

Homophily and its Implications for Inclusion - Exploring Paradoxes and Tensions

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Abstract

Diversity and inclusion have markedly been the topic of many discussions in media and academia over the past few years; and with good reason too. This project focuses on exploring the tensions between preference, the moral need to create inclusion, and the harsh reality of studies concerning existing social structures which overwhelmingly show trends of homophily. As homophily is a rather uncommon term, we took it upon ourselves to deconstruct the various dynamics and implications it accompanies. The role of friendship in this project is one of an analytical tool; we use friendship as a microcosm in which inclusion and homophily interact with one another. Further, the analysis being infused with the concept of close friendship and uncut depictions of personal experiences serves to ground the dense theory. When the three main concepts (inclusion, homophily, and friendship) are pinned down, the abundant tensions between them undermine the logic commonly used to apply them. Thus, paradoxes unfold.

Key terms: homophily, inclusion, friendship, friendship formation, tensions, ethical responsibility, socialisation, diversity, social philosophy, heterophily, dramaturgy, paradoxes, preferences, exclusion, personal experience, connection, multiculturalism.

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1. Introduction

Homophily is the type of term one finds solely in academic journals, despite the concept's prevalence in everyday life. It indicates that the tendency of individuals to associate with others similar to themselves is a major driving force in the formation, and evolution of social ties. Although many researchers argue that homophily hinders inclusion, there is little attention given to the mechanisms behind it or to drawing out its implications for social interaction. The problem area of our project encompasses the influences homophily and inclusion-exclusion processes have on each other, particularly those that occur during the formation of close friendships. Often when we talk about diversity and inclusion, we refer to it as an *"ethical obligation to include all others"* (Allan, 2005, p. 282). It is the encouragement, respect and appreciation of differences. The notion of inclusion revolves around a set of behaviours that encourages others to feel valued for their unique qualities, and to experience a sense of belonging. Yet, if we examine the content of our networks, we are likely to observe a homophilous preference (McPherson et al 2001). Thus, exploring this matter can reveal the tensions between preferences for social interaction with similar others, and the imperative of including all people. Such thoughts spiked our curiosity about what this tension implies. An additional reason behind choosing this topic is due to the relevance and impact we find it has on society. Reflecting on interpersonal tendencies and understanding these occurrences can be a large step towards finding sustainable models of socialisation.

1.1. The tension and the red thread

The structure of our project is not orthodox. We have chosen three points of focus: inclusion, homophily, and friendship. This is done with intention. We describe how inclusion and homophily come into tension with each other, due to the clash of ethics and personal preferences. We dive into the ambivalence of creating inclusion in practice, examine how the phenomenon of homophily is grounded in friendship, and explore whether friendship is an obstacle to inclusion. We see this as a triad relationship because the concepts are so clearly connected in all three directions. Abstractly speaking, our triad of concepts allows us to get into the fine spaces between the three concepts as well as their web of interactions, where we gain depth of understanding across the nuances of each. These nuances include many factors which are further developed when we observe how they overlap and connect. For example,

negotiating inclusion both according to personal ethics and the moral norms of one's environment can be contradictory because of a lack of a common perception of what inclusion is.

Finally, we chose friendship to be the means of grounding the theory of inclusion and homophily. We use friendship instead of any other type of intimate bond because it is a choice. It denotes a relationship not connected by familial bonds, which are personally significant and intimate but at the same time non-sexual and non-romantic.

1.2. Problem formulation and research questions

We have come to the conclusion that the aim of our project is not to find one final conclusion. We wish instead to start a conversation. Thus a problem formulation that reflects this was created. The central problem formulation and the objective of our investigation is to work towards, "**What are the tensions between the moral obligation for inclusion, and preference for homophilous interaction?**". The subquestions, or research questions, which we used as a guide to help answer this were as follows:

- 1. How do homophily and inclusion interact and how do we best describe this dynamic?**
- 2. To what extent are homophily and inclusion compatible in social settings?**
- 3. What role does homophily play in the formation of friendship?**
- 4. To what extent can friendship groups present a threat to inclusion?**
- 5. Given this idea of friendship and preference, to what extent is inclusion desirable by individuals?**
- 6. Is the notion of diverse friendship superficial?**
- 7. What are the paradoxes which arise from the process of inclusion?**

2. Methodology

2.1. Working with Paradoxes

The concept of paradox has long shifted beyond the depiction of a ‘thing’ producing inaction and turbulence, and is now expressed as a ‘lens’ through which something is viewed (Lewis et al. 2014). This contributes to a process of action described as ‘working through’ paradox (Lewis, 2008). This shift reflects the empirical reality in a more progressive way as concerns do not just face one simple duality, but complex dualistic tensions (Sillince and Jarzabkowski, 2007). The benefit of using paradoxes to address tensions as opposed to other approaches (such as trade-off), is that paradox allows us to acknowledge the coexistence of contradictory elements. In other words, the contradiction, rather than being a ‘trade-off’ for example, remains crucial to the approach and thus central to the response (Lewis, 2011). This enforces us to work in a space whereby conflict, ambiguity, and inconsistencies are accepted as part of a natural condition, and thus the polarisation of information and the inclination for internal consistency is renounced.

2.2. The role of theory

During the whole process of this project, theory has served as an immense evocative tool that brought new ideas to the table and may have been the biggest driver for the development of our research. Hence, it is only right that we acknowledge that this has been a deeply theoretical project.

However, we also consider theory to only exist embedded in practice, as theory informs practice and vice versa. The connection between the two is often impossible to disentangle. Through personal experiences and observations, we conceptualised the idea that homophily and homophilous friendships might pose challenges for the moral obligation to inclusion. However, this cannot be fully apprehended unless theories are utilised. To explore a question about ‘how friendship can challenge inclusion’, it is imperative to understand and have an idea of ‘why people form friendships’, ‘what practices surround inclusion’, ‘what are the ethics of those practices’ and ‘how those ethics come into tensions with individual preferences’. The combination of theory and practice we work with makes it possible to develop problem formulations, reflect on the notions involved in them, and finally highlight the significance of the issues in question.

In addition, it is not possible to articulate one's research area and how it contributes to existing literature and debates within the field of inquiry without engaging in theory. Thus, theory helps us contextualise our observations in relation to key philosophical, historical, and societal understandings. Theory is also highly valued in academia - thus, for us, there is an element of feeling pressure to use existing theory in addition to our personal renditions of the world. Using existing theory not only determines the legitimacy of our research, but not using it would also quickly change our project from an 'academic piece' into 'art'.

However, no theory is found or applied in a vacuum. Many academic communities tend to claim that it is or that it can, when proper tools and procedures are applied, be objective and universally applicable, or tend to treat it as if it was. Most notably, the study of hard natural sciences, such as mathematics and physics, even biology, is routinely conducted under the premise that there are theories that describe the world perfectly and which represent and reflect the truth. That these theories just need to be discovered. Whether this makes sense in natural sciences, we cannot claim, however in the line of humanistic inquiry across psychology, philosophy, and culturology, this is not the gaze we have the liberty to work with.

Two humanistic perspectives support our approach as well as the worldview that is constructed through this project. Firstly, the thought traditions of post-structivism and constructivism¹ opened our eyes to all knowledge having been constructed/created by humans, rather than having been handed to us on a silver platter, and hence all that we know is in one way or another a reflection of a human mind. Secondly, the theory of cultural psychology by Jan Velsiner, supplements the mentioned schools of thought with a psychological theory on why we cannot avoid differences between ways of thinking. Velsiner argues that there are ever-present and inherent differences between social actors based on their cultural background(s) (Velsiner, 2013).

¹ The main difference between constructivism and post-structivism is that the constructivists rely on positivist ideas of knowledge and favour empiricism and rationalism while the post-structivists claim that the whole picture of knowledge can never be fully constructed so they focus on just proving that a certain dynamic/phenomenon exists. Both though traditions are critical of all knowledge's epistemology. (Dunne, Kurki, Smith; 2021)

2.3. The final approach - subjectivity and an intrinsic case study

During the initial steps of the project we faced a limitation with the belief that existent theory is what gives a research paper value. However, having experienced the above perspectives, we decided to embed this project in subjectivity instead of trying to avoid it - as a result, this paper is radically different in its approach than any other academic piece any of us have written before. At parts we argue based on 'only' our collective experiences and common knowledge/sense. At others we feed from or quote others, and where this is done, we add references.

Our initial inspiration for taking our research methodology in this direction is the practice of reflecting on personal biases, by writing a 'positionality statement' or 'personal reflections'. We expand the idea to valuing our personal inputs, not just as a postscript but as material that can be studied. This move was inspired by Lakoff and Johnson, who, in their 1980 publication *The Myths of Objectivism and Subjectivism*, wrote of the space between objectivism and radical subjectivism which we hope our version of subjectivity comes to occupy:

"Either of these views would be a misunderstanding based on the mistaken cultural assumption that the only alternative to objectivism is radical subjectivity—that is, either you believe in absolute truth or you can make the world in your own image. If you're not being objective, you're being subjective, and there is no third choice. We see ourselves as offering a third choice to the myths of objectivism and subjectivism."(Lakoff and Johnson; 1980)

Still, an external pressure exists, in the form of orthodoxy and tradition, demanding that this is not as valid, as meaningful, or as useful. We argue that whenever theories are used in academia, they are ever so slightly moulded and adapted with every use, in order to be applicable to either different, more specific, or more broad contexts. Because of this ever-present and unavoidable dynamic, we see our writing, while openly including personal opinions, as simply choosing to be more transparent and honest about our process. Another reason why our paper can be considered weak by some is that we own up to the subjectivity and actively work it outside of the scope of a positionality statement. This assumption on subjectivity hinders the development of our analysis, so we aim to approach our research

critically, bringing our own subjective knowledge to challenge and reform existing theory - after all, our personal theories are interpretations of real-world experiences too.

Further, we supplement the explanation of the 'story of homophily and inclusion' through anecdotes and a case study series on ourselves. By making our subjectivity into a **tool** for further developing the questions we pose, rather than something we have to defend or see as an obstacle to overcome. In the 'intrinsic case study', we use ourselves to investigate our problem, and tell of real-world examples, which we then use to substantiate our theories and to ground them. The personal experiences are an essential part of our analytical strategy as the anecdotes and personal experiences/observations are used as valid and credible sources of knowledge.

We have chosen a structure of our intrinsic case study so that it reflects some of our personal experiences; namely the ones which are most relevant to our line of inquiry. The mode of this was allowing ourselves to write freely, while only imposing a set of guiding questions to keep ourselves on track, and in no lack of inspiration. The guiding questions were as follows:

1. Which characteristics do you value the most in other people when you make friends?
2. Can you reflect on which of your personal traits and/or interests you think could be more subjected to the processes of homophily?
3. Do you view your friendships as homophilous and how?
4. Have you ever felt conflicted or confused about including others or being included through friendship?
5. Has there ever been an instance where you intentionally excluded someone? What was this based on?
6. Do you feel comfortable in a diverse environment where no one elicits similarities to you?/ when do you feel the most comfortable in a social setting (spec. Through social interaction)
7. To what extent is inclusion important for you? And thinking about the concept of moral obligations versus preference, to what extent would you want to change your approach to friendship, in order to fulfil a duty of being inclusive (e.g. by embracing and befriending someone you don't see eye to eye with in terms of values/opinions)?

3. Portrayal of personal experiences

For the sake of privacy and anonymity, we assigned nicknames to the stories. We have allowed ourselves to lightly edit the stories for comprehension purposes. They are still the stories each of the authors presented.

Mary

Personally, it is very important for me that, before I consider an individual a friend, I am comfortable with being around them. That is the first step towards my development of friendship. Secondly, I feel a certain importance for an individual being trustworthy, honest, and humorous. Thus, making the internal characteristics more important for me, than the external. Though, these factors also depend on the closeness of the friendship. In order for me to consider an individual a close friend, it is important that I perceive the individual as a reliable and supportive person. These specific factors and characteristics have also shown through my life-long friendships. Furthermore, I have noticed that having either one or two similar personal characteristics usually fastens the development of the friendship. These similarities can for example be similar humour, similar interest, or similar life values. Thus, creating homophilous tendencies, and furthermore homophilous friendships. Though I would not consider my friendships very homophilous, I still perceive certain similarities that play an important role in the friendship. One of them being similarities in culture and upbringing. Several of the friendships I have made, have been due to the similarities I have had in culture and upbringing with the individuals. These similarities furthered the development of the friendships, due to the feeling of relatedness. Personally, it creates a sense of comfortability, when I converse with an individual, and thereby, identify that we share the same upbringing experience. It not only creates a sense of comfortability, but also a certainty that this individual will understand me at a level that another individual would not. This certainty has previously also been a reason for experiencing difficulties, when wanting to include other individuals in the friend group. Due to the similarities in upbringing, there are certain factors between me and my friends that would be incomprehensible for the individual who does not share the same upbringing. Therefore, creating a certain difficulty when personally wanting to include everyone. This perception can also be regarded when it comes to my comfortability in a diverse environment, with individuals who are not similar to myself. When I started in High School, I experienced a very homophilous environment in the school.

Most of the students shared the same culture, life value, and humour, in which I could not assimilate myself upon. This created a severe difficulty, when wanting to create friendships with others. I had different values, and therefore I automatically felt different, in regards to everyone else. Fortunately for me, I had friends from Middle School that I shared values and humour with. Hereby, extending my time in this High School by two months. After two months, I realised that the decision I had made about the High School felt wrong. The feeling of being different overwhelmed me to an extent that I had to change the High School I was attending. This comes to show that I did not feel comfortable in the presence of a diverse environment, which differed severely from myself. As mentioned earlier, I have felt a certain difficulty when wanting to include others with different life values, upbringing, and humour. Though, I can still converse, and create a less intimate friendship on the basis of not excluding others, since inclusion has a certain importance for me. This can also be interpreted as a feeling of moral obligation, more than preference, since it might require much more for me to set aside the characteristics I prefer in an individual.

Cypress

I sometimes get told that I speak as if I was writing an essay; that's why this text might at times seem like I am trying to be formal because I'm trying to keep up appearances. The reality in my mind is the opposite. It's how it comes out naturally. I have mentally prepared myself for this piece to be a reflection of my personal, subjective, and emotional experiences - to some degree at least...not entirely any of those things because I reserve those for people closest to me who I feel safe with, and not the potentially prying eyes of anyone who may read through our research paper, even possibly entirely unappreciative or un-constructively critical of it. I will be careful about exposing too much of my personal space, but at the same time I am acutely aware that it is necessary for me to feel slightly like I am stepping outside of my comfort zone in terms of what I share with almost-strangers. The aim of this project is well worth the discomfort though.

So here I go: When making friends, I pay attention to a couple of main personal characteristics such as emotional and logical intelligence, introspectiveness, ethicality, and liveliness (the quality of someone living their life fully). I also highly value practical similarities, such as residing in a somewhat close vicinity, having interests in similar hobbies,

and having similar values or political orientations. Above all, I believe I value intellectually stimulating interactions the most, whether emotionally or logically.

I think about the preferences which are homophilous in my friendships as not centered around the 'classical' striations of society, such as race, gender, social class, or age, however, I can also not decisively claim that this is not the case. For example, most of my close friends in the last years have identified as males, I do not tend to grow close to super rich folks (probably because of the low incidence of having experienced significant suffering throughout their lives in the circles of greatest privilege), and I do not have much consciousness about the race and ethnicity of my friends (I mostly remember where they currently live and what their cultural heritage entails).

Throughout my late teenage years, and especially during the last few months filled with working on this project, I have felt disoriented about specifically reaching out to people I could have perhaps wanted to befriend, if they practiced a religion I wasn't familiar with or were of an ethnicity which's cultural customs were unfamiliar. But I do not have any memories of intentionally trying to exclude someone from a group...actually, I don't think I invited a classmate to a birthday party once, specifically because it made me uneasy when he wouldn't know how to pick up on social cues. I still feel a little bad about this, because he was always polite and had good intentions. In all reality, if I have excluded people, it was most likely based on the quality of conversations I held with them, as this is the selection criteria for befriending someone that I usually go for. However, when I think about it, this can potentially exclude a whole myriad of people and be very discriminatory.

I do think I feel more comfortable in diverse environments than most people. Largely because of my background of being an immigrant child placed in a highly international, inter-cultural, and ever-changing environment. However, when I find myself in a room where I can't seem to click with anyone (and not for the lack of trying) I expressly want to leave that environment. E.g. if I find myself in a place where people only care about drinking alcohol or making insensitive jokes...I especially get triggered by misogyny, racism, speciesism, harmful vulgarity, emotional exploitation/manipulation and similar veiled under the pretenses of entertainment.

The most comfortable I feel is usually when there is a decent amount of difference in the room but also points of similarity - whatever the gender, sexual orientation, race, and age in

the mix, if we all have a common interest, it is exciting and fun to interact (although the attitude and vibes of every individual can also make this environment cold/unwelcoming i.e. if they have a closed-off mind and/or body, are aggressive, or are putting up pretenses.)

I think that inclusion without hypocrisy, equality, and fair treatment are rights of every living being (yes I also mean non-human living beings too). When these are not present, somebody is not enjoying the rights they deserve. I consider this to be one of the formational thoughts on how to treat others, so I try to stand by it. If I don't, I have the premonition that life will not work out well for me, I mean I could find myself as a miserable billionaire hoarding money indefinitely 10 years down that line haha.

Moving on, as a person who immigrated to Denmark from Croatia, but foremost as me as myself, I have experienced some exclusion and unequal treatment; exclusion when people around me would speak a language I didn't understand and mock my values or interests; unfair treatment when assumptions would be made about my identity and when the same opportunities wouldn't be extended to me in the same capacity as to those who were more stereotypically Danish/American and neurotypical. As far as it's within my power, I don't want to induce the same, or similar, negative experiences in others. I think it is always worth it, when one is in the right place and able to, to step out of one's own personal comfort zone slightly in order to meet and understand another person. It can of course sometimes hurt, but it has been, in my experience, a win-win situation most of the times - I learned about another person, gotten to know about another way of thinking/being, and enriched my inner world, and the other person has probably experienced the same, or at the very least, had been understood a little bit as they deserve.

And it wasn't even a big deal.

I suppose I could make a counter-argument in the form of the good old picking-apart here, and I am tempted to make it - because it could be beneficial to the project and I feel morally obliged to - but I don't want to, it's just how I feel. People aren't meant to keep apart from others just because they are different. We all have similarities in my opinion; we are just sometimes not able to see them. Which is when we are more likely to start discriminating against each other based on differences which don't have to matter or differences which have been imposed on us, either by family or by other parts of society or by ourselves after

internalizing them. I believe that if I look enough, I will always be able to find similarities between myself and another person (and in extension, living beings).

It's interesting to think about how most people don't make any friends before they have spent some time with a family (no matter how big or small, how short, how long).

Bonny

1. Which characteristics do you value the most in other people when you make friends?

I wanna say honesty and loyalty (but not like a dog). Why? Because I think that they are qualities that we don't see very often in people today. I think that this generation seeks a kind of "blind loyalty" where even if their friends are wrong, they somewhat demand a certain type of loyalty and that is where honesty comes in, ig. I value honest friends cause when I am on the wrong side of things, they will let me know. They will tell me that I am wrong and if I keep up with it, I will hinder my choices.

2. Can you reflect on which of your personal traits and/or interests you think could be more subjected to the processes of homophily?

I never really thought about it and now that I am thinking about it, I don't really think so? I never really had many friends growing up and when people got to know me, one of the first things that would always come up was -how weird I was. And I think that trait would only delay the process of homophily being weird and having quirks wasn't/isn't really the deal breaker to making friends.

3. Do you view your friendships as homophilous and how?

Yes and no. I know that my friendship group is pretty diverse. I would say that the friendship group outside the university is definitely more diverse and my university friendship group less diverse.

4. Have you ever felt conflicted or confused about including others or being included through friendship?

Yes ofc. But with time I came to realise that I am very quick to know which people I want to include and which people I don't want to. I have been excluded from friendships because I

was considered "weird" so I would say that I am somewhat picky when it comes to which people, I want to make friend with and which are ones that I don't really care about.

5. Has there ever been an instance where you intentionally excluded someone? What was this based on?

Yes. Is based on their overall opinion. I'm not gonna befriend someone whose sole purpose is to learn and not grow. And I know that some of you have encountered these types of people. They often question things, create havoc, and still have the audacity to say, "I like to be the devil's advocate sometimes". Well, guess what, there are some subjects that don't need a devil's advocate. People who often play for both teams and don't settle for one aren't here to be integrated, they don't even know how to work towards integration. They are just a bunch of oligarchs who don't accept other people opinions and when they are contradicted, they use the excuse "being the devils advocate" as they only way to show their knowledge and understanding of the world. I don't need those kinds of friends if they can't be real to themselves how do you expect them to be real to their friends?

6. Do you feel comfortable in a diverse environment where no one elicits similarities to you?/ when do you feel the most comfortable in a social setting (spec. Through social interaction)

First I have a question. Is it a diverse environment with different people? Or a diverse environment with a big diversity of people?

Because if I encountered myself in a diverse environment and the people surrounding me don't have any similarities with me and let's assume that I am in a room full of men, then no I don't feel comfortable. I don't even know why I would be there in the first place. But if the diverse environment is constituted with diverse people that don't have any similar traits with me and let's assume that it is at a gathering or a club, also no. But that is because I am quite reserved and being alone in a "closed" place with a lot of people makes my world feel lonely and small. But if I am alone in a big city and I am just walking around, looking at shops windows, looking at people coming and go I'm able to find comfort in that. Knowing that the world is quite big and diverse.

I find comfort in being by myself I think is a skill that a lot of people have yet to master.

7. To what extent is inclusion important for you? And thinking about the concept of moral obligations versus preference, to what extent would you want to change your approach to friendship, in order to

fulfill a duty of being inclusive (e.g. by embracing and befriending someone you don't see eye to eye with in terms of values/opinions?)

I don't like this question. Simply because of the "moral obligation". I do have a sense of morality and I find it important that people understand morality but an obligation? To what? Morality? To whom? Society? Family? I don't feel obligated to include someone, there are people who shouldn't be included at least not in my life, in the circle of friends that I want to preserve. I value preference more than I value moral obligation, after all, I am the one who has to live with my choices. So, I will always put my preference and I guess, my need to include someone. I am not gonna do it just because there is some moral obligation behind it.

Pluto

When meeting someone new, I tend to at least try being friends with them regardless of who they are. While I don't easily connect with people, I still want them to like me which might play a large role in how I socialise. However, I do admit to making assumptions about people based on how they appear (mannerisms, style, tone of voice). These assumptions consequently influence my behaviour around them and how likely I am to make efforts into forming a close bond. I think rather than the person's characteristics, it's their attitude towards me that ends up the deciding factor. More or less I need to feel like they're a good person according to my standards. Once I've gotten to know someone there are conditions they have to meet in order for me to properly connect with them, such as intolerance of homophobia, racism, sexism etc.

I think my friendships are homophilous but not in a way that can be 'classified', it's more so that I gravitate towards people who I feel can relate to and appreciate me. Things like humour, political views, and social cues matter to me in a friend but I like being around people who seem 'out of the box'. While I might not be the most comfortable around them, I sometimes end up enjoying my time more with people who say or do things I wouldn't think of. I like having people I can go to for different situations which makes it harder to claim something as being homophilous or not. The person I would approach for an existential question probably isn't the same as the person I would approach to gossip about a rumour I heard.

I can see already in my statements that there's a concept of comfort being part of friendship formation. While I want people to challenge my views, I also want them to make me feel like i'm in a space where I can do the same without having to go to great lengths to defend myself.

I think there's a difference between having traits that I really appreciate and traits that I look for in a friend. While I love people who think in unconventional ways and people who have something they're extremely passionate about, it's not a criteria to be my friend. Additionally, some people have traits that I admire but I don't see them as someone who could be my friend. Sometimes a person can seem perfect on paper and shares my values or interests but being around them feels like emotional labour. So it's probably safe to say that I make friends depending on how I feel and it's emotions that drive me rather than rational thinking.

In friends that I have known for an incredibly long time, I can see an overlap of our values and beliefs but despite having been raised in almost the same environment, we still differ in many ways. This points to the notion that no matter what, it's impossible to have your views align with someone else's, and at the end of the day, there is some sentiment at our core that isn't shared by others. It's impossible to categorise something as 'homophilous' because it's rather easy to claim the opposite. So, homophily exists in a grey area of relationships in which we know it's something we're prone to but have a hard time elaborating on.

Being excluded never really feels good, which might be why inclusion has become a social and moral obligation. While I don't recall being intentionally excluded, I know i've been excluded on the basis of things that can't really be controlled, like language. Or if the topic of the conversation is something I don't have anything to say in, I feel excluded because I can't participate. I don't think i've ever been excluded from a group, which is probably a privilege to be able to say and shows how inclusion is something we feel we have a responsibility to see through.

I grew up in a very international school where various races and ethnicities were all put together, so for me I never really consider someone's phenotype when making friends. While I do admit i'm more likely to bond with a POC rather than a white person, I feel a disconnect because I have a fear of not meeting their standards of what I 'should be'. So while being able to relate to my friends is important to me, I also don't like the feeling that i'm being categorised in their minds. On the other hand, being around people I have no similarities to

also means they might not have experience with my traits, and they would base my character off of the little knowledge they have instead of who I am as a person. I don't think this a very common occurrence because I rarely box people in that way and I doubt other people haven't yet realised the nuances that come from current expressions of identity. It's also not so productive being cynical of people. Still, I continuously feel the internal need to diversify my surroundings and not be one thing. This also goes hand in hand with the assumption that we become our environment. If the people around you are a certain way, you tend to adopt the same patterns.

That makes me question if the process of friendship will ultimately begin leading to homophily. Or is that a sign of an unhealthy attachment, when you start becoming like your friends? Even if you were influenced by your surroundings, if the choices you make and the person you become is something that comes natural to you, isn't that still YOUR identity despite it being a result of the friends around you? Or is a fruitful, inclusive friendship one that drives you to be the rawest version of yourself without sharing similar characteristics with your friends?

It can also be considered a form of inclusivity to allow people to integrate and adopt similarities to you. People change all the time and to be honest it's a bit dense to think that a person staying the way they are means they're maintaining their identity. You can be consistent with yourself and know who you are, but still change and grow. So if you join a friend group and notice that you're becoming like them, it doesn't really mean they weren't inclusive of who you were in the first place.

I think I'm already pretty inclusive as is, but aiming for more is something I believe everyone should probably do. However, while I don't want people to feel left out or alienated from a group, I also can't force myself to be close with someone I don't feel a connection with. In that sense, the friendship wouldn't be real and it would just be a byproduct of guilt and duty. So really I can't find any answer to how or if it should be done, it either happens or it doesn't.

Hunter

Alright, so where do I begin? I think it's easier to explore these questions throughout telling a story. Let's start with the way I think about my friends.

When I think about my friendship group, I tend to categorize them into 3 parts. I grew up in Curacao, moved to the Netherlands for 2 years, then came to Denmark in 2021. I made friends in all these 3 countries. However, I would say that in each of these countries, I've made friends based on different values (whether mine or theirs). This is why I find it easier to categorize them based on the geographic area in which we first became good friends. The reason behind this I think is because I have also changed drastically throughout my time in each country and I have not necessarily looked for the same things during the process of developing a friendship (since my values have also changed).

If I reflect on the types of close friends I had back home in Curacao, I would say that they all have the same artistic background as I do. I used to perform a lot in areas such as poetry, dancing and singing... and most of my friends, that I am still close with today, have similar experiences and passion for the artistic world. We would participate in many events together, compete together, write together which I think was a good base for developing the friendship. In addition to that, most of my friends also came from a religious background like me. Well, I can say that back home I was quite the religious type. Very much devoted to God and was not so interested in people who did not share this similarity with me as I believed that they would probably lead me to temptation of some kind. Aside from that, it wasn't natural to make non-religious friends anyways since most of their parties and night out happened on days where I either had church activities or poetry programs. And honestly, all of the people I made friends with outside of religion and art, I don't even know where they are now... I have also got proven right a couple of times when they did things, I wasn't particularly happy with! Or that did not align with my religious values. So, all in all, it was never smooth sailing with people too different from me. And I guess one can argue that to also be a good thing, but my ideas of friendship back in the days was "since it is not family, nor a romantic relationship, there is no reasons for it to clash and no reasons to have arguments" (Since ... you know ... I can allow a lot from a partner or a family than I'd be willing to allow from a friend).

Okay, onto the Netherlands. My experience in the Netherlands was pretty similar to Curacao in terms of friendship formation. It was mostly those who were as much into singing as I was, and those who were as religious as I was. However, it is in the Netherlands that I also first experienced the notion of race. I was not exposed to many black kids in class, the majority were Dutch which was a completely different experience for me. Throughout my 2 years

there, I have not made nor properly interacted with a single white/Dutch person. All of my friends were Black, mainly also from the Caribbean and as "churchy" as I was... well, unless they also came from Curacao – then it did not matter much since it was nice to have people around me I could speak my own language with. I didn't really feel like there was much in common between me and a Dutch nor was there anything we could really talk about ... somehow, I think maybe they were also a bit scared? I remember once the teacher was talking about racism and ironically asked me to say something about it... when I did, I remember the room being filled with an awkward silent, and everyone just trying to avoid eye contact with me. At that moment I was a bit embarrassed but also found peace within me to accept the realities and the difficulties of forming friendships with the "colonizers"² (that's what I thought back then, I guess as a defense mechanism and for me to be at peace with the fact that I would never be included in the Dutch system, so there was no point of even trying).

At last, Denmark. I think I have changed a lot since I moved to Denmark. I mean, from the Netherlands I started becoming more independent and self-aware person. I had much more freedom to explore my own values in the Netherlands than I had back home. And as I mentioned before, I became much more aware of how different I actually was, together with understanding the whole notion of racism, prejudice, slavery mentality etc. (Since Curacao is 85% black, I was mainly just exposed to colorism. and I can say that back in the days we also had the colonizer mentality and did not appreciate our own history/culture as much). All of what I experienced in the Netherlands has given me a sense of pride in my black identity, African heritage, Rich Haitian history (ouw, did I not mention I was born in Haiti?? Sorry about that! Have not really claimed that side of me until I moved to Denmark sooo that's why). I mean, imagine being embarrassed of a country that was the first to have a successful slave revolution??!! Well, that is how my generation in Curacao has made me feel for many years. Imagine a country that buries its beautiful creole language for the Dutch curriculum, because they do not think their language has much value (still talking about Curacao). Imagine a country that adopts the European beauty standard and makes all of its dark-skin children feel ugly and underappreciated. So yeah, I had a lot to learn.

All of these things mentioned above, are things that I became aware of when I moved to Europe. I also got to learn that the religion I was practising was somewhat made out of

² Curacao was colonised by the Dutch

European doctrines. So, I started drifting away from this belief and also drift away from my friends who were still blindly devoted to this belief. But anyway, to get back to my point, my friends here in Denmark are a bit more dissimilar because I think I became more open to other people and other experiences (at least I like to think so). Funnily enough tho, most of my friends do come from similar religious or cultural experiences/background as I do but I think that is because we are all people of color. So, I guess, we are not so dissimilar anyways... which honestly? Is super super nice! Let me give you an example why. My current partner is Danish and before meeting my parents, I had to teach him a lot about what is considered respectful and disrespectful in my culture; about customs; how to address my parents; what to do or not do in their house etc. etc. And although he accepts it, he does not always understand it. My friends on the other hand, already know all of these things because of experience, so I am not scared for them to meet my parents and or scared of my parents not liking them. And I mean, it would not be too bad having to explain and teach a friend about experiences but it's just more natural and much nicer when I engage with those who already shared some part of that experience with me. There is also a bit more authenticity in it (which I value a lot in friendship). Additionally, it is hard on itself already to be Black in Denmark or Europe as a whole. So having friends that are also people of color serves as a comfort than anything. It also gives me a sense of home when I am with them, since I don't have to fit in with Danish norms. They also all have that sense of proudness of their background that I love surrounding myself with. So, being with them fuels me much more than being with any Danes for ex. (Aside from my partner ofc) Thus, I don't really feel a need to expand my horizon in terms of friendship.

Okay, I have been writing a lot so let me cut it down now. To answer the question of whether I have intentionally excluded someone, well probably. But still, depending on the definition of exclusion, and the depth of it. if we are talking in terms of being in a room full of people, I am pretty good at making sure everyone feels included. I believe I have enough compassion in me to treat everyone equally.. however, if we are talking in terms of including them in my circle; in my friendship group... inviting them in my space, to my house, to go out with me, while I do not particularly enjoy their company due to clashing values or differences then yess .. but I mean doesn't everyone? And does that mean I am not an inclusive person? ... because if it is, id still do it, since I am not interested in forced bonds and superficial friendships.

In terms of feeling comfortable in environments where people do not elicit similarities to me, I sure do feel comfortable. I have also learned to be comfortable in environment where I was the only one who was different in the crowd (since I'm with a Dane). However, back in the days, I did not! This was something I learned myself. But its also good to note that I also don't usually get much out of those environments. I don't usually make friends in them, nor am I as connected as if I was with any other person of color.

And this brings me to my last point about how important inclusion is to me and how much im willing to include in my friendship groups. Just as sustainability, I have always thought of inclusion as something a bit superficial (at least the Western way of thinking). As I minority, I do deem it to be important and I understand why it is necessary to address, however, the way that it is being addressed is not constructive in my eyes. Yes, diversity and inclusion is indeed about race, ethnicity, gender ..but it is also about religion, opinions, values etc. So, one who preaches for diversity and inclusion should also have those in mind.

I do not feel any obligation to include people. I do it out of good will when I'm in an environment cause I remember how it felt like when I did not feel included. However, I do not get the need to do it in my close cycle because those are people I trust, people I can be authentic, real, natural with and people that I am willing to sacrifice a lot for as well .. and that is when things get a bit more complicated!

4. Theoretical framework

4.1. Understanding culture and identity

Identity and culture can be used in our project both individually, and as a network that strongly influences humans because of their interactions. Deconstructing the dualism between moral obligations, and personal comfort/preference is something we are aiming towards, and understanding culture and identity is our way of doing so. We argue using different theories that inclusion implies an imperative and responsibility which comes into tension with people's tendency to bond with those similar to them. Furthermore, this moral obligation even comes into tension with itself because while it's generally 'moral' to include others, it is not as natural in the process of socialisation. In this following section, we will be introducing the key concepts of culture and identity that can help us to deconstruct this dualism. Hence, It will be the framework with which we approach our analysis and draw conclusions.

4.1.1. Frontstage/backstage identity

One particular take on identity is Erving Hoffman's dramaturgy³, which he elaborates on in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. The main emphasis of this theory is the relationship between an individual and their surroundings. It is also commonly referred to as the frontstage and backstage identity theory.

The frontstage/backstage⁴ theory argues that identity is something that can be influenced by the situations one finds themselves in and that there is a dichotomy between a private and personal identity. This is where the role of dramaturgy comes into play. Goffman uses the metaphor of theatre production to illustrate the dichotomy of these identities. On stage, there are actors who play characters to an audience who watch and react. This is referred to as the 'front region' or 'frontstage'. The performance is affected by what the audience expects of the actor, and is one part of an individual's complete identity. To contrast, in a theatre production, once an actor retreats backstage, they are no longer subjected to an audience. This is the 'backstage' or 'back region' identity. The backstage identity is the private one, shown when there are few social expectations placed on an individual (reserved for

³ Dramaturgy refers to the sociological application of theatre to explore issues regarding identity: Mediatexthack. (2014, February 28). Dramaturgy. Media Studies 101. Retrieved December 11, 2022, from <https://opentextbc.ca/mediastudies101/chapter/dramaturgy/>

⁴ Some other scholars mention of the existence of an 'offstage identity' but it will not be used in this paper

themselves and close ones). In the 'back region', one can genuinely express themselves and their attitude. People also tend to rehearse their performance backstage, checking for *"offending expressions when no one is present to be affronted by them"* (Goffman 1956). An outsider coming across your backstage can be recognised as *"The moments when the presentation slips – when customers walk into the kitchens, or 'dirty laundry' is aired in public – are moments of breakdown,"* (Peter, 2009).

For something to be a performance, awareness of it is not required; one can do something because others are watching without being aware of the reason. It is rather the case that something is a performance when one exercises internalised expectations and norms. This also means that the terms of a 'performance' can vary and that which is a performance to one, might not be for another. Many argue that political correctness is an example of performance and the product of social pressure (Reinelt 2011). An article demonstrating this is *'The Performance of Political Correctness'* by Janelle Reinelt where she defines cultural performance as an, *"ideology enforced by the power of institutions or the internalization of norms and values as habits"* and therefore, *"political correctness participates in the key repetitions with difference and self-reflexive public consciousness that are the hallmark of cultural performance"* (2011). Ideas that are considered a moral responsibility are thus manifestations of cultural performance and are reinforced through frontstage behaviour.

4.1.2. Anomie and double consciousness

Durkheim's theories work with the idea that social facts are to be studied outside of biology or psychology, and have the capacity of coercive power upon individuals (Elwell 2003). Durkheim would consider the frontstage/backstage theory an example of our two consciences; *"There are in each of us...two consciences: one which is common to our group in its entirety...the other, on the contrary, represents that in us which is personal and distinct, that which makes us an individual"* (Elwell 2003). To use an example just previously discussed, political correctness is, by association of the frontstage, an extension of society and therefore a manifestation of the 'collective consciousness'.

The personal and individualised conscience is a vessel capable of seeking various things, and is constantly in conflict with itself, being pulled apart by the things going on with us. This

affliction of wanting is ‘*anomie*’ (Elwell 2003). Durkheim continues on to explain that the reason our wants and desires are not ‘insatiable’ has to be because of an external constraint,

"According to Durkheim, traditional cultures experience a high level of social and moral integration, there was little individuation, and most behaviors were governed by social norms which were usually embodied in religion. By engaging in the same activities and rituals, people in traditional societies shared common moral values, which Durkheim called a collective conscience. In these societies, people tend to regard themselves as members of a group; the collective conscience embraces individual awareness, and there is little sense of personal options." (Elwell 2003)

The collective conscience has deemed one thing as morally good, therefore people conform to it in order to achieve oneness. Throughout this paper, we will discuss recognising inclusion as a moral obligation. Applied onto Durkheim’s theory of double consciousness, this implies that being *inclusive* will ultimately allow you to be *included* in the greater society (thus acting as a positive feedback mechanism). In other words, this paper considers Durkheim’s approach to consciousness as a possible explanation for the dynamics between inclusion and homophily, serving as a framework that informs further analysis.

4.2. Social philosophy

Our project places people and socialisation at the centre, using them to both analyse real-world situations and make interpolations on how they function. The term ‘social philosophy’ encompasses, "*group dynamics and organization, group identity and the role of individual feelings within them,*" (Wollacott, 2022). Although a rather broad term, we believe that approaching our problem formulation as a study of ‘social philosophy’ opens our project up to discussions on ethics, friendship formation, and the intermingling of our concepts: inclusion, homophily, and friendship.

4.2.1. Value theory

Essentially, value theory serves to assess the worth of something (be-it moral, financial, legal, aesthetic, or usefulness in a specific context). The study of these highlights inferences which can be applied to an array of social aspects; specifically how the way we value things can influence our behaviour and norms (Madison, 2022). We use value theory constantly through

language when we express axiology; the study of whether something is good or bad. It can be argued that this is basically value theory. However, the definition of value theory that we use also aims to question the nature of value and studies it relative to other measures of morality (Schroeder, 2021).

How value is measured comes in different forms - if we began detailing all these approaches, we would find ourselves digging an endless hole. So instead, we will summarise those we believe hold the most relevance to our investigation.

Utilitarianism claims that something is morally correct, "*if it results in the happiness of the greatest number of people in a society or a group.*"⁵ (Tardi, 2022). It focuses on ethics in a sense of improving the collective society, and views happiness as something with intrinsic value. This is a normative structure that presents things as either good (creating happiness) or bad (not creating happiness). If we look at the classic trolley problem⁶ through a utilitarian perspective, the obvious choice would be to pull the lever and kill one person instead of letting four people die. So, with regards to value theory, something is valuable if it results in happiness for the greatest population. This comes with its own limitations, such as normativism itself, which fails to recognise the matter between right and wrong. Additionally, happiness cannot really be the only indicator of value; "*Having life is something that provides value to people. Being free to make your own choices has a certain worth that shouldn't be ignored. When love is in the picture, the relationships that cause this emotional reaction are also present.*" (Regoli, 2019). If we attempt to determine the value of either inclusion or homophily in a utilitarian manner, we come across the issue that happiness in friendship is not static or universal. We can argue that people befriend and form connections with others in the pursuit of happiness, but we also have to work under the assumption that being included in friend groups leads to happiness. Or perhaps excluding someone and prioritising your desires to be friends with a certain type of person, is the right thing to do.

⁵ There are also quantitative and qualitative utilitarianism - quantitative utilitarianism believes happiness comes in amounts, qualitative utilitarianism believes there are different types of happiness and sadness: Tardi, C. (2022, October 3). Utilitarianism: What it is, founders, and main principles. Investopedia. Retrieved December 15, 2022, from

<https://www.investopedia.com/terms/u/utilitarianism.asp#:~:text=Investopedia%20%2F%20Jessica%20Olah-,What%20is%20Utilitarianism%3Fof%20society%20as%20a%20whole.>

⁶ Merriam-Webster. (n.d.). *What is the 'trolley problem'?*. Merriam-Webster. Retrieved December 18, 2022, from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/trolley-problem-moral-philosophy-ethics>

Circling back to intrinsic value, we have 2 views on what this really is. Monism argues that there can only be one fundamental value that is intrinsic (Schroeder, 2021). The opposite of this is pluralism, which argues there can be multiple. Isaiah Berlin is a known advocate for the pluralist perspective and holds it to the degree that these are essential to being a human. In his essay, Berlin wrote, "*But I do believe that there is a plurality of values which men can and do seek, and that these values differ*" (Berlin, 1998). These values are both what people pursue for themselves, and also what they may require from other people.

Finally, deontology leads us to believe that following our duty is what is right (The Ethics Centre, 2021). Morality comes with a clear set of rules, and we must respect them, thus concerning ourselves more with intention and reasoning, instead of results. In deontology, you must follow through with what is right even if it requires a large sacrifice. For example, keeping a promise that will come at a personal cost or risk. Hence, moral obligations would outweigh preferences and self-interest.

Thus, value theory allows us to explore what conscious or subconscious approaches people take when navigating between homophily and inclusion. If we wish to analyse the dynamics between inclusion, homophily, and friendship, we have to realise why any of these things hold value/significance to individuals and society.

5. Conceptual analysis

5.1. Inclusion

5.1.1. A History of Inclusion

The words 'inclusion' and 'exclusion' derive from the Latin words 'inclusionem' (the act of confining something) and 'exclusionem' (the act of shutting out). The usage of their verb forms started around the 1400s, making them old concepts with a rather large history and varied meanings (Etymonline). One meaning of exclusion which has gained increasing traction in modern research is 'Social Exclusion'. It originated in France, dating back to French socialist politicians, particularly René Lenoir in 1974 (Taket, 2009). It was a term targeted towards people who were not covered by the national social security system, but it quickly started being used in reference to other groups who were 'excluded', such as: the disabled, homeless, unemployed etc.

Durkheim's theories indicate that inclusion and exclusion are not mutually exclusive, and can happen simultaneously (Mascareno and Carvajal 2016). It is reinforced through the idea of more than one consciousness, which argues that it is a human condition to want nearly everything. However, conceptualising them as a binary is an understandable framework for people to explain socio-political issues and interpersonal relationships. The binary would then be, as Niklas Luhmann puts it, the included who are "*made relevant in communication*" (Mascareno and Carvajal, 2016), and the excluded who are not.

This narrative of inclusion and exclusion being an understandable binary is reinforced in media and culture through children's shows, superhero movies, and religious texts, such as the bible. For example, Proverbs 22:2 states "*Rich man and poor man meet; the Lord made them both*". Religious social gatherings have also widely been used to construct inclusion; "*the Sabbath and Festival meal for Jews as a way of celebration, the Eucharist for Christians as a way of communion. These are manifestations of inclusion, of being at one with everybody else and with God.*" (Marmur, 2002)

Inclusion is treated as our obligation to society, and a moral imperative. However, this disregards the nuances of creating a space accommodating every individual and their values, interests, and background. It is difficult to consider a person without considering their

behaviour, and characteristics, and a lot of the time, inclusion depends on one's characteristics being 'tolerable' or 'digestible' for the majority.

Additionally, Georg Simmel's theory of a 'stranger', highlights the paradoxical relationship between inclusion and exclusion. He uses the character of a stranger, who is both close to and distanced from the social group. They have superficial commonalities with the group, and because of the distance, they are relied upon for detached perspectives. If there is a conflict within the group, this stranger can judge and intervene in a way that the group believes is unbiased. Despite being 'excluded', they are still an integral part of the social group, and including them in any other sense would disrupt the dynamic and remove them from the position of trust and apparent objectivity.

While inclusion in a social connectedness context (friendships, relationships) does not equal inclusion in society (access to resources, equal representation etc.), it can be argued that diversity within intimate groups of people is rather important, since it allows us to garner more empathy and incentive for universal justice (Passini, 2011). However, our need to be in a space where we are comfortable, which often happens subconsciously, limits the chances of this.

There are countless takes on where we must draw the line between the acceptable and unacceptable; necessary comfort and unnecessary discomfort; with some arguing that there should be no line at all. In an interview, Slavoj Žižek claims that a certain amount of dogmatism is a sign of progress within a society, *"I would like to live in a country where the fact that you don't rape is simply in the good sense 'dogmatic'"* (Channel 4 News, 2017). He also expressed his concerns about the increase in racist, anti-immigrant, homophobic etc. sentiments. In this sense, creating a space in which people feel allowed to debate things like 'whether women enjoy being sexually assaulted' is regression. If inclusion is conceived of as being inclusive to everyone of every value and characteristic, it is then a step backwards, where we begin debating things that should be ideological. However, this raises questions on what should be considered worthy of dogmatism and who determines this. The following sections will detail different approaches to inclusion and the paradoxes which surface when we deconstruct its meaning and implications.

5.1.2. The ambiguity of inclusion

Social inclusion is a challenging and complex concept that cannot be reduced to only one meaning or dimension. It has been described as an aim for "*social justice*" (Thomas, 2013), and 'an ethical obligation to the other' (Allan, 2005). It is the embracement of similarities, and differences, and the assurance of collective acceptance, without having to give up vital qualities and/or individual uniqueness (Ferdman, 2014). Thus inclusion, whether at an educational or societal level, indicates a commitment to an ideally 'just' society. Discourses of inclusion are made to systematically foster social equality across multiple dimensions of identity. However, although there is a general understanding that more equality is needed, dilemmas and tensions about how to achieve this, proliferate.

The discrepancy of inclusion and its many interpretations are particularly apparent in research. Although inclusion is one of the most dominant objectives and values in social context and in education, there is still considerable disagreement regarding its normative implication. What inclusion means or how it feels depends on its milieu: who defines it, and for what purpose is it being defined. Some discourses focusing on rights, morality and ethics, emphasise increasing equality and removing group-based barriers to opportunity. Whereas some social and legal pressure highlights the importance of avoiding unfair discrimination and treating everyone the same. However, 'treating everyone the same' is not always seen as 'being inclusive', as it can neglect the requisite for special needs and attention (for example; special needs in education for neurodivergent pupils in contrast to neurotypical pupils). Furthermore, assimilation can also be seen as inclusion – if inclusion is solely based on the presence of groups/individuals of different characteristics in a social system, without caring for and giving attention to the freedom of expression in preferred ways.

Yale psychologist, and Ph.D. principal Bernardo Ferdman, explains that psychological experience of inclusion enables people to feel safe and to maintain safety; to be engaged and to engage others; to be authentic, heard, respected, and valued both as individuals and as a member of a group with multiple identities (Ferdman, 2014). However, when addressing this psychology at a level of social interactions, it presents complexity since how inclusion is experienced is relative to the dimension of diversity involved. One example, fostering the inclusion of individuals with disability may involve a different focus than fostering inclusion across racial groups – due to the nature of the difference involved and the historical relations

among the groups in question, the inclusion of different groups must happen on different terms.

At last, let us talk about the relationship between freedom of expression and inclusion. Although freedom of expression has been linked with inclusion, there is still plentiful debate on whether individual expression is fully compatible with inclusion and equality. If someone's values offend that of another person in a diverse group of people, is it still considered inclusive? If individuals must conceal their opinions of someone in order to not be offensive, does that violate their freedom of expression and thus violate their right to inclusion? Or does it not? So, although freedom of expression, diverse values, inclusion, and equality may coexist, arguably, they can only do so in a tension-filled way that must be consistently negotiated.

Take the example of Yale University below, which had to explore the tensions between Freedom of expression and Inclusion;

In October 2016, Yale university's president, and social psychologist Peter Salovey, tried to explain in his Op-ed in the Wall Street Journal, how institutions can make room for both inclusion and equality on one hand, and freedom of speech on the other. According to his op-ed, the supposed tension between free speech and inclusion is false as it is possible to pursue both ends simultaneously. However, Yale found itself publicly mired in controversy and protest over the limits and balance of this free speech for fostering inclusion. This controversy was triggered by an email sent from the university's intercultural affairs committee to the student body, inquiring students to avoid culturally unaware and insensitive costumes that can be offensive to 'minority' students. Specifically, it advised students to avoid outfits including elements such as turbans, blackface, or feathered headdresses. In response, a residential administrator and faculty member wrote a counter email on behalf of those she described as "frustrated" by the official suggestions on Halloween costumes. She asked and argued whether blond toddlers should be banned from dressing as African-American or Asian Disney characters. This email upset many students, particularly of colour, since the administrator's stance was seen as a grievous setback to efforts of multicultural inclusion. As a result of this, the administrator found herself having to resign due to the massive pressure and protests after students demanded that resignation⁷.

⁷ For more information, watch this [YouTube video](#) Silence U Part 2: What Has Yale Become? | We the Internet Do...

As Salovey makes room for both seemingly contradictory perspectives, one of the most critical matters in dealing with rights to freedom of expression is also the duty of individuals to avoid actions that harm other persons. However, this duty might not correlate with individual preference and desire, and what is considered harmful contains much built-in ambiguity.

5.1.3. Paradoxes of inclusion

The tensions involved in the practice and process of inclusion, can be viewed through the lens of paradox. One of the main prominent paradoxes involved in inclusion is the idea of safety; ‘comfort zone’ and the preservation of ‘my way’ in contrast to ‘discomfort’ and openness to ‘mutual change and influence’. To truly engage with inclusion of differences, requires some degree of both comfort and discomfort (Ferdman, 2014).

§ Inclusion is about increasing collective and individual comfort; it is possible only when everyone can be more at ease.

§ Inclusion requires encouraging everyone to be fully authentic and accepting of themselves and others.

§ To foster inclusion, no one should need to change; everyone should be able to just "be".

§ However, inclusion is also about leaving individual and collective comfort zones, and expanding options and responses.

§ Inclusion requires everyone to mutually adapt and support each other, learning new patterns better suited for a diverse collective.

This begs the question of how individuals can experience and balance the inherent tension between creating a safe and ‘comfortable’ inclusive environment while managing the discomfort of differences (Ferdman, 2016).

5.1.3.1. Being comfortable with discomfort

The relationship between inclusion and comfort is not as straightforward as it may initially seem. People usually resonate with the idea that inclusion increases comfort and decreases discomfort for most people (Ferdman, 2016), especially for those previously marginalised or excluded. This is due to the gradual expansion of acceptance; *'eliminating barriers stemming from identity-based biases or invidious discrimination'* (Ferdman, 2016). As stated above, from this perspective, it is required for people across different social identities to become more comfortable with themselves and with one another in order to foster supportive collaboration and engagement across all types of differences. However, Ferdman (2016) argues discomfort to be grounded in our social identities when dealing with differences and is a vital way of thinking about inclusion. *"For truly reaping the benefits of diversity [...] it is not necessarily about making all of us fully comfortable but rather that it involves more of us being uncomfortable – albeit with discomfort that is distributed more evenly and equitably"* (Ferdman, 2016, p. 66). Thus, bringing out more differences and making space for these differences in a diverse environment can often elicit discomfort and unease.

Furthermore, true inclusion also involves including individuals who are angry and anguished just as those who are happy and satisfied; thus also including those who do not agree with dominant social norms as much as those who do. Isn't everyone excluded at times? even by those 'preaching inclusion for all', because we do not always share the same beliefs?

"The tension, briefly stated, is that as long as we think of inclusion as a process of bringing those who are on the 'outside' into the 'inside,' we run the risk of reproducing the very social and political structures that label some as insiders and others as outsiders in the first place. At a deeper level we therefore run the risk of keeping in place the very divisions and power relations that the agenda of inclusion seeks to expose and overcome. While this does not mean that all attempts at bringing about more inclusive ways of doing and being through the inclusion of those who are on the 'outside' are automatically bad or unhelpful, there is a risk that thinking of inclusion only in these terms may prevent us from addressing the more fundamental issues out of which questions about inclusion and exclusion arise" (Biesta, 2019).

Given this polarity, the tension of comfort versus discomfort can be difficult both to address and experience, and can unfold in a variety of ways. When trying to co-construct norms for

inclusion, it can be challenging to stretch beyond one's comfort zone; not only in terms of allowing differences of styles and perspectives to flourish, but also in terms of managing tensions between own preferences/desires in contrast to those of the group/diverse environment. As seen with the example of Yale University, this tension can be aggravating particularly in the context of power struggles among marginalised groups.

So, how much do I (and we) need to change in order to include you (and them)? What can be done considering the historical realities of such (dis)comfort? Does subduing one's opinion/feelings at the expense of making others feel included, violate their own rights to inclusion?

Inevitably then, we simply cannot establish inclusion without simultaneously excluding someone.

5.1.4. How do we assess that a person is "different"?

In understanding the expectations and implications of social inclusion, it is important to understand and address how differences are constructed.

Difference is as ubiquitous a part of interpersonal experience as it is a typification⁸. Multiple philosophers have insisted that the processing of human differences is essential to the recognition of others as autonomous social actors. This argument is central, for example to Husserl's (1970) discussion of "appresentation"; How we come to view others as independent actors not of our own creation. Husserl addresses this question using a three-part process of interpersonal perception. The first stage of interpersonal perception is what Husserl calls "appresentational pairing" (Husserl & Welton, 1999). He claims that people do not directly perceive others as egos, noting that we only perceive the physical body of another person at first... yet, there is still a sort of "coincidence of meaning" taking place when we see other bodies (In contrast to seeing other objects). We are predisposed to viewing another person's

⁸ *Typification is the process of relying on general knowledge as a way of constructing ideas about people and the social world. As we participate in social life, most of what you know of other people does not take the form of direct personal knowledge, but rather general knowledge about the social world.*

body as having consciousness. The other body becomes a sign of a mind analogous to our own. The typification of one's sense of self suggests a body inhabited by consciousness.

In the second process, Husserl argues that we become further aware of a sense of sameness as the other person's body realises certain expectations. In other words, the other body executes various activities and movements familiar to us via the experiences of our own body. Thus, we further assume that another person's body *appresents* a corresponding consciousness.

In the last process of Husserl's model, the other person engages in behaviours and activities divergent from our own bodily experience. Through this, it becomes apparent that the other person is not an exact replica of oneself. Furthermore, through the process of empathy, our "I" in the setting/situation recognises the other person as "Other". In other words, it is the differences that allow us to see the autonomy and independence of other social actors.

Going beyond this philosophical anthropology, one can also argue that this 'processing of difference' affects the quality and nature of interactions with other people; "*the way in which we apprehend the other person, is basic to the dynamics of interpersonal relations, to the group structure of the world of people as we see it, and, very practically, to the way in which social tensions develop and are resolved.*" (MacLeod, 1979). (since we do not treat all differences equally).

Furthermore, the lack of attention given to the way differences come to exist may connote that they are approached as characteristics essentially attached to a person, rather than being characteristics that acquired/obtained meaning through (and in reaction to) specific frameworks and expectations (such as that of inclusion). Using Husserl's theory of the Self, we can argue "the differences we emphasise and identify are expressions of ourselves and our values" (Mathieu, 2018); since differences do not inherently exist on their own, and are therefore constructed from somewhere and/or someone and within a specific norm in mind. A norm that is then normalised by being kept implicit. From this perspective, the classification of a person as different – or similar – is more than just describing pre-existing characteristics that exist. Rather, it involves attributing from the perspective of the self, a specific value to some characteristics; materialising and making them matter. Hence, this promotes a view of differences as "lying within people", and hides the fact that differences represent a comparison that has been drawn between people; comparisons that use some traits as the

norm and confirm these norms as truth while disregarding or devaluing the perceptions and norms of others.

5.1.5. Inclusion and the ‘collision of values’

Many inclusive scholars explored possibilities for managing and fostering inclusion – including the management of different values – without exploring the difficulties of this.

Let’s take an example;

There has been a dispute concerning the installation of religious symbols within publicly shared space. In the mid-1990s, one particular dispute, fought with considerable intensity in London, involved the proposal to establish an eruv in a public space. Stretched around this public space of largely urban neighbourhoods, eruv work by converting the territory into a single private domain which allows and enables orthodox Jews to carry on the Sabbath outside their homes. Disputes over the establishment of eruv occurred in the 20th century across a number of jurisdictions, revealing the fraught and complex relationship between identity, symbolic meaning, and practice. In the US, the ACLU (American Civil Liberties Union) became involved in challenging a New Jersey eruv on the basis that it ‘breached the wall between state and church’. In the UK, the attempt to build an eruv in north London generated formidable oppositions from those who deemed its creation to threaten prevailing norms of universality, rationality, public versus private and secular geographies (Spain & Cooper, 2000).

This example can be multiplied many times over, with other instances showing similar and familiar tensions. And given this tension, questions about the benefits of inclusion and accommodation arise.

Furthermore, the discussion that unfolds, surrounding inclusion and the concept of difference, centres on the way in which collective identity, values and social structure intersect.

Politics/discourses of inclusion remains grounded in respecting and affirming vulnerable forms of difference. Such affirmation set inclusive discourses apart from the more muted advocacy of tolerance apparent in traditional liberal frameworks. Historian and sociologist Jeffrey Weeks (1993), for example, expresses that tolerance is not enough. "for tolerance

presumes a position of normative superiority" (p. 206); as we tolerate the things we do not like but believe have the right to exist. Thus, what inclusion asks of us is much stronger – affirming differences for its own sake and as a way to facilitate individual and collective freedom. However, the charge to celebrate and affirm differences brings difficult questions in its wake.

This is where the political analysis of the philosopher Isaiah Berlin is relevant as it acknowledges the agonising truth of managing different values (Berlin, 1990). Berlin held no illusions and insisted that not all human values are necessarily compatible with each other, meaning that there are no final solutions in which conflicts and tensions are resolved once and for all. To him, the notion of "the ultimate solution", in which all good things coexist, seems to not only be unattainable, but conceptually incoherent. Berlin insists on being critical of those who deny this 'collision of values' while holding out the prospect of the removal of these contradictions is some future "perfect world". *"in this way tragedy enters into life as part of its essence, not as something which can be resolved by rational adjustment: to hope to eliminate it is merely to cheat oneself, to be superficial, to avert one's eye from the truth; and this is to betray one's integrity [...] deliberate moral suicide"*⁹

⁹ Center, T. H. A. (2014, August 11). Isaiah Berlin and the Collision of Values. <https://hac.bard.edu/amor-mundi/isaiah-berlin-and-the-collision-of-values-2014-08-11>

5.2. Homophily

5.2.1. The origins of homophily

The concept of homophily, – the tendency of individuals to bond and associate with similar others – was born in the mid-century urban struggle over race and space. It was coined in 1954, by researchers Robert Merton, and Paul Lazarsfeld in a highly-cited study about friendship in a mixed-race public housing project in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Namely, under the United States Housing Act of 1937, local governments had the authority to decide whether or not to build mixed-race housing; one result of this was that racially-segregated public housing developments were largely the norm. Some social scientists and housing advocates made major efforts to change this pattern of segregation. Robert Merton, being one of the advocates, directed the project in Pittsburgh where he did research on the white and black residents' attitudes towards racial segregation and integration. Together with Paul Lazarsfeld, they explored the familiar question of whether birds of a feather flock together, and concluded that friendship forms and persists not only on the basis of shared identities but also based on shared values and beliefs. Focusing on questions such as; "*Do you think colored and white people should live together in housing projects?*" and "*On the whole, do you think that colored and white in the Village get along pretty well, or not so well?*" They discovered that people who valued racial integration tended to be friends with each other, as did people who valued segregation.

The distinctiveness theory, which suggests that "*People in a social context tend to identify with others with whom they share characteristics that are relatively rare in that context*" (Mehra, Kilduff, & Brass, 1998, p. 442) has also helped shape the concept of homophily. Giving an example, two black people are more likely to "find each other" in a crowd dominated by white people than in a crowd dominated by black people. According to the distinctiveness theory, the notion of rarity of a characteristic in a social network makes that characteristic a lot more salient for the ego, and therefore elevates the chances of forming a tie with an 'alter' of the same characteristic. From Cypress' personal experience, this tendency to pick out a similar other is also accompanied by the greatly heightened chance to form a tie with that person, even if the person is radically different in other ways which would mean that the tie would most likely never have formed in an environment where she

and the distinctly similar other person were not the few/only persons with that characteristic. This would also mean that the formation of friendship in an extremely foreign environment is more likely than in a familiar one, and that the bar for strength of similarity between two persons is higher in situations where many similar others are available.

Other research in workplace management has examined racial and gender homophily in organisational contexts. In ‘newcomer’ networks, they found minority groups to exhibit greater homophily compared to whites (Mollica et al., 2003). And despite the promotion of diversity, homophilous tendencies have consistently continued to be observed in educational settings, such as multiracial groups. Over the years, there have been constant debates in literature about the negative and positive effects of homophilous ties in social contexts. On the one hand, homophily acts as a social support mechanism because it enhances reciprocity, trust in relationships, and improvement of communication. These effects can be particularly necessary during phases characterised by novelty and uncertainty (which can be the case in ‘newcomer’ networks, i.e. social environments in which social actors are newcomers). On the other hand, when individuals with similar background characteristics (e.g., age, gender, nationality) develop their own subgroups, the benefits of functional diversity might be negated due to the lack of contact of individuals with diverse others.

5.2.2. Heterophily

This is where diving into the concept of heterophily furthers our knowledge. Heterophily can be coined as the opposite of homophily. It functions by connecting people through their differences; it is a foundation behind many inclusion processes, and a significant factor in driving us forward.

"Homophily facilitates efficiency of communication, while heterophily stimulates innovation" (Hermans; 2018)

Innovation through understanding, and integrating, different knowledges is one of the many sources of appeal for profit-driven organisations to promote inclusion. However, we do not wish to reduce the whole affair of heterophily and innovation down to profit opportunity. In identity theory, heterogeneity (the quality of containing different characteristics within a whole) of the self is accepted as a means of explaining the coexistence of contradictions in the beliefs of the self (Hermans, 2018), or as we could call it, the paradoxes of own thinking.

The theory is that these contradictions exist - after all, most people have the personal experiences of being at odds with themselves, or finding out they hold opinions about different topics which are not entirely consistent with each other; in any case we have had them so they surely exist. Hermans too, argues that in modern society, normally "*the self is faced with an unprecedented density of positions; that its position repertoire becomes complexly patterned and heterogeneous, laden as it is with differences, tensions, oppositions, and contradictions*" (Hermans; 2018).

However, even though homophily and heterophily can be seen as opposites, the existence of one doesn't necessitate the absence of the other, and vice versa. Both homophily and heterophily can simultaneously co-exist in a social tie at different times, and in different ways. For example, if a certain friend group is homophilous in terms of race, gender, and religious beliefs, it can simultaneously be heterophilous in terms of ethnicity, political views, and ambitions in life. Thus, when theorising about the negative and positive effects homophilous ties can have on society, there is also a dimension of the positive and negative effects of heterophily. This approach extends our understanding of inclusion further than an approach that only considers homophily. For instance, it is much easier to condemn a 'religiously homophilous group'¹⁰ of people for not being inclusive if the knowledge of that group being incredibly racially diverse is withheld. Further, no friendship or group of friends can ever be completely inclusive, even if they desperately wanted to - due to the sheer complexity of human beings as organisms, just the material constraints of segregation due to social class, or geography, or inherited wealth, or hair texture, or childhood trauma, make it extremely unlikely that two people can be entirely homophilous.

¹⁰ A group that is homophilous in regards to religion

5.3. Friendship

Now that we have dived into the dynamics of inclusion and showed how it comes into tension with homophily, we bring in the last main concept - the concept of friendship. For us, this represents the third crucial dimension to understanding the two more theoretical dimensions. Friendship is something we all experience first-hand during our life journeys. It represents close interpersonal relationships, and it can help us understand inclusion and homophily on a deeper level; a more practical, and perhaps more emotional level.

5.3.1. Pinning down the concept of friendship

In this paper, we use the word 'friendship' loosely on purpose. We are aware that the essence of 'friendship' can take many forms - the same word is used extensively throughout Western and non-Western academia alike, also rarely in conjunction with a proper delineation of what is meant by it. For us, the essence of 'friendship' as the phenomenon we want to focus our study on is: the set of interactions between individuals, who are not connected by familial bonds, which is personally significant and intimate but at the same time non-sexual and non-romantic. This might be broadly referred to as something else than 'friendship' in other knowledge traditions that we do not have sufficient expertise nor familiarity with, and we are aware that the categorisations we use to define our use of friendship can be negotiable (culturally, personally, or randomly).

Though we have experimented with and discussed how relative friendship is, the focus of our investigation is on the tensions between homophily and inclusion. So, rather than use the etymology of friendship to evaluate interpersonal relationships, it will be used as a type of 'microcosm' to study an example of how these tensions arise. We can explore the psychological emotions involving friendship formation, and investigate its importance to understand how it can be paradoxical to inclusion.

We assume that the choice of whether to form a friendship bond with someone and with whom is not entirely involuntary or uncontrollable; or in other words, that we make choices about friendship formation.

"Friendship choice is an exemplar of a decision that is both intensely personal and profoundly shaped by social structure. It is the most voluntary form of strong ties in modern

societies, entailing far more choice than family, with easier exit than long-term romances and marriages." (Thomas, 2019)

The friendships that we make are seen as a choice that is personal and somewhat shaped by social structure. These homogenous ties that connect us with each other are considered one of the most voluntary choices that we make, more voluntary than family ties. These ties conduct and influence our flow of information, as well as demonstrate a large social influence by determining who we befriend in the future.

In the western philosophical tradition, it is common to follow Aristotle (Nicomachean Ethics, Book VIII¹¹) in distinguishing three kinds of friendship; that of pleasure, utility, and virtue. The basic idea of this distinction seems to be that pleasure, utility, and virtue are our fundamental reasons for loving our friends. That is, 'I may love my friend because of the pleasure I get out of them'; or 'because of the ways in which they are useful to me'; or because 'I find them to have a virtuous character'. However, as a group, we came to realise that we all had varied views and approaches to our friendships. This was in terms of the priority they hold, how we believe affection should be expressed to friends, and even what qualifies as a friend.

Furthermore, the long-term effects of which bonds are formed and which are not, can have astoundingly significant implications for individual persons and social organisations.

"The informal social networks created by friendships are conduits for information, social influence, aid, and introductions to others, all of which become sequestered within group boundaries when 2 networks are segregated (Tilly 1998), heightening inequality between groups." (Thomas; 2019)

Humans are social beings, and even though modern societies have many systems in place and pose as doing the best they can to prevent discrimination, a lot of discrimination happens silently, behind closed doors, or little by little over multiple years. As a couple of banal examples: a friendly relationship with the head of study at one's university can make knowing of the the best opportunities available a lot simpler; friends in high places may put in a good word for one's dying sibling to get treatment for melanoma before it's too late; or a classmate from highschool who became a famous entrepreneur can help a friend with back

¹¹ More on Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics: <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/friendship/>

problems achieve full financial stability and early retirement within 5 years. Metaphorically speaking, these situations are about as easy to pin down and prevent as feeding a toddler spinach is. The repercussions of being in an unfavourable position can alter the life course of an individual in powerful ways; both for the better and for the worse.

This being the case sets the perfect stage for systemic exclusion of marginalised persons. Over time this exclusion can become discrimination on the basis of events which are not easily pointed to and no one person or actor is responsible for.

The connection between inclusion and friendship must exist because of the nature of friendship. The self-expansion theory proposed by a team of renowned social psychology researchers, A. Aron, E. N. Aron, and C. Norman, and postulates that: *"in a close relationship each person includes in the self, to some extent, the other's resources, perspectives, and identities"* (Mashek and Aron 2004). By accepting the close friendship of another person, they are included. In the opposite situation, where a friendship is not formed, the sharing of parts of selves and inclusion of each other's perspectives into each other's minds does not happen.

5.3.2. How friendship connects (us)

R. J. Thomas stipulates that friendship is a choice, a decision that we make in a personal setting and is also influenced by our social surroundings. Expressing that friendship is a voluntary form of strong ties in our societies far more voluntary than family. Thus, there is a fundamental liberty that friendship allows us to make the most of our relations. (Thomas, 2019).

Thomas claims that the first social relations that are usually made are among our family with the help of our parents thus creating reflections of a caregivers' network. Relationships that are based on residential proximity are often the first friends that we make in our childhood. The main target of these youth friendships are neighbourhoods that resemble similar families by race and ethnicity, religion, and social class. Although it is important to mention that these relationship formations are created with the child's social status in mind, such status will not differ over the life course, but the social class mobility from childhood to adulthood can change the more homophilous friendships to more class-diverse friends. The change into

adulthood begins through postsecondary education and the need for friendship affiliated with residential proximity fades away.

The connections built during friendship formations can present themselves in various ways. They do not necessarily have to be in terms of proximity or mutual connections as explained above, but can also be through similar interests. A survey done by VIVE¹² regarding *"Ethnic youth minority in Denmark - a survey of generation 0"* from 2017, shows how rarely minority and majority youths form friendships. This survey has been applied to demonstrate how children in the Danish school systems preferably form friendships with individuals who look like themselves, and the ultimate consequences of doing so. The article also raises concerns in regard to this homophilous tendency in the Danish school systems, and elaborates on the importance of socialising across different groups. Thus, emphasising that by working on these homophilous tendencies, it can prevent prejudice and hostility across minority and majority youths. The article emphasises that children in the Danish school systems perceive close friendships as a relationship with someone who looks like themselves (Høi, 2020). This perception can also be identified within the intrinsic case study of the project.

To elaborate further with a concrete example, Hunter expressed, *"I didn't really feel like there was much in common between me and a Dutch nor was there anything we could really talk about"*. In this example, Hunter explains her experience of moving to a different country, where she no longer was a part of the majority group, but now was considered a minority. She further explains her difficulty of forming friendships with the majority group, due to their differences, which strengthened her perception on rather befriending individuals who are similar to her. The perception of preferring to form a friendship based on similarities, and not differences, can be understood and potentially created, due to the feeling of comfortability. To further elaborate, in the article, it is stated by L. Gillian, who is an associate professor at Aarhus University, and a researcher in school and ethnicity, that *"The reason why we find friends we think are similar to ourselves, is that it reinforces or supports us in our self-understanding, and view of the world. That there is someone who has the same experiences as me, or is interested in the same things, it supports me, that my choices and interests are sensible"* (Høi, 2020). This statement can once more be identified within

¹² <https://www.vive.dk/da/> : The National Research and Analysis Center for Welfare is a Danish analysis and research organisation.

Hunter's case. Hunter expressed that in the beginning of her relocation to the Netherlands, she comfortably formed friendships with individuals, who had the same nationality as her. Hunter expressed how sharing the same language, and experiences, made her feel at ease, and was one of the main factors in the formation of the friendship. This can potentially also be understood as Hunter's way of coping with adjusting to a new country, and the uncomfortability it can bring for an individual to acknowledge that she no longer is a majority. Hence, having the same experiences and perceptions, can create a form of support and self-understanding, which can strengthen the formation of friendship, as Gillian also expressed in her statement.

5.3.3. The psychology behind friendship - emotions and bonding

Although traditionally psychology has focused on dynamics and meanings of friendship which are relevant to society on a large scale (Martínez-Priego and Romero-Iribas, 2021), we choose to focus on the interactions between friends and the resulting dynamics of inclusion and homophily.

All interactions, and by that also the interactions between individuals who are close, form due to emotional exchanges and needs. It is generally accepted that as humans, we have an innate necessity to belong, which tenaciously drives us to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of significant, positive and lasting interpersonal relationships (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497). This need is closely related to moral and emotional fulfillment and regulation elements "*because it is a source of emotional and instrumental resources for the individual*" (Mendelson & Aboud, 2014) and because "*it is crucial for avoiding negative situations such as loneliness (Cacioppo & Cacioppo, 2018; Killeen, 1998) or even as an expression of one's political stances*" (Martínez, Priego and Romero-Iribas, 2021). Some of the most valued aspects of friendships among others, have been observed to be: altruistic behaviour, quality interactions, promise-keeping, and intimacy (Keller, 2004). A useful term for understanding the specific nature of intimate friendships between individuals is the *bonding feeling*. Originally from the psychological tradition of attachment studies, this term describes the emotional experience of feeling a closeness to someone. But what creates this *bonding feeling*? What makes two people compatible?

To discuss the essence of social networks and how they are formed, homophily is of high importance. Many psychologists believe that the attraction between those who share similar personality traits and characteristics are more likely to increase (Dryer & Horowitz, 1997). This hypothesis has been supported by numerous scientific studies, suggesting friendships have a greater success rate when common behaviours/attitudes are shared. Although homophily between friends are varied, they all serve the same purpose of fostering compatibility and maintaining the rewards of affiliation. This can then generate cohesion within groups, loyalty, trustworthiness, reciprocity and comfort (Byrne & Nelson, 1965; Byrne, 1997).

6. The intertwined relationship of the 3 concepts

6.1. The association between homophily and the process of friendship formation

Throughout reading the personal stories in chapter 3, one can see many dimensions of homophily present within the scope of friendship including; values, beliefs, physical characteristics, demographic variables and attitude. Cypress expressed in her text that she *"highly value practical similarities, such as residing in a somewhat close vicinity..."*. This sentence can be compared with the sentence *"Ties based on residential proximity are often the first childhood friendships..."* (Thomas, 2019). Ruben J. Thomas argues that one of the first friendships that we make are based on proximity, but growing into adulthood, these ties become less correlated with proximity and more on social opportunities. If we keep on reading the rest of the sentence that Cypress wrote we could somewhat box it as a social opportunity *"...having interests in similar hobbies, and having similar values or political orientations."*: The opportunity to discuss and enjoy their time together. The source of the friendship stops being about residential proximity and more about what they can get out of this friendship. This tie with social opportunity can also be viewed early on in the text when she said, *"I could have perhaps wanted to befriend, if they practiced a religion I wasn't familiar with or were of an ethnicity which's cultural customs were unfamiliar"*. This is the type of friendship that we make as adults as we stop making friends based on their proximity and more on 'what we can have out of this relationship'. Cypress' case was about the learning opportunities, in terms of different cultures and religions that she could have if she expanded

her friendship network. In some others' cases, it can be about wanting to expand their social network in order to get something out of it.

Since we mentioned the topic of religion, let's also look at how religion – as an example of similarities in value¹³– can reinforce attraction. Despite religion being generally considered an individual affair, it is in fact also a social phenomenon (Cheadle & Schwadel, 2012). Religion is as reinforced, as it is produced by social interaction and thus cannot be solely considered as an individual matter. George Simmel for example, argues that "*the faith which has come to be regarded as the essential, the substance, of religion, is first a relation between individuals*" (Simmel, 1905, p. 366). In addition, Durkheim also explored the significance of religion, by claiming it to be a source of social solidarity and mutual identification (Durkheim, 2011). In this way, religion generates a shared history and creates collective symbols and understandings. Hunter expressed that when she used to be very religious, most of her friends "*also came from a religious background*". "*I can say that back home I was quite the religious type. Very much devoted to God and was not so interested in people who did not share this similarity with me as I believed that they would probably lead me to temptation of some kind. [...]it wasn't natural to make non-religious friends anyways since most of their parties and night out happened on days where I either had church activities or poetry programs*".

Many other scholars have also tried to examine the reasons behind religious homophily. Windzio, M., & Wiggins, M. (2014) for example, conceptualised the idea of trust, which holds that religion supplies individuals with routine moral responsibilities and rituals. This then enables individuals practising similar religion to believe that they share the same behavioural guidelines, and as a result, produces mutual trust between them. This can also be seen in Hunter's text when she said she "*was not so interested in people who did not share this similarity with me as I believed that they would probably lead me to temptation of some kind*" and when she expressed that it was not natural to make non-religious friends due to the timing of church activities.

To take it further, several theoretical propositions have been forwarded to explain the role and psychological importance of similarity attraction within groups. Some examples include;

¹³ *In terms of value homophily; the tendency to form relations with people of the same values and opinions (McPherson et al., 2001)*

self-validation (e.g., Day & Schleicher, 2006), relationship satisfaction and egocentrism (Murray et al., 2002), identification and understanding (Duck, 1973).

Research argues for similarities through self-validation by claiming that friends are more likely to validate each other's opinions when they share similarities in values (Coombs, 1966). This serves as an external validation for one's own value priorities. In addition, there are also many potential rewards and benefits that can come out of this reassurance including; increasing well-being through increased confidence, and stabilising identity through increased self-respect (Knafo-Noam & Solomon, 2011). This can also be seen through the personal stories told by the writers. Pluto mentioned how her friends "*are homophilous but not in a way that can be 'classified', it's more so that I gravitate towards people who I feel can relate to and appreciate me. Things like humour, political views, and social cues matter to me in a friend*" (emphasis added). Mary also shared similar thoughts stating; *Several of the friendships I have made, have been due to the similarities I have had in culture and upbringing with the individuals. These similarities furthered the development of the friendships, due to the feeling of relatedness. Personally, it creates a sense of comfortability [...] but also a certainty that this individual will understand me at a level that another individual would not.*" (Emphasis added).

Similarly, Murray et al., (2002) state that people are often satisfied and happy in relationships where they believe to have found a 'soulmate'; where they consider their friends and/or partner to understand them and also share similar experiences. However, he continues to argue that because reality does not always match one's ideals and desires, individuals in intimate relations sometimes achieve comfort and security by creating a thought pattern of egocentric assumptions in regards to their friends/partners' resemblance of themselves. Thus, concluding that the perception of similarities is often greater than the actual resemblance of personality traits (Murray, 2002).

In addition, researcher and social psychologist Duck (1973) used the theory of construct to inspect similarities in friendship. The theory of construct views individuals as 'intuitive scientists', trying to make sense of the world as they experience it. This suggests that individuals have 'constructs' (individual cognitive processes of representation and judgement) that help them understand the world. The similarity between friends in these constructs thus increases the probability of social bonding and mental closeness due to

content-related similarities in thinking processes (Duck, 1973). This may be self-rewarding and thereby reinforces the choice for similar others in a positive feedback loop.

Duck's theory of construct can be seen throughout Mary's expression when she states that similarities "*furthered the development of the friendships, due to the feeling of relatedness*". She later revealed how the experience-related similarities in her construct, made her feel more comfortable and thus increases the chances of becoming friends with someone; "*it creates a sense of comfortability, when I converse with an individual, and **thereby, identify that we share the same upbringing experience***" (Emphasis added).

6.2. Diverse environment, comfort, and similarities in friendship

Another aspect that can shape the way people initiate and maintain social relationships is the correspondent social ecology. A study from social psychologist Angela Bahns et al., suggests that people are keener to choose similar friends when they are able to choose from a larger and more diverse environment, in contrast to those in rural and smaller groups. This idea was inspired by the impactful investigation of Barker and Gump's *Big school, small school* (1965), in which they compared different-sized Kansas high schools in order to study the "behaviour setting"¹⁴ of each. The results showed that people in smaller schools had a more relaxed criterion for selecting friends as there were "*less sensitivity to and less evaluation of differences between people. [...] usually in the nature of ignoring differences previously noted, and exhibiting increased tolerance of those noted*" (Barker, 1968, p. 24). Thus, the expansion of social contacts and the diverse possibilities of interpersonal relations – e.g., in the urban milieu – has evidently made ties of friendship more selective, as its criteria became more expressive and delicate. This notion is noticeable in both Cypress and Pluto's texts. Cypress stated; "*In all reality, if I have excluded people, it was most likely based on the quality of conversations I held with them, as this is the selection criteria for befriending someone that I usually go for*", While Pluto also expressed that; "*Once I've gotten to know someone there are conditions they have to meet in order for me to properly connect with them, such as intolerance of homophobia, racism, sexism etc.*"

¹⁴ Behaviour settings are theorised entities that help explain the relationship between the environment and the individual - particularly the social environment

While one might believe smaller homogeneous communities to lead to more homophilous interactions, these studies showed an opposite effect. They emphasised how the ability to choose from a greater variety led to individuals choosing others with similar interests and beliefs much more than those in smaller colleges. This leads to an ironic yet straightforward hypothesis that *"in greater diverse environments, we find less diverse friendships"* (Bahns et al., 2011). This hypothesis, together with Duck's theory of construct and Husserl's theory of the Self and difference, makes sense; since as mentioned before, differences do not inherently exist on their own but are constructed from somewhere/someone and within a specific norm in mind (Chapter 5.1.4.). As our environment becomes more diverse, we too, become more aware of this. For example, Hunter expressed that moving from a smaller island to a bigger European country has made her much more *"self-aware"*; *"I had much more freedom to explore my own values in the Netherlands than I had back home. And as I mentioned before, I became much more aware of **how different I actually was**, together with understanding the whole notion of racism, prejudice, slavery mentality etc."*. According to Husserl, Hunter's assessment of difference is a placement of value on that specific characteristic that she believed to stand out – in her case, it is *'being a person of color'*. This construct then makes it more attractive to form personal relations with others that share this similar characteristic; *"it is hard on itself already to be Black in Denmark or Europe as a whole. So having friends that are also people of color serves as a comfort than anything. It also gives me a sense of home when I am with them, since I don't have to fit in with Danish norms"* (Hunter).

The hypothesis of social psychologist Angela Bahns and the notion of how differences are generated, opens a big discussion of how much our personal comfort and approach towards similarities threatens the imperative of diversity and inclusion. Can inclusion happen as naturally as homophily?

6.2.1. Multicultural sensitivity and friendship formation

Multicultural sensitivity is defined as an ability to communicate, understand, and work effectively with people of diverse cultural backgrounds (Hunter & Elias, 1999). While this definition is accurate, it can also be stipulated that multicultural sensitivity can be regarded in different forms. To elaborate, culture is defined as the shared belief in values, religion, and/or racial groups (Merriam-Webster, 2019), which extends the use and importance of

multicultural sensitivity. The ability of multicultural sensitivity can then be regarded as a social competence due to the skill of perspective-taking, respect, understanding, communication, and cooperation, which are also crucial factors for multicultural friendships (Hunter & Elias, 1999). Meaning that, in order for a multicultural friendship to function, a certain consideration of all the social competencies mentioned above is required. The ability of multicultural sensitivity is not only applicable in regard to friendships, but can also be applied to work settings, and in any cross-cultural relationships, whether that is romantic, familial, or platonic (Hunter & Elias, 1999).

This can then raise concerns between homophilous friend groups. If one has always been in a homophilous friend group, the necessity to understand or develop multicultural sensitivity can potentially be either disregarded or not prioritised. This could possibly also result in issues when wanting more inclusion. Since one of the requisites of inclusion is *"inclusion requires everyone to mutually adapt and support each other, learning new patterns better suited for a diverse collective."* (Ferdman, 2014). Therefore, it is crucial to emphasise the importance of multicultural sensitivity, not only in regards to a successful multicultural friendship, but also to successfully include an individual with a diverse background in a homophilous friend group or setting. An important factor in the process of inclusion and multicultural sensitivity is to identify the level of initial discomfort that can happen for the individual. Hence, one of the other paradoxes arises when we believe that, *"inclusion is also about leaving individual and collective comfort zones, expanding options and responses."*(Ferdman, 2014). The initial discomfort could potentially also be regarded as one of the many reasons why certain homophilous friend groups tend to stay in their comfort zone, since they fear the incident of not being multicultural sensitive enough, in regards to, a person of a diverse background. Therefore, by accepting the initial discomfort inclusion can create, as well as minding the importance of multicultural sensitivity, one can proceed with a more fluid social interaction. Though, it is important to mention, that this is not always the incident, and that the end result can indeed vary depending on the setting and situation. Thus, by having a look at the intrinsic case study of the project, it is possible to identify several incidents in which multicultural sensitivity has occurred. To give a concrete example, Cypress expressed in her statement that several of her close friends identify as males, which differs from what Cypress identifies herself with. Though Cypress does not elaborate further on her reasoning behind her ability to create a close friendship bond with males, rather than

females, she states that having a common interest, hereby creates a more comfortable and fun interaction. In this example, we find traits of multicultural sensitivity, since Cypress emphasizes that she does not regard difference in gender, sexual orientation, race, or age, as being hindering factors for her will to communicate with the diverse individual. Furthermore, she expressed that regardless of these mentioned factors, by simply having a few points of similarities, and common interest, it sparks her will to comfortably communicate with the individual. Though, multicultural sensitivity merely focuses on the ability to converse with individuals that differ from oneself, it is safe to identify that Cypress has a semi-multiculturally sensitive orientation. In order for Cypress to conclude whether she feels comfortable when conversing with an individual, she has to first converse with the given individual, and hereby sense whether the individual has a common interest, in order for her to decide whether or not she wants to continue the conversation. Though this contradicts the main focus of multicultural sensitivity, due to the statement of having a more willing lust to converse with individuals with the same interest, it still does not fully deny that Cypress can converse with individuals who do not share the same interest. Meaning that, Cypress does not express anywhere that she will fully reject or exclude an individual, if they do not share the same interest. Hence, stating subconsciously she has the ability to be semi-multiculturally sensitive. Though Cypress expresses her ability, she also points to a rather different viewpoint when it comes to befriending a diverse individual. Cypress expresses a form of disorientation towards her ability to befriend individuals with an unfamiliar culture and or religion.

6.3. Homophily versus Inclusion – Backstage versus Frontstage

Homophily, as described above, is a 'tendency' occurring due to attraction (Kurgan et al, 2019). Instead of being a process initiated by our actions, homophily is something that happens to us. Thus, making it a byproduct of our inhibitions, and something behind our 'performance'. Consequently grounding homophily as something being conducted 'backstage'. When Hunter expressed, *"I do not get the need to do it in my close cycle because those are people I trust, people I can be authentic, real, natural with and people that I am willing to sacrifice a lot for as well .."*, she presented a dynamic between homophily, friendship, and the backstage. Her experience is that being friends with someone implies opening yourself up to who you are outside your performance.

Inclusion, on the other hand, occurs on the front stage. It is a concept widely connected to social justice, political correctness, and responsibility - as it can be stipulated that being inclusive and allowing for inclusion is something people must do for the sake of humanity. Inclusion within intimate social circles can help develop inclusion in the wider socio-political landscape of the world. This is particularly important for the course of equality and social justice, as can be seen through the implications it has on society as a whole. In his article, *'Individual responsibilities and moral inclusion in an age of rights'*, Passini talks about the discussion of inclusion as directly linked to one of 'rights vs duties'. 'Duties' in this context refers to the responsibility we have towards others (ie. protecting, supporting). He argues that in order to achieve universal recognition of human rights, we have to partake in intercultural dialogue. Western societies have been preoccupied with individualism and fighting for their personal protection, consequently pushing aside their 'duties'. He describes the concept of 'moral exclusion' as the act of excluding people from your "scope of justice" (2011). Therefore, you do not feel so strongly about seeing the rights, or the lack thereof, when it comes to others.

While inclusion in a social connectedness context (friendships, relationships) does not equal inclusion in society (access to resources, equal representation etc.), it can be argued that diversity within intimate groups of people is rather important, since it allows us to garner more empathy and incentive for universal justice over time. This is arguably the only way to move towards fundamentally fairer justice. Cypress explained how she thinks, *"that inclusion without hypocrisy, equality, and fair treatment are rights of every living being (yes I also mean non-human living beings too). When these are not present, somebody is not enjoying the rights they deserve. I consider this to be one of the formational thoughts on how to treat others, so I try to stand by it."* For many, it goes without saying that being inclusive is fundamental to being a 'good person'. However, our need to be in a space where we are comfortable, which often happens subconsciously, limits the chances of this, as discussed in the section explaining inclusion through paradoxes of discomfort. To Hunter, there is a distinction between inclusivity in social gatherings/dialogues, and accepting them in intimate settings, *"But still, depending on the definition of exclusion, and the depth of it. if we are talking in terms of being in a room full of people, I am pretty good at making sure everyone feels included. (...) however, if we are talking in terms of including them in my circle; in my friendship group... inviting them in my space, to my house, to go out with me, while I do not particularly enjoy their company due to clashing values or differences then yess .. but I mean*

doesn't everyone?". Recognising inclusion as an activity on the front stage allows us to understand that being inclusive in one way and not another is plausible and does not dismiss the importance of either. We are our front-stage identity as much as we are our backstage identity.

Goffman mentions the belief of performance being something "for the benefit of other people". We perform because the reality of the human mind and raw human identity (the backstage) is unproductive, undesirable, and often offensive. But we can see through personal confessions that performance can also be for the sake of your own mental health. Cypress thinks if she does not stand by the core values of inclusion she could, *"find myself as a miserable billionaire hoarding money indefinitely 10 years down that line"*. This is how socialisation is understood by most (Goffman 1956), and stirs tension between aspects of the front and back regions of identity. If inclusion is understood as a moral imperative, it is a performance required for the greater good. Consequently, since inclusion is an active process, one is inclusive, not because the 'uninhibited' or 'backstage' wants them to be, but rather because they feel they should. The innateness of homophily comes to clash with the obligation of inclusion and raises serious doubts on the authenticity of inclusion. How does someone being inclusive for the sake of performance affect inclusion itself? Does it invalidate inclusion?

However, as we can see through the personal stories it is more than possible to believe in inclusion and fight for it, whilst participating in homophilous tendencies. Hunter wrote that she includes, *"out of goodwill when I'm in an environment cause I remember how it felt like when I did not feel included."* In one way or another, we all expressed feeling excluded and how we believe that inclusion is in fact a good thing. But, *"However, I do not get the need to do it in my close cycle because those are people I trust, people I can be authentic, real, natural with and people that I am willing to sacrifice a lot for as well"*. Before beginning this project, even though we made the assumption that homophily and inclusion were opposites, the danger with this lies in the fact that being both inclusive and homophilous is not always an act of hypocrisy. A friendship group can be both inclusive and homophilous simultaneously - for example, a friendship group can have representation of many beliefs but can at the same time be homophilous through all of the friends being of one gender.

The idea of frontstage and backstage identities makes it easy to compartmentalise these two phenomena that are both prominent yet arguably contradict one another. The reason people continue preferring those similar to them, despite the pressure of inclusion is that the back region relieves them of this pressure. When we form friendships, we are subjecting people to a part of our back region, which is not commonly receptive to the obligation of inclusion. It is therefore an explanation for how these two concepts can coexist and not undermine one another.

6.4. Exploring tensions between ethical responsibility and preference

*If inclusion is understood as a **moral imperative**, it is a **performance required** for the greater good. [...] The innateness of **homophily comes to clash with the obligation of inclusion** and raises serious doubts (refer to p. 55, emphasis added).*

The concept of homophily can be understood as an implicit and/or explicit preference (for similar others). Preference refers to the values, tastes, wishes, and desires a person has, which makes them favour one state of affairs over another (Grüne-Yanoff & Hansson, 2009).

Generally speaking, one can have preferences regarding personal goals, types of activities and behaviour, the welfare of others, type of food, and so on.

Social scientists started engaging with this concept in the 20th Century to criticise the methodological approach of ‘hedonistic cardinal utility’ – an approach previously used by economists to argue that decisions were motivated by individual quest for pleasure; A is preferred to B only if A yields more utility than B. This hedonistic concept, being increasingly questioned, enabled utilitarian philosophers to seek alternative foundations for their ethical theories; through the concept of *preferentialism*. The concept of *preferentialism* claims there to be ‘*certain absolute preferential frames of reference which are preferred by nature*’ (Rønnow-Rasmussen, 2002), in contrast to the hedonistic approach. *Preferentialism* also defends the satisfaction of individual preferences as the only intrinsic-value agent¹⁵, and equates intrinsic value with well-being. Although this idea has been met with sceptic eyes, a number of researchers defend some version of *Preferentialism* (Rawls, 1971).

¹⁵ When *something is valuable for its own sake* as opposed to being valuable *for the sake of something else*

One can argue that expressing one's preference through means of decision-making and choice is the essence of purposeful and intelligent behaviour. Yet within the social realm, when there is more than a single individual involved, personal preference can come into conflict with social ethics and social inclusion.

Inclusion, as described in previous sections (chapter 5.1.), is the '*aim to social justice; (Thomas, 2013), and an ethical responsibility to others (Allan, 2005)*'. Human beings often feel a moral responsibility to refrain from activities that hurt others, and pursue those that benefit them. Many sociologists formally modelled such moral disposition, expanding on altruism (Becker, Margolis; 1981,1982) and reciprocal altruism (Rabin, 1993). However, several social scientists have stated many moral dispositions to not be personal preferences, but rather a set of (internalised) constraints or rules that are ingrained in us (e.g., Goffman, 1956). In addition to this belief, self-interest and preference can oftentimes be more intuitive than ethical duty, and thus can shape and change the way in which people interpret situations and dilemmas. Nevertheless, inclusion is considered to have more ethical weight than individual preference, since preference is not seen as an expression of social justice and fairness to others.

But how do these 2 concepts unfold in the social context?

When our preferences do not align with social inclusion, social decision-making may involve 'trade-offs' between the well-being of one person and that of another/others. Making such 'tradeoffs' also involves social rules, norms, constitutions, and social ethics. As individuals, we do not grow within a social 'vacuum'; our sense of justice, moral knowledge and our depiction of the functioning of the world are all constructed through our interactions with our society (Passini et al., 2009). These bits of knowledges are developed through the historically transmitted norms, conventions, traditions and beliefs, one finds themselves in. In this regard, our moral principles are a reflection of our moral understanding acquired through the process of social experiences. Thus, through exploring the notion of moral reasoning, one can find fundamental relevance for understanding the relationships between individuals and the functioning of society, in which social expectations and interactions are regulated both between and within groups. These interactions – together with the whole social system – change dynamically and constantly, which provides individuals with a multiform of perspectives. Indeed, such views on moral reasoning also raises questions on whose

perspectives are given consideration in such dialogues; who is considered to be a moral agent, and whose position is given weight.

6.4.1. Social exclusion and moral reasoning

Social exclusion is a pervasive facet of social life that ranges from everyday events (such as exclusion from social organisations) to large-scale tragedies. The exclusion of others often involves a range of reasons, from stereotypic expectations and group norms, to moral assessment of the fairness of such exclusion.

To take an example; when Cypress was asked about experiences of intentionally excluding someone, she answered; *"I do not have any memories of intentionally trying to exclude someone from a group...actually, I don't think I invited a classmate to a birthday party once, specifically because **it made me uneasy when he wouldn't know how to pick up on social cues**. I still feel a little bad about this, because he was always polite and had good intentions. In all reality, if I have excluded people, it was most likely based on the quality of conversations I held with them, as this is the **selection criteria** for befriending someone that I usually go for. However, when I think about it, **this can potentially exclude a whole myriad of people and be very discriminatory**"* (emphasis added).

Social psychology on justice explains how an individual's beliefs about the fairness of a particular instance influence their emotion and thus serve as an important motive in social behaviour (Tyler et al., 1997). While Cypress made a moral assessment to exclude, she still expressed a great sense of guilt and regret. To understand this behaviour and approach toward social exclusion, social-domain theory can be used to describe the incentives behind Cypress' emotions.

Social-domain theory proposes that people oftentimes distinguish moral issues using 3 models; morality, social-convention concerns, identity and autonomy. Morality fixates itself with what is fair, right, just and the welfare of others (e.g., 'it would not be fair for Cypress to exclude her classmate from the party'); social-conventional concerns, on the other hand, involves etiquettes, customs and conventions promoting effective group functioning (since Cypress' classmate cannot pick up on social cues, he would not be able to fit in anyways and thus this will make the group disruptive); autonomy and identity involves personal entitlements and personal issues (it is Cypress' decision who she wants to invite to the party

and who she wants to be friends with). These domains influence one's sense of responsibility and value orientation and thus one's actions. Although these domains can be contradictory, they exist simultaneously, and can cause conflict within an individual.

As seen with the example of Cypress, while she admits to excluding people due to her preferences, she expressed the feeling of guilt and she too places inclusion on a higher ethical ground than her preferences, stating; *"People aren't meant to keep apart from others just because they are different. We all have similarities in my opinion; we are just sometimes not able to see them. Which is when we are more likely to start discriminating against each other based on differences"*. Cypress believes that people are not meant to exclude or be excluded due to differences, however, in the same breath, she continued expressing *"I especially get triggered by misogyny, racism, speciesism, harmful vulgarity, emotional exploitation/manipulation and similar veiled under the pretenses of entertainment."* Similarly, Pluto expressed that once she *"have gotten to know someone, there a conditions they have to meet in order [...] to properly connect with them, such as intolerance of homophobia, racism, sexism etc."*

So, surely everyone has finite boundaries for justice?

To explain this further, take a look at the fable of the scorpion and the frog below;

A scorpion and a frog encounter each other on the banks of a river. The scorpion is on its way to the other side of the river, but the waters are too treacherous for it to cross. With no other alternative, the scorpion asks a frog to carry it across. With suspicion, the frog asks the scorpion; "how do I know you won't sting me?" To which the scorpion replies "why would I do that? We would both drown then." The frog, although still unsure, considers this argument sensible and decides to transport the scorpion. Midway across the river, the frog feels a sting and the spread of venom slowly taking over his limbs. The sinking and dying frog realizing what has happened, gasp out "why did you do that? Now we will both drown and die!" and as the scorpion sinks with the frog, it replies "I am sorry, it is in my nature."

Although this fable may represent a dispositionist view¹⁶ of human nature, since it rejects the idea that the human being behaves rationally in accordance with the present circumstance, it

¹⁶ a term in social psychology used to describe those who believe people's actions are conditioned by some internal factor, such as beliefs, values, personality traits or abilities, rather than the situation they find themselves in.

brings forward a possibility to question whether some differences can outweigh similarities. "*We all have similar*" (Cypress), however, how different is too different?

To assess difference, as mentioned in chapter 5.1.4. comes down to what one ascribes values to and the importance of such value. Perhaps, Isaiah Berlin's notion of pluralism could once again give some insight... In accordance with Berlin's concept of Pluralism, there are many genuine values that may – and often do – come into tension with one another. Clashing values do not always signify misunderstanding; as mercy can conflict with justice, liberty with equality, love with fairness, spontaneity with responsibility, etc. It is the essence of what/who we are, and such conflicts cannot be resolved (Berlin, 2002, p. 213).

Berlin's assertions are based on empirical grounds; throughout ordinary experiences, we are faced with pluralistic choices in which the "*realisation of some [...] must inevitably involve the sacrifice of others*" (Berlin, 2002, p. 213-214) – or as we discuss, the exclusion of others. The idea of an 'ultimate solution' is conceptually incoherent, as it would require the transformation – which amounts to the abandonment – of those values themselves. Furthermore, in combination with the concept of humanism, which holds human beings to be of primary importance, and where avoiding harm to humans should be the first moral priority, Berlin holds that in navigating conflicts in values, "*the first public obligation is to avoid extremes of suffering*". He explains that although moral collisions are unavoidable, they can be softened and balanced by maintaining a "*precarious equilibrium*" that avoids, as far as possible, "*intolerable choices*" and "*desperate situations*". However, philosophy itself cannot solve this riddle and tell us how to do this. In many cases, pluralism holds that there is no single right answer. This can be used as an argument for the importance of liberty – to be more precise, it can be used as an argument against restrictions of liberty that seek to impose the '*right*' solution. Choice, after all, is an expression of individual personality, and it is part of what makes that personality. In other words, it is essential to the human self.

While some choices might seem more obvious than others, some might contain impediments that can leave us with moral guilt; such as Cypress feeling bad about her choice to not invite her classmate to her party. However, should one be condemned for such a choice? Perhaps it was her way of avoiding '*intolerable choices*' and '*desperate situations*'. All in all, what makes Cypress' case and form of exclusion particularly compelling from a moral viewpoint, is the fact that it reflects, on one hand, a bias towards an individual and towards groups, yet it

also involves judgments about rights, fairness, and equality. While these judgments are conceptually opposed, they in fact represent a paradox and they too, exist simultaneously.

To encapsulate this chapter, let's think a bit radical. One can argue Nobel Peace Prize winner, Mother Teresa to also be motivated only by her preference to help the poor. She was a world-class figure, and thus when she was visiting the village, the hosts would get very excited and prepare a room for her to sleep in and food for her to eat. However, she would get there and deny the food and room and explain how she only wanted to stay on the street with her people and eat the food her people ate. Of course, this was a great disappointment to her hosts. However, she was only interested in maximising her own goals – her own preference. Well at least, that is a perspective! (And as Nietzsche argues in his notion of perspectivism; knowledge is perspectival because truth itself is!).

While Mother Teresa's choice is quite apparent and moral to most – since it is more moral to help the poor than it is to please the rich – and while it might seem obvious to most (as well as justifiable), why the sexist, racist, homophobic, misogynist is less worthy of inclusion, it also contains the same choice of preference, value, and association as Cypress' experience above. Bonny's justification for excluding and not befriending someone was because they *"often question things, create havoc, and still have the audacity to say, "I like to be the devil's advocate sometimes. [...] People who often play for both teams and don't settle for one **aren't here to be integrated**, they don't even know how to work towards integration"*. But isn't that also exactly how the racists and the patriots feel about immigrants?

Our moral beliefs, norms, and values apply to those we include within our scope of justice, thus moral exclusion happens when we view others as lying beyond this boundary where our moral values, fairness, and rules of justice apply - beyond the abyssal line¹⁷ (Santos, 2007). So then, if moral reasoning is susceptible to *"framing, directional, motivational, self-serving, nepotistic, and group serving biases"* (Krebs, 2008, p.166), who is it that gets to make the assessment that our preferences are fundamentally wrong? At face value, most preferences are neither wrong nor right. Preferring traditional furniture to modern, public schooling to private, or shopping to sporting has never been phrased as a choice between good and bad. So, why should one's preference for specific characteristics for developing relations be any different? Or should these choices also be thought through the lens of morality?

¹⁷ A concept of the metaphorical line which divides the horizon between the knowledges we accept as valid and those we consider non-sense.

7. Conclusion

On the one hand, inclusion, homophily, and friendship interact through the clashing of logic and value. On the other hand, these interactions are what we have seen as describing our world in its reality. These three concepts, and even more so their overlaps, are so intricate that they can not possibly be simplified by definitions such as ‘inclusion does this’ and ‘homophily does that’. They have an interconnecting relationship that often contradicts itself. After discussing homophily and inclusion, we find that the existence of one does not invalidate the other; both through theory and anecdotal analysis, it is increasingly apparent that one does not need to be an all-inclusive, anti-homophilous messiah to advocate for inclusion. They exist simultaneously - and neither is inherently good nor bad, since it all comes down to moral development/reasoning that can result from individuals' interpretations of social interactions.

Through the entry point of theories and perspectives on inclusion, we poke at the tensions homophilous friendships may present to it. The next chapter reflects on the concept of homophily as grounded in reality. And finally, by bringing in the concept of friendship and the aspect of personal experiences, our theoretical skeleton gained its flesh.

It is highlighted through the intrinsic case studies that everyone has had one or several forms of homophilous experiences, despite the refusal and denial to recognise it. Homophily can be what joins people together or it can be the factor that drives them apart. It is furthermore safe to state that the continuous reason for the homophilous act, is due to the feeling of comfort, support, and security. When forming a friendship, it is evident that the feeling of comfort is strengthened more when sharing similarities between either feelings, experiences, or culture, rather than an individual who you do not share any values with. Hence, verifying that homophily does play a significant role in the formation of friendship. Though, this can be a concerning factor, due to the consequences that homophily can bring.

The important question then becomes the inquiry in the direction of ethics and social consequences, which we have traversed in chapter 6. Finally, this is the chapter in which we threw ourselves into the exploration of the spaces between the three main concepts (inclusion, homophily, and friendship). This domain of overlap is where we found them interacting the most, as well as where we learned the most about how each operates in the real world.

Although we have covered a lot of ground showing the tensions active between homophily and inclusion, and the paradoxes which ensue, the Earth has not stopped spinning in its orbit and we have not started living in a state of social anarchy. In other words, although we have picked apart the concepts and found irregularities, they together are the regularity of the world.

Through the perceptions of scenario-based examples, it is clear that there is in fact a tension between homophily and inclusion. This tension, being constructive, is related to the ways in which differences are being managed. While balancing and solving the two opposing sides can be difficult, the complexity is increased yet again by the rhetoric of inclusion which largely focuses (and ultimately instructs) on what is ethically appropriate and just, instead of allowing room for personal decisions on what can be appropriate and just.

We find that inclusion, instead of being sets of formal prescribed practices, could be a continuous process of negotiation of differences and values. Thus then, acknowledging the tensions and giving value to dialogues. In this way, inclusion is about highlighting the importance of this “multifaceted movement”, in order for our inclusive efforts to not solely be directed towards those who are in the mainstream, but to also affect identities and social actors in all positions.

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