Tolerance

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abstract Tolerance entails acceptance of the very things one disagrees with, disapproves of or dislikes. Tolerance can be seen as 'a flawed virtue' (Schuyt, 2001), because it concerns acceptance of the differences between others and ourselves we would rather fight, ignore or overcome. Although tolerance carries with it this negative connotation of conditionality, as imperfect as it may be it does provide a 'recipe' for dealing with sometimes irreconcilable differences between (groups of) people in society. In this article an examination of the paradoxical nature of tolerance is followed by a review of the academic literature and empirical findings on tolerance and its determinants. To conclude, future challenges for tolerance research are outlined.

keywords   intergroup relations ◆ intolerance ◆ prejudice ◆ tolerance ◆ toleration

Tolerance is a flawed virtue for a flawed society. (Schuyt, 2001)

Introduction

Tolerance is 'putting up with something you do not like' (Vogt, 1997: 1). Tolerance is not a 'self-evident' phenomenon: it is often fought for, and reached only after controversy, conflict or even war. Tolerance contains an internal paradox of accepting the things one rejects or objects to. To overcome or avoid conflict, one needs to tolerate the very things one abhors, disagrees with, disapproves of or dislikes (Gibson, 2006; Sullivan and Transue, 1999; Sullivan et al., 1982; Vogt, 1997). In other words: 'compromise entails tolerance' (Vogt, 1997: 2). Although not self-evident, tolerance is not uncommon: all over the world people have proved to be willing and able to tolerate and accept the seemingly irreconcilable differences between their own values, lifestyles, religious beliefs, political views, personal preferences, and those of others. For centuries philosophers and researchers alike have been intrigued by the question why people tolerate one another, and when and why they do *not* tolerate others. The urgency and relevance of this issue is only too obvious: without tolerance, communities that value diversity, equality and peace could not persist (Vogt, 1997).

This article discusses the nature, antecedents and dynamics of tolerance. It consists of three parts. The first part deals with the question of what tolerance exactly *is*; historical, philosophical and scientific understandings of tolerance will be summarized; and the conceptualization of (in)tolerance as a societal and a social characteristic will be outlined. The second part discusses the central dilemmas in tolerance research. It contains a review of the empirical literature on (in)tolerance and its predictors. In the third part of the article, future challenges for tolerance research are discussed.

The nature of tolerance

Tolerance: a European invention
In Europe the word tolerance appeared as early as in the second century, in *The Meditations* by Marcus Aurelius, who expressed the idea of tolerance as followed: 'All men are made one for another, either then teach them better, or bear with them' (in the translation of Casaubon, 1692: 169). The idea of tolerance

has been put forward by philosophers time and again, but tolerance has always remained a contested concept. Its practice and limitations have been subject to societal debate from the time of Aurelius to the present day.

'Long before the word tolerance gained currency in scientific terminology, it found its root in actual resistance against tyranny and repression' (Goudsblom, 2007: 44). In the sixteenth century authors – often anonymous, afraid of repercussions – started to use the word tolerance in their pamphlets to protest against inquisition and persecution of heretics (Goudsblom, 2007). During the Middle Ages, persecution of heretics by Catholics ended in the Reformation. Reformation in early modernity (*c.* 1500–1800) led to religious wars and insurgencies all over Western Europe. Inquisition, or ecclesiastical jurisdiction, as opposed to accusational jurisdiction (in which the defendant had more opportunities to actually defend him or herself) was deployed by those in power to enforce religious 'unity'. There was no division between religious and political power in the Protestant theocracies in Europe at the time (such as the regime of Calvin in Geneva), giving way to forceful repression of non-Protestants.

Sebastian Castellio (1515–63) was one of the thinkers of his age who openly and vigorously protested against Calvin, pleading for both religious and political tolerance (Goudsblom, 2007; Schuyt, 1997). Castellio's main argument was *theological*: 'By casting judgment on the belief of others, don't you take the place of God?' (as concisely summarized by Goudsblom, 2007: 44). In his opinion persecution for heresy would only lead to uprisings and unrest. So Castellio's plea for tolerance was a plea for stability and peaceful coexistence, hence a *political* argument. Throughout the eighteenth century not only the fight for freedom of religion, but also a secular fight for tolerance emerged, the plea for the right to fight religion *altogether*, yet in a peaceful way. The era in which claims for secular tolerance emerged – 'radical enlightenment' as it is called by Jonathan Israel (2001) – gave way to the establishment of liberal democracies in Europe as we know them today.

Throughout the sixteenth century the Netherlands functioned as a refuge for enlightened thinkers, such as Baruch de Spinoza, who were persecuted for their religious beliefs elsewhere in Europe (Van der Lem, 2006). The Dutch republic in those days accepted refugees of various Christian denominations and Jews, the latter being quite exceptional in Europe at the time. The 'Concordia' (unity) among civilians was highly esteemed, religious diversity was of secondary importance (Van der Lem, 2006). As long as every citizen swore allegiance to the state, it was permitted to establish one's own church and live in one's own religious community without interference from the state (Van der Lem, 2006). Notably, it was not agreement over religious matters, but the need for stability and peace between religious groups that fostered tolerance.

The Netherlands remained known for and proud of its tolerant climate. However, as in the rest of Europe, over recent decades an increase in intolerance of religious diversity has been reported (Walraven, 2010). Societal debates over tolerance as a 'cover-up' for mere indifference (see ten Hooven, 2001) reveal that the Netherlands, like any other country, cannot escape a debate over the scope and limits of tolerance. Ebbs and flows in levels of tolerance and shifts in the targets of intolerance are not particularly Dutch. They can be discerned all over the world and sometimes seem to follow global 'trends', as can be seen in the way Islam became a contested religion in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the US in 2001.

The term tolerance is no longer reserved for religious tolerance only. It is applied to diverging political orientations, ethnic and racial diversity, gender issues and matters such as homosexuality, euthanasia and abortion. The common denominator remains that tolerance comes into play only when matters are controversial and intergroup relations conflictual.

The paradoxical nature of tolerance – accepting the disliked

'Tolerance is putting up with something you do not like, often in order to get along better with others' (Vogt, 1997: 1). However short and condensed this definition of tolerance may be, it reflects the main characteristics of tolerance that most contemporary social scientists will agree upon.

First, to speak of tolerance, there must be an aspect of dislike, disagreement or disapproval. The term tolerance presupposes opposition or disagreement (Sullivan et al., 1982). If no such objection exists, we no longer speak of tolerance, but of indifference or plain sympathy (Vogt, 1997: 2). Tolerance is only required in the case of dislike, disagreement, disapproval, and thus is closely connected to differences between people (Vogt, 1997). Furthermore, tolerance does not refer to just any difference, but differences people consider *important* (Vogt, 1997: 2): 'If people do not believe that the difference is important, if they do not care about it, it makes sense to say that they are *indifferent* to it, but not that they tolerate it.' This 'conditional' characteristic of tolerance is crucial to understand what tolerance is exactly.

The 'paradoxical' nature of tolerance becomes clear when we approach tolerance as an attitude, in the social psychological meaning of the word

(Sullivan et al., 1982). An attitude consists of *cognitive* beliefs about an object, *affective* evaluations of that object and *behavioural* orientations towards that object (Sullivan et al., 1982). In the case of tolerance these three elements internally contradict one another: one refrains from negative action (e.g. discriminating, prohibiting, intervening) that would be in line with negative affect and cognitions towards an opposed person, group or idea.

Despite the broadly shared conception of tolerance as 'accepting the disliked', some scholars plea for 'a warmer grade of tolerance' (following Allport, 1954: 425), which means 'a feeling of friendliness toward all kinds of people and, thus, not only enduring but accepting them' (Mummendey and Wenzel, 1999). Disputes over the right definition and measurement of (in)tolerance troubles the adequate interpretation of the nature, antecedents and consequences of (in)tolerance in empirical research (Gibson, 2006; see also second section).

Oberdiek (2001) formulates the philosophical and practical dilemma of tolerance as follows: 'Given that tolerance of absolutely everything is out of the question, how do we judge what deserves the protective umbrella of toleration and what does not? If knowledge is not to be had – at least not in enough hard cases to matter – then how and where will we draw the line between the tolerable and the intolerable?' (Oberdiek, 2001: 19). This is exactly the question philosophers have been concerned with, and social scientists alike. The fact that 'Tolerance is not by definition good and intolerance is not by definition bad' (Verkuyten and Slooter, 2007: 476) further complicates our understanding of tolerance.

Political, moral and social tolerance

Vogt (1997: 17) broadly discerns three types of tolerance. The first is *political tolerance*. Vogt (1997: 17) hereby means tolerance towards 'acts in the public sphere, such as giving a speech, demonstrating, distributing leaflets, organizing meetings, and so on'. This type of tolerance concerns the support for civil liberties, typically those of disliked or unpopular groups. Political tolerance has been the subject of scientific studies since the 1950s (see Gibson, 2006; Sullivan and Transue, 1999; Sullivan et al., 1982). Vogt notes (1997: 17) that 'political tolerance is fundamental because it is important for winning and maintaining tolerance of other kinds'. Vogt explains how political tolerance precedes or 'paves the way for' other types of tolerance. Although diverse political orientations were the subject of the earliest systematic study of political tolerance (Stouffer, 1955), political tolerance is not confined to diversity in *political* orientations. Political tolerance refers to support for civil rights across religious, ethnic, political,

cultural and gender differences.

The second kind of tolerance Vogt discerns is *moral tolerance*. This means tolerance towards acts in the private sphere: 'Most typically and controversially in recent decades … sexual conduct, such as "living in sin", pornography, homosexuality, and abortion' (Vogt, 1997: 17). Vogt (1997) explains that what is at stake, is not the behaviour *per se*, but the question whether certain practices should be subject to public or governmental control. This tension is highly visible in contemporary public debates over euthanasia and gay rights. In the recent history of Western Europe a shift can be discerned with regard to homosexuality, from absolute intolerance (public and private prohibition) to increasing tolerance (sexual conduct is a private matter, and should not be publicly regulated) to full recognition of the equal rights of homosexuals to marry and adopt children in some countries in the last decades.

The third kind of tolerance Vogt describes is *social tolerance.* Social tolerance refers to acceptance of 'ascriptive characteristics people have at birth or acquire in early socialization such as skin color or language' (Vogt, 1997: 17). Vogt explains it is often not the characteristics in themselves that are disputed, but rather the behaviour and acts 'held to be 'inappropriate' of people with such characteristics. An iconic example Vogt uses to illustrate social tolerance is the use of public transport and other public facilities by blacks: prohibited in South Africa until the end of the twentieth century; not tolerated in the USA well into the 1960s. What is considered (in)tolerable varies over time and place and is subject to social, societal and political transformations.

Tolerance and prejudice

According to Vogt (1997), the opposite of tolerance is discrimination, not prejudice. It is not the *affect* and *cognitions* towards a group that are intolerant, it is the *behavioural* component (such as overt discrimination) that turns a negative attitude (including prejudices and stereotypes) into intolerance. Prejudices are commonly seen as 'preconceived, usually unfavorable, judgments or unfounded beliefs, often based on race/ethnicity, sexual preference, social class, age, gender, disability, religion' (Wikipedia, 2012), or according to Allport (1954: 6): 'Thinking ill of others without sufficient warrant'. Robinson et al. (2001: 74) note: 'It is notable that tolerance … does not presume acceptance of others' opinions and practices. This definition of tolerance [as enduring or putting up with others] implies that one can be tolerant and prejudiced simultaneously. … This possibility is rarely acknowledged in the literature, which tends to assume that tolerance and prejudice are mutually exclusive

and/or opposites of each other.' This conceptual fuzziness hinders the investigation of the relationship *between* prejudices and (in)tolerance. Does thinking ill of others inevitably lead to intolerance? Empirical research suggests a more complex relationship between prejudice and tolerance. Prejudice is found to interact with threat perceptions that in turn increase intolerance (Van der Noll et al., 2010). Exactly *how* prejudice and tolerance interrelate remains ambiguous if we rely on research on the subject. Prejudice may influence tolerance, but prejudice and intolerance are not different words for the same phenomenon.

Tolerance in societal context

Toleration: institutionalized tolerance. Tolerance and intolerance are not only characteristics of social relations between citizens (Mummendey and Wenzel, 1999), but also characteristics of societies or regimes as a whole. Tolerance is associated with democracy and democratic norms such as minority rights and social equality (for a discussion of tolerance according to three democratic theories, see Sullivan et al., 1982). Vogt (1997: 227–8) distinguishes toleration from tolerance, where *tolerance* concerns the interpersonal realm of social interactions, while by *toleration* he means:

> … governmental and other institutional policies and principles that limit discrimination and ban some restraints on individuals' liberties. Toleration, then, involves legal and institutional prohibitions of discrimination, whether that be done by broad constitutional principles limiting government action … or by more narrowly gauged legislation. … Toleration also has an intellectual component; it not only involves laws and organizations, but also societal and governmental principles of justice and fairness.

With *toleration* Vogt thus refers to what Mutz (2001) calls the democratic 'rules of the game'. Toleration in societies remains 'a matter of degree, a continuum, rather than an absolute measure' (Vogt, 1997). Vogt discerns six societal conditions that foster toleration: social diversity; a market economy; democratic political institutions; epistemological uncertainty; the predominance of rational calculation over tradition; and a critical mass of knowledge occupations (Vogt, 1990, in Vogt, 1997: 227–35). Vogt (1997: 252) argues that '[these societal conditions] make toleration more likely, they do not trigger it'. A relation between toleration as a societal characteristic and tolerance in the social domain is often assumed (Sullivan and Transue, 1999), but empirical evidence is ambiguous. The first large-scale investigation of levels of tolerance among US citizens

by Stouffer in the 1950s (Stouffer, 1955) led to the finding that a majority of citizens did *not* support equal rights for all political groups, while the USA was considered to be an established democracy. However, in an international comparative study political tolerance was found to be 'greater in stable democracies that have endured over time – the longer, the better' (Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003: 243). Van der Noll (2010: 192) demonstrates 'that countries have a large influence on whether someone supports the ban on headscarves, indicating that contextual differences matter'. Vogt (1997: 39) refers to the work of Amartya Sen (1995) and Partha Dasgupta (1993, 1995) to argue that democracy, open government and civil liberties are inversely proportional to a variety of social problems in poor countries, and concludes that 'Democracy, rights, liberties and tolerance are good for societies as a whole and for the people in them, including poor people and those subject to discrimination.'

Tolerance vs rights. Vogt (1997: 12) quotes Berlin (1969) to exemplify the distinction between rights and tolerance: 'Toleration is a matter of freedom *from*; rights are usually instances of positive liberty, of freedom *to*.' Rights and tolerance are not the same. Vogt (1997: 12–13) outlines three shifts from tolerance to rights. The first distinction lies in a change in emphasis from *permitting* to *protecting* certain freedoms. It is the difference between shutting one's eye to something that is not allowed or considered socially undesirable (such as the 'don't tell, don't ask' policy towards homosexuality in the American army, a policy established by Bill Clinton in the 1990s) and a legal and protected status (a position homosexuals gained in the US army not until 2010, under Obama's presidency). The second change discerned by Vogt concerns a shift in the burden of proof. When the burden of proof shifts from those arguing for tolerance to those arguing for repression, this signals a de-emphasis on toleration and a shift towards rights. 'Toleratees' need to plea for acceptance, and can be denied tolerance by more powerful others, while rights are non-negotiable. The third aspect of the shift from toleration to rights is governmental self-restraint in the exercise of repressive power. Thus, a democratic government should be reluctant to overrule minority rights. Vogt (1997: 13) notes that 'in a dozen or so nations (Britain, Canada, France, Holland, and the United States, among others) by the 20th century the weights have shifted from the mere tolerance side of the balance to the full rights side'.

Power dimensions underlying tolerance. Obviously, tolerance can only be tolerance, if the

tolerator has the power to intervene. Only if there is an option *not* to tolerate, can we speak of tolerance. When a person feels intimidated or has no power to interfere, it is improper to speak of tolerance. Self-restraint or the decision 'not to indulge' is essential to tolerance (Goudsblom, 2007). The 'toleratee' or object of tolerance has less of a choice than the one tolerating. This implies a power relationship between the subject and the object of tolerance (Goudsblom, 2007).

Tolerance and intolerance characterize the nature of the relationship between (groups of) people (Mummendey and Wenzel, 1999). Tolerance as well as intolerance reflect social inequality between groups. Social psychological analyses of intergroup relations (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999; Tajfel and Turner, 1979) suggest that relationships between groups in society always incorporate a power imbalance. Which groups *tolerate* and which groups are *tolerated* can be seen as a 'social representation' of societal status (Hagendoorn, 1995). Awareness of this power dimension underlying (in)tolerance is crucial to understand changes in tolerance levels as well as shifts in the objects of (in)tolerance. These shifts are also notable in research on intolerance. For instance, in the twentieth century research on prejudice, discrimination and intolerance was typically about racial discrimination. With the turn of the century attention shifted towards (in)tolerance for Muslims, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in New York. Social research thus reflects societal debates over who has the power and legitimacy to tolerate who.

Research on tolerance: where do we stand?

Introduction

What is known from research on tolerance is mainly what we know from the extensive body of literature on *political* tolerance (for reviews see Gibson, 2006; Sullivan and Transue, 1999). This line of research is informative, especially when it comes to comparing levels of (in)tolerance in a particular time and place. Furthermore, research on political tolerance has revealed – individual – sources of political (in)tolerance, such as threat perceptions and level of education, the first negatively and the second positively correlated with tolerance. Regrettably, much effort has been put into debates over the appropriate definition and measurement of political (in)tolerance, blurring our understanding of the social mechanisms leading to tolerance. Social psychological knowledge of intergroup relations is arguably beneficial to the study of (in)tolerance in a social context (Gibson,

2006; Mummendey and Wenzel, 1999; Sullivan et al., 1982; Vogt, 1997). Intergroup conflict theories shed light on the psychological and social mechanisms of power- and threat-perceptions influencing tolerance. To date, unfortunately, political tolerance studies and research on intergroup processes hardly intersect (Gibson, 2006; but see Gieling et al., 2011; Van der Noll et al., 2010; Verkuyten, 2007; Verkuyten and Slooter, 2007, 2008).

Problems of defining and measuring (political) tolerance

Political intolerance is among the most investigated phenomena in modern political science (Gibson, 2006). In political research what is measured usually entails support for the civil liberties of others; or support for the more abstract (democratic) 'rules of the game' that entail tolerance (Mutz, 2001). The adequate measurement of tolerance however is subject to ongoing debate (e.g. Gibson, 1992, 2005a, 2005b; Gibson and Bingham, 1982; Mondak and Sanders, 2003, 2005). Scholars disagree about the question of whether measuring tolerance in different ways has consequences for the presumed aetiology of tolerance. Gibson (1992) argues this is not the case, at least not as far as *in*tolerance is concerned.

Measuring political tolerance – Stouffer vs Sullivan's 'least-liked' method.   Stouffer's 1954 survey was the first systematic large-scale study of political tolerance in the USA. Stouffer (1955) investigated the political opinions of American citizens. He listed several unpopular (mostly political left-wing) groups, and assessed the willingness to support the civil rights of those groups. Stouffer's research was conducted in the days of McCarthy's 'Red Scare', and communists and other left-wing groups were commonly disliked and widely considered to be an unpopular 'out-group' (Sullivan and Transue, 1999). Stouffer's findings revealed that a majority of Americans did *not* support the extension of civil rights to communists and other leftist groups (Stouffer, 1955). Later, Stouffer's study was criticized for being biased, as it only assessed intolerance for leftist groups, and not for groups with other political affiliations (Sullivan and Transue, 1999). Some 20 years later Nunn replicated the study and concluded that American tolerance had increased (Nunn et al., 1978). Sullivan criticized these conclusions, arguing that tolerance had not increased, but the rejection of leftist groups had decreased, causing a shift in tolerance levels (Sullivan et al., 1979). As a response to Stouffer and Nunn, Sullivan and colleagues developed the so-called 'least-liked' method (Sullivan et al., 1979, 1982). Their 'two-step technique' (Sullivan et al., 1982) took into account the element

of disapproval and disagreement required to speak of tolerance. First, the negative affect towards several listed groups was measured, and subsequently respondents were asked to rate their support for civil rights of their *least-liked* group. This way it was made sure that every respondent rated the support for civil rights of a group they strongly disliked; a measurement technique that dovetailed better with the definition of tolerance as support for civil rights of an *opposed* group.

Gibson compared the two methods of measuring political tolerance – the Stouffer-like technique of listing several 'unpopular' groups and the least-liked technique developed by Sullivan and colleagues (Gibson, 1992). He concluded that both methods accurately measure intolerance and do not differ significantly in their conclusions regarding the underpinnings of intolerance. With both methods the determinants of intolerance remained broadly the same. Gibson (1992) argues that Stouffer's method can be considered a valid way to measure *in*tolerance, but it is not a good measure of tolerance. In Stouffer's work support for the civil rights of a certain group may indicate sympathy towards that group, and hence it does not assess tolerance as in 'putting up with something you do not like'.

However, in measuring intolerance for disliked groups only, the least-liked method does not reveal intolerance for practices by groups that are *not* disliked. For instance, it could be that people do not tolerate hate speech, regardless of who is talking. In that case it is the *act* that triggers intolerance, not the group. Other aspects that remain obscured in both Stouffer-like measures and the least-liked approach are trade-offs between values that shape (in)tolerance (Peffley et al., 2001). For instance, intolerance for a group that wants to demonstrate could be based on fear of social unrest rather than an objection against freedom of speech. In general, questionnaire studies fall short in grasping such motivational components that explain (in)tolerance for groups or acts. Value conflicts and trade-offs between values also explain discrepancies between the principle and the practice of tolerance.

The discrepancy between the principle and the practice of tolerance. Lawrence (1976: 82) states: 'There is great inconsistency between the norms people claim they adhere to in principle and those they are willing to apply in specific instances, at least to "controversial" issues or groups … the explanation for inconsistency is that citizens are unwilling to extend democratic rights to those they dislike or fear: tolerance is issue-related, or dependent on the situation in which it is to be extended.' Lawrence was among the first to

acknowledge this inconsistency between general and specific (abstract and applied) tolerance. Although people are generally willing to support the idea of tolerance, when facing its practical consequences, many react intolerantly.

Jackman (1978) assessed commitment to the norm of tolerance towards blacks among higher and lower educated white Americans, initially to test for the effect of educational differences on tolerance. A norm of tolerance regards 'relatively abstract, general principles', Jackman (1978: 302) notes. In her study she contrasted the *general* norm of tolerance with what she refers to as *applied* tolerance. General tolerance was assessed with a 'Support for Integration Index' containing statements such as: '[Blacks] have a right to live wherever they can afford to, like anybody else'. Applied tolerance was measured with a 'Support for Government Action Index' containing statements such as 'Some people feel that if [blacks] are not getting fair treatment in jobs the government in Washington should see to it that they do. How do you feel, should the government in Washington see to it that …?' Jackman (1978) expected the higher educated to be both more tolerant on the abstract measure and to be more consistent in their approval of tolerant policies. Results indicated that highly educated whites were indeed more tolerant when it came to the abstract norm of tolerance, but did not display more applied tolerance than the lower educated. Both higher and lower educated 'defected' on the norm of tolerance when it came to support for racial integration policy. Jackman's longitudinal results demonstrated that the higher educated did become more tolerant over time than the lower educated, but this was true only for abstract tolerance, not for applied tolerance. Also in more recent studies (such as Coenders et al., 2004), the discrepancy between the principle and the practice of tolerance is evident. Vogt (1997: 56), however, observes that 'this kind of result is strictly speaking not an attitude–behavior contradiction' but rather 'a contradiction between general and specific attitudes' (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1977, in Vogt, 1997). Vogt (1997: 57) quotes Schuman and Johnson (1976: 166): 'The typical associations reported [between tolerant attitudes and behaviour] are small or moderate only in terms of expectations that they be very large; they are not particularly small in comparison with magnitudes reported in social research generally.' Finally, some studies reveal that self-reported intolerance does *not* necessarily coincide with intolerant practices (Keuzenkamp, 2010, 2011; La Piere, 1934). For instance, in the Netherlands Keuzenkamp (2010) found that (both higher and lower educated) people who reject homosexuality usually respond acceptingly when their own child

turns out to be homosexual. Thus, sometimes the actual behaviour is *more* tolerant than the abstract opinion. To conclude, as much as for any other attitude, we can expect discrepancies between (in)tolerant beliefs and (in)tolerant behaviour. The question remains, what characteristics of the person tolerating, the social context, the issue at hand or the judged group lead to negative *and* positive discrepancies between principle and practice?

Dichotomous or continuous? If tolerance is understood as support for the civil rights of others, then tolerance should be unconditionally applied to all groups. This is the point made by Mondak and Sanders (2003), when they suggest that tolerance is dichotomous in nature: one is *either* tolerant (supportive of *all* civil rights for *all* groups), or one is *intolerant*. However, Gibson argues that tolerance is continuous in nature, not dichotomous. Gibson (2005a) claims that for any person that is tolerant to a number of groups on a number of civil rights, there is surely a group this person would *not* extent all civil rights to. Survey studies thus are probably not the most adequate means to test for unconditional tolerance (Gibson, 2005a). Gibson (2005a: 313) furthermore argues that 'Even if such a phenomenon of "absolute tolerance" exists, it is sufficiently rare that few practical implications are indicated for those doing empirical work on political tolerance and intolerance.'

Recent empirical studies indeed confirm that unconditional tolerance is rare (e.g. Gieling et al., 2011; Verkuyten and Slooter, 2007, 2008). As Robinson et al. (2001: 85) note: 'It appears that people are selective about whom and what they will tolerate and under what circumstances they are prepared to be tolerant. Hence, tolerance cannot be conceptualized as a global structure and should be viewed as multi faceted and context sensitive.'

The asymmetry of tolerance and intolerance. Gibson (2006: 29) notes: 'Some important evidence suggests that tolerance and intolerance may have a number of different political and psychological characteristics. Though it is common to treat tolerance and intolerance as simply the opposite poles of a continuum, research has shown that these two attitudes may be constructed differently and have quite disparate consequences for political action.' Gibson (2006: 29) states that intolerance and tolerance differ in their 'pliability': 'the tolerant can be more readily persuaded to abandon their tolerance than can the intolerant be convinced to become tolerant'. Gibson (2006: 29) notes that 'intolerance has stronger behavioral consequences than does tolerance. That is, those who are

intolerant, are more likely than the tolerant, to act on the basis of their attitudes.' For instance, as Marcus et al. (1995) found, the tolerant are less willing to sign a petition to express their tolerant opinion than the intolerant are to express the opposite. Gibson (2006: 29) concludes: 'The picture that emerges from extant research is thus, that intolerance is an attitude more strongly held, with fewer sources of internal discord, and with greater behavioral potential. In contrast, tolerance is typically only weakly embraced, is readily malleable, and political action is less likely to flow from tolerance. Although tolerance and intolerance must obviously be cut from the same attitudinal cloth, these different attributes result in considerably greater pernicious potential for intolerance.'

Determinants of tolerance and intolerance

Sullivan and Transue (1999) identify four primary predictors of tolerance in their review of twentieth-century research – the most recent overview to date. Below, each predictor they identified is discussed, together with more recent evidence and contradictory findings. First, education plays a central – and much researched – role in the emergence of tolerance. So-called political elites or 'the educated and the politically active' (Sullivan and Transue, 1999: 629) are more supportive of civil liberties and hence are generally more – politically – tolerant (McClosky and Brill, 1983; McClosky and Zaller, 1984; Nunn et al., 1978; Sullivan et al., 1993; but see Sniderman et al., 1996). Second, the more strongly people have internalized beliefs in the abstract norms of democracy the more consistent they are in their – tolerant – judgements (Lawrence, 1976; McClosky, 1964; Prothro and Grigg, 1960; Sullivan et al., 1982). Moreover, internalized democratic norms have a 'dampening effect' on the negative effect of threat perceptions. Third, perceptions of threat are strong predictors of intolerance. The more one feels threatened by a group the less tolerant one responds towards this group (e.g. Sullivan et al., 1982). Fourth, certain personality dispositions correlate strongly with political tolerance. Sullivan and Transue (1999) conclude that in international comparative research the effect of personality characteristics remains quite stable, suggesting it is to some extent personality over circumstances that causes (in)tolerance. Each of these determinants will be discussed in detail below. Moreover, demographic variables that influence tolerance will be discussed.

Education. Educational level is the most consistently found predictor of tolerance (Bobo and Licari, 1989; Duch and Gibson, 1992; Golebiowska, 1995;

Karpov, 1999a, 1999b, 2002; Nunn et al., 1978; Stouffer, 1955; Wilson, 1994). However, sometimes the universal effect of education is questioned (see Weil, 1982, in Froese et al., 2008). In the earliest studies of tolerance, Stouffer (1955) and Prothro and Grigg (1960) already found tolerance to be positively associated with education. The higher educated display more adherence to civil liberties and tolerance in general, and are less inclined than lower educated to defect from their tolerant principles when applying them to a disliked group (Lawrence, 1976; but see Jackman, 1978; Keuzenkamp, 2010, 2011). Under what circumstances education effects hold, and how and why education advances tolerance have been pivotal questions of tolerance research to date. In his book *Tolerance and Education* (1997) Vogt concludes: 'Education not only gives students new information, it can change how they think, alter their personalities, and provide them with new social experiences. These are sweeping claims, but they are supported by extensive research' (1997: 246). 'Education increases tolerance and reduces prejudice and stereotyping of political, social, and moral groups' (1997: 102). *How* education advances tolerance is more of a question than *that it does*, but Vogt (1997: 103) points to four common explanations: (1) personality development, (2) cognitive development, (3) intergroup contact and (4) civic, moral and multicultural instruction. More recently, from a sociological perspective, effects of 'social capital' have been studied that explain tolerance (Cote and Erickson, 2009; Iglič, 2011). Social capital represents access to information, the provision of positive experiences with diversity and increased political trust, all factors that in turn promote tolerance, and go hand in hand with education.

Internalization of democratic norms. Democratic norms mean support for general democratic principles such as minority rights, majority rule, equality under the law and free speech (Sullivan et al., 1982). Lawrence (1976: 93) found that 'large majorities of the population in fact apply their tolerant general norms consistently on even the hardest … issues'. This led Sullivan et al. (1982) to test for the relationship between general democratic norms and political tolerance for disliked groups, finding that indeed adherence to general democratic norms had a positive effect on political tolerance for specific disliked groups.

In addition, international comparative research shows that the *kind* of democratic values that are emphasized in a country vary (Sullivan et al., 1985) and this leads to different tolerance judgements. For example individual freedom and minority rights are core values in US democracy while majority rule and equality are emphasized as Israeli democratic values (Sullivan and Transue, 1999). The cultural meaning and importance of certain democratic norms lead to different tolerance judgements in different democracies (Sullivan et al., 1985). The political context thus influences what kind of democratic norms and values are internalized and given priority when tolerant norms are applied to specific issues or groups.

Interestingly, democratic norms are modelled as an intermediate variable between education and political tolerance (Sullivan et al., 1982: 221), indicating that one of the effects of education is stronger adherence to democratic norms which in turn is associated with a higher likelihood of tolerance (Vogt, 1997: 127). General norms of democracy thus in part explain the relationship between education and tolerance.

Threat. Threat has been identified as a pivotal source of intolerance. Gibson (2006: 24) stated: 'those who feel threatened by their political enemies are less likely to tolerate them'. Although threat is a consistent factor explaining variety in tolerance we do not know precisely where variations in threat perceptions come from: 'few projects have been able to link threat perceptions to factors such as social identities (Gibson and Gouws, 2003; Sniderman et al., 2004), personality structures (Marcus et al., 1995; Feldman and Stenner, 1997), and perceptions of social stress (Gibson, 2002), but no existing research provides anything remotely resembling a comprehensive explanation of variation in perceived group threat' (Gibson, 2006: 24). Paradoxically, perceived group power (as an indicator of how threatening a minority group could *really* be to a majority's way of life) seems to have no particular impact on threat perceptions (Marcus et al., 1995; Gibson and Gouws, 2003, in Gibson, 2006). Interaction effects of personality dispositions such as neuroticism and anxiety with threat perceptions are also reported (Marcus et al., 1995: 168–72). People who are more neurotic tend to feel threatened more easily, and respond more intolerantly towards groups they perceive as threatening than the less neurotic.

Gibson (2006) argues that a differentiation in types of threat perceptions and threat perceived from different target groups should be made. More recently indeed a distinction is proposed between safety threat and symbolic threat. Research suggests that the impact of *value* conflict on intolerance is bigger than the influence of *economic* conflict between groups (Sniderman and Hagendoorn, 2007). In Gibson's (2006: 22) words: 'those who see threat to their "way of life" – not their personal safety – often tend to be the most intolerant'.

Personality factors. Adorno et al.'s (1950) classic work on the 'Authoritarian personality' (captured with the famous F-scale, that included items such as 'Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn') paved the way for much research on personality characteristics that were (and are) believed to enhance prejudice. Likewise, Allport (1954) in *The Nature of Prejudice* dedicated one chapter to 'The tolerant personality' (p. 425) as opposed to 'The prejudiced personality' (p. 395) and, like Adorno, referred to psychodynamic theories to explain prejudice and intolerance, suggesting prejudice was inherent to certain personalities. In line with research on prejudice, political tolerance is found to correlate with certain personality characteristics (McClosky and Brill, 1983; Marcus et al., 1995; Stouffer, 1955; Sullivan et al., 1982).

Sullivan and Transue (1999: 634–5) mention dogmatism, misanthropy, being in favour of stern child-rearing techniques, pessimism, neuroticism and extroversion as correlating positively with *in*tolerance, whereas flexibility, self-esteem, openness to experience and trust correlate positively with tolerance. Openness to experience seems to be the most powerful predictor of political tolerance (Marcus et al., 1995, in Sullivan and Transue, 1999: 634), while 'psychological insecurity' (measured with Rokeach's dogmatism scale) showed the strongest relationship with intolerance (Sullivan et al., 1982).

Notably, the relationship between personality characteristics and political tolerance seems to be confounded by education (Vogt, 1997: 124–8), indicating that personality 'traits' can be altered by education. Marcus et al. (1995) note that personality characteristics influence the search for valid information, also suggesting there may be interaction effects between education and personality that result in greater tolerance. Recently, integrative models are proposed, combining personality and early socialization approaches with intergroup theories to explain intolerance (Duckitt, 2005; Duckitt and Sibley, 2010).

Demographic variables: socioeconomic status, age, regional differences, religion and gender. Determinants of tolerance include socioeconomic status (Filsinger, 1976; Karpov, 1999a, 1999b; Katnik, 2002), age (Helwig, 1997; Karpov, 1999a, 1999b; Keuzenkamp, 2011; Wilson, 1994) and regional differences (Ellison and Musick, 1993; Fletcher and Sergeyev, 2002; Moore and Ovadia, 2006). Generally people with a higher rather than lower socioeconomic status, older rather than adolescent people and people living in cities rather than in rural areas are believed to be more

tolerant. However, systematic meta-analyses are absent.

In the Netherlands, Van der Waal and colleagues (Van der Waal and Houtman, 2010; Van der Waal et al., 2011) found the 'cultural climate' of a city to be predictive of tolerance *over* economic threat and interethnic contact. They measured the 'cultural climate' with a 'bohemianism-scale' by assessing the number of artists living in a city plus gay activism, and found inhabitants of more 'bohemian' cities to be more tolerant towards ethnic diversity. Regional differences are often explained by other variables.

For instance, both religious affiliation and religiousness (church attendance) is consistently shown to be associated with (political) intolerance (Beatty and Walter, 1984; Ellison and Musick, 1993; Filsinger, 1976; Froese et al., 2008; Katnik, 2002; Stouffer, 1955; Yeşilada and Noordijk, 2010; but see Eisenstein, 2006).

Froese et al. (2008: 33) pointed out that 'previous research has found a consistent relationship between political tolerance and religiosity, as measured by affiliation, attendance, belief, or some combination thereof'. This effect has commonly been ascribed to 'closed-mindedness' of believers. The extent to which the Bible is taken literally; conservatism or fundamentalism; as well as the specific image people hold of God (forgiving vs punishing) coincides with intolerant opinions. 'If God is intolerant of certain behavior, believers should be intolerant, too' (Froese et al., 2008: 30).

Women have generally proven to be more (politically) intolerant than men (Bobo and Licari, 1989; Gibson, 1992; Golebiowska, 1995; Marcus et al., 1995, in Golebiowska, 1999; Nunn et al., 1978; but see Sotelo, 1999). But, as Golebiowska (1999: 43) notes: 'women also seem to differ from men in their choice of intolerance targets'. The latter is demonstrated by Verkuyten and colleagues (Verkuyten, 2007; Verkuyten and Slooter, 2007, 2008), who found that women were less tolerant to (Muslim) practices that are disadvantageous to women. In a similar vein, Keuzenkamp (2010) found men to be far more intolerant towards male gays than women. Golebiowska (1999) examined the sources of intolerance in women and found commitment to democratic norms, political expertise, threat perceptions, tolerance of general uncertainty and moral traditionalism to be responsible for the 'gender gap' in the USA. Witenberg (2007) points to gender differences in *motives* to tolerate various practices; she found adolescent girls to be motivated primarily by a combination of justice and empathy, while boys tend to judge on the basis of justice and reasonability.

Future research on (in)tolerance

Finding out more about the nature of tolerance and the circumstances in which it emerges

One thing speaks clearly from almost a century of tolerance research: the need for clear-cut conceptualizations and operationalizations. A typology of definitions of tolerance, such as outlined by Robinson et al. (2001), could serve as a guideline to clear up conceptual and empirical fuzziness. In the words of Robinson et al. (2001: 74): 'The adoption of one definition over another has consequences for how tolerance is operationalized and also for the selection of research questions. … Much research suffers from problems caused by the lack of correspondence between conceptual and operational definitions.' Authors should be clear about their understanding of the terms they use, transparent in their choice of one definition over another and strive for congruence between definition and measurement of tolerance, and be aware of the social context in which tolerance gains meaning.

The practice of tolerance: increasing the ecological validity of tolerance research

Scholars from a wide range of disciplines (history, political philosophy, sociology, anthropology, social psychology, political sciences) highlight the societal relevance of tolerance. The idea is widely shared that one should accept some of the very things one abhors, in order to establish and maintain peaceful coexistence. Tolerance has the power to overcome differences, prejudice and plain hostility between people. The power of tolerance is that it can be practised *withstanding* the almost 'automatic' responses of interpersonal prejudice and stereotyping (Leyens et al., 1994). The majority of tolerance research to date, however, has investigated support for the *principle* of tolerance rather than the *practice*. The variation in the *practice* of tolerance has been acknowledged by many scholars, but its causes remain understudied to date. It is time to systematically investigate not only cognitive and affective components of tolerance, but above all tolerant *behaviour*. In addition to survey studies, experimental and qualitative research may provide the data necessary for our understanding of the nature and dynamics of tolerance, and the circumstances in which it emerges.

Evidence from a socialization point of view (Avery, 1988; Gimpel and Lay, 2008; Harell, 2008; Robinson et al., 2001; Sears and Levy, 2003; Wainryb et al., 1998) suggests that tolerance is learned and acquired throughout (early) life. Evaluations of intervention programmes (Stephan and Vogt, 2004) indicate that tolerance can be learned. Studying intervention programmes aimed at the promotion of tolerance can help us to get a grip on mechanisms promoting or inhibiting tolerance.

Recent survey studies, mostly from a social psychological angle, are promising both in terms of ecological validity (such as the use of vignettes to measure applied tolerance) and in their contribution to the explanation of within-subject variety in tolerance judgements (Gieling et al., 2011; Van der Noll, 2010; Van der Noll and Dekker, 2007; Van der Noll et al., 2010; Verkuyten and Slooter, 2007, 2008). Such applied research is urgently needed to fill the gaps in our knowledge regarding the practice of tolerance.

Contextualizing tolerance: multi-level phenomena affecting tolerance

Tolerance research tends to focus on either individual or aggregate levels of (in)tolerance. Sources of intolerance are usually identified on the micro-level, such as personality dispositions, threat-perceptions or demographic characteristics (e.g. Marcus et al., 1995; Feldman and Stenner, 1997; in Sullivan and Transue, 1999). The rare international comparative research reveals macro-level or structural factors that impact upon tolerance (see Mueller, 1988; Peffley and Rohrschneider, 2003; Sullivan et al., 1985; Van der Noll, 2010). Studies that combine the examination of macro-, meso- and micro-level explanations for intolerance greatly add to our understanding of the dynamics of tolerance and intolerance formation, but are scarce. Some studies indicate that there are indeed complex interaction effects between macro-, meso- and micro-level factors influencing (in)tolerance. Jaspers (2009) found macro-level as well as meso- and micro-level aspects explaining tolerance. With her longitudinal research in the Netherlands she detected factors such as increasing secularization, the composition of governing coalitions, immigration rates, but also (in)tolerant attitudes of parents and first hand experience with discrimination to impact upon individual tolerance (Jaspers, 2009). Jaspers' findings suggest that there is a complex interplay between societal transformations, the way politicians and institutions address and frame social problems and individual factors. For a more accurate understanding of how context allows for or inhibits tolerance, multi-level studies are essential.

Intergroup dynamics of tolerance: bringing social psychology back in

Differences in tolerance for in- and outgroup members imply that tolerance is an inter*group* phenomenon, rather than an inter*individual* phenomenon.

This has been argued (Mummendey and Wenzel, 1999; Sullivan et al., 1982; Vogt, 1997) and tested empirically (e.g. Verkuyten and Slooter, 2007, 2008) time and again. People tolerate others depending on their own and others' group membership. Interactions between people 'as group members' is the central theme of intergroup relations research, with Lewin, Festinger and Sherif as its 'founding fathers' in social psychology (for reviews see Brewer and Kramer, 1985; Ellemers et al., 2002). Strangely enough knowledge of intergroup conflict, the original driving force behind social psychology as a discipline, hardly informs research on tolerance (Mummendey and Wenzel, 1999; Sullivan et al., 1982; Vogt, 1997). In Gibson's (2006: 25) words: 'those who study intergroup prejudice and those who work on political tolerance rarely intersect'. The relevance of social psychology to tolerance research is evident. Studies from a social psychological angle highlight social identification processes (Hornsey and Hogg, 2000; González and Brown, 2003), social distance (Hagendoorn and Kleinpenning, 1991; Hraba et al., 1989), power relationships between groups (Sidanius and Pratto, 1999) and social norms (Hogg et al., 1990; Smith and Postmes, 2009, 2011) as determinants of negative intergroup attitudes and behaviour. These strands of research provide for the social and psychological dynamics so often missed in (political) tolerance research. A stronger multidisciplinary approach would be advantageous to tolerance research. At the same time, social psychologists should be more aware of the conceptual differences between prejudice (extensively studied in social psychology) and tolerance. In much social research both terms are used as synonyms, rather than tested for their unique characteristics or shared psychological dynamics.

Annotated further reading

Kaplan BJ (2007) *Divided by Faith: Religious Conflict and the Practice of Toleration in Early Modern Europe.* Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press.

Zagorin P (2003) *How the Idea of Religious Toleration came to the West.* Princeton, NJ and London: Princeton University Press.
Two accounts of the development of (religious) toleration in Early Modernity for those interested in the historical and philosophical roots of tolerance.

Stephan WG and Vogt WP (eds) (2004) *Education Programs for Improving Intergroup Relations: Theory, Research, and Practice.* New York: Teachers College Press.
Detailed descriptions as well as useful evaluations of educational interventions aimed at the promotion of

tolerance. Informative for practitioners as well as researchers interested in – the promotion of – tolerance.

Sullivan JL, Piereson J and Marcus GE (1982) *Political Tolerance and American Democracy.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
The most extensive study of American political tolerance since Stouffer (1955). Moreover, the book offers an insightful overview of perspectives on tolerance in democratic theory.

Sullivan JL and Transue JE (1999) The psychological underpinnings of democracy: A selective review of research on political tolerance, interpersonal trust, and social capital. *Annual Review of Psychology* 50(1): 625–50.

Gibson J (2006) Enigmas of intolerance: Fifty years after Stouffer's communism, conformity, and civil liberties. *Perspectives on Politics* 4(1): 21–34.
The most complete reviews of empirical tolerance research till date.

Vogt WP (1997) *Tolerance and Education: Learning to Live with Diversity and Difference.* Thousand Oaks, CA, London and New Delhi: Sage.
Not only the best documented examination of the relationship between education and tolerance, but also essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the complex nature of tolerance.

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résumé   La tolérance implique l'acceptation des choses mêmes avec lesquelles on n'est pas d'accord, on désapprouve ou déteste. On peut regarder la tolérance comme 'une vertu défectueuse' (Schuyt, 2001), parce que ça concerne l'acceptation des différences, que nous préférons a battre, surmonter ou ne pas relever, entre les autres et nous-mêmes. Bien que la tolérance implique cette connotation négative de conditionnalité, quoi qu'il en soit imparfaite, ça apporte un 'recette' à faire face à les différences parfois incompatibles entre des (groupes de) personnes dans la société. Dans cet article un examen de la nature paradoxale de la tolérance est suivi de un rapport de littérature académique et des conclusions empiriques sur la tolérance et ses facteurs déterminants. En conclusion, on détermine les épreuves futures pour la recherche de tolérance.

mots-clés   intolérance ◆ préjugé ◆ relations intergroupes ◆ tolérance

resumen   La tolerancia implica la aceptación de aquellas cosas con las cuales uno disiente, que desaprueba o le desagradan. La tolerancia se puede considerar como una 'virtud imperfecta' (Schuyt, 2001), porque se refiere a la aceptación de las diferencias entre los otros a los cuales preferiríamos atacar, ignorar o vencer y nosotros. Aunque la tolerancia lleva consigo esa connotación negativa de la condicionalidad, por imperfecta sea suministra una 'receta' para tratar con las diferencias a veces irreconciliables entre (grupos de) gente de una misma sociedad. En este artículo se realiza un estudio sobre la naturaleza paradójica de la tolerancia, seguido de una revisión de la literatura académica y los hallazgos empíricos sobre la tolerancia y sus determinantes. Para concluir, se señalan futuros retos a tener en cuenta en la investigación sobre la tolerancia.

palabras clave   intolerancia ◆ prejuicio ◆ relaciones entre grupos ◆ tolerancia