

Addressing Affective Polarization: Intellectual Humility in Controversial Political Debates

Affective polarization, the positive perception of people with similar and the devaluation of people with opposing political identities and opinions, prevents political dialogue. One promising approach to counteract such polarization is fostering intellectual humility, the recognition of one's intellectual limitations. However, most work on the intersection of intellectual humility and affective polarization is limited to the US and the use of correlative designs. To address these limitations, my dissertation examines this intersection with three projects using quantitative and mostly experimental methods in Germany.

In the first project, we transferred the concept of intellectual humility to the German context by conducting a validation study (N = 698) of four self-report intellectual humility scales. Results showed that especially a scale measuring intellectual humility with regard to specific political issues showed good validities. In the second project, we conducted four online experiments (N = 1668) in which we manipulated the intellectual humility of target persons (using diary entries, imagined intergroup contact, and social media profiles) and measured the intellectual humility of participants. We found that participants' intellectual humility consistently predicted less affective polarization towards opinion-based groups. Additionally, intellectual humility of both participants and target persons was important to make participants willing to engage in political exchange. In the third project, we systematically compared five existing approaches to increase intellectual humility in an intervention tournament (N = 1503). This revealed that only an information text intervention was able to increase the participants' intellectual humility with regard to political topics. In this talk, I will briefly present the three research projects before discussing avenues for future research: studying the intersection of intellectual humility and social status, moving towards measuring state intellectual humility and behavioral measures, and studying intellectual humility in media and political elites.