

Koc Social Identities Lab

Inaugural Newsletter



Koc Social Identities Lab Newsletter for 2023

This is our lab's first newsletter. I am hoping that from now on we will have an annual newsletter where we share what we were up to during the year, who joined our group, who moved on with their careers, and more. During CORONA, we spent a lot of time trying to support and uplift each other especially in terms of our declining mental health and wellbeing due to the restrictions.

It was clearly not an easy year, but most of us managed to make it through. We kept remembering *if Britney Spears made it through 2007, we could get through this lockdown*. Overall, we had plenty of good news, but also some undesirable ones. I am still glad and grateful that we were able to stay together as a group and support each other.

But first of all, **who are we?** We are Koc Lab – a social identities lab led by Dr Yasin Koc. This is a platform for students working with me to think, discuss, and learn to conduct research collaboratively. As a group, we aim to apply and extend the *social identity approach* to study disadvantaged groups focusing both on their engagement with social change processes and on their wellbeing.

In this inaugural newsletter, we tell you a bit of our history, we reflect back at the last few years, and share our plans for 2022-2023 academic year. Thanks for taking time to read it.

Yasin Koc, Lab Director

<http://kocsocialidentitieslab.com/>

A Bit of History: Who Are We?

Our lab initially started when Bengisu contacted me in 2018 inquiring whether she could do her Erasmus+ summer internship with me. I said yes, and she spent two months in summer 2018. Next, Ayca started her internship in January 2019, then Zeynep joined us in summer 2019. Working with these amazing students made me realise it is time to make it official and start a standardised way of working with my students and interns. As a joke, we called our group “Koc Lab” because I always found it weird how American professors named their labs after their surnames. And Lord has funny ways of turning things back to my way and this name stuck with us. With an inaugural “conference”, I presented our vision and goals, and Bengisu, Ayca, and Zeynep presented their research projects to our social psychology group in Groningen. The reaction was encouraging. Then we carried on doing great work together.



Later, CORONA happened. The interns who were supposed to come from Turkey could no longer come to Groningen and join us in person. Indeed, any in-person meeting became impossible. So we turned our lab online for 2 years, which enabled several other students from Turkey to join us as well as our own members to keep in touch with us even after they moved on.

Now, we are a big group of researchers at different stages of career spreading from the Netherlands to Turkey, Italy, Australia, the UK, and the US. For this year, we have two labs: one in person in Groningen, and one online. The online team has already been through training last year, and we are mostly focusing on writing papers. The in-person team is doing the training as well as getting together to discuss research proposals, articles, and more.

Our core value comes from the beautiful words of Toni Morrison, and with a social justice orientation in our research, collaboration, and teaching, this is what we try to achieve in our lab by giving opportunities to students particularly from disadvantaged backgrounds.

“When you get these jobs that you have been so brilliantly trained for, just remember that your real job is that if you are free, you need to free somebody else. If you have some power, then your job is to empower somebody else. This is not just a grab-bag candy game.” Toni Morrison

A Little Look at Our Members

I want to start with introducing our members in a historical way. For more information about each member, you are welcome to check [The Team](#) page:

After Bengisu, Ayca, and Zeynep, the following year included several of my master and bachelor students joining the lab in the academic year of 2019-2020:

- **Basti Weitz** as a bachelor intern first then as a bachelor thesis student in 2020-2021,
- **Wendelien Barkema** as bachelor thesis student,
- **Stefano Ciaffoni, Mees Kok, and Denise Chin** as master students,
- **Tugce Tezel, Deike Menken and Helin Sahin** as master interns first then as master thesis students 2020-2021,
- **Denizhan Sengul** as an Erasmus+ intern,
- **Jordan Hinton** as an external PhD student from Australian Catholic University.

These amazing people presented their research at our second Koc Lab conference.

In 2020, we had more members joining us online.

- **Hannes Bey and Gokce Gultekin** as bachelor thesis students,
- **Jennifer Koning** as a master thesis student,
- **Ece Demirgüneş and Pelin Su Safak** were meant to join as Erasmus+ interns in summer, but it was impossible. They joined us online. Later, we had **Ugur Ozkusen and Ayse Nur Asyali** joined us online.

These amazing people (together with those who stayed with us from the previous year) presented their research at our third Koc Lab conference.

In 2021, we had more members joining us: **Irem Nur Keskin, Zumra Kendir, and Betul Gümüşoluk, Elif Çelik, Fatih Köseoğlu, Dilara Rahim, Çağla Akyıldız** from Turkey, and **Winnie Ansh** from Groningen.

In 2022, finally things went back to normal and we have our in-person lab joined by the following members:

- **Ezgi Kara and Irem Sakarya** as Erasmus+ interns,
- **Greetje Scheller** as bachelor thesis student
- **Miriam Dietz, Beatrice Gänzler, and Doreen Maloney** as master students,
- **Urvija Bhargava** as an intern,
- **Hakan Cakmak and Yajing Zhao** as PhD students,
- **Owen Murphy and Alisha Scheuer** as master interns from Groningen,
- **Nele Hausmann and Deike Menken** as returning graduate interns.

From this academic year onwards, I decided to accept new members only at the beginning of the academic terms so that we can organise a structured training for research methods, statistics, and writing skills.

News and Achievements

Despite all the challenges in our lives through the pandemic, we managed to do some great things. I would like to start with the greatest achievements of my students. Most of our members applied for grad school or initially master programmes. We have seen a great list of accomplishments. Heartfelt congratulations to all:

- **Stefano Ciaffoni** started his PhD at University of Bologna.
- **Basti Weitz** joined Culture Lab as a predoc at Stanford Graduate School of Business working with Michele Gelfand.
- **Bengisu Akkurt** started and completed her master programme at Kadir Has University, Turkey.
- **Zeynep Dogan** started and completed her master programme at Bournemouth University, England.
- **Wendelien Barkema** started her research masters at Utrecht University, Netherlands.
- **Ece Demirgüneş and Pelin Su Safak** started their master programme at University of Padua, Italy.
- **Hannes Bey** started his research master at University of Amsterdam.
- **Ayse Nur Asyali and Irem Nur Keskin** started her master programme at KU Leuven, Belgium.
- **Ugur Ozkusen** has awarded the Fulbright Scholarship to do grad school in the US.
- **Ayca Aksu** is starting as a lecturer at our department in Groningen in 2023.

For those who were not lucky to get a place in their desired programmes, we are now working smarter to ensure that they can get into these programmes next year.

Moreover, another great achievement is that **Jordan Hinton** was awarded a stipend scholarship to assist in covering living costs during his PhD from Australian Catholic University. This is very well-deserved – Jordan sets the bar high for all of us in his work ethics and perfect outputs he produces. Congratulations to Jordan!

Grant and Awards

First, **Joel Anderson and I** received the *EASP Collaborative Research Grant (€2,750)* to run studies on gay-leader identity integration. We had Gokce work with me on one of the three studies of this grant with me through her bachelor thesis. We are very excited to share our findings soon.

Next, **Shaun Wiley and I** received a Russell Sage Foundation grant (**\$47,447**) for our project titled “*Do Concerns about the Deportation of Close Others Increase Willingness to Protest U.S. Immigration Policy? The Roles of Anger, Fear, and Identity Conflict*”. This will allow us to run a pilot study to ascertain our experimental manipulation and a large field experiment with a nationally representative sample in the US.

Two more things about me personally.

I was awarded a **micro-sabbatical at Princeton University**. Thanks to this generous award, I was able to spend a month at Princeton with Betsy Paluck. More on this on another page in the newsletter.

Thanks to the nomination by two of my mentors, Ayse Uskul and Constantine Sedikides, I was named a **Rising Star by Association for Psychological Science (APS)**. I am grateful to Ayse and Constantine for their nominations, and to all my students, collaborators, and family and friends who have done a great job to support me in my academic journey so far.

My time at Princeton

I was awarded a **micro sabbatical** at Princeton University in April. I managed to travel there and spend my October 2021 visiting primarily the greatest **Betsy Paluck** and her lab. My time at Princeton was magical. I also visited **Kristina Olson's** and **Diana Tamir's** labs – and made contacts with several professors whose work I have always admired.

Both academically and socially, I had a fantastic time. Everyone was exceptionally nice and friendly. I had great conversations about my research, my lab, and more broadly, who I want to be as a researcher and what I want to tell the world. Moreover, while in New Jersey, I made contacts with **Shaun Wiley** from the College of New Jersey. Shaun Wiley and I had never met before, but turns out we reviewed each other's papers or we were reviewers on the same papers several times over the years. This connection led to lots of amazing conversations and we are working on a few projects



together at the moment. Finally, I managed to travel across the country and visit **Michele Gelfand's** Culture Lab at Stanford University where our own Basti is currently working as a predoc. Again, I had great conversations with Michele Gelfand and other members of the lab. I am grateful for this fantastic experience to Princeton for awarding me this, and to my boss, Tom Postmes, for enabling me to travel there. Princeton is a jewellery-box in October with the leaves changing colours. I enjoyed cycling around the campus and town. Here are some photos from the beautiful nature.



Students' publications

In this section, I will not talk about my own papers. You can find all my new papers [on our website](#). Here, I would like to highlight the great work conducted by my students.

Basti's second year RA work was published in *Current Psychology*. Across three experiments, this paper looks at the effect of status on relational models both at interpersonal and intergroup level using relational models theory.

Weitz, B. M., & Koc, Y. (2022). Examining the role of status on the perceptions of gay disparaging humour using relational models. *Current Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03712-9>

Current Psychology
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-022-03712-9>

The effect of relational status on perceptions of gay disparaging humor

Bastian Weitz¹ · Yasin Koc¹

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Abstract

A lot of popular comedians are known for their transgressive humor towards social groups, but disparagement humor is not just restricted to stages or media performances. We encounter it everywhere or perhaps use it ourselves. In this paper, we were interested in how people react to disparaging jokes (i.e., homophobic jokes) across different relational settings. Adapting Fiske's relational models theory, we examined how status differences in relationships affect the perception of and cognition about socially disparaging jokes. In Study 1 ($N = 77$), we piloted seven potentially disparaging jokes about gay men in relation to how they are perceived. In Study 2 ($N = 288$), using one joke from Study 1, we constructed vignettes manipulating the sexual orientation of the source of the joke in the dyad (i.e., heterosexual, gay, both heterosexual) and their status differences across relational models (i.e., high, equal, and low status). We found that the joke was perceived to be less funny, more offensive, and more morally wrong, and to contain more harm intent if it came from a heterosexual person rather than a gay person. Study 3 ($N = 197$) used concrete status differences in relationships in terms of existing intergroup dimensions. Results showed that the joke was perceived as more offensive, less acceptable and more morally wrong when it came from a high authority source (e.g., professor rather than a student). Overall, these findings bring the first evidence to link disparage-

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ORIGINAL ARTICLE  

Facilitators and barriers to contact between asylum seekers and their Dutch neighbors

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Abstract
Currently, Europe is dealing with a large number of asylum seekers. A recent report show that attitudes toward asylum seekers are not that negative in the Netherlands, and yet Dutch citizens living close to asylum seeker centers barely have contact with them. Because contact is vital for a multicultural society, we investigated the facilitators and barriers for Dutch citizens to establish and maintain contact with asylum seekers where they live close together. We conducted semistructured interviews with Dutch people

Wendelien's bachelor thesis was published in *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*. This paper explores the barriers and facilitators to contact between asylum seekers and their Dutch neighbours who live close to an asylum seeker centre.

Barkema, W., & Koc, Y. (2021). Facilitators and barriers to contact between asylum seekers and their Dutch neighbours. *Analyses of Social Issues and Public Policy*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/asap.12252>

Jordan published his first paper from his PhD. This is a big meta-analysis examining the role of identity centrality within the LGBTIQ+ population. You might be familiar with this data from his presentation at the second Koc Lab conference.

Hinton, J. D. X., De la Piedad Garcia, X, Kauffman, L., M., Koc, Y., & Anderson, J. R. (2022). Understanding the role of identity centrality within the LGBTIQ+ population: A systematic and meta-analytic review. *Journal of Sex Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2021.1967849>

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A Systematic and Meta-Analytic Review of Identity Centrality among LGBTIQ Groups: An Assessment of Psychosocial Correlates

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ABSTRACT

The degree to which an identity is an important aspect of one's self-concept (i.e., identity centrality) relates to both health and prejudice experiences of minority groups. Individuals with greater levels of identity centrality view their world through the lens of that identity. This allows them to engage in more positive identity-relevant experiences. However, it could also heighten their perceptions of in-group threat. Among LGBTIQ groups, the relationship between identity centrality and psychosocial outcomes is yet to be established. In this paper, we investigated the relationship between LGBTIQ identity centrality and psychosocial outcomes via a comprehensive systematic ($k = 89$, $N = 35,950$) and meta-analytic ($k = 57$, $N = 26,704$) literature review. Results indicated that greater levels of LGBTIQ centrality relates to more positive identity-relevant experiences ($155 \leq r \leq 419$), but also greater prejudice/discrimination perceptions and experiences ($-271 \leq r \leq -138$). We found no evidence of a relationship between LGBTIQ centrality and health outcomes ($-052 \leq r \leq .046$). Importantly, we found that these relationships are more beneficial for some LGBTIQ groups (gay men), than for others (Bisexual/transgender individuals). Findings from this review provide important and necessary insights on the role of LGBTIQ identity centrality and identify crucial gaps in the literature that should be addressed.

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OPEN ACCESS 

Societal acceptance increases Muslim-Gay identity integration for highly religious individuals... but only when the ingroup status is stable

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ABSTRACT
Reconciling religious beliefs with a sexual minority identity can be challenging. After coming out, many gay men report to renounce their religious identity or experience increased identity conflict between their religious and sexual identities. Giving up one's own identity or identity conflict are known to predict negative well-being, and it is important to find ways to reduce this conflict and increase identity integration. In this experiment, we conceptualized identity integration as a social creativity strategy, and we examined whether societal acceptance (vs rejection) and ingroup experience (e.g., whether gay community feels stability or improvement about their status) would alter one's level of Muslim-gay identity integration. We found that Muslim-gay identity integration was highest among highly religious gay men when societal acceptance was present and ingroup experience was stable. Overall, we discuss our findings by drawing parallels between social identity theory and bicultural identity integration framework, and provide implications to increase identity integration for those with multiple conflicting identities.

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Identity integration; multiple identities; social creativity; social identity theory; gay; muslim

This paper started as **Helin's** master thesis project, yet she switched from our regular master to ReMA, so then we continued to work on it as a side project. This is a paper where I make pretty bold claims about identity integration and social creativity strategy of social identity approach. Luckily, Shaun Wiley agrees with me. We have more work on the way.

Koc, Y., Sahin, H., Garner, A., & Anderson, J. R. (2021). Societal acceptance increases Muslim-gay identity integration for highly religious individuals... but only when the ingroup status is stable. *Self and Identity*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15298868.2021.1927821>

Other work in press / under review / in prep

Moreover, Stefano produced a fantastic article for In-Mind magazine on consensual non-monogamy. Although I speak no word of Italian other than 'allora!', I managed to read and comment on the draft of the paper thanks to google translate. You can find the paper here:

<https://it.in-mind.org/article/quando-amare-fa-male-la-pervasivita-dello-stigma-verso-la-non-monogamia-consensuale>

Since the goal of our lab is to promote cooperative and supportive work environment with an emphasis on skills development, we started working on collective projects. The aim here is to work together on projects where students want to develop their skills together with others who are already more experienced in these skills. This way, we can achieve skill sets to be transferred to the next generation.

6 Missing the Good Old Days: Investigating Outgroup Attitudes through Collective Nostalgia and Global Identification

Yasin Koc, Bengisu Akkurt, Ayca Aksu, Zeynep Doğan, Denizhan Sengul, and Joel Anderson

Our first collective paper has just appeared as a chapter in a book edited by Huseyin Cakal and Shenel Husnu. This was a dataset I had from many years ago, but I never managed to write it up. We thought the book chapter was a great opportunity for me to dig this dataset out, but also start working collaboratively and collectively on projects in the lab. We found this experience to be very rewarding and also learnt a lot.

I will list a few more projects as placeholders also to appreciate the efforts of my students working on them.

- **Zeynep, Ayca, Bengisu, and Bart** worked on a dataset about family support and collective action during the protests at the closure of Sehir University in Turkey. This paper is under review now.
- **Bengisu** and **Hannes** are working on a paper on intergroup helping in Turkey in the case of Syrian refugees. This project started four years ago when Bengisu first visited me as an intern, and also has external collaborators, **Busra Kizik** from Keele University and **Omer Erdem Kocak** from Istanbul Medipol University. Now, **Greetje** joined to finalise the writing.
- **Ugur, Jordan, Stefano, Ayca, and Ece** have worked on a paper looking at how perceived identity integration moderates the negative effect of religiosity on anti-gay attitudes and on internalised sexual prejudice among gay men. Now, **Alisha** joined to finalise the writing.
- **Ezgi, Irem, and Miriam** are writing a paper on sexual objectification of teachers and how they are evaluated by their students.
- **Ayca** worked on a paper about experimental investigation of perception of new masculinities in a traditional society. Now, **Owen** joined the project to finalise the writing.
- **Irem Nur, Fatih, and Urvija** are working on a paper about how perceptions of hijabi employees differ based on the maternity leave decisions they make.
- **Mees** is working on his master thesis data to be published. We had a long year of waiting before a rejection, but we just received a revision decision at another journal, which is encouraging.

Societal Engagement

I wrote a blog post for ISPP on The Strange Case of Diversity in Perpetuating Academic Barriers: <https://polpsyispp.medium.com/ispp-early-career-committee-newsletter-issue-2-2022-8f1948df9ff2>

I gave an interview on the Western-ness of science earlier last year: <https://www.ukrant.nl/magazine/its-not-science-if-its-not-european/?lang=en>

Lab Conferences: Inaugural Conference in 2019, and 2nd and 3rd online conferences in 2020 & 2021

This year, we hosted [our third annual Koc Lab conference](#).
The theme of the conference was: “It’s raining research, Hallelujah!”

We had four thematic sessions on a) majority attitudes towards minority, b) perceptions and experiences of sexual minorities, c) societal issues through masculinity, gender and religion, and finally d) privilege of the advantage group and social change efforts. We had over 50 attendees engaging with us at the conference. I am grateful to all my students doing fantastic jobs presenting their research in a greatly accessible way. And I want to thank all the attendees for supporting us and sharing the great moment with us.



Koc Lab at ISPP 2021

After attending ISPP in Lisbon 2019 with Bengisu, I decided to provide the opportunity to my students to present their works at an international conference. We had several talks accepted to ISPP 2021 online: **Ayca’s** talk was on organisational interventions to increase women-leader identity integration, **Basti’s** talk was on collective apology and support for Black Lives Matter movement, **Stefano’s** talk was on internalised sexual prejudice and self-harming among MSM, **Zeynep’s** talk was on lack of ordinary privileges among Muslim women, **Mees’s** talk was on the disconnections minoritised Muslim communities experience in the Netherlands. Finally, **I presented our collective lab work** on #MyWhitePrivilege. It was a pleasure to join this conference and connect with colleagues across the world.

Moving Forward into 2023

We are simply excited for 2023! We have a lot to do. In 2022, for the first semester, we started trainings in research methods, statistics, and writing skills. In the second semester, our students applied these skills into practice. In 2023, our team with new members will design new studies, present proposals, acquire IRB approvals, analyse data, write papers, give feedback to each other, and continue to build our community stronger. I am grateful for everyone’s efforts and care for each other.