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# Crafting tolerance: the role of political institutions in a comparative perspective

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Ongoing changes in social structures, orientation, and value systems confront us with the growing necessity to address and understand transforming patterns of tolerance as well as specific aspects, such as social tolerance. Based on hierarchical analyses of the latest World Values Survey (2005–08) and national statistics for 28 countries, we assess both individual and contextual aspects that influence an individual's perception of different social groupings. Using a social tolerance index that captures personal attitudes toward these groupings, we present an institutional theory of social tolerance. Our results show that specific institutional qualities, which reduce status anxiety, such as inclusiveness, universality, and fairness, prevail over traditional socio-economic, societal, cultural, and democratic explanations.

**Keywords:** social tolerance; institutions; comparative politics; hierarchical analyses; World Values Survey

## Introduction

'Europe's call to intolerance'.[1] This headline from the Washington Post from 1 December 2009 refers to the heated debate over the Swiss minaret ban. Over the course of time, such headlines mirroring and accelerating this ongoing public controversy concerning various kinds of tolerance have become increasingly prevalent in the media. Other exciting examples include the stirring French burqa debate in May 2010; the legislative debates in some states in Africa (e.g. Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda) in October 2009 about making homosexuality punishable by life imprisonment; the reinforced ban on same-sex marriage in the state of California in the United States in May 2009; and the rejection of same-sex marriage laws in Portugal in October 2008. These cases have led to a lively debate

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over different ethical standards and values. Furthermore, discussions concerning anti-smoking laws and campaigns (in 2008, six European countries banned smoking from restaurants), the legalization of marijuana, the medicinal use of heroin in addiction therapy, or the legality of gambling take place almost on a weekly basis. These repeated debates over freedom of lifestyles, interests of various social groupings, and attitudes undoubtedly contributed to the re-emergence of the concept of tolerance on the (research) agenda (Stouffer, 1955; Sullivan *et al.*, 1993; Norris, 2002; Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003; Andersen and Fetner, 2008b).

Despite this growing awareness within the public and academic community of the importance of the concept, little research has explicitly addressed the question of how tolerance can be built. The aim of the present article is to provide an additional step toward filling this gap. Accordingly, this paper evaluates the foundations of one important aspect of tolerance, namely social tolerance. Our guiding question concerns the impact of political institutions on this key component of social cohesion. Our contribution will go beyond the existing literature in three ways:

First, while most studies refer to the concept of political tolerance, we investigate the sources of social tolerance. Whereas the concept of political tolerance has been frequently addressed within the US context and received broad attention since the 1950s, it is somewhat surprising that so little research has been conducted on social tolerance (cf. Gibson and Gouws, 2000; Mutz, 2001; Mondak and Sanders, 2005). Considering that tolerance not only means political tolerance – to allow certain groups the same (political) rights and to acknowledge the rights of others 'even those one finds objectionable, to participate fully in political, social, and economic life' (Weldon, 2006: 331) – this lack of research becomes even more astounding. Moreover, tolerance also refers to the toleration and acceptance of socio-cultural and socio-economic differences within society, 'entailing full recognition and acceptance of the identity and uniqueness of differences that are seen as not reducible to invisibility by their bearers' (Persell *et al.*, 2001: 208). This so-called social tolerance complements the principles of political tolerance, or rather, expresses a more general level of tolerance (Persell *et al.*, 2001). It captures the actual willingness to accept differences and to tolerate the contents of these expressions (Weldon, 2006: 336). Social tolerance thus plays a crucial role in daily interactions and constitutes a critical element of the social fabric. Particularly, in times of growing internationalization, migration, and changing social conventions lead to evolving societal and ethnical heterogeneity, which ultimately results in a diversified sphere of interest challenging individual social tolerance and peaceful cohabitation. If social tolerance and peaceful cohabitation are prevalent in a society, these contribute to the stability of a system in the long run (Feldmann *et al.*, 2000: 9). Studies on political tolerance have also shown that the intolerant are more likely to 'express a willingness to act on their views than the tolerant' (Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003: 244); assuming the

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same mechanisms are at work for social tolerance, it is important to learn more about a person's acceptance of difference across a range of groups (and not just objectionable or unpopular groups or actions) by examining the more general individual social tolerance. This is particularly relevant against the background of Sullivan *et al*.'s (1993) finding that respondents are significantly less socially tolerant than politically tolerant.

Second, compared to the few other studies in the field (cf. Sullivan *et al*., 1993; Norris, 2002; Dunn *et al*., 2009), we present an empirically and theoretically more diverse index of social tolerance. In this regard, we exclude certain groupings from our analyses, since the broad public is unlikely to ever tolerate groups or acts that display a certain level of delinquency (see Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003).

Third, the literature suggests that social and political tolerance are primarily shaped by socio-economic, societal, cultural, and democratic factors, such as economic development or religion (see among others Sullivan and Transue, 1999; Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003; Weldon, 2006; Andersen and Fetner, 2008a; Ikeda and Richey, 2009). However, studies in the tradition of the neo-institutionalist perspective regarding the influence of institutions on voting behavior, different policies, socio-economic developments, political culture, or social capital – hitherto fail to address the tolerance issue. Thus, combining these two research areas, we argue that an important source of social tolerance is to be found in the qualities of political institutions. By filling this research gap, we provide new insights for an even broader audience, cross-cutting and connecting disciplines. Our paper seeks to systematically complement previous studies that include some political-institutional features, yet have failed to comprehensively model and account for various institutional features (Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003; Wernet *et al*., 2005; Weldon, 2006; Andersen and Fetner, 2008b). In this vein, we place political institutions at the center of our analysis and present an institutional theory of social tolerance. We argue that specific facets of political institutions such as inclusiveness, universality, and fairness are capable of reducing the threat of losing social status and thereby contribute to the development of social tolerance. When people come to believe that political institutions exhibit these qualities, they will generally tolerate others in their society.

The data for our analyses stem from the latest wave of the World Values Survey (2005–08; WVS) for 28 countries and from official statistics for the aggregate-level data. The case selection is based on the availability of both individual and societal-level data. Accounting for the data-generating process, we use hierarchical models, a tried and tested means for overcoming micro–macro dualism, as individual levels of social tolerance are structured both by personal traits and societal conditions (Hox, 2002; Steenbergen and Jones, 2002; Freitag and Bühlmann, 2009).

The remainder of our analysis is structured as follows: the second section outlines our understanding of social tolerance. In the third section, we present our theory linking contextual conditions to the creation of individual levels of social

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tolerance. The fourth section elaborates on the methodology used and subsequently subjects the various independent variables to systematic empirical testing in a number of hierarchical models. The most important findings are summarized and discussed in the fifth section.

## Tolerance – the dependent variable

Social changes brought on by the past few decades, such as the decreased importance of traditional relationships (family, clubs, etc.), the rapidly changing orientation patterns (religious convictions, etc.), or the increased speed at which information is exchanged (new media, etc.), have contributed to a growing number of diverging lifestyles, interests of various social groupings, opinions, and attitudes. Simultaneously differing macro social structures and the modernization process have transformed attitudes, values, and the perception of (out-) groups (Wernet *et al.*, 2005). How these changes have been received, however, is somewhat ambiguous: On the one hand, they lead to cultural, political, and social diversity; on the other hand, different ethical standards and values compete with one another and increase the need for tolerance.

As one of the central concepts in political-philosophical discourse, the roots of tolerance and toleration can be traced back as far as Cicero or early Christian beliefs (Forst, 2007). The interest in tolerance, however, is primarily vested in the religious-political conflicts that followed the Reformation in Europe (Forst, 2007).[2] In the social sciences, the mainstream understanding of tolerance has its roots in pioneering studies by researchers in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s. Threatened civil liberties in the Cold War Era and the US Civil Rights Movement paved the way for this sudden surge of interest in tolerance. The most common and current approach by empirical researchers focuses on political tolerance (cf. Gibson and Gouws, 2000; Mutz, 2001; Mondak and Sanders, 2005). Characterized by conceptual heterogeneity within this strand of literature, 'to tolerate' is commonly understood as allowing one's political enemies to participate actively in political life (Sullivan *et al.*, 1979, 1993). It refers to general political principles such as the freedom of speech, the right to vote, and the right to run for political office (Weldon, 2006: 335). The term tolerance itself, however, does not justify the prevalent narrow focus of research on political tolerance (cf. Gibson, 1992; Cigler and Joslyn, 2002; Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003; Weldon, 2006).

Simply put, in general to tolerate is to allow 'ideas and opinions that one dislikes or disagrees' (Orlenius, 2008: 469). A similar definition of tolerance can be found in Mendus (1999: 3): '[W]e are genuinely tolerant of others only when we disapprove of them, or of their actions and beliefs, but nonetheless refrain

[2] Murphy (1997: 593) distinguishes between toleration 'as a set of social or political practices' and tolerance 'as a set of attitudes'. Drawing on this distinction, our contribution focuses particularly on tolerance understood as a set of attitudes.

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from imposing our own view'. Therefore, in order to distinguish tolerance from other concepts – such as indifference or affirmation – certain criteria have to be met: (a) a conflict or competing interests concerning the particular objects of tolerance, such as practices or beliefs, is assumed (objection dimension); (b) violence, disapproved manners, or actions toward those objects, are absent; and (c) equal rights are voluntarily recognized and not coercively (Forst, 2007; Orlenius, 2008). Tolerance not only relates to political rights but also to the toleration and acceptance of socio-cultural and socio-economic differences within a society (Weldon, 2006: 335). This kind of tolerance, 'the willingness to live and let live, to tolerate diverse lifestyles and political perspectives', is known as social tolerance (Norris, 2002: 158). It incorporates an individual's perception of what is right or wrong, and the extent to which the content of these differences can be expressed (Weldon, 2006: 336). Distinguishing between the act (cf. Maule and Goidel, 2003; Orlenius, 2008), the moral issue (cf. Loftus, 2001; Cohen *et al*., 2006; Andersen and Fetner, 2008b), and the group (cf. Gibson and Gouws, 2000; Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003; Weldon, 2006; Dunn *et al*., 2009; Ikeda and Richey, 2009) to which tolerance can be expressed (cf. Wagner, 1986: 48), we focus on social tolerance regarding the latter. Social tolerance in this context is understood as the willingness to tolerate or accept persons or certain groups as well as their underlying values and behavior by means of a co-existence (even if they are completely different from one's own). With this view we tap the range of groups, and thus their ideas as well as activities 'that people will allow to go uncensored in society', and investigate the political circumstances in which social tolerance will be given (Chong, 1994: 27).[3]

Weldon (2006: 336) operationalizes social tolerance using a content-controlled index comprising questions on the toleration of ethnic differences (concerning neighbors, employment, marriage, societal, and cultural integration). These questions were administered to respondents that found minority groups personally disturbing and to those who stated that there is a group that other people find disturbing. According to Norris (2002: 158), however, 'there are many alternative measures' to capture social tolerance. One such measure that 'taps many of the most common types of narrow-mindedness and bigotry' is the social tolerance scale that can be derived from the WVS (Norris, 2002: 158). This approach also overcomes the weakness of various content-controlled measures (mostly applied to political tolerance): many only inquire about one or a few more 'objectionable' groups; it is therefore impossible to distinguish those who dislike only one group from those who dislike almost every group other than their own.

[3] Following the logic of Allport (1958: 398) and others, it seems even more appropriate to discuss a more inclusive, warmer notion of tolerance in place of the conventional definition. '[T]he domain of tolerance should not apply solely to things that we oppose or dislike; rather it is proper to speak of tolerating things even when we like them [… thus] tolerance in some realms may progress all the way from endurance to outright approval' (Chong, 1994: 26). We adopt this more inclusive definition of social tolerance, expressing a friendly and trustful attitude toward other people reflected in a 'non-negative general orientation toward groups outside of one's own' (Dunn *et al*., 2009: 284).

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In the WVS, social tolerance, as the toleration or acceptance of groups outside one's own (cf. Dunn *et al.*, 2009), is measured with a battery of items: 'On this list are various groups of people. Could you please mention any that you would not like to have as neighbors?' The question covers ten categories: drug addicts, people of a different race, people who have AIDS, immigrants/foreign workers, homosexuals, people of a different religion, heavy drinkers, cohabiting unmarried couples, people who speak a different language, and, ultimately, another relevant minority in a given country. Each item is binary coded to capture whether the respondent accepts or rejects a particular group as neighbors. For theoretical and empirical reasons, however, we modify the social tolerance index applied in Norris (2002) and Dunn *et al.* (2009) as follows: According to the existing tolerance research (especially Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003) the broad public is unlikely to ever tolerate groups or acts that display a certain level of delinquency. Peffley and Rohrschneider (2003: 247) argue that 'in most countries, criminals do not enjoy the same citizenship rights as non-criminals'. Applying this logic to the WVS battery on social tolerance, we identify drug addicts and heavy drinkers as groups that possibly fall into that category.[4]

Ultimately, social tolerance is measured with an additive index ranging from 0 to 7, where higher values indicate higher social tolerance. Referencing groups outside of one's own, our definition of social tolerance also includes a variety of groups in order to avoid undermining the scale for an individual (cf. Dunn *et al.*, 2009). This summated rating scale produces an average inter-item correlation of 0.35 and a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.79. With these multiple items we anticipate that a respondent cannot be a member of each group at once, which yields a rudimentary content-controlled measure (Gibson, 1992; Sullivan *et al.*, 1993; Mondak and Sanders, 2005; Dunn *et al.*, 2009).

Taking a closer look at the levels of social tolerance (Table 1), it becomes clear that they vary considerably from country to country.

These figures indicate that the level of social tolerance ranges from high in Sweden and Norway, to low in some Eastern European states (Moldova, Ukraine, Russia), in some Asian states (India, Indonesia, South Korea), as well as in Turkey. They also undermine the notion that the level of social tolerance in individual countries could be directly linked to a specific type of culture. As the Western European countries are mainly clustered together, they are interspersed with other countries, such as Argentina, Brazil, or Uruguay. One can find countries from Eastern Europe, Africa, and Latin America in both the second and the third thirds of the distribution. If we

[4] It may be debatable if drug addicts and heavy drinkers can be considered as criminals, but they certainly represent a higher social threat than unmarried couples or immigrants. Conducting a principal component analysis of the nine items based on tetrachoric correlations confirms these theoretical considerations. Our results show that drug addicts and heavy drinkers fall into a different category than the remaining social groups and therefore should be excluded from the social tolerance scale.

The tenth answer category is a residual category, where the respondent can write in a group of his/her choice. Due to numerous missing values and reasons of comparability, this category is excluded.

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Table 1. Country information

| Country | n | Social tolerance index (mean) | Social tolerance index (std. dev.) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sweden | 963 | 6.85 | 0.61 |
| Norway | 1001 | 6.75 | 0.84 |
| Argentina | 869 | 6.71 | 0.68 |
| Canada | 1937 | 6.59 | 0.94 |
| The Netherlands | 867 | 6.55 | 0.93 |
| Spain | 1002 | 6.51 | 1.02 |
| Uruguay | 902 | 6.46 | 1.21 |
| Great Britain | 895 | 6.45 | 1.01 |
| Switzerland | 1154 | 6.29 | 1.69 |
| Brazil | 1393 | 6.28 | 1.45 |
| United States | 1183 | 6.19 | 1.23 |
| Australia | 1320 | 6.03 | 1.83 |
| Germany | 1871 | 6.00 | 1.78 |
| Chile | 896 | 5.93 | 1.71 |
| Finland | 959 | 5.93 | 1.83 |
| South Africa | 2767 | 5.84 | 1.40 |
| Slovenia | 803 | 5.73 | 1.86 |
| Italy | 932 | 5.55 | 2.06 |
| Bulgaria | 743 | 5.29 | 1.69 |
| France | 954 | 5.24 | 2.15 |
| Romania | 1452 | 5.14 | 1.86 |
| Ukraine | 761 | 5.07 | 1.66 |
| Russian Federation | 1491 | 5.00 | 1.59 |
| Moldova | 952 | 4.57 | 1.47 |
| India | 1381 | 3.89 | 1.73 |
| Indonesia | 1687 | 3.68 | 1.59 |
| Turkey | 1170 | 3.64 | 1.96 |
| South Korea | 1195 | 3.54 | 1.97 |
| Mean | 1196 | 5.63 | 1.49 |

*Note*: This table presents an overview of descriptive statistics for all countries in the sample.

are unable to find explanations based either on socio-economic resources or on shared historical-cultural experiences and their expression in modern convictions and attitudes, then how *are* we to explain the varying levels of social tolerance? Providing an answer to this question is the task of the next section.

## Theory and hypothesis of the institutional foundations of social tolerance

Tolerance is often considered a virtue, a virtue of democracy, and pluralism. It is not, however, an innate characteristic, it must be acquired and learned; it is not only a product of individual competence but also a result of the cultural imprint – of the political, social, and religious fabric of society (Fritzsche, 1995: 11). At the core of the

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present analysis is the perspective that the qualities of institutions act as catalysts for social tolerance. In contrast to prior research (cf. Weldon, 2006; Marquart-Pyatt and Paxton, 2007; Andersen and Fetner, 2008b), we establish our theory exclusively around political-institutional conditions and their ability to shape social tolerance, an analytical dimension which, to date, has been rather neglected (cf. Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003; Dunn *et al*., 2009). Viewed systematically, this inquiry forces us to take hierarchical structures into account, as the assumption is posited that a macro-level condition (qualities of institutions) is capable of influencing individuals at the micro-level (the attitude to tolerate others).[5] Theoretically, interactions with one's social surroundings can shape individual choices; however, an individual's attitudes can also be traced back solely to the observation of one's environment. A specific incentive offered by the individual's economic and socio-political surroundings can influence the individual to think and feel in a particular manner. From the perspective of neo-institutionalism, political institutions are capable of molding individual preferences and stimulating or limiting behavioral options and affective orientations toward others by means of certain incentive mechanisms (Hall and Taylor, 1996). Our approach thus follows this tradition of 'new institutionalism' in political science. Whereas classical institutionalism focuses on formal rules, new institutionalism includes informal settings, thereby enabling the discovery of previously undetected effects. Moreover, in contrast to the earlier historical-descriptive institutionalism, which focused on rules and constitutions, the *new* institutionalism takes an explicitly empirical approach to the analysis of the effectiveness and regulative power of political institutions. Institutions can structure the exchange of information or various types of behavior and can also impose sanctions. In other words, political-institutional conditions as opportunity structures influence individual attitudes (Anderson and Singer, 2008; cf. Freitag and Traunmüller, 2009). As demonstrated in recently published literature, there are specific qualities of institutions that have been shown to be important for forming affective orientations toward others (Rothstein and Uslaner, 2005; Herreros and Criado, 2008; Rothstein and Stolle, 2008; Freitag and Bühlmann, 2009). In this sense, institutions can stimulate individual tolerant attitudes. The central assumption of our approach is that tolerance-based relationships can be attained through the maintenance of individual social status and security.[6]

[5] We are aware that survey research cannot capture actual behavior but only attitudes. Even if the relationship between both is inconsistent, to learn more about attitudes, as captured with our measure of social tolerance, and how these are shaped is essential.

[6] According to our understanding, there is no appropriate measure in the WVS reflecting status anxiety. A possible proxy could be seen in 'perceived threat', which Sullivan *et al*. (1993) note is the only relevant variable for social tolerance (understood as desire to socialize or to express social approval). They discover that respondents are significantly less socially tolerant than politically tolerant. 'Given those results, then levels of social tolerance will only be increased by removing or substantially reducing levels of perceived threats from target groups' (ibid: 261). We can confirm this function of 'threat' – people would try to take advantage of the respondent (v47, WVS) – and social tolerance: this variable cannot however account for the varying levels of social tolerance and differences in means in our sample.

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According to Feldmann *et al.* (2000: 11), one of the basic prerequisites to an unprejudiced and unbiased approach to people and concepts perceived as 'alien', is a stable identity. In this perspective, '"identity" establishes what the person is and where he or she is situated in terms of others' (Tatalovich and Smith, 2001: 3). The context in which individuals live is likely to contribute to a feeling of security/insecurity and adequacy/inadequacy as well as status stability/anxiety due to varying levels of threat. Tolerance must therefore be 'affordable', as only somebody sure of him/herself, living in an appropriate context, can afford to be tolerant: when status positions and social roles are certain and guaranteed by specific qualities of institutions, the willingness to accept others and to behave in a tolerant way will most likely increase.[7] In such an institutional environment citizens are socialized and connected to a variety of attitudes, opinions, and groups, which form an integral part of the political system and aid individuals in orienting themselves according to defined principles of conflict management. However, when status positions and social roles are uncertain, the propensity for individuals and groups to search for various modes of self-expression calculated to establish a secure identity increases. The apprehension and anxiety that accompany the demand for personal self-expression nourish growth in the number of status claimants, including disputes about alternative cultural styles of life and issues revolving around questions of race, ethnicity, gender, and other group concerns. In particular, the increased complexity of economic and social contexts through internationalization leads to a growing pluralism within society that makes people feel insecure and perceive themselves as disadvantaged. If people feel insecure of who they are and where they are situated in relation to others, they are in danger of becoming intolerant toward others (Fritzsche, 1995: 16; Feldmann *et al.*, 2000; Tatalovich and Smith, 2001).[8] This process is further enhanced since unhappy and worried individuals are more likely to blame an

[7] Another argument in this context concerns social categorization and social identity theory, according to which the groundwork for all forms of social discrimination and prejudice lies in ingroup differentiation and associated biases (for an overview of social identity theory see Brewer and Gaertner, 2004). Social identity, as a psychological attribute of the individual, subsumes individual and intergroup relations 'as a complex interplay between cognitive and motivational processes within individuals and structural features of the social environment that make group distinctions salient and meaningful' (ibid: 304). The process linking strong social identities and intolerance according to Gibson and Gouws (2000: 280) is straightforward: 'strong identities, tinged with authoritarianism, lead to anti-identities' and thus to the perception of threatening outgroups. Consociationalism as 'one possible solution (e.g. Lijphart, 1977), and others advocate institutions that are capable of ingroup policing (e.g. Fearon and Laitin, 1996), but some scheme must be implemented to impede the institutionalized dominance of any particular group [...]. Especially in deeply divided societies, group identities, and intolerance most likely go hand in hand' (ibid: 280).

[8] 'While "status" will not entirely displace "class"', it is anticipated that 'status [...] becomes more rather than less significant in the development of the political systems of late capitalism' by being an essential 'part of the process of political mobilization, whereby groups, enjoying relative levels of privilege or disprivilege, constantly organize in the interests of maintaining or improving their position within society' (Tatalovich and Smith, 2001: 4).

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outgroup and to believe that the members of an outgroup contribute to negative personal conditions (McLaren, 2003). To put it bluntly, status anxiety may ultimately lead to intolerant speech and actions, especially when individuals feel inadequate and deprived, that is, when they have few chances to be included in the democratic decision process, to obtain equal life chances, and to be treated fairly by the government. The question then remains as to which substantive qualities institutions must have in order to act as catalysts for social tolerance.

We argue that power-dispersing, universalistic, and non-partisan political-institutional configurations increase the likelihood that social tolerance will develop as long as these 'rules' reduce status anxiety. In this vein, the first quality of institutions is the extent to which mechanisms of inclusion are present. Some institutions are designed to afford greater opportunities of *inclusiveness* to both winners and losers of democratic competition. Against this background, there is the need for a crucial distinction between different types of democracies. If citizens experience systematic discrimination because of certain decision-making processes, it seems plausible that these individuals fear losing their status within society. This permanent threat will generate intolerance among individuals who are confronted with disadvantages or who are singled out as special cases due to the institutional setting. However, inclusive political-institutional structures nourish social tolerance by allowing the manifold societal interests to partake proportionally in the decision-making process and by systematically integrating minorities into this process. These systems facilitate mutual respect and contribute to deliberation among groups. Seminal work conducted by Lijphart (1999: 275ff.) suggests that consensus democracies are 'kinder and gentler', fostering and encouraging 'mutual persuasion', a strong social consciousness as well as public discourse (Lijphart, 1999: 293). Consensus democracies provide a plurality of interests access and are 'superior in social integration', providing various (institutional) incentives to cooperation (Armingeon, 2002: 82). In this form of democracy, citizens are socialized and subjected to a variety of opinions and arguments incorporated in the decision-making process according to a consociational principle, that is, conflict management by cooperation. In other words, consensual institutional arrangements produce particular habits and norms of affective orientations toward others, thus making people inherently more tolerant through socialization mechanisms and by frequently exposing individuals to a diversity of social groups and interests.[9] In this regard, inclusive political-institutional structures prevailing in consensus democracies allow policymakers to adapt policies according to the diverse preferences and ideas of people living in those structures and provide manifold

[9] Another substantial argument supporting this reasoning stems from mass media studies: according to Dunn *et al.* (2009: 286) there is a '*mere exposure effect* (Zajonc, 1968)' which states that 'attitudes toward a neutral stimulus become more positive with repeated exposure, and awareness of this exposure is not necessary. Simply having the information within receptive range is sufficient to improve people's attitudes towards it.'

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access to influence and encourage political compromise as a breeding ground for social tolerance.

A second key attribute of political institutions is the extent to which they are *universally oriented* and provide their citizens with equal opportunities to develop tolerance (Crepaz and Damron, 2009). In this regard, a universalistic welfare state has the following advantages: one can assume that people who receive assistance on the basis of equal rights and responsibilities are less likely to be stigmatized as 'others'. Moreover, by reducing inequality and providing key resources, universalistic welfare states abate fears of being exploited by other members of society or robbed of the equal opportunity to lead a successful life. Hence, the provision of goods such as health care, education, and security are basic opportunity principles (Gutmann and Thompson, 1996: 273) that are able to bridge the class divide (Crepaz and Damron, 2009: 437) as well as to universally include different social groups. Therefore, the more comprehensive a welfare state is, the more tolerant its people are expected to be.

Finally, institutions must enshrine concepts such as *fairness*, justice, incorruptibility, non-partisanship, truthfulness, and transparency as the core norms of communal living. These institutions generalize values to the extent that they transparently hold the members of society to these norms and impose sanctions on those who breach them. Influenced by fairness-generating institutions and with the knowledge that sanctions will be imposed on those who violate these norms, each person comes to tolerate others. These institutions create a reliable environment in which personal status security is assured and social tolerance can therefore prosper. If there is reason to suspect that the rule of law in a given country is weak, such that legal organs like the judicial system or law enforcement are unable to ensure secure contracts or prevent some actors from receiving undue privileges, social intolerance between individuals is more likely to develop. Moreover, if citizens feel that they are not treated fairly by the authorities and politicians, their self-esteem will be negatively influenced, thereby shaping how they feel toward other people. If the officials of the government or the public administration are not fair, why should the rest of society be?

Summing up, the central assumption of our approach is that institutions, depending on their level of inclusiveness, universality, and fairness, reduce an individual's perceived threat from groups outside his or her own and thus foster social tolerance. Our main hypothesis is formulated as follows.

> Individuals living in a country in which political interests are represented in a proportional, inclusive manner, whose institutions of the welfare state reduce inequalities, and whose authorities are seen as incorruptible exhibit a higher level of social tolerance. It is expected that these influences will prevail even when controlling for individual and contextual level predictors.

## Data, methods, and operationalizations

For the remainder of this paper, our primary focus will be on testing the introduced hypothesis. Based on hierarchical analyses of the latest WVS (2005–08) and

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national statistics, we assess both individual as well as contextual aspects that influence individual social tolerance. Using these data, indicators derived from the international literature on tolerance were retained and complemented with indicators accounting for political-institutional settings (cf. Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003; Weldon, 2006; Andersen and Fetner, 2008b; Dunn *et al.*, 2009). Owing to reasons of data availability and comparability, our final sample comprises 28 nations and includes 33,500 objects of analysis.[10] To encompass the influence of both individual-level (level-1) and contextual (level-2) factors, hierarchical analyses are conducted, permitting the simultaneous estimation at both levels in a statistically accurate way (cf. Steenbergen and Jones, 2002). Accounting for dependencies of individuals within the same country cluster therefore circumvents the problem of spuriously significant results (Hox, 2002: 5). In short, we simultaneously test for differences between respondents' characteristics and for variations in these between countries with different institutional heritages.

Our social tolerance index is constructed from an additive scale that measures personal attitudes toward various groups, ranging from unmarried couples to homosexuals (for details see section two and Appendix 1). At the macro level, based on the hypothesis presented above, the main explanatory variables of interest for our analyses are the following political-institutional attributes: inclusiveness, universality, and fairness. *Inclusiveness* is primarily understood as the degree of power sharing within a country (cf. Lijphart, 1999) and typically conceptualized as the system of proportional representation. We measure proportional representation with the degree of disproportionality between votes and seats in national elections (Gallagher, 1991; Gallagher and Mitchell, 2008). The extent to which institutions are *universally oriented* is captured by health-care expenditures as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP; Norris, 2009).[11] Health-care expenditures are a high-quality universal program and increase the feeling of 'optimism' and 'equal opportunity' among large segments of the population by satisfying basic needs (Clayton and Pontusson, 1998: 80f.; Rothstein and Uslaner, 2005: 63).[12] Our *fairness* indicator is based on the average estimated risk of corruption (2001–02) by means of the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI); higher scores indicate incorruptibility (Norris, 2009).[13]

In the analyses to follow, our models furthermore control for traditional explanations of tolerance, that is, socio-economic, societal, cultural, and democratic

[10] A further reduction of our sample size is attributable to list wise deletion conducted when information on key variables at the individual level was missing.

[11] Missing values for some cases led us to refrain from using other comparative institutional indicators of welfare state systems, such as Esping-Andersen (1990).

[12] Although public health expenditures are not an institutional variable *per se*, they are an approximate measure for welfare effort, especially since total government spending is considered to be 'too broad' a measure for the size of the welfare state (Clayton and Pontusson, 1998: 78).

[13] The CPI aggregates expert assessments and opinion surveys about the perceived corruption within countries into a single score using data from various institutions on frequency of corrupt payments, the value of bribes paid, etc., therefore also functioning as an indicator for effective democracy (Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, 2008).

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explanations. According to prior research these four indicators are fundamental in shaping social and political tolerance,[14] respectively (Sullivan and Transue, 1999; Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003; Weldon, 2006; Andersen and Fetner, 2008b; Dunn *et al.*, 2009). To capture a country's degree of *economic prosperity* as well as its level of modernization, we use the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI; Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003; Dunn *et al.*, 2009; Norris, 2009). Taking the average value of two years (2001–02), this mean centered index combines information on three important dimensions of development: GNP per capita, average life expectancy, and the level of education. To account for *societal composition* we include the measure of ethnic fractionalization (Alesina *et al.*, 2003; Dunn *et al.*, 2009). High values on this scale imply a highly heterogeneous society (Norris, 2009). The *cultural tradition* is captured by the religious context of a country ('cultural heritage', cf. Minkenberg, 2002). 'Culture does matter […] historical religious traditions have left an enduring imprint on contemporary values [… which] are part of a broader syndrome of tolerance, trust, political activism, and emphasis on individual autonomy that constitutes "self-expression values"' (Inglehart and Norris, 2003: 64ff.). The average level of religiosity (i.e. the emotional dimension indicating how important religion is to the respondents) in a given country[15] is aggregated from the WVS question on individual religiosity. It provides the share of people who consider themselves religious. Finally, we integrate the duration of *democracy* in years as a measure of the democratic tradition, accounting for the persistence and stability of a democracy (Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003; Marshall and Jaggers, 2009).

At the individual level, determinants of social tolerance include social attributes, social integration, and political orientations. A considerable degree of consensus has developed in the literature concerning the following *social attributes*: gender, age,[16] educational level,[17] and religiosity[18] (Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003: 249;

[14] In compliance with previous research (Dunn *et al.*, 2009: 288) traditional explanations of political tolerance can easily be adapted to research on social tolerance.

[15] According to Pickel (2001: 109), it seems advisable to distinguish three central dimensions of Christian religiosity in order to be able to provide differentiated information on a country's religion: (1) church attendance, (2) trust in the church as an institution, and (3) personal beliefs, that is, subjective religiosity. Since we do not only consider Christian orientations, in which church attendance play a more prominent role, we include a broader measure of religiosity shown to be vital for individual attitudes (though analyses not presented here show that the average church attendance and the average religiosity are highly correlated).

[16] Owing to the design of our research, we are unable to differentiate between cohort and life cycle effects.

[17] Variables measuring income or social class were excluded from the analysis since those data were missing for a large number of respondents. It can be reasonably assumed (aside from problems of social desirability) that income and social class are not missing at random and would therefore introduce considerable bias to our analyses (Little and Rubin, 2002). We however approximate social status by including a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1983): educational attainment.

[18] Further analyses not presented here show that individual religious self-assessment and actual church attendance are highly correlated. Substituting religiosity with the measure of regular (at least monthly) church attendance does not alter the results of our statistical analyses.

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Wernet *et al*., 2005: 353; Weldon, 2006: 338; Marquart-Pyatt and Paxton, 2007: 96f.; Andersen and Fetner, 2008b: 946; Dunn *et al*., 2009: 288). It is expected that women, the young, and the highly educated are more likely to express higher levels of social tolerance (cf. Wernet *et al*., 2005). Individual religiosity, included as a proxy for traditional value orientations, is expected to negatively influence social tolerance (cf. Mondak and Sanders, 2003; Dunn *et al*., 2009: 290). According to Sullivan *et al.* (1993: 137) 'the most important factor affecting [political] intolerance appears to be religious traditionalism, a diagnosis also made by other writers'. Based on Gerhards (2007: 14) we assume this individual level influence 'regardless of the particular denomination'. *Social involvement or integration* in the broader society (e.g. through civic engagement or reading the news) is expected to produce more liberal attitudes due to greater exposure to the world and diversity of ideas, such as interests, beliefs, lifestyles, and values different from one's own (Gibson, 1987; Hodson *et al*., 1994: 1546f.; Dunn *et al*., 2009; Ikeda and Richey, 2009: 662). We use civic engagement and the level of personal (media) information to measure social integration. Finally, *political orientations* may also affect social tolerance. Support of democratic ideals and postmaterialism are anticipated to foster the attitudes of self-determination and social tolerance. A more detailed description of all variables, their operationalizations, and related hypotheses can be found in Appendix 1.

A further issue that requires clarification is the problem of directionality in our relationship. One could argue that institutions are of course the result of citizens' collective action and may therefore be endogenous to individual attitudes and behavior in the long run. Following previous studies on institutional influences (cf. Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003; Weldon, 2006; Dunn *et al*., 2009), we argue, however, that institutional arrangements can be considered exogenous framework conditions which cannot be altered by an individual in the short and medium run (Freitag and Stadelmann-Steffen, 2010); instead, there is much evidence that they influence individual preferences, attitudes and behavioral patterns (see Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1987: 1200). In other words, there is little theoretical reason to assume that tolerant societies choose representation with a high degree of proportionality, universalistic welfare states, or incorruptible institutions to foster inclusiveness, universality, and fairness. Our analyses are based on this assumption, that certain qualities of political institutions facilitate individual social tolerance.

## Empirical findings

Focusing particularly on the influence of national characteristics, we follow the logic of hierarchical modeling by first introducing an empty model (model 1) and then presenting a progression of models, each one building on the last.[19] The main

[19] All models are estimated via maximum likelihood and introduce a random intercept to account for overall mean differences in attitudes across countries. All explanatory variables are assumed fixed, except for civic engagement, where a random slope is introduced.

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analysis reports the findings from four models. Model 2 assesses the impact of our individual level explanatory variables; however, it does not yet account for any macro-societal and institutional variables. Established from traditional explanations of tolerance, model 3 introduces our contextual control variables, presenting a baseline model to explain individual levels of social tolerance. We then proceed to our main hypothesis, introducing the three relevant political-institutional indicators in model 4 complementing previous explanations of social tolerance.

Turning to the empirical test of our derived hypotheses, Table 2 displays the results for the multilevel models. Discerning variation within nations from variation between nations in *model 1*, our analyses reveal that approximately 28% of our total variance can be accounted for by differences between countries. The intra-class correlation thus shows a rather large degree of dependence within countries.

Our *second model* adds micro level indicators for social tolerance, reducing the individual level variance somewhat. Except for civic engagement, which fails to reach the statistical significance level,[20] this model reveals that all individual level control variables point in the theoretically expected direction. In other words, young, highly educated women, who do not consider themselves religious, who are very informed, who have high democratic ideals, and possess a postmaterialist value orientation exhibit a higher level of social tolerance. As assumed, individual level predictors shape individual social tolerance; nevertheless, unexplained differences between countries persist. Controlling for individual characteristics even increases the contextual differences in model 2.

In addition to individual resources and predispositions as well as to avoid spurious results, *model 3* establishes a baseline model against which our hypothesis will be tested (see Inglehart, 1997, 2000; Inglehart and Baker, 2000; Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003; Inglehart and Welzel, 2005; Wernet *et al.*, 2005; Weldon, 2006; Andersen and Fetner, 2008b; Dunn *et al.*, 2009). Accordingly, we would expect that two individuals with equal characteristics exhibit different attitudes under differing conditions, that is, a country's economic setting, societal composition, religiosity, and democratic stability. Interestingly, our third model cannot fully confirm these previous findings. Only the economic setting (HDI) exhibits statistical significance, indicating that economically developed countries show increased levels of social tolerance, thereby providing support to the oft-stated postmaterialist hypothesis, that is, Inglehart's (1997) thesis that 'economic development can lead to changes in peoples' psychological orientations and preferences' (Sullivan and Transue, 1999: 640). A materially secure setting thus appears capable of reducing a perceived threat that otherwise might emanate from other social groups, resulting in higher levels of social tolerance. Variables capturing

[20] The randomized coefficient significantly varies between countries pointing to an ambiguous effect depending on the level 2 unit. To further inquire into this effect, however, is beyond the scope of this paper.

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Table 2. Estimates for hierarchical models predicting levels of social tolerance in 28 countries

| | Model 1 | Model 2 | Model 3 | Model 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Intercept | 5.637*** | 4.821*** | 3.817*** | 2.209* |
| | (30.45) | (25.34) | (5.16) | (2.30) |
| Individual level | | | | |
| Gender | – | 0.110*** | 0.109*** | 0.109*** |
| | | (6.43) | (6.42) | (6.42) |
| Age | – | −0.006*** | −0.006*** | −0.006*** |
| | | (11.76) | (11.81) | (11.81) |
| Educational level | – | 0.065*** | 0.065*** | 0.065*** |
| | | (14.55) | (14.53) | (14.55) |
| Religiosity | – | −0.086*** | −0.085*** | −0.085*** |
| | | (4.33) | (4.30) | (4.30) |
| Civic engagement | – | −0.002 | −0.002 | −0.002 |
| | | (0.06) | (0.06) | (0.06) |
| Personal information | – | 0.028*** | 0.028*** | 0.028*** |
| | | (4.98) | (4.93) | (4.91) |
| Democratic ideals | – | 0.128*** | 0.128*** | 0.128*** |
| | | (10.42) | (10.43) | (10.39) |
| Postmaterialism | – | 0.114*** | 0.114*** | 0.114*** |
| | | (7.97) | (7.96) | (7.95) |
| Controls: traditional explanations | | | | |
| Human development index | – | – | **8.013**** | 2.183 |
| | | | **(3.03)** | (0.81) |
| Ethnic diversity | – | – | 1.267 | 0.960 |
| | | | (1.34) | (1.37) |
| Religiosity | – | – | 0.523 | 0.930 |
| | | | (0.46) | (0.99) |
| Democratic tradition | – | – | 0.000 | **−0.007+** |
| | | | (0.00) | **(1.66)** |
| Political-institutional qualities | | | | |
| Inclusiveness | – | – | – | **−0.061*** |
| | | | | **(2.92)** |
| Universality | – | – | – | **0.270**** |
| | | | | **(2.59)** |
| Fairness | – | – | – | **0.175+** |
| | | | | **(1.84)** |
| Variance components | | | | |
| Civic engagement ($\sigma^2$) | – | 0.022 | 0.022 | 0.022 |
| Individual level ($\sigma^2$) | 2.420 | 2.343 | 2.343 | 2.343 |
| Contextual level ($\sigma^2_{\mu 0}$) | 0.957 | 0.967 | 0.546 | 0.296 |
| Model properties | | | | |
| N | 33,500 | 33,500 | 33,500 | 33,500 |
| AIC | 124853.0 | 123835.1 | 123827.2 | 123816.2 |

Notes: +*P*-value<0.10; **P*-value<0.05; ***P*-value<0.01; ****P*-value<0.001. Absolute *z*-values in parentheses.

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the societal composition, such as ethnic fractionalization[21] exhibit no statistically significant influence. However, we are careful to attach too much weight to this result, since we partially attribute this effect to a statistical artifact. Societal heterogeneity as operationalized here is likely measured at the wrong level of analysis. Studies on diversity suggest that 'at the national level [diversity] often fails to translate into a plurality at the local level' (Finke and Adamczyk, 2008: 640).[22] Furthermore, our analyses reveal that the differential effect for the level of religiosity cannot be illustrated with our data, despite the fact that religiosity has been frequently shown as having left a sizeable imprint on contemporary values by translating norms and values of the institutions into individual attitudes (see also Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Rothwell and Hawdon, 2008: 257).[23] However, since the level of religiosity might be seen as a country's path of secularization, as disenchantment (Minkenberg, 2002: 234), this effect is partially captured by a country's level of socio-economic development. Finally, we cannot observe a statistically significant effect of democratic tradition on individual level social tolerance. However, disentangling the single mechanisms of how particular democratic settings work proves a more fruitful strategy, as model 4 will illustrate. To sum up, partially supporting previous findings, lower economic development encourages 'the maintenance of traditional values' (Andersen and Fetner, 2008b: 943).

Keeping these results from the (contextual) baseline model in mind, we now turn our attention to *model 4* and its additional explanatory power. With regard to our main hypothesis, the estimations seem to confirm our arguments. Our results demonstrate the expected significant effects of the disproportionality of an electoral system, its health-care efforts as well as its level of corruption in shaping social tolerance. Therefore, institutional qualities that foster a proportional, inclusive manner of representation of political interests, that reduce inequalities, and that promote incorruptibility of authorities are conducive to higher levels of social tolerance. These influences prevail even when controlling for individual and contextual level predictors. In this vein, an individual with the lowest scores (0) on all individual characteristics (i.e. average-aged male with no formal education, no religious background, who is not actively engaged in any associations and relatively uninformed, with low scores on democratic ideals, and focuses on materialist concerns) but who lives in a country with relatively low levels of disproportionality, a universally oriented welfare system, and a strong perception of fairness (i.e. a low degree of corruption), scores about 0.81 points higher on our social tolerance index, as opposed to the same individual living in a country

[21] Accounting for other structural measures such as urbanization does not alter our results. Owing to reasons of parsimony, we thus left those out of the analyses.

[22] Owing to the data availability, we are confined to this level of analysis.

[23] Religious institutions 'typically emphasize historical wisdom, and hence adherence to the *status quo*, that hinders social change' (Andersen and Fetner, 2008a: 314). Historic religious tradition is usually considered a 'key integrative device that maintains social order and fosters common beliefs and values among its individual members (Durkheim, [1915] 1968)' (Rothwell and Hawdon, 2008: 257).

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with opposite characteristics.[24] In comparison to our first model, model 4 reduces the individual level variance by 22% and the context dependent variance by 69% (group mean harmonized; formulae according to Windzio, 2008: 35). Moreover, compared to model 2, including key political-institutional aspects improves the model fit significantly.[25] The most obvious change from model 3 is in accordance with Peffley and Rohrschneider (2003: 252): the effect of economic development vanishes completely when accounting for political-institutional variables. Democratic tradition now reaches the statistical significance level, however, slightly diminishing individual levels of social tolerance and thus seemingly contradicting previous studies (Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003: 252).[26] These findings suggest that economic development or democratic tradition alone do not lead to higher levels of tolerance; rather, it is an effect of certain democratic institutions. To sum up, our findings imply that political-institutional factors are able to complement the traditional socio-economic, societal, cultural, and democratic explanations of social tolerance.[27] The results are in accordance with conclusions reached by previous studies on political and social tolerance that include only some political-institutional aspects (Andersen and Fetner, 2008b; Dunn *et al.*, 2009).[28]

Our results do however require further testing. Since we are dealing with a relatively small number of countries, single level-2 units can quickly exert a large influence on our country level effects.[29] Small samples are particularly prone to the dangers of influential observations dominating the results as well as the

[24] This exemplary difference for the same hypothetical individual within different contexts is obtained when calculating scores one standard deviation above and below the means of our main independent country characteristics, keeping all control variables at mean values.

[25] It seems appropriate to address possible problems resulting from multicollinearity, which could bias our results: if we split model 4 up into two models (1) including conventional explanations of tolerance, that is, our control variables (cf. model 3), and (2) our political-institutional variables only, we observe that the contextual variance is reduced by 63% in this second configuration. This is almost as much as can be achieved with model 4, however, including only three political-institutional variables; whereas model 3 only lowers the contextual variance by 43% including four 'conventional' variables. Since, despite multicollinearity, the conclusions drawn are the same, we report the complete model 4 as opposed to a more parsimonious model in order to avoid misspecification and to counter arguments concerning the possibility of spurious results. Again, political-institutional variables seem to substantially improve our understanding of individual social tolerance.

[26] This effect is due to the high correlation of socio-economic development and democratic tradition ($r = .69$). This multicollinearity hints at these variables quantifying a similar phenomenon. Introducing every variable individually, using an alternative indicator such as mean political rights (Polity IV), or introducing social tolerance as a binary response variable shows the expected (insignificant) effects.

[27] Problems resulting from multicollinearity have been dealt with by analyzing a variety of models and including alternative operationalizations for our main institutional indicators and level of development (e.g. Inglehart's aggregated postmaterialism index). The results remain robust toward those alternations.

[28] Compared to the results of Dunn *et al.* (2009), the inclusion of the effective numbers of parties as a measure for inclusiveness does not show the expected significant results.

[29] Analyzing level 1 and level 2 standardized residuals show that these are approximately normally distributed.

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reliability of regression estimates resulting in questionable conclusions. However, additional analyses not presented here excluding single level-2 units from the analysis show that the estimated coefficients are similar to those obtained in model 4. The influence of disproportionality, the welfare effort, and the perceived level of fairness remain robust to this modification. Supplementary tests to assess the robustness of our results were conducted, though not presented:

As suggested by Mondak and Sanders, ‘it is the exception that signals intolerance’ (2003: 496). If we follow this understanding of tolerance, this statement implies a dichotomous nature of social tolerance, that is, whether individuals are tolerant or intolerant. Only an individual accepting all seven groups as neighbors would then be truly tolerant. This alternative operationalization [0; 1] also circumvents possible problems attached to the nature of our original dependent additive count scale. The mixed-effects models for binary responses fully confirm the results presented above. The picture becomes even clearer (reference: models 2 through 4): all of our control variables (including democratic tradition) become statistically insignificant, whereas our variables of interest show the expected signs and are statistically significant. Leaving the control variables out of the regression equation in order to avoid over-determination does not alter these results. In addition, we ran model 4 separately for each individual item of the social tolerance index [0; 1]. Again, the results confirm our findings that political-institutional factors prevail over socio-economic, societal, cultural, and democratic explanations in shaping social tolerance.

Including alternative indicators such as proportional representation (Beck *et al.*, 2001; substituting electoral disproportionality), income inequality (Gini Index, CIA World Factbook, 2006; substituting health-care expenditures), or rule of law (Bertelsmann Transformation Index, 2003; substituting corruption) did not alter our conclusions.

Accounting for other aggregate cultural influences that could lead to spurious results, such as confessional heritage in a given country, that is, dominant religion, or a country’s particular social culture, that is, prevalence of postmaterialist values, does not change our results.

Finally, if we include all major indicators separately or in different combinations with our controlling factors, the conclusions we draw remain the same. Taking all evidence together, regardless of the rather small number of countries, disproportionality, welfare effort, and the level of corruption are the most robust contextual predictors of an individual’s level of social tolerance across various model specifications.

## Conclusion

In recent years, scholars in the social sciences have shown resurgent interest in the analysis of tolerance, due in part to increasing diversity, immigration, or globalization accompanied by distribution conflicts. Based on hierarchical analyses of

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the latest WVS (2005–08) and national statistics for 28 countries, our paper has evaluated both individual and contextual aspects that influence an individual's social tolerance. In order to fully capture the nature of social tolerance, it is necessary to understand the political, cultural, and socio-economic environment that shapes people's judgments. Our contribution follows those paths by investigating the macro-sources of social tolerance, presenting an institutional theory of social tolerance focusing particularly on specific facets of institutions such as inclusiveness, universality, and fairness that are presumed to provide a breeding ground for social tolerance.

As we have seen, individual-level characteristics affect individuals in a way (generally) consistent with past research, although not to such an extent that can account for the clear differences between countries. We argue that social tolerance is primarily a function of anxiety related to one's social, political, and economic status – when one's status is threatened, one is less likely to be tolerant of minority groups. Institutions are important essentially because they influence the level of inequality in a society, and hence the standing threat of losing one's status. With regard to the key contextual factors, our analyses provide much evidence to suggest that a country's political-institutional configurations, that is, institutions as 'the rules of the game in a society', significantly shape social tolerance (North, 1990: 3). High degrees of inclusiveness, universality, and fairness create a reliable environment in which personal security is assured and status anxiety is reduced. In this line of argumentation, our results suggest that individuals living in a country in which political interests are represented in a proportional, inclusive manner, whose institutions of the welfare state reduce inequalities, and whose authorities are seen as incorruptible exhibit a higher level of social tolerance. A major implication of the findings of this analysis is that these integrative institutional qualities provide a 'top-down' path to breaking out of the vicious circle of a lack of tolerance and conflict that is based upon this deficiency.

In order to complement research on social tolerance, we have used the latest available data to construct an additive social tolerance index. Our goal was therefore to increase reliability, reduce measurement error, and try to capture a more or less content-controlled measure. Nevertheless, our research is limited by the types of questions asked in the surveys. For instance, one fundamental problem common to all cross-national comparative surveys is the lack of more elaborate questions on social tolerance.

The question also remains as to whether inclusive, universal, and fair institutions lead to tolerant citizens or whether the causal relationship is reversed. We address this problem by incorporating a time lag between the institutional cause and its effect on individual social tolerance. The underlying rationale behind this strategy is somewhat ambiguous: We can only assume and theorize that the values of our main independent variables were also formed prior to individual social tolerance (see discussion above). Concerning causality, yet another scenario explaining our results seems plausible. It could be that some other factor (e.g. a long-term cultural force)

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influences both: the emergence of a certain institutional design and social tolerance. We cannot definitely rule out this possibility, though our robustness analyses do not support this assumption. According to our opinion there is still much work to be done before one can convincingly speak of causality and the entire causal structure of social tolerance poses a challenge worthy of additional research. However, we now know that there is at the very least a strong relationship and there is much evidence to suggest that inclusive, universal, and fair institutions lead to social tolerance.

Our findings should be viewed as the provisional results of an empirically oriented analysis. As certain limits are imposed on this research design by the limited availability and reliability of micro- and macro-level data, the hierarchical models must be viewed as a statistical method that complements previous investigations. Furthermore, while we concede that disproportionality, health-care expenditures, or estimated risks of corruption are not institutional variables *per se*, these are outcomes of particular institutional structures. This central assumption is based on the distinction between rules-in-form, the focus of classical institutionalism, and rules-in-use. The mere existence of formal rules (rules-in-form) is not consistently associated to their actual implementation and effective application (rules-in-use; Rothstein, 1996: 146; Vatter, 2002). Our analyses thus rely on these rules-in-use; however, in order to pinpoint the influence of political conditions on social tolerance in a systematic manner, even more precise estimates and measures of political-institutional configurations are needed. This investigation has however taken the first step toward greater clarity in this research area.

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## Appendix 1. Hypotheses and operationalizations

The following table presents the applied variables, their operationalizations and sources, and the expected directions of the relationships

| Variable | Operationalization and source[1] | Exp[2] |
|---|---|---|
| Individual-level variables | | |
| *Social tolerance* | An additive index according to theoretical and empirical assumptions is constructed out of the following seven indicators:<br>On this list are various groups of people. Could you please mention any that you would not like to have as neighbors?<br>People of a different race [V35]<br>People who have AIDS [V36]<br>Immigrants/foreign workers [V37]<br>Homosexuals [V38]<br>People of a different religion [V39]<br>Unmarried couples living together [V41]<br>People who speak a different language [V42]<br>Reverse coded: mentioned = 0, not mentioned = 1. Additive social tolerance index [0; 7] with higher values indicating higher levels of individual social tolerance. | |
| *Gender* | Dummy variable with 0 = male and 1 = female [V235, recoded]. | + |
| *Age* | Can you tell me your year of birth, please? 19__ [V236]. Recoded in years old and centered on the grand mean of the sample. | – |
| *Educational level* | Scale from 'no formal education' (0) to 'university-level education with degree' (8). [V238, recoded]. | + |
| *Religiosity* | Independently of whether you attend religious services or not, would you say you are [V187]. Recoded: not religious or atheist = 0; religious = 1. | – |
| *Civic engagement* | The variable takes the value '1' if the respondent is an active member in at least one of the following kinds of clubs/ associations:<br>Church or religious organization [V24]; sport or recreational organization [V25]; art, music, or educational organization [V26]; labor union [V27]; political party [V28]; environmental organization [V29]; professional association [V30]; humanitarian or charitable organization [V31]; consumer organization [V32]; any other (write in):__ [V33].<br>If the respondent is a passive member or not a member at all in any of the above listed associations, the variable takes the value '0'. | +/– |
| *Personal information* | People use different sources to learn what is going on in their country and the world. For each of the following sources, please indicate whether you used it last week or did not use it last week to obtain information:<br>daily newspaper [V223, recoded 0/1]; news broadcasts on radio or TV [V224, recoded 0/1]; printed magazines [V225, recoded 0/1]; in depth reports on radio or TV | + |

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**Appendix 1.** *(Continued)*

| Variable | Operationalization and source[1] | Exp[2] |
|---|---|---|
| | [V226, recoded 0/1]; books [V227, recoded 0/1]; internet, email [V228, recoded 0/1]; talk with friends or colleagues [V229, recoded 0/1]. Additive index of no sources used last week (0) or all sources used (7). | |
| *Democratic ideals* | I am going to describe various types of political systems and ask what you think about each as a way of governing this country. For each one, would you say it is a very good, fairly good, fairly bad, or very bad way of governing this country? Having a democratic political system [V151]. Reverse coded: 0 = very bad; 1 = fairly bad; 2 = fairly good; 3 = very good. | + |
| *Postmaterialism* | If you had to choose, which one of the things on this card would you say is most important? (code one answer only under 'first choice') [V71]. And which would be the next most important? (code one answer only under 'second choice') [V72].<br>Maintaining order in the nation<br>Giving people more say in important government decisions<br>Fighting rising prices<br>Protecting freedom of speech<br>Recoded: 0 = materialist (i.e. priority given to order and prices); 1 = priority to materialist and postmaterialist concerns; 2 = postmaterialist (i.e. priority given to government decisions and freedom). | + |
| Controls: traditional explanations | | |
| *Human Development Index (HDI)* | UNDP HDI; high values indicate high socio-economic development. Grand mean centered. Average 2001–02 [−0.22; 0.14]. *Source*: Norris (2009). | + |
| *Ethnic diversity* | Fractionalization index for various ethnic groups in a country. 0 = absolutely homogeneous; 1 = highly fractionalized. 2002 [0; 0.75]. *Source*: Norris (2009). | +/– |
| *Religiosity* | Independently of whether you attend religious services or not, would you say you are [V187]. Recoded: not religious or atheist = 0; religious = 1. Aggregated proportion of people who say they are religious [0.32; 0.94]. *Source*: World Values Survey 2005–08. | – |
| *Democratic tradition* | Democratic tradition in means of the number of years since the most recent regime change (e.g. from autocracy to democracy) or the end of a transition period within a country. 2005 [1; 157]. *Source*: Polity IV (Marshall and Jaggers, 2009). | +/– |
| Political-institutional qualities | | |
| *Inclusiveness: disproportionality of the electoral system* | Degree of disproportionality defined as the disparity between the distribution of votes and the allocation of seats for parties in national elections; whereby higher values indicate higher levels of disproportionality. Last election before 2005 (exceptions: Argentina 2005, Turkey 2008) [0.26; 21.95]. *Source*: Gallagher (2009). | – |
| *Universality: health-care expenditure* | Official statistics on health-care expenditures as a percentage of GDP. 2001 [0.6; 8.1]. *Source*: Norris (2009). | + |

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**Appendix 1.** *(Continued)*

| Variable | Operationalization and source[1] | Exp[2] |
|---|---|---|
| *Fairness: corruption* | Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index; 0 = highly corrupt; 10 = highly clean. Grand mean centered. Average 2001–02 [0; 10]. *Source*: CPI (2008), Norris (2009). | + |

[1]All data on the individual-level come from the World Values Survey 2005–08 (World Values Survey, 2005 Official Data File v20090621a and v20090621b 2009).
[2]Exp. = theoretically derived expected direction of relationship (+ = positive relationship; − = negative relationship).

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