidelining Arab concerns about structural inequalities, inadvertently reinforcing existing power imbalances (Maoz, 2011). However, the first attempts using equality-based

respect norms as a form of intervention in schools revealed the complexity of the respect norm and tolerance link (Shani et al., 2023). Our findings illustrate that the association is context-dependent, varying based on the reference group proximity, norm specificity, and emotional engagement required for more active behaviors. The link between norms and tolerance is particularly relevant when compared to models like deliberative decision-making (Verkuyten et al., 2022) as evidence suggests in-group norms influence attitude-behavior consistency more reliably than deliberative reasoning alone (Smith & Terry, 2003). This indicates a promising avenue for future research on the role of norms in shaping tolerance, potentially offering a more effective path for fostering social change.

We argue that the general vs. specific distinction is important when studying tolerance, as individuals tend to endorse tolerance in abstract terms rather than in specific situations (Sleijpen et al., 2020). A key contribution of this study is the use of a tolerance scale that aims to address a gap identified in the literature: While much of the existing research focuses on support for broad concepts of tolerance, it often lacks consideration of how tolerance manifests in concrete practices, beliefs, or real-world scenarios (Van Doorn, 2014). This gap is particularly relevant given that research has questioned whether common mechanisms of prejudice reduction, like contact and common identification, consistently translate into tangible behavioral change (Dixon et al., 2012). Our study builds on this perspective by considering whether the discrepancy between professed and practiced tolerance may, in part, stem from the way tolerance is measured. The differences between GT and ST levels, along with the stronger predictive power of ST for behavioral intentions, suggest that general measures may overestimate individuals' levels of tolerance. This underscores the need for more precise tools to capture the complexities of tolerance in practice, particularly in evaluating the effectiveness of tolerance interventions.

## 8. Limitations and Future Directions

This research is not without its limitations. First, while the studies were conducted before and during the intensification of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and importantly, not during periods of heightened attention to this conflict within Poland, we cannot fully rule out the potential influence of such emotionally charged global events on Polish views and attitudes. The data collected does not assess the extent of this influence. Second, although the tolerance scale underwent rigorous refinement and demonstrated high reliability (see Supplementary File), formal validation is still pending. Additionally, the study is subject to self-selection bias, as participants with stronger interest or background knowledge in the topics may have been more likely to participate, particularly in Study 1 which was circulated among internet users. Moreover, the online format excludes individuals without regular internet access and tends to attract a younger demographic. While the online nature offers broad accessibility, it may not fully capture behavioral intentions shaped by offline social networks or face-to-face interactions. Another important consideration is the use of different norm operationalizations across the two studies. Study 1 assessed acquaintance norms, whereas Study 2b focused on personal environment norms. While this distinction limits direct comparability within a single study, it highlights the need to carefully consider how social norms are defined and measured. This research shows that framing norms as acquaintance versus personal environment yields distinct insights, potentially reflecting differences in their strength or nature. In Studies 1 and 2a, several ST items contained embedded religious components, which may have influenced participants' responses in ways not fully accounted for. Although secularism was measured in Study 1 and included as a control variable in supplementary analyses, this approach does not fully eliminate the potential confounding effects of religiosity or secular orientation. As such, the contextual limitations of these measures should be carefully considered in future research.

Moreover, the behavioral intention scale employed in the studies reflects a relatively active form of tolerance, conceptually aligning more closely with measures of collective action.

To preserve the distinctiveness of active tolerance as a construct, future research should refine the measure to more clearly delineate it from collective action tendencies, improving construct validity and enabling a clearer assessment of the tolerance principle implementation gap. Further validation of the tolerance scale is essential to strengthen its psychometric properties. Finally, conducting this research in diverse cultural settings presents a valuable direction for assessing the broader applicability of the findings and deepening our understanding of how social norms influence tolerance and behavioral intentions across different environments.

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## Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interests.

## Supplementary Material

Supplementary material for this article is available online in the format provided by the author (unedited).

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## About the Authors

**Dominika Gurbisz** is a PhD student at the Doctoral School in the Social Sciences at Jagiellonian University, affiliated with the Institute of Psychology. Her research focuses on the interplay between intergroup toleration and social norms.

**Anna Potoczek** is a social psychologist. In her scientific work, she conducts research regarding susceptibility to social norms, reactions to crises, and political psychology. Her interests also include good research practices as part of the Open Science movement and the dissemination of scientific knowledge.

**Marcin Bukowski** is a professor at the Jagiellonian University (Institute of Psychology) and a member of the Centre for Social Cognitive Studies in Kraków, Poland. His research interests focus mainly on motivated social cognition and the psychology of intergroup relations.

**Lucía Estevan-Reina** is a substitute temporary professor in the Department of Social Psychology at the University of Granada. Her main research interest focuses on intergroup relations and social change, especially in the context of cross-group solidarity.

**Oliver Christ** is a full professor at the FernUniversität in Hagen (Faculty of Psychology), Germany. His research interests focus mainly on the social psychology of intergroup relations.