A Social Psychological Concept of Normality

An examination of the emergence, perpetuation and shift of unnoticed standards,
and their influence on behavior and social dynamics

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Summary

This dissertation takes an approach that allows to shed new light on difficult-to-understand behavioral dynamics. How does it come to pass that seemingly respectable individuals perform immoral and extreme behaviors? Why do individuals accept a status quo even though they appear to be disadvantaged or oppressed by it? This dissertation examines the influence of normality perceptions and shifts of normality perceptions on individuals' attitudes and behaviors. Here, normality is understood as a backgrounding standard, which is ever present, but never (explicitly) perceived (e.g., Taipale, 2012). Whilst normal stimuli and events often remain unnoticed and unquestioned, abnormal stimuli or events are perceived as *effects to be explained* (e.g., Miller, Taylor, & Buck, 1991). Since, at the time of writing, there has not yet been a comprehensive and holistic concept of normality in social psychology, the first objective of this dissertation was to identify and integrate the different research lines of relevance. The approaches included stemmed foremost from *norm theory* (e.g., Kahneman & Miller, 1986), research on the status quo (e.g., Eidelman & Crandall, 2009), *naïve realism* (e.g., Ross & Ward, 1996), *shared reality* (Hardin & Higgins, 1996) and social norms research (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990). A social psychological concept of normality was developed and stated in a *model of normality* and a *model of shifts of normality*. The second core objective of this dissertation was the empirical examination of components and underlying mechanisms of normality and shifts of normality. To this end, seven quantitative studies were conducted in heterogeneous study fields.

The model of normality illustrates the process of emergence and development of certain stimuli and events as normal. It describes which factors are relevant for a stimulus or event to be promoted towards appearing normal, and furthermore, what is inherent in the perceptions of a stimulus or event as normal. A key aspect of the model are the deductions individuals draw from normality to normativity and objective reality. It becomes clear that normality perceptions have a strongly self-perpetuating and circulatory character, and can evolve arbitrary and without directed intention. The model of shifts of normality contributes to explaining how the scope of normality can gradually move and be extended, with the result that increasingly extreme stimuli and behaviors are integrated. As the decisive factor for the incorporation of a stimulus into the scope of normality, the magnitude of contrast to the latter is considered.

In Study 1 and 2, the emergence, shift, and influence of normality in social settings were examined. Embedded in the simulation of a United Nations General Assembly, Study 1 investigated developments of and interactions between individuals' behavioral intentions and perceptions of descriptive norms in a longitudinal design. Individuals perceived others to regard hardball strategies as more normal than they did themselves. In the course of the simulation, individuals' acceptance and preference of the hardball strategies increased. At the same time, individuals appeared to synchronize their normality and become more similar

in their behavior. In Study 2, the influence of different sources of norm information on individuals' behavior was examined. Using bogus election polls in the context of the German federal election 2013, it was shown that perceptions of social sharedness and support can determine individuals' willingness to share their opinions with others. It was further shown that situationally perceived descriptive norms and long-term developed norms can have a concurrent influence on individuals' behavior.

In Study 3, shifts of perceptions of groups' normality were examined. The study was implemented via a mentorship program that fosters integration in Germany. The *ingroup projection model* (e.g., Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Weber, 2003) was used as a theoretical and methodological framework. Native Germans perceived their ingroup to be more normal than the outgroup with regards to the category of people living in Germany. Arab migrants, in contrast, perceived their ingroup to be similarly – or in tendencies even less – normal than the outgroup. Higher intergroup contact was shown to lead to a mutual adaptation of normality perceptions of both groups: Whilst the native Germans increasingly put their group's normality into perspective, Arab migrants perceived their group as increasingly normal for people living in Germany.

Studies 4 to 7 examined the effect of social norms on reality perceptions. The research was conducted in the domain of prejudice. The first core objective was to clarify why prejudice against certain groups appears to be tolerated and more difficult to identify. The second core objective was to highlight the relevance of examining basic processes of prejudice. The studies show that whichever group-based evaluation is congruent to the group norms is perceived as true, objective and real, even if it exhibits prejudice. Evaluations that are incongruent to individuals' perceptions of normality and/or normativity, in contrast, stand out as the effect to be explained, and are perceived to be faulty and resulting from biased perceptions.

In summary, the dissertation provides a comprehensive social psychological concept of normality. The empirical examinations give first insight into the processes of normality emergence and perpetuation, and underline the relevance of the concept for a range of fields. The crux of normality is that, once attained, it is no longer (explicitly) perceived. The deductions individuals draw from what *is* to what *ought to be* as well as the congruency to individuals' reality and self-concept appear to make the influence of the status quo specifically strong and at the same time difficult to grasp. Besides the application to a range of societal phenomena and specific contribution to the understanding of emergence and perpetuation of extreme and/or immoral behavior, this dissertation suggests controversy, plurality and reflection as antagonists to a rigid normality.

Zusammenfassung

Die vorliegende Dissertation bietet einen Ansatz, schwer zu verstehende Verhaltensdynamiken in neuem Licht zu betrachten. Wie kommt es, dass scheinbar unbescholtene Individuen immoralisches und extremes Verhalten ausüben? Warum akzeptieren Individuen einen Status Quo, obwohl sie augenscheinlich durch diesen unterdrückt und benachteiligt werden? Im Zusammenhang mit diesen Fragestellungen wird in der vorliegenden Arbeit der Einfluss von Normalitätswahrnehmungen auf Einstellungen und Verhalten von Menschen untersucht. Normalität wird hier als ein Hintergrundstandard verstanden, der immer existent ist, aber selten (explizit) wahrgenommen wird (siehe z. B. Taipale, 2012). Während normale Stimuli und Ereignisse oft weder bemerkt, noch hinterfragt werden, werden anormale Stimuli oder Ereignisse als erklärungsbedürftig betrachtet (z. B. Miller, Taylor, & Buck, 1991). Da es zum Zeitpunkt des Verfassens dieser Dissertation in der Sozialpsychologie noch kein umfassendes und ganzheitliches Konzept von Normalität gab, ist das erste Ziel dieser Dissertation gewesen, die verschiedenen relevanten Forschungsstränge für ein solches zu identifizieren und zu integrieren. Die einbezogenen Ansätze stammen vor allem aus der *Normtheorie* (z.B. Kahneman & Miller, 1986), Forschung zum Status Quo (z.B. Eidelman & Crandall, 2009), dem *Naiven Realismus* (z.B. Ross & Ward, 1996), dem Konzept der *geteilten Realität* (Hardin & Higgins, 1996) und der Forschung zu sozialen Normen (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990). Es wurde ein sozialpsychologisches Konzept von Normalität entwickelt und im *Modell der Normalität* sowie im *Modell der Normalitätsverschiebungen* (grafisch) festgehalten. Das zweite zentrale Ziel dieser Arbeit war die empirische Testung wichtiger Komponenten und unterliegenden Mechanismen von Normalität und Normalitätsverschiebungen. Zu diesem Zweck wurden sieben quantitative Studien in heterogenen Studienfeldern durchgeführt.

Das Modell der Normalität veranschaulicht den Prozess des Entstehens und der Entwicklung von Stimuli und Ereignissen hin zum Normalsein. Es beschreibt, welche Faktoren relevant sind, damit ein Stimulus oder Ereignis als normal gilt und weiterhin, was der Wahrnehmung von Normalität inhärent ist. Ein Schlüsselfaktor des Modells sind die Schlussfolgerungen von Normalität zu Normativität und objektiver Realität. Es wird deutlich, dass Normalitätswahrnehmungen einen stark selbst-verfestigenden und zirkulären Charakter haben und sich willkürlich und ohne gerichtete Intention entwickeln können. Das Modell der Normalitätsverschiebungen trägt zu der Erklärung bei, wie der Bereich der Normalität sich graduell verschieben und erweitern kann, mit dem Ergebnis, dass immer extremere Stimuli und Verhaltensweisen integriert werden. Als der entscheidende Faktor für die Inkorporation eines Stimulus in den Bereich der Normalität wird die Höhe des Kontrastes zu letzterem betrachtet.

In Studie 1 und 2 wurden die Entstehung, die Verschiebung und der Einfluss von Normalität in sozialen Kontexten erforscht. Eingebettet in die Simulation einer Generalversammlung der Vereinten

Nationen wurden in Studie 1 Entwicklungen von und Interaktionen zwischen den Verhaltensabsichten von Individuen und ihren Wahrnehmungen der deskriptiven Normen in einem Längsschnittdesign untersucht. In der Wahrnehmung der Teilnehmenden haben die Anderen die Wahl rücksichtsloser Strategien als normaler angesehen als sie selber. Im Verlauf der Simulation sind dabei die Akzeptanz und Präferenz von wenig rücksichtsvollen Strategien allgemein gestiegen. Gleichzeitig scheinen sich die Individuen in ihren Normalitätswahrnehmungen synchronisiert zu haben. In Studie 2 wurde der Einfluss von unterschiedlichen Quellen an Norminformationen auf das Verhalten von Individuen untersucht. Unter Verwendung von manipulierten Wahlumfragen zur deutschen Bundestagswahl 2013 konnte gezeigt werden, dass Wahrnehmungen der sozialen Verbreitung und sozialen Unterstützung die Bereitschaft, die eigene Meinung mit anderen zu teilen, bestimmen kann. Weiterhin wurde gezeigt, dass situativ wahrgenommene deskriptive und über einen langen Zeitraum entwickelte Normen parallel einen Einfluss auf das Verhalten haben können.

In Studie 3 wurden Verschiebungen der Normalitätswahrnehmungen von Gruppen untersucht. Die Studie wurde innerhalb eines Patenschaftsprogrammes implementiert, das Integration in Deutschland fördert. Das Eigengruppenprojektionsmodell (z.B. Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Weber, 2003) diente als theoretischer und methodischer Rahmen. Deutsche ohne Migrationshintergrund nahmen ihre Eigengruppe in Bezug auf Menschen in Deutschland als normaler wahr als die Fremdgruppe. Personen mit arabischem Migrationshintergrund nahmen ihre Eigengruppe hingegen als ähnlich – und in Tendenzen sogar weniger – normal als die Fremdgruppe wahr. Erhöhter Intergruppenkontakt führte dabei zu einer gegenseitigen Adaption der Normalitätswahrnehmungen beider Gruppen: Während die Deutschen ohne Migrationshintergrund die eigene Normalität zunehmend relativierten, nahmen sich Personen mit arabischem Migrationshintergrund als zunehmend normal wahr bezüglich der Kategorie in Deutschland lebender Menschen.

Die Studien 4 bis 7 untersuchten den Effekt sozialer Normen auf Realitätswahrnehmungen. Die Forschung wurde im Bereich der Vorurteile durchgeführt. Das erste Kernziel war es zu ermitteln, warum Vorurteile gegen manche Gruppen toleriert werden und schwer zu identifizieren sind. Das zweite Kernziel war, die Wichtigkeit der Erforschung grundlegender Prozesse der Vorurteilsentstehung und -erhaltung hervorzuheben. Die Studien zeigen, dass eine auf der Gruppenzugehörigkeit basierte Wertung, die kongruent zu den sozialen Normen ist, als wahr, objektiv und real wahrgenommen wird, auch wenn sie ein Vorurteil darstellt. Wertungen, die inkongruent zu den Wahrnehmungen von Normalität und/oder Normativität sind, stechen hingegen als erklärungsbedürftig heraus und werden als das Ergebnis fehlerhafter und voreingenommener Wahrnehmungen angesehen.

Zusammenfassend präsentiert diese Dissertation ein umfangreiches sozialpsychologisches Konzept von Normalität. Die empirischen Untersuchungen bieten einen ersten Einblick in die Prozesse der

Normalitätsentstehung sowie -entwicklung und unterstreichen die Relevanz des Konzeptes für eine Reihe an Bereichen, wie zum Beispiel die Erklärung von immoralischem und/oder extremem Verhalten. Der springende Punkt von Normalität ist, dass sie, einmal angenommen, nicht mehr (explizit) wahrgenommen wird. Die Schlussfolgerungen von dem, was *ist*, auf das, was *sein soll* sowie die Kongruenz zur Realitätswahrnehmung und dem Selbstkonzept eines Individuums stärken den Einfluss des Status Quo und machen ihn gleichzeitig schwer fassbar. Neben der Anwendbarkeit auf ein weites Feld sozialer Phänomene und dem konkreten Beitrag zum Verstehen der Entstehung und Entwicklung extremen und/oder immoralischen Verhaltens, unterstreicht die vorliegende Arbeit die Relevanz von Kontroversität, Pluralität und Reflektion als Antagonisten einer rigiden Normalität.

1. Introduction

1.1. Polarization and extreme behavior in German society

In the past years, German society has experienced two extreme inner streams that have been highly visible in the treatment and the discourse pertaining to refugees. On the one hand, prejudice and violence against refugees has increased within the last five to ten years (Federl, 2016; Zick, Küpper, & Krause, 2016). An interim result of the yearly criminal statistics, provided by the German Federal Office of Criminal Investigation (Bundeskriminalamt, 2016), shows that in the first half of 2016 already 665 criminal acts against refugee shelters had been committed. These included violent assaults, property damage, propaganda crimes and malicious arson. The number of incidents was three times higher compared to 2015 at the same point in the year. The statistics from 2012 onwards show that attacks on refugee shelters have at least doubled year on year, reflecting a trend towards a more aggressive climate ("Zunehmend Angriffe auf Flüchtlingsheime," 2015). On the other hand, many Germans helped to create a welcoming atmosphere for the numerous refugees who arrived in Germany after the temporary border opening in the autumn of 2015 (e.g., Küpper & Zick, 2016). These people waited at train stations, brought presents and even applauded the moment the refugees stepped out of the trains. A study by researchers from the Berlin Institute for Empirical Research on Integration and Migration (BIM) shows that from 2011 to 2014, the amount of people working voluntarily to support refugees increased by approximately 70% (Karakayali & Kleist, 2015). In a second assessment in 2015, Karakayali and Kleist (2016) illustrated that, compared to 2014, the demographic of the people who were active in the community became more diverse, most notably with respect to age. The most frequently named motivations for the engagement were taking a stand against racism, and the resolve to actively shape society (Karakayali & Kleist, 2016). Around 25% of the volunteers indicated they had invested upwards of ten hours a week to support the refugees. The number of people investing upwards of 15 hours a week had also doubled compared to 2014.

While the strong differences in perception, opinion and behavior of societal groups in Germany may at first glance seem paradoxical, they can be seen in a different light when considering that the German society currently is quite polarized, particularly regarding the issue of refugees ("Die deutsche Gesellschaft polarisiert sich," 2016). An example that illustrates these polarizing trends, are the "Pegida-walks" in Dresden, which began in the fall of 2014. Pegida (Patriotische Europäer gegen die Islamisierung des Abendlandes [Patriotic Europeans against the Islamization of the Occident]) is a German anti-Islamic movement that aroused a strong public interest (see [Overview of news about Pegida], n.d.). The demonstrations serve to criticize the mainstream media for disseminating lies, the alleged radicalization of Islam in Germany, and the German federal government's behavior regarding immigration policies. These demonstrations in turn elicited counter protests of citizens supporting tolerance towards migrants and

refugees (e.g., "Pegida-Jahrestag endet in Gewalt," 2015). Every Monday for more than a year, Dresden was the center of demonstrations of these two adverse camps. The amount of people demonstrating rose to 20.000-30.000 for each side ("Pegida-Jahrestag endet in Gewalt," 2015). The polarization of the society regarding the concerns the Pegida movement raised, is reflected in a survey by YouGov in December 2014. The survey shows that around 50% of the participants indicated sympathy towards the Pegida-demonstrations ("Jeder Zweite sympathisiert mit Pegida," 2014).

Something has changed in German society within the last years. It would seem that due to the focus on the issue of immigrants and refugees in Germany, a high percentage of Germans began to engage in actions and opinion exchanges that go beyond the private sphere, and into the public. As illustrated, the methodology of achieving their goals, differed largely between the groups. How did it come to pass that society became so polarized, with the result that individuals within the same national society react so differently to the same events and challenges? And how is this polarization further reflected in individuals' personal lives, their attitudes and their behavior?

After decades of rejection and alienation of this kind of opinion, fascism- and dictatorship-supporting attitudes have in the last years become expressed more openly in the public (Neuerer, 2016; Decker, Kiess, & Braehler, 2016). In a survey by the faculty for management and social sciences of the University Hamburg, 59% of people who marked their support for the political party Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany; AfD), a German right-wing populist party, indicated their feelings that today the influence of Jews is still strong (Neuerer, 2016). 40% of the participants supported the statement that the National Socialism also had positive aspects (Neuerer, 2016). Following polls at the time of writing, the AfD would claim around 11% of the German electorate in the upcoming German federal election ("Sonntagsfrage," 2017). The comments to online newspaper articles as well as social media posts (for instance on Facebook) exemplify the increasing radicalization and polarization (Diener, 2014; Stürzenhofecker, 2016). More extreme opinions and claims are expressed than in past times. For example, the deputy national chairwoman of the AfD, Beatrix von Storch, declared on Facebook that the usage of weapons against women and children is justified when it serves the purpose of preventing immigrants to cross the German border ("Von Storch bejaht Waffengebrauch," 2016). This violence-promoting Facebook post received great endorsement by her followers ("AfD-Vizechefin will Polizei sogar auf Kinder schießen lassen," 2016). At the already described Pegida-demonstrations in Dresden, around 20.000 demonstrators chanted "Volksverräter" ("traitor to the people") in a threatening and strong choir to express their attitudes towards the mayor of Dresden as well as chancellor Angela Merkel ("Pegida-Demonstranten beschimpfen Merkel," 2016). Notably, this was not a criminal mob shouting out their aggression; among the demonstrators were men and women, young and elderly, uneducated and recipients of doctorates – individuals from different parts of society and with different levels of education. They appeared certain that

their actions were righteous and necessary (e.g., Müller-Vogg, 2014; "Pegida-Demonstranten beschimpfen Merkel," 2016). Furthermore, citizens in many German cities gathered and founded vigilance groups to control and ensure safety in the neighborhood (Kocina, 2016). These groups are discussed controversially in German society. Critical voices are devaluated by the vigilantes by referring to their altruistic motivation. Interestingly, the members claim (and seem to truly believe) that their primary motivation to become active was not for their own good, but out of societal necessities and for the common good ("Forum: Was motiviert die AfD-Mitglieder," 2016). Beyond the vigilantes, many individuals from the corresponding spectrum perceive themselves as being morally good and acting according to necessities.

On the other side of the polarized German society there also are, and have been, cases of one-sided and extreme behaviors of otherwise rather moderate individuals that were supported and endorsed by a large and diverse amount of people. There were incidents in Cologne at New Year's Eve 2015, in which supposed migrants were involved in sexual harassment of women (for an overview, see "Köln – Silvester und die Folgen," 2016). The accompanying discourse within the political left was for a long time focused on justifying and relativizing the elements of crime, seemingly to prevent a potential expansion of racist resentment. As a consequence, the general issues of sexism were neglected and only little focus put on the victims' perspective (e.g., Buchholz, 2016). In contrast to this, for a great part of the political left, the rejection and devaluation of individuals based on either their participation in Pegida-demonstrations, or the choice of voting for the AfD, is commonly practiced online as well as offline (e.g., Sauerbrey, 2016). A particularly interesting case regarding the degree of lingering digressiveness, is that of a volunteer working for the initiative Moabit Hilft, which supports refugees at the Landesamt für Gesundheit und Soziales (Regional Office for Health and Social Affairs; LaGeSo) in Berlin. The volunteer claimed that a Syrian man had died after days of queuing to receive documents and a place to sleep at the LaGeSo (e.g., "'Moabit hilft!' fühlt sich verraten," 2016). It became clear in the same night that the volunteer had simply invented the story to highlight the despicable conditions at the LaGeSo. However, Moabit Hilft had already backed his statements about the dead Syrian on Facebook before conducting any further assessment regarding facticity, or receiving any physical evidence. They believed these statements without showing any doubts, since they reflected a logical consequence of the current situation to them. Another remarkable incident was an art and activism performance by the Zentrum für politische Schönheit (Center for Political Beauty; ZPS) in June 2015. The ZPS had announced the holding of a "March of the Determined", with the goal of beginning the building of a cemetery and memorial for the victims of the military isolation of Europe in front of the German Federal Chancellery ("The Dead are coming," 2015). The activists announced their intention of carrying the corpses of refugees who had died in the Mediterranean Sea. Although the coffins in fact were empty, the action nonetheless ended in chaos: 5.000 people illegally entered the fence-protected forecourt of the Reichstag building. Some began to build symbolic graves, despite police hindrance (e.g.,

"Gräber auf der Reichstagswiese," 2015). The group of individuals involved in these illegal actions was diverse in gender, age, ethnicity, level of education and profession. The art and activism action again polarized the society. The participants, many refugee activists, and the artists themselves, were convinced of the action's righteousness, unmindful of the escalation (e.g., Govrin, 2015; "The Dead are coming," 2015). They justified their actions with the neglectful and (poor) treatment of refugees in the Mediterranean, and consequently perceived their actions to be necessary, despite the degree of extremity. Parts of the media, as well as the Refugee Commissioner of the German government criticized the action as overstepping a moral border ("Keine Flüchtlingsleichen vor dem Kanzleramt erlaubt," 2015). All in all, these examples show that also the moderates and center-lefts who often refer to themselves as sticking to high moral values, under certain circumstances can and will deviate from their own standards, potentially without being entirely aware of the meaning of their actions. They seem to correspond these actions and attitudes without problems to their understanding of a good and just society.

This introduction illustrates how in recent years, otherwise rather moderate and diverse individuals from the middle of society have increasingly frequent exhibited behavior that can be considered as extreme from an external perspective. These individuals can be nominally allocated to different sides of a spectrum in a rather polarized German society. Alongside these actions consideration must be given to each groups' perceptions of righteousness and legitimacy of the own behavior.

1.2.   The impact of normality and shifts of normality

The above illustrated opinions and behaviors, alongside the self-evidence with which they are exercised, can be difficult to understand from an external perspective. It can seem that a significant group of people in the German society have lost their sense of appropriate measures and rationality. As indicated above, three core questions obtrude: From where does the extremity in the different societal groups stem? To what extent are the individuals aware that their actions might be perceived as extreme? Upon what is the high accompanying degree of perceptions of self-certainty and righteousness based?

Only a few years ago, such a deep division and polarization was not to be expected in Germany. Although there are voices within the society that mark the widely shared opinions and behaviors of particular groups as extreme, the societal groups continue to drift apart (e.g., Laub, 2016; Zick et al., 2016). Significantly, neither the individuals expressing critical attitudes towards refugees and engaging in anti-refugees actions, nor the individuals supporting the cause of openness towards refugees with morally dubious actions (i.e., actions that violate universal and higher principles concerning right and wrong or good and bad behavior), appear to notice that their positions and behaviors might be perceived as irrational and extreme, in comparison to the recent past, as well as from an external viewpoint. How is it possible that the

German society is so strongly polarized into distinct groups that each exhibit extreme behavior, whilst at the same time maintaining their perception of performing morally necessary deeds?

The explanation could be that these groups have acquired different perceptions of what is normal, accepted, and appropriate. In the course of recent developments, and especially along the divisive topic of refugees, the perceptions of normality may have not only drifted apart, but shifted to extremes. As I will point out, the individuals are not aware of how their personal, or the groups' self-concept and understanding of the world may have changed during their polarization. The differing perceptions of what is normal and normative, are acquired by individuals through their unique experiences, different information sources, and contact with different peers. The personal perception of normality shapes an individuals' thoughts, feelings and behavior in a very subtle manner. The acquisition of different perceptions of normality in this case, for instance, leads both societal groups to strongly differing interpretations of their own and others' opinions and behavior. In some groups, commenting insultingly upon social media articles, and expressing prejudices towards refugees alongside wishes for a strong leader, has plainly become the norm. At the same time, for other individuals, it might be perfectly normal – and therefore remain unquestioned – to invest several hours a week in the support of refugees, to mark around 11% of the German society (i.e., the voters of the AfD) as inhuman, and to occupy the forecourt of the German Reichstag in order to build symbolic graveyards. What makes the phenomenon of perceived normality so influential and at the same time difficult to grasp, is that it seems not to be thought of as something that has been influenced externally, but as in accord with individuals' interpretations and meaning-making of the world. As indicated, individuals might notice neither the effects that their normality perception has on them, nor that normality perceptions may differ for them and others. A person demonstrating to stop immigration, or participating in a vigilance group, might perceive his behavior as a logical, necessary and positive act to rouse and protect the rest of the society. The same logic would apply for the volunteer who invented the death of a Syrian refugee, or the individuals damaging the grounds of the German Reichstag. The underlying attitudes and behaviors may have grown upon an innocent and comprehensible base, but due to different processes have led – and might lead further – to rather extreme behavior. The shift of normality, here, is not being noticed but instead justified. The illustrated cases exemplify these basic developments well. The underlying processes of the acquisition, consequences and shift of normality will be the focus of this dissertation's examinations.

The perception of certain opinions, beliefs and behaviors as normal, and not explicitly abnormal, may explain a range of phenomena and societal developments that are otherwise difficult to understand, also beyond the context of the current German society. The factor normality, for that matter, may not only explain how and why individuals become active, but also why they remain inactive. Why do individuals and groups often bear oppression and suppression? How can we explain that social inequalities are so well maintained? Why do individuals, after initially resisting, widely accept digital monitoring despite the deep

cuts into their private sphere? And how can we explain that individuals often accept the removal of rights and freedom, when gradually eroded? The answer can be simple as well as complex: because it has become normal. A similar answer may also apply to a range of other phenomena that are less related to extremity, and possibly generally thought of as more positive: ow to explain why and how certain innovations (may they be of technological, social or political kind) assert themselves and are disseminated, whereas others do not? How did the ecologization of Germany's politics occur since the late 1980's (Markovits & Klaver, 2013)? How is the development of perceptions of homosexuality from deviancy to lawful equalization explained ("Bundesrat gibt grünes Licht für Ehe für alle," 2017)? Furthermore, process-related questions come into mind: what role does group consensus play in these contexts? What role does dissent play? And how are individuals perceived and treated that do not agree with the respective processes / the respective normality?

The illustrated phenomena and developments demand theoretical considerations as well as empirical examinations. Therefore, the deductions in this dissertation stem from a practical necessity to understand, and examine certain societal phenomena and developments. It is important to note that this dissertation will not focus on specifics with regard to content and context, and/or the differences of the illustrated developments and phenomena. Instead, the causes, dynamics and consequences that these developments and phenomena have in common, will be the object of this dissertation's analyses and examinations. Thus, the objective of this dissertation is to generate social psychological basic models of the phenomena of normality and shifts of normality and empirically examine the underlying mechanisms. The illustrated concrete examples for shifts of normality shall at different points of this dissertation serve as references and examples of practical application and implication, highlighting consequences of normality and shifts of normality. However, the central object of examination will be the basic processes and underlying mechanisms of normality. The following questions, which derive from the above illustrated examples and the further explications, lay ground for this dissertation:

How do (different) perceptions of normality emerge? What are the involved factors and underlying mechanisms? What role do social dynamics play?

What are the attributes and accompanying factors of normality?

In what relation does normality stand to normativity as well as perceptions of reality, factuality and objectivity?

How do shifts of normality occur? What consequences do shifts of normality entail?

Aside from deducing from a practice-related necessity, this dissertation's approach deduces from theoretical concerns, specifically from gaps in the existing landscape of theories and approaches to normality. These conceptual and theoretical gaps will be described alongside a short introduction to the understanding and character of norms, and a more concrete illustration of the current approach in the following chapter.

1.3. Definitions and understanding of normality: From lay theories and sociological concepts to a (social) psychological approach

1.3.1. Lay theories and the case of descriptive and prescriptive norms

Lay understanding of normality: A short introduction and demarcation from this dissertation's object of examination

The terms *normality* and *normal* are constant and widely used constituents of human language, regularly used in everyday conversations, media reports etc. A Google query for the term normal for example, yielded 2.060.000.000 results (https://www.google.de/, 23.03.2017). A Google News query yielded 49.200.000 results (https://news.google.com/, 23.03.2017). The content of the results shows how lay concepts and everyday use of the terms normal and normality, in many cases aim at criticism that something is "not normal (any more)," declarations that "this is normality," indications of a "new normal," suggestions that "being normal is not enough" and claims that "this behavior should become normal" or "people should stick to normal behavior." These examples of usage do, on the one hand reflect the definition of normality by the Oxford dictionary as "conforming to a standard; usual, typical, or expected" ("normal," n.d.). On the other hand, they go beyond this definition by adding a normative notion. The term normative can be defined as follows: "Normative generally means relating to an evaluative standard. Normativity is the phenomenon in human societies of designating some actions or outcomes as good or desirable or permissible and others as bad or undesirable or impermissible" ("Normative," n.d). It seems that lay theorists understanding and use of the term normality differs strongly across contexts and is not rarely intertwined with phenomena and notions that actually reflect normativity. Accordingly, Wysocki (2016) showed that individuals' understanding and use of the terms normal and normality is referenced to statistical as well as prescriptive (/normative) considerations (Wysocki, 2016, as cited in Bear & Knobe, 2016). Of the various uses of the term normality, I would like to delineate two that explicitly do not form the basis for this dissertation. The first is normality as a purely statistical dimension. This includes normality as the average score, normality as what is numerically (in contrast to psychologically) the most frequent and as whatever falls into the Gaussian bell curve (e.g., Holland, Holyoak, Nisbett, & Thagard, 1986). The second understanding of normality that is explicitly not in focus of this dissertation's examinations is normality

(and abnormality) as defined by medical and psychiatric criteria (e.g., Foucault, 1969). These approaches focus on the view that whoever deviates from clinical standards, a rather rigid idea of what is normal, should be defined as mentally ill or handicapped and needs to be actively (by force) conveyed towards the scope of the normal (e.g., Nirje, 1994).

Introduction of the descriptive and prescriptive character of norms

As illustrated above, use and understanding of the terms normal and normality are diverse and the different meanings often intertwined. Therefore, it is not reasonable and constructive to lock this difficult to grasp concept in only one fixed overarching definition. However, for a basic understanding, it is necessary to make a distinction between two types, respectively two modes of effect, of norms: Norms can have a *descriptive* or *prescriptive* character (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990; Prentice, 2007). Whereas descriptive norms refer to what actually is, happens, and most people in a group think, feel or do, prescriptive norms refer to what should be, should happen or should be felt, thought or done. The former refers to *what is*, the latter to what *ought to be*. To be silent in a library can for instance be indicated by the most visitors being silent (descriptive norm) or by a sign, saying that silence is demanded (injunctive). Normativity usually refers to the prescriptive content of a norm. While a descriptive norm / the descriptive part of a norm reflects an informative value, a prescriptive norm / the prescriptive part of a norm motivates action on the basis of indicated (social) punishment or reward (see, e.g., Cialdini et al., 1990; Prentice, 2007; Smith & Louis, 2008). Both types of norms are per se distinct, but can overlap and interact in their meaning and influence (e.g., Smith & Louis, 2008). Moreover, both types of norms can sometimes contradict each other and stand in conflict to each other (e.g., Smith & Louis, 2008). A group might, for instance, have the agenda to be very open-minded (injunctive), but at the same time regularly discriminate individuals who have differing beliefs (descriptive). In some approaches and theories, the definitional divide between the concepts of normality and normativity, respectively descriptivity and prescriptivity, remains rather unclear (Bear & Knobe, 2016). Sometimes they are even used analog. For the current approach, however, this conceptual divide is of high relevancy: The terms normality and normal shall therefore refer to description and information of what is, whereas the terms normativity and normative shall consistently be referred to phenomena and interpretations that contain evaluative value.

1.3.2. A psychological approach to normality: From social theories to social psychology

Introduction to the social theorists and the necessity of a psychological perspective

Normality has been subject of theoretical considerations throughout a range of scientific disciplines, such as philosophy, sociology, linguistic, political science, media studies and psychiatric research. Whilst

not all the relevant theories and theorists explicitly use the term normality, they all commonly refer to a certain source or process that influences an individual's attitudes, beliefs and behavior in a mostly implicit manner and is connected to societal dynamics. To name but a few, they range from Husserl's concept of intersubjectivity (e.g., Husserl, 1973, as cited in Zahavi, 2003), along Elias' concepts of *psychogenesis* and *sociogenesis* (Elias, 1977), the notion of a *normalizing gaze* by Foucault (e.g., Foucault, 1977) and Merleau-Ponty's thoughts (e.g., Merleau-Ponty, 1962, as cited in Spina, 2012), to more recent approaches by Habermas (1987), Butler (2001) and Forst (2015). A selection of the approaches from this list will be introduced shortly in this chapter. All in all, the theoretical understanding of normality is widely shaped by approaches from philosophers, sociologists and social theorists. When working on a new concept of normality, even though coming from a psychological perspective, it is therefore necessary to relate to these approaches. In the next subchapter(s), I want to illustrate why the status quo of approaches to normality is insufficient and what exactly the theories are lacking. I will clarify why there is a need for a (social) psychological approach, a more comprehensive model, and empirical examinations.

Many approaches of the sociologists and social theorists have a rather normative character, which is often already implied in the perspective and procedure with which sociologists approach the object of examination. There are two aspects in/of social theories that I refer to as a starting position for this dissertation's examinations. As a first aspect, many social theorists presuppose an in-deficit status quo. When analyzing, they often focus on societal and systemic structures. In many cases, social theorists and sociologists mirror their perceptions, respectively the results of their analyses, by an ideal and ought-to-be status. Or at least the theorists raise the idea/claim that a change of the current states is necessary (e.g., for the sake of the unfairly treated or for the better functioning of society). Due to the analytical structural and systemic approach and the clear division from and contrasting juxtaposition with an ideal state, respectively the implicit or explicit claim for change, these approaches often lack a psychological view on how the current status quo is actually perceived by individuals. To what extent are individuals capable of making distinctions between what is (the potentially in-deficit) and (a not yet existing) what should be? What if individuals already evaluate the status quo as good or acceptable, even against all odds? What would be the antecedents and consequences of this? As a second issue, sociologists and social theorists often claim that normality is the product of power structures, external constraints, active regulation and intention (e.g., Foucault, 1977). Solely following these approaches, it would be difficult to understand and explain the phenomena and dynamics illustrated in the introduction (see Chapter 1.1). Thus, how can phenomena of a stimulus, event, attitude or behavior becoming normal be explained in the lack of primary active and intentional external regulation? In the following chapter, I will elaborate on the two introduced gaps in social theories on normality, and suggest a psychological perspective, a more comprehensive model, and empirical examinations, as necessary answers.

The status quo and the ideal state: A psychological perspective

The objective of many sociologists and social theorists is to design models for an ideal society. This concerns a range of issues, notably concerns for justice, equal rights and opportunities, as well as general paths towards intergroup cooperation and mutual recognition (e.g., Honneth, 1994; Rawls, 2009; Durkheim, 2014). The basis for the approach of the social theorists is typically the deficits of a status quo (in which for instance, some groups are unfairly treated and suffer) and resulting criticisms. The analytical conclusion that drives sociologists and social theorists to design these models is that the current state of affairs should be different. To this end, they contrast the current, descriptive state with the aspirational, that is, a prescriptive state. When focusing on objectives, this division between the status quo and an ideal state is understandable. For instance, Rawls (2009), in his opus *A theory of Justice*, assumes that the current status quo reflects unjust and unequal conditions and treatment (Rawls, 2009). He contrasts this analysis with a concept of an ideal social-political basic order that is based on the value of equality, which he perceived as aspirational for the society. However, as introduced in Chapter 1.3.1., in lay theories, the separation between status quo and ideal may be difficult to distinguish. When focusing solely on the status quo, it becomes apparent that what is, the descriptive level, is often pervaded by perceptions and interpretations of what shall and should be, the prescriptive level (e.g., Bear & Knobe, 2016). An example might be helpful here. As explicated, for many social theorists (see, e.g., Rawls, 2009) the current status has a deficit with respect to matters of justice and equality. Empirical evidence, however, draws a more paradoxical picture. Regarding the questions of justice and equality, for example in a poll imposed by the German Geo Magazine ("Chancenungleichheit ist 'gerecht,'" 2007), 41 percent of the participants indicated that the German educational system is a just one. In contrast, an article by Klasen and Wagner (2013) summarizes different studies, in which the procedures and outcomes of the educational system were systematically studied and evaluated. These studies indicate that by de facto the German educational system produces and reproduces inequality. Thus, even though the educational system is scientifically shown to be unjust, and therefore supporting social theorist claims for the necessity of change, a large percentage of individuals disagrees in their perceptions. 41 percent also suggests that not only the potential benefited of the respective inequality approve of the system, but also at least a part of the disadvantaged. Moreover, and importantly, despite having knowledge about the inequalities in the German educational system for a long time, little has been done to effectively change this state; neither by the institutions, nor by the population. There are many further examples in which a lack of opposition is reflected. Instead, acceptance and approval of statuses of disadvantage or statuses that from an objective point of view might be regarded as oppressive can be observed (e.g., Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). Another similar paradox is illustrated in the contribution by Fratzscher (2007) in the German daily newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. Fratzscher reported (referring to the yearly conducted Socio-Economic Panel [SOEP]) that the Germans feel the most

(economically) satisfied since more than 25 years. At the same time, the SOEP shows that the Germans perceive the current division of economical goods in the society as highly unjust. Hence, the participants seem to generally, and on a more abstract level, perceive the current conditions as systemically unfair. But nonetheless, personally and on a concrete level, they accept and endorse this status quo. Psychologically, a clear division between the normal and the normative seems to be difficult. Despite many sociologists and social theorists (on the bases of their analyses) claiming the necessity of a change of the status quo for the better, and introducing approaches towards ideal states, individuals in fact seem to widely accept and endorse the status quo.

This notion is not a finding of postmodern times. Hume (1992; see also Moore, 1903) formulated the *naturalistic fallacy* as caption of the phenomenon that individuals tend to derive a prescriptive ought to be from an empirical fact / the status quo. A reflection of this is Voltaire's prosaic-philosophical book *Candide: Or Optimism* (Voltaire, 2005), which, using the stylistic devices of exaggeration and sarcasm, displays the paradox and potential ridiculousness of the illustrated inference/claim. The book is Voltaire's answer to Leibnitz' claim, which he had proposed as part of a teleological argument, that we live "in the best of all possible worlds" (Leibnitz, 1991). Voltaire's protagonist Candide experiences one disaster after another and nonetheless always discovers a positive outcome for which the disastrous event has been the necessary cause. He never loses faith that everything that is, is as it shall be. Voltaire does here not only criticize Leibnitz' claim but also illustrates a disclosing example of a basic mechanism of human reasoning. Individuals seem to perceive the status quo as a status that is built on justification and superiority compared to other statuses (i.e., statuses that are not existent). Individuals seem to be neither motivated, nor cognitively stimulated to change the status quo. In contrast to the approaches of sociologists that often suggest a *shall not be*, perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of individuals often suggest an *it is alright / it is good as it is*. In that context, it might not even be of such high importance what the exact circumstances of a status quo are but plainly be decisive that the respective state currently *is*. This will be illustrated in more detail in Chapter 2.2. of this dissertation. Besides that, for a psychological evaluation, also the question whether a matter is in fact positive and/or reasonable for an individual may play only a minor role. It might psychologically not be separable from false assumptions. Potentially, a matter might have been de facto reasonable and justifiable at an earlier point of time. This may however have changed along with/due to a change of circumstances. Individuals, in such cases, may not always be psychologically capable of going along with these changes.

Whereas sociologists and social theorists usually do not consider the illustrated level in their theories and approaches, psychology – and specifically social psychology – has the potential to further examine why individuals regularly perceive the status quo as being normative. Psychological and empirical examinations are highly relevant here, in order to understand why individuals might not actively aspire to the ideal states

formulated by the social theorists, but instead accept and endorse a status quo that appears to be very imperfect – and from which they even might suffer (as for instance in the example of the German educational system). Through psychological approaches, individuals' actual perceptions of the status quo can be examined and elaborated on. Moreover, from a psychological perspective it can be assessed how individuals attain their views and what the (behavioral) consequences are. That is not only relevant in the light of practical issues (for instance in respect to the dynamics illustrated in the introduction; see Chapter 1.1), but also meaningful for societal theories and the appeal of the postulated ideal states. Through empirical examinations of the underlying mechanisms, knowledge on the complex relation between (individuals' perception of) normality and normativity can be gained. Moreover, individuals' related motivation and cognitive processes can be understood. Thus, this dissertation attempts to extend sociologists' and social theorists' approaches by a substantial (social) psychological perspective on normality.

Normalization or "becoming normal": The question of intention and active regulation

One way to look at norms is by concentrating on their roots in statutes and law codes (e.g., Miramon, Boureau, & Jacob, 2008). Norms may not directly correspond to a state's laws, but often are anchored in or related to these. As for today, norms have an important role in societies: They generally indicate and regulate whether an individual's behavior is to be socially sanctioned and punished or accepted and potentially rewarded (Miramon et al., 2008). Hence, social norms are binding and deviancy leads to (unpleasant) consequences. Many sociologists and social theorists claim that norms are imposed (and their adherence monitored) by who- or whatever possesses and/or exercises power (e.g., Foucault, 1977; Butler, 2001; Deleuze, 2016). According to Foucault, norms are manifested mostly by institutions (as for instance a national state) and by the *disciplinary power*. Through the use of pressuring surveillance, adherence is demanded (Foucault, 1977). To illustrate his thoughts on society, Foucault used the example of the *Panopticon* (see Bentham, 1791), a specific prison structure/architecture, in which the guards can overview everything and everybody, whereas the inmates cannot see who is surveilling them, and indeed if they are currently being under surveillance at all. Foucault here sees the exercising of power structures reflected. According to Foucault, controlling and norming are used intentionally by the powerful as a measure of external regulation. In further processes, an individual that is subjected to its continuous visibility and has knowledge about this circumstance, is assumed to internalize the power structure (Foucault, 1977). As a consequence, the external constraints turn into self-discipline and the individual "becomes the principle of his own subjection" (Foucault, 1977, p. 202). In the context of norms, this would mean that externally imposed normativity through a process of normalization becomes internal normality. Whereas individuals follow their self-discipline as an inner normality and necessity, the original external constraints are not perceived as such anymore and consequently are not questioned. Nonetheless, the now unquestioned

normality remains its normative character. As already illustrated, Foucault understands the roots of normality as initially controlled and regulated by an external power and thus, normality ultimately as a reflection and product of power structures (Foucault, 1977). However, power structures are not always clearly reflected in individuals' lives. It often remains uncertain and/or ambiguous who or what sets a norm. Moreover, the process of preexisting power and normalization might be more dynamic. There are additional debatable aspects of Foucault's approach with respect to processes of normality. It is questionable whether norms always necessarily operate through constraint. In some cases, they may also serve as optional standards for orientation (see Chapter 2.4.2.). Moreover, as indicated in the previous subchapter, individuals do not only infer what is normal from external constraints (the normative), but can also infer what is normative from what is normal.

In the tradition of Foucault's approaches, Butler understands societal norms as power that is exercised towards individuals and under which individuals are subjected (Butler, 2001). Thus, Butler also understands the process of normalization as driven by active and intentional components. Beyond that, Butler hints to the double role of norms: They additionally serve the identity formation and subjectivation. Forst (2015) relates in his more recent book *normativity and power* to this discourse. According to Forst, norms and institutions, with which individuals comply, are based on historically grown narratives of justification that serve as an orientation for individuals. Consequently, these narratives of justification also build the basis for perceptions of normality. By determining and/or restricting these narratives, an institution (or individual) can exercise power over others and thus influence perceptions of normativity and normality. In contrast to the illustrated assumptions (e.g., Foucault, 1977), in Forst's approach (2015), power is not predetermined, but is per se existent. Instead, power structures are built in a historical process of growing narratives (of justification). Therefore, this approach already includes more dynamic developments and is more flexible in explaining changes of normativity and normality. However, Forst's approach still assumes to a large extent that external regulation and intentionality are the driving forces of these dynamics.

In the illustrated approaches to power and normalization, the (social) theorists – due to their differential focus – lack the answer to the following crucial questions: How can developments of phenomena becoming normal and/or normative be explained in the absence of clear active and intentional control or regulation? How can developments be explained that seem to be of no use to anybody, seemingly not connected to the will of any individual or institution? How can developments be explained that are undetermined, not directed towards a certain objective, and changing/shifting throughout the process – as it is the case for the examples in the introduction (see Chapter 1.1.)? And how can dynamics that are driven by individuals or powerless groups be asserted? For example, this occurred in the course of the equalization of marriage for homosexuals in Germany as well as the ecologization of German politics. Both were driven

by social civic movements and the latter further by the founding of the Green party in the 1980s (e.g., Markovits & Klaver, 2013)?

There are researchers who doubt the existence of clear structures of causality and intentionality for certain phenomena and developments. With regard to documentations and examinations of the long list of genocides in the 20th century, Wallimann and Dobkowski (1987) indicate difficulties to locate intentionalities (in this case: to commit / participate in a genocide) on societal levels, since there are many different forces involved, such as market mechanisms and bureaucracies. Yet, hatred, discrimination and even the act of killing had become normal for relatively large parts of the respective populations. According to the researchers, "the emphasis on intentionality appears anachronistic" (Wallimann & Dobkowski, 1987, p. xxii). Due to the high complexity of interplay of different structural, systemic and societal factors, the attribution of intentionality and regulation seems neither possible, nor reasonable. Moreover, the assessment of the particular role each factor plays in dynamics of normativity and normality perceptions is at least challenging. Thus, a change in the level of examinations of behavioral causes in relation to normativity and normality is indicated: The underlying psychological mechanisms that relate to the basic processes independently of (but still in relation to) the diverse involved factors need to be assessed. Through a psychological perspective and psychological examinations, dynamics of stimuli, events, attitudes or behaviors becoming normal and/or normative can be assessed that are external of clear power structures. Dynamics that rather have a non-intentional or ambiguous character and/or are the result of arbitrary or coincidental developments can be assessed. For example, relevant factors, such as cognitive heuristics on the one side and undetermined social dynamics on the other, can be included from a psychological perspective. From a psychological – specifically a social psychological – perspective, normality and normativity are the result of social/mutual (perception) processes and behavioral loops. This approach adds a further level to explain unmanageable complex and hardly determinable dynamics, such as in the illustrated cases of developments in the German society, or as in the cases of genocides in the 20th century (Wallimann & Dobkowski, 1987). The current approach shall extend and question the models proposed by many social theorists of intentional and actively regulated normalization. A further advantage of a psychological view and examination of the underlying mechanisms, is the gain of knowledge that is valid independently of the specific content or context. With respect to the assumption of a dynamical character, I will not speak of a *normalization* in the examinations of this dissertation, since this would suggest active taxation. Instead, I will speak of a process of stimuli, events, attitudes and/or behaviors becoming normal – and accordingly assess the dynamics under this paradigm. A further feature of the psychological perspective is a change of object that is focused on: In the current approach, the perception of individuals and groups (i.e., how they perceive the world) will move into the center.

1.3.3. Introduction to a social psychological perspective on normality and a short overview of the theoretical background chapters

In the previous subchapter, I have presented gaps in social theories on the concept of normality and illustrated the necessity for a (social) psychological approach, a more comprehensive model as well as empirical examinations. In this subchapter, I want to shortly introduce and define the basic understanding of normality from a social psychological perspective. This understanding will act as a guiding point throughout this dissertation. Subsequently, I want to briefly give an overview of the theoretical background chapters. Until this point in time, the discipline of psychology in general, and social psychology in particular, have not developed a holistic, comprehensive and integrative model of normality as well as respective mechanisms, antecedents and consequences. Despite different singular approaches, a grand overview and empirical examinations of the potential linkages between the different research lines are still lacking. These open issues shall be addressed in this dissertation.

In social psychology, norms and related concepts have been examined in a range of different domains, such as the fields of comparative, causal and moral judgment, causal reasoning, cognitive biases, personality descriptions and group cohesion processes (e.g., Kahneman & Miller, 1986; Eidelman & Crandall, 2009). Due to the wide-ranging domains of origin, scientific references, and areas of application, I refrain from giving a clear cut and narrow definition of normality. The psychological understanding of normality is conceptually multi-facetted. Accordingly, each chapter of the theoretical background is laid out in such a way that it provides an inevitable but not standalone sufficient puzzle piece of an extensive and diverse social psychological concept of normality. What can generally be noted though, is that throughout this dissertation, normality is understood as the horizon that always is, but never(more) is explicitly perceived (see, e.g., Taipale, 2012). It is assumed that individuals usually only consciously retrieve a presentation of what is normal, if a stimulus or event deviates from the unnoticed norms. And even in these cases, rather the deviating – the abnormal – stimulus, event or group comes into focus (e.g., Hegarty & Pratto, 2001; Bruckmüller, 2013). The theoretical background chapters reflect core domains of normality, its acquisition, emergence, maintenance and shift. These will contribute to a more holistic and comprehensive social psychological understanding of normality.

In the first chapter of the theoretical background, normality shall be illustrated as a background standard for contrasting stimuli and events. The normal here is understood as rather fixed, whereas alternative stimuli or events are perceived as "effects to be explained" (e.g., Miller, Taylor, & Buck, 1991; Chapter 2.1.). The second subchapter focuses on normality as subjectively acquired through socio-cognitive heuristics (Chapter 2.2). The processes and effects of the inference of prescriptive judgments from descriptive information and non-evaluative stimuli encounters (such as frequency of stimulus encounter or own experience) shall be explicated. In the third subchapter, the phenomenological proximity of the

concepts of normality and objective reality shall be illustrated and its meaning for individuals' perceptions and behavior highlighted (Chapter 2.3.). In the fourth subchapter, normality is illustrated as a phenomenon of group dynamics (Chapter 2.4.). Perceptions of what and how others think, feel, do, and evaluate, in an immediate situation, as well as the general notion of majority opinions and social consensus, are highlighted as descriptive and prescriptive standards of orientation. These will be shown to be potentially implicitly acquired and internalized by individuals. The components that will be illustrated in the theoretical background, do on the one hand have a distinct meaning within and for their particular research traditions. On the other hand, with regard to a concept of normality and shifts of normality, the components will be shown to act together in a complex, dynamic, mutually complementary and influencing manner, beyond the particular research lines. As an outcome of the illustrations of the different lines of social psychological research on normality, I will present two models (Chapter 2.5.). The first one will illustrate the underlying mechanisms of the emergence of normality, its antecedents, promotive factors, deductions and consequences. The second model will illustrate the process of shifting perceptions of normality. Both models base on the current state of research, whilst also indicating gaps for the empirical examinations of this dissertation.

1.4.   Overview of the core objectives of this dissertation

The value of this dissertation deploys on different levels. At the zero-point stands the identification of the practical as well as theoretical relevancy of perceptions – and shifts of perceptions – of normality. A paradigm focusing on normality perceptions may apply to a range of social phenomena. Until now, certain societal circumstances and developments can only be explained insufficiently by existing theories and approaches.

Theories and approaches to normality predominantly stem from sociologists, social theorists and philosophers. I have illustrated in Chapter 1.3. that these approaches view and examine normality from a particular perspective and based on specific assumptions. I have illustrated the necessity of a (social) psychological perspective in research on normality and normativity that bases on gaps in existing approaches. The issue of a lack of (psychologically) disentangling normality and normativity as well as the pervading assumption of unambiguous causal structures of normality emergence and attributions of intentional regulation are two relevant points to start examinations. This dissertation aims at extending the theories and concepts on normality by a comprehensive social psychological approach.

As addressed in Chapter 1.3.3., there is no social psychological integrative and comprehensive concept of normality as of yet. Until now, in social psychology there are solely different separate lines of research that each focus on different singular components of normality, but do not provide a more integrative and holistic view (e.g., Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Kahneman & Miller, 1986; Cialdini et al., 1990; Ross &

Ward, 1996; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Crandall & Eidelman, 2009). In this dissertation, the different components of normality shall be illustrated and discussed, the different research lines linked and be integrated into a more extensive and comprehensive model.

As indicated previously, a further core aim of this dissertation is to empirically examine the most crucial components of the (newly created) social psychological concept of normality. The dynamics of normality emergence, maintenance and shift shall therefore be assessed statistically. Inferences from normality to normativity and objective reality will be in particular focus. Furthermore, antecedents and consequences of these processes shall be examined.

Another core concern of this dissertation is to illustrate the practical value of the models of normality and shifts of normality – and the related empirical evidence – for concrete application and implication. Academic research can and should impact society and serve the social benefit (see, e.g., Bornmann, 2012). Chapters 1.1. and 1.3. highlight the societal relevance of conducting research that aims to explain specific social phenomena and developments, such as shifts of individuals' or groups' societal behavior to what could be considered extreme, and connected these findings to individuals' low motivation to dissent and oppose what they perceive as being normal. This dissertation's challenging objective is to create and examine basic research (models) in applied and concrete settings. This unusual proceeding shall further underline the concrete pragmatic approach and practical relevancy of social psychological research in general. Particular attention, shall be placed on applying research into urgent real-world problems without narrowing the focus, derogating the scope of the meaning, or jeopardizing the claims of good scientific practice (e.g., Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, 2013).

The main objectives and core aspects of this dissertation are:

(1) *Modelling an integrative and comprehensive concept of normality. This concept shall comprise dynamics of normality emergence, maintenance and shift as well as antecedents and consequences. The concrete processes and dynamics of this concept shall be stated and graphically illustrated in two models.*

(2) *Empirically examining core propositions, components and mechanisms of the (newly developed) social psychological concept of normality.*

(3) *Referencing and applying the concept of normality to societal phenomena.*

2. Theoretical Background

2.1. Normality and the effect to be explained

In this chapter, I will focus on the phenomenon of normality as being both presupposed and unnoticed. I will illustrate its influential role as a comparison background. Norms are often conveyed and transmitted indirectly, simply by not standing out, not being in focus, and not being explicitly communicated (e.g., Miller & Prentice, 1996). Therefore, they reflect background assumptions, are taken for granted, and in most cases, are not subjected to change. Whatever is norm-congruent is both, "unremarkable and unlikely to be remarked on" (Miller & Prentice, 1996, p. 808). The norm-incongruent, in contrast, requires explanation. Therefore, normality seems to be self-maintaining and self-perpetuating to a high degree. In this chapter, I will further deepen the understanding of normality as the unsaid by explicating reasons and processes that lead a feature, attribute or category member to appear as either the normal, or the *effect to be explained*. In this context, I will highlight the role of *attentional focus*. In the final section, I will discuss consequences of being differentially perceived in regard to normality, especially for non-normative category members.

2.1.1. Norm theory, contrast and counterfactuals

Many researchers describe seeking causes for events as being triggered by the experience or perception of violations of 'normal conditions', which reflect expectancy and probability (e.g., Lalljee & Abelson, 1983; Weiner, 1985; Hilton & Slugoski, 1986; McGill, 1989). Hilton and Slugoski (1986) argued that consensus, distinctiveness, and consistency of information are interpreted in consideration of presupposed norms of what is expected and usual, identifying abnormalities (deviations from what is usual) as the cause of an event. Norm theory (Kahneman & Miller, 1986) in contrast, describes the concept of norms as being constructed in a backward process, rather than solely reflecting precomputed and presupposed structures. According to Kahneman and Miller, norms can be generated either by the retrieval of similar experiences for which memory traces exist, or by ad hoc constructions of counterfactual alternatives to the experienced episode. In both cases, it is the object or the event itself that evokes its norms as "representations of what (it) could have been, might have been, or should have been" (Kahneman & Miller, 1986, p. 136). These serve as standards of comparison for the experienced. How normal or surprising an event appears to be, depends on the contrast between the target event or object and the norms, and respectively the counterfactual alternatives, it evokes. Accordingly, rather than explaining an event per se, a perceiver seeks to explain the discrepancy between an event or object and a contrasting alternative (McGill, 1989; Miller at al., 1991). Following norm theory, the factor that primarily influences which norms

are activated is availability. Availability is determined by the "recency, frequency, intensity, area, duration and higher-order attributes such as meaningfulness, familiarity and ego-involvement" (Avant & Helson, 1973, p. 440, as cited in Kahneman & Miller, 1986, p. 141; Kahneman & Tversky, 1982; Kahneman & Miller, 1986). The one-time experience of an event, for instance, already lets subsequent similar events appear to be less surprising, since the original episode is now available to be recruited as a standard for classification (Kahneman & Miller, 1986). Summarizing this section, according to Kahneman and Miller, "an abnormal event is one that has highly available alternatives, whether retrieved or constructed; a normal event mainly evokes representations that resemble it" (Kahneman & Miller, 1986, p. 137).

Kahneman and Miller (1986) further focus on the concept of mutability. A target stimulus or event and its evoked alternatives share some but not all attributes. Features that the target stimulus and the evoked alternatives share are referred to as immutable attributes, whereas unshared features count as mutable. Whenever there are discrepancies between the immutable and mutable aspects of a target event, "the immutable aspects will become the causal background against which the mutable aspects or attributes will be contrasted" (Miller et al., 1991, p. 6). Whichever alternative has fewer and mutable attributes, will be considered as normal and serve as the comparison background. An alternative with many mutable features, in contrast, will appear as surprising and abnormal (Miller et al., 1991). I will specify some factors determining the mutability of target events and their alternatives in the next section (Chapter 2.1.2.).

The same events and objects can evoke very different norms and counterfactual experiences dependent on the dimensions upon which the comparison is based, the information given, and the specific context and the perspective of an observer (Hart & Honoré, 1959; Jones & Harris, 1967; Slovic, 1985; Kahneman & Miller, 1986). The resulting differences between different people in the same situation, or one person across different situations, regarding what is used as a comparison standard, have a strong impact on an individual's interpretation of a certain target event or object. Notably, throughout the whole process, the representations of exemplars do not need to be accessible to explicit and conscious retrieval. Instead, the process of recruitment is assumed to be "rapid, automatic, and essentially immune to voluntary control after its initiation" (Kahneman & Miller, 1986, p. 148). Correspondingly, usually neither the evoked standard of comparison (the norm or the counterfactual alternative) is explicitly conscious, nor how it influences what a person experiences as normal, and what is surprising.

2.1.2. Normality and the quest for causality and explanation

The matter of normality plays a crucial role in the process of causal attribution. According to norm theory, the causality of events and objects remains unquestioned, if the evoked norms and counterfactual alternatives resemble the initial episodes (Kahneman & Miller, 1986). In such a case, the contrast between an observation or experience and an alternative is low. When norms are violated and the contrast between

an observation or experience and an alternative is high, only then is causal interest aroused and experiences and events are questioned (Einhorn & Hogarth, 1986; Kahneman & Miller, 1986). Accordingly, Mackie (1974) stated that only when an event or object becomes a *difference-in-a-background,* sticking out of the *causal field*, which consists of related presupposed factors, it gains causal relevance and is therefore focused on. Also McGill (1989) hypothesized that a to-be-explained event is specified by the difference of a target episode and an adopted contrasting causal background, which can differ between individuals. She illustrates the context dependency of identification of a cause with the help of the example of pregnancy: While a mother would attribute her teenage daughter's pregnancy to the occurrence of sexual intercourse, a married woman in her late thirties would rather attribute her pregnancy to the omission of birth control. A doctor however, working with men and women hoping to receive children, may attribute pregnancy to the parents'-to-be fertility. The protagonists have in common that none of them considered factors for explanation, for which the particular contrast between target and evoked norm was small, for which counterfactual alternatives were not highly available. Each of these protagonists selected a different cause for the same event, dependent on each's causal background. Hence, "differences in causal explanations may result not from differences in beliefs about the factors that produced an occurrence but from the selection of causal backgrounds" (McGill, 1989, p. 190).

What are the relevant factors for the selection, respective salience, of a causal background? As mentioned earlier, according to Kahneman and Miller (1986) the *mutability* of the features of a target event or category is decisive regarding the questions if something needs to be explained and who or what needs to be explained. The mutability again is assumed to be determined by the routine of a behavior or a perception, attentional focus, typicality, the intonation and choice of words in communication, perceiver's past experience and the order of the contrasting information (e.g., Grice, 1975; Francik & Clark, 1985; Kahneman & Miller, 1986; Miller et al., 1991). From this it further follows that a change in one of these factors can turn a highly mutable and abnormal feature into an immutable and normal one. In this context, in the next section (Chapter 2.1.3.) I want to specifically highlight and discuss the factors of attentional focus and typicality.

While it often seems natural and logical to question (only) what stands out as abnormal, this has great influence on an individual's life and far-reaching political consequences. Considering the case of oppression for instance: If events only especially stand out when violating the normality of the situation of oppression and oppression acceptance (e.g., through protests or demonstrations), these respective events need to be explained and justified as they are perceived as contrasting what has been, could be and should be. The oppression itself will remain unquestioned for the most part and therefore most likely not be subjected to change.

2.1.3. What becomes the normal and what the effect to be explained? The role of focus and typicality

In this subchapter, it will be illustrated who or what becomes the normal or the effect to be explained. A particular focus will be placed on the role of focus and typicality. As mentioned already, Kahneman and Miller (1986) proposed that directing the focus towards a specific element of an event or a category would let it appear more mutable. The unattended aspect in contrast would be perceived as more immutable and presupposed. Marques, Quelhas and Juhos (2014) examined in three scenarios (a physical assault, mugging and a car accident) whether the behavior of a perpetrator or a victim would appear as more mutable, and hence more counterfactuals would be produced. In each of their scenarios they manipulated the focus, directing it on either the victim, the perpetrator, or both. In line with their hypothesis, in each case more counterfactuals were produced about the behavior of each focal person. Additionally, Marques et al. provided evidence that the first counterfactual individuals wrote about, was virtually in every case about the person in focus. Thus, the attentional focus has led the aspect or person under focus to be subject to change. The out-of-focus aspect or person, in contrast, appeared as less mutable and therefore became the background and taken for granted.

Miller et al. (1991) showed in their work that when comparing different category members, it is in many cases not arbitrary who becomes the comparison background and whom the effect to be explained. The researchers state that "once it is recognized that causal explanation focuses not on events per se but on contrasts between events and causal backgrounds, a natural focus of attention becomes the factor that determines the perceiver's choice of causal background" (Miller et al., 1991, p. 10). They further propose, based on the assumptions of norm theory, that in a context of comparison, the behavior of a non-prototypical category member should be the contrasting case, matched to the behavior of a prototypical category member. In a set of studies, they examined their hypotheses in the context of the *gender gap*. The term gender gap refers to the phenomenon of discrepancies between men and women regarding status and general opportunities (e.g., "gender gap", n.d.). Miller et al. (1991) first showed that individuals described the prototypical member of the category "American voter" as being male. When asking participants about differences between male (prototypical) and female (non-typical) voters, explanations focused predominately on the female voters. Furthermore, when asked whom of these two groups would rather change, most participants indicated that the female voters would (Miller et al., 1991). While the non-typical group is in the center of focus and becomes the effect to be explained, the prototypical group is unattended as the causal background and therefore not subject to change. Other researchers also have found support for these hypotheses (e.g., Hegarty & Pratto, 2001; Pratto, 2004; Bruckmüller, 2013). Normality seems to perpetuate itself in that process by implicitly directing focus to what- or whoever is experienced as more abnormal. As mentioned, Kahneman and Miller (1986) proposed that attentional focus increases the

mutability of any feature of a situation or category. In contrast, unattended attributes become the default, the presupposed background. Hegarty and Pratto (2001) showed that when individuals' focus is explicitly directed at one group, it provokes more explanations regarding this group than for the unattended. This holds true even when the former group is the more prototypical. In their study, Hegarty and Pratto explicated that by showing that when heterosexuals were explicitly named in a question, participants produced more answers about how they differ from homosexuals, instead of the other way around. Iyer, Jetten, Branscombe, Jackson and Yungberg (2014) in that context found that when the focus was directed on the illegitimate nature of a criterion, differential treatment on that category's basis was perceived as less legitimate.

Despite the evidence provided by the latter study examples, it should be considered that outside of scientific studies, it is somewhat rarely the case that the focus is directed in an unusual way, since individuals seldom communicate what they perceive to be the *common ground*, knowledge which they assume to be shared with others (Francik & Clark, 1985). This unexpressed common ground builds the background against which individuals interpret communication, while the common ground itself remains unsaid. Once more, this indicates the self-perpetuating character of normality.

2.1.4. Consequences of being the effect to be explained

Besides the perpetuation of the status quo, another consequence of the partial determination of selection of causal backgrounds is that certain category members are more likely to be stigmatized than others. Pratto, Korchmaros and Hegarty (2007) for example show that marking certain groups in comparative situations justifies different treatment of these groups. Membership of the unmarked group in contrast, goes along with unstated privileges. According to Hegarty and Pratto (2001), people retrieve stereotypes that focus on the marked group as attributional content, when explaining the differences between the groups. Generally, groups rather being marked are often groups of low status and minorities – groups that that do not "fit with implicit expectations" (Bruckmüller, 2013, p. 237). High status groups and majorities in contrast, are often taken as default standards (Hegarty & Pratto, 2001; Pratto, et al., 2007, Bruckmüller, Hegarty, & Abele, 2012). Furthermore, Bruckmüller and Abele (2010) show that when a group was presented as the norm, participants perceived it to be more powerful, higher in status, more agentic and less communal compared to when it was presented as the effect to be explained. The circular relation between status and normativity of the group underlines the self-perpetuating character of normality. In addition, the groups in question directly feel the consequences of being the effect to be explained. Appearing as less normal is associated with negative feelings and lower private collective self-esteem, as well as experiences of stigmatizing, othering and disempowerment (Miller et al., 1991; Pratto et al., 2007; Bruckmüller et al., 2012). For non-normative groups, these effects already occur solely on the basis of being marked as different, regardless of specific content or characteristics of comparison (e.g., Bruckmüller,

2013). All the effects illustrated in this subchapter may contribute greatly to the general maintenance of social inequalities in societies.

2.1.5. Summary

In this chapter, I have first shown how events and objects produce their own norms and contrasting counterfactual alternatives, against which they are compared, and subsequently, depending on the contrast between target stimulus and alternatives, judged as either normal, or abnormal and surprising. In this process, whichever feature is judged to be more mutable, is subjected to become the effect to be explained. Immutable features become the presupposed background. In summary, that which appears more normal becomes the unsaid and unnoticed standard of comparison, against which other events and stimuli are contrasted. The involved processes do not require explicit awareness.

Typically, the method of communication, perceiver's past experience, the order in which contrasting information is presented, and attentional focus, are assumed to account for the mutability of features and attributes. In my remarks, I focused on the factor attentional focus and highlighted its role in deciding who or what becomes the effect to be explained and who or what becomes unquestioned normality: High focus leads to attribution of causality and quest for explanation, low focus leads to the subsumption as presupposed comparison background. I illustrated that in most cases this process does not appear to be fortuitous, but that normality seems to be self-perpetuating. As a last step, I emphasized that becoming the effect to be explained is associated with (external) perceptions of being less agentic, less powerful, and experiences of stereotyping and stigmatization.

2.2. The subjective acquisition of normality and inferences from the descriptive to the prescriptive

In many well-adapted approaches in social psychology, the constitution of normality is understood to be built on aligning to social references and social validation, for example through social sharing of experiences and/or perceptions of group norms (e.g., Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; see Chapters 2.3. und 2.4.). However, as the illustrations in Chapter 2.1. indicate, what is perceived as normal (or abnormal) can also be acquired by mostly cognitive and automatic mechanisms in subjective observations and experiences of events and stimuli. In this chapter, I want to elaborate on this particular approach to normality. In the first section, I will therefore illustrate factors that lead to the perception of stimuli or events as more normal than others, in the absence of explicit social validation. I will illustrate that in fact individuals create, experience and maintain normality daily, in mostly subtle, ubiquitous and not always rationally backed processes. Moreover, I will emphasize that a notion of normality can be already

acquired through one-time experience, and thus seems to be inherent in the encounter of a stimulus or event (e.g., Eidelman & Crandall, 2009; see also Kahneman & Miller, 1986).

After stimuli or events are acquired as being normal, respectively as the status quo, individuals seem to think, feel and act as to maintain this normality (Samuelson & Zeckhausen, 2012; Eidelman, Crandall & Pattershall, 2009; Eidelman & Crandall, 2012). As already illustrated in Chapter 1.3., individuals seem to infer the prescriptive from the descriptive. In the second part of this chapter, I will therefore illustrate the motivational, informational and heuristic processes that lead to this inference. The specific focus will be on automatic mechanisms. Furthermore, I will discuss the question of whether the perception of stimuli or events as the norm fosters implicit assumptions of social validation and verification. Throughout this chapter, the self-perpetuating character of normality shall be highlighted.

2.2.1. Subjective-cognitive factors in the emergence of normality

Perception of stimuli

What are processes that lead one stimulus to be perceived as more normal than a comparable alternative, in the absence of direct reception of social references? When encountering different stimuli, what are the factors leading individuals to judge and internalize one stimulus as more normal? In the literature, a variety of factors can be found, determining the subjective acquisition of what is normal from different theoretical concepts. Such can be the frequency, availability, accessibility, primacy or the familiarity of a stimulus or event (e.g., Helson, 1948; Kahneman & Miller, 1986; Bargh, Lombardi, & Higgins, 1988; Higgins, 1996; Weaver, Garcia, Schwarz, & Miller, 2007; Eidelman & Crandall, 2009; Eidelman et al., 2009). These factors have been found to function partly as heuristics. Thus, they work on mainly subtle and automatic levels, without explicit awareness and rational evaluation. Instead, they have effects based on merely existing and/or being encountered first or more often (see Bargh, 1994; Weaver et al., 2007; Eidelman & Crandall, 2009). This indicates that what appears as normal may be partly based on biases and arbitrariness.

Kahneman and Miller (1986) proposed that stimuli which are encountered before others are perceived as less mutable and likely taken as comparison background. Accordingly, Miller and Gunasegaram (1990) have shown that, in a presentation of students' inconsistent exam performances, the majority of participants indicated that the inconsistency would be best explained by relating a comparison of the second results to the first, not the other way around. Jones and Goethals (1972) have shown that the implications of later information are predominated by impressions that were already formed earlier. Whatever information is acquired first serves as a referent point for all subsequent information (e.g., Eidelman & Crandall, 2009). Even an inferior alternative can be chosen and justified by decision makers

when it is presented and supported first (Russo, Carlson, & Meloy, 2006). According to Eidelman and Crandall (2009), existing states (i.e., the information or experience that was encountered first) will "inhibit the generation of reasons for alternatives, while tempering expectations for future outcomes that are discrepant from what is already established" (Eidelman & Crandall, 2009, p. 87-88).

Moreover, the amount of (equitable) alternatives, and thus the accessibility of more than one option, seems to play an important role in the constitution of normality: When in a variation of the Milgram experiments different possibilities of punishment were introduced, only a small amount of participants (compared to the number in the standard version of the experiment) chose to punish the learners by electro shocking and subsequently acquire this immoral behavior as adequate and normal (e.g., Milgram, 1963; Milgram, 1982). Marks and Duval (1991) showed that the number of alternatives presented had an influence on participants' estimations of group consensus for an activity they had chosen from a selection. In the "high number of alternatives" condition, participants' consensus estimations for the own choice decreased significantly.

Another phenomenon or bias being based on overly relying on information that is acquired first is captured in the anchoring effect (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974). It describes the tendency of judges to assimilate towards a previously encountered (usually numerical) standard (e.g., Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; Mussweiler & Strack, 1999). This standard functions after its encounter as an implicit comparison background (Mussweiler & Englich, 2005). Experiments regarding the anchoring bias range across different domains and different degrees of actual informational content of an anchor, from determining the freezing point of vodka up to rolling dice in an unrelated judgment situation (Mussweiler & Strack, 2000; Epley & Gilovich, 2001). In the further process, it is to be expected that individuals perceive judgments of others that are closer to a formerly presented anchor as being more normal. Hence, numerical information across several domains can be integrated in individuals' perception of normality, even without the individuals' awareness (e.g., Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; Mussweiler & Englich, 2005). Some stimuli (e.g., newspaper articles: see Piel, 2016; e.g., a statement by a peer: see Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughn, 1994) might also trigger anchor effects because they are perceived as representing social agreement. In Piel's study for instance, the presentation of an alleged newspaper article, either providing an example of extremely harsh treatment of refugees or extremely friendly and supportive treatment, led individuals' attitudes to shift in the respective direction (Piel, 2016).

Subsequent comparison to a stimulus acquired as standard may lead to effects of contrasting away from it (e.g., Herr, 1986). Herr showed that participants evaluated a target person as friendlier when they were primed with hostile exemplars (such as Adolf Hitler). In contrast, a target person was evaluated to appear more hostile when participants before were primed with particular friendly exemplars (such as Santa Claus). Again, simply presenting a contrasting norm influenced the perception and interpretation of

subsequently encountered stimuli. Norris, Larsen and Stastny (2010) illustrated contrast effects in the domain of morality. In their study, students judged fewer practices as torture when they were aligned among more aversive practices.

Additionally, the frequency with which a stimulus is encountered has an influence on its perception as more (or less) normal compared to a similar stimulus (e.g., Weaver et al., 2007). According to Bear and Knobe (2016), individuals infer the normality of stimuli to a large extent from the frequency of presentation. Weaver et al. (2007) proposed that "the more often an opinion has been encountered in the past, the more accessible it is in memory and the more familiar it seems when it is encountered again" (p. 821). Weaver et al. assume this process to be independent of the source of exposures. In their set of studies, they further focus on the relation to social consensus estimations. The more often an individual is confronted with a plausible statement – even though, it might be ambiguous or equivocal – the more certain the individual will get that the statement is valid (Hasher, Goldstein, & Toppino, 1977). In an experiment, in which they compared validity ratings of repeated and unrepeated true and false statements, Hasher et al. found that repeated statements were generally more likely to be judged as true than similar statements that were not repeated. This effect occurred for true as well as false statements. More recent studies found similar results on what is called the *truth* or *validity effect* (e.g., Hackett Renner, 2004; DiFonzo, Beckstead, Stupak, & Walders, 2016). Furthermore, Nemeth and Wachtler (1974) showed that minority opinions reach the strongest influence when they are persistently repeated. These studies are remarkable documents for how perceptions of normality and truth can be acquired subjectively and cognitively in everyday encounters. In the next section, I will illustrate how practicing a behavior only once, already increases the normality perceptions of subsequent similar events.

Acquisition of normality through mere and single experience

Kahneman and Miller (1986) illustrate an example in which a person at a restaurant observes how another guest, after tasting his soup, winces as if being in pain. According to Kahneman and Miller, this incident alone will alter the normality for the observer regarding a multitude of events. For instance, another guest's wincing after tasting the soup will appear unsurprising. Similarly, the startling of the first guest after being touched by a waiter, will appear normal. While the first experience of the wincing as a new experience was perceived to be abnormal, the subsequent experience of a similar situation is perceived as much more normal. According to Kahneman and Miller, this is due to any event or stimulus generates its own norm by comparison of its features with similar situations retrieved from memory (or counterfactual alternatives), every experience contributes to the constitution of an individual's normality. As Kahneman and Miller put it: "Any observation of behavior – even if it is discounted or discredited – increases the normality of subsequent recurrences of compatible behaviors" (1986, p. 148). A further factor highlighting the impact of

a single experience for the constitution of normality is the phenomenon of radical generalization from the single experience to behavior norms (Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Read, 1984). Imagine that the wincing guest in the example above wore a tie. An individual, subsequent to the experience in the restaurant, might believe that people wearing ties often wince in public. Another potential consequence might be that the observer assumes that bad food is served in this restaurant and hence will not visit it again.

Early doubts about one's actions can, when clearly expressed, cushion the effect of the acquisition of an (immoral) behavior as normal. In the Milgram experiments (see Chapter 2.4. for an illustration), individuals who expressed their disagreement with the experimenter at an early stage of the experiment were much more likely to defy and stop the electro shocking than individuals who expressed their disagreement later or not at all (Milgram, 1982). This example provides support for the hypothesis of the normalizing effects of own experience and at the same time introduces a factor to prevent these dynamics. The individuals that disagreed early established an alternative to the act of electro shocking that was accessible to them throughout the experiment. For the individuals who did not at all or at a late point of time express disagreement, the alternative of defying might have been less retrievable. Therefore, it might have not been as strongly considered as norm as the electro shocking. Importantly, individuals do not only acquire normality through mere experience but also infer prescription of this normality. The processes that lead to an inference to prescription and advantage of the normal are illustrated in the next section.

2.2.2. Subjective-cognitive processes of normality maintenance

Existing states, defaults, and any stimuli that have become an implicit or explicit norm have an advantage over unexperienced stimuli: They are more likely to be cognitively accessible and available, less effortful to retrieve and often implicitly endorsed (Eidelman & Crandall, 2009; Everett, Caviola, Kahane, Savulescu, & Faber, 2015). For that reason, individuals' preference for the status quo is not inevitably based on rational evaluation processes (see Eidelman & Crandall, 2009). People are often biased to stick with what they once have observed, experienced or chosen. These biases in favor of once acquired norms influence a wide range of states and actions: personal living conditions, attitudes and beliefs, social judgments – and also on a bigger scale, social relations and the societal status quo (e.g., Kahneman & Miller, 1986; Bruckmüller & Abele, 2010; Eidelman & Crandall, 2012). Roberts, Gelman and Ho (2016) for instance, show that children in a non-normative language context inferred what ought to be directly from what they observed and experienced. One example illustrating these effects on a societal level is the introduction of the gender-neutral pronoun in the Swedish language (Gustafsson Sendén, Bäck, & Lindqvist, 2015). Gustafsson Sendén et al. reviewed and evaluated change processes from 2012 to 2015. The word creation *hen* was introduced in 2012, as an addition to the pronouns *hon* (she) and *han* (he), by including it into the Swedish Academy Glossary (SAOL). In 2012, the majority of the Swedish population was negative towards

the word hen. Resistance against using the word was high. However, these attitudes shifted in the course of time to predominantly positive attitudes. The overall use of the word also increased but only relatively weakly in comparison to the attitude shifts. The authors propose that key factors for the shift were the length of the word in use, and the fact that it was shared by the relatively neutral media, in contrast to, for example, feminist activists. Similar processes and factors will be illustrated and examined throughout this chapter. In the first section, I will reference this dissertation's paradigm to classical phenomena of decision making, focusing on rationalization and justification. Subsequently, I will illustrate and discuss more recent approaches to explain the maintenance of what appears more normal. Here within, I will focus on approaches that understand the status quo maintaining processes as operating in a mainly heuristically manner.

Motivational processes

Once individuals have made choices or committed actions, they tend to rationalize them and to justify previous commitments (e.g., Brehm, 1956; Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988). Festinger (1957) stated that an inconsistency between two cognitions (such as wanting to lose weight and at the same time wanting to eat a donut) can raise a tension that he called *cognitive dissonance*. To overcome or prevent this dissonance, individuals tend to adapt their cognitions and affective states to be consonant with preexisting states, such as attitudes and beliefs (Brehm, 1956; Festinger, 1957). As a consequence, chosen alternatives are enhanced in their value, whereas rejected alternatives are cognitively and emotionally devaluated. Consequently, this notion will support the fixation of a once acquired belief system as the normal and not to be changed. One prominent example is the following reaction of many participants in the Milgram experiments (Milgram, 1963). After being informed about and made to realize the potential scope of their actions (injuring an unacquainted person to a serious degree), many participants highlighted how their participation has been important and necessary to support the progress of science – and therefore rather praiseworthy (see Haslam & Reicher, 2012).

For contexts in which a stimulus or choice is explicitly presented as the default, people tend to prefer these over alternatives. This leads to a *default bias* (Dhingra, Gorn, Kerner, & Dana, 2012; Everett et al., 2015). Individuals are motivated not to change what they experience as given in a certain situation: The marking of a stimulus as default seems to suggest its superiority over alternatives. Everett et al. (2015) in that context, demonstrated a notably stronger effect for the default when it was preselected by a checked box (for instance in a computer scenario) than when it was only introduced as being plainly the default statement. Apparently, one factor that supports the choice of the default is that individuals tend to prefer inactivity over activity – even if it is not (financially) cost-effective (see also Kahneman & Tversky, 1982). As a similar concept, the *status quo bias* (Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1988) shows that individuals

disproportionally stick with the status quo. This means that individuals either maintain their current and/or previous decisions or simply remain inactive. In one of their studies, Samuelson and Zeckhauser showed in a real world setting that university employees kept their current health plans, even though similar new enrollees decided to prefer an alternative. This indicates that even if the value of something acquired as the personal norm may change or has already changed, individuals irrationally tend to hold on to it. Newbies in contrast, seem to be freer in their decisions. As psychological mechanisms explaining individuals' tendency to maintain the normality they have acquired, often two motivational processes are proposed: *Loss aversion* (e.g., Kahneman & Tversky, 1984; Tversky & Kahneman, 1992), people's tendency to give more weight to losses than to potential gains, and *regret avoidance* (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982), the tendency to imagine feeling greater regret for action over inaction. Both effects can be observed even in cases of equivalent outcomes of a decision. For example, not losing five dollars is perceived to be of higher value than finding five dollars (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982). Again, individuals seem to attribute worth, value and righteousness to what they have acquired as being normal, seemingly perceiving it as something that is justified and proven due to its mere existence.

The illustrated processes and effects, though operating partly automatic and without individuals' awareness, also seem to partly involve motivational aspects. In the next subsection, I will illustrate that as the status quo established norms are also maintained and enhanced based on completely heuristically operating processes.

Automatic processes

As indicated at the end of the last subsection, the mere existence of a norm may be taken by individuals as evidence of value, worth and goodness (Eidelman & Crandall, 2009; Eidelman et al., 2009; Eidelman & Crandall, 2012). A large proportion of processes to maintain what is normal as what is good and necessary, seem to ground on Hume's thoughts on what was later referred to as the naturalistic fallacy (Hume, 1992). As illustrated in Chapter 1.3., the phenomenon of naturalistic fallacy describes individuals' tendency to derive a prescriptive ought to be from an empirical fact (what is). Eidelman et al. (2009) derived from this notion the *existence bias*. This bias contains that individuals simply assume the value and positive valence of existing states and norms, with little deliberation and reason and not inevitable rationality. Eidelman and Crandall (2012) propose that "existence itself is evidence of positive qualities" (p. 272). There are two important differences between the phenomena discussed in the previous section and the work on the existence bias. Firstly, Eidelman and colleagues (e.g., Eidelman & Crandall, 2012) have demonstrated in their studies that, once acquired, normality is valued regardless of any costs that might be associated with change. In contrast, in the concepts of loss aversion and regret avoidance, cost-effectiveness plays a crucial role (see section 2.2.2.1.). The second difference is that Eidelman and colleagues broaden the range of

application from making choices to several different fields (e.g., Eidelman et al. 2009; see also Eidelman & Crandall, 2012). In their work on group comparisons in communication, Bruckmüller and Abele (2010) found similar effects of positive evaluation of the existing state. They showed that for whichever group was presented as the norm, more positive aspects were attributed. The group to which another group was compared, was perceived as more powerful and agentic, less communal and higher in status. Bruckmüller and Abele reasoned that current forms of communication therefore will reproduce and maintain the current social relations of different groups. This example underlines the widespread range of application of normality and status quo effects.

Eidelman, Pattershall and Crandall (2010) extended the mere existence bias by indicating that also the length of existence is decisive. In a study about torture interrogations in the "Global War on Terrorism," Crandall, Eidelman, Skitka and Morgan (2009) framed the description of torture practices either as being new or as already being executed for 40 years. When torture in the United States was introduced as a practice being long in existence, participants showed more support and justification (though no increased acceptance) for this status quo of torture practice than when it was presented as a more recently introduced method. As indicated before, both related effects of mere existence and longevity seem to operate as heuristics, as rules of thumbs: they are not consciously perceived, are especially efficient and are often generalized to fields where they do not apply (Tversky & Kahneman, 1974; Kahneman & Frederick, 2002; Ferreira, Garcia-Marques, Sherman, & Sherman, 2006; Eidelman et al., 2009; Eidelman & Crandall, 2012). Eidelman et al. (2010) illustrated the lack of awareness in a study. In their experiment, individuals preferred a chocolate that was presented as being longer in the market over an alternative. When participants were asked why they had preferred the respective chocolate, they failed to indicate time of existence as a reason. Thus, individuals tended to favor what they had acquired as the normal and usual, without being aware of it. According to Eidelman and Crandall (2009), this lack of awareness is a reason for why norms are so resistant to change. Interestingly, even when noticed, motivation and effort is needed to overcome the illustrated biases (Eidelman et al., 2009). Another factor supporting the status quo is the circumstance that individuals tend to interpret and integrate newly acquired information generally in a way that suits and confirms the already existing perceptions of normality (Tversky, 1977; Nickerson, 1998).

It is striking, how far reaching the effects of processes of normality maintenance and inferences to normativity seem. Indeed, they might even potentially lead to more positive evaluations of morally dubious practices. In the above illustrated study by Crandall et al. (2009) for instance, participants supported and justified torture to a higher degree when it was introduced as being practiced for 40 years compared to being rather newly introduced. Regardless, whether this reflects skepticism towards the newly introduced, or motivation to conserve what already exists, the presentation as being the long-standing status quo led to an increase in participants' agreement that "torture was necessary given the circumstances" (Crandall et al.,

2009, p. 7). Thus, coming back to Hume (1992) and Moore (1903), Crandall et al. (2009) empirically illustrated that the circumstance that torture is and has been practiced psychologically led to an ought to be, indicating that torture is and was necessary (under the specific circumstances and to reach certain goals; Eidelman et al., 2010). It seems that the observation or experience of stimuli as normal can, due to automatic processes, lead to support for, and maintenance of, even morally dubious practices. In the next section, I will discuss an alternative, respectively additional, explanation for these prescriptive notions of norms and normality.

2.2.3. The implicit assumption of social validation and verification

One alternative approach towards the deduction from descriptivity to prescriptivity is the proposition that individuals infer from status quo information that a stimulus or an experience has been socially validated before, respectively reflects a widespread opinion or experience (e.g., Everett et al., 2015). Since people are motivated to act in accordance with social norms (e.g., Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; see Chapter 2.4. for an extensive illustration), a (falsely) induced enhanced perception of social support might contribute to the explanation of the normality and status quo effects (e.g., Weaver et al., 2007; Everett et al., 2015). Weaver et al. (2007), in that context, proposed that the repetition of an opinion by the same person leads to higher estimations of social sharedness than a single expression of that opinion. As an underlying mechanism, the researchers proposed that a higher frequency of encounters leads to a higher accessibility of the stimulus in memory. When encountering this opinion again or reflecting about the group's opinion, this memory trace supposedly is cued and experienced with a feeling of familiarity, as if heard many times and from different persons. According to Weaver et al., this experience of familiarity leads to an overestimation of opinion extensity. The results of their studies were consistent with their hypotheses. Interestingly, the proposed effects even occurred when the participants were aware that the opinion expressions they read were identical copies, coming from the same person (Weaver et al., 2007). Everett et al. (2015) proposed that the default effect can be partly explained by individuals' attempts to act according to the perceived norms. They argue that a default option per se is perceived as the option that is recommended (injunctive) and the one that most people would follow (descriptive). In their studies, the researchers received mixed support for their hypotheses. Consistent with the default bias, when an option (donating money to charity vs. receiving it in person) was presented as the status quo, it was chosen more than when it was the non-default option. However, the comparisons between the choice of option tested estimations of injunctive and descriptive norms were only in certain cases significantly different for the default and the non-default condition. The same applies to analyses testing the perceived norms as mediators for the default effects. Though the results are mixed, it seems that descriptive have a stronger relation to the default than injunctive (Everett et al., 2015). All in all, it remains unclear whether the default really was

perceived as being socially validated, or the estimation of consensus was rather inferred after a person had chosen an option, and therefore made himself the referent for a potential group. Also Eidelman and Crandall (2009) discuss the possibility that a stimulus or process that is perceived as the status quo reflects social validation. They argue in their study about the longevity-effect that the participants indeed estimated that others would agree with their taste (Eidelman et al., 2010). However, no variation of the estimations along the manipulation of the starting date of selling the particular chocolate had been found. Thus, time in existence affected the tasting experience of the participants, but not the estimations of social consensus (Eidelman et al., 2010). As a consequence, the explanation of perceptions of social norms inherently being transferred via the status quo does not apply here. However, the perception of a social consensus that might have shifted the attitudes accordingly, seems to be a plausible alternative explanation for the effects of introducing torture practices as long-standing status quo (Crandall et al., 2009). The framing of these practices as being applied for 40 years may well have led to three effects, which might operate partly integrated and dynamically: Firstly, a heuristic equating existence with goodness. Secondly, a rationalization and justification of torture as being of some use and necessary if being practiced for such a long time. Thirdly, the notion that these practices must be supported by a consensus, assuming that otherwise they would have been more strongly put into focus and changed (Crandall et al., 2009). Either way, the result remains the same: Individuals irrationally favor an alternative based on its presentation as more normal.

To summarize, the idea of perceptions of social validation as being inherent in the status quo is worthy of consideration. Since the results are very mixed and partly ambiguous though, a more complex intertwining of the factors is more probable than a clear notion that one is inherent in, or stems from, the other. A further approach would be that the notion of social validation is somewhat inherent in a subject's encounter with and experience of stimuli, making the subject himself the reference for social judgment, once he has incorporated a stimulus or experience. Since the constitution, incorporation and maintenance of normality comprises a wide range of different phenomena and processes, the social validation might play different roles and occur in different ways. Also, different pronunciations at different points of times as well as dynamical interactions between cognitive, stimulus-inherent and social factors are possible. For example, purely subjective constitution of norms and first maintenance processes in form of heuristics might occur primarily, whereas social validation might become more important in the long run. A further discussion of intersubjectivity and social validation in subjective experience is provided in Chapter 2.3.2.

2.2.4. Summary

In this chapter, I have illustrated how individuals' subjective and daily observations and experiences constitute what they perceive as normal, even in the absence of direct validation by others (e.g., Kahneman

& Miller, 1986; Eidelman & Crandall, 2012). Accordingly, already the single experience of a stimulus or event will lead to a modified perception of normality (Kahneman & Miller, 1986). I have further illustrated that the amount of choice and action alternatives to and/or retrieved by an individual play an important role for normality perceptions. In that context, (the experience of) normality shows to have history: An individual's past experiences and observations are captured, incorporated and maintained in patterns of feelings, thoughts and behaviors that make up the current normality. These constitutes of normality decisively determine future interpretations and evaluations of stimuli and therefore social judgments of the individuals (e.g., Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Nickerson, 1998). Importantly, these processes seem to be processed mostly automatic and without explicit awareness, as cognitive heuristics (see Tversky & Kahneman, 1973; Bargh, 1994; Eidelman & Crandall, 2012). The partly arbitrary, content-independent acquisition of normality and the phenomenon of heuristical support of the status quo are widespread and powerful (e.g., Eidelman & Crandall, 2009; Crandall et al., 2012). They seem to operate independently from moral considerations. Therefore, they potentially lead to relativization, support and maintenance of morally dubious practices (Crandall et al., 2009; Norris et al., 2010). As the status quo is implicitly favored over alternatives, it is rather resistant to change (Jost, 2015). Importantly, even when individuals are aware of the biases that make them prefer the status quo, they need particular motivation and effort to overcome these (Weaver et al., 2007; Eidelman & Crandall, 2012). Moreover, mixed results indicate that some of the processes of an individual's subjective normality acquisition and maintenance seem to be related to implicit assumptions of social validation. However, the evidence is ambiguous and exact conjunctions still unclear.

In the first two chapters of the theoretical background, I illustrated processes of acquisition and maintenance of normality that are based on experience-based, stimulus inherent and cognitive factors. In the next two chapters, I will illustrate a second family of relevant factors for processes of normality perception and shifts of normality. I will focus on the role of intersubjectivity, social validation as well as descriptive and injunctive norms. In relation to this, I will begin with an extensive illustration of the inference from normality to objective reality, truth and factuality.

2.3. The understanding of normality as reality, truth and objectivity

What people perceive as being real and truthful often does not stem from facts within the physical world or corroborations from external perspectives (such as science) but from people's subjective experience of what is real (e.g., Festinger, 1950; Festinger, 1954; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Ross & Ward, 1996; Echterhoff, Higgins & Levine, 2009). In their assessment of reality and truth, individuals strongly rely on information provided by others whom they perceive to be similar (in beliefs and attitudes; e.g., Sherif, 1936; Festinger, 1950; Ross & Ward, 1996; Husserl, 1960, as cited in Zahavi, 2003). Others serve as epistemic providers with the function to construct and maintain reality (Hardin & Higgins, 1996;

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Kruglanski, Pierro, Mannetti, & de Grada, 2006). And, as Spina puts it, "every subjective paradigm of normality has to find confirmation in the intersubjective dimension" (Spina, 2012, p. 49). Objective reality seems to be primarily a normative notion that is based on intersubjective perception.

Indications of the constitutive role of social sharedness of experience (i.e., intersubjectivity) and consensually shared information for individuals' perceptions of normality have a tradition in philosophy (most notably, American pragmatism and phenomenology) as well as social psychology. In this chapter, I will introduce and combine aspects from both disciplines in order to illustrate the narrow ties between individuals' perceptions of the world, intersubjectively gained perceptions of normality and interpretations of these views as reality, objectivity and truth. Therefore, I will first show that consensually shared beliefs and intersubjectively obtained perceptions can attain the phenomenological status of objective reality (Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Husserl, 1973, as cited in Zahavi, 2003).

In a second step, I will illustrate that individuals perceive most of their subjective propositions about the world, as well as most of their individual behaviors, as socially shared and implicitly intersubjectively verified, and thus reflecting reality. In the third section, I will draw an image of how individuals deal with disagreement regarding their perceptions of reality and dissent in a socially shared situation. I will show that, in most cases, it is not undetermined what will be integrated from a social situation into an individual's understanding of reality. Instead, this integration depends on an already developed sense of reality and the constitution of other individuals, respectively the fit of others to these pre-developed perceptions and beliefs.

Experienced as objective reality, normality becomes the unquestioned horizon, against which everything else is contrasted. Whatever is in line with an individual's sense of normality is implicitly integrated, whatever is perceived as dissenting is excluded. Understanding social sharedness as an indicator for objective reality may shed some light on explaining the strong, far reaching and long-lasting effects of normality.

2.3.1. Intersubjectivity as objective reality

Philosophical concepts

In some philosophical concepts, it is proposed that mere intersubjectivity of experience, i.e., "the sharing of subjective states by two or more individuals" (Scheff, 2006, p. 196), leads to factual objectivity of this experience (Peirce, as cited in Freeman, 1973; Husserl, 1973, as cited in Zahavi, 2003; Davidson, 1997). Following the American pragmatists (e.g., Charles Sanders Peirce), objectivity may be defined as *intersubjective agreement*, which stands in contrast to the classic realistic definition as *non-subjectivity* (Peirce, as cited in Freeman, 1973). The pragmatists' approach merely focuses on the role of intersubjectivity as a direct reference for situational subjective apperception. Peirce suggests that through

the fact of their interconsistency, the separate subjective reports of different investigators in a situation are transmuted into a set of actual objective reports. According to the pragmatists, an observer seeks confirmation of his experience in others who are confronted with identical conditions: If they experience the same thing he does, the observer presumes this experience to be objective (Peirce, as cited in Freeman, 1973).

According to Husserl's phenomenological approach, objectivity is depicted and manifested in longstanding processes of intersubjective communication, reflecting a cross-generational intersubjective agreement (Husserl, 1954, as cited in Zahavi, 2003). Individuals learn from others about what is normal, and during this process become involved in common traditions with longstanding roots in the past. Within intersubjective normality, forms of apperception and structures of anticipation are handed down (Husserl, 1973, as cited in Zahavi, 2003). Importantly, what individuals experience as objective nature is merely based on this intersubjective perception and normality. Taipale (2014) phrased it as following: "What we simply took as shared objectivity turns out to be objectivity-for-us, objectivity shared within a particular intersubjective community" (p. 145).

A third philosophical approach to the matters of intersubjectivity and objectivity, respective reality, is Davidson's *coherence theory of truth* (1986). The theory is based on the concept of intersubjectivity as comprising the sharing of meaning of the world that is constructed in social interactions. In his work, Davidson states that intersubjectivity is the ultimate source of objectivity – and truth an intersubjective standard (Davidson, 1989; Davidson, 1997). According to Davidson (1995), the background of shared values and beliefs allows individuals to infer the idea of a "common standard of right and wrong, true and false" (p. 51). The coherence of a proposition with a specified set of propositions (e.g., a set of beliefs) is a "good indication that the proposition corresponds to objective facts" (Young, 1996/2013). Intersubjectivity here attains the status of a criterion for truth. This indicates that the social consensus reflects objective reality.

All three philosophical concepts deal with the fundamental question of how individuals can deduce from their subjective perceptions a broader and more objective understanding of the world. The notion of intersubjectivity, whether directly inferred from a social situation or learned in a history of social interactions, seems to fill the gap between pure subjectivity and objectivity adequately. Nonetheless, it is important to keep in mind that even though intersubjectivity may hold useful information about reality, these might not always be veridical (Freeman, 1973). As optical illusions are perceived the same way by most individuals but nonetheless remain illusory, as might all kinds of intersubjectively shared propositions regarding the world, such as individuals' beliefs and attitudes about others or themselves. A good illustration of this are the classic experiments on the *autokinetic effect* (Sherif, 1936). Participants were presented with a stationary light, but informed by the experimenter that the light was in fact moving. The participants' task

was to estimate the magnitude of the movement. As a result, the different participant groups de facto perceived movement of the light, and their estimations of magnitude converged to a consensual group norm after a few trials already (Sherif, 1936; Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Since the light actually did not move, the participants' intersubjective agreement reflected their shared notion of reality but not physical facts. Moreover, the result of variations among the different participant groups' norms in the experiment suggest that the relation between the intersubjective objectivity and the external physical stimulus may be relatively arbitrary (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Regardless the potential tendencies of arbitrariness, the understanding of the intersubjectively shared as objective, real and true, is of high psychological relevance and function: It serves as orientation in situations of uncertainty, as epistemic provider and social regulator, determines and structures how individuals think, behave, feel and even remember (Peirce, as cited in Freeman, 1973; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Kruglanski et al., 2006). Even though the intersubjectively obtained notion of the real world does not always correspond to external (physical or social) realities and neglects the potential of existence of other intersubjective objectivities (gained in different contexts and by different subjects), it is deeply psychologically established and behavior-guiding. A good example is the recent discussion about the number of viewers at Donald Trump's inauguration as US-American president (e.g., Wallace, Yourish, & Griggs, 2017). While photos clearly showed a decrease of viewers compared to Barack Obama's inauguration, Trump's spokesperson claimed that in fact the amount of viewers had increased (e.g., Korn & Schabner, 2017). In certain societal circles, individuals believed that the notion shared by both Trump's staff, as well as potentially their own close peers, more than they believed the numerous photos, which reflect physical evidence (see readers' comments in Korn & Schabner, 2017).

The psychological concept of shared reality

The social psychological meaning of social sharedness of experience is best captured in the concept of *shared reality* (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). In their concept of shared reality, Hardin and Higgins illustrate how social verification and recognition in an on-going and dynamic process turns subjective experience into one that "achieves the phenomenological status of objective reality" (1996, p. 28). According to Hardin and Higgins, "experience is established as valid and reliable to the extent that it is shared with others" (1996, p. 28). The presence of others modulates the construction and maintenance of meaning. Hardin and Higgins present their concept as self-perpetuating: Mutual sharing of experience creates meaning and perception of reality for an individual, which predicates and regulates social interaction. The social reality, established in these social interactions, in turn functions to regulate the self. Using the statistical basics of scientific experiments as a metaphor, Hardin and Higgins ground their concept of shared reality on the quality criteria reliability, validity, generality and predictability.

The researchers describe reliability as the repeated recognition of an individual's experience by others that leads to the realization that the experience is "reproducible in others, and therefore not random

or capricious" (Hardin & Higgins, 1996, p. 36). Hardin and Higgins further state that "reliably shared experience is validated experience" (p. 36). The social sharedness validates the individual's experience to the degree that he perceives it as corresponding to objective facts, "as veridical of the external world" (p. 36). The verification of an experience by people other than oneself establishes the notion that an experience is "broader and more general than the immediate moment [and] exists across people, time and particular situations" (Hardin & Higgins, 1996, p. 36). From these three quality criteria Hardin and Higgins derive a predictability for future situations.

Hardin and Higgins (1996) further highlight that in the above illustrated series of experiments on social influence by Sherif (1936), participants did not describe their judgments in terms of conformity, but instead as reflecting their perceptions of reality. The participants claimed to have expressed their true experience, and not to merely have reported in order to comply with their co-participants. This corresponds to Husserl's claims that intersubjective norms function as external sources that shape individuals' behavior, and that individuals further do not need explicit awareness of these norms to be guided by them (1973, as cited in Taipale, 2014). In an ongoing process, individuals gradually adjust to these intersubjective norms and include information from ongoing socially shared experiences as "something that we can recognize as our *own* – it is in this sense that subjectivity understands *itself* as intersubjectivity" (Husserl, 1973, as cited in Taipale, 2014, p. 53).

In summary, it appears that the notion of intersubjective sharedness can provide orientation, and create and establish a sense of objectivity in a current moment. Furthermore, it can validate an individual's prior to the situation existing beliefs. Individuals seem to habituate and transfer this socially supported perception of reality to subsequent situations, and include it in their general sense of what is objective and true. As a consequence, it is to be expected that individuals will seek intersubjective validation of these perceptions once more in subsequent experiences. Regarding this, Hardin and Higgins (1996) state that "alternative shared realities may be resisted, and older beliefs maintained and defended, to the extent that the older beliefs have a strong basis in being regularly shared with others" (p. 51).

While I will elaborate on the shortly illustrated aspects of normality's independency from conformity and the process of internalization of norms in Chapter 2.4., in the second section of this chapter, I will focus on the notion of subjectivity being understood as intersubjectivity, which is best reflected in the psychological concept of *naïve realism* (e.g., Ross & Ward, 1996).

2.3.2. The intersubjective understanding of the subjective

The social psychological concept of naïve realism (e.g., Ross & Ward, 1996) consists of three tenets: (1) Individuals tend to feel confident that they perceive the world as it is and react to it in an objective manner. (2) Individuals tend to be convinced that other social perceivers should share their own

interpretations and reactions, provided they have accessed the same information as the individual and processed it in a "reasonably thoughtful and open-minded fashion" (Ross & Ward, 1996, p. 111). And (3), individuals tend to believe that the failure to share their views by a given individual or group, arises from (a) exposure to a different sample of information (in which case an agreement is still possible), (b) the other(s) being "irrational, or otherwise unable or unwilling to proceed in a normative fashion from objective evidence to reasonable conclusions" (Ross & Ward, 1996, p. 111) or (c) a bias from which the other person or group is affected.

These tenets of naïve realism are reflected in different biases, such as the *false consensus effect*. The false consensus effect describes individuals' tendency to perceive their own choice as more common and shared by a larger proportion of a reference group than an alternative choice (Marks & Miller, 1987; Ross & Ward, 1996). Accordingly, the bias is related to the first two aspects of naïve realism. In a classic study by Ross, Greene and House (1977), students were asked to walk around campus with a sandwich board bearing a message (e.g., "Eat at Joe's") and to observe the environment's reactions. Participants had the choice to either agree or not agree to fulfill this task. After choosing, individuals were instructed to indicate their estimations of what percentage of fellow students would either agree or not agree to walk around with the board. While those who refused estimated that only 23.3% of fellow students would agree to participate, those who agreed estimated that 63.5% would also agree. Thus, both groups seemingly estimated a higher sharedness of their respective position.

Amongst others, the example above illustrates that individuals seem to have a representation of intersubjective sharedness, social support and social verification, even in cases of solely subjective perception or behavior that is neither actually shared, nor evaluated by others in this very moment. In other words, individuals seem to obtain validation of the correctness of their reality experience and their choices of behavior through this representation of an intersubjective agreement (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). The notion of intersubjectivity seems to have an influence on the individual even when reality is not currently socially shared – the subjective seems to be implicitly conceived as intersubjective (e.g., Husserl, 1973, as cited in Taipale, 2014). A classic explanation of the false consensus effect is that individuals' perception of most others to be similar rational, might lead to the implicit expectancy of these others to make similar choices as themselves (e.g., Ross & Ward, 1996). As an alternative explanation, Marks and Miller (1977) propose motivation to bolster perceived social support and to "validate the correctness or appropriateness of a position" (p. 73). Empirically, this proposition has found support in studies showing that perceived high consensus strengthens attitude certainty (e.g., Visser & Mirabile, 2004; Prislin, Shaffer, & Crowder, 2012). Complementary to these approaches, the resonance of intersubjectivity in the subjective might also be attained in processes of continuous learning from socially shared situations and internalization and (inadequate) generalization of experience to other contexts and situations (e.g., Kelman, 1958; Hardin &

Higgins, 1996; Wojcieszak & Price, 2009; Husserl, 1973, as cited in Taipale, 2012). Either way, as the notion of social consensus objectivates (e.g., by directing attributions to situations or objects; see Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967), in subjective acts, the notion of objectivity and validation of reality perception generally seems to be resonating. The perception of normality as something which is not determined by an outside world, but rather perceived as being inherent within the subject, entails again the difficulty in explicitly identifying and changing normality.

Following on from the first two sections of this chapter, experience seems to attain the phenomenological status of objectivity through intersubjective agreement. Further, it seems that subjectivity often already includes a representation of intersubjectivity. These two circumstances might serve to validate individual's perception of reality. However, it is crucial to bear in mind that – following the third tenet of naïve realism – not every person might be included in these processes of social creation of reality but only those who share an individual's views. Therefore, in the third section, I will illustrate the process of exclusion of persons or groups from an individual's perception of reality and conclude by demonstrating the circling nature of reality perception and validation.

2.3.3. Self-perpetuating selection processes in intersubjective reality creation

As demonstrated, the intersubjective sharing of an individual's experience leads to its validation as true and appropriate. The respective experience may attain the phenomenological status of objective reality (Pierce, as cited in Freeman, 1973; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Ross & Ward, 1996; Husserl, 1973, as cited in Taipale, 2012). However, this validation only occurs if the perceptions are in agreement – if there is a consensus about how to perceive the world, what to believe and what to think. What happens though, if the experience or general world view of others differs from that of an individual (which, as illustrated, understands his own experience as objective and true? How do individuals deal with the "perplexity arising out of the experience that other people see the world differently" (Ichheiser, 1949, S.39)?

Hardin and Higgins (1996) state that "once shared reality has been achieved, participants act in ways that protect and maintain it" (p. 33). According to the third tenet of naïve realism, the failure of a person or group to share an individual's views and beliefs (i.e., his reality) stems either from a lack of information, irrationality or unwillingness to process the information in a normal way – or from bias or a specific ideology (Ross & Ward, 1996; Pronin, Gilovich, & Ross, 2004). If the subjective is understood and thought with an inherent presentation of the intersubjective (see Chapter 2.3.2.), everyone who has a differing world view is consequently perceived as deviating from what is otherwise validated as objective reality. As a result, the dissent is dismissed as being defected and conjointly with the information an individual conveys excluded from the process of reality creation and validation. The outcome is that individuals remain their perception of "things 'as they really are' and [to] react to them 'in a normal way'" (Ichheiser, 1949, p. 39). Whether

here the implicit presumption of social verification stems from a process of learning or reflects an implicit bias is less considerable. More important is that even in cases of disagreement and dissent with others, an individual's normal interpretation of reality and truth is not endangered (see Ichheiser, 1949; Ross & Ward, 1996; Pronin et al., 2004). On the contrary, the belief to see things as they really are, can even become stronger after the disclosure of dissenting information as Lord, Ross and Lepper (1979) show. In their study, participants were more convinced about the veritability of their views after they had been presented scientific evidence that challenged their position.

As for an individual, the subjective through the representation of intersubjective sharedness has become / becomes an unquestioned horizon of objectivity, he attributes bias only to others, not to himself. In a pair of studies, Robinson, Keltner, Ward and Ross (1995) showed that pro-life and pro-choice partisans not only overestimate the magnitude of the differences between their positions, but also felt their own views to be both less driven by ideology and less ideological consistent than the opposing partisans'. Accordingly, individuals seem to not notice the influence ideology has on their own perception of reality, whereas they overestimate the influence it has on others. They perceive the own view as objective, whereas they devaluate others' views as purely subjective and biased. In more recent studies, the effect of differential attributions has been empirically shown to be especially strong for polarized issues (Kenworthy & Miller, 2002; Bäck, Esaiasson, Gilljam, & Lindholm, 2010; Bäck & Lindholm, 2013). While people who agreed with a participant's opinion were perceived as being rather rational, people who disagreed were seen as rather being influenced by external factors (Bäck et al., 2010).

Individuals' perception of reality seems to be directed and structured in the sense that only information a subject agrees with and/or that stems from similar others is included. Husserl stated as such in his theoretical considerations; when another individual disagrees with the own world view, usually modification processes are initiated (Husserl, 1954, as cited in Zahavi, 2003). But this only occurs if the other is perceived as normal, rational and similar in the abilities to perceive and interpret the world properly. If this is not the case, the given information is judged irrelevant. As a further issue, due to selective exposure, people tend to be exposed in day-to-day interactions to the world views of others who are similar to them in many ways, such as their socioeconomic status and the personal life worlds (Crocker, 1981). What people include in their reality is mainly shaped by similar others, whereas world views, to which people are not exposed to, rarely become a part of an individual's reality. Hardin, Higgins and Schachinger (1995) moreover showed that individuals prefer to be partnered with other individuals who share their impressions (of themselves). Consequently, this indicates a character of a vicious circle, leading to the establishment of a reality that is based almost completely on people who share similar views and beliefs. Thus, in socially shared experiences, each individual influences the reality of all others he interacts with, while no one is this reality's "sole creator" (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, as cited in Hardin and Higgins, 1996, p. 39). Although this

circumstance should create a sphere of activity for people to freely and self-defined shape their own as well as others' reality by choosing who they interact with, independent choices of interaction partners rarely occur (Crocker, 1981; Hardin et al., 1995). Accordingly, a certain pre-definition of an individual's experience of reality is indicated.

2.3.4. Summary

In this chapter, I have illustrated how perceptions and experiences that are shared with others can attain the phenomenological status of objectivity, truth and reality. Other individuals seem to function as providers of meaning and as validators of world views in that process. Furthermore, I have illustrated that the subjective is often implicitly understood as being intersubjective, inherently comprising a representation of social verification and sharedness. Therefore, individuals understand their normality as reality and generally claim to experience the world objectively and as it really is. In a last step, I disclosed the character of intersubjectively based reality perception as being that of a vicious circle: In most cases, only information which is in agreeance with an individual's current views is included, so information that stems from others who are perceived as normal and/or similar. Whoever disagrees with an individual and falls out of his normality is excluded as a potential source of reality creation, and the accompanying information dismissed as biased. This may lead to a directed and narrow experience of reality.

As a quintessence, this chapter indicates that individuals understand their normality, formed through direct social sharing of experience or representation of intersubjective validation, as objective reality. As a result, people rarely question their beliefs and attitudes, which they experience to be true and devaluate whatever deviates from that as being untrue and purely subjective. The intersubjectively attained normality becomes a horizon of reality.

2.4. Social norms and normality

As I have illustrated in the previous chapter, the physical presence of others and even the implicit assumption of agreement can lead to perceptions of social validation of an attitude or behavior as normal or real (e.g., Hardin & Higgins, 1996). The collective plays a powerful role in shaping emotions, conceptions of the self, social behavior and moral judgments of individuals (e.g., Miller & Prentice, 1994). Researchers have long stated that the collective influences individual psychological processes (e.g., Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Cialdini et al., 1990; Miller & Prentice, 1994). Influenced by *Social Identity Theory* (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and *Social Categorization Theory* (e.g., Turner & Oakes, 1989), researchers have started to understand the collective as a psychological variable rather than (just) a situational factor (Miller & Prentice, 1994). Individuals seem to be motivated to behave in accordance with social norms (Deutsch & Gerard,

1955; Schultz, Nolan, Cialdini, Goldstein, & Griskevicius, 2007; Paluck, 2009). The social norms define and organize how an individual should behave in a collective or group in order to not stand out as deviant (e.g., Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Social norms have been shown to influence attitudes, beliefs and behavior across a range of contexts and domains, such as drinking behavior (Prentice & Miller, 1996; Neighbors, Larimer, & Lewis, 2004), pro-environmental behavior (Ferguson, Branscombe, & Reynolds, 2011; McDonald, Fielding, & Louis, 2013), willingness to vote (Gerber & Rogers, 2009), political actions (Smith & Louis, 2008) and prejudice expression (e.g., Stangor, Sechrist, & Jost, 2001; Crandall & Stangor, 2005). A range of studies have indicated that the normative effects are especially strong when an individual identifies highly with the norm-setting group and/or messengers of norms are identified as ingroup-members (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Oakes, 1989; Smith & Louis, 2008; Endres, Sprain, & Peterson, 2009; Fresque-Baxter & Armitage, 2012). Moreover, individuals seem to be more likely to be influenced by norms in situations of ambiguity and subjective uncertainty (Reno, Cialdini, & Kallgren, 1993; Smith, Hogg, Martin, & Terry, 2007).

Social norms have the potential to work as entire reference systems. These might differ for the same person in different contexts. Research that examined steel workers in Indiana, USA, and coal miners in West Virginia, USA, illustrates that vividly (Minard, 1952; Reitzes, 1953). Minard for example found that black and white coal miners were integrated below ground but segregated above ground. Accordingly, below ground, there was little racial conflict, whereas above ground, interracial attitudes and behaviors were more negative. The reference systems of normality and normativity are usually not only communicated via groups and peers, but also institutions and legislation (e.g., Barron & Hebl, 2010). It is important to note that the socially induced reference systems can change according to factors such as time, group and context (see for example Minard, 1953; Reitzes, 1953; Crandall, Eshleman, & O'Brien, 2002). Therefore, what is considered as normal, accepted and righteous in one situation might be considered as abnormal, unaccepted and wrong in another.

2.4.1. Injunctive and descriptive norms

As indicated in Chapter 1.3. already, social norms typically are divided into injunctive norms (how one ought to behave) and descriptive norms (what is; what most people do; e.g., Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Cialdini et al., 1990; Schultz et al., 2007; Smith & Louis, 2008). Descriptive norms indicate what is normal in a certain context or a certain group without assigning judgment. Accordingly, their influence is based on informational processes and the dependence of individuals on information as source for orientation and validation (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1990; Hardin & Higgins, 1996). For example, in a demonstration for an issue with which an individual is not yet familiar, the information about the (total and/or relative) amount of people demonstrating may cognition and behavior influencing information. For instance, it may answer

questions, such as "Are only a few extremists supporting this issue – or a great share of the society?" I will focus on the mechanisms of descriptive norm influence in more detail in the next section (Chapter 2.4.2.). Injunctive norms express, which attitudes, beliefs and behaviors are morally approved and accepted (in a group; e.g., Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Cialdini et al., 1991; Paluck, 2009). Instead of indicating normal behavior on an informational basis, injunctive norms display which attitudes, beliefs or behaviors might be sanctioned if not conformed to. In the precursors to their *focus theory of normative conduct*, Cialdini et al. (1990) pointed out that descriptive and injunctive norms are conceptually distinct as well as based on different motivations, and therefore should be kept separate. The illustrations of Chapter 1.3 indicate that this may be difficult to do and implement.

While both kinds of norms are action-guiding and leading to conformity and adaption, this process seems to be more direct and conscious for injunctive norms than for descriptive norms (e.g., Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). In the classic series of studies on the autokinetic effect by Sherif (1936) for example, individuals changed their judgment of the distance of light moving in order to resemble others in the group and conform to the newly established norm. Since the light in fact was not moving at all, the others were not more correct in their judgments. Two details seem to be of special interest here: Firstly, when being asked by Sherif, participants answered that they had not been aware of the influence the descriptive norm had on them. That indicates unconscious and subtle effects. Secondly, the effect lasted even when participants subsequently were tested in single sessions. This indicates that the norm (already) was internalized (Sherif, 1936; see also Kelman, 1986). More recent studies have found similar results (e.g., Stangor et al., 2001; Zitek & Hebl, 2007). Since in this dissertation normality is conceptualized as being subtle and mostly unnoticed, descriptive norms and their subtle influence are of high relevance and thus will be further elaborated in the next section.

2.4.2. Descriptive norms as standards for orientation and adaptation

As illustrated, perceptions of peer norms are a powerful indicator for an individual's behavior (e.g., Schultz et al., 2007). They serve, often subtle and without explicit awareness, as an orientation giving reference, indicating what is normal in a certain group or situational context. In the following text, I will illustrate that descriptive norms often function as (comparison) standards to which individuals adapt and accordingly shift their attitudes and behaviors towards, even without being aware of it. The illustrations will indicate that descriptive norms may appear as a socially validated *anchor*, shifting attitudes and behaviors even towards extreme, unreasonable and morally dubious attitudes and behaviors (see section 2.2.1.1.). This process might potentially occur without an individual's original intention. As already noted, one crucial aspect is that individuals often do not consciously perceive this change. Whereas descriptive norms may be perceived as external stimuli, the outcomes of the shifting process seem to be internalized without explicit

awareness as they are congruent to an individual's self-concept (e.g., Kelman, 1986; Paluck, 2009a). However, it seems difficult to disentangle conscious and unconscious ratios in the shifting processes.

Subsequent to these first indications of the powerful effects of descriptive norms above, in the next subsection, I will illustrate more concretely how the perception of descriptive norms influences individuals' attitudes and behavior directly within a certain situation. In the section subsequent to that, I will illuminate the influence descriptive norms have beyond a concrete situation.

Influence of descriptive norms within a certain situation

As illustrated in Chapter 2.2.1. and in the previous section, in Sherif's experiments (1936), individuals shifted their judgments about the distance of light moving towards the norms set by others. In that process, participants indicated having not been influenced by the judgment of others and moreover repeated their judgments as apparently internalized norms in subsequent single sessions. Jacobs and Campbell (1961) adopted the basic setting of Sherif's studies. Their objective was to examine whether the arbitrary emerged norm would be perpetuated along several generations of participants. The studies were conducted in different group compositions, which varied in regard to the total number of participants as well as the proportion of confederates. In the following illustrations, I will focus on the setting with two participants per session. At the beginning of each generational transgression, a confederate indicated to perceive a very strong movement of light. In the first generation, the first participants gave his judgment right after the confederate did. After the session, the confederate left the room, while the first person took over his seat and a new participant entered the room. In the course of these sessions, whoever has been in the room the longest gave the first judgment. This procedure was repeated for an average of ten generations, always with one individual that had already made a judgment and one spotless participant. Parallel to this, Jacobs and Campbell tested the perception of light movement in single sessions, with a different sample of participants. The researchers used the respective judgments as a baseline to compare the effects of the generational transmission to. The results show that it took as far as the whole ten sessions (depending on the group composition) until the arbitrary norm had decreased to the average baseline level. Initially, the judgments in the shared condition/sessions have been significantly higher. Thus, an arbitrary normality had been maintained and perpetuated along several generations. It is worth looking at the results in more detail. The first judgment of a new participant was always very close to the formerly experienced judgment of the peer. Thus, the participants seem to have been directly influenced by the other individual, be it through a motivation to conform or an anchor effect. In the next session, however, even though reporting a lower movement than before, participants (in the first few generations) gave an estimation that was still significantly different from what individuals in the single sessions (the baseline condition) estimated. Hence, even though the group context had changed and participants had the possibility to freely (i.e., without

induced motivation to conform) report their perception, participants gave a judgment that apparently was based on the primarily acquired norm. Unfortunately, Jacobs and Campbell did not assess to what extent the participants were aware of the social influence or convinced to report their unaffected, true and real perceptions. Adding to these results, Blanchard at al. (1994) illustrated the influence of descriptive norms within a certain situation. They showed that hearing a single statement already has the potential to change subsequently assessed attitudes. More concretely, Blanchard et al. showed that a peer's condemning versus condoning of racism led to higher, respectively lower, expressions of antiracist opinions. This finding has important implications for the dynamics illustrated in the sections 2.4.3. and 2.4.4.

Influence of descriptive norms beyond a certain situation

The perception of normality does not only emerge and shift in concrete situations of observation of others. The internal or externally induced presentation of social consensus has the potential to shift an individuals' attitudes and behaviors long-term (e.g., Stangor et al., 2001; Zitek & Hebl, 2007). A great part of social psychological research on descriptive norms as a standard for comparison has focused on the perception of peers' drinking norms on US-American College campuses (Baer, Stacy & Larimer, 1991; Prentice & Miller, 1994; Clapp & McDonnell, 2000). These studies show that students in their drinking behavior are implicitly geared to the perceived peer norms, i.e., the estimated drinking behavior of fellow college students. Individuals' perception of peer norms fostering drinking, in these studies go along with stronger own consumption of alcohol. Long-term studies show that in this process, (male) participants shifted their attitudes towards the perceived peer norms over time (Prentice & Miller, 1994).

Schultz et al. (2007) in a set of studies tried to disentangle the effects of descriptive and injunctive norms. In a field experiment, they presented individuals information on their own energy consumption as well as descriptive normative information on the average energy consumption in their neighborhood (and additionally, suggestions on how to save energy). In a second condition, Schultz et al. further presented the individuals an injunctive norm, either a happy face when they had previously consumed less energy than the average or a sad face when they had consumed more than the average. While the injunctive message led to a general decrease of energy consumption, the descriptive message did so only for individuals that previously had had a higher consumption than the average. Individuals who had been consuming less energy than the average, in contrast, increased their consumption after reading the information on average consumption. Thus, individuals have shifted towards the descriptive norm, independent from the position they started. This is a strong demonstration of the effect of descriptive norms as a standard for orientation.

Also in the research on stereotypes and prejudices, the subtle, strong and long-lasting effects of descriptive norms have been vividly illustrated. In a set of studies, Stangor et al. (2001) have shown that providing social consensus information has the power to significantly change individuals' intergroup

beliefs. When European Americans were presented their (manipulated) ingroup members' opinions about African Americans they shifted their beliefs in accordance with this newly acquired standard, either to more positive or negative beliefs. In a post-test one week later, similar scores were measured. Hence, the effects were shown to be internalized, long-standing and persistent. In a third study, Stangor et al. moreover showed that the normatively bolstered beliefs could not be effectively changed by the presentation of information on the 'actual' characteristics of African Americans, which were labelled as stemming from scientific research. Crandall et al. (2002) illustrate the social influence on prejudice expression in their *justification-suppression model of prejudice*. They propose that descriptive norms are an indicator for the acceptance of certain prejudices in a context and group. They lead individuals to either perceive the prejudices as justified and hence to freely express them, or as unjustified, and consequently to suppress them. As noted before, social consensus information seems to be especially relevant in ambiguous contexts or situations of uncertainty. Accordingly, Sechrist and Stangor (2007) have found that the relation between individuals' intergroup attitudes and their perceptions of ingroup members' attitudes was stronger towards unfamiliar than towards familiar groups.

The effects of shifted intergroup attitudes were also observed when the presented standard reflected descriptive norms only indirectly. Picking up the tradition of research on social influences of mass media communication, Piel (2016) examined whether an article about malicious arson on a refugee shelter (negative norm) and an article about individuals supporting refugees on voluntary basis (positive norms) influenced individuals' prejudices towards refugees. Piel showed that individuals that were presented the negative norm expressed more negative attitudes towards refugees than individuals that were presented the positive norm. Importantly, also minority opinions and actions can cause a shift in individuals' attitudes and behavior, specifically, by introducing new issues or focusses into the discourse and repeating them consistently (e.g., Moscovici, Lage, & Naffrechoux, 1969). In a field study, Paluck (2009a) examined in a long-term study the influence of a radio telenovela, aimed at fostering reconciliation in post-conflict Ruanda. Interestingly, whereas the listeners' (/participants') beliefs remained the same, the perception of descriptive norms regarding open dissent, trust, cooperation and intermarriage were changed. In accordance with the descriptive norms, the individuals' behavior changed, amongst others, the will for active negotiation and cooperation. This Study 6vidly shows in an applied setting that changes of what appears to be normal can effectively influence and shift social behavior, even though corresponding beliefs remain the same. One approach to explain the latter results is captured by the concept of *pluralistic ignorance* (e.g., Miller & McFarland, 1991), which I will introduce in the next section.

2.4.3. Dynamics of distorted norm perception

Individuals might wrongly perceive what counts as normal in a certain context or group. Since individuals align their attitudes and behaviors largely with what they perceive and expect others to believe and do, erroneous estimations of peers' norms might have widespread and long-lasting consequences. One well-studied phenomenon describing the dynamics of misperception of peers' norms is pluralistic ignorance. Pluralistic ignorance describes the phenomenon that a majority may privately reject a certain norm but the majority members (falsely) assume that the majority accepts and/or supports the respective norm (e.g., Katz & Allport, 1931; Miller & McFarland, 1991; Miller & Prentice, 1994; Rios & Chen, 2014). The phenomenon reflects individuals' belief that their thoughts, feelings, attitudes and behaviors differ from most others'. Individuals, in that context, tend to overestimate the social consensus on a certain issue. They are motivated not to deviate from the perceived norms and hence align their behavior with what they perceive to be the norm. Therefore, despite differing private attitudes, individuals may publicly express opinions and behaviors that are in accord with the perceived peer norms. By expressing the (erroneously) as normal and/or normative perceived attitudes and behaviors, in turn, individuals set a standard that others use as an orientation. These other individuals, as a consequence, may also adapt to the norms and shift their behavior accordingly (e.g., Prentice & Miller, 1993). In that process, an initially not widely shared attitude or behavior might spread and become the factual norm in a group, publicly supported and expressed by the majority. It is possible that a group's social reality may largely stem from misperceptions of peer norms. Pluralistic ignorance might lead to the acquisition of a normality of attitudes and behaviors that potentially had not only been unsupported, but also unwanted, at an earlier point of time. Prentice and Miller (1993) showed that students believed that they themselves are more uncomfortable with the alcohol consumption practices on campus than the average student. Hence, they overestimated the drinking rates of the fellow students. Over the course of one semester, male students shifted their attitudes towards what they at the beginning of the semester had (mistakenly) perceived as the predominant peer norms.

The phenomenon of pluralistic ignorance has been examined in a range of societally relevant areas, such as affirmative action and political correctness (van Boven, 2000) and climate change (Geiger & Swim, 2016). Gustafsson Sendén et al. (2015) assume false estimations of social consensus to be responsible for people being hesitant to use the newly introduced gender-neutral pronoun *hen* in Sweden (see also Chapter 2.2.). The researchers interpret the results as that individuals still perceive the majority to be negative towards the word. Indeed, whereas the use of the word is only slightly increased, the (private) attitudes are de facto strongly increased. In these results, linkages are indicated to the factors illustrated in Chapter 2.1. and 2.2., of mere existence, frequency and longevity. These factors may play a crucial role regarding the perception of the word hen as widely shared and established.

In the literature, different motivations are proposed for publicly conforming to a perceived norm, whilst privately disagreeing. Amongst others, these include fear of rejection (Bergsieker, Shelton, & Richeson, 2010) or embarrassment (Miller & McFarland, 1987). In any case, the mechanisms seem to work in the form of a self-fulfilling prophecy, and over time, the initial motivation an individual had – potentially, to not deviate from the perceived group norms – might be less focused on or even forgotten. Already through an individuals' single or repeated expression of an attitude or behavior, it might become the unquestioned normality for himself. As noted before, the experience or observation of the expression of publicly expressed attitudes or behaviors might lead individuals to draw conclusions about what is normal in a group or context – and as a result, cause shifts in their opinions and behaviors. Crandall et al. (2002) for example, illustrate this process in the domain of stereotypes and prejudices (see Chapter 4.5.). Piel's (2016) study suggests that this process might also apply for rather ambiguous and/or indirect sources of descriptive norm information, such as newspaper articles.

As illustrated, one direct effect of pluralistic ignorance is individuals' reduced willingness to openly express certain attitudes or behaviors (Miller & McFarland, 1987; Rios & Chen, 2014). This notion is also central to the concept of the *spiral of silence* (e.g., Noelle-Neumann, 1993). This concept predicts that, because of the non-expression, certain (potentially widely shared) opinions might seem unsupported and decrease in their support and/or expression or even completely diminish from the public discourse. Due to fear of rejection, dissent and proper discussion will be hindered – and the regarding opinion spiral down. In the next section, I will further elaborate on the spiral of silence and illustrate the potential consequences of missing dissent and its impact on potentially moral dubious opinions and behaviors.

2.4.4. The role of dissent, validation and devaluation

According to Noelle-Neumann (1993), in the public discourse, opinions that are perceived as being shared only among a minority will diminish with time. This happens especially when a topic is morally charged or controversial. Noelle-Neumann proposed the silence to be self-reinforcing. Opinions that are initially supported by a majority might gain factual, widespread support. Opinions that initially are perceived as unsupported, will assumingly spiral downwards. Accordingly, resistance to the spiraling effects can be accomplished by clear and consistent opposition to what is perceived to be the majority opinion, respectively, support of what is perceived as the minority opinion (see, e.g., Moscovici et al., 1969).

In Asch's experiments on conformity (1951), the number of participants conforming to the alleged majority's (false) judgment (regarding the length of presented lines) decreased significantly as soon as an *ally*, a person dissenting with the otherwise shared opinion, was present. Importantly, even an ally who also gave a wrong answer – but one that differed from the majority's claim – increased the resistance against the acquisition of the majority implied normality. Thus, the allies' function seems to have gone beyond

providing an individual with the (potentially) correct answer. Their expressing of an opinion shattered the majority's influence on normality perceptions solely by presenting an alternative of how things are / can be interpreted. Similar conclusions can be drawn from Milgram's experiments (e.g., Milgram 1963). In a set of experiments, Milgram asked study participants to take the part of "teachers" and punish "learners" (who were introduced as fellow study participants but in fact were confederates of the experimenter) for making mistakes by applying electro shocks with increasing volume. However, not only were the alleged learners the experimenter's confederates, but in addition no real electro shocks were applied. In the course of the experiments, a great number of participants applied shocks to such a high magnitude that serious health issues for the learners would have been the consequence. Milgram's explanation for the willingness to induce the electro shocks was individuals' obedience to authorities (e.g., Milgram, 1963; Milgram & van Gasteren, 1974). By now, a range of explanations has been offered (for an overview and examples, see Haslam & Reicher, 2012 and Reicher & Alexander, 2012,). However, two aspects of the experiment are particularly interesting for this section: In the baseline condition of the experiment, the experimenter repeatedly motivated the (uncertain) participants to continue applying the shocks. This might have caused a validation of the individuals' understanding of the normality and righteousness of the situation as well as their behavior. In contrast to that, the presence of a second experimenter who disagreed with the first experimenter dropped the shocking rates dramatically. The unambiguous validation of the immoral behavior was removed and an alternative offered. This was also the case for another variation of the experiment, in which the participants could observe in a previous (simulated) sequence how a teacher discontinued the experiment. As a consequence, participants' compliance rates dropped significantly. Thus, the rupture of the norms of the experimental setting (for instance, by a peer), changed perceptions of the participants of what was normal, accepted and possible in this situation (see Milgram, 1982). As the participants who applied high volumes of electro shocks, the participants who discontinued were ordinary people, for which the immoral behavior just had not become an unquestioned normality (see also Rochat & Modigliani, 1995).

From a normality perspective, in both experiments, due to the presence of a dissenting other, the participants received information about what is normal and adequate from more than one consenting source or a seemingly fixed contextual setting. The perception of dissent and thus the representation of alternatives might prevent a normality of a context or group being acquired and incorporated, in an unquestioned manner. Already single deviant opinions (if they are not devaluated from the start; see Chapter 2.3.) indicate that there are different ways as to how a situation or circumstance can be perceived and interpreted. Accordingly, no clear norm is created, respectively, the emerged norm is ambiguous. Especially in the illustrated context of immoral behavior, deviant opinions can have a powerful impact. They indicate that a certain behavior (as electro shocking a failing student) is not consensually accepted, not adequate and not normal. As a consequence, the individual will most likely not interpret the own behavior and the newly

acquired normality as necessary or eligible (as was reported by a part of the participants in Milgram's studies; see Milgram & van Gasteren, 1974; also, Reicher & Alexander, 2012). Hannah Arendt argued that a lack of questioning of what appeared as normal, necessary and eligible, might have been a part of the motivation for cruelties during the time of National Socialism in Germany (Arendt, 1963). In *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A report on the banality of evil* (1963), Arendt stated that Eichmann "had no motives at all. He merely, to put the matter colloquially, never realized what he was doing" (p. 287). Potentially, dissent of any kind might have made a difference and helped him realize.

Besides serving to open a norm for alternatives, a minority based opinion can also lead to the establishment of simply a different norm than the one implied by the majority (Moscovici et al., 1969). As Moscovici and colleagues showed in a color description task, the judgment of a minority, when being expressed consistently, led a part of the majority to follow the choices of the minority. In the experiment, a minority group of confederates had consistently claimed that the color of the presented stimulus was green, instead of blue (the actual color). In that process, with the size of the minority group, the strength of its influence increased. Moreover, a gain of confidence, with which the choice was expressed, as well as the existence of a common ground between minority and majority members, increased the influence. As Noelle-Neumann (1993) and Taylor (1982) proposed that the perception of a decreasing trend of sharedness of an opinion will lead to a (real) decline of the opinion, a perceived increasing trend can seemingly convert a minority opinion or behavior to an opinion or behavior that is commonly perceived as normal (see, e.g., Moscovici et al., 1969). Dissent and the introduction of alternative political paths, caused by Bündnis90/DieGrünen (the German Green Party) in the 1980s and the Piratenpartei (the Pirate Party) in the 2000s, changed the German society long-standing. Both Parties started from a minority standpoint (e.g., Mayntz & Vomberg, 2012; Markovits & Klaver, 2013). Already, via disagreement with the current discourse, introduction and prioritization of environmentally conscious behavior (by the Green Party), and the topics of internet security and online participation (by the Piratenpartei), the former normality was generally questioned and hence subject to change.

In similar processes, the phenomena of group think and group polarization can be hindered by the expression of dissent (Janis, 1982; Hirt & Markman, 1995; Nemeth, Brown, & Rogers, 2001). Both phenomena are consequences of processes of group consensus leading to fixed and unquestioned normalities and potentially irrational decisions. In group think, individuals with similar opinions get locked in their course of action, neglecting alternatives and conflictive evidence (Janis, 1982; Nemeth & Kwan, 1987). Dissent leads the group members to search for more information and include alternatives (Nemeth & Goncalo, 2005). Furthermore, groups more strongly engage in divergent thinking when they include minority influence agents (van Dyne & Saavedra, 1996). Group polarization describes the phenomenon of how group members that hold similar beliefs or attitudes towards an issue, through discussion, become more

extreme in their opinions (Isenberg, 1986; Brauer & Judd, 1996). The non-existence of dissenting voices or of devaluation of certain opinions (for instance, when coming from outgroup members) seem to drive this process (Paluck, 2010). Accordingly, studies have shown that firstly, recognition and repetition of dissenting arguments and secondly, more diverse group compositions from the start, help to decrease or even prevent group polarization (Brauer & Judd, 1996; Fishkin & Luskin, 1999).

2.4.5. Summary

In this chapter, I have illustrated the influence of social norms on individuals' attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Moreover, I have exemplified a crucial constitution of normality: Individuals perception of what is accepted and expressed by others. The influence of social norms has been shown to be particularly strong when the messenger was in the individuals' ingroup, when an individual's uncertainty was high, and when the situational norms were ambiguous. Social norms are often grouped into injunctive norms and descriptive norms. Whereas the former function via normative pressure, the latter have a rather informational value. In the context of an examination of normality as an individual's unquestioned and unnoticed reference for behavior, I focused on descriptive norms and their foremost informational social influence. In the second section, I illustrated that descriptive norms often serve as standards for orientation, to which individuals shift their attitudes and behaviors. These adaptions occur independently from the individuals' previous position. This process often seems to work without individuals' explicit awareness and intention. The adaptation to norms can either occur in a concrete situation, with a direct influence of the majority's behavior and an immediate orientation, or indirectly, through any kind of information that implies a certain predominant gradient of peers (such as others' statements or newspaper articles). In the third section, I illustrated in what way social biases, particularly the phenomenon of pluralistic ignorance, can lead to an individual's overestimation of the socially sharedness of an opinion or behavior that in fact neither the individual himself, nor most others, privately share. As a consequence, an only minority supported opinion or behavior might become considered as normal. In the fourth section, I highlighted the role of dissent and deviancy as regulators in processes of the emergence, establishment and shift of normality. From the majority opinion – or a specific setting's implications (such as the experimental setup in Milgram's studies; e.g., Milgram, 1963) – deviating opinions or behaviors can lead individuals to question the current context and its implied norms. Furthermore, dissent and deviance lead to the disclosure of alternative ways of perception, interpretation and behavior than implied by a consensus or context. In all sections, I indicated how these phenomena and dynamics may lead to the perception and practice of immoral behaviors as normal and unquestioned.

Based on the four chapters of the theoretical background, in the following chapter, I will introduce two models regarding normality. The first model will illustrate the process of normality emergence, the

meaning of normality, potential influences as well as antecedents and consequences of the respective mechanisms (Chapter 3.1.). The second model will illustrate the process of shifts of normality (Chapter 3.2.). The models shall link the different lines of research, give initial answers to the questions raised in the introduction, attempt to fill the gaps left open by the social theorists and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of normality-related processes. Subsequently to the descriptions of the models, I will give an overview to this dissertation's empirical part.

3. Two Models: Normality and Shifts of Normality

3.1. A model of normality

3.1.1. Introduction to the model

In the four chapters of the theoretical background, I have laid the groundwork for a social psychological concept of normality. Through these analyses and illustrations of the (scientific) state of art, it has become clear that normality differs from context to context, group to group and time to time. What is considered as normal, accepted and righteous in one situation, might be considered as abnormal, unaccepted and wrong in another. One objective of this dissertation is to clarify and link the underlying dynamics. This dissertation's concept of normality is composed of a range of different components that interactively influence each other in dynamics of normality emergence, maintenance and shift. Within this process, these factors do not always work in the same fixed patterns but instead mutually influence each other with in a dynamic temporal and causal relationship. In this chapter, the different aspects and factors will be illustrated in a model of normality and consequences of normality (see Figure 1). The model captures a process that begins with an individual's encounter of a stimulus, event, attitude or behavior and, along with the respective perception as normal, moves on to inferences and deductions made implicitly by individuals, with respect to evaluations and interpretations of the regarding stimuli and behavioral expressions. The model shall furthermore highlight the self-perpetuating, self-maintaining and self-enhancing process of normality. The following text will illustrate in greater detail the mechanisms that are graphically stated in Figure 1.

To a great extent, the model reflects the status quo of the scientific literature. However, elements of the linkages between the different levels of the model have not yet been extensively examined, nor comparably stated in a model. In addition to linking the lines of research to create a comprehensive and holistic concept, the model reveals open questions regarding the evolvement of normality and its consequences, which will be assessed in this dissertation. The model further implies initial answers to the questions raised in the introduction to this dissertation. Missing links between the involved factors and (practical) consequences of the dynamics will also be examined in the studies of this dissertation. In the introduction to each of this dissertation's studies, the exact reference to the model will be briefly illustrated.

It should be noted that at this point, the model does not reflect final conclusions on normality-related processes. It should instead be understood as a structure or a working model that summarizes and defines the relationship between the different constituents and consequences of normality. As previously noted, a further objective of the model is to provoke thoughts and lay ground for current and further research. There are still many uncertainties and therefore many studies still to be conducted. Notwithstanding that no final and fixed model can be presented, the presentation of this scheme and the examination of the crucial implied

questions and linkages is a valuable starting point for understanding the processes and consequences of the constitution of normality. The following text, for the most part, illuminates the different levels of the first model (see Figure 1). Both the text as well as the generated figure are self-explanatory and can be understood as independently comprehensible explanations of the processes and consequences of a stimulus or event becoming normal. This chapters' text will illustrate the mechanisms in greater detail than the graphic illustration of Figure 1. Since the model is based entirely on the illustrations in the four chapters of the theoretical background, references to explicit literature sources are only included when they are of particular relevance.

3.1.2. Perception of stimuli, events, attitudes and behavior

Individuals are frequently confronted with a variety of stimuli and events, which they need to integrate into their existing ideas of the world. The experience of stimuli and events causes reactions of the individuals that may be emotional, cognitive or behavioral. One crucial factor in the process of integration and evaluation of a stimulus is that of whether, and to what extent, it is perceived as normal. Potentially, every (type of) stimulus or event can attain the status of being normal. Examples for the important role of perceptions of normality in encountering and evaluating stimuli have been illustrated throughout the theoretical background. They include the wincing of a restaurant's guest, described in Chapter 2.2.1. (see also Kahneman & Miller, 1986), the evaluation of chocolate (Eidelman et al., 2010; see Chapter 2.2.2.), the request to induce electro shocks as a measure for punishing an unknown person's mistakes, (e.g., Milgram, 1963; see Chapter 2.4.4.) or simply maintaining silence in a library (e.g., Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2003). As noted in previous chapters, the classification of a stimulus, event, attitude or behavior as normal or abnormal – though consisting mainly of automatic and implicit processes – can be action-guiding and of high importance for an individual, a group, or an entire society. Therefore, the first level of the model shall illustrate the decisive factors regarding whether an event, stimulus, attitude or behavior is perceived as normal or abnormal.
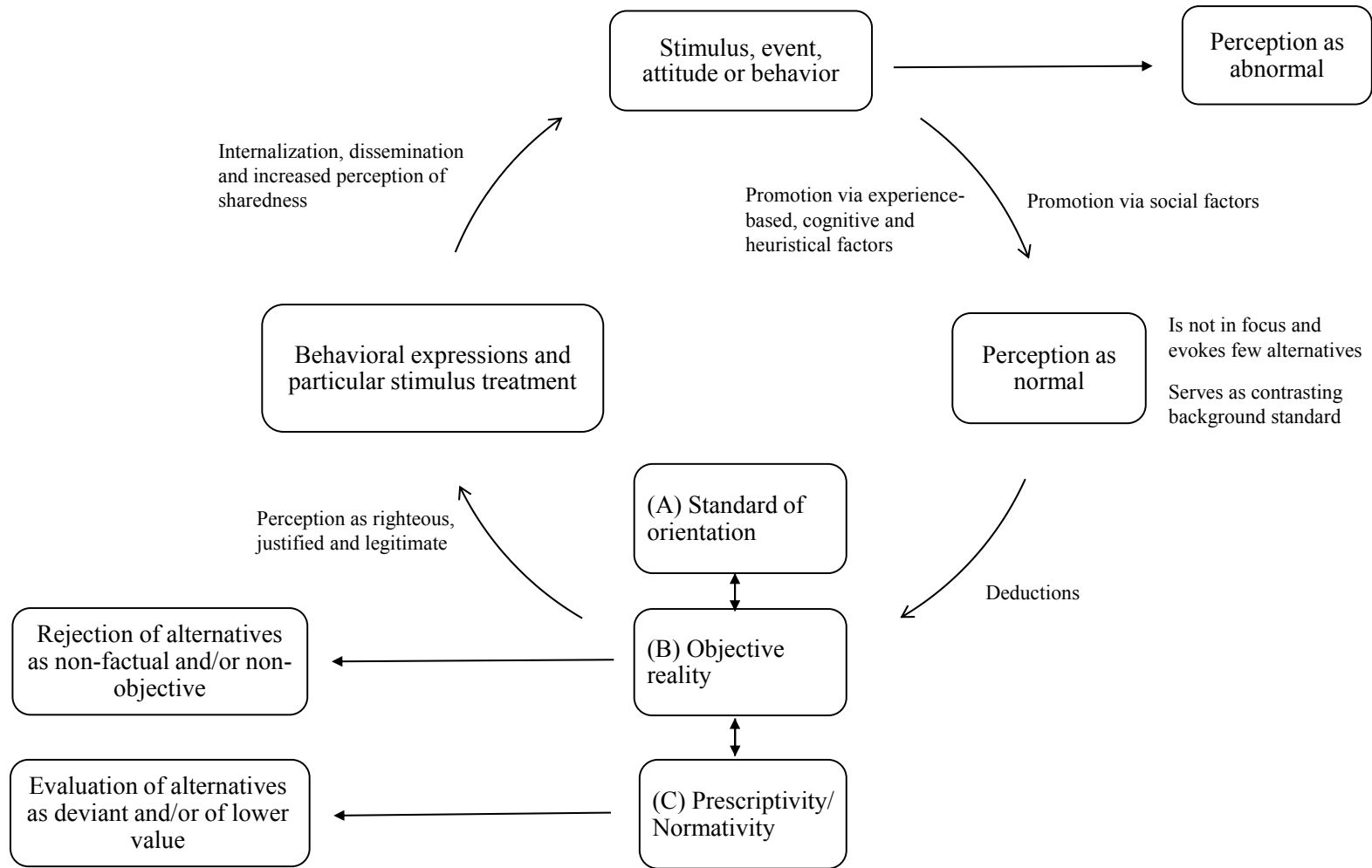
Figure 1. The model of normality. Processes of emergence, perpetuation and effects of normality are illustrated.

3.1.3. Promotion towards perceptions of normality

There are a range of diverse factors that are decisive with regards to the question of whether an event or stimulus is perceived as being normal or abnormal. Before deepening the illustrations of the promotive factors, it should be noted that the decision whether a stimulus, event, attitude or behavior is normal, is not always an absolute choice. In most cases, tendencies are the result of that process –whether a stimulus is somewhat more normal than others. The promotive factors can be roughly divided into experience-based, cognitive and heuristic factors on one side, and social factors on the other side (see Figure 1). Notably, normality seems to be already inherent in the experience of a stimulus or event itself. The sole observation, experience or personal expression of a stimulus or behavior increases the perception of normality of subsequent recurrences of similar stimuli or behaviors. Having perceived, experienced or expressed a stimulus, event, attitude or behavior once, makes it appear less abnormal and surprising in future encounters and experiences. As noted, besides the effect of sole experience, four further factor categories can be identified: Cognitive and heuristic factors, the contrast to existing representations, social validation, intersubjective experience and social norms (descriptive and injunctive). Cognitive and heuristic factors for example, comprise of the frequency with which a stimulus is presented or an event occurs, and related to that, the cognitive availability, accessibility and familiarity, the question of primacy of presentation or encounter, and the length of existence. A related promoting factor of perceptions of normality is whether a stimulus or event has a low contrast to existing representations, and hence evokes few counterfactuals. For this, the focus is upon the role of similarity in relation to previously experienced stimuli or episodes, as well as the strength and amount of counterfactual alternatives.

The above-mentioned factors are a function of the individual's former (internalized) and current experience as well as the stimulus or event itself. In contrast, the following two factors are based on social aspects, and more specifically, the assumed or observed actions and reactions of others. The first social factor highlights the role perceiving others plays in determining what is normal. Other people function as providers of meaning and as validators or devaluators of interpretations of stimuli, events, attitudes and behaviors. By perceiving others' reactions to a stimulus or event, individuals receive information about the normality of a stimulus or event. This information can contain the emotions others show, for example, whether they are surprised. Furthermore, individuals can infer information from others by their reactions to the individuals' own reactions to a stimulus or event and their attitudes or behaviors: Do others actively agree or remain passive? Both forms of reactions would imply a higher normality of a behavior in a certain context. Do the other individuals act surprised? Do they even seek to punish the behavior? These indicators would lead to the perception of a low normality of the respective behavior. The second social factor, descriptive and injunctive norms, captures the information acquired in the moment as well as previously

existing knowledge about what is (generally) considered as appropriate in a group and what most individuals of the group think, feel and do. Here it is decisive, what would most others do, or what is the explicitly stated group norm. The indication that the majority would (previously accessed norm information) or actually does (perception in the moment) express a certain behavior leads to the evaluation of this behavior as rather normal. The assumption that most others would be silent in a church as well as the current observation that most others are silent in the church, both contribute to the identification of what is normal: to be silent in a church. However, it should be considered that the perception of who is the majority / what the opinion of the majority is, does not necessarily correspond to the facts. It follows that the establishment of normality can be based on misperceptions and, thus, inappropriate and unsupported stimuli or behavior can also become normal.

To fully understand the process of normality evolvement, it is crucial to understand how the different promoting factors interact with each other. Currently, scientific literature does not provide a substantive answer, and therefore the illustrated model (see Figure 1) does not represent a final answer. However, it is a reasonable assumption that the factors work at least partially independent of each other. In each event or stimulus experience, not all factors are present, nor actively play a role. For example, an individual might encounter a stimulus without the attendance of another person, whereby direct social validation or devaluation is omitted. Whether the individual nevertheless integrates assumptions about others' potential reactions into his decision making in such cases, is still a topic of debate. It is however clear that other factors (i.e., experience-based and stimulus inherent) in this situation will gain more weight. Having never previously experienced a certain stimulus, in contrast, will heighten the relevancy of norm information that others provide. When considering the interplay of the factors, it becomes apparent that ambiguities may occur, highlighting the complexity of the process. For instance, a stimulus may be presented highly frequently, but at the same time be rejected by the group. What would be the consequence for perceptions of its normality? Furthermore, it may be that a stimulus is validated by the group, but the contrast to the existing representations (which serve as a comparison background) are very high and many counterfactuals evoked. All in all, it can be assumed that the different promoting factors can have different weight, depending on the context, and, more specifically, the availability of the factor, its saliency, previous experiences and potentially the strength of social pressure.

In the illustrated processes, the perception that a stimulus, event, attitude or behavior is normal can occur with awareness and be reflected by a sudden realization such as "Ah, this is how they/we do it here." However, once established, normality is mostly conceived without awareness and remains as the unfocused standard. As the mentioned factors indicate, the acquisition of what appears as normal is not necessarily based on content and rationality but instead on different motivated, informed or heuristic, generally more or less implicit, processes. The constitution of normality, for that matter, can have an arbitrary character.

Moreover, even morally dubious practices can potentially become normal, if promoted accordingly by the illustrated factors. Even though an individual might perceive a behavior as generally morally dubious, the introduced factors (such as the social validation, descriptive norms or simply the frequency of experience) can lead an individual to perceive and accept the respective stimulus as normal. On the contrary, the absence of the promoting factors can prevent the establishment of a stimulus or behavior as normal. The perception of dissent or contradiction for instance, might hinder the illustrated processes. Further, whereas one-sided information strengthens these processes, ambiguous or diverse information may weaken them.

3.1.4. Attributes and meaning of a normal stimulus

The, in the previous section illustrated, first part of the model shows the process leading to the perception of a stimulus or event as normal and explicates the most decisive factors (see also Figure 1). The next level of the model illustrates the attributes of a normal stimulus or behavior – what it means when a stimulus or event is perceived as being comparatively normal and what happens to a stimulus or event that is perceived as being normal (see Figure 1). As illustrated in Chapter 2.1., whatever is perceived as normal, as a consequence, is not (explicitly) perceived and not center of focus (anymore). A normal stimulus, event, attitude or behavior becomes the background that serves as a basis for contrasting the experience of subsequently presented stimuli, events, attitudes and behaviors. Individuals implicitly compare stimuli to what they have acquired to be the norm. Therefore, whatever appears as normal builds the basis for future interpretations and integrations of experiences. Whatever is perceived as normal, becomes the unsaid and unnoticed standard. Towards a normal stimulus also in future encounters less focus is directed. Further, whatever has acquired the status of being normal, requires less explanation and is less questioned. Heterosexuality for instance, goes unstated, whereas homosexuality requires a coming-out. At a party, individuals who do not drink alcohol are expected to explain themselves. Moreover, less alternatives to a stimulus or behavior are cognitively available. Stimuli that are perceived as abnormal (i.e., are/were not promoted by the in the previous section illustrated factors), in contrast, stick out, are focused on, require explanation, cause surprise and evoke a high number of alternatives. Therefore, whereas normal stimuli, events, attitudes and behaviors constitute an accepted and fixed status quo, abnormal ones are rejected. While former ones are not opted to change, latter ones are perceived as changeable and to be changed. The impact on the perception of groups for instance, has been shown by Hegarty and Pratto (2004). In a situation of comparisons between straight persons (generally perceived as more normal) and lesbians/gays, individuals focused their explanation for differences mainly on attributes of the gay/lesbian persons and moreover, attributed more mutable attributes to the latter group. The in this section illustrated effects hint at the self-perpetuating character of normality evolvement: What is, shall not be changed – and what is not or differs from what is shall be changed in such a way that it becomes similar to what is.

3.1.5. Deductions from and consequences of normality

Theoretically, a model of the emergence and establishment of normality could appear as complete at this point: The basic processes have been illustrated and normality has been described in descriptive terms. However, the defining role of perceptions of normality in determining and shaping individuals' behavior goes far beyond pure descriptive terms. It is a core concern of this model to clarify the far-reaching impact of perceptions of normality. As illustrated in all chapters of the theoretical background as well as the introduction, perception of a stimulus or event as normal strongly shapes how individuals think, feel and behave. In this dissertation's model of normality, there are three influential consequences illustrated (see Figure 1); these are deductions individuals make from the perception that a stimulus, event, attitude or behavior is normal. (A) Individuals often use the regarding stimuli / behaviors as standard of orientation for their own stimuli reactions and behaviors. (B) Individuals perceive what is normal and shared as objective, factual and reality-based. (C) Individuals draw inferences from the descriptive to the prescriptive, from what is normal to what is normative. The three deductions are guiding for individuals' interpretations of stimuli, evaluation of behavior and behavior itself. To understand the deductions from normality is crucial, since they indicate how individuals process normality. The deductions further imply what consequences the perception of normality generally can have for practical expressions, the use of language and – not the least – for research on normality. I will illustrate each of the deductions in more detail in the following.

(A) What is normal can serve as an orientation standard for individuals. Normality for that matter serves as an anchor, to which individuals are motivated to adapt to, respectively not deviate from. The standard implies what the conventional behavior is and gives individuals information on how to fit in in a certain context. Individuals implicitly adapt to what they perceive as the usual opinion and behavior. As a consequence, they shift accordingly. Especially in situations of heightened uncertainty, information about what is normal is consulted as standard for orientation (e.g., Smith et al., 2007).

(B) The second crucial deduction from the normality and sharedness of a stimulus, event, attitude or behavior is to objectivity, truth, factuality and reality. As illustrated in Chapter 2.3., perceptions of normality, particularly when being induced by the endorsement of other individuals, provide meaning and validate world views. A stimulus, behavior or event that is shared with others, respectively intersubjectively experienced and agreed on, is not only perceived as normal but in many cases also as objective, true and real. Whatever corresponds to the perceived normality appears as being factual and objective – and can attain the phenomenological status of objective reality (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). In contrast, whatever challenges an individual's perception of normality, is rather perceived as untrue, subjective and not corresponding to reality. Individuals infer from the assumption that they perceive the world as it is (first tenet of naïve Realism, e.g., Ross & Ward, 1996) that others, who differ in their perceptions, must be biased (at least when given the same information as them; see the third tenet of naïve Realism; e.g., Ross & Ward,

1996). The understanding of normality as objective reality can hence also have an excluding character. Who- or whatever differs from the respective views falls out of the circle of normality evolvement (see Figure 1).

(C) A third crucial aspect of normality is that individuals infer prescription from the descriptive information. Individuals deduce from what is to what ought to be. Normality attains the character of normativity. Accordingly, individuals favor alternatives that they perceive to be more normal, judge them more positively, are motivated to justify them and view them as superior (see Chapter 2.2.). Crandall et al. (2009) and Eidelman and Crandall (2012) for instance, showed that the mere existence as well as the longevity (both factors being associated with the perception as normal) lead to a higher justification and support of the regarding behaviors. Moreover, Eidelman et al. (2010) showed that a piece of chocolate that was thought to be on the market for a longer time – and therefore assumed to be more normal – led individuals to evaluate it as tasting better than an alternative. These effects can also be observed for the evaluation of groups: A group that appears as more normal is perceived as more powerful, higher in status, more agentic and less communal (Bruckmüller & Abele, 2010). The understanding of normal stimuli, events, attitudes and behaviors as normative may imply that deviation and choice of alternatives may be punished. Thus, an additional motivation to stick with what is perceived as normal – prevent to count as deviant and be punished – appears. Though normativity may be implicitly deduced from perceptions of normality, some factors, such as the validation or devaluation by others can also directly lead to perceptions of normativity. Assumingly, the relation between normality and normativity is bidirectional: A stimulus, event, attitude or behavior that is non-normative should evoke more surprise than a normative one. This direction of effect still needs to be examined further.

Regarding the interplay of the deductions from normality, though there is not much empirical evidence yet, certain relational paths seem to be implied. An orientation standard, set by the perception of what others do, provides individuals with meaning and interpretation patterns of the world around them. An orientation standard may in that process not only set situational reality and objectivity, but also lead individuals to the interpretation of a particular stimulus or behavior as normative and binding. The perception of normativity and objectivity / objective reality also seems to be somewhat closely associated and mutually influential. Individuals may infer that what they perceive as objective is justified in its existence, superior to alternatives and therefore the correct way to think, feel or behave. Something that corresponds deeply to an individual's view of the world, is likely to be perceived as a good and necessary element. In turn, individuals may also infer from perceptions of superiority of a stimulus, from the perceived necessity of behavior or plainly from group pressure that a respective stimulus or behavior is based on factuality and/or objectivity (e.g., Hardin & Higgins, 1996). The accompanying effect of internal as well as external rejection of alternatives in that process, will tighten the ties of perceptions of factuality and normativity.

Though it cannot be stated with complete certainty, there are different assumptions about the process of how the deductions from normality (as a descriptive value) to an orientation standard, objectivity/reality and normativity evolve. As discussed in the Chapters 2.2.3. and 2.3.2., individuals might implicitly assume that whatever is normal is supported by a significant group of others. Social validation and an intersubjective understanding would therefore be inherent in the perception of normality. The degree of perceived normality would thus be an indicator for a proper social regulation. As a consequence, individuals would be motivated to adapt to the perceived normality, now understood in normative terms and as objective fact. Another basis for the deductions might be that – especially in the absence of other, potentially contradicting information – the degree of normality of a stimulus factually delivers valuable information about what is right and correct and good or bad. Individuals tend to attribute reasons towards whatever they perceived as existent or normal. They seem to (implicitly) follow the assumption that what exists, cannot be without reason. Also for the non-existence, individuals attribute reasons. The inference in the study by Eidelman et al. (2010) for instance, may be based on individuals' assumption that there must be a reason for why the particular chocolate has been on the market for such a long time. They may conclude that this is likely due a particularly good taste. It appears to be difficult for individuals to perceive and understand a stimulus solely on a descriptive level. Furthermore, it appears difficult for individuals to accept the potential arbitrary processes that led the respective stimulus to exist and endure (over another one). In a similar notion, individuals seem to need to justify their attitudes, behaviors and whatever is normal to them. Otherwise they might be deeply uneven with their self-concepts and would have to seriously question themselves. A further explanation for the deduction is that the reduction of (cognitive) alternatives in the process of a stimulus becoming normality leads to its appearance as necessary and better in comparison to whatever is remaining as stimulus for comparison. Even though the literature provides bases in support of these assumptions (see Chapters 2.1-2.4.), the concrete processes leading to the deductions need to be further examined.

There are a range of different motivations resulting from the deductions and directing towards certain interpretations of stimuli, events, attitudes and behavior preferences and actual behavioral expressions. Among these are adapting to the (implicit or explicit) standard of orientation, preventing to stick out as deviant, to maintain and behave according to the own world view and simply, not seeing any reason for alternative interpretations and expressions. These motivations manifest consequences on a behavioral level, which are illustrated in the next section.

3.1.6. Reactions to stimuli, behavior expression and concomitant effects

The next level of the model illustrates the consequences of the deductions from perceptions of normality to an orientation standard, normativity and perceptions of objective reality and factuality: respective behavioral expressions and particular stimulus treatment (see Figure 1). For example, individuals

who read about others' littering behavior (Cialdini et al., 1990), who were told about stereotypes about black people (Stangor et al., 2001) or who were presented examples of reconciling interactions in a post-conflict society (Paluck, 2009), subsequently to these experiences, preferred and acted out what they had perceived as normal and normative. Also behavior towards groups is influenced, as a consequence of the deductions. For instance, are groups that are identified as being comparatively non-normative more strongly discriminated than groups that are perceived as normative (e.g., Bruckmüller, 2013). As it is illustrated in Chapter 2.3., individuals behave in line with what they perceive as real and objective. As captured in the first tenet of the concept of naïve realism (Ross & Ward, 1996), individuals do not only assume that they interpret the world in an objective manner but that also their reactions to the world are objective. Accordingly, individuals prefer and choose stimuli, events and behaviors that appear to be in line with their world views. Further, individuals tend to implicitly adapt their behavior and behavioral preferences to whatever appears as normal to them – to what they perceive as a standard of orientation. Also, individual tend to repeat their behavioral expressions and their stimuli interpretations when they perceive them to be normal, normative and/or based on facts. Though there has been research on these single lines of behavioral consequences, there is still a need for deeper, more process-focused and relational examinations. At this level, it also remains uncertain, to what extent the perception of normality has direct impact on the behavioral level, independently of the illustrated deductions.

The behavioral consequences of the deductions from normality are associated with crucial concomitant effects, respectively crucial attributes (see Figure 1). Whatever is perceived as normal – and as a result of the deduction processes as factual and objective – leads to stimulus interpretations and behaviors that are congruent to an individual's world view and his self-concept. Therefore, they are somewhat perceived to be righteous and justified (e.g., Kelman, 1986; Ross & Ward, 1996; Paluck, 2009a). Thus, a major consequence of perceiving oneself in line with how things are, is that an individual less questions his motives, interpretations and behaviors (see Chapter 2.3.2.; e.g., Robinson et al., 1995). Individuals tend to justify and perceive those behaviors as righteous that are commonly expressed by others, or supported by a majority, that is, behaviors that the individuals deduce to be normative. These attributes, in turn, heighten the probability that a certain attitude is adopted and maintained, and that a certain behavior preferred and expressed. The relation is thus bidirectional. The lack of questioning of the behavior can lead to the adoption of an attitude and expression of a certain behavior even in cases when other factors speak against this, such as moral arguments. These effects have been impressively shown by Milgram (e.g., Milgram, 1963). However, the respective development still needs to be examined more process-focused and in more concrete relational terms. All in all, these dynamics already strongly hint at the self-perpetual character of normality. This is reflected in the processes that will be illustrated in more detail in the next section.

The flip side of the illustrated effects is the rejection of deviating world views and alternatives to what is perceived as factual and objective (see Chapter 2.3.). Attitudes and behaviors that appear as non-normal are rejected and excluded from the process of reality-generation and resulting behavior. This can lead to the complete suspension of people in disagreement from the personal reality creation process. The stronger the notion of objectivity and reality is supported and fixed, the stronger disagreeing opinions are rejected. As noted, this rejection hints at the self-enhancing process of normality: Information that could challenge an individual's views, behaviors and patterns of interpretation is potentially not even processed and already rejected on a superficial level. Also, devaluating stimuli treatment and non-expression of behavior can result from the perception of normativity. Certain stimuli interpretations or behavioral expressions might count as deviant in a certain group or context. The deviancy from the norms might be associated with potential punishment. Therefore, the respective stimulus interpretations and behavioral expressions might be permanently avoided. Thus, whatever is not perceived as objective or normative falls out of the circle of normality and behavioral expressions.

3.1.7. The self-perpetuating and -enhancing character of normality

As already shown throughout this chapter, the mechanisms of normality evolvement as well as the regarding antecedents and consequences seem to be self-perpetuating and self-enhancing (see Figure 1). The perception of stimuli as normal, the deductions, and particularly, the preference and expression of behavior, all contribute to normality perceptions of following stimuli, events, attitudes and behaviors. There are different factors, bridging the behavioral level and the perception and experience of stimuli, events, attitudes and behaviors (see Figure 1). These factors can either influence the perceptions of normality (directly or indirectly) for the individual himself – or serve as source of information for others.

A self-perpetuating effect, resulting from the choice and expression of behavior, is the perception of a respective behavior as widely shared. The second tenet of naïve realism (e.g., Ross & Ward, 1996) states that individuals are convinced that others share their perceptions and interpretations. Accordingly, Ross et al. (1977) showed that the decision to choose to express a certain behavior leads to the perception of a higher sharedness of that behavior. In his study, the majority of participants that chose to walk around campus with a sandwich board bearing a message, estimated that others would also agree to do so. Participants that chose not to walk around with the board, in contrast, estimated that most others would also refuse. As illustrated above, the perception of descriptive norms as well as the assumption of social validation are important promotive factors, influencing the perception of normality.

Another consequence of the perception of a stimulus, event, attitude or behavior as normal and the subsequent deductions is that the respective interpretations and expressions are internalized. An individual's past experiences and observations are captured, incorporated and maintained in patterns of feelings,

thoughts and behaviors. These parts form an entity that defines the current normality. Accordingly, current experiences and perceptions influence what will be perceived as normal in future encounters, as they become part of the treasure trove of experience that serves as a valuable information source for the perception and integration of stimuli. The internalized perceptions of normality, reality and normativity are in that process accumulated, so that every perception of a new stimulus has a long history on which its interpretation is based on (e.g., Husserl, 1954). Although, according to Miller and Prentice (1996) and Paluck (2009a), the effects of accumulated experience have a relatively weak influence on perceptions of normality (compared to norm information referenced to the immediate context), they still do directly impact the promotive factors. Further examinations are required at this point.

A further crucial aspect, leading to the self-perpetuation and -enhancing of normality, is that the acting and reacting individuals themselves serve as a source of information and orientation for others. Their reactions to stimuli, events and attitudes as well as their indications of behavioral preferences and behavior expressions provide others with valuable information about what is shared and normal (see Chapter 2.4.). The individual himself contributes to the dissemination, promotion or reducing of perceptions of normality. Other individuals will consider the behavior of their peer(s), when making assumptions about the normality of a certain stimulus, event, attitude or behavior (see Figure 1). They do so by incorporating perceptions of the actions of significant others, the actions of the majority, and of what is validated or devalued in a certain context. Furthermore, some of the other promotive factors will be influenced by the behavioral expressions: A respective interpretation or behavior will appear to be expressed more frequently, more familiarly, and as having a longer history. Moreover, also stimuli and behaviors that are similar (but not necessarily identical) to those previously experienced will cast a lower contrast to cognitive representations, and therefore be less focused on and evoke less counterfactual alternatives. At this point, the circle closes (see Figure 1).

As indicated previously, the model illustrates that the establishment of normality can have an arbitrary character. Stimuli can be sustained and behaviors constantly expressed – and both positively evaluated – on the pure basis of potentially arbitrary and contingent factors, with potentially little or no regard to content as well as rationality. Furthermore, the illustrated processes can lead to the phenomenon that a normality becomes increasingly established (and the respective behaviors expressed), not based necessarily on correct and adequate perceptions but on misperceptions of normality. These misperceptions may have manifested due to adoption and expression of certain attitudes and behaviors, working in interplay with the use of these (by others) as norm information. Consequently, for a normality (and the accompanying understanding of normativity and objective reality) to emerge as well as to be established, perpetuated and transmitted, no correspondence to physical reality or ensured factuality is necessary.

Beyond these effects of self-maintenance, -perpetuation and -enhancement, what is perceived as normal, can be shifted due to the illustrated dynamics. The illustrated model already implies these shifting

effects (see Figure 1). However, in order to further elaborate on the process of normality shifts, the basic mechanisms shall be explicitly illustrated in more detail in a separate model (see Figure 2) in the next subchapter.

3.2. A model of shifts of normality

3.2.1. Introduction to the model

In Figure 1, I illustrated the process of normality evolvement, individuals' inferences to normativity and objective reality as well as behavioral consequences. Furthermore, I indicated that this process is of a self-perpetual and self-strengthening character. The model of normality links different lines of research for the first time. The model also seeks to explain the phenomena illustrated in the introduction. Although the model of normality already provides the basis for understanding shifts of normality towards extreme and one-sided behavior, more specific illustrations are still necessary. Therefore, the second model (see Figure 2) shall illustrate how perceptions of normality change and shift in a certain direction. The far-reaching consequences of these shifts, potentially towards extreme tendencies, shall be particularly highlighted. The graphical illustration of the second model (Figure 2) is self-explanatory. However, the following text highlights the different levels of Figure 2 in more detail and exemplifies accompanying factors that cannot be illustrated by the graphic.

Individuals integrate stimuli and events they perceive or experience into their worldview and evaluate them regarding their degree of normality. According to Kahneman and Miller (1986) and Miller et al. (1991), perceptions of what is normal and abnormal depend on the contrast between stimuli/events and a causal background (the already existing representations of norms; see also Chapter 2.1.). Individuals implicitly compare the (newly) experienced stimuli and events to their existing backgrounding norm representations (as well as cognitively generated counterfactuals). Stimuli and events that generate a high contrast to a background standard are perceived as abnormal and surprising, whereas stimuli and events that generate a low contrast are perceived to be comparatively normal. What is of greatest relevance for a model of shift of normality, is the implication that, in order to change the perception of the normality of a stimulus or event, its contrast to the background standard needs to undergo change (see Figure 2). The model of shifts of normality is based on the understanding of the decisiveness of the magnitude of contrast between perceived stimuli and events and backgrounding norm representations. By means of this basic understanding, the process of shifts of normality, which can potentially lead to extreme normalities, shall be illustrated.

a)

Promotive factors

Magnitude of contrast

Starting position. Illustration of the scope of normality and the infinite field of stimuli. The three light grey stimuli initially have the same contrast to the scope of normality. For one stimulus, promotive factors occur.

b)

Magnitude of contrast

Initial norm emergence. Due to the promotion, the triangle is perceived as more normal (than other stimuli) and incorporated into the backgrounding norm representations. The contrast of the scope of normality to similar stimuli decreases.

c)

Magnitude of contrast

Stepwise shift of normality. The light grey stimulus has been incorporated into the scope of normality. From that point on, an ongoing interplay of decrease of contrast to similar stimuli and incorporation of the respective stimuli as norm representations occurs. The scope of normality shifts and broadens. A stepwise development towards increasingly extreme stimuli occurs.

Figure 2. The model of shifts of normality. The process of increasingly extreme stimuli becoming normal is illustrated in three steps, as an ongoing interplay between change of magnitude of contrast and shift/extension of the scope of normality.

3.2.2.   The first level of the model: starting position, change of contrast and promotive factors

The initial position of normality perception is as follows (see part "a" of Figure 2): Individuals at a current state have stored norm representations that constitute their scope of normality. These representations function as background standards for the comparison and integration of stimuli and events. Outside of this scope of normality individuals can encounter an infinite field of stimuli and events. The initial contrast of these stimuli to the scope of normality fundamentally varies between the different stimuli and events. In the graphic illustration (see Figure 2), the closer in proximity a stimulus (represented by various shapes) is to the circle (the scope of normality), the lower the contrast is, the less abnormal it appears to an individual and the higher its chance is to be perceived as normal. For every perception, whichever stimulus or event evokes the least contrast to the existing background representations is perceived as the most normal. In contrast, a stimulus or event that has a high disparity is (immediately) perceived as being abnormal, and is therefore not incorporated into the scope of normality, and potentially even rejected as obscure, extreme or immoral. Stimuli and events that have a low contrast to the background, and thus are perceived as more normal, are integrated into an individual's norm representations and as a consequence, influence future stimuli encounters and perceptions of magnitude of contrast. In the course of a shift of normality, the contrast to a stimulus may change in such a way that at a certain point, it will be low enough for the regarding stimulus or event to be perceived as normal rather than abnormal.

In some cases, particularly in well-known situations, it may be distinct and obvious, which stimuli or events are comparatively normal or abnormal. For a scholar, the experience of silence in the library probably sparks less contrast to his norm representations than continuous giggling (e.g., Aarts & Dijksterhuis, 2003). However, for other individuals, or for the same individual in a different context, what is normal might be more ambiguous and ambivalent. And yet, indications of what is normal may be highly relevant for the individual's interpretation of the situation and his own reactions. Individuals may need to access indications of what is normal to decide what to do and how to think or feel, particularly in a field of ambiguous and/or equivalent stimuli. The question emerges, which factors are influential and decisive when different stimuli or events initially evoke a similar contrast to the background – or the magnitude of contrast is ambivalent. In order to respond to this question, we can refer to the situation modelled in Figure 2. Three stimuli/events (shown in a light grey) are close to, and equidistance from the circle; they all have roughly the same contrast to the scope of normality. Thus, initially, they all should be perceived as equally normal. As illustrated, there are certain factors whose appearance promote the perception of normality, whereas the absence or opposite reduces the perception of normality. Chiefly, these comprise of the experience or perception of a stimulus/event itself, the frequency of presentation, the availability, accessibility, familiarity, primacy and the length of existence of a stimulus or event. Moreover, social factors contribute to the process of promotion: namely, immediate social evaluation (validation versus devaluation) and descriptive norms.

All of these factors contribute to the appearance of a stimulus or event as having less contrast to existing norm representations and hence being more normal. For instance, in the study by Weaver et al. (2007; see also Chapter 2.2.), the influence of frequency and accessibility has been highlighted. Hearing a single group member repeating her claim multiple times, led participants to estimates of more widespread support for that opinion. The influence of others' behavior on individuals' norm representations has been extensively discussed in Chapter 2.4. Alternatively, the proposed function of social validation as a promotive factor for the perception of normality, may function as a control mechanism; it shows an individual what is accepted, expected and desired in a group. In an additional step, it may indicate whether it is appropriate to perceive a stimulus or event as normal and to incorporate it in the norm representations. A clear social devaluation might therefore prevent the perception of normality for a stimulus or event that would otherwise (e.g., by cognitive or experience-based factors) be promoted.

3.2.3. The second and third levels of the model: the process of shifting normality

The second level of the model

The second level of the model of shifts of normality (see Figure 2, part "b") shows the incorporation of a stimulus or event into the backgrounding norm representations, following its promotion. This is graphically illustrated by the convergence of the scope of normality (circle) and the light grey triangle. Due to the promotion, the contrast between the triangle and the background has decreased and therefore the triangle is perceived as normal. This change of contrast and incorporation into the scope of normality also decreases the contrast of similar stimuli and events, and increases their perception as normal. The differently shaped triangles now correspond to the changed, respectively extended, norm representations to a higher degree. In the graphic illustration, this is indicated by a heightened proximity of the circle of normality perception to the group of triangles (see Figure 2). The triangles appear more normal than they had before and potentially also than other stimuli (i.e., the squares and pentagons). Thus, perceptions of normality have shifted. To name a solid example for the change of contrast of normality perceptions to subsequent stimuli, the introduction and extension of video surveillance as a measure of fighting criminality in Germany had initially been promoted by repeated claims by politicians and the police regarding its necessity and as functional answer to security threats (e.g., Wender, n.d.). Before, video cameras in the public sphere had mainly served for the purpose of traffic monitoring (see Wender, n.d.). Today, the development has proceeded even further: In Germany, automatic face identification (measuring individuals' distinct facial features, generating a unique digital pattern based on that and retrieving the respective biometrical data; see Spehr, 2017) shall be generally introduced at train stations and is currently already being tested at the train station *Südkreuz* in Berlin (Eckardt, 2017). Data will be continuously collected and compared in real-time

to other databases, creating the possibility of direct interventions. This approach far outreaches the (initial) use of video surveillance cameras in the public sphere to fight crime.

The third level of the model

The third level of the model focuses on the level of stimuli and events that are similar to the promoted and incorporated stimulus (i.e., the triangles; see Figure 2, part "c"). It illustrates the character of a stepwise shift of normality. The triangles in the illustration range from equal-sided to deformed. This increasing deformation represents the growing contrast of each respective stimulus to the initial backgrounding norm representations. The contrast of each triangle to the background norms decreases with each incorporation into the scope of normality of a similar (still less acuminated / less extreme) stimulus or event. The respective extension or directional shaping of the norm representations leads to a corresponding (continuous) contrast reduction. The subsequent similar stimuli, as a consequence, appear to be ever more normal.

At the time of writing, the current literature does not imply with certainty, whether the scope of normality remains a certain same size along the shift – or whether the scope is extended and broadened by every incorporated stimulus. The former assumption would indicate that at some point along the shift, the light grey triangle might not be perceived as normal anymore – since the scope of normality has shifted away. The use of video cameras for surveillance in that case, for example, might be perceived as abnormal, when more subtle scanning procedures are introduced. When following the latter assumption, the triangle in the model as well as the use of surveillance camera will remain normal, despite ongoing incorporations of stimuli. Both mechanisms seem possible and the development in each case most likely dependent on the specific context. Also hybrids are thinkable, whereas a clear division of both options is possibly more a matter of philosophical consideration.

Generally, a stimulus or event may at a certain point show a high contrast to the background and therefore, trigger the perception of abnormality. The facilitation, i.e., the change/extension of the contrasting norm representations by the incorporation of one or several similar stimuli or events, will also decrease the contrast to the initially particular high contrasting stimulus or event and let it appear as less abnormal. At an initial point, the contrast of the more extreme stimulus to the norm representations may be too high to be bridged by promotive factors and/or it might socially still count as inappropriate. In practice, this might often be the case for the use of violence, which in many cases initially is socially devalued. With a preceding change/extension of the background norms though, a perception of the stimulus or event (even the use of violence) as relatively normal might become possible. Thus, a stimulus, event, attitude or behavior might be rejected as abnormal in one moment or situation, but accepted and perceived as normal as the result of a stepwise shift of the backgrounding norm representations.

Heimstädt (2017) illustrates how much protest the intention of the German government sparked to conduct a national census among the German population in the year 1983. The protesters were concerned with threats of broad data collections and the dissemination of the data to government agencies and the police. In contrast to that, the census in 2011 did not spark any protest and went by nearly unnoticed (e.g., Berlinghoff, n.d.). The census, which was once considered as abnormal and socially devalued, has become widely accepted. Beyond that, more extreme forms of data collection have become normal and the treatment of personal data more freely and careless. For example, does a big share of the worldwide two billion monthly users of Facebook share most private data on daily bases (Constine, 2017).

By now, it should be clear, that a stimulus or event is rejected as being abnormal as long as there are no norm representations that resemble it. As the third level of the model indicates, the respective perception can change in a process of a stepwise incorporation of more and more (similar) stimuli or events (see Figure 2, part c). Whereas the very deformed/acuminate triangle on the right side of the figure currently seems abnormal, it is expectable that, at some point, it may be perceived as normal, due to the stepwise incorporation into the scope of normality of the less deformed triangles. There are many examples, once counting as (dark) dystopias, that have been successfully introduced or are on the edge of being introduced and becoming normal. Among these is certainly the already illustrated automatic face identification at train stations in Germany (e.g., Eckardt, 2017).

During the process, the promotive factors are also influential. The appearance of such factors on each level further reduces the contrast between the stimuli/events and the adapted background (see Figure 1 / chapter 3.1.3.). Importantly, the appearance of promotive factors and the decrease of contrast are mutually influential. This is a crucial fact in understanding how more extreme stimuli and events are accepted as well as attitudes and behaviors expressed, with gradually less opposition. I have shown this respective development above, for the case of the census reactions and online data behavior (Heimstädt, 2017). A similar development can be expected for the issue of face identification.

The shift processes rarely have a clearly identifiable beginning, nor a fixed end. An individual continuously runs through changes of what counts as normal for him. Naturally, the shifts/changes of normality do not always proceed as linear, logical and determined as suggested by the model of shifts of normality (see Figure 2). The processes can be assumed to be more dynamic and complex. Especially (but not exclusively) when norm shifts are observed in hindsight, the contingency of each stimuli, event and norm development needs to be considered. On the plain basis that a certain path is entered, or a phenomenon established, it is not appropriate to deduce its inevitable necessity. As illustrated in the first step of the model of shifts of normality, the field of stimuli and events is infinite. From an extension of the backgrounding norm representations numerous options for further developments unfold – of which of course some stand to reason more than others. In any case, norm shifts usually proceed gradual and floating. That corresponds to

the stepwise decreasing of contrast as indicated by the model. The incorporation in perceptions of normality of a certain (less extreme) stimulus lowers the contrast of norm representations to similar (more extreme) stimuli and heightens their perception as normal. In some cases though, a big and sudden step may occur, due to very specific circumstances (e.g., a specific combination of promotive factors, the introduction of a new technology, a sudden and strong insection in individuals' lives), misinterpretations – or simply by chance. In some of the illustrated examples for instance, the initial change of normality perception might reflect a big step (for instance, the first use of Facebook). It should be noted that it is not always ascertainable what the initial starting point is or was. Every development has a history that laid ground for the things to come – for example, by influencing preceding normality perceptions. However, from the point on, in which a certain stimulus or event is incorporated in the backgrounding norm representations, subsequent similar stimuli and events will also be perceived as less abnormal and hence the nature of the shift be more gradually.

3.2.4. Accompanying factors, consequences and meaning of a shifting normality

First, it should be pointed out that shifts of normality are themselves normal and reflect general occurrences of (societal) changes. Norm shifts are not per se problematic. Nonetheless, the nature of the shifting processes provide potential for problematic and unintended developments. As indicated in the model, there are inherent conditions that advantage, respectively enable, the shift processes and hinder alternative paths. The processes of shifts of normality generally proceed without the explicit awareness of the affected individuals. The backgrounding norm representations do not become the focus of individuals' perceptions. Each step in a normality shift not only corresponds to individuals' perception of what currently is – but also of what shall be and what is objective and real (see Figure 2). The perception of normality, along the different steps of a shift, is in accord with an individuals' general perception of the world and his self-concept. Only individuals external of the particular normality, or the affected individuals at different points of time, could and would consider the particular stimuli, events, attitudes or behaviors as abnormal or extreme. The individuals that are affected by the shifting norms generally do not question them but instead implicitly follow their implications. As a consequence, immoral and extreme stimuli, events, attitudes and behaviors can increasingly be perceived as normal, without the individuals even noticing or reflecting (their extremity). Walliman and Dobkowski (1987) indicate in their documentation of the genocide in Ruanda for instance, "that most individuals involved at some level of the process of destruction may never see the need to make an ethical decision or even reflect upon the consequences of their action" (Walliman & Dobkowski, 1987, p. xxii).

Moreover, as noted before, the process of norm shift can adopt an arbitrary character and lead to the stepwise becoming normal of stimuli, events, attitudes and behaviors that originally have no or just little

meaning and function in a certain context or group. Alternatively, a stimulus or event may originally receive only little support by individuals but be misperceived. In any case, the incorporation of a stimulus into the scope of normality will shape interpretation patterns further in that (stimulus') particular direction and increase the chance of similar stimuli to become perceived as normal. Therefore, an intervention in a process of shifting norms primarily can be done by directing the focus to the generally unnoticed background. This would stimulate a process of questioning the existing norm representations. This is, for example, the approach, activists in Germany followed to change the perception of normality of surveillance in public places: In different actions/activities, they direct focus on the measures and meanings of surveillance and try to make surveillance and its consequences visible (e.g., Reuter, 2016). Further potential routes for interventions will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The illustrated model of shifts of normality and its basis in the change of contrast between the unnoticed background and encountered stimuli and events, builds on the state of art in different fields of (social psychological) norm-related research. Nonetheless, the proposed form and mechanisms are still in need of proper empirical evidence. Some aspects and linkages of the model remain a topic for debate. Parts of these open questions will be addressed in the empirical part of this dissertation. The following chapter will give an overview of this dissertation's studies and the particular linkages to the two models.

4. Empirical Evidence

4.1. Outlook on the studies

In the empirical part, propositions, core components and mechanisms regarding this dissertation's concept of normality will be examined. Therefore, besides giving a short general overview of the studies, their specific references to the two models shall here be illustrated. For all studies, it was a particular concern to implement basic research in applied settings. As illustrated in the theoretical background and the introduction, the concept of normality is deeply intertwined into a range of practical fields and even everyday life. Therefore, the objective of this dissertation's empirical part was to reflect and examine the basic mechanisms of normality and shifts of normality and at the same time draw inferences to the practical application and implication of these.

The fields, the studies are set in, were intentionally chosen to be heterogeneous. The broad area of relevancy and application of a normality approach should be underlined. Aside from their contributions to the examination of the concept of normality, the studies are designed to add to the research lines they are nested in. In order to introduce the research lines and each study's contribution properly, a separate theoretical background (as well as discussion) part will be provided for each study. In these, a bridge will be built between the specific theoretical background, this dissertation's general concept of normality (/ the two models) and the particular practical field, which frames each study. Below, I will introduce the different studies shortly. Subsequent to the specific introductions, I will illustrate for each study the references and contributions to the models of normality and shifts of normality. For a better overview, the contributions of each study will be recapitulated in the respective theoretical background.

The emergence, shift and influence of normality in social settings

In the first chapter of the empirical part, the focus is placed on the questions of how normality emerges in social situations, and how it influences individuals' behavior. More specifically: How does the notion develop that a certain behavior is normal, whereas another one is disregarded? What does a shift of normality depend on and how is it expressed by individuals? In particular, the factors of seeking for orientation in the behavior of others, sharing of experiences and participating in the same discourse are assessed. This section will be focused on normality emergence and shift based on interacting processes of individuals directly following the information others provide and individuals commonly (explicitly as well as implicitly) negotiate a consensus within a group. Alongside other lines of inquiry, it will be assessed whether in this process, the accuracy of perception and interpretation of norm information, is a relevant constitutional factor for a behavior-guiding normality – or whether the perception per se (independent of its accuracy) is decisive. The mutual influence of peers will be of particular focus in the first part of the

experiments. In addition, the role of societal factors, such as the media, will be examined. The first section of this dissertation's empirical part consists of two complementary studies, despite being assessed in two different fields. The approaches and objectives of both studies shall be introduced next.

Study 1

The objective of Study 1 was to examine how normality emerges and shifts in a context for which no clear norms have been brought up yet. How do perceptions of normality evolve in a context for which neither the perception of own former behavior, nor concrete representations of others' behavior are available? And, moreover: To what extent do individuals adapt their personal beliefs to a newly established normality? The study largely focuses on the mutual influence of peers in a commonly experienced setting. A distinctive feature of this study is the examination of *accessibility of alternatives* and *shift of focus* as accompanying and/or driving factors of a behavior becoming normal. In order to use a realistic scenario and to be close to actual praxis, the study was embedded in a simulation of the General Assembly (GA) of the United Nations.

The study contributes to the models of normality and shifts of normality on several levels. The effect of social factors as promotive factors in the emergence of normality perceptions is examined in a real-time setting. In that context, the use of information about others' behavior as a standard for orientation is assessed as a deduction from normality perceptions. By embedding the Study into a setting of mutual discourse, the influence of the participants themselves as providers of norm information for others and the meaning for the self-perpetual and self-strengthening character of normality perceptions is assessed and discussed. Additionally, attributes and accompanying factors of perceptions of normality are examined. Due to the longitudinal character of the study, effects of normality emergence and shift of normality can be illustrated.

Study 2

In Study 2, the influence of descriptive norms on individuals' behavior was examined. Specifically, notions of majority support of an individuals preferred versus opposed political spectrum were examined in their effects. Different sources of norm information were compared regarding their influence on individuals' voting behavior. In these sources, long-term grown norm information (such as the perceived media climate or the anticipated reaction of friends) as well as situationally implied norms were included. The study relates to the research line of the spiral of silence theory (Noelle-Neuman, 1980). It was implemented in the setting of the 2013 German federal election.

The study contributes to the two models by assessing the effects of normality and normativity on reality perceptions and the behavioral level. It highlights the self-perpetuating and self-enhancing effects of normality perceptions. Specifically, it examines the extent to which individuals deduce normativity from descriptive information. In what way does this deduction influence individuals' behavior – and how does

individuals' behavior, in turn, affect perceptions and anticipation of norms by others? In this study, further different promotive factors are assessed and compared regarding their influence and interplay. Of particular relevance is the inclusion of long-term grown norm information as well as situationally implied descriptive norms. As a further contribution, the study shall underline the potentially arbitrariness and fact-independency of developments of normality perceptions and respective behavioral consequences.

Shifts of perceptions of groups' normality

Study 3

In the second chapter of the empirical part, the relevance of normality perception was examined and highlighted in the context of categories/groups. The research line of groups as the effect to be explained was taken up and extended (see section 2.1.4.). As stated throughout the dissertation, one notable aspect of the concept of normality is that what is perceived as normal remains unnoticed. It has been shown that certain groups count as unsaid standards, whereas others are perceived as effects to be explained (e.g., Hegarty & Pratto, 2001; Bruckmüller, 2013). Being the effect to be explained has far-reaching consequences for others' attitudes towards the respective groups as well as the self-understanding of the groups. In Study 3, the role of perceptions of groups being differentially normal was examined in the context of intergroup attitudes, migration and integration. The effects of normality perceptions' shifting were assessed in dependency of intergroup contact for a minority and a majority group in comparison. The study was implemented in the context of migration in Germany. Specifically, it was embedded in a mentoring program (Schuelerpaten Berlin e.V.), in which native German university students mentor Arabic minority children in Germany. The ingroup projection model (e.g., Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Weber, 2003) forms the theoretical and methodological framework for the study. As well as its relevance for this dissertation's concept of normality and examination within a societal context of migration in Germany, the study provides relevant evidence for research on intergroup contact and ingroup projection.

With regard to both the models, in Study 3, the status required for being perceived as normal is comparatively assessed for different groups. This is achieved with consideration of specific content-related reflections (namely, being part of the majority versus the minority; intergroup contact) in relation to different promotive factors. Specifically, these societal statuses/phenomena reflect the promotive factors of frequency, familiarity and availability as well as descriptive norms and socially evaluative factors. The study shall offer pointers to both the intertwining of normality perceptions, and the behavioral level.

Impact of social norms on reality perceptions

Studies 4-7

The starting point of this core set of studies is the statement of the necessity for more basic research on processes related to prejudices. Research on prejudices primarily focuses on the characteristics of ethnicity, skin color, sexual preference and gender (e.g., Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010). This strongly influences researchers as well as laypersons' conceptions of prejudices and related mechanisms. Crandall et al. (2002) highlighted the dependency of prejudices on the current social norms. Studies 4 - 7 are based on these findings and examine how perceptions of normality and normativity of certain group-based evaluations influence individuals' respective perceptions of truth and factuality. Specifically, it was proposed that whichever stimulus, claim or statement is congruent with the norms of an individual's reference group, is perceived as true, objective and real. A stimulus, claim or statement that is incongruent to the norms, in contrast, was expected to be perceived as the result of biased perceptions. The studies provide answers to the question of if and why individuals may have difficulties to identify certain prejudices.

This set of studies provides a fundamental contribution to the model of normality. Firstly, the deductions from normality and normativity perceptions to the experience of objectivity, truth and factuality are examined. The extent to which individuals' perceptions of objective reality are in accord are assessed, along with their implicit understanding of what is normal or normative. Secondly, the studies indicate the deductions' consequences for the interpretation and expression of certain attitudes and behaviors. In that context, the self-perpetual character as well as the consequences for who- or whatever falls out of the circle of normality are shown.

4.2.   Study 1: The emergence and influence of normality in social settings (1)

4.2.1.   Theoretical background

Contributions to the models of normality and shifts of normality

This study contributes on different levels to the models of normality and shifts of normality. The influence of social factors as promotive factors in the emergence of normality perceptions is examined in a real-time setting. Within this, the use of information about others' behavior as a standard for orientation is assessed as a deduction from normality perceptions. The study setting was one of group discourse, therefore the influence of the participants themselves as providers of norm information for others is relevant. The importance of this process for the self-perpetual and self-strengthening character of normality perceptions is analyzed and discussed. Additionally, attributes and accompanying factors of perceptions of normality

are examined. Due to the longitudinal design of the study, processes of normality evolvement and shift of normality are also illustrated.

The emergence of social norms

The main objective of Study 1 was to examine the processes of norm emergence and evolvement in a context for which, as of yet, no clear norms have been stated, and to assess in what way these norms would impact upon individuals' behavioral preferences and acceptances. Researchers have emphasized that "social norms are communicated through social interaction" (Paluck, 2009b, p. 598) and in everyday discourse (Stangor & Leary, 2006). Stangor and Leary have stated that individuals' attitudes are affected by perceptions of the attitudes of others and that attitudes are shared among peers (Stangor and Leary, 2006; see also Chapter 2.4.). Hence, individuals rarely receive an isolated notion of the norms, especially when entering a new group or an unknown context. The behavior of every group member (including an individual's own behavior) can be relevant in providing norm information for all other individuals who are also member of the specific group or share a certain experience. Norms reproduce themselves among individuals: For example, reading about others' recycling behavior has been shown to lead individuals to adapt their own behavior to the behavior of their peers (Cialdini et al., 1990). At the same time, naturally, individuals' behavior (as newly built norms), in turn, can serve as an orientation standard for others (e.g., Markus & Kitayama, 2010; Paluck & Shepherd, 2012). Smith and Louis (2008) highlight that "the process of psychologically belonging to a group means that self-perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and behavior are brought into line with the position advocated by the perceived ingroup norm" (Smith & Louis, 2008, p. 5/6). However, individuals do not perceive their environment in an unbiased manner – their selection of norm information they integrate rarely matches the factual behavior of others (see for instance, Tankard & Paluck, 2016). Nevertheless, "individuals' subjective perceptions of norms become a reality and a guide for their own behavior, even when the perceptions are inaccurate" (Tankard & Paluck, 2016, p. 183). When entering a new situation, the reception of certain norm information might therefore be a determining factor for the subsequent behavior of group members. As illustrated in Chapters 2.1. and 2.2., the experience of a stimulus or event influences the perception and reception of ensuing stimuli and events. Initial encounters are often judged to be more legitimate and normal. Subsequent stimuli, in contrast, are more opted to change (Miller & Gunasegaram, 1990). Therefore, three processes are (at an early stage of a context) highly relevant for the (future) behavior in a (new) group: what peer behavior is perceived, how is this interpreted – and how an individual himself behaves. The interplay between norms, beliefs, personal attitudes and behavior is reasonably complex (Smith & Louis, 2008; Paluck, 2009a). In the current study, we gain insights into the process of interplay of these factors, specifically in the context of an unknown norm situation. As illustrated previously, it is to be assumed that (future) behavior is strongly oriented towards the behavior of others as

well as dependent on early stage discourse. Therefore, individuals' behavioral preferences and how these relate to the perception of others' norms shall be examined: Are they perceived as being in accordance or disparate? How does the relationship influence and reflect individuals' behavioral preferences? May the group dynamics lead to group polarization or group think? The central question, however, is: Do individuals' behavioral preferences change over time dependent on the perceived normality of the current context?

The research on the basic processes of norm emergence and shift processes also has practical applications. It has been shown that the establishment of a certain (unquestioned) normality has led to extreme and negative behavior. Researchers have emphasized that violence in some cases, such as genocides, did not necessarily reflect the perpetrators personal beliefs, but instead resulted from the perception of the act of killing as necessary and socially acceptable (Straus, 2006; Paluck, 2009a; Fujii, 2009). Individuals in these cases followed what they perceived to be normal conduct, without necessarily changing their general beliefs regarding the affected groups or their perception of morality for certain (violent) behaviors. Even though generally opposing violence (which marks persons as the center of society, compared to the so-called extremes; e.g., Rommelspacher, 2011), due to the perception of respective norms, individuals may accept and legitimize the use of violence in certain situations, such as ethnic conflicts. Other negative though less dramatic outcomes due to shifts of normality perceptions are captured by the phenomena of group think and group polarization (e.g., Janis, 1982; Park, 1990; for details, see Chapter 2.4.). Thus, in Study 1, with regard to the practical relevance of investigating and explaining these particular developments, a specific focus will be placed on negative and potentially immoral norms.

The establishment of normality and a decrease of alternatives

As illustrated in Chapter 2.1., norm theory specifies that rather than explaining an event per se, individuals seek to explain the discrepancy between a stimulus or event and a contrasting alternative (e.g., McGill, 1989; Miller et al., 1991). Kahneman and Miller (1986) stated: "The occurrence [of an event] will appear especially abnormal if some scenarios that yield a different outcome are highly available. The outcome will appear inevitable if no such alternatives come readily to mind" (Kahneman & Miller, 1986, p. 139). Despite this notion, little research has been conducted to assess the relation between perceptions of a behavior or stimulus as normal, and the accessibility of alternatives. Marks and Duval (1991) analyzed and studied the relationship from the opposite direction of effect. They showed that the presentation of differing quantities of alternatives led to different estimations of social consensus; less choice led to a higher consensus. Thus, when individuals retrieved less alternatives, they perceived the choice they made as more normal and normatively implied. Moskowitz, Skurnik and Galinsky (1999) used counterfactual alternatives as behavioral primes to show that a higher amount of alternatives reduced the functional and strategical

fixedness. The latter aspect appears to be connected to the normal use of certain objects (in certain situations). Importantly, the amount of alternatives rather than the content was seen as relevant. Tajfel (1978) highlights the concept of *cognitive alternatives* as one "whereby group members become aware that the existing social reality is not the only possible one and alternatives to it are conceivable and perhaps attainable" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 93, as cited in Zhang et al., p. 160, 2013). Zhang et al. (2013) highlight the importance of the accessibility of alternatives in preventing the manifestation of a certain social reality. Significantly for this study, the awareness of alternatives has been shown to be an important factor in whether or not an immoral behavior is adopted (e.g., Milgram, 1982).

An area of further research is if the relationship between the accessibility of alternatives and manifestation of normality is bidirectional. To what extent does the perception of a stimulus or behavior as increasingly normal hinder the accessibility of alternatives to this stimulus or behavior? At the time of writing, few studies have had this focus. Reicher and Haslam (2012) indicated that especially when the status quo is perceived as becoming unstable, awareness of cognitive alternatives is increased. Furthermore, Eidelman and Crandall (2009a) found that existing states hinder the initial generation of reasons for alternatives, consequentially decreasing the generation of alternatives per se. Following the notion of individuals' inference from descriptive norm information to prescriptive claims, alternatives to what is perceived as normal should be less attractive and likely rejected. Accordingly, the motivation to generate and access alternatives can be expected to decrease.

In the current study, the relationship between an evolving normality and the accessibility of alternatives shall be examined. It is hypothesized that if a stimulus or event has attained the status of normality and therefore proven to be functional in a certain context, the amount of alternatives to the respective stimulus or behavior decreases. In line with the propositions of norm theory (Kahneman & Miller, 1986), this process is proposed to operate implicitly and be inherent to the acquisition of a stimulus, event or behavior as normal. Hence, already the introduction of a certain behavior is assumed to make the choice of a different behavior in the future less probable, by hindering the generation of alternatives. The decreased accessibility of alternatives, in turn, contributes to the perception of a certain choice or behavior as more normal.

A shift of comparison standard, a shift of focus

As illustrated in Chapter 2.1., the direction of focus is an important factor regarding the question whether a behavior is perceived as normal or as the effect to be explained (e.g., Kahneman & Miller, 1986; Miller et al., 1991; Hegarty & Pratto, 2001; Marques et al., 2014). A behavior or stimulus that is not focused on, is likely to become or reflect an unquestioned and unsaid background norm, to which other stimuli are compared. According to Kahneman and Miller (1986), a stimulus that is not focused on counts as rather

immutable, whereas a stimulus in focus counts as mutable. In that context, not only the different stimuli can be relevant, but also the shifting focus between different aspects or levels of one stimulus.

Individuals often seem to first make relatively global and holistic decisions and from there proceed to increasingly detailed decisions. With the level of choices, the level of focus of potential comparisons also shifts. Having attained a new level of detail, decisions made at the former level are usually no longer in focus and therefore no longer questioned. Thus, in the process of an evolving normality, the decision of whether to exhibit a certain behavior will not be further questioned once it is incorporated into the scope of normality. And with the question of *if*, the question of *why* can be expected to diminish as a relevant question. Instead, the question of *how* (in detail) to show the certain behavior might become more important, shifting the level of focus to the underlying layers. The shift of focus from a global decision if to express a behavior to the more concrete decision of how to express the (already accepted) behavior, and the accompanying unlikeliness of stepping back one level, might explain why individuals even seem to accept normalities that seem unbearably negative to others. Due to focusing on a more detailed level of a stimulus or event and accessing reference standards at that level, individuals may no longer question the stimulus per se. Instead, they may take the status quo for granted and as a frame of normality (see also Chapter 2.2.). Therefore, it is hypothesized that in the process of the evolvement of normality, a shift of focus occurs from the question of whether to show a certain behavior, to that of how exactly it can be expressed.

Context of the study

The simulation of a United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) was identified and chosen as an appropriate setting for the examination of the above illustrated questions and hypotheses. In such a simulation, individuals enter a new and unusual context, in which they are urged to interact with others and pursue both individual and common goals. Before the simulation the participants learn basic facts about the procedure and conduct of a General Assembly (GA), they do not have a clear indication of what to expect. Thus, it can be assumed that the participants will have an increased need for peer and process information, helping them to find orientation with regards to appropriate and normal behavior. In a new context, like the simulation of the GA, new social norms are expected to emerge, which may be behavior-guiding for individuals. In this study, the processes of the emergence and evolution of social norms in the course of the UNGA and their impact on individuals' behavior shall be examined.

The choice of the simulation of a UNGA as setting for the study also denotes a practical application of the theory based questions. Political debates and negotiations (such as the General Assembly) often start out open, but end up in deadlocked repetitions of each party's standpoints. Often destructive behaviors and a heated climate can evolve. Many participants behave very different to their everyday lives when attending a political debate (Minard, 1952; Reitzes, 1953; see also Chapter 2.4.). I propose that these developments

are advantaged by the emergence of a very particular normality, in which competition and hardball tactics (such as using threats) are favored over cooperation, and ruthless behavior is perceived as common. Even though participants might generally favor deliberative strategies (for details, see Mansbridge & Martin, 2013), the perception and interpretation of others' behavior may serve as a standard, and therefore cause individuals to adapt their behavior and behavioral preferences (see, e.g., Cialdini et al., 1990). As illustrated in the *(false) uniqueness bias* (Goethals, Messick, & Allison, 1991), individuals tend to overestimate the sharedness of their undesirable attitudes, and conversely, to underestimate that of their desirable attitudes. Thus, in the context of this study, a more critical assessment of others' behavior and a more positive of individuals' own behavioral preferences and moral integrity can be assumed. A shift in the direction of more hardball-strategies would consequently be more probable. Since the participants are unable to access factors promoting alternatives (such as former experiences), they are mainly dependent on the information that is provided in the closed environment of the debate. As illustrated above, it is to be expected that during this process, the early encountered attitudinal and behavioral patterns will be less questioned and perceived as with fewer alternatives. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that rather negative and destructive strategies assert themselves; not because they are perceived as good and fair measures, but because they seem appropriate, normal and necessary.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

a) *It is hypothesized that in the early stage of the GA simulation, the participants' personal behavioral preferences will differ from the perceived descriptive norms. Individuals are assumed to indicate higher personal preferences of constructive and cooperation-based strategies compared to their perceptions of others' behavior. Vice versa, individuals, assumingly, will perceive destructive and competition-based strategies to be more normal for others than themselves.*

b) *It is hypothesized that during the simulation, individuals' personal behavioral preferences will shift towards the perceived descriptive norms.*

Hypothesis 2:

In the course of the GA simulation, certain procedures and strategies will become more normal for the participants. It is hypothesized that along with this becoming normal, the amount of retrievable alternatives to procedures and strategies within the GA simulation will significantly decrease.

Hypothesis 3:

Having encountered a stimulus, event or behavior primary (to another) in a new situation, often leads to its establishment as the not-in-focus background norm. In relation to this, it is hypothesized that during the simulation, a change in the level of focus occurs from the question if a certain behavior within the GA should be expressed to the question how it should be expressed.

4.2.2. Method

Participants

77 (39 female, 34 male, 4 did not indicate gender) German students of political science from the Friedrich Schiller University Jena participated in the study. The students were participants of a two-day simulation of the United Nations General Assembly, organized by their lecturers. For their participation in the simulation, students received course credit.

Procedure

Simulation of the United Nations General Assembly

In this simulation of the United Nations General Assembly, participants represent UN member states as delegates and hold a debate regarding an international issue. During the simulation, participants adopt the tone and rules of a real UN General Assembly. The objective was to acquaint participants with the typical procedures of a political debate through practical experience. In this simulation, 32 delegations (i.e., 32 countries) were represented. Participants were asked to faithfully represent the positions of their simulated delegation countries. The topic of the debate was a potential reform of the UN Security Council. Following the reading of the agenda, all delegation representatives gave an opening statement. The topic was then discussed in the plenum and draft resolutions formulated and proposed. Plenary phases and lobbying phases then alternated. In the lobbying phases, each delegation attempts to persuade the others of their standpoint, making coalitions and negotiating potential deals and compromises. At the end of the simulation, all delegations gathered once more in the plenum to vote for the different draft resolutions.

Procedure of the data collection

A longitudinal design was chosen for the study in order to examine changes over time. The study was conducted in July 2014, at a lecture hall in the Friedrich-Schiller-University Jena. The GA simulation is organized yearly for students of political science by the department of political science of the University Jena, and is part of the department's curriculum. Students receive credit points for their participation and

are graded for their performance. In preparation, students had studied background information about the UNGA, as well as rules of conduct and general procedures. The participants could choose which countries they represented for the simulation. Before the stimulation started, the gathered students were informed that a psychological study would be conducted independently from the purpose of the simulation, and in agreement with the responsible lecturers. Moreover, students were informed that the participation in the study would have no impact on the evaluation of their performance in the simulation. The simulation was held over two days. An identical survey was conducted at two points of measurement: firstly, at the beginning of the first plenary phase (time 1), in the morning of the first day, directly after a short welcoming. Secondly, at the end of the last plenary phase (time 2), in the afternoon of the second day, directly after the participants had voted for or against the draft resolutions.

Measures

Individuals' personal preferences of the use of different strategies in the simulation

Participants' preference regarding their personal usage of seven specific strategies (seeking for compromises, threatening, tit-for-tat, demonstrating own power, striving for the best result for the whole group, enforcing the own interests at all costs, giving in to objectively better arguments) and two rather general strategies (competition, cooperation) were examined. One item was used for each strategy (6-point Likert scale, from 0 = *not at all* to 5 = *very much*). Specifically, individuals were asked to indicate how normal it is for them to use the respective strategies in the simulation ("To what extent is it normal to you to use following strategies in the simulation of the General Assembly?"). Behavioral preferences were chosen as a measure as they reflect a preliminary stage of actual behavior. The wording of the items was chosen very specifically, in order to prevent individuals from just indicating their general beliefs towards the use of the respective strategies (see Paluck, 2009a), and to do justice to the complexity of reliably measuring behavior.

With regards to the strategy list, the objective was to choose strategies that are specifically relevant for this kind of political debate and moreover cover the broad spectrum from *deliberative negotiation* to *strategic hardball* (see, e.g., Mansbridge & Martin, 2013). As such, the nine strategies originate from literature regarding negotiations in political and/or conflicted contexts (Johnston, 1982; Lax & Sebenius, 1986; Thomas, 1992; Mansbridge & Martins, 2013). In addition, the strategy list was influenced by consultations of both former attendees, and prior conductors of the UN simulation (lecturers of the political science department).

Means and standard deviations of the personal preferences of strategy use are shown in Table 7 (Section 4.2.3.)., The intercorrelations of the participants' own behavioral preferences of the different strategies at the first and second point of measurement are shown in Table 1 and 2 respectively. Although

some of the items show moderate correlation, overall the different strategies appear to be statistically independent and distinct. The low correlations between the seven specific strategies and the two general strategies furthermore indicate that the former seem not to be contained within the latter, but can be seen as independent concepts. This finding is in line with the literature (see Johnston, 1982; Lax & Sebenius, 1986; Thomas, 1992; Mansbridge & Martins, 2013).

Table 1
Intercorrelations of individuals' personal preferences of the use of the strategies at time 1

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Compromises	–								
2. Threatening	-.033	–							
3. Tit-for-Tat	-.063	.247*	–						
4. Power	.029	.275*	.411**	–					
5. Best for all	-.037	-.123	-.144	-.152	–				
6. Own interests	-.158	.332*	.473**	.372**	-.215	–			
7. Best arguments	-.017	.055	-.018	-.189	.257*	-.175	–		
8. Cooperation	.208	-.009	-.199	.095	-.122	-.158	.023	–	
9. Competition	-.157	.222	.143	.170	.054	.214	.152	.160	–

Note. $N = 74\text{-}77$
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Table 2
Intercorrelations of individuals' personal preferences of the use of the strategies at time 2

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Compromises	–								
2. Threatening	-.118	–							
3. Tit-for-Tat	.004	.540**	–						
4. Power	-.027	.527**	.425**	–					
5. Best for all	.103	-.069	-.079	-.138	–				
6. Own interests	.108	.452**	.459**	.542**	-.164	–			
7. Best	.183	-.073	.044	-.184	.494**	-.057	–		
8. Cooperation	.252*	.027	.193	-.050	.096	.135	.007	–	
9. Competition	-.026	.266**	.255*	.253*	.031	.234*	-.022	.335**	–

Note. $N = 74\text{-}77$
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Perceived descriptive norms of strategy use

The descriptive norms of strategy use in the simulation were assessed by inquiring what is normal for the majority of participants within the simulation ("To what extent is it normal for others to use following

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strategies in the simulation of the General Assembly?"; for a similar approach, see Guimond et al., 2013). As a counterpart to individuals' personal strategy preferences, the perceived normality of the seven specific strategies and the two general strategies was examined. Also for the descriptive norms, one item was used for each strategy (6-point Likert scale, from 0 = *not at all* to 5 = *very much*). Means and standard deviations are presented in Table 6 (Section 4.3.4.). The intercorrelations of the perceived descriptive norms of strategy use are shown in Table 3 for the first point of measurement and in Table 4 for the second. Again, although some of the items show moderate correlation, overall the different strategies appear to be statistically independent and distinct.

Table 3
Intercorrelations of the perceived descriptive norms of strategy use at time 1

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Compromises	–								
2. Threatening	-.135	–							
3. Tit-for-Tat	-.049	.432**	–						
4. Power	-.121	.225*	.228*	–					
5. Best for all	.237*	-.120	-.021	.051	–				
6. Own interests	-.157	.320**	.197	.525**	-.154	–			
7. Best arguments	.267*	-.052	.249*	.000	.378**	-.002	–		
8. Cooperation	.239*	.064	.114	.030	.222	.005	.164	–	
9. Competition	.071	.118	.151	.028	.142	.095	.129	.487**	–

Note. N = 74-77
*p < .05, **p < .01

Table 4
Intercorrelations of the perceived descriptive norms of strategy use at time 2

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Compromises	–								
2. Threatening	.034	–							
3. Tit-for-Tat	-.009	.388**	–						
4. Power	.015	.306**	.220	–					
5. Best for all	.684**	-.003	-.026	-.169	–				
6. Own interests	-.016	.515**	.232*	.433**	-.176	–			
7. Best arguments	.439**	-.054	.018	-.139	.720**	-.235*	–		
8. Cooperation	.297**	-.024	.197	.071	.254*	.043	.149	–	
9. Competition	.063	.255*	.320**	.277*	.007	.398**	.046	.161	–

Note. N = 74-77
*p < .05, **p < .01

Perceived amount of alternatives

Four variables were used to assess the accessibility of alternatives to behaviors and procedures with regards to the GA simulation, selected based on input from previous conductors and attendees. The objective was to identify aspects for which alternatives are relevant in this specific simulation and that are also significant for the research questions. The variables were the quantity of general possibilities for compromises regarding the solution of conflicts within the GA, the quantity of applicable strategies, the number of general ways to hold a GA simulation, and the quantity of lecturers' potential methods for teaching about a GA. Participants were asked to estimate the amount of existing alternatives for each variable by drawing a vertical line at their chosen point, on a scale in form of a horizontal line, ranging from 0 to 25. The marked points were then measured and translated into their corresponding numeric values. The 0 to 25 range was based on former attendees' consultation. The means and standard deviations (at time 1 and time 2) of the different variables are shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Means and standard deviations of the amount of participants' accessible alternatives to different behaviors and procedures regarding the GA simulation

	Time 1	Time 2
	M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
General possibilities to compromise in the GA simulation	9.60 (5.45)	8.01 (5.75)
Applicable strategies in the GA simulation	11.24 (6.45)	10.96 (6.29)
General ways to hold a GA simulation	12.91 (5.80)	9.98 (5.86)
Lecturer's potential methods for teaching about a GA	8.20 (6.32)	8.18 (6.05)

Note. M = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation; GA = General Assembly; all variables ranged between 0 and 25

Level of focus: If versus how

The items regarding potential shifts of focus also corresponded to the consultation of the conductors of the simulation as well as former attendees. Participants were asked to indicate on a 6-point Likert scale (from 0 = *not at all* to 5 = *very much*) whether it plays an important role for them to choose a specific strategy (or specific mixture of strategies) for the GA simulation (global level; $M = 3.47$, $SD = 0.85$) and how important it was for them, how they would concretely use these strategies (concrete level; $M = 3.29$, $SD = 0.84$).

4.2.3. Results

Rankings of individuals' personal preferences of strategy use and the perceived norms at time 1 and 2

The descriptive data (for the 67 participants who answered all questions regarding all strategies) are shown in Table 6 and Table 7, ranked from strong to weak preferences / perceived preferences. At both

points of measurement, the participants perceived the use of the strategies "demonstrating own power" and "enforcing the own interests at all costs" as the most normal ones for other participants. For the use of the strategies of "giving in to the objectively better arguments" as well as "striving for the best result for the whole group," in contrast, the perceived descriptive norms were the lowest. Regarding their own behavior, participants at both points of measurement indicated to prefer the strategies "seeking for compromises" and "cooperation" the most, and "threatening" and "tit-for-tat" the least. A clear difference in the ranking order of perceptions of own and others' strategy use can therefore be observed. Whilst participants associated other participants' behavior with mostly hardball and competitive strategies, they themselves indicated a preference for compromise-associated and deliberative strategies.

Table 6
Means and standard deviations of the perceived descriptive norms of strategy use, ranked from strong preferences to weak preferences

	Time 1	Time 2
	M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
1. Demonstrating own power	3.99 (0.81)	3.93 (0.72)
2. Enforcing the own interests at all costs	3.90 (0.70)	3.85 (0.91)
3. Competition	3.58 (0.84)	3.76 (0.93)
4. Cooperation	3.43 (0.86)	3.07 (0.93)
5. Tit-for-tat	3.06 (0.92)	3.19 (1.09)
6. Seeking for compromises	3.06 (0.87)	2.81 (1.10)
7. Threatening	3.01 (1.09)	3.42 (0.97)
8. Striving for the best result for the whole group	2.31 (0.94)	2.33 (1.21)
9. Giving in to the objectively better arguments	2.25 (1.01)	2.15 (1.06)

Note. *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; all variables ranged from 0 = *not at all* to 5 = *very much; N* = 67

Table 7

Means and standard deviations of individuals' personal preferences of strategy use, ranked from strong preferences to weak preferences

	Time 1	Time 2
	M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
1. Seeking for compromises	4.37 (0.67)	3.96 (0.79)
2. Cooperation	3.75 (0.56)	3.54 (0.79)
3. Demonstrating own power	3.61 (1.00)	3.28 (1.04)
4. Competition	3.61 (0.92)	3.70 (0.89)
5. Enforcing the own interests at all costs	3.13 (0.97)	3.10 (1.02)
6. Striving for the best result for the whole group	2.99 (1.20)	3.15 (1.13)
7. Giving in to the objective best arguments	2.90 (0.98)	2.90 (1.10)
8. Tit-for-tat	2.40 (1.18)	2.58 (1.16)
9. Threatening	2.25 (1.15)	2.58 (1.18)

Note. M = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; all variables ranged from 0 = *not at all* to 5 = *very much; N* = 67

Differences between and changes of individuals' personal preferences of strategy use and the perceived descriptive norms

A study objective was the examination of whether perceived descriptive norms differ from participants' personal preferences pertaining to the use of the different strategies, and furthermore, of the development of this relationship during the simulation. A two-factor multivariate ANOVA with repeated measures was conducted, with the factors "point of measurement" (time 1 / time 2) and individuals' perceptions of own versus others' strategy usage preferences. The analyses included all seven specific and the two general strategies. Of the 77 participants, 67 complete data sets were obtained and included in the analysis. The multivariate tests yielded a main effect of who was addressee of the perception (others or self), $F(9, 58) = 12.93$, $p < .001$. The perceived descriptive norms significantly differed from participants' personal strategy usage preferences. Furthermore, the point of measurement had an effect on participants' perceptions of strategy use, $F(9, 58) = 4.64$, $p < .001$). The multivariate analysis yielded an overall significant change from time 1 to time 2. There was no significant interaction of the two factors in the multivariate tests, $F(9, 58) = 1.05$, $p = .414$. With all strategies included in the analyses, the perception of the use of strategies was not dependent on who was target of the assessment (self or others), or the point of measurement.

In the following, the results of the univariate tests are reported for all nine strategies. Whose behavior / behavioral preference was being assessed (self or others) had an effect on perceptions for all strategy use, aside from competition. Participants indicated that it is less normal for other participants to seek compromises than themselves, $F(1, 66) = 106.15$, $p < .001$, more normal for others to use threatening

as a strategy, $F(1, 66) = 65.53$, $p < .001$, more normal for others to use a tit-for-tat-strategy, $F(1, 66) = 28.80$, $p < .001$, more normal for others to demonstrate their own power, $F(1, 66) = 23.60$, $p < .001$, less normal for others to strive for the best result for the whole group, $F(1, 66) = 38.98$, $p < .001$, more normal for others to enforce the own interests at all costs, $F(1, 66) = 41.06$, $p < .001$, less normal for others to give in to objectively better arguments, $F(1, 66) = 38.05$, $p < .001$, and less normal for others to choose cooperation as a general strategy, $F(1, 66) = 18.04$, $p = .001$.

The analyses further yielded a significant influence of the point of time in the simulation on preferences for the use of four of the strategies (and a trend for a fifth). While participants at the second point of measurement perceived it as generally less normal to seek for compromises, $F(1, 66) = 11.28$, $p = .001$, and to use cooperation as a general strategy, $F(1, 66) = 14.45$, $p < .001$, they perceived it as more normal to use threats, $F(1, 66) = 11.42$, $p = .001$, choose a tit-for-tat-strategy (statistical trend), $F(1, 66) = 2.85$, $p = .096$, and to demonstrate the own power, $F(1, 66) = 5.75$, $p = .019$. Furthermore, the analyses yielded an interaction effect of who was being assessed and the time of measurement for the strategy of demonstrating power, $F(1, 66) = 4.14$, $p = .046$. This indicates that whilst participants preferred less to demonstrate power in the course of the simulation, they perceived no change regarding others' behavior. There were no further significant interaction effects. Overall, participants' personal preferences of strategy use and their perceptions of others' behavior have undergone a similar change during the simulation.

Correlations between the perceived descriptive norms and individuals' personal preferences of strategy use at time 1 and time 2

As a further supplement to the comparison of means, correlations were calculated between the perceived descriptive norms and individuals' personal preference for the use of each strategy. The results are shown in Table 8. For the most strategies, perceived norms and individuals' own preferences showed moderate correlation. Exclusively for the strategies of seeking for compromises and enforcing the own interests at all costs the analyses yielded no significant correlation at the beginning of the simulation. One could conclude that the participants deviated from the norms regarding the use of these strategies. The correlations were assessed as to whether the relationship between the participants' personal strategy preferences and the perceived norms changed during the simulation. The results show that the relations grew tighter in the course of the simulation for the strategies of enforcing the own interests at all costs and tit-for-tat. Similar tendencies can also be observed for the strategy of seeking for compromises. In contrast, an opposed trend can be observed for the strategy of striving for the best result for the whole group.

Table 8

Correlations between the perceived descriptive norms and individuals' personal preferences of strategy use at time 1 and time 2

Personal preferences		Descriptive norms								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Compromises	T1	.052								
	T2	.159								
2. Threatening	T1		.567**							
	T2		.558**							
3. Tit-for-Tat	T1			.320**						
	T2			.534**						
4. Power	T1				.459**					
	T2				.430**					
5. Best for all	T1					.462**				
	T2					.377**				
6. Own interests	T1						-.038			
	T2						.230*			
7. Best arguments	T1							.425**		
	T2							.411**		
8. Cooperation	T1								.416**	
	T2								.351**	
9. Competition	T1									.411**
	T2									.437**

Note. T1 = Time 1; T2 = Time 2
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Adaptation of individuals' personal preferences of strategy use to the perceived descriptive norms

A main study objective was to further examine the relation between the perception of descriptive norms and individuals' behavioral preferences. In particular, to what extent would participants shift their personal behavioral preferences towards the currently perceived norms? This was examined on both group and individual levels.

Shifts of individuals' personal preferences of strategy use on a group level

In order to assess shifts of individuals' personal preferences of strategy use on the group level, the first step was to calculate difference values between the averaged descriptive norms at time 1 and (a) the averaged strategy preferences at time 1, as well as (b) the averaged strategy preferences at time 2. Means

and standard deviations for each strategy are presented in Table 9. Individuals' personal preferences of strategy use were hypothesized to shift towards the descriptive norms perceived at the start. Such a shift is statistically indicated when the difference values between the perceived descriptive norms (measured at time 1) and individuals' preferences are significantly lower at the second point of measurement. A repeated measures MANOVA was run to examine the effect of point of measurement on the nine strategies. The multivariate test yielded a significant effect, $F(9, 62) = 3.85$ $p = .001$. The difference values generally significantly changed from time 1 to time 2. The univariate tests (within-subject) revealed that time of measurement had an effect on four difference values. Compared to time 1, individuals' preferences at time 2 were significantly closer to the descriptive norms (at time 1) for the strategies of seeking for compromises, $F(1, 70) = 15.60$, $p < .001$, threatening, $F(1, 70) = 6.73$, $p = .012$, and cooperation, $F(1, 70) = 4.27$, $p = .042$. Thus, for these strategies, as time went on, the participants seem to have shifted their preferences of strategy use according to what they had perceived as the descriptive norms at the beginning of the simulation. For the strategy of demonstrating power, the individuals' preferences shifted in the opposite direction of the descriptive norms $F(1, 70) = 9.37$, $p = .003$).

Table 9
Means and standard deviations of difference values between the perceived descriptive norms and individuals' personal preferences of strategy use at time 1 and 2

	Time 1	Time 2
	M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
Seeking for compromises	-1.34* (1.11)	-0.93* (1.21)
Threatening	0.80* (1.09)	0.42* (1.12)
Tit-for-Tat	0.68 (1.25)	0.46 (1.26)
Demonstrating own power	0.37* (0.97)	0.75* (1.17)
Striving for the best result for the whole group	-0.76 (1.15)	-0.85 (1.15)
Enforcing the own interests at all costs	0.83 (1.23)	0.83 (1.18)
Giving in to the objectively better arguments	-0.65 (1.10)	-0.65 (1.36)
Cooperation	-0.31* (0.82)	-0.11* (0.98)
Competition	-0.03 (0.96)	-0.12 (0.88)

Note. Means were tested for statistical differences between time 1 and time 2; $N = 71$
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Influence of perceived descriptive norms on individuals' personal preferences of strategy use on an individual level

In order to measure the influence of the perceived descriptive norms at the beginning of the simulation on individuals' preferences of strategy use at the end of the simulation on an individual level, a cross-lagged panel model was processed. In a cross-lagged panel model, a variable (at the second point of

measurement) is regressed on a second variable, which is hypothesized to affect the first variable, as well as on itself at the first point of measurement (to control the effect; see, e.g., Reinders, 2006; Kessler et al., 2010). The cross-lagged regression approach shows how individuals were influenced by the perceived descriptive norms in their personal preferences of strategy use. The approach also assesses potential contrary and bidirectional causalities. In addition to the assessment of potential predictions of individuals' preferences by the perceived descriptive norms, potential predictions of the perception of descriptive norms by individuals' personal preferences of strategy use were examined. The results are shown inTable 10. The analyses yielded significant effects for the regression models in the hypothesized direction for the strategies of threatening ($\beta = 0.36$, $p = .002$) and competition ($\beta = 0.27$, $p = .020$). The perception of other participants' behavior at the beginning of the simulation significantly affected the participants' preferences at a later point of the simulation, respectively, significantly explains changes in individuals' preferences that occurred during the simulation. For the strategy of threatening, this effect of shifting towards the descriptive norms was particularly strong. The strategy striving for the best result for the whole group was on the edge of significance ($\beta = 0.22$, $p = .057$). For the strategies of tit-for-tat ($\beta = 0.28$, $p = .016$) and enforcing the own interests at all costs ($\beta = 0.30$, $p = .008$), individuals' preferences of strategy use seem to have rather predicted the perception of descriptive norms than the other way around. Higher preference scores at the beginning of the simulation here seem to have caused perceptions of stronger norms at the end of the simulation.

Table 10
Results of the cross-lagged regression analyses

Variable A *(Perceived descriptive norms)*	Variable B *(Individuals' preferences)*	Variable B regressed on A[a]	Variable A regressed on B[b]
Seeking for compromises	Seeking for compromises	-.05, n.s.	-.18, n.s.
Threatening	Threatening	.36, $p = .002$	.02, n.s.
Tit-for-tat	Tit-for-tat	-.19, n.s.	.28, $p = .016$
Demonstrating own power	Demonstrating own power	.06, n.s.	.08, n.s.
Striving for the best result for the whole group	Striving for the best result for the whole group	.22, $p = .057$	.01, n.s.
Enforcing the own interests at all costs	Enforcing the own interests at all costs	.13, n.s.	.30, $p = .008$
Giving in to the objectively better arguments	Giving in to the objectively better arguments	.03, n.s.	.08, n.s.
Cooperation	Cooperation	.19, n.s.	-.01, n.s.
Competition	Competition	.27, $p = .020$	.14, n.s.

Note. [a]Variable B (at time 2), regressed on A (at time 1; controlling B at time 1); [b]Variable A (at time 2), regressed on B (at time 1; controlling A at time 1)

Shifts of individuals with (at the beginning) low versus high scores for their preferences of the different strategies

In order to gain further insight into the processes of the emergence of norms and shifts of behavioral preferences in a new social context, additional analyses were conducted. Simple comparisons of means lack to identify shifts in cases when they occur from both sides/ends of the spectrum and go towards a center score. As a result, these shifts towards the center might have gone undetected. Participants with strong or weak preferences of strategy use at the beginning of the simulation might both factually shift – but potentially in different directions. To test this assumption, median splits were conducted for the preference scores of each strategy and the resulting two groups of participants were examined in separate tests. Since the participants differed in their starting scores with regard to the different strategies, separate t-tests were conducted, for each strategy comparing means at time 1 and time 2. The respective means and standard deviations are shown in Table 11. With regards to the majority of strategies, for individuals who reported a weak preference at the beginning, the preference significantly increased along the simulation; threatening: $t(43) = -4.42$, $p < .001$; tit-for-tat: $t(35) = -2.88$, $p = .007$; striving for the best result for the whole group: $t(25) = -4.60$, $p < .001$; enforcing the own interests at all costs: $t(17) = -2.61$, $p = .018$; giving in to the objectively best arguments: $t(22) = -3.23$, $p = .004$; cooperation: $t(25) = -2.29$, $p = .31$; competition: $t(32) = -3.87$, $p = .001$. Regarding more than half of the strategies, for individuals who reported a rather strong

preference at the beginning, the preference significantly decreased along the simulation; seeking for compromises: $t(34) = 5.72$, $p < .001$; demonstrating own power; $t(49) = 4.26$, $p < .001$; striving for the best result for the whole group: $t(49) = 1.99$, $p = .052$; giving in to the objectively best arguments: $t(53) = 2.15$, $p = .037$; cooperation: $t(50) = 4.03$, $p < .001$; competition: $t(43) = 3.10$, $p = .003$. Thus, participants' personal preferences of strategy use seem to have shifted towards a center score, which is reflected by the means of all participants' behavioral preferences as well as the perceived norms regarding the respective strategies (see Tables 6 and 7).

Table 11
Means and standard deviations of personal preferences of strategy use at time 1 and 2 for individuals with low and high scores for preferences at time 1

| | | preference weak at time 1 | | | preference strong at time 1 | |
| | | time 1 | time 2 | | time 1 | time 2 |
	n	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*	*n*	*M (SD)*	*M (SD)*
Seeking for compromises	42	3.86 (0.42)	3.76 (0.62)	35	5.00*** (0.00)	4.17 (0.86)
Threatening	44	1.32*** (0.64)	2.09 (1.01)	33	3.30 (0.53)	3.18 (1.10)
Tit-for-tat	36	1.36** (0.68)	1.92 (0.84)	39	3.36 (0.54)	3.23 (1.01)
Demonstrating own power	26	2.54 (0.76)	2.73 (0.72)	50	4.28*** (0.45)	3.66 (1.08)
Striving for the best result for the whole group	26	1.73*** (0.60)	2.54 (1.07)	50	3.78 (0.79)	3.44 (0.99)
Enforcing the own interests at all costs	18	1.72* (0.46)	2.39 (0.98)	58	3.53 (0.57)	3.33 (0.96)
Giving in to the objectively better	23	1.57** (0.66)	2.30 (0.97)	54	3.41* (0.5)	3.09 (1.05)
Cooperation	26	3.00* (0.00)	3.23 (0.51)	51	4.10*** (0.30)	3.63 (0.82)
Competition	33	2.70** (0.47)	3.30 (0.85)	44	4.25* (0.44)	3.95 (0.75)

Note. Means were tested for statistical differences between time 1 and time 2, separately for individuals with weak and strong preferences at time 1; *M* = mean; *SD* = standard deviation; all variables ranged from 0 = *not at all* to 5 = *very much*
*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

Shift of focus: From if to how

T-tests were conducted to analyze whether the participants' focus regarding their strategy use shifted from a higher level of abstraction, to a lower level. The focus on whether to choose a certain strategy or set of strategies, $t(70) = -0.86$, $p = .39$, nor the focus on how to exactly use the selected strategies, $t(73)$

= -0.51, p = .609, significantly changed along the process of the simulation. In order to compare the relationship between the focus on a higher and lower level at time 1 and time 2, difference values of the two focus levels were calculated for each time of measurement. Subsequently, the difference of these difference values between the first and second point of measurement were assessed. Again, the t-test did not yield a significant effect, $t(69)$ = -.20, p = .843. Thus, no shift in the relation between focus on a higher and lower level of abstraction could be observed.

Accessibility of alternatives

To test the hypothesis regarding a change of accessibility of alternatives for different procedures and usages of strategies along the simulation, dependent t-tests (comparing each of the scores at time 1 and time 2) were conducted. The analyses reveal a significant effect of point of measurement on the estimated amount of alternatives regarding possibilities to compromise, $t(76)$ = 2.41, p = .018, and alternative ways to hold a GA simulation, $t(75)$ = 3.68, p < .001. Individuals' estimates of the amount of alternatives decreased with the timely progress of the GA. In the course of the simulation, the participants saw less general possibilities of compromises that could lead to a solution of the conflicts in the simulation. Moreover, the participants could imagine less alternative ways to hold a GA simulation. For the amount of accessible strategies in the GA, $t(75)$ = 0.21, p = .832, as well as the estimated amount of alternative teaching methods, $t(75)$ = -0.11, p = .912, no significant changes could be observed.

4.2.4. Discussion

As an introduction to the discussion, a short overview of the results shall be given and in very broad terms discussed in relation to the theoretical background, the hypotheses and the models of normality and shifts of normality. After this section, specific results will be discussed and incorporated in more detail, and regarding their relevance in their specific fields. A further integration of the results in the context of the two models within the scope of this dissertation's further studies will be provided in the general discussion (Chapter 5.). In the same chapter, the results will also be discussed in reference to the in the introduction illustrated current societal dynamics.

The main focus of this study was to examine the process of norm emergence and evolvement in a context for which previously no clear norms existed. Moreover, it was a central objective to assess the newly emerged norms' effect on individuals' behavioral preferences and acceptance. These questions were examined in a longitudinal design and in an applied setting, specifically, in a simulation of the UN General Assembly. Another particular contribution of this study was the assessment of the effects that the experience of the emergence of certain norms has on the accessibility of alternatives. At the beginning of the simulation, the participants indicated a high personal preference for deliberative strategies, and a low preference for

hardball-tactics, such as threatening. In contrast, they perceived other participants to use more hardball- and less deliberative strategies. Although the ranking of individuals' personal preferences regarding the use of the strategies did not change notably in the course of the simulation, all in all, individuals' preferences for deliberative strategies decreased (i.e., they were less willing to seek for compromises and to support cooperation), whereas their acceptance and preference of hardball strategies increased (i.e., the use of threats). In that process, personal preferences regarding the use of threats and a competition-focused approach shifted towards (respectively, were adapted to) the perceived descriptive norms. Perceiving greater use of these strategies by others led participants to more deeply incorporate said strategies in their own behavioral patterns. For the strategy of enforcing the own interests at all costs, the role descriptive norms played increased markedly during the simulation. These results underline the important role of early stage discourse and perceptions and interpretations of others' behavior and behavioral preferences. Furthermore, it highlights the relevance of the process of negotiating norms for individuals' acceptance and preference of their own behavior. Norms appeared to have been (implicitly or explicitly) negotiated commonly between the participants. Within that process, the perceptions of others' behavior, each individual's (past) own behavioral preferences and the average of all individuals' personal behavioral preferences interacted in a complex manner to shape individuals' current and future behavioral preferences.

It is notable that shifts of behavioral preferences occurred especially for behaviors that in most contexts are devaluated. After experiencing the behavior of others in the simulation, behaviors (i.e., the hardball strategies) that might be generally opposed by the individuals and were less accepted in the beginning of the simulation, gave the impression of becoming less inappropriate and increasingly justified. Interestingly, the results further show that for most strategies, individuals who had a rather strong or weak preference of a certain strategy significantly shifted towards a center score. During the simulation, individuals' preferences approached the means of all participants' preferences as well as the perceived descriptive norms. It appears that within the discourse, a mutual convergence and/or corrections of the individuals' preferences occurred, leading the more extreme individuals to adapt their behavior to the average preferences as the newly established group norm.

With regards to potential shifts in the level of focus in the usage of certain strategies, no significant change could be observed. The quantity of estimations of alternatives regarding possibilities to compromise and alternative ways to hold a General Assembly decreased significantly with time. The establishment of the particular experience as normal, thus, seems to have led to a diminishing of certain alternatives. All findings are further discussed and integrated below.

With regards to the model of normality and the model of shifts of normality, the findings of the study primarily underline four aspects. Firstly, an individuals' convergence towards others is highlighted; other individuals play a particularly strong role in shaping an individuals' normality perceptions.

Interestingly, the results indicate that the processes of orientation, shifts and adaptation seem to be more complex and subtle than is often assumed. As a second crucial finding, the results illustrate the tight interweaving and mutual influence of the perception of descriptive norms, the expression of own behavior, and how these in turn serve as part of the descriptive norms for others. The self-perpetuating and -strengthening character of normality emergence and its consequences are highlighted throughout the study. Thirdly, regarding the assumptions of the models, it was found that a fixed normality can evolve quickly and with little reflection. The sole perception or expression of a certain behavior can already have an enduring effect on both an individuals' perceptions of what is normal, and the accompanying deductions and behavioral consequences. Finally, the diminishing of cognitive accessibility of alternatives to a certain behavior gives insight into the evolution of normality accompanying elements. The perception or expression of a certain behavior already leads to the perception of fewer alternatives. As illustrated previously, we can assume that this will in turn strengthen individuals' perception of the respective behavior as normal und therefore not requiring explanation.

Individuals' personal behavioral preferences and acceptance and descriptive norms: perceptions and shifts

The finding of differences between perceptions of others' behavior and individuals' personal preferences and acceptance is in line with a range of studies on the relation between descriptive norms and attitudes (e.g., Buckley, Harvey, & Beu, 2000; Guimond et al., 2013). As noted in the theoretical background, individuals' preference and acceptance of a certain behavior can be understood as a pre-level of behavior, which is allocated between individuals' attitudes and factual behavior. Since this effect of differential perception applies for almost all participants, the presence of a commonly shared bias is likely. The observed differences can reflect an over- or underestimation of the approval or expression of the behaviors for the others', or one self's behavior. For example, research on pluralistic ignorance has shown that individuals often (mistakenly) perceive others to commit and agree to more unethical behavior than themselves (Buckley, et al., 2000; Halbesleben & Buckley, 2004). According to Watt and Larkin (2010) as well as Strube and Rahimi (2006), individuals may be motivated to justify their own less acceptable behaviors by imagining them to be widely shared or even exceeded by others. In line with the assumptions of the uniqueness bias (Goethals et al., 1991), individuals perceived comparatively positive strategies (such as seeking for compromises) as less normal for others than themselves, whereas they perceived rather negative strategies (such as to use threats) as more normal for others than themselves. The perception of widely shared and strong usage of relatively unethical strategies may give individuals the social permission to behave more unethical themselves. The indications above are of highly practical relevance, as they reflect dynamics that might explain problematic evolvements in society in which intentions can be unclear, but destructive behavior is nevertheless expressed. As an extreme example, the act of killing (in certain contexts)

has been shown to take place, without individuals' according beliefs, attitudes of hatred, or a general agreeing to the deed. Instead, individuals seem to have killed based on the notion that killing was necessary and socially acceptable (Straus, 2006; Paluck, 2009a; Fujii, 2009).

The influence descriptive norms had on using threats and a competition-focused approach as well as the shifts of individuals' preferences and acceptance of deliberative (to the lower) and hardball strategies (to the higher), gives insights into the evolution of potentially harmful behaviors. Perceived peer behavior appears to play a particular important role when it comes to negative and usually unaccepted and inappropriate behaviors. In this study, the perception of others' usage of, for example, threats, might have indicated individuals that using threats indeed is an accepted, appropriate and potentially even necessary strategy in this context. Following the assumptions of Crandall and Eshleman's justification-suppression model (2003), observing others acting out these supposedly unaccepted behaviors, may have in this context led individuals to suppress these less themselves, and/or perceive them as justified. Thus, extreme behavior might not only be performed by individuals who are at the margins of the societal spectrum (as it is often perceived and proclaimed; for thoughts on definitions on the center of society as well as the extremes; see, e.g., Rommelspacher, 2011; Heitmeyer, 2017). Instead, individuals might be capable of extreme behaviors when they perceive them to be in line with the descriptive norms and/or as a result of dynamics of mutual spiraling effects. To what extent the respective individuals and respective societal groups are aware of the potential extremity, is another question. This will be examined in Chapters 4.5-4.10. In any case, it would seem that the center of a group/society is also not immune to extreme behaviors.

Interestingly, as shown by this study, the perceptions of others' behavior do not need to be accurate in order to have an effect on individuals' behavioral preferences and acceptance. Every piece of information, be it based on factual norms, misperceived norms or other factors, appears to be influential in potential shifts of behavior – since in a discourse, every individual influences every other individual and norm information are exchanged all the time (e.g., Stangor & Leary, 2006). As illustrated in the model of normality previously, not only individuals' perception of others' behavior, but also their own behavior, influences the normality of the group (e.g., Paluck & Shepherd, 2012). Therefore, the increase in the acceptance of threatening on the basis of an (adequate or inadequate) perception of sharedness may lead to the manifestation of threatening as an appropriate strategy both within the context of the GA simulation, and possibly even external of it (see also Prentice & Miller, 1993; Halbesleben, 2004).

Crucially, the influence of discourse and mutual adaptation is also reflected in the shifts from the extremes of the spectrum of behavioral preferences and acceptance towards the center. Instead of polarizing or shifting to one extreme mutually (as it is described by the phenomenon of group think; Janis, 1982), participants appear to have used the average of others' behaviors as a standard for orientation. This is a particularly interesting result, as it is questionable whether the participants did consciously process this

aggregate of behaviors. A relevant precondition for this behavioral trend may be that from the start, the sample was not strongly polarized or leaning into a particular direction. An explanation for the adaptation to the center might be the fact that the participants shared reality – and were brought into accord and mutual agreement by that experience (see Chapter 2.3.; see also Hardin & Higgins, 1996). As noted previously, individuals might have implicitly agreed on a common ground for the personal usage of most strategies. Interestingly, this is not explicitly reflected in the participants' indications of their perceptions of others' behavior. Exactly why this is the case, is a matter of speculation. Potentially, instead of shifting the personal attitudes solely towards the perceived norms or group extremes, participants might have adapted their preferences and acceptance to what can be called the *mainstream culture* of the General Assembly simulation. In a survey study, Saito assessed the influence of television on traditional values. Against Saito's assumptions, conservatives were not pulled to more traditional views by watching television but instead were liberated. More liberal viewers, in contrast, showed partially more conservative views after watching television. Saito explained the differential effects for very liberal and very conservative viewers by arguing that both groups were "out of sync with the cultural mainstream" (Saito, 2007, p. 526). The cultural mainstream here reflected an unspoken center of values and preferences. As watching mainstream television brought Saito's participants in sync with a more general societal mainstream culture, participants in the current study may in turn also have become in sync with a specific mainstream culture of the GA simulation, which was reflected by the average of participants' factual behavioral preferences.

Shift of focus and decrease of alternatives

There was no difference between an individuals' focus on an abstract level of behavior to that of a process-related focus at the start and end of the simulation. A potential explanation might be that considering exactly how to use a certain fixed set of strategies is already inherent in choosing a particular set of strategies. This explanation is supported by the fact that individuals indicated a strong focus on both levels from the beginning. An alternative explanation might simply be that, due to the in this study chosen wording, the relevant items were not properly distinguishable for the participants.

In line with the hypotheses, the amount of estimated alternatives regarding possibilities to compromise and alternative ways to hold a GA simulation significantly decreased. These results show that once a normality is attained, not only are individuals less motivated to generate reasons for alternatives (see Eidelman & Crandall, 2009a), but are factually less capable of actually finding or imagining alternatives to that which has become the norm. By implication, when a certain behavior or stimulus is established as the norm, it appears to have fewer alternatives than before. Simply expressing the specific behavior or encountering a specific stimulus appears to be sufficient for a decrease of cognitive alternatives. As previously stated, the potentially problematic role of a decrease of alternatives is illustrated in the variations

of the Milgram experiments (e.g., Milgram, 1963; Milgram, 1982). The presentation of different alternatives to the use of electro shocks as a measure of punishment, led to a weaker preference of the shocks. Marks and Duval (1991) had further shown the relation between the accessibility of alternatives and estimates of group consensus (see Chapter 2.2.1.). A vicious circle occurs: The establishment of a behavior or stimulus as the status quo leads to a decrease of alternatives. This in turn, leads to the behavior to appear to be supported by the social consensus, and heightens the probability of being supported and expressed by an individual. As shown, the establishment of a certain behavior as the norm can happen after a single observation or expression. In this study, the effects of a decreasing accessibility of alternatives have been shown for two of the four stimuli-alternative pairs. In future research, it is yet to be investigated what factors may lead to this discrepancy of application.

Strengths and limitations

A strength of the study is the application of processes of norm emergence and influence in the field of political debate. However, a shortcoming of this applied approach, is the relatively low level of control of what happens during the debate. In particular, the unofficial meetings between the plenary phases of the GA were unpredictable in their effects, though not of great relevance for the objectives of this study. A principal detail in confirming validity of the theoretical model and propositions, is that the changes occurred after only a short time already, namely, a day and a half. Despite the expected effect of memory upon results, significant changes could be observed. Future studies could aim to improve upon the item-wording utilized for examining the level of focus. In addition, individuals' actual behavior as well as individuals' beliefs could be measured and included into a common model.

Implications for assemblies

The results indicate that for the ongoing dynamics in a UN General Assembly or a comparable political debate, the early perceived and established norms are decisive. The behavior exhibited during early stages by different parties and individuals, and how this behavior is received, shapes all participants' perceptions of what is normal, appropriate and accepted in this particular context. This consequently leads to individuals' shifting their behavior accordingly. Behaviors that usually are seen as inappropriate and sanctionable, such as using threats to reach a goal, might present themselves to be particularly more justifiable and less suppressable when seemingly widely accepted. As a potential result of the adaptation to the perceived norms, by showing more aggressive behavior themselves, participants in a political debate might, in turn, shape the normality of others. As undesirable behaviors generally tend to be perceived as more widely shared than desirable behaviors (Goethals et al., 1991), they are more prone to be used. To counter these dynamics, the results of the study indicate two potential methods by which an assembly can

be directed towards more positive dynamics. Firstly, a high diverse and balanced composition of individuals regarding the preference spectrum for different strategies might benefit a shift rather towards a moderate group center than to the extremes. Secondly, a more benevolent and trusting perception of other individuals and parties as well as more constructive and less aggressive behavior at an early stage of a debate might lead to more constructive dynamics and adaption processes towards more fair, deliberative and potentially even benevolent behavior.

4.3.   Study 2: The emergence and influence of normality in social settings (2)

4.3.1.   Theoretical background

Contributions to the models of normality and shifts of normality

The study contributes to the models of normality and shifts of normality, by examining the influence of normality and normativity on reality perceptions and the behavioral level. The study assesses the spiraling and self-perpetuating effects of normality perceptions. Specifically, it examines to what extent individuals deduce prescription from descriptive information. The focus is placed on the following questions: In what way does this deduction affect individuals' behavior? And how does an individual's behavior, in turn, influence others' perception and anticipation of norms? In this study, different promotive factors are examined and compared regarding their effects and interplay. Of particular relevance is a comparison between norm information developed in the long term, to situationally implied descriptive norms. As a further contribution, the study shall also highlight the potentially arbitrary and fact-independent character of developments of normality perceptions, deductions and respective behavioral consequences.

Influence of normality and normativity perceptions in the sphere of voting behavior

In the weeks and months before an election, the same question always presents itself: How can political parties convince the electorate to vote for them? In relation to this initial query, supplementary questions (particularly for researchers) may arise: What influences voting behavior in general? Which party may have an advantage in the current political climate? To what extent might the status quo of political power be self-sustaining, and how can this status quo be changed? Throughout this dissertation, I have indicated that the perception of normality and inferences to standards of orientation, normativity and objective reality affect individuals' behavior in many domains. In the context of (potential changes of) voting behavior, Noelle-Neuman (1980) has stated in the spiral of silence hypothesis that perceptions of majority opinions can be decisively behavior-guiding. Perceptions of public support for a certain opinion have been shown to lead this respective opinion to become widely shared and approved (Noelle-Neuman,

1993; Prentice & Miller, 1993). Accordingly, it has been indicated that descriptive norms can influence voters' behavior and hence elections.

It is important to note that Noelle-Neumann has proposed and tested the spiral of silence primarily with regard to the public opinion as conveyed by the media. Moreover, the research and generation of the model were both performed some time ago, in the 1970s-90s. In relation to this dissertation's propositions of a model of normality, it is essential to have more recent and contextual examinations of influences of normality and normativity perceptions on voting behavior; investigation in this direction shall take place within this study. Therefore, this study pursues three objectives: Firstly, to test propositions of the models of normality and normality shifts. Secondly, to extend the research in the field of the spiral of silence theory. Thirdly, to assess practically implied questions regarding the influence of voting behavior.

The theoretical basis will be illustrated in detail in the following sections. It will begin with a short review of the role of descriptive norms in behavior change. Then, the influence of descriptive norms in the context of voting behavior will be described, and the spiral of silence hypothesis explained in further depth, with a focus on potential gaps. The theoretical background will conclude with a description of the specific context of the study, the objects of examination and the hypotheses.

Review: The role of (descriptive) norms in behavior change

As illustrated, individuals perceive descriptive norms as orientation standards for what to think and how to behave in a certain context, and amongst certain groups of people. As a consequence, individuals tend to shift their attitudes towards the norms, even without being consciously aware of it, often in automatic processes (see also Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). For a long time, the impact of pure descriptive information was understated (compared to norms that directly imply prescriptivity). However, Tankard and Paluck (2016) asserted that in many cases of norm influence the informative value is decisive. Paluck and Shepherd (2012), in that context, call the alignment of attitudes and the "behavioral conformity to the perceived group consensus […] a normal, universal process" (p. 34). In Chapter 2.4.2., I have already explicated a few domains, in which the influence of descriptive norms has been illustrated. In particular, it was shown that the presentation of manipulated social consensus information has been effective in changing attitudes and behavior (see also Wittenbrink & Henley, 1996; Stangor et al., 2001). The current study continues the tradition of examining and highlighting the influence of social norms in a setting, in which no direct evaluation by others, nor threats of social sanctions are implied. As such, the informative value of the presented norms will be in the foreground.

Descriptive norms in the context of voting behavior

As I have illustrated in the theoretical background of this dissertation, micro- and macro-information about what is normal stems from many diverse sources and are encountered in different processes. For example, the frequency in which a stimulus is encountered, the temporal order and the perception of social sharedness all play a major role in the constitution of normality. In this process, it is not guaranteed that individuals always correctly reflect the given information. For instance, as illustrated in Chapter 2.2., the false consensus effect captures the phenomenon of individuals' overestimation of the social sharedness of their own attitudes, behaviors and choices (e.g., Marks & Miller, 1987). Therefore, certain opinions and behaviors individuals already have acquired are likely to be maintained or even strengthened under the implicit impression of a supporting social consensus (e.g., Baumann & Geher, 2002). As illustrated in Chapter 2.3., these perceptions of social sharedness are maintained and strengthened by the process of individuals seeking information that confirms their sense of the world and distorted extrapolation due to selective exposure effects, leading to a more frequent encounter of similar opinions (e.g., Crocker, 1981; Nickerson, 1998). However, Taylor (1982) as well as Baumann and Geher (2002) have indicated that confrontation with contradicting or changed/changing descriptive norms might cause an according shift of an individual's opinions and behaviors. In some cases and situations, individuals may not have acquired a fixed norm at the point of stimulus-encounter and therefore have no reference model upon which they can base their reactions. Consequently, conformity to peer norms has been shown to be especially strong in situations of uncertainty (Smith et al., 2007). With uncertainty, individuals' needs for behavior-guiding norm standards increases (e.g., Kruglanski et al., 2006). Thus, perceptions of what others do become a more valuable source of orientation.

As previously noted, in the context of voting behavior, the above illustrated phenomena and processes might have crucial consequences. A person that has a rather conservative circle of acquaintances, for instance, may generally overestimate the percentage of voters of the conservative party among the society (see Crocker, 1981; Marks & Miller, 1987). The perception of stronger than expected support in a specific context might strengthen the general certainty by an individual that their own choice is shared by others, and lead to according behavioral consequences. What will happen though, if an individual that considers himself as following the majority opinion is confronted with information that raises doubts about the strength of support? How, for example, would a voter of the conservative party react to the sudden perception of a stronger societal support of the more liberal and left parties? Surprise and/or an adaptation of attitudes or behavior might be the reaction. In addition, a person who does not feel represented by any party, is voting for the first time, or who sympathizes with a controversially discussed party, might be uncertain about their choice. Observing what significant others do or what is commonly done might be perceived as a particular valuable orientation anchor and guide the political opinion and voting behavior.

The first hypothesis of this study addresses these questions and makes assumptions about how support / non-support leads to an increase / decrease of individuals' willingness to speak out publicly.

The dynamics and shifts of behavior that perceptions of majority and minority can spark (be it intentionally or unintentionally, implicit or explicit) are well captured in the phenomenon of pluralistic ignorance (see Chapter 2.4. for an extensive illustration; see also Prentice & Miller, 1993). In a similar notion, the concept of the spiral of silence (e.g., Noelle-Neumann, 1974; Noelle-Neumann, 1981; Noelle-Neumann, 1993) captures a part of the processes that are of interest for this study. The concept illustrates processes and consequences of descriptive norms and dynamics within the context of voting behavior, and shall therefore serve as a framework for this study. In the following sections, the spiral of silence theory will be illustrated in greater detail and discussed in the context of the current study.

The spiral of silence

The spiral of silence theory (e.g., Noelle-Neumann, 1974; Noelle-Neumann, 1981; Noelle-Neumann, 1993) states that individuals' willingness to pronounce their opinion publicly depends on their perceptions of the public opinion climate. Individuals assume the current opinion climate to represent the present and future majority or minority regarding an issue. Noelle-Neumann (1980) claimed that when the prevailing opinion climate is perceived as being opposed to an individual's opinion, the individual's willingness to publicly show support for this party declines. Noelle-Neumann further proposed that this decrease would lead others to perceive the opinion climate as even less supporting; thus, in turn, inhibiting their willingness to speak out. Noelle-Neumann (1973) described this process as a downward spiral, turning an opinion that has (correctly or falsely) been perceived as being predominant into a factual majority based opinion – and, vice versa, an actually majority supported opinion into a minority and deviant one. As a driving force of this spiral, Noelle-Neumann proposed the individuals' fear to be isolated in and from society (Noelle-Neumann, 1980). As stated previously, Noelle-Neumann noted that individuals receive the information about the current opinion climate mainly from the mass media. It follows that she assumed the mass media to be a major source in learning what is normal and preferable in a society (see also Cheé & Eilders, 2015). What makes the theory particularly interesting in this dissertation's context, is the notion that not only does it describe a spiral effect of public opinion and willingness to speak out publicly, but also more generally contributes to explaining behavior change based on normality perceptions.

Context of the study

As illustrated in the first two sections of this study, the current examination shall contribute to this dissertation's models of normality and shifts of normality as well as to research on influences upon voting behavior. To this end, the study assesses the impact of perceived norms on individuals' willingness to

express their political opinion in public. The study compares the influence of different sources of norms, namely, descriptive norm information within a specified situation, perceptions of the media climate, anticipations of friends' attitudes, and individuals' former decisions. The critical question is, how do these different sources contribute to an increase or decrease in willingness to speak out publicly about a preferred political party. To my knowledge, this is the first study to make a general comparison of the effects of these different sources and, specifically in the context of voting behavior.

As illustrated, I used the spiral of silence theory as a theoretical sub-framework (see Noelle-Neuman, 1980). The spiral of silence theory is established in the context of examinations of norm influence in the public sphere. However, some aspects of the spiral of silence theory have been challenged throughout the years (see Moreno-Riaño, 2002; Mayer-Uellner, 2003). The theory assumes explicit and direct normative influence, and resulting fear of isolation as primarily driving motivational force. As described in the previous section, the perceived norms may be influential as well on an informational basis. Accompanying deductions, such as perceptions of normativity and objectivity might occur, and strongly contribute to the strength of effects. Another salient point is that the spiral of silence hypothesis was originally focused on media influences (e.g., Noelle-Neumann, 1980). However, Gonzenbach and Stevenson (1994) as well as Shamir (1995) widened this focus by noting that under certain conditions, the influence of media may be quite weak, and individuals may access alternative sources of information for finding orientation and support for their opinion. At the time of writing, there is still a lack in research of the spiral of silence theory regarding alternative sources of information. Furthermore, following current assessments (e.g., "Medien in der Glaubwürdigkeitskrise?," 2016), the influence of mass media is debatable. Individuals' trust in the mainstream media has progressively decreased (at least, in the German society). This highlights the urge to study alternative sources of norm information in this context. By including multiple sources of norm information, this study provides a valuable extension of the spiral of silence model. Furthermore, this study is one of the few which examines the claims of the spiral of silence theory in an experimental setting.

The chosen scenario for this experimental survey was the 2013 German federal election. In the weeks before an election, the opinion climate usually becomes increasingly polarized as the masses are confronted with making a decision for a deadline that is rapidly approaching, and about a highly important topic. The opinion climate is especially visible and significant to individuals shortly before an election (Noelle-Neumann, 1980; see also Sechrist & Stangor, 2007). Dynamics of voting behavior and the factors influencing voting behavior play a central role at this time. The study's hypotheses, derived from this dissertation's concept of normality as well as the research line of the spiral of silence theory, are related to the context of the chosen scenario. The hypotheses will each be stated and briefly introduced in the following section.

Hypotheses

(1) Effects of situationally presented descriptive norms

The first hypothesis regards the effects of perceived descriptive norms on individuals' behavior, within a specified situation. It is hypothesized that individuals deduce prescription from the presented descriptive norms and therefore behave in a corresponding manner. Voters are assumed to change their willingness to speak out publicly about their preferred political party according the prevailing opinion climate. A greater willingness to speak is expected when descriptive norms indicate a larger support for the preferred party, and vice versa. Crucially, in contrast to most of the work on the spiral of silence theory (see Cheé & Eilders, 2015), the immediate influence of descriptive norms is assessed. When answering this hypothesis, also potential misperceptions of majority and minority opinions shall be examined further, in terms of their emergence and influence.

Hypothesis 1:

> *In the specified situation, indicated descriptive norms will affect individuals' behavior, independently of the correctness of the information. It is hypothesized that individuals' willingness to publicly support their preferred political party will be affected.*
>
> a) *An indication of descriptive norms supporting an individual's opinion will lead to a greater willingness to speak out publicly.*
>
> b) *An indication of descriptive norms opposing an individual's opinion will lead to a lesser willingness to speak out publicly.*

(2) Effects and interplay between different sources of norm information

The second core objective of this study is to examine the effect of different promotive factors of normality perceptions. The influence of the following factors upon an individuals' election-related behavior are assessed: perception of certain majorities, anticipated/deduced social validations or devaluations, and the individual's former commitment. The principal lines of inquiry are as follows: To what extent does perception of a prevailing media climate, the anticipation of friends' reaction, the congruence of the current to the former election choice, and the perception to be evaluated negatively due to political preferences, influence individuals' behavior (i.e., their willingness to publicly talk about their choice of political party)? What is the interplay between these factors, and how strong is their influence compared to the context implied descriptive norms? To what extent do the individuals make deductions based on the (partly) descriptive information normative claims? What information do individuals include or disregard in their

understanding of reality, and? In the following sections, these questions are formulated into hypotheses for each of the potentially influential factors.

 a) Effects of perceived media climate

According to the spiral of silence theory, the main source of norm information affecting individuals' attitudes and behavior is mass media. Mass media is omnipresent and communicated through diverse means, such as TV, radio and internet. The media does not influence individuals' attitudes and behavior by directly explaining what to think, but instead by reflecting the thoughts and opinions of others, i.e., by communicating social norms (Kinder, 1998). Crucially, trust in the mainstream media in Germany has decreased in the recent years ("Medien in der Glaubwürdigkeitskrise?," 2016), and therefore, its normative influence might accordingly have decreased. The significance of alternative factors, in contrast, may have increased. For the current study, three hypotheses unfold regarding the perception of media climate.

Hypothesis 2a:

1. *Individuals' perception of a stronger (weaker) support of their preferred political party by the media leads to greater (lesser) willingness to speak publicly about the party.*

2. *The influence of the perception of a prevailing media climate upon an individual is weaker than the influence of situationally implied descriptive norms, as well as the anticipation of friends' reactions.*

3. *The perception of a strong media bias (independent of the direction of support) affects individuals' behavior particularly strongly. The direction of effect is not clearly indicated by the previous literature and therefore, this hypothesis is examined exploratory.*

 b) Effect of anticipated reactions of friends

Throughout the theoretical chapters and in the models, the normality promoting role of social validation has been highlighted. Research on the spiral of silence theory, in that context, has largely focused on the effects of media coverage. However, the factor of peer norms has been found to be an important source in the constitution of action-guiding normality throughout a range of fields (Prentice & Miller, 1993; Paluck, 2009a; Giletta, Scholte, Prinstein, Engels, Rabaglietti, & Burk, 2012). Individuals are especially susceptible to information from people with whom they feel close and connected (Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Individuals that are perceived as being similar and/or with whom individuals have a closer relationship, appear to be especially relevant as sources of norm information (see Chapters 2.3. and 2.4.; see also Paluck & Shepherd, 2012). As noted previously, Miller and Prentice (1994) have shown that the perceptions of

peer norms do not always have to be accurate in order to be influential. Therefore, for the current study, it is expected that the anticipation/expectation of peers' reactions – independently of their correctness and factuality – already has an effect on individuals' behavior.

Hypothesis 2b:

> *Individuals' anticipation of a stronger (weaker) approval of their preferred political party by close peers leads to greater (lesser) willingness to speak publicly about the party.*

c) Effect of choice in the last German federal election (2009)

As shown in Chapters 2.1. and 2.2., past decisions serve as a source of norm information that may influence future decisions in similar contexts. Whilst the content of arguments for or against a party may have changed, the former choice of party might still function independently as a background standard of comparison (e.g., Kahneman & Miller, 1986). Therefore, to deviate from one's own former choice of party might cause uncertainty and, as a consequence, lead to a lower willingness to publicly talk about the current choice of party. Thus, the following is hypothesized.

Hypothesis 2c:

> *The congruence (incongruence) between the political spectrum of an individual's chosen party at the last election (2009), and individuals' current preference (2013) will lead to greater (lesser) willingness to speak publicly about the party.*

d) Effect of perceived negative public evaluation due to an individual's preference for a certain political party

An individual's perception of being evaluated negatively in society due to supporting a specific party takes on a more directly normative notion. Following the spiral of silence theory (e.g., Noelle-Neumann, 1980), the perceived devaluation by society should lead an individual to be less willing to speak openly about his preferred political party. This effect is hypothesized for the current study. Significantly, as for the media climate and the anticipated reaction of friends, the individuals' perceptions do not necessarily correspond to objective facts / real circumstances, but may still be behavior-guiding.

Hypothesis 2d:

> *A stronger (weaker) perception by individuals' to be evaluated negatively due to their preferred political party leads to a greater (lesser) willingness to publicly speak about the party.*

4.3.2. Method

Participants

1793 individuals participated in the online study. 367 of these had to be excluded from the study because they indicated not to vote ($n = 36$), to be still undecided ($n = 289$) or to vote for a party that had no relevancy for this study ($n = 42$). 1427 participants remained for the analyses. The sample consisted of 779 women, 637 men, 11 participants with other gender and 10 persons who did not specify their gender. The average age of the participants was 26.32 years, ranging from 18 to 84. 84.5% of the participants had at least a high school diploma and 8.7% indicated to have migration experiences. The participants were equally distributed between the three conditions of the norm manipulation (see below) regarding their demographics.

Norm manipulation

In order to manipulate descriptive peer norms, different versions of an opinion poll for the upcoming (2013) German federal election were presented. The poll was characterized as being conducted by the Forsa institute, a well-known German polling institute. In the two experimental conditions, a predominant peer support of the center-right or the center-left parties was indicated. In the third (neutral/control) condition, no poll was presented. In the pro-center-right as well as the pro-center-left condition, participants first read the following description: "According to the current Forsa-poll, members of your age group would vote at the German federal election upcoming Sunday as follows." Beneath this description, the participants were presented with the respective distribution of percentage of support for the different parties as well as a bar chart reflecting the poll. Even though differences in regard to the age groups are indicated in the description, all participants in each condition saw the same poll results. The poll included the at the time of writing most relevant and biggest parties in Germany: Christlich Demokraktische Union Deutschlands / Christlich Soziale Union (Christian Democratic Union / Christian Social Union; CDU/CSU), Freie Demokratische Partei (Free Democratic Party; FDP), Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany; AfD), Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party; SPD), Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Alliance '90/The Greens), Die Linke (The Left), Piratenpartei (Pirate Party).

The in the pro-center-right condition presented percentages were as follows: CDU/CSU: 49%, SPD: 18.5%, FDP: 9.5%, AfD: 9%, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen: 6%, Die Linke: 2.5%, Die Piratenpartei: 1.5%, others: 4%. The support for the center-right parties was pronounced. The in the pro-center-left condition presented percentages, in contrast, were as follows: CDU/CSU: 29%, SPD: 32.5%, FDP: 3%, AfD: 1%, Bündnis90/Die Grünen: 15%, Die Linke: 11.5%, Die Piratenpartei: 6%, others: 2%. The support for the center-left parties was pronounced. As a comparison, at the point of assessment the most recent genuine

poll (not part of the study material; see Gesellschaft für Markt- und Sozialforschung, 2013) indicated following results of the elections: CDU/CSU: 40%, SPD: 25%, FDP: 5%, AfD: 3%, Bündnis90/Die Grünen: 11%, Die Linke: 9%, Die Piratenpartei: 3%, others: 4%. The magnitude of the experimental conditions' deviations from the actual current poll were chosen to reflect a realistic picture of what was still generally conceivable at the time the study was conducted, considering differences among the age groups, in order to maintain the credibility of the manipulation. The used percentages had been previously discussed with voters of different spectrums and age groups.

The parties were clustered into center-right and center-left camps, in accordance with the societally established divisions (e.g., "Wahlomat-Daten-Analyse II," 2010; Infratest dimap, 2012). The political parties CDU/CSU, FDP and AfD were assigned to the center-right spectrum. The SPD, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Die Linke and Piratenpartei were assigned to the center-left spectrum. The total percentage for the pro-center-right condition was the following: center-right parties: 67.5%, center-left parties: 28.5 %, others: 4%. For the pro-center-left condition, the total percentage was the following: center-right parties: 33%, center-left parties: 65%, others: 2%. In comparison, the current state of authentic polls consisted of the following totals: center-right parties: 48%, center-left parties: 48%, others: 4%. In order to test whether they had been attentive to the norm manipulation, participants were asked to solve two simple summation tasks regarding the presented percentages.

Procedure

The study was conducted one week before the German federal election in September 2013. Three surveys (for the three conditions of the norm manipulation) were distributed online, via different Facebook groups. The groups were selected with regard to the diversity in the demographics and political ideologies of their members. At the beginning of each survey, participants were asked to specify their demographic data. They were then asked which party they would vote for in the coming election. Then, the manipulated election poll, biased either in favor of the center-right or center-left parties, was presented. In the third condition, no poll was presented. Subsequently, the dependent variable as well as the further sources of norm influence (media climate, etc.) were assessed. At the end of the survey, it was clarified to participants that the opinion polls were bogus and created particularly for this study. The time to fill in the complete questionnaire ranged between five and ten minutes. Participants did not receive money or other kinds of remuneration.

Measures

Dependent variable

Following the classical work on the spiral of silence theory, the established *train-scenario* was used to assess individuals' willingness to publicly speak about their preferred political party (for details, see Noelle-Neumann, 1974). The specified wording used was: "Imagine you are on a train journey. Would you like to talk to a fellow traveler about why you will vote for the party you just named in the upcoming German federal election?" The variable was assessed on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 = *not at all willing* to 5 = *strongly willing* ($M = 2.00$, $SD = 1.47$).

Independent variables

Descriptive norms (pro-center-right, neutral, pro-center-left; experimental manipulation)

As noted above, as the first independent variable, manipulated descriptive norms were presented. The manipulation contained an opinion poll for the upcoming German federal election, labelled as being conducted by the Forsa Institute, a well-known German polling institute. As described earlier, the poll was either indicating a predominance of peer support for the center-left or the center-right parties. The political parties CDU/CSU, FDP and AfD were assigned to the center-right spectrum, the parties SPD, Bündnis 90/ Die Grünen, Die Linke and Piratenpartei were assigned to the center-left spectrum. In a third condition, no manipulation was presented. The participants were distributed among the conditions as follows: pro-center-right: 485; no manipulation / neutral: 525; pro center-left: 417.

Descriptive norms (neutral, non-neutral)

The variable "descriptive norms (neutral, non-neutral)" was generated from the variable "descriptive norms (pro-center-right, neutral, pro-center-left)," as its orthogonal contrast. To this end, the scores of the conditions "pro-center-right" and "pro-center-left" were merged and contrasted with the neutral condition. The result was a dichotomous variable, with the categories "neutral" (no descriptive norms; $n = 525$) and "non-neutral" (directed descriptive norms; $n = 902$).

Choice of political party (center-right, center-left)

The affiliation to one of the political camps (center-right or center-left) was assessed by asking the individuals to indicate, which political party they were going to vote for in the upcoming German federal election ("Which party will you vote for in this year's federal election?"). Participants could choose out of a list of the seven German parties with the highest numbers of official members (see "Liste der politischen Parteien in Deutschland," n.d.) or select one field labelled as others. For the analyses, parallel to the grouping of the parties for the manipulation / descriptive norms, the political parties CDU/CSU, FDP and AfD were

grouped into the category "center-right." The parties SPD, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen, Die Linke and Piratenpartei were grouped into the category "center-left." This classification approach reflects the traditional approach by Noelle-Neumann of a dual comparison (e.g., Noelle-Neumann, 1974). In the 70s and 80s, a comparison between the two predominating parties CDU/CSU and SPD was the center of interest. Though this classification reduces the variety of the political landscape, it is well established in the German society and helps to handle the increased complexity of the German landscape of political parties (e.g., "Wahlomat-Daten-Analyse II," 2010; Infratest dimap, 2012). This somewhat complicated procedure was chosen to prevent dissimilar classifications of the political parties by participants. As per previous existing research, the political distinctions left/right and liberal/conservative will be used analogous in this study (see Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003; Jost, 2006).

Distributions of party choice for the 1427 participants were as follows: AfD: 4.3% (62 participants), Bündnis 90/Die Grünen: 25.9% (369), CDU/CSU: 18.4% (263), Die Linke: 11.0% (157), Piratenpartei: 8.1% (115), FDP: 7.4% (106), SPD: 24.9% (355). After grouping, the respective percentages were the following: center-left voters / liberals: 69.8% (996) and center-right voters / conservatives: 30.2% (431). These numbers do not represent the status quo of support for the different parties in Germany at the time the survey was conducted. A slight bias in favor of the center-left can be observed. However, this is not significant for the further content and validity of this study.

Media climate (from pro-center-right to pro-center-left)

The variable "media climate" was generated in a somewhat complex manner. Participants were asked to rank the political parties according to the valence with which they perceived them to be evaluated by the media. For each party, the rankings were classified into the two categories "negative evaluation by the media" and "positive evaluation by the media". Subsequently, the respective scores were totaled for the center-right as well as the center-left parties and then divided by the respective number of affiliated parties. In the next step, the scale for the center-right parties was inverted, both scales totaled and divided by two. A variable (on an interval scale) ranging from 1 = *the media mainly supports the center-right parties* to 2 = *the media mainly supports the center-left parties* was the outcome. The mean for the 1427 participants was $M = 1.51$ ($SD = 0.14$).

Media climate (bias, no bias)

The variable "media climate (bias, no bias)" was generated from the variable "media climate (from pro-center-right to pro-center-left)." To this end, the median and the standard deviation of media climate (from pro-center-right to pro-center-left) were assessed ($Mdn = 1.58$; $SD = 0.14$). The variable was then divided into three categories: media bias in favor of the center-right parties (scores lower than the median minus one standard deviation), no media bias (scores in the area between median minus one standard

deviation and plus one standard deviation) and media bias in favor of the center-left parties (scores higher than the median plus one standard deviation). As a last step, the categories "media-bias in favor of the center-right parties" and "media bias in favor of the center-left parties" were merged to generate a category of general perceptions of the presence of prevailing media climate. The resulting variable had the two categories "perception of no media bias" ($n = 1080$) and "perception of media bias" ($n = 347$).

Anticipated reaction of friends to the individuals' choice of party

The long-term developed effect of peers on individuals' willingness to publicly talk about their preferred political party was examined by asking for participants' anticipation of their acquaintances'/friends' reactions to their choice of political party ("How would most of your acquaintances react to your voting decision?"). The variable was assessed on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 = *very negative* to 5 = *very positive* ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 0.88$; $n = 1186$).

Perceptions of negative evaluation in the society due to party preferences

This variable was assessed using one item ("Do you sometimes think that you might be judged more negatively because of your party preferences?"), on a 6-point-likert scale, ranging from 0 = *do not agree at all* to 5 = *absolutely agree* ($M = 1.04$. $SD = 1.36$).

Congruence of individuals' political choice between the last election (2009) and the current choice of party (2013)

Participants indicated, which party they had voted for in the German federal elections in 2009. Similar to the procedure for the choice of political party, the parties were grouped into center-right or center-left parties. The political spectrum of the formerly (2009) elected party was then matched with the spectrum of the current party choice (2013). As a result, a dichotomous variable was generated that either indicated congruency or dissonance of the choices. 792 participants indicated they would vote for a party from the same political spectrum as the last election, whereas 100 would vote for a party from the opposing political spectrum. 535 participants did not indicate which party they voted for in the last election.

4.3.3. Results

In the first segment of the results section, analyses assessing the effects of the situationally presented descriptive norms on individuals' willingness to openly talk about their preferred political party are illustrated. The second segment presents a linear regression model, which examines and compares the influence of the different sources of norm information. Besides the situationally received information, the influence of long-term developed norm information is assessed.

Influence of the situationally presented norms

A factorial ANOVA, with the factors descriptive norms (pro-center-right versus no descriptive norms versus pro-center-left) and affiliation of individuals' party choice (center-right spectrum versus center-left spectrum) was conducted. The ANOVA revealed a significant interaction effect of the descriptive norms and the choice of political spectrum on individuals' willingness to publicly express their opinion about their preferred party to a stranger, $F(2, 1418) = 4.67$, $p = .009$. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 12. For the center-right supporting descriptive norms and the no-manipulation condition, no differences between the voters of the two political camps were observed. In contrast to that, voters' willingness differed notably in the center-left supporting norms condition, in dependence of their preferred political camp. Compared to the other norm conditions, as well as the center-left voters, the center-right voters were significantly less willing to publicly speak about their preferred party when the descriptive norms indicated only weak support for their choice and somewhat stronger support for the opposing spectrum.

Table 12
Means and standard deviations of voters' willingness to speak about their preferred party, in dependence of the presented descriptive norms and political affiliation

	Norm manipulation		
	Pro-center-right	No poll	Pro-center-left
	M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
Political affiliation			
Center-left	1.98 (1.46)	2.08 (1.48)	2.04** (1.38)
Center-right	2.08 (1.45)	2.03 (1.62)	1.50** (1.50)

Note. M = Mean; *SD* = standard deviation; the variable ranged from 0 = *not at all willing* to 5 = *strongly willing*; *N* = 1420
**$p < .01$

A one-way ANOVA, examining the effects of the manipulation within the group of center-right voters, yielded a significant effect, $F(2, 426) = 5.52$, $p = .004$. The assessment of contrasts revealed that, whereas the center-right voters' willingness to speak publicly did not differ between the center-right supportive (condition 1) and the no-manipulation condition (condition 2; $p = .762$), their willingness was significantly lower in the center-left supportive condition (condition 3) than in the two other conditions (pro-center-right versus pro-center-left: $p = .002$; no manipulation versus pro-center-left: $p = .005$). For the liberals, the one-way ANOVA did not yield significant differences, $F(2, 992) = 0.37$, $p = .694$. The assessment of contrasts did not reveal significant differences between any of the three conditions (1 vs. 2: $p = .394$; 1 vs. 3: $p = .635$; 2 vs 3: $p = .722$).

Comparisons of influence of different sources of norm information

Preliminary analyses

Not all participants completed all the questions related to the variables of the regression model, potentially due to either a lack of willingness to share sensitive data, or technical reasons. For example, not all participants voted in the previous election (due in part to age restrictions) and hence the number of participants for the variable "congruence between last and current election" was reduced. In total, the number of participants included in the regression model was 876.

The regression model is particularly interesting because of the inclusion of long-term norm influence data (for example, the general media climate) and in a concrete situation presented descriptive norms presentation. It must be noted though, that due to the specific procedure of this study, the perceptions of the media climate may not be completely independent from the application of the descriptive norm manipulation. To assess the potential effect of the norm manipulation on the two variables of media climate, I conducted two univariate ANOVAs. For the variable media climate (from pro-center-right to pro-center-left), the ANOVA yielded significant results, $F(2, 1424) = 5.72, p = .003$ ($M_1 = 1.50, SD_1 = 0.15; M_2 = 1.52, SD_2 = 0.12; M_3 = 1.52, SD_3 = 0.14$). Also, the differences for the variable media climate (bias, no bias) were significant, $F(2, 1424) = 5.90, p = .003$ ($M_1 = 1.28, SD_1 = 0.45; M_2 = 1.19, SD_2 = 0.40, M_3 = 1.26, SD_3 = 0.44$). Thus, the manipulation did have a moderate effect on the perceptions of media climate. Supposedly, this does not generally affect the results regarding the hypotheses of effects of perceived media climate on the willingness to publicly talk about the preferred political party. However, it should be considered for the further interpretations of the results.

In order to assess the effect of the descriptive norms in dependency of individuals' choice of party, I generated an interaction term. I did this, by multiplying the respective two variables. In order to examine the effect of perception of media climate, in dependency of individuals' choice of party, I generated a further interaction term, again, by multiplying the regarding variables. Naturally, the correlations between the interaction terms and the regarding factor variables turned out to be relatively high. The variable descriptive norms was highly correlated with the interaction (term) of the variables descriptive norms and choice of political party ($r = .84, p < .001$). Also the choice of political party and the interaction (term) of choice of political party and media climate correlated strongly ($r = .94, p < .001$). To prevent the strong interrelations from confounding the results of the regression model, the variables descriptive norms, choice of political party and media climate were centered. I re-generated the interaction terms, using the centered variables. The interaction terms are labelled as "choice of political party*descriptive norms" ($M = 0.03, SD = 0.36$) and "media climate*choice of political party" ($M = -0.01, SD = 0.06$).

To test the interrelations of all predictor variables, correlations were assessed. The intercorrelations of the regression's predictor variables are shown in Table 13. Aside for the correlation between media

climate (from pro-center-right to pro-center-left) and media climate (bias, no bias), all interrelations were rather weak to moderate. The stronger correlations of these is natural, since both variables stem from the same initial variable. According to Tabachnick and Fidell (1996), a correlation below $r = .70$ is still acceptable, wherefore both variables were included in the model.

The regression model: predicting voters' willingness to publicly express their opinion

The regression model yielded significant results, $F(10, 864) = 4.73$, $p < .001$. Individuals' willingness to publicly talk about their preferred political party could be partly predicted by the tested factors. The results are shown in Table 14. The descriptive norms presented within the context had a significant effect ($ß = -0.07$, $p = .041$). Voters' willingness to publicly talk about their preferred party declined from the pro-center-right condition, along the neutral condition, to the pro-center-left condition. The choice of political party did not significantly add to the prediction. For the interaction between participants' political choice and the direction of descriptive norms manipulation, a trend could be shown ($ß = .06$, $p = .061$). Whereas the center-left voters were merely affected by the descriptive norms, center-right voters' willingness to talk publicly decreased strongly in the pro-center-left condition. This reflects the results of the ANOVA. The assessment of the orthogonal contrast (the comparison of both [merged] non-neutral conditions to the neutral condition) did not yield significant results.

The perception of a prevailing media climate did not have a general effect on voters' willingness to publicly talk about their preferred political party ($ß = -.04$, $p = .383$). However, the interaction between voters' perception of media climate and their preference of a political party spectrum significantly added to the prediction of voters' willingness to openly talk about their preferred party ($ß = -0.10$, $p = .003$). For the interpretation of the interaction effects, the tools of StatWiki (Gaskin, 2016) were used. For the center-left voters, the willingness to openly talk increased with a rise of perceptions that the media climate predominantly is in favor of center-right parties. For the center-right voters, in contrast, the willingness to openly talk about the preferred party increased along an increasing perception of media support for the center-left spectrum. The stronger both groups of voters perceived the media to be biased in favor of the opposing political spectrum, the more willing they were to openly talk about their preferred party. The perception of a high media support for their preferred party spectrum, in contrast, was associated with a low willingness to openly talk about their preferred political party for both groups of voters. The general perception of a media bias (compared to the perception of no bias) did not affect the prediction.

Table 13
Intercorrelations of the regression's predictor variables

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Descriptive norms (pro-center-right, neutral, pro-center-left)	–									
2. Descriptive norms (neutral, non-neutral)	-.046	–								
3. Choice of political party (center-right, center-left)	.080**	-.011	–							
4. Choice of political party*descriptive norms	.001	.060*	-.069**	–						
5. media climate (from pro-center-right to pro-center-left)	.073**	-.055*	-.021	.019	–					
6. media climate*choice of political party	.020	-.022	.018	.059*	.033	–				
7. media climate (bias, no bias)	-.030	.087*	.017	.008	-.630***	-.022	–			
8. Anticipated reaction of friends	-.007	-.015	.126***	-.009	-.004	.037	.002	–		
9. Perception to be judged negatively	-.082**	.085**	-.066*	.093**	-.078**	-.089**	.125***	-.211***	–	
10. Congruence between last and current election	.019	.006	-.124***	-.050	.023	.002	-.044	-.144***	-.005	–

Note. N = 892 to 1427
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$

Furthermore, the anticipation of friends' reactions was shown to be a significant predictor of voters' willingness to speak out publicly (ß = 0.11, p = .001). The expectation of a more positive evaluation by friends was associated with a higher willingness to publicly speak about the preferred party. Moreover, the general perception of participants' to be sometimes judged more negatively in society because of their choice of political party, also led to a higher willingness to speak out publicly about the preferred party (ß = 0.13, p < .001). The congruence between last election's political spectrum with the currently preferred did not significantly affect the prediction.

Table 14
Results of the regression model: predicting voters' willingness to publicly express their opinion

Variable	B	SE	ß	p
1. Descriptive norms (pro-center-right, neutral, pro-center-left)	-0.13	0.06	-.07*	.041
2. Descriptive norms (neutral, non-neutral)	-0.09	0.1	-.03	.370
3. Choice of political party (center-right, center-left)	0.11	0.11	.04	.308
4. Choice of political party*descriptive norms	0.26	0.14	.06	.061
5. media climate (from pro-center-right to pro-center-left)	-0.39	0.45	-.04	.383
6. media climate*choice of political party	-2.31	0.77	-.10**	.003
7. media climate (bias, no bias)	-0.09	0.14	-.03	.514
8. Anticipated reaction of friends	0.18	0.06	.11**	.001
9. Perception to be judged negatively	0.13	0.04	.13***	<.001
10. Congruence between last and current election	-0.24	0.15	-.05	.123

Note. R^2 = .052; $F(10, 864)$ = 4.73, p < .001
*p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001

4.3.4. Discussion

In Study 2, firstly the influence of situationally implied descriptive norms on individuals' willingness to publicly speak about their preferred political party was tested. Secondly, different sources (such as the perceived media climate and the anticipated reactions of friends) of norm information were compared with regards to their effects on voters' willingness to speak out. The framework for the latter examination was the spiral of silence theory (Noelle-Neuman, 1974; Noelle-Neumann, 1980). An

experimental survey had been applied in the context of the German federal elections in 2013. The strong influence of different normality and normativity information was demonstrated for both kind of sources: contextually presented and long-term developed. The behavior of the individuals was (partly) influenced. In feedback loops, this norm information may lead to social changes. More specifically, the results show that situationally presented descriptive norm information, implying either support for individuals' favored political spectrum or the opposing spectrum, has the power to significantly change individuals' willingness to speak out their opinion publicly. This occurs without explicit pressure to conform. However, this effect was exclusive to more conservative individuals, namely, center-right voters. The willingness of conservatives to speak publicly about their preferred party did not differ when the descriptive norms were either supportive or not particularly emphasized, but it did decrease significantly when the descriptive norms were opposing. For more liberal individuals, namely center-left voters, no change of willingness between contexts of supporting and opposing descriptive norms could be observed.

The results for the comparison of different sources of norm influence are somewhat surprising. Most interestingly, the perception of a prevailing climate of mainstream media had the opposite effect to what is proposed by the spiral of silence theory (Noelle-Neuman, 1974) and what was also hypothesized for this study. Individuals were more strongly motivated to publicly talk about their preferred political party when they perceived the media to favor the opposing side of the political spectrum. In contrast to that, individuals were only weakly motivated to speak out publicly when they perceived the media to be in favor of their party's preferred political spectrum. Similarly, the perception to be sometimes evaluated negatively in society because of the choice of political party had a strong effect in the opposite direction of the initial predictions. In the following section, all results will be discussed in more detail, and in relation to their specific context as well as this dissertation's models of normality and shifts of normality.

Influence of descriptive norms

Interestingly, as illustrated, conservatives were strongly influenced by the perception of opposing descriptive norms, whereas more liberal individuals were not. Two major lines can be offered for these results. The election polls in the early autumn of 2013 favored the CDU (as the major conservative party), with support for the AfD also increasing at this time ("Sonntagsfrage Bundestagswahl," 2013). Furthermore, the conservative parties (except for the AfD) constituted the government at the time the study was conducted, and therefore represented a factual status quo of politics in Germany. As a result, the unsupportive descriptive norms may have surprised or even shocked supporters of the conservative parties (at least the CDU and FDP). That in turn might have caused a change of normality perceptions (see Chapter 2.1.; see also, Kahneman & Miller, 1986). Conservatives' surprise at their encountering with unexpected and unusual social norms, may have caused uncertainty and a hesitation to speak about their preferred

political party publicly. Confrontation with an abnormality that was presented as reality appears to have caused doubts about personal perceptions of normality and reality. The voters of the AfD might be an exception here. Since the AfD was a relatively new party at that point, the notion of high support might have caused great surprise and boosted AfD-voters' willingness to publicly support their preferred party. For the center-left parties, in contrast, the indicated support in the election polls was rather low at the point of the assessment ("Sonntagsfrage Bundestagswahl," 2013). Furthermore, the center-left parties constituted the opposition to the elected government. Liberals might have not been surprised by the unsupportive descriptive norm information. As the opposition to an elected government, they factually reflected the minority. Liberals had been the opposition for a while and as challengers of the status quo, potentially more reasons to speak out their opinion, as well as more experience in speaking out in a negative opinion climate. Equally, liberals may also not have been surprised at perceiving supporting descriptive norms. Firstly, most of the participants were between 20 and 35 years old, an age group that is generally shown to be more liberal (e.g., Hilmer, 2008). Secondly, according to Watt and Larkin (2010), the false consensus effect occurs more frequently for challengers of the status quo than for its defenders. Thus, the center-left voters might have generally overestimated the support by peers (see also Gross & Miller, 1997), independently of the presented descriptive norms.

The second explanation line refers to the influence of different political ideologies. The differences of the impact of social norms could also be partially attributed to differences in attributes and characteristics between liberals and conservatives (see Jost et al., 2003; Jost, 2006; McCarty, Poole, & Rosenthal, 2006; Carney, Jost, Goslin, & Potter, 2008). Jost (2006) as well as Federico and Deason (2011) stated that conservatism is associated with a stronger desire to avoid uncertainty and insecurity. Thus, conservatives may rely more on (norm) information to receive orientation about the appropriateness of behavior (see also Smith et al., 2007). In a similar manner, Saito's study (2007) on the influence of television on traditional values, showed that the strongest adjustment to a perceived normality occurred for the most conservative participants. Liberals, in contrast, have been shown to be more flexible, more open and less prone to the status quo (e.g., Golec de Zavala, Cislak, & Weselowska, 2010). Barberá, Jost, Nagler and Tucker (2015) analyzed the data of 3.8 million Twitter users. They found that liberals were more likely to engage in cross-ideological dissemination than conservatives. Thus, disagreement and diversity of information might be more normal for liberal individuals, than for the conservative who appear to remain more ideologically segregated in their social media use.

Influence of different sources of norm information

A distinctive feature of this study is the comparison of different sources of norm influence. The study included contextual as well as long-term developed norm information. Particular emphasis was placed

on the influence of peers and mainstream media. This study's approach reflects a more realistic and multifaceted approach to norm influence and potential spiraling effects. It discloses dynamics of differential relevance and interplay of currently presented and long-term developed norms. In regard to this interplay, the results suggest that in a specific context implied descriptive norms and long-term developed norm information can be influential simultaneously. In the current study, the long-term developed norms had a particularly strong influence. This result supports the propositions of this dissertation's model of normality, in particular of a self-perpetuating and -strengthening character of normality. Information that has already been incorporated seems to have gained implicit behavior-guiding power. It would appear that, in contrast, newly encountered information needs to be somewhat startling in order to change internalized assumptions.

The perception of (a prevailing) media climate had a significant effect on individuals' willingness to publicly talk about their preferred political party. However, this effect was in the opposite direction than expected and indicated by previous studies (e.g., Noelle-Neumann, 1980). Individuals were particularly motivated to speak when they perceived the prevailing media climate to be against the political spectrum of their preferred party. Though previous research has already raised doubts regarding the classical assets of the spiral of silence theory, the current study surpasses these in their effects' significance (see Moreno-Riaño, 2002; Mayer-Uellner, 2003). Different explanations for these results are implied and will be discussed in the following.

A media climate perceived to be opposing towards an individual's opinion/choice may have sparked a *fight*-reaction or (psychological) *reactance* (Brehm, 1966; see also *negative conformity*; Hall, 1986). This stands in contrast to the hypothesized silence, which would instead reflect a *flight*-reaction. Because of the perceived strong opposition, individuals may have been particularly motivated to react. This antagonism to what they perceived to be untrue, unjust or extreme is also reflected in individuals' higher willingness to speak about their preferred party if they perceived themselves to have been judged negatively by society because of their party choice. These results can be explained by two (related) approaches. Firstly, according to the third tenet of the concept of naïve realism (e.g., Ross & Ward, 1996), information that differs from an individual's may be perceived as biased and untrue, and hence rejected. The transmitter of this information may be accordingly discredited. Firstly, this dissertation's model of normality predicts that information that is perceived as not in line with an individual's perception of normality is rejected as non-factual and therefore falls out of the circle of normality. A consequence can be the strengthening of the already established normality and according behaviors (see Lord et al., 1979). Secondly, the model predicts that the evaluation of an information or a source of information in a group as non-normative, reduces an individual's motivation to consider or follow it. With that in mind, it is important to consider that the general trust and popularity of the mainstream media in Germany has decreased in the last decade to a relatively low level ("Medien in der Glaubwürdigkeitskrise?," 2016). Parts of the (German) center-right voters express

this in labeling the mainstream media as "Lügenpresse" ("lying press"), with sections of the center-left voters demanding a more differentiated medial handling of migrant and refugee stories (Meier-Braun, 2016). The mainstream media does not seem to be thought of as a reliable source anymore. Therefore, as illustrated, the information the main stream media transmit may not be received as reliable norm information and thus have seemingly paradox effects on behavioral expressions. Moreover, in the current context of the German society as well as voting situations in general, other factors are involved that may strengthen these effects. Johnson and Eagly (1989) have examined factors that are associated with resistance to persuasive messages. Among them are the involvement of individuals' personal values and egos. Both are factors that are pronounced in polarized settings like opposing political spectrums. Brehm (1966) and Wicklund (1974) asserted that psychological reactance is likely to occur whenever free behavior is restricted and/or under conditions of a source being perceived as trying strongly to influence an individual's opinion and/or social behavior. Individuals seem to be motivated to create a counterweight to Information that deviates from their normality perception and general world views.

Besides the perceived media climate, the anticipated reaction of friends had a strong effect on individuals' willingness to publicly speak about their preferred political party. The anticipation of stronger approval, and being in agreement with close peers, was associated with a higher willingness to speak publicly. The information that peers provide has a particularly strong influence on individuals' behavioral intentions. This is in line with the illustrations in Chapter 2.4. and a host of other studies (Prentice & Miller, 1993; Juvonen & Cadigan, 2002; Paluck, 2009a; Paluck & Shepherd, 2012). The significant influence of group/peer norms is highlighted. Individuals seem motivated to behave in line with their friends' attitudes and behavior, and not to deviate. At the same time, the (norm) information that are shared among a circle of friends is highly selective and often homogenous (e.g., Crocker, 1981). Differing and diverse information may often not be received and included. These results highlight the relevancy of biases like the false consensus effect. Individuals may transfer a high sharedness of attitudes among their friends to the general society. (Close) peers seem to be a particularly important (and at the same time selective) source of norm information. In scenarios where potential sources of norm information are ambiguous or little trusted (as in the context of the current study), peers' influence may increase. The somewhat implicit character of peer norms may also contribute to the strength and importance of their influence. The strength of peer influence is also in line with current research on the spiral of silence (Hampton, Rainie, Lu, Dwyer, Shin, & Purcell, 2014). Hampton et al. showed that Facebook users were more willing to share their opinions when they assumed their followers to agree with them. The strength of peer influence is particularly important in regard to a potential spiral effect. The norms are self-perpetuating in groups of peers and constantly create a frame for what information is brought to the group and how it is judged (Stroud, 2008; Garrett, 2009). Individuals who show a higher willingness to publicly speak out based on perceived peer approval, might hence by

doing so influence other peers in their perception of what is the normal and appropriate opinion. A more extensive discussion on the important role of (close) peers in the processes of normality evolvement and shift will be provided in Chapter 5.2.2.

Contributions to the models of normality and shifts of normality

The results show that a violation of what usually counts as normal can have far-reaching consequences. When more conservative individuals were confronted with a surprisingly low support for their opinion, their willingness to publicly represent this decreased. The confrontation with the surprising information may initiate a process of questioning. In this context, it seems that the descriptive information of distribution of party support was interpreted as having a normative notion. This led to according behavioral consequences and adaptions. A further consequence might be the initiation of a shift of normality. In contrast, for more liberal individuals the different pieces of descriptive information might have all been within their range of normality, and hence did not cause surprise, perceptions of changed normative claims, and the necessity for behavioral adaptations.

The study shows that situationally implied descriptive norms as well as long-term developed norm information as promotive factors determine what is perceived as normal, normative and real, leading to according behavioral expressions. It is important to note that both kinds of promotive factors are influential based simply on anticipation and/or cumulated perception. These factors do not necessarily correspond to facts, yet they would appear to shape reality perceptions and world views. While the behavior of (trusted) peers led to the promotion of according behavior, support of the (rather untrusted) mainstream media led to the promotion of opposing behavior. These dynamics underline the potential for arbitrary normality developments: Information seems to be incorporated and reflected based more on characteristics of a source than its content. This may lead to a self-preservation and self-strengthening of normality perceptions in rather closed and selective circles (e.g., Crocker, 1981). The self-perpetuating character of normality is indicated throughout the results: An individual's affected willingness to publicly talk about the political choice supposedly influences other individuals in their perceptions of normality. This, in turn, may again influence perceptions and behavioral expressions of the originally affected individuals (see Noelle-Neumann, 1974; Miller & Prentice, 1994). An important finding of this study with respect to the model of normality is that the same norm information can have contrary consequences for members of different groups. In accord with the illustrations above, spiral effects can indeed be expected, though, assumingly, in different directions for different groups. The direction of spiraling effects supposedly is based on the historically acquired perceptions of reality and truth as well as differing normative conduct. This, in turn, seems to be based on the (self-)selective frequent encounter and incorporation of certain norm information.

Strengths and limitations

The study contributes to the research line of the spiral of silence theory, the study of coting behavior and the concept and effects of normality perceptions. In an unusual approach, the influence of situationally presented norms and long-term developed and (potentially) internalized norms was compared. Due to the experimental survey design, conservative and liberal individuals, who are status quo defenders and – challengers respectively, could be simultaneously examined and differences identified. The assessment via an online survey and the distribution in diverse Facebook groups had advantages as well as disadvantages. While a relatively diverse sample could be reached, a relatively high number of participants did not complete the whole questionnaire and control was emitted. Also the decision to assess the belonging to a political camp indirectly, was two-folded. On the one hand, asking for a party choice made the classification into the political camps less dependent on individuals' perceptions of the left-right (respectively, liberal-conservative) spectrum and therefore more objective. On the other hand, it made the methodology and the analyses more complex. Also, the procedure of assessment of the perceived media climate was rather complex. The trade-off between a challenging data handling and the subtlety of assessment may be solved differently in a future study. A further integration of the study's results into the theoretical concept of normality is provided in the general discussion (Chapter 5.). Practical implications of the results are discussed with regard to the example of the German society also in the general discussion (Chapter 5.3).

4.4. Study 3: Shifts of perceptions of groups' normality

4.4.1. Theoretical background

Contributions to the models of normality and shifts of normality

In this study, individuals' perceptions of the level of different groups' normality is tested. This research is carried out on specific content-related reflections of different promotive factors: being part of the majority or minority and intergroup contact. These aspects contain the promotive factors of frequency, familiarity and availability as well as descriptive norms and socially evaluative factors. To what extent and in what way these factors shape and change normality perceptions is assessed. The study shall further work on unravelling the intertwining of normality perceptions, and the societal status of stereotypes towards and evaluations of groups (i.e., the behavioral level).

Native Germans migrants: Intergroup ideologies and attitudes

As described in the introduction, the topic of migration is a very central and often polarizing in the German discourse. Study 3 is set within the greater picture of immigration to Germany and related attitudes

of the population. Migration and integration have played a major role in societal and demographic development in the Western societies over the last 50 years (for the German context, see Hoßmann & Karsch, 2010). Due to current and future refugee movements, an increase of the number of immigrants is expected (e.g., Outten, Schmitt, Miller, & Garcia, 2012). This development naturally implies challenges for the native populations of the host countries, regarding matters of diversity and intergroup relations (e.g., Sidanius, Levin, Van Laar, & Sears, 2008; Kamiejski, De Oliveira, & Guimond, 2012). How well the future societies will function in terms of harmony and justice will depend significantly upon the native populations, as well as how well the immigrants react and adapt to this new social reality (e.g., Berry & Annis, 1974; Sidanius at al., 2008; Kessler et al., 2010; Kamiejski at al., 2012). As described in the introduction (see Chapter 1.1.), attitudes towards immigrants are not only highly relevant, but also highly polarized and problematic in the German context. We can assume that the migrants' self- and other perceptions are influenced by the attitudes of the majority society, and their communication and interaction with immigrants.

Alongside migrants' choice of *acculturation* strategies (Berry, 1980; Berry, 1997), the native population's dealings with diversity and their attitudes towards assimilation and multiculturalism (generally referred to as *intergroup ideologies*; Vorauer, Gagnon, & Sasaki, 2009) are of interest in social psychological research. Guimond et al. (2013) report that Germany in generally is thought of as a country that has few (national) policies in favor of multiculturalism. Despite this, the German participants in Guimond et al.'s comparative study were shown to be highly in favor of multiculturalism, and critical of assimilation. Despite the low support by national policies, participants indicated a willingness to encourage minorities to maintain a part of their original cultural identity, instead of applying pressure for them to completely adapt to Germany's "original" culture. Surprisingly in this regard, in Guimond et al.'s study, the German participants were still relatively strongly prejudiced against migrants, compared to participants from other countries (such as Canada and the UK). Research conducted by Zick, Küpper and Hövermann (2011) as well as Zick et al. (2016) shows that prejudices are widely shared and persistent among Germans, including individuals who are supposedly well-educated and high in their socio-economic status. The concurrency of multiculturalism supporting intergroup ideologies and ingrained prejudices in the German society seem to contradict each other. How can this paradox of support and tolerance on the one side and prejudice and devaluation on the other side be dissolved?

In the current study, it is proposed that perceptions of groups as differentially normal plays a crucial role in this context. If a (minority) group is not considered as being equally normal compared to another group (e.g., the majority), a strong basis for stereotypes, prejudices and differential treatment might be given; even despite potentially benevolent intergroup ideologies (see, e.g., Hegarty & Pratto, 2001; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015). Moreover, if members of a certain (minority) group perceive their own

group as less normal than they perceive the majority group, their collective self-esteem will supposedly be relatively low (Bruckmüller, 2013). Therefore, members of a minority in such a case might be more willing to accept unfair treatment and inequality, and integration processes may be hindered. This study will firstly assess the potential differences in the perceptions of groups' normality, comparing a minority and majority group. Secondly, the effect of intergroup contact on these normality perceptions shall be examined.

Native Germans and migrants: Social realities and perceptions of groups' normality

In the following sections, I will explicate the reasoning and background for the above stated proposition, using both high level and detailed explanation. In the current literature, the perception of a higher normality and prototypicality of the ingroup over an outgroup has been shown to go hand in hand with more negative attitudes towards the particular outgroup (e.g., Wenzel, Mummendey, & Waldzus, 2008; Kessler et al., 2010). This effect was shown to be especially strong within the context of clear status relations of a majority (i.e., native population) and a minority (i.e., migrants; Kessler et al., 2010; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015). The participants in these studies were diverse with regard to their intergroup ideologies. For the current study's context, the question arises whether a minority group will still be perceived as less normal by the majority group, when members of the latter explicitly support multiculturalism (and even specifically express motivation to engage for a just and equal society for all people living in the country).

As noted, being perceived as differentially normal has consequences for groups. While the group perceived and established as being more normal usually enjoys privileges, the group perceived as being less normal is marked in intergroup comparisons, and becomes the effect to be explained (e.g., Hegarty & Pratto, 2001). Hegarty and Pratto claim that "rather than attempting to prove stereotypes of marked groups wrong, one might reduce group bias by having people question the frequently unexamined normalcy of unmarked high-status groups" (Hegarty & Pratto, 2001, p. 733). This underlines the discrete role of being perceived as more or less normal for processes of stereotype emergence and maintenance, and raises another exigent research question that shall be examined in this study: How can subtle forms of biased perceptions of groups' normality be questioned and counteracted? As previously mentioned, intergroup contact shall be examined as a potentially influential factor in this study. Intergroup contact may, for instance, help individuals to receive a more precise image of others.

Migrants and members of the native population tend to live within different social realities (Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992; Matsumoto, 2007). However, since they are part of the same society, they interact and depend on each other, with their identities being reciprocally related (Schwartz, Vignoles, Brown, & Zagefka, 2014). Integration can therefore be considered a mutual process (see Sam & Berry, 2010; Benet-Martínez, Lee, & Leu, 2006). This study will underline the importance of giving consideration to each group and the dynamic relations between them, when examining integration processes. After

illustrating the societal context in terms of social psychological research, the role of different perceptions of a group's normality in the context of intergroup relations, particularly between minority and majority groups (in the process of migration and integration), shall be further explained in the following sections. The focus of this study is on minority and majority groups' perceptions, within the context of migration and integration.

Normality of groups: The effect to be explained

The literature on the effect to be explained as the polar opposite to an unsaid standard of normality is explained at length in Chapter 2.1. Amongst others, Hegarty and Pratto (2001) show that the marking of groups in comparison situations can act as a justification for treating them differently. In contrast, membership of the unmarked group gains unstated privileges (Pratto et al., 2007). People retrieve stereotypes that focus on the marked group as attributional content when explaining the differences between the groups (Hegarty & Pratto, 2001). Generally, groups being marked are often groups of low status and minorities; groups that that do not "fit with implicit expectations" (Bruckmüller, 2013, p. 237). High status groups and majorities, in contrast, are often taken as default standards (e.g., Hegarty & Pratto, 2001; Pratto et al., 2007; Bruckmüller et al., 2012). In countries with a relatively short history of immigration, like Germany or the Netherlands, migrants are still associated as being of lower status, whereas the native population as the majority is associated with a higher status (Kessler et al., 2010; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015). Hence, migrants can be assumed to more likely count as the effect to be explained. The inherent population builds a group of social reference, and as a consequence, the explanatory focus lies on the migrants, making salient their (supposed) deviance from the unsaid norms (e.g., Miller et al., 1991; Hegarty & Pratto, 2001; Bruckmüller, 2013). Importantly, according to Devine (1989), stereotypes of marked groups are generally more accessible and better known than of unmarked groups. Hence, with migrants being marked as less normal in a society, it can be assumed that certain stereotypes about them are widely shared and easily accessible; identifying the migrants as deviating from certain standards. Similarly, migrants' self-perception can also be assumed as being influenced by the level of normality (Bruckmüller, & Abele, 2010). Being the marked group supposedly has an impact on migrants' attitudes and behavior within the society. For instance, appearing as less normal is associated with negative feelings and lower private collective self-esteem (Bruckmüller, 2013). Moreover, is it associated with experiences of stigmatizing, othering and disempowerment (e.g., Miller et al., 1991; Pratto et al., 2007; Bruckmüller et al., 2012). Challenging the "unexamined normalcy of unmarked high-status groups" (Hegarty & Pratto, 2001, p. 733) is supposed to reduce stereotypes towards low status groups (from a high-status point of view); it may also reduce self-stereotyping by the low status group (e.g., Hogg and Turner, 1987).

The above paradigm of the effect to be explained has mainly been used to explain categorical differences of normativity and normality with regard to semantic reflections. It provides a substantial base for understanding the general effect, process and impact of differing perceptions of the normality of groups. The second framework that is crucial for the current study is the ingroup projection model (Waldzus et al., 2003; Wenzel et al., 2008). The ingroup projection model explains different levels of prototypicality perceptions in intergroup relations, particularly focusing on intergroup relation and intergroup attitudes. This focus, as well as the corresponding subtle measures of perceptions of groups' normality, make it particularly valuable as a framework for this study. In the next section, I will therefore introduce and illustrate the ingroup projection model. The contextual focus here will be migration.

The ingroup projection model

Ingroup projection describes the phenomenon that members of a group tend to perceive their ingroup (compared to an outgroup) as relatively more prototypical for an inclusive group (e.g., Waldzus et al. 2003; Wenzel et al., 2008; Kessler et al., 2010). Group members seem to project the typical attributes of their ingroup onto the common superordinate category, defining the default norm of the superordinate group on basis of their ingroups' characteristics. The result is that "the prototype of the inclusive category constitutes the norm against which both groups are compared" (Wenzel et al., 2003, p. 462). Therefore, other subgroups within the overarching category are perceived to be deviating from the norms. Wenzel et al. showed that the outgroups are consequently evaluated in a more negative fashion. In contrast to that, a low or none-occurring ingroup projection has been shown to lead to more positive outgroup attitudes (e.g., Wenzel et al., 2008). As a further insight, Wenzel et al. (2003) state that ingroup projection is linked to perceived legitimation of higher status and entitlement based on membership to the superordinate group.

Ingroup projection in the context of minority and majority groups

For native majorities, *relative ingroup prototypicality* (*RIP*; the difference score between an individual's prototypicality perception of the ingroup and an outgroup) is expected to be particularly high in migration contexts (Kessler et al., 2010). In contrast to that, RIP is significantly lower for minority groups. Ufkes, Otten, van der Zee, Giebels and Dovidio (2012) as well as Verkuyten and Martinovic (2015) showed that ingroup projection is particularly little likely to occur for ethnic minorities in countries like Germany and the Netherlands. In these countries, relatively small immigrant groups meet large native majorities. Within these constraints of socio-structural realities, it seems much more difficult for minority groups to perceive themselves as prototypical for an overarching category when being compared to the majority group (e.g., Hahn, Judd, & Park, 2010). This is not necessarily the case when a minority group is compared to other minority groups. In the study by Verkuyten and Martinovic (2015), migrants' attitudes towards the

native Dutch were more positive than towards other minorities. The correlations of ingroup projection and outgroup attitudes were also much lower. Ufkes et al. (2012) have highlighted the role of ingroup projection as a mediator in the relationship between identification with an overarching identity and outgroup attitudes. In their study, ingroup projection was associated with different effects for minority and majority groups. For the minority, the perception of a high ingroup prototypicality was connected to a positive relation between identification and outgroup attitudes. For the majority group, in contrast, a low ingroup projection was associated with the respective relation (see Ufkes et al., 2012). These differences give clues for understanding the distinct meaning of ingroup prototypicality for minority and majority groups. One objective of the current study was to further enhance the knowledge on potentially different processes of ingroup projection of minorities and majorities. Therefore, it shall be assessed whether minority and majority groups' perceptions of normality shift in different directions, as a result of an intervention aimed at changing intergroup relations. Different mechanisms for this potential shift process are introduced and briefly discussed in the next section.

Shifts of minority and majority groups' normality perceptions

At the time of writing, there has been no study comparing minority and majority groups' ingroup projection over time and in dependence on intergroup contact. However, it has been shown that minorities and majorities have a significantly different starting point regarding their perceptions of being normal (Ufkes et al., 2012; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015). Ehrke, Berthold and Steffens (2014) showed that a majority group's ingroup projection was decreased through a diversity training. Ufkes et al. (2012) hypothesized that a decrease of a majority group's perceptions of ingroup prototypicality would generally make the inclusive group representative also for a minority group. Yet it is still unclear how the perceptions of prototypicality will change for majorities and minorities when both groups experience the same intervention (i.e., intergroup contact). For members of a minority group, whether their subgroup is included and accepted by the majority group is a relevant and important question (Bergsieker et al., 2010). Ufkes et al. (2012) conclude that a low perception of ingroup prototypicality might lead the minority to doubt whether the common group includes their subgroup. Thus, a shifted level of RIP might be a necessary condition for a member of a minority group to suppose the superordinate group to be relevant and inclusive for his own subgroup (see Ufkes et al., 2012), which would reflect an arrival in the society. Ufkes et al. further stated that, a lower RIP for majority members would go hand in hand with reduced intergroup bias. For members of a minority group, in contrast, a higher RIP would go hand in hand with reduced intergroup bias. Hence, it can therefore be assumed that intergroup bias should be reduced by interventions that cause the RIP of majority and minority members to equalize.

Hegarty and Pratto (2001) showed that changing the superordinate group to one for which the low status group appears to be more typical, causes the explanatory focus to become more even-handed, not leading to a marking of any group. The increased perception by the high-status group that the low status group belongs, appears to distribute the explanatory focus more equally. Bruckmüller (2013) showed that when marking normative / high status groups, group self-esteem of members of the non-normative / low status group increased, whereas it remained on the same level for members of the normative / high status group. In all conditions, members of the high-status group showed a higher group self-esteem than members of the low status group.

Perceptions of complexity of the superordinate group

An approach to shift perceptions of prototypicality is to change the complexity of the respective superordinate category (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Wenzel et al., 2008). Increased perception of a diverse superordinate group might lead to the understanding that members of other groups might be different, but also typical for the superordinate group (Wenzel et al., 2008). Ingroup members' perception of the undeniable existence of an outgroup within the superordinate group is assumed to increase the perception that this outgroup also represents the superordinate group. According to Wenzel et al. this should lead to a reduction of ingroup projection. There is evidence for this process for members of majority groups (see Ehrke et al., 2014), though it is unclear how the perception of complexity of the superordinate group will change the perception of ingroup prototypicality for members of groups that do not perceive themselves to be prototypical. Ufkes et al.'s (2012) results (see above) suggest that for minorities the same mechanism will lead to the opposite effect: The perceptions of a high complexity and diversity of the superordinate group might increase their perception of ingroup prototypicality. The same mechanism might apply for the paradigm of the effect to be explained. The perception of which group is the effect to be explained (and on who explanatory focus is put) might change by including members of outgroups as also somewhat typical. One possibility of developing perceptions of a more complex and diverse superordinate group might be intergroup contact (see Waldzus et al., 2003; Gaertner, Dovidio, Banker, Houlette, Johnson, & McGlynn, 2000). I will therefore introduce intergroup contact as a potential influential factor on perceptions in the context of groups' normality in the next section.

Intergroup contact in the context of migration and integration

Migrants and members of the native population (in Germany) often grow up and live in different environments, leading them to face different challenges and experience different social realities and ways of living (e.g., Matsumoto, 2007). Typically, these social realities are perceived differently by members of different groups (i.e., insiders and outsiders). This increases the probability of (cultural) misunderstandings,

inaccurate attributions of group representation and accompanying intergroup attitudes (see Chapter 2.2; see also, Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Intergroup contact has been shown to reduce these effects consistently (e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Brown, Eller, Leeds, & Stace, 2007; Binder et al., 2009).

In the context of migration and integration, most studies so far have focused mainly upon the effects of intergroup contact on members of a native majority. Only rarely have effects on majority and minority groups been assessed in a comparative study. In one notable study, Mähönen, Jasinskaja-Lahti, and Liebkind (2011) found that direct cross ethnic friendships predicted positive outgroup-evaluations over time among majority, but not minority group children. Verkuyten and Thijs (2002) found multicultural education (in intergroup settings) to affect Dutch children (majority group), but not Turkish children (minority group). Dovidio, Gaertner and Saguy (2007) state that the preconditions for intergroup contact can differ largely between majority and minority, specifically due to having "different perceptions and motivations regarding their intergroup relations and the status quo" (p. 304). Thus, there might either be different mechanisms of how intergroup contact works for minority and majority groups, or the same mechanisms might lead to different results. I propose that a higher complexity of superordinate group representations will decrease the relative ingroup projection of the majority group members, but increase the relative ingroup projection of the minority group members. For both groups, it is assumed that a change in perception will take place in terms of how their own and/or the other group is represented in the overarching category. Because of these changes, the majority may be led to shift the explanatory focus to be distributed more even-handed (see, e.g., Kawakami, Dovidio, Moll, Hermsen, & Russin, 2000; Dovidio, Gaertner, & Kawakami, 2003). For the minority, the explanatory focus also may shift towards the majority group, questioning the majorities' predominant understanding as the standard. Intergroup contact might shatter the perceived social realities, influencing perceptions of normality of societal status relations (e.g., Berry et al., 1992; Matsumoto, 2007). For these changes to occur, instead of reducing the salience of the ingroup-outgroup categorization, members of both groups should interact explicitly as members of their respective groups, in order "to acknowledge mutual superiorities and inferiorities" (Wenzel et al., 2008, p. 333), and appreciate and value group differences (Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Wenzel et al., 2008).

Summary

The first primary goal of Study 3 is further investigation into the perceptions of an ethnic minority group and a native majority group, as to whether they perceive their ingroup as well as the respective outgroup as being differently normal, respectively, prototypical. The second main goal of Study 3 is to examine whether contact (differently) influences the minority and majority group's perceptions of ingroup and outgroup normality. Whilst for the majority group, a decrease in relative ingroup prototypicality perceptions is expected, for the minority group an increasing perception of prototypicality, a shift towards

becoming equally normal in the receiving society, is assumed. By applying these theoretical questions to a specific context of integration, new insights and implications for a process of migration and integration, including the different societal groups, can be gained. Further explorations will take place as to whether majority and minority group's shifts of normality perceptions are driven by the perception of the ingroup becoming more typical or the outgroup becoming less typical. The study is of both theoretical and practical relevance, and aims to further develop the understanding of normality perceptions in a group context and to depict dynamics (of the perceptions) between the native population and migrant groups in a mutual integration process.

The context of this study: a mentoring program

Intergroup friendships, as a specific form of intergroup contact, have been shown to be particularly strong as predictor of prejudice reduction (Dovidio et al., 2003; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Tropp & Prenovost, 2008). In order to extend the knowledge already gained in laboratory studies (e.g., Kessler et al., 2010), an applied setting with real groups was chosen for the current study; namely, a one-mentor-one-mentee mentorship-program, based in Berlin, Germany (Schülerpaten Berlin e.V.). As it establishes a long-term relationship between native Germans and Germans with migration background, the process of mentoring can be understood as an intervention that applies high quality intergroup contact. By ensuring the occurrence and the regularity of the meetings through an organizational frame, control and comparability is facilitated. Therefore, this specific intervention / mentoring program is an appropriate vehicle for the current study.

Schülerpaten Berlin e.V. is a mentoring program that has the objective of establishing equal opportunities for children from a migration background (i.e., migrants in the second or third generation). These children are often disadvantaged in German society (e.g., Jäger, 2014). Volunteer mentors (native Germans; most of them, university or PhD students in the age between 20-34 years) meet with their mentees (school students with Arabic migration background, between 6 and 20 years old) once a week for in average two hours. While there is no limit for the duration of the mentorship, the minimum is six months. In this mentoring program, mentors support mentees in their school work (in informal learning procedures; see Esch, 2011) and, importantly, become involved with extracurricular activities. Part of the approach is that private lessons are held at the homes of the mentees. Due to this, members of the different groups meet, gain insights into the social reality of each other, and even develop intergroup friendships (Jäger, 2014). As examinations have shown, this is otherwise rarely the case in German society (Jugert, Noack, & Rutland, 2011; Titzmann, 2014). The mentoring program aims to affect both mentees and mentors: (1) through contact and guidance from the mentors, the mentees have the opportunity to improve their educational level, proficiency in the German language, and knowledge of the German school system. The mentees' parents

would not necessarily be able to provide this support themselves, due to factors such as the language barrier and/or the difficulties of financing private lessons. The interexchange of social realities and related experiences and ideas are also expected to provide a positive influence. This should help to establish a clearer and more realistic image of each individual, and the group he identifies with. Moreover, individuals' willingness to mentor without pay, signals to the minority members that the majority cares about them. (2) For the mentors, Schülerpaten Berlin e.V. offers a good possibility to learn about the social reality of individuals with Arabic heritage in Germany. In addition, Schülerpaten Berlin e.V. offers mentors the opportunity to become socially involved in an organized but open frame. In that context, by meaningful contact and a close relationship, stereotypical thoughts and prejudices are aimed to be reduced. The Schülerpaten Berlin e.V. organizational team provides both groups with support, offering accompanying seminars and get-togethers. Evaluations of similar mentorship programs have shown different (generally positive) effects of mentoring on mentees; specifically, on potential deviancy, prosociality and the closing of development gaps (Grossman & Tierney, 1998; Esch, 2011).

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1:

>*It is hypothesized that native German mentors and Arab migrant mentees perceive their respective ingroups as differently normal for people living in Germany. While mentors are assumed to perceive their ingroup as being more prototypical than the outgroup, mentees are assumed to perceive their ingroup as equally or less prototypical compared to the outgroup. In comparison, mentors are assumed to perceive themselves as more relatively prototypical than the mentees do.*

Hypothesis 2:

>*It is further hypothesized that intergroup contact leads to changes in prototypicality/normality perceptions. These changes are assumed to differ for mentors and mentees. While mentors' perceptions of relative prototypicality are hypothesized to decrease with increased intergroup contact, mentees' perceptions of relative ingroup prototypicality are hypothesized to increase. It is assumed that during this process, perceptions of prototypicality of mentors and mentees will become closer due to the experience of intergroup contact.*

Hypothesis 3:

> *Exploratory assessments will also be carried out as to whether potential shifts in mentors'*
> *and mentees' perceptions of relative prototypicality are driven by changes in their*
> *perceptions of the respective ingroup's or the outgroup's prototypicality. It is assumed that*
> *these processes/perceptions differ between mentors and mentees.*

4.4.2. Method

Design and procedure of the study

Design of the study and procedure of the data collection

The chosen design is that of an intervention study, with participation in the mentoring program serving as the intervention (of intergroup contact). Although the study is a cross-sectional one, the time of exposure to the intervention is a crucial factor. Different participant groups were compared using the duration of their participation in the mentoring program. The data was collected via an online-survey, which was conducted at five times over a total duration of two and a half years. On each occasion, different participants were used. Therefore, the confounding effects of particular time contexts (e.g., the introduction of a specific integration policy) were prevented. The design was chosen ahead of a longitudinal design due to the specific challenges of data sampling in the mentoring program. These include the fluctuation of participants, different complications in the process of assessment of the mentees (some did not have internet access) and the relatively high complexity of the survey.

The study participants were contacted and informed through the organizers of the mentoring program. The survey was embedded in a larger program evaluation, carried out by the mentoring organization. Participants were informed about the scientific nature of the respective part of the questionnaire. Sampling the data in an online survey (Fluidsurveys) began in September 2013. Personal, yet anonymous, links were sent to the mentors, directing them to the online survey. Links for the mentees were also sent to the mentors with the request to forward. Mentors and most mentees filled in the online-questionnaire independently. Younger mentees and mentees whose German skills were limited were assisted by their mentors. In the case of the mentee sample, the participant turnout was lower than hoped. This was due to general difficulties in approaching students with Arabic migration background, a lack of computers with internet access, and difficulties in answering the questionnaire due to a lack of language skills. The number of participants is still not unusual, neither in the context of majority/minority studies of relative ingroup projection (see, e.g., Ufkes et al., 2012), nor in the context of interethnic contact studies (see, e.g., Feddes, Noack, & Rutland, 2009). In order to improve the intercultural sensitivity as well as to

heighten the participation rate, over time the survey was slightly modified, predominately with respect to the wording. As a consequence, a few questions could not be answered by all participants. Of the around 200 mentoring dyads that were active in the time range of the assessment, 112 mentors and 44 mentees completed the whole questionnaire. The time required to complete the survey ranged from 25 to 45 minutes. While mentees had the chance to win a Schülerpaten Berlin e.V. fan set or Amazon gift cards, mentors participated without receiving remuneration. Up to three reminder emails were sent to the mentors. Informed consent was obtained.

Intervention: procedure of the mentoring process

As described in detail in the theoretical background section, Schülerpaten Berlin e.V. is a one-mentor-one-mentee program. Mentors and mentees regularly meet once a week for at least 1.5 hours. During this time, the mentors focus on supporting the mentees in their school work, any kind of (mostly school related) challenges and, if necessary, also in improving their German language skills. Other exchanges and extracurricular activities (such as doing sports or going to a museum) are also possible. The meetings are usually held at the family homes of the mentees and therefore exceed formal private teaching. Mentors often stay with the family for a tea or a meal, and mentors are encouraged to organize the mentoring in an active dialogue and a non-hierarchical manner.

Participants

Mentees as well as mentors of the Schülerpaten Berlin e.V. mentorship program participated in the study. For the analyses, the group membership of the participants (mentors/mentees) was treated as a two-level factor.

Mentees

Of the 59 mentees who originally participated in the study, 15 did not complete the entire study questionnaire and were therefore excluded from the analyses. Of the remaining 44 mentees, 19 were male, 25 female. The average age was 13.3 years (SD = 2.25), ranging from 7 to 17 years. At the point of assessment, most mentees were either going to an elementary school, an integrated secondary school or a regular secondary school. All mentees' parents were born in Arab countries. Most of the parents were born in either Lebanon, Palestine or Egypt. 34 of the mentees were born in Germany, 10 were born in an Arabic country. The average duration of a mentorship relation was 37.07 weeks (SD = 31.12; Mdn = 32.00). The main motivation for mentees to participate in the program (several options could be selected) was to improve grades in school, as selected by 32 participants. For only one mentee "getting to know the German culture" was part of the motivation. The mean for to what extent mentees perceived their mentor as friend, measured on a 6-point-likert scale, from 0 = *do not agree at all* to 5 = *completely agree*), was 4.04 (SD = 1.40).

Mentors

Of the 172 mentors who originally participated in the study, 60 did not complete the entire questionnaire and were therefore excluded from the analyses. Of the remaining 112 mentors, 70 were male, 42 female. The average age was 25.95 years ($SD = 7.16$), ranging from 17 to 73 years. The sample consisted mainly of highly educated participants. 85 mentors were either university or PhD students. The average duration of the mentorship was 45.07 weeks ($SD = 44.27$; $Mdn = 32.00$). The mentors' motivation to participate in the program was mainly to "do something meaningful," "to be committed to a just and equal society" and "to pay back to society." The mentors showed strong support for diversity and integration. Multiculturalism was measured by one item: "It is a good thing when persons with Arabic migration background, in addition to the German culture, keep parts of the Arabic culture." The item was measured on a 6-point-Likert-scale (from 0 = *do not agree at all* to 5 = *completely agree*). The mean score was 4.65 ($SD = 0.73$). Mentors' attitude towards assimilation was also measured by one item: "Migrants should adapt to the German culture." The item was also measured on a 6-point-Likert-scale (from 0 = *do not agree at all* to 5 = *completely agree*). The mean was 2.41 ($SD = 1.12$). The items were taken from the scale, developed by Berry (2003), and adapted to the specific context. Thus, the precondition for examining effects of normality perceptions for individuals with pro-diversity and pro-multiculturalism attitudes was fulfilled.

Measures

Independent variables: two measures of contact: duration of participation in the mentoring program and percentage of cross-group peers

As the first measure of contact, the duration of participation in the mentoring program was assessed. The variable was divided a posteriori along a cut-off of 16 weeks for both groups. Mentees and mentors who had participated in the mentorship less than 16 weeks were subsequently categorized as short-term mentees/mentors. Those who had participated for more than 16 weeks were categorized as long-term participants. The cut-off score was based on both, contextual and theory-based considerations (see, e.g., Jekielek, Moore, Hair, & Scarupa, 2002). Thus, for the analyses, a two-level factor was used, reflecting a short versus long duration in the mentoring program. Of the mentees, 13 had been participating in the mentoring program short term, and 31 long term. The corresponding figures for mentors were 35 (short term) and 76 (long term) respectively.

As a second measurement of contact, the percentage of persons of the respective other ethnicity in participants' environment (Arab migrants for the mentors, native Germans for the mentees) was examined. This measurement was independent of the intervention. So far, studies have yielded mixed results regarding the effects of an ethnically diverse environment. Negative effects on the majority group's outgroup attitudes are suggested when the diversity in the environment is high, but the occurrence of (meaningful) intergroup

contact not guaranteed (e.g., Agirdag, Loobuyck, & van Houtte, 2012). However, when interactions take place, a higher diversity in the environment was shown to lead to positive intergroup attitudes (Savelkoul, Scheepers, Tolsma, & Hagendoorn, 2010). The current study's procedure of assessment of the percentage of individuals' cross-group peers was as follows. Mentees were asked to firstly indicate the total number of children and secondly the number of native Germans in their classroom. The respective percentage of native Germans was calculated and used for the analyses. For the mentors, the percentage of Arab migrants in their circle of acquaintances was assessed. The respective percentages for each group were divided via two separate median splits, resulting in two-level factors (low versus high percentage of cross group peers). 20 of the mentees indicated a low percentage of native Germans in their classroom (less than 15%), 23 a relatively high percentage (more than 15%). Of the mentors, 62 indicated a low percentage of Arab migrants in their circle of acquaintances (less than 3 %), 49 a comparatively high (more than 3%). Both measures of contact were not related to each other, neither for mentors ($r = .07$, $p = .490$), nor for mentees ($r = .06$, $p = .724$).

Dependent variables: relative ingroup prototypicality, profile dissimilarity of native Germans and profile dissimilarity of Arab migrants

Mentees and mentors were presented with a list of 18 attributes. Of these, six attributes were typical for native Germans, six were typical for Arabs and another six were neutral. The list was mainly based on attributes presented by an intercultural consultant and further extensively discussed in the research group. The attributes were presented in German language. The attributes are listed in the following paragraph. The letters in the parentheses indicate, for which group each attribute is perceived to be typical: punctual (German), friendly (Arabic), pretty (Neutral), family oriented (A), affectionate (A), laid back (N), smart (N), career-oriented (G), chaotic (A), diligent (G), teacher-like (G), lazy (N), cooperative (A), intelligent (N), brave (N), emotionally cold (G), dependent (A), reliable (G). The list of attributes was presented four times: Mentors and mentees were asked to indicate whether these attributes were typical for (a) native Germans, (b) Arab migrants in Germany, (c) people living in Germany (the inclusive category) and (d) themselves. The 8-point Likert scale ranged from 0 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*.

The assessment of these attributes was used as a basis for attribute profiles for mentees and mentors. The square root of the sum of squared attribute differences between the profiles of each subgroup and the inclusive category was calculated as a measure of dissimilarity between profiles (see Wenzel et al., 2003 for a detailed description; Bortz, 2006). The formula for the *profile dissimilarities* (*PD*) was the following: $d_{inc-sub} = [\Sigma(x_{inc \cdot i} - x_{sub \cdot i})^2]^{1/2}$; with d = profile dissimilarity, inc = inclusive category, sub = sub-ingroup / sub-outgroup, and xi = value for attribute i. These profiles reflect how dissimilar each single group was considered to be from the inclusive group. A high value in the profile dissimilarity in this context indicates a low group prototypicality, a low value indicates a high group prototypicality. A measure of relative

prototypicality of the ingroup with respect to the superordinate group was obtained by subtracting the ingroup's profile dissimilarity from the outgroup's profile dissimilarity. For more details on the procedure and calculations, see Wenzel et al. (2003) or Wenzel et al. (2008).

4.4.3. Results

For samples that were similar to this study's participants, identification with the respective ingroup and the inclusive group have been shown to occur for native German students (Kessler et al., 2010) as well as migrants and natives in the Netherlands (Ufkes et al., 2012; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015). Therefore, a for the application of the ingroup projection model necessary minimal identification of participant groups' can be assumed for this study's sample.

This study's descriptive data for all variables is provided in Table 16. In Table 15, correlations between outgroup and ingroup profile dissimilarities are provided for mentors and mentees in total as well as for the different contact conditions. Perceptions of ingroup and outgroup prototypicality appear to be relatively closely related for mentors as well as mentees.

Table 15
Correlations between ingroup and outgroup profile dissimilarities for mentors and mentees

	Outgroup profile dissimilarity
Ingroup profile dissimilarity	r
Mentors	
Total	.469**
Short duration in mentorship	.654**
Long duration in mentorship	.369*
Low percentage of cross-group peers	.400*
High percentage of cross-group peers	.570**
Mentees	
Total	.671**
Short duration in mentorship	.436
Long duration in mentorship	.715**
Low percentage of cross-group peers	.689*
High percentage of cross-group peers	.705**

*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$

Prototypicality perceptions of mentors and mentees

The first main objective of the study was to assess whether ingroup and outgroup prototypicality for people living in Germany differ between a native German (mentors) and an Arab migrant group (mentees). In the first hypothesis, it was predicted that mentors perceive their ingroup as more relatively prototypical for people living in Germany than mentees do. The mentors were assumed to perceive the ingroup as more prototypical than the outgroup. The mentees, in contrast, were assumed to perceive the outgroup as being more prototypical than the ingroup. It was first tested whether mentees and mentors would differ in perceptions of their respective relative ingroup prototypicality. The group membership was treated as a two-level factor with the conditions "mentors" and "mentees". A one-way ANOVA comparing mentors and mentees yielded a significant effect of group on relative prototypicality, $F(1, 154) = 28.47$, $p < .001$. The mentors perceived their ingroup as significantly more relative prototypical for people living in Germany than the mentees did.

In order to examine the relation between perceptions of ingroup and outgroup prototypicality for the groups of mentees and mentors individually, two separate ANOVAs with repeated measures were conducted. For each group, the respective two profile dissimilarities were compared. As described above, the profile dissimilarity is used as an inverse factor of prototypicality. A high score of a dissimilarity indicates a low prototypicality perception, a low score indicates a high prototypicality perception (see, e.g., Wenzel et al., 2003). While mentors perceived their ingroup to be significantly more prototypical than the outgroup, $F(1, 111) = 67.46$, $p < .001$, no difference was observed for mentees' ingroup and outgroup profile dissimilarities, $F(1, 43) = 1.44$, $p = .238$. Thus, mentees perceived their ingroup to be equally (or in tendencies even less) prototypical for people living in Germany than they perceived their outgroup, native Germans, to be.

Table 16

Means and standard deviations of mentors' and mentees' relative ingroup prototypicality and profile dissimilarities

	Total	Duration in mentoring program		Percentage of cross-group peers	
		Short	Long	Low	High
	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)	M (SD)
Mentors					
Relative ingroup prototypicality	2.38 (3.31)	2.03 (2.67)	2.47 (3.30)	2.76 (3.03)	1.78 (2.99)
PD for native Germans	4.42 (2.24)	3.84 (2.19)	4.71 (2.22)	4.32 (1.96)	4.60 (2.56)
PD for Arab migrants	6.79 (3.39)	5.87 (3.53)	7.18 (3.26)	7.10 (3.75)	6.76 (3.71)
Mentees					
Relative ingroup prototypicality	-0.60 (3.06)	-1.39 (3.63)	-0.26 (3.17)	-1.21 (3.76)	0 .00 (2.89)
PD for native Germans	6.61 (3.39)	6.22 (3.66)	7.54 (2.54)	6.05 (3.2)	7.10 (3.61)
PD for Arab migrants	7.21 (4.42)	8.93 (3.93)	6.49 (4.48)	7.26 (5.16)	7.18 (4.47)

Note. PD = profile dissimilarity; M = mean; SD = standard deviation

Effects of intergroup contact

The second main objective of the study was to examine whether intergroup contact would affect mentors' and mentees' perceptions of ingroup and outgroup prototypicality. Differences in relative ingroup prototypicality, ingroup profile dissimilarity and outgroup profile dissimilarity were assessed. Two different measures of intergroup contact were used. The two factors measuring contact were "time of duration in the mentorship program" and "percentage of cross-group peers." The results for both are presented separately below.

Effects of duration of participation in the mentoring program

Influence of duration of participation in the mentoring program on perceptions of relative prototypicality

The second hypothesis predicted that mentors as well as mentees who have participated in the mentoring program for a longer term would differ in their prototypicality perceptions from mentors and mentees who had just started the program. While mentors' perception of relative prototypicality was hypothesized to decrease throughout the mentorship, mentees' perception of relative prototypicality was assumed to increase. For the analyses, both groups were split in short- and long-term participants, depending

on the duration of their participation in the program. The cut-off score was 16 weeks. A two-way ANOVA, with the factors group (mentors/mentees) and duration of participation in the program (long/short), was conducted, in order to assess changes/differences in perceptions of relative prototypicality. No significant interaction was found for perceptions of relative prototypicality, $F(1, 151) = 0.33$, $p = .568$. Also, the analyses did not yield a main effect of the duration of participation in the mentoring program, $F(1, 151) = 1.67$, $p = .198$. Perceptions of relative ingroup prototypicality did not differ for mentees' and mentors' who has just started the program, and mentees' and mentors' who had already participated for a longer term. Perceptions of relative ingroup prototypicality did not change significantly during the mentorship (for the descriptive data, see Table 16).

In order to receive a more detailed insight, the impact of duration of participation in the mentorship program was also assessed separately for the groups of mentors and mentees. Two one-way ANOVAs, comparing long-term and short-term participants for each group, were conducted. The analysis did not yield significant differences between the new and the long-term mentors, $F(1, 109) = 0.49$, $p = .484$. For the mentees, the analysis also did not yield significant differences, $F(1, 42) = 1.07$, $p = .307$. The lack of significance for the mentees' scores may be partly explained by the relatively small sample size and the suboptimal distribution of participants per group.

Influence of duration of participation in the mentoring program on profile dissimilarities

In order to build a more detailed picture of the processes, it was further assessed whether perceptions of ingroup prototypicality and/or outgroup prototypicality differed between short-term and long-term participants amongst each group. Two-way ANOVAs were conducted, with the factors duration of mentoring, and group membership. First, the results for the dependent variable "profile dissimilarities for the perception of Arab migrants" are reported. No main effect of duration of participation in the mentoring program was found, $F(1, 151) = 0.64$, $p = .424$. However, the analysis yielded a significant interaction effect, $F(1, 151) = 7.00$, $p = .009$. Mentees who had been participating in the program for a longer time, perceived Arab migrants to be more prototypical than mentees did who were relatively new to the program. In contrast to that, long-term mentors perceived Arab migrants as less prototypical than relatively unexperienced mentors did. Again, to further analyze the effects, differences between long- and short-term attendees were additionally assessed separately for the groups of mentees and mentors. Two one-way ANOVAs were performed. Respective statistical trends for the effects of duration of mentoring on profile dissimilarity of Arab migrants could be observed for the mentees, $F(1, 42) = 2.92$, $p = .095$, as well as the mentors, $F(1, 109) = 3.64$, $p = .059$.

The results for the dependent variable "profiles dissimilarities for the perception of native Germans" are reported below. A similar pattern could be observed. No main effect of duration of participation in the

mentoring program was found, $F(1, 151) = 0.19$, $p = .661$. However, as hypothesized, a significant interaction of duration of participation in the mentoring program and participant group could be observed, $F(1,151) = 4.70$, $p = .032$. Whilst long-term mentors perceived native Germans as less prototypical than new mentors did, long-term mentees perceived native Germans to be more prototypical than new mentees did. Again, the effects of duration were also tested for the groups of mentees and mentors separately. Whilst the one-way ANOVA turned out to be non-significant for the mentees, $F(1, 42) = 1.38$, $p = .246$, it yielded a respective statistical trend for the mentors, $F(1, 109) = 3.69$, $p = .057$.

Differential effects of intergroup contact on prototypicality perceptions: comparisons among short-term and long-term participants

Looking at the literature as well as the results from the ANOVAs above, there is reason to believe that the direction of effects of duration of mentoring differs for mentors and mentees. Both groups' perceptions may approach each other. To test the hypothesis that intergroup contact changes native Germans' and Arab migrants' perceptions of ingroup and outgroup prototypicality differently, four t-tests were conducted. Two t-tests assessed the differences between short-term mentors' and short-term mentees' perceptions of the profile dissimilarities for Arab migrants as well as native Germans. Two further t-tests assessed the differences between long-term mentors' and long-term mentees' perceptions for both profile dissimilarities. A weaker difference / higher similarity between long-term mentors and mentees would indicate a mutual approaching of the typicality perceptions. For the descriptive data, see Table 16. The analysis yielded significant differences between new mentors' and new mentees' perceptions of prototypicality of Arab migrants, $t(46) = 2.59$, $p = .013$, as well as native Germans, $t(46) = 4.97$, $p < .001$. For the long-term mentors' and mentees', perceptions of prototypicality of native Germans still significantly differed, $t(105) = 2.62$, $p = .010$. However, the difference was less strongly. Long-term mentors' and mentees' perceptions of prototypicality of Arab migrants did not significantly differ, $t(105) = -0.89$, $p = .378$. While the short-term mentees and mentors largely differed in their perceptions of prototypicality of Arab migrants and native Germans, the long-term mentees and mentors had relatively similar perceptions.

Effects of percentage of cross-group peers

As a second measure of contact, the influence of the percentage of cross-group peers was analyzed. For the descriptive data, see Table 16. Parallel to the previous analyses, first, the effects of percentage of cross-group peers (high/low) and group membership (mentor/mentee) on perceptions of relative prototypicality were examined via a two-way ANOVA. To avoid potential confounding by the duration in the mentoring program, the respective variable was included as a covariate. The analysis yielded an interaction effect close to significance, $F(1, 150) = 3.83$, $p = .052$. While mentors with a high percentage of cross-group peers perceived their ingroup as less prototypical than mentors with a low percentage, mentees

with a high percentage of cross-group peers perceived their ingroup as more prototypical than mentees with a low percentage of cross-group peers. Additionally, one-way ANOVAs were conducted, separately for the group of mentees and the group of mentors. While no significant difference could be observed for the mentees, $F(1, 41) = 1.41$, p=.242, the analysis yielded a statistical trend for the mentors, $F(1, 109) = 2.90$, $p = .091$.

In order to examine the influence of the percentage of cross-group peers on profile dissimilarities of native Germans and Arab migrants, two-way-ANOVAs were conducted. Again, the group membership was treated as a single factor and included in the analysis. For the profile dissimilarities of Arab migrants, the analyses yielded neither a main effect of percentage of cross-group peers, $F(1, 150) = 0.42$, $p = .519$, nor a significant interaction effect of percentage of cross-group peers and participant group, $F(1, 150) = 0.18$, $p = .673$. Also for the profile dissimilarities of native Germans, there was neither a main effect of percentage of cross-group peers, $F(1, 150) = 1.94$, $p = .166$, nor a significant interaction effect, $F(1, 150) = 0.71$, $p = .402$, of percentage of cross-group peers.

4.4.4. Discussion

There were two major objectives for Study 3. The first was to further examine the phenomenon of perceiving different groups as being differentially normal for/in a society. Particular emphasis was placed on normality perceptions in the context of majority-minority relations. The second major objective was to examine factors that potentially may affect groups' normality perceptions. Specifically, intergroup contact was hypothesized as an influential factor and assessed in the study. It was a particular concern, to elaborate groups' perceptions of groups' normality in an applied setting. Therefore, in this study, it should be examined, to what extent different perceptions of groups' normality might be a relevant factor for explaining native populations' prejudices against migrants', even in cases when former support diversity and multiculturalism.

As hypothesized, native Germans and Arab migrants did significantly differ in their perceptions of the own group's normality. Native German mentees perceived their ingroup to be more prototypical for people in Germany than they perceived the outgroup. The migrant mentees, in contrast, perceived their ingroup as equally or even less prototypical than they perceived the outgroup of native Germans. The contact measures yielded mixed results. Even though, the participation in the mentoring program did not significantly change participants' perceptions of relative normality, it did change absolute perceptions of each group. Migrant mentees who had had intergroup contact for a long term, perceived their ingroup as more normal than those mentees who had had contact for only a short amount of time. Native German mentors who had experienced intergroup contact for a long term perceived their ingroup as well as the outgroup as less prototypical. All in all, normality perceptions of native Germans and Arab migrants were

more alike when the groups had experienced contact and interacted with each other over a longer term. Their perceptions seem to have approached each other over time.

The percentage of cross-group peers in participants' environment affected native Germans' and Arab migrants' perceptions in the hypothesized direction: For the native Germans, a higher percentage of cross-group peers was associated with perceptions of the ingroup as less relatively prototypical. For the Arab migrants, the opposite was the case: A higher percentage of cross-group peers was associated with higher perceptions of the ingroup as more relatively prototypical. In the following sections, the results shall be further discussed and integrated.

Perceptions of groups' normality

This study shows that perceptions of relative normality are a factor that differs in its influence on native Germans and Arab migrants. These results are in line with, and extend, the previous research on ingroup projection among majorities and ethnic minorities (Ufkes et al., 2012; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015). In the research on ingroup prototypicality, it is indicated that different perceptions of typicality to a certain degree appear to reflect social realities of differences in status, size and/or power (Mummendey & Otten, 2001; Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Boettcher, 2004). However, differences of perceptions of groups' normality also influence the social reality of the groups and group relations themselves (Hegarty & Pratto, 2001). Perceiving the ingroup to be more prototypical than the outgroup, for example, is associated with the expression of more negative attitudes towards this group (Waldzus et al., 2003; Wenzel et al., 2008; Verkuyten & Martinovic, 2015). Being perceived as less normal is associated with stigmatization and lower perceptions of agency, power group self-esteem (Bruckmüller, 2013). Whichever group is regarded as less normal becomes marked as the effect to be explained, and therefore stereotypes regarding this group are more easily accessed, better known and more persistent in society (Devine, 1989; Hegarty & Pratto, 2001). According to Hegarty and Pratto (2001), differences in perceptions of being normal are related to the establishment of hierarchical group relations. The results of this study indicate that native Germans perceive Arab migrants as less normal for people living in Germany than they perceive their own group. During this process, they implicitly neglect the "social fact of cultural and ethnic diversity" (Kessler et al., 2010, p. 988). This notion holds true even for this study's specific sample of native Germans who are strongly concerned with migration and integration issues and express supportive intergroup ideologies. All in all, it can be stated that the relatively low perceptions of migrants' normality in the German society seems to contribute to explaining the wide sharing of negative attitudes towards migrants throughout the whole scope of society (i.e., individuals of different demographics, educational levels and socioeconomic status).

It is furthermore remarkable that also the participants with an Arabic migration background perceived themselves to be, at the most, equally prototypical as native Germans. These perceptions occurred

even though most of the individuals were born and raised in Germany. This result is in line with the research, conducted by Verkuyten and Martinovic (2015) in the Netherlands. It reveals the nature of the status quo of integration and acculturation of Arabic migrants in Germany.

Shifts of perceptions of groups' normality: complexity, representation and social realities

In a rare approach, Study 3 examined and compared the effects of intergroup contact on the majority population and a minority group. The few studies in this context have found moderate to strong effects of intergroup contact on the majority groups, but only weak effects on minority groups (Verkuyten & Thijs, 2002: Tropp & Prenovost, 2008; Mähönen et al., 2011). These studies, however, assessed intergroup attitudes – not normality perceptions of groups. In the current study, perceptions of groups' normality have been shown to be shifted by certain forms of intergroup contact. The normality perceptions have been found to approach each other, dependent on the time of contact/interaction as well as the percentage of cross-group peers. Intergroup contact decreased native Germans' perceptions of relative normality, whereas it increased perceptions of own group's relative normality for Arab migrants. While changes of perceptions of absolute normality of the in- or outgroup were also observed for the mentorship program, the changes of relative prototypicality solely occurred for contact, conceptualized as the percentage of cross-group peers in the individuals' environments. This may be due to the frequency and closeness of everyday experiences. Due to day-to-day interactions, the frequency of intergroup encounters should be particularly high, increasing perceptions of normality (see Chapter 2.2.). The mentorship, however, is only once a week and in a somewhat structured / orderly frame.

There are different explanations for why and how intergroup contact is effective in changing the perceptions of groups' normality. Wenzel et al. (2008) suggested that intergroup contact might increase the complexity of the representation of the superordinate category and therefore reduce ingroup projection and its associated effects. A higher complexity of the representation of the superordinate group is built upon the understanding that the superordinate group is made up of different prototypes (Wenzel et al., 2008). Thus, for the native Germans, a higher proportion of cross-group peers may have affected general perceptions of diversity within the society. This, in turn, may have increased their acceptance of Arab migrants as being different, but also normal for people living in Germany. The experience of intergroup contact and accompanying superordinate group diversity appears to have led to two processes. Firstly, the outgroup seems to be included in the representation of the superordinate group. Secondly, the normality of the own ingroup was relativized. The literature suggests that, with this shift of perceptions, a lower intergroup bias, more balanced relations between the groups and more balanced attributions of characteristics of both groups are to be expected (e.g., Hegarty & Pratto, 2001; Ufkes et al., 2012; Bruckmüller, 2013).

For the Arab migrants, intergroup contact seems to have led to a lower degree of doubt about their actual inclusion in the German society, as well as a feeling of stronger representation within German society (see also Ufkes et al., 2012). For minority members, it is an important issue whether the majority accepts and includes their ingroup (Van Oudenhoven, Prins, & Buunk, 1998; Bergsieker et al., 2010). A minority group, which has only experienced a few intergroup encounters to date, might have an abstract and potentially incorrect image of the superordinate category of people in the country to which they have immigrated, as constituted almost entirely of members of the native majority. With an increasing number of intergroup encounters and acquaintances, migrants might feel more accepted and form an image of the superordinate category, in which their subgroup is stronger integrated. Living in different social realities, migrants might also have (had) a rather incorrect image of the native population (see Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Matsumoto, 2007; Binder et al., 2009). With increased knowledge about the (diverse) characteristics of the outgroup members, minority members might correct certain perceptions of typicality, similarity and group differences and "acknowledge mutual superiorities and inferiorities" (Wenzel et al., 2008, p. 333). The experience of being increasingly represented within the superordinate group supposedly is an important factor towards successful migration and integration processes (see Berry, 1997; Ufkes et al., 2012). As integration can be considered a mutual process (see Benet-Martínez et al., 2006; Sam & Berry, 2010), the dynamic relations of native Germans' as well as Arab migrants' normality perceptions of the respective in- and outgroups are of high relevance.

Strengths and limitations

The current study is the first to assess the influence of intergroup contact on perceptions of groups' normality, respectively, relative ingroup prototypicality, comparing a majority and a minority group. This is highly relevant for the practical examination of integration processes. Due to special challenges (see section 3.2.2.), a cross-sectional design was chosen for the study. Using a longitudinal design might have provided a clearer accentuation of the effects of the mentoring. Compared to other studies on ingroup projection (e.g., Wenzel et al., 2008, Kessler et al., 2010), the number of participants for this study was somewhat low. A higher number of participants might have increased the statistical sensitivity for differences between the groups. One further reason for the somewhat weak to moderate effects of the duration of participation in the mentoring program might be the choice of a cut-off score of 16 weeks. At this point of time, first intergroup encounters might have already taken place and first insights in each other's living worlds may have been attained. As illustrated in Chapter 2.2., these first encounters already have the potential to establish and change perceptions of normality. Another reason for the relatively weak effects of the mentoring program might be the fact that it does not meet the optimal conditions for intergroup contact

(Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Mentor and mentee are not of the same status, as a mentoring relationship implies a teacher-student relation.

All in all, it is notable that the effects were found under these somewhat challenging conditions. With an improvement of the contact intervention, a (timewise) lower cut-off and less culturally sensitive participants (on the side of the native population), even stronger results are to be expected. Further implications of Study 3, regarding this dissertation's general concept of normality and shifts of normality are provided in the general discussion.

4.5. Theoretical background of the Studies 4 to 7: Impact of social norms on reality perceptions

Contributions to the models of normality and shifts of normality

This set of studies contributes fundamentally to the model of normality. Firstly, the deductions from normality and normativity perceptions to the experience of objective reality will be examined. I will assess to what extent individuals' perception of factuality, truth and reality is in accord to their implicit understanding of what is normal or normative. Do individuals solely perceive as real and true what is normal or normative to them? Secondly, I will investigate the interactions between perceptions of normality, normativity, reality and behavioral/attitudinal expressions. Thirdly, it will be examined whether information that is perceived as abnormal, or that stems from persons who are perceived as abnormal, is included, or falls out of the circle of normality.

Introduction

The nature of prejudice seems complex and elusive. Individuals seem to have a clear prospect of what prejudices constitute of and how they are typically expressed. Therefore, they perceive themselves as capable of (correctly) recognizing prejudices and acts of discrimination. However, various examples indicate that prejudice is not always perceived as such at all times, and by every individual. The examination of at consensually rejected groups gives enlightening insights. It might seem inappropriate, irrational and non-normative to refer to a devaluation of a fascist as an expression of prejudice. It seems very clear that fascists are simply bad people. Therefore, a question arises. Can individuals actually have prejudices against groups like fascists, racists or pedophiles, against groups, which are commonly devalued? Or do negative evaluations of these groups simply reflect what is factual and true?

In the USA, the expression of prejudices and discrimination against black people was widely accepted until the middle of the 20th century, with Whites and Blacks usually living segregated (e.g., Jackson Jr, 2011). Today, in contrast, although forms of subtle racism still exist, the extent of segregation is confined and many institutional and societal attempts have been made to further decrease racial prejudices.

Regulations are even being incorporated into the laws (e.g., Ridderbusch, 2014). In most parts of the Western world, the norms of acceptance and open expression of racial prejudices have shifted within the last 50 years, in an increasing process of liberalization (Crandall et al., 2002). Work by Durrheim, Quayle and Dixon (2016), however, shows that (compared to many Western countries) the segregation in South Africa is still deeply integrated in the society. The character of the segregation may have changed in South Africa but it has never completely diminished. In the current political climate, however, with Donald Trump as the 45th president of the USA, as well as the rising populism and societal polarization in the center European countries, studies and surveys also show shifts back to a higher number of strongly and openly expressed racial prejudices in these countries (e.g., Decker et al., 2016). Whilst the media in 2015 and 2016 was attentive to the issue of racial prejudices, negative group-based evaluations and discriminations against other groups are still below the radar and hence accepted and openly expressed. Obesity for instance, has been denoted "the last acceptable prejudice" several times (see, e.g., Sodha, 2017). Furthermore, studies have shown prejudice against singles to be thought of as acceptable (Morris, Sinclair, & DePaulo, 2007; Bowden, 2012; Neporent, 2013). Whilst racial prejudices within the last 50-60 years have moved into the focus of the discourse and therefore are open to questioning, prejudice and discrimination against obese persons and singles seem to be more commonly accepted and widely shared. Devaluations of these latter groups appear to be part of an unnoticed and unsaid normality.

In summary, the illustrations show that the expression of prejudice depends on the social acceptance of the specific prejudice. The acceptance of prejudice, in turn, depends on the time- and societal context. Prejudice against particular groups may be accepted and even desirable in one context, but not in another. Potentially, prejudice may not even be recognized as such. Diverse questions arise from this: What is prejudice and how is it understood? Is it understood as an expression of something that lies outside the normality- and truth perception of an individual? What do individuals recognize and name as prejudice? Does the extent depend not only on the expression and acceptance of prejudice, but also whether an evaluation or devaluation is recognized as a prejudice, on the social norms / the perception of normality?

As illustrated, there are thoughts and paradoxes regarding the specific and practical content of what counts as prejudice and in which cases it is freely expressed or not even identified. It is therefore necessary to reconsider the (scientific) concept of prejudice and what lay persons generally understand as prejudice. It becomes necessary to research prejudice as a general concept, and focus on the underlying processes. Therefore, the nature and understanding of prejudice can be examined independently of specific time- or group-contexts. For that matter, it should be considered that prejudice has a certain function in a group. An individual who shares the group's prejudice is a proper member, whereas an individual who does not (or even opposed them) is a non-conformist and might be treated as a deviant. The meaning of this function

regarding the acceptance and expression of prejudice for groups and group members, has so far not been well considered.

Research has largely defined prejudice as being biased and faulty statements (see Allport, 1954). Prejudices thus reflect what is undesirable in a group or deviates from the group norms. The idea that also expressions that are in line with the social norms can in fact reflect prejudices has been mostly neglected. Therefore, the research has been focused on specific groups as potential targets (e.g., black people, Jews, women; Pettigrew, 1997; Crandall et al., 2002). However, due to specific socio-historical contexts in studying particular prejudices / prejudices against particular groups, inferring learnings from one phenomenon to another is hardly possible without contamination (e.g., Crandall et al., 2002). Therefore, there is a strong necessity to focus research on general processes, independently of specific target groups or types of prejudice. This should broaden the general understanding of prejudice. By focusing research only on illegitimate / non-normative prejudices, researchers miss an entire relevant aspect of research on prejudice.

In the current set of studies, it shall be examined whether the social norms not only affect the expression of prejudice, but beyond that determine, which prejudiced expression is identified as prejudice at all and which, in contrast, goes unsaid, counting as true and objective. In more general terms, in this set of study the theoretical notion is analyzed that whatever counts as normal and/or normative in an individual's group, is perceived as reflecting reality and objectivity. More detailed illustrations regarding this set of studies' approach and objectives as well as regarding the nature of prejudice expression and identification are provided in the following sections.

Identification of prejudice

In this section, I will give an insight in the status quo of research that analyzes relevant factors for the identification of acts of discrimination as well as prejudice. So far, not much research has focused on aspects of perception and detection of discriminatory behavior and prejudices outside the typical forms and patterns. Iyer, Jetten, Branscombe, Jackson and Youngberg (2014) suggested that discriminatory behavior will only be detected and labelled if it is perceived to be inappropriate and illegitimate (see also Jetten, Iyer, Branscombe, & Zhang, 2013). In these studies, differential treatment based on age was only identified as being discriminatory when participants had been asked to consider illegitimate reasons for this treatment. Otherwise, the discrimination was not recognized (Iyer et al, 2014). Baron, Burgess and Kao (1991) suggested that some forms of prejudice and discriminatory behavior were increasingly regarded as prototypical examples. As a consequence, prejudices that match these prototypes are more likely to be effectively labelled as such (see also Marti, Bobier, & Baron, 2000). Baron et al.'s (1991) approach focused on the prototypicality of perpetrator and target characteristics. Researchers showed that incidents of males

discriminating females (Baron et al., 1991), Whites discriminating Blacks (e.g., Inman & Baron, 1996) or, in general, more powerful groups discriminating less powerful groups (Rodin, Price, Bryson, & Sanchez, 1990) were more likely to be labelled as acts of discrimination. This contrasts to the low levels of discrimination identification when the discrimination occurred the other way around (given the same behavior). Marti et al. (2000) broadened this approach by suggesting that the *dimension of human variability* (e.g., height or skin color) would contribute to the prototypicality of an act of discrimination and/or a prejudice. Some dimensions represent more prototypical bases for prejudices than others. For example, Marti et al. described mental sanity as usually not being considered as a prototypical dimension for prejudice. Consequently, even prejudice expressions by a mentally sane person (powerful) towards a mentally ill person (not powerful) are not likely to be identified as a form of prejudice (Marti et al., 2000). Marti and colleagues describe this dimension of variability as being anchored in a social/historical context, and therefore culturally learned. They suggest that the prototypicality of exemplars is based on the frequency of exposure and its cognitive accessibility (Marti et al., 2000; see also Fiske & Taylor, 1991).

Baron at al.'s (1991) as well as Marti et al.'s (2000) approaches provide important foundations in showing that not all forms of discrimination and prejudice are identified. However, their approaches do not explain differential perceptions of what counts as an expression of prejudice, nor the occurrence of shifts in these perceptions in certain cases. These cases include contexts of unchanged frequency of exposure, individuals and groups that show perpetrator as well as target characteristics and the occurrence of acts of discrimination and expressions of prejudice external of the typical dimensions.

Crandall et al. (2002) have shown that prejudices are deeply bound to social norms. The degree to which negative emotions towards a target group are perceived as being generally accepted, corresponds highly to individuals' prejudices towards these groups. Whilst devaluations that are perceived as being inappropriate (non-normative) are rarely expressed (e.g., against blind people), devaluations that are perceived as being socially appropriate (normative) are freely expressed (e.g., against racists). The current approach builds on these findings and further assesses the role of social norms as the decisive factor in the process of identification of prejudices. In what way are normative and non-normative prejudices differently received? I suggest that social norms form a standard for the identification of prejudices. A prejudice that is in line with this standard goes unnoticed and counts as factual, true and real. A prejudice that is incongruent to the social norms, in contrast, is perceived as being biased and therefore labelled as prejudice. The person who expressed the prejudiced statement will therefore be perceived as being deviant, and be excluded from the potential sources of reality building (see Chapters 2.3. & 3.1.).

Revisiting the nature of prejudice

Two concepts / definitions of prejudice

As indicated in the previous section, in social psychological literature, amongst others, two different central concepts/definitions of prejudice can be found. The concepts differ in crucial aspects. The more current one is the relatively broad concept/definition of prejudice as an "evaluation of a group or of an individual on the basis of group membership" (Crandall et al., 2002, p. 359). It effectively means that, regardless of whether a certain evaluation/expression is normative or non-normative, it will be considered a prejudice, if it is based on the group-membership. Whether an evaluation needs to be negative in order to count as a prejudice has been a topic of debate (Secord & Backmann, 1964; Feldman, 1985; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010). In direct contrast to Allport (1954), Crandall et al. (2002) go on to define prejudice as being independent of the accuracy, justification and overgeneralization of an evaluation. As stated previously, throughout its history, prejudice research has focused on particular groups and dimensions against which individuals were assumed to be prejudiced. Amongst these typical groups/dimensions are race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, nationality and religion (e.g., Marti et al. 2000; Crandall et al., 2002; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010; Iyer et al., 2014). In contrast to this, in this dissertation's approach, prejudice formation, maintenance and expression is understood and shall be studied as a general process.

In Allport's classic approach, prejudice is defined as "an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization" (Allport, 1954, p. 9). This reflects the general and widely shared understanding and common lay theories. Comparing the two concepts/definitions, not only do they differ in their content, but also in the amplitude of included incidents. The more recent concept is of broader nature (see Crandall et al., 2002), the classic concept is narrower. For this set of studies, the most crucial difference between the concepts is that in Allport's approach, group-based evaluations that are not perceived as faulty, inappropriate and deviant by the group (norms), are not considered as prejudices. The advantages and disadvantages of a broad and narrow definition are a topic of current debate. Haslam (2016) refers to this phenomenon of semantic shifts in psychological concepts as *conceptual creep* (Haslam, 2016). He states that what is thought of as deviant has in general grown over time. Following Haslam, concepts may have expanded on a vertical dimension, for example, by lowering the threshold for identifying a certain phenomenon. Or, they may have expanded on a horizontal dimension, by extending concepts to qualitatively new classes of phenomena or applying them in new contexts. Compared to Allport's definition, the current concept has vertically expanded, by including positive evaluations and horizontally, by including incidents and occurrences independently of particular groups or dimensions. Whilst Haslam warns that concept creep might lead to a pathologizing of everyday experience, I want to highlight the positive consequences of research focused on the underlying and basic processes of prejudice detection. To perceive and identify group-based evaluations as expressions of prejudice, independently of a certain context of social norms (e.g., a certain time- or group-

context), enables individuals to deal with them (e.g., to fight them), even when the contexts change. I want to creep the concept even further, by depicting that every group is a potential target of prejudice. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of prejudice perception and identification, I do not ignore Allport's definition and understanding of prejudices as necessarily faulty (Allport, 1954). On the contrary, it is an essential factor for this study's concept of prejudice identification; not the least because it seems to generally reflect individuals' lay understanding of what a prejudice is.

The role of social norms for the expression of prejudice

In this section, the introduced concepts and definitions of prejudice are discussed in greater detail, above all in relation to their references to social norms. Focusing on the general processes of prejudice expression, Crandall et al. (2002) suggested that social norms strongly affect the expression and experience of prejudices (see also Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). Whilst in current times, prejudices against a black person may be socially unaccepted and therefore remain unexpressed, a group-based evaluation about a member of a right-wing party might count as normatively justified and therefore be freely expressed (Crandall et al., 2002; Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). As mentioned earlier, Crandall et al. (2002) show the close relation of norms and prejudices, drawing the conclusion that "expressed prejudice is a direct function of its social acceptability" (p. 363). Consequentially, prejudices are righteous and correct to the degree that they are coherent to the social consensus. In contrast to that perspective, Allport's understanding of prejudices as faulty generalizations suggest that holding and/or expressing prejudices rather reflects a distorted view than something that is coherent to the social norms (Allport, 1954). According to Allport, a person holding or expressing prejudice always deviates from certain socially shared standards and values. At this point, the current concept of prejudice expressions, as evaluations based on group memberships and mostly reflecting social norms, does not only seem like a creep of Allport's classic concept of a prejudice as distorted perception, but as its opposite. A prejudice is expressed when it is socially accepted. How can this paradox be solved and new insights be gained on the nature of prejudice expression and identification?

I propose that group-based evaluations are only perceived, identified and labelled as prejudices when they are norm-incongruent. In other words, group-based evaluations are only judged as being faulty and reflecting distorted perceptions when they go against the social norms. Group-based evaluations that are norm-congruent, in contrast, are perceived as correct and valid. They go unnoticed, are not identified and labelled as expressions of prejudice, and may even be appreciated. Thus, prejudices against groups for which (negative) group-based evaluations typically are socially unaccepted (e.g., blind people, Native Americans, elderly people) are easily identified. In contrast to that, prejudices against groups for which (negative) group-based evaluations are normatively accepted (e.g., pedophiles, drunk drivers, gang members) often remain undetected and unlabeled, although they fall under the broad definition of prejudice

(see Crandall et al., 2002). Following this theoretical outline, I assume the contrast in prejudice identification to stem from individuals' attribution of a group-based evaluation either to biases and distortions of the expressing person, or, on the other side, facticity and objective reality.

Attribution to objective reality or bias

In this section, the evolvement of individuals' perception of reality, truth and objectivity shall be examined in greater detail. The relationship to acceptance and expression of prejudices shall be clarified. What people perceive as being real and truthful often does not stem from facts within the physical world or corroborations from external perspectives, but from individuals' subjective experience of what is real (e.g., Festinger, 1950; Festinger, 1954; Brickmann, Coates, & Janoff-Bulman, 1978; Echterhoff et al., 2009). As illustrated in Chapter 2.3., in their assessment of reality and truth, people strongly rely on information provided by others whom they perceive to be similar in beliefs and attitudes (e.g., Sherif, 1936; Festinger, 1950). The perception of certain beliefs to be shared consensually within a group leads to their establishment as group standards. These standards are seen as correct, valid and proper (Festinger, 1950), and thus acquire objective reality (Sherif, 1936). In other words, the social consensus regarding beliefs (such as stereotypes) appears to serve as a standard, providing individuals with meaning of the world around them and definitions of reality (Oakes, Haslam & Turner, 1994; Wittenbrink & Henly, 1996; see also Chapters 2.3. and 2.4.). This sense of reality, based on shared beliefs, can attain the phenomenological status of objective reality (Hardin & Higgins, 1996).

As indicated in Chapter 2.4., when expressing prejudice people rely on information about the socially shared acceptance of prejudice (Wittenbrink & Henly, 1996; Sechrist & Stangor, 2001). The participants in the studies by Wittenbrink and Henly as well as Sechrist and Stangor were more willing to express prejudice when it was supported by the social consensus, than if it was not. Setting the approaches illustrated in the previous sections of this chapter from the field of prejudice expressions in context with the introduced aspects of social comparison theory (Festinger, 1950; Festinger, 1954), shared reality (Hardin & Higgins, 1996) and the coherence theory of truth (Davidson, 1986), I propose that the social sharedness of the acceptance of (certain) prejudices leads to their manifestation as objective reality. Therefore, I propose a socially shared prejudice (i.e., a prejudice that is coherent to the shared beliefs) to attain the status of being truthful and factitive. A socially not shared prejudice, in contrast, I assume to remain subjective and in the eye of the beholder.

The concept of naïve realism (for a detailed illustration, see Chapter 2.3.) indicates that individuals tend to feel confident that they perceive the world as it is and react to it in an objective manner. Differing perceptions and behaviors, in contrast, are seen as not reflecting reality (Ross & Ward, 1996; Pronin, Lin, & Ross, 2002; Kenworthy & Miller, 2002; Pronin, et al., 2004; Bäck et al., 2010; Bäck & Lindholm, 2013).

If individuals acquire their sense of objective reality by referencing what is socially shared, whatever is not socially shared is excluded from that reality. The latter is rejected as stemming from individual characteristics or biased perceptions. Therefore, inferences about bias assumingly follow directly from the discovery that another person does not share the validated social norms about the degree of acceptance of specific prejudices. It is always the others who are prejudiced.

Another important approach to understanding the relationship between prejudices, norms/normality and reality comes from norm theory (e.g., Kahneman & Miller, 1986). According to norm theory, perceptions of the normality of an event depend on the contrast between the event and the counterfactual alternatives it evokes. An event that highly evokes representations of alternatives is perceived as being abnormal, while "a normal event mainly evokes representations that resemble it" (Kahneman & Miller, 1986, p. 137). Thus, a prejudice that is in line with the social norms of prejudice expression should not highly evoke representations of alternatives and therefore go unnoticed, not causing surprise. In contrast to that, the expression of a prejudice that deviates from the social norms of prejudice acceptance should highly evoke representations of alternatives. Therefore, it will cause surprise and become the effect to be explained (e.g., Kahneman & Miller, 1986; Miller, 1991; Hegarty & Pratto, 2004).

Guiding hypothesis and short outline of the set of studies

Following the theoretical background and its inferences, I hypothesize that prejudices (in the sense of the broad definition; see Crandall et al., 2002) that are socially shared, acquire the status of objective reality. As a consequence, individuals do not identify them as prejudices (in the sense of the narrow definition and lay theories; see Allport, 1954). In contrast to that, prejudices that are not congruent to shared values and beliefs are perceived as reflecting a distorted reality. Therefore, they are attributed to personal characteristics or biases of the expressing person.

After this concise repetition of the guiding hypothesis, I will now briefly introduce the procedure of this study series. In Study 4, I assessed participants' prejudice expressions and perceptions of acceptance of prejudice against 123 groups in Germany. From this list, I selected groups with whom the expression of prejudice was strongly accepted or opposed. In Study 5 and 6, I tested whether the expression of prejudice (with positive or negative valence) against the selected groups would be attributed to objective reality or bias of the person expressing the opinion. In Study 7, I conducted an experiment, in order to detach the research from the context of specific societal groups and isolate the effect of norms. In Study 5 und 6, real groups were used, regarding existing social norms. In Study 7, fictitious and previously unknown groups were used, regarding which indications of social norms were manipulated.

4.6.   Study 4: Impact of social norms on reality perceptions (1)

As a first step, I assessed the relationship between the perceived social acceptance of prejudices and participants' personal expressions of prejudice. Crandall et al. (2002) had shown both factors to highly correspond in a US-American sample. Using an analogous measure to Crandall et al.'s, I examined whether a similar close relationship would be found and how the pattern of prejudice expression and acceptance looks like in the current societal context in Germany. As the basis for the subsequent studies on prejudice attribution, it was essential to identify groups against which the expression of prejudice is socially rather accepted and groups, against which it is not accepted. Hence, in Study 4, I aimed to create a list of potentially relevant groups to subsequently select the low as well as high ranked.

4.6.1.   Method

Material

As a basis for creating this study's list of groups, I used Crandall et al.'s (2002) list of 105 potential targets of prejudices. Crandall and colleagues had included groups that had been used in previous research on prejudices and complemented the list with groups that were currently potential targets of prejudice in the media at the time they conducted their studies. From that list, I excluded some groups that I identified to be specific for an US-American context and added groups that I identified as playing a crucial role in the German context. After discussing the groups in our research group, I finalized a list of 123 potential prejudice targets. This final list is presented in Table 17.

Procedure

Two separate surveys were conducted, using two independent samples. One survey was used to assess the perceived social norms regarding the acceptability of prejudice expression. The other survey assessed participants' prejudice expressions. Both surveys were conducted in an introductory course in social psychology at the University of Jena. The participation was voluntarily and participants received no remuneration in return.

Measures

One group of participants was asked to indicate their perceptions of societal acceptance of prejudices by answering the question "Would you say that in Germany it is generally accepted to have negative feelings towards the following groups?" for each of the 123 groups. The variable was assessed on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *not accepted* to 6 = *accepted*. A second group of participants was asked to indicate their personal attitudes (prejudices) towards each of the 123 groups, by answering the

following question: "On a 'feeling thermometer', ranging from *cold* (not positive) to *hot* (very positive), how do you feel about following groups?" The variable was assessed on a 6-point Likert scale. For the analysis, the prejudice-scale was inverted, so that a low number indicates positive feelings, and a high number indicates negative feelings.

Participants

Among the 61 bachelor students who completed the survey regarding the acceptability of prejudice expressions, 14 were male and 46 female. One person did not specify. The average age was 20.35 years (*SD* = 0.77), ranging from 17 to 26. Of the 69 students completing the questionnaire regarding their personal expressions of prejudice, 53 were female and 14 male. One person did not specify their gender, two people did not specify their complete demographic. The average age was 20.87 years (*SD* = 0.79), ranging from 18 to 31.

4.6.2. Results and discussion

The list of all groups' mean scores for perceptions of social norms and personal prejudice expressions is presented in Table 17. The groups are ranked in descending order of acceptance/normativity of prejudice. The group scores range across the entire spectrum of acceptability, from a very high acceptance of prejudices (rapists, *M* = 5.82) to a very low acceptance of prejudices (honorary workers, *M* = 1.72). The expression of prejudice was particularly acceptable against criminal groups, right-wing affiliates and groups who potentially threaten the lives of others due to inconsiderate behaviors. In contrast to that, prejudices based on race, gender and status was widely perceived as not being accepted.

The correlation between the social norms of prejudice acceptance and individuals' personal prejudice expressions was assessed. For the analyses, all mean scores were treated as single observations for both variables. As hypothesized, the perceived social acceptance of prejudices and personal expressions of prejudices correlated highly, *r* = .93, *p* < .001. Thus, the results of Crandall et al. (2002) could be replicated for the German context. Even though a causal ordering of norms and prejudices cannot be determined with certainty, the results certainly underline the close relationship of both factors. The ranked list of the social norms on the acceptance of prejudice expressions against different societal groups served as the basis for the selection of the groups that I used in Study 5 and 6.

Table 17
Ranked list of potential target groups of prejudice expression and mean scores of perceived norms of prejudice acceptance and personal prejudice

Groups	N	P	Groups	N	P	Groups	N	P
Rapists	5.82	5.79	Voters of the Left Party	3.98	3.74	Teachers	3.10	2.77
Right-Wing extremists	5.60	5.57	Members of the anti-fascist organization	3.93	3.46	Building contractor	3.10	3.24
Racists	5.59	5.63	Civil servants	3.90	3.21	HIV-positive persons	3.07	3.34
Pedophiles	5.53	5.57	Business consultants	3.90	3.49	Juveniles	3.03	2.67
Consumers of child pornography	5.49	5.72	Voters of the party CSU	3.86	3.83	Temporary workers	3.03	3.10
Fascists	5.44	5.49	Obese people	3.83	3.67	Depressive persons	3.03	3.48
Pregnant women who smoke	5.37	5.54	Transvestites	3.81	3.30	Bus drivers	3.02	2.90
Criminals	5.35	4.94	Bodybuilders	3.79	3.87	Emotional unstable persons	2.97	3.27
Drug dealers	5.20	5.03	The German Army	3.75	3.81	Househusbands	2.93	2.74
Salafis	5.19	5.47	College dropout	3.74	3.10	Dog owners	2.92	2.84
Pegida supporter	5.18	5.14	Turkish migrants	3.69	3.07	East Germans	2.90	2.46
Careless drivers	5.17	5.03	Homeless people	3.68	3.50	Artists	2.90	2.07
Hooligans	5.08	5.33	Muslims	3.61	3.16	Tourists	2.90	3.03
Islamists	4.86	4.84	Leftists	3.59	3.42	Single-parent mothers	2.84	2.86
Voters of the party AfD	4.85	4.60	Political activists	3.59	3.29	Housewives	2.83	3.06
Anti-Semites	4.84	5.16	Real estate agents	3.54	3.76	Asians	2.80	2.72
Casting show participants	4.75	4.33	Voters of the Green party	3.54	2.87	Occasional drinkers	2.78	2.93
Juvenile delinquents	4.59	4.19	Police officers	3.51	3.00	Homosexuals	2.75	2.56
Lazy people	4.57	3.79	Russian migrants	3.48	3.01	Vegetarians	2.73	2.60
Ex-convicts	4.46	4.21	Feminists	3.46	3.43	Students	2.68	2.19
Left-wing extremists	4.45	4.67	Slightly dressed women	3.45	3.57	Men	2.66	2.26
Christian Fundamentalists	4.44	4.86	Sinti and Romanies	3.44	3.25	Professors	2.65	2.36
Long-term unemployed	4.42	4.23	Arab migrants	3.43	3.04	Interracial couples	2.63	2.09
Politicians	4.42	3.69	Private security agencies	3.42	3.66	Black people	2.62	2.59
Lobbyists	4.37	4.45	Islam critics	3.41	3.89	Farmers	2.61	2.66
Alcoholics	4.36	4.61	Rock musicians	3.40	2.79	Social workers	2.59	2.41
Smoker	4.3	3.90	Vegans	3.38	3.09	Physicians	2.57	2.69

Groups	N	P	Groups	N	P	Groups	N	P
Receiver of social welfare	4.25	3.74	Tattooed	3.37	3.10	West Germans	2.55	2.86
Consumers of marihuana	4.25	3.77	Soccer fans	3.33	3.50	Peace activists	2.54	1.97
Homophobes	4.22	4.88	Asylum seekers	3.33	3.29	Particularly educated persons	2.42	2.11
Male prostitutes	4.19	4.24	Blondes	3.33	2.81	Librarians	2.42	2.66
Manager	4.14	3.67	Homosexuals who raise children	3.27	2.63	Athletes	2.36	2.64
Supporter of Hooligans against Salafis	4.13	4.98	Migrants	3.25	2.71	Infants	2.25	2.19
bankers	4.11	3.84	People with mental disorders	3.23	3.20	Male nurses	2.22	2.19
Rich people	4.08	3.27	Refugees	3.22	2.77	Elderly persons	2.21	2.57
Particularly uneducated people	4.08	4.11	Careerists	3.19	3.31	Women	2.07	2.04
Communists	4.07	3.69	Environmental activists	3.14	2.43	White men	2.05	2.57
Porsche drivers	4.05	3.81	Psychologists	3.14	2.24	Black migrants	2.03	2.53
Welfare recipients	4.03	3.40	Free thinker	3.13	2.17	Poor people	2.00	2.40
Anti-abortionists	4.03	4.30	Lawyers	3.12	3.30	Handicapped people	1.93	2.69
Non-voters	4.02	4.00	Career-oriented women	3.12	2.81	Voluntary workers	1.72	1.77

Note. N = Norms (of prejudice acceptance); P = Personal feelings / prejudices; the mean scores of norms are based on a scale ranging from 1 = *not accepted* to 6 = *accepted*; the mean scores of personal feelings/prejudices are based on a scale ranging from 1 = *hot / very positive* to 6 = *cold / not positive*

4.7.   Study 5: Impact of social norms on reality perceptions (2)

In Study 4, I have shown that the social acceptance of prejudice expressions strongly differs dependent on the target group. While, for example, expressions of prejudices are not accepted against handicapped people, poor people or male nurses, they are highly accepted against right-wing extremists, drug dealers and hooligans. The main objective of Study 5 was to examine whether accepted/normative and non-accepted/non-normative prejudices are differently attributed. It was assessed whether different group-based evaluations are identified as biased and distorted by the participants and therefore recognized as prejudices. Or if the evaluations are perceived to correspond to objective reality and factuality and, thus, are not identified as prejudices.

4.7.1. Method

Participants

I conducted an online-survey (using Sosci Survey as a platform) in Facebook groups for German-speaking psychology students (bachelor and master). Of the 125 participants, 16 were male, 109 female. 39 participants indicated to have migration experiences, 86 did not. The average age was 26.16 years (*SD* = 8.82), ranging from 18 to 46.

Material

I selected four groups, against which the expression of prejudices is accepted and four groups, against which the expression is not accepted, from the list above (see Table 17). The selected groups were the following: racists, consumer of child pornography, fascists and pedophiles (prejudices are normative) on the one side, and black people, homosexuals, peace activists and handicapped people (prejudices are non-normative), on the other.

Measures

I developed a 6-item scale of statement attribution. Three items measured attribution with the wording focused on the reality-end of the dimension. Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agree to the following explanations: (1) "…because it corresponds to the facts," (2) "…because they really are" and (3) "…because it's true." Three further items measured attribution with the wording focused on the bias-end of the dimension. The items used were (4) "…because the person does not know anything about these people," (5) "…because the person is biased" and (6) "…because the person thinks very one-dimensional." All six items were assessed on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 = *don't agree at all* to 5 = *fully agree*. The latter three items were inverted for the analyses and allocated to the three other items. The six items were then averaged, to get a score for the total attribution. The score obtained was used as the dependent variable for the study. The attribution scale ranged from 0 = *completely bias-based* to 5 = *completely reality-based*.

Originally, a seventh item ("…because the person deduces from a single person to the whole group") was to be included in the scale. Reliability analysis showed that Cronbachs alpha was substantially lower for each condition, when this item was included. Field (2009) recommends, that whenever an item causes substantial decrease in alpha scores, one should consider dropping it from the questionnaire. Therefore, I did not include the respective item in the scale. Reliabilities for the scale ranged from α = .62 (for the statement, "Black people are bad people") to α = .84 (for the statement, "Racists are bad people"). According to Kline (1999) and Bühner (2011) these are good to acceptable values.

Procedure

Participants were presented in total eight (four positive and four negative) general statements, one regarding each of the eight selected groups. The statements were presented as coming from an unspecified person. They depicted an evaluation of the respective group, solely based on the group-membership. According to the broad concept, this reflects prejudice (e.g., Crandall et al., 2002; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010). The presented statement had either a negative ("[group name] are bad people") or positive ("[group name] are good people") valence. Each statement could be presented regarding a group against which prejudice is perceived to be accepted, or a group against which the expression of prejudice is not accepted. The study therefore consisted of four conditions (see Figure 3). For each condition, two regarding the social norms of prejudice acceptance comparable target groups were assessed. The distribution of the eight groups to the four conditions was fixed for the entire study.

Subsequent to each statement presentation, participants were asked to indicate their explanation for why the person gave that statement ("Why do you think the person gave that statement?"). Participants were asked to answer the question by filling in the above introduced attribution scale. All eight statements were presented to each participant. Each participant was to answer all six items of the attribution scale for each statement. The order of conditions as well as of the attribution items within the conditions was randomized. Demographics were assessed at the end of the online-survey.

Perceived acceptance of prejudice

Low   high

| Valence of statement | positive | Peace activists / Handicapped people | Pedophiles / Fascists |
| negative | Black people / Homosexuals | Consumers of child pornography / Racists |

Figure 3. Distribution of target groups to the four conditions of Study 5, along the factors of perceived acceptance of prejudice and valence of the presented statement.

4.7.2. Results and discussion

As noted, each condition was examined using two target groups. The respective scores of these both groups were averaged for the analyses. I conducted a two-way ANOVA with repeated measures, with the factors "social norms of prejudice acceptance" (accepted or not accepted) and "valence of statement"

(negative or positive). The analyses yielded a highly significant interaction effect on attribution, $F(1, 124)$ = 413.09, $p < .001$. For a group against which the expression of prejudice is perceived as being accepted/normative (racists, consumers of child pornography), a negative statement was attributed to correspond to objective reality ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 0.92$. In contrast, a negative statement about a group for whom prejudice is perceived as being not accepted / non-normative (black people, homosexuals), was strongly attributed to stem from biases of the expressing person ($M = 0.40$, $SD = 0.44$). Positive statements were perceived to be reality-based for the groups, against which the expression of prejudice is perceived as non-normative (peace activists, handicapped people; $M = 2.21$, $SD = 0.97$) and bias-based, for the groups, against which the expression of prejudice is perceived as normative (pedophiles, fascists; $M = 1.43$, $SD = 0.73$). These results are in line with the hypotheses. Considering the concept of shared reality (Hardin & Higgins, 1996), socially shared prejudices seem to attain the phenomenological status of objective reality. Prejudices that are not socially shared, in contrast, are perceived as distortions from reality.

In addition, the analysis yielded significant main effects for the social norms of prejudice acceptance, $F(1, 124) = 142.49$, $p < .001$, and the valence of statement, $F(1, 124) = 57.13$, $p < .001$. Statements about groups for whom the expression of prejudice is perceived as being accepted, were in general more strongly perceived to correspond to objective reality than statements about groups for whom prejudice is perceived as not being accepted. Furthermore, negative statements were generally stronger attributed to biases than positive statements. A closer look at the data reveals that both effects seem to be mainly driven by the relatively strong attribution to bias of negative statements about groups, against which prejudice expression is non-normative. Participants perceived negative group-based evaluations of black people and homosexuals as especially biased and with a weak grounding in reality. This becomes particularly evident when compared to the relatively low quest for external explanation with regards to positive statements about groups, against which prejudice expression is normative. Individuals seem to be specifically highly sensitive and motivated to find explanation in external factors when disruptions to what they have learned repetitiously occur, and perceive as widely and strongly socially shared (e.g., Baron et al., 1991; Marti et al., 2000; Pronin et al., 2004; Bäck et al. 2010).

In order to receive a deeper insight into the processes, the mean scores were compared separately for each single condition of the two factors (negative statement, positive statement, prejudice accepted, prejudice not accepted). As such, four t-tests were conducted. All four comparisons yielded significant results, each in the direction indicated by the above analyses. Statistical differences between the groups, against which the expression of prejudice is either accepted or not accepted, can be observed in the negative statement condition, $t(124) = 21.47$, $p < .001$, and in the positive statement condition, $t(124) = -10.62$, $p < .001$. Statistical differences between positive and negative statements can be observed regarding the groups, against which the expression of prejudice is accepted, $t(124) = 9.72$, $p < .001$, and groups, against which the

expression of prejudice is not accepted, $t(124) = -19.91$, $p < .001$. The results show that the congruence of a group-based evaluation to the social norms of prejudice acceptance determine the causal attribution of that evaluation. Depending on the social norms, the evaluation is either perceived to reflect objective reality or personal bias.

4.8. Study 6: Impact of social norms on reality perceptions (3)

In Study 5, I was able to present empirical evidence supporting the hypotheses made in this set of studies. While prejudices that have been shown to be non-normative were in general attributed to an individual's biases, the same could be said of the attribution of normative prejudices to objective facts. The effects proved to be very strong. In Study 5, the group of participants was relatively homogenous regarding education, field of study (psychology), age and gender. Therefore, I conducted Study 6 with a more diverse and larger sample. I also varied the target groups, in order to test whether the effects occur independently of specific targets / target characteristics. The general procedure and study design was generally the same as the previous study. One notable change was inclusion of the factor of *surprise* as a variable, the relevance of which is explained below.

Social norms form a common standard of what is true and false and what corresponds to objective facts (e.g., Davidson, 1986). This standard may serve as a background against which experiences are compared and, therefore, make whatever is perceived to differ from this standard, the effect to be explained (e.g., Miller, 1991; Hegarty & Pratto, 2004). Whilst the standard goes unsaid, whatever deviates from the norms needs explanation and evokes surprise (see Kahneman & Miller, 1986). The social norms regarding the acceptance of prejudice expressions may have become a background standard. Therefore, in Study 6, it is further tests are fashioned in order to ascertain whether the statements evoked different degrees of surprise. It is hypothesized that a negative evaluation of a group, against which expressions of prejudice are non-normative, causes more surprise than a negative evaluation of group, against which expressions of prejudice are normative. It is further hypothesized that a positive evaluation of a group, against which expressions of prejudice are normative, causes more surprise than of a group against which expressions of prejudice are non-normative.

4.8.1. Method

Measures

I used the same six-item attribution scale as in Study 5. The scale for the total attribution ranged from 0 = *completely bias-based* to 5 = *completely reality-based*. Scores of Cronbachs alpha were assessed. The reliabilities ranged from $\alpha = .70$ (for "Handicapped people are bad people") to $\alpha = .87$ (for "Salafis are

bad people"). As an additional measure, I examined the extent to which the statements evoked surprise. As indicated above, surprise reflects the degree of perception of an event as normal or abnormal. A higher level of surprise reflects a higher degree of abnormality. I assessed surprise using one item ("To what extent were you surprised by the statement that '[group name] are positive/negative people?'"), on a 6-point Likert-scale, ranging from 0 = *not at all* to 5 = *very*.

Procedure

The general procedure was similar to Study 5. For the current study however, the link for the online survey was spread across a range of Facebook groups, for whom a high diversity regarding demographics and attitudes was assumed. The target groups where once more selected from the ranked list of prejudice acceptance (see Table 17). I chose single mothers and househusbands for the condition of low acceptance of prejudice expression and positive statement, fascists and anti-abortionists for high acceptance of prejudice expression and positive statement, handicapped people and black people for low acceptance of prejudice expression and negative statement and Salafis and right-wing extremists for the condition of high acceptance of prejudice expression and negative statement (see Figure 4). The construct of the survey was the same as in Study 5: The positive/negative statement about each respective group was presented. Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they agreed with each of the attribution items. All participants were to fill in the complete attribution scale for each target group. The final page of the survey asked participants to indicate the extent to which they were surprised by each of the statements about the different groups. The demographics of the participants were then surveyed.

Participants

The sample of participants was diverse. Though not entirely representative of German society, the sample consisted of participants with substantial variation in age, education, profession, ideology, place of residence and ethnic origin. Of the 383 participants, 132 were male and 251 female. The average age was 28.32 years, ranging from 16 to 68. 137 participants held a university degree, 193 had a high school diploma as their highest educational degree, 47 participants dropped out after secondary school and five were still high school students. 166 of the participants were non-students, 217 were students. 82 participants indicated to have a migration background, 301 did not. 142 participants grew up in East Germany, 207 participants grew up in West Germany and 34 participants did not specify. Additionally, political ideology was measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *left/liberal* to 7 = *right/conservative*. The mean score was 2.33 ($SD = 0.82$).

		Perceived acceptance of prejudice	
		low	high
Statement of person	positive	Single mothers Househusbands	Fascists Anti-Abortionists
	negative	Handicapped people Black people	Salafis Right-wing extremists

Figure 4. Distribution of target groups to the four conditions of Study 6, along the factors of perceived acceptance of prejudice and valence of the presented statement.

4.8.2. Results and Discussion

Attribution

As per Study 5, the scores for the two groups of each condition were averaged for the analyses. I conducted a two-way ANOVA with repeated measures, with the factors social norms of prejudice acceptance (accepted or not accepted) and valence of statement (negative or positive). The descriptive data is presented in Table 18. The results yielded a highly significant interaction effect, $F(1, 382) = 866.41$, $p <$ .001. While a negative group-based statement about a group, against which prejudice is not accepted, stuck out as being biased, a negative group-based statement about a group, against which prejudice is accepted, was perceived as corresponding to objective reality. In contrast, a positive statement about the groups for whom prejudice is perceived as being normative, was more strongly attributed to objective facts, whereas a positive statement about the groups for whom prejudice is normative, tended to be perceived as somewhat biased. Furthermore, the analyses yielded a significant main effect of acceptance of prejudice, $F(1, 382) = 362.29$, $p < .001$. The attribution of a statement to objective facts was significantly higher for the groups, against which the expression of prejudice is accepted, than for the groups, against which it is not accepted. There was no significant main effect of statement valence, $F(1, 282) = 0.40$, $p = .528$.

Again, t-tests were conducted to compare the mean scores separately for each single condition of the two factors (negative statement, positive statement, prejudice accepted, prejudice not accepted). All four comparisons yielded significant results, each in the direction indicated by the previous analyses. Statistical differences between the groups, against which the expression of prejudice is either accepted or not accepted,

can be observed in the negative statement condition, $t(382) = 31.06$, $p < .001$, and in the positive statement condition, $t(382) = -13.74$, $p < .001$. Statistical differences between positive and negative statements can be observed regarding the groups, against which the expression of prejudice is accepted, $t(282) = 20.89$, $p < .001$, and groups, against which the expression of prejudice is not accepted, $t(282) = -26.59$, $p < .001$.

Table 18

Means and standard deviations of participants' causal attributions and surprise as a function of social norms of prejudice acceptance and valence of statement

	Social norms of prejudice acceptance	
	Prejudice accepted	Prejudice not accepted
	M (*SD*)	M (*SD*)
Attribution		
Valence of statement		
Negative	2.36 (1.05)	0.46 (0.54)
Positive	1.11 (0.69)	1.75 (0.90)
Surprise		
Valence of statement		
Negative	0.63 (0.90)	2.80 (1.53)
Positive	2.45 (1.37)	3.19 (1.34)

Note. *M* = Mean; *SD* = standard deviation. All respective means (within a row and a column) are significantly different at $p < .05$; the mean scores of attribution are based on a scale ranging from *0 = completely bias-based to 5 = completely reality-based*; the mean scores of *surprise* are based on a scale ranging from *0 = not at all (surprised) to 5 = very (surprised)*

Surprise

I further assessed the degree to which the expression of either normative or non-normative prejudices evoked surprise. I conducted a two-way ANOVA with repeated measures, with the factors social norms of prejudice acceptance (accepted or not accepted) and valence of statement (negative or positive). The analysis yielded a significant interaction effect, $F(1, 382) = 482.59$, $p < .001$. A negative statement was less surprising when it was about a group for whom the expression of prejudice is socially accepted, than when about a group for whom the expression of prejudice is not accepted. In contrast to that, a positive statement was more surprising when it was about a group, against which the expression of prejudice is normative. Furthermore, the analysis yielded significant main effects of prejudice acceptance, $F(1, 382) = 230.92$, $p < .001$), and statement valence, $F(1, 382) = 387.90$, $p < .001$. Positive statements were generally more surprising than negative statements. Statements about groups for whom the expression of prejudice is not accepted were more surprising than statements about groups against which the expression of prejudice

is accepted. The descriptive data is presented in Table 18. A closer look at the data reveals that these latter two effects seem to be mainly driven by the strong difference in perceptions of surprise between a negative and a positive statement about a group, against which prejudice is normative. A group-based evaluation of the groups against which prejudice is non-normative might have been less surprising; because of the selection of groups that have a history of being perceived as targets of prejudice, there is a high probability that the participants have previously experienced factual incidents of negative prejudice expression against the respective groups. In this case, the prejudices seem to have reached a certain degree of normality, without being normative.

The relation of normativity, normality and causal attribution

The results on attribution and surprise obtained here provide information about the (general) relationship between normativity, normality and reality. The normativity of prejudice expressions seems to be reflected in perceptions of normality: In a situation in which a group-based evaluation corresponded to the normativity of a prejudice, no surprise was sparked. However, when the relation between the norms and the expression was incongruent, surprise was evoked and the – evaluation perceived as being abnormal. According to Kahneman and Miller (1986), surprise is produced "by the contrast between a stimulus and a (constructed) counterfactual alternative" (p. 136). For the conditions where expressed prejudices were not in line with the social norms, the respective contrast appears to have been high. When the expressed prejudice was in line with the social norms, in contrast, it appears to have been low. It appears that the social norms of the acceptance of prejudice expression formed a background standard, against which expressions of prejudice were compared and judged.

In order to examine the relationship between causal attribution and surprise across the different statement/group conditions, I treated the respective mean scores for each of the eight groups as single observations of the two variables. I correlated the variables of attribution and surprise. The correlation reached significance, with $r = -.76$, $p = .029$. Across the groups, higher surprise was associated with stronger attribution to bias. This means that when an expression of prejudice was perceived as not surprising, the elements that constituted this event were perceived as being objective and real. When the prejudice expression was surprising, and hence the contrast to the counterfactual alternatives high, the explanatory focus was directed at what or who was perceived as differing from the normative circumstances. The latter has therefore become the interpretation-guiding comparison standard, making the prejudice as well as the expressing person the effect to be explained.

Summary

In summary, Study 6 succeeded in affirming the results of Study 5 for a larger and more diverse sample. Beyond that, the results were confirmed for varied target groups. Effects on, and of, perceptions of a surprise as well as their relations to the normativity and attribution of prejudice expressions could be shown. As per Study 5, for groups for whom the expression of prejudice is socially accepted, negative statements were perceived as being objective and true. In contrast, positive statements about these groups were perceived as a reflection of personal bias. For groups for whom the expression of prejudice is not accepted, positive statements were perceived as coherent to reality. Negative statements about these groups, in contrast, were perceived as being distorted and biased. As a consequence, individuals who express non-normative prejudices might be devalued and/or not considered as providing relevant information. Normative prejudices, in contrast, seem not to be questioned. In all conditions, the statements met the broad definition of prejudice (e.g., Crandall et al., 2002; Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010). However, they were only perceived as such when they were not in line with the social norms.

At this point, alternative explanations for the results cannot be rebuffed with complete certainty. The history and experiences people share with specific target groups could affect the attribution. Furthermore, the question of causal relationship between the perception of social norms and the attributions cannot be completely clarified, although it seems logical that the norms affect the attribution. In order to close these gaps, I conducted a further study, in which I experimentally manipulated the social norms about fictitious groups, with whom the participants had no history. Again, I tested the influence of norm congruence of group-based evaluations on attribution and identification of prejudice.

4.9. Study 7: Impact of social norms on reality perceptions (4)

In Study 7, I present a thorough experimental test of the propositions. So far, I have shown which prejudices are normative or non-normative in the German society (Study 4), and examined whether the expression of normative or non-normative prejudices evoke different causal attributions, either to objective reality or personal bias (Studies 5 and 6). Moreover, effects on perceptions of surprise/abnormality have been assessed. I found strong support for the hypotheses. In Studies 4 to 6, I used real existing groups as target groups. In Study 7, I aimed to test whether the suggested causal direction of the effects, namely, that the perceived norms affect the causal attributions, finds empirical support. I aimed to rule out the potential for alternative explanations based on the history of individuals' interactions and experiences with the groups as well as confounding information individuals have about specific groups. Therefore, in Study 7, I conducted an experiment, in which I manipulated the perceived social norms about fictitious target groups to imply either a high or low acceptance of expressions of prejudice.

4.9.1. Method

Manipulation

      The manipulation of the social norms consisted of three parts. Firstly, individuals were presented a list of social evaluations of two groups based on specific attributes. Secondly, a general evaluation of the groups was presented. And thirdly, participants were presented with testimonials of experiences with regards to interactions with the two groups. The entirety of the presented material was bogus. All three parts of the manipulation will be illustrated in detail below. For the complete presented material, see Appendices A and B.

      In the first part, participants were presented with evaluations of two groups with ethnic sounding names: the *Maray* and the *Sanguren*. Both groups are fictitious and taken from (relatively unknown) science-fiction literature. The evaluations allegedly originated from former study participants and were presented as the "percentage of individuals who attribute a certain attribute to the respective groups." The procedure regarding the evaluations was similar to Stangor et al., 2001. The characteristics were presented as being represented by a majority. The evaluations were based on five positive attributes (e.g., intelligent) and five negative attributes (e.g., aggressive). A part of these attributes was taken from a list by Judd, Park, Ryan, Brauer and Kraus (1995). In the first condition, negative/unfavorable evaluations of the Maray were presented, in the second condition, positive/favorable attributes were presented. The evaluations of the Sanguren were used to contrast with evaluations of the Maray, as part of the manipulation. When the evaluations of the Maray were positive, they were negative for the Sanguren – and the other way around. After the participants read the rating of the allegedly former participants, they were asked to indicate, which group they perceived to be positively or negatively evaluated, based on the presented characteristics. This item was used to ensure that participants had attended to the consensus information. In the second part of the manipulation, participants were presented general evaluations of the Maray and Sanguren ("the percentage of individuals who evaluated the Maray and Sanguren as rather positive or negative"). This was accompanied by the suggestion to compare these to their own indications. These were also labelled as though originating from former study participants. The valence of the general evaluations matched the condition the evaluations of attributes. For the third part of the manipulation, participants read mock testimonials of personal everyday experience with both groups, allegedly given by the former study participants (e.g., "After breaking my left leg in a bicycle accident, my neighbor, who is a Maray, drove me to the university every morning for two weeks. I have rarely experienced so much helpfulness."). The experiences of contact with the Maray were condition dependent – either positive or negative. The valence was always in line with the evaluation of attributes and the general evaluation. The testimonials reflected the acceptance of prejudices against the Maray and Sanguren. Again, the valence of the presented personal experiences of

contact with the Sanguren contrasted the testimonials about the Maray. Subsequent to the third part of the manipulation, participants were told that they would be randomly assigned to either fill in the survey about the Maray or Sanguren. In fact, all participants filled in the items regarding the Maray.

Measures

I used the same six-item attribution scale as in Study 5 and 6. The scale for the total attribution ranged from 0 = *completely bias-based* to 5 = *completely reality-based*. The reliability for the six items was $\alpha = .79$. As a manipulation check, I tested the effect of the manipulation on the perception of social acceptance of prejudice expression ("Would you say that in Germany it is generally accepted to have negative feelings about the Maray?"). The item was assessed on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *not accepted* to 6 = *accepted*. Additionally, personal feelings toward the Maray were examined, as a measure of prejudice expression ("As how positive would you rate your feelings towards the Maray?"). The item was assessed on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *not positive* to 6 = *very positive*. For both questions, participants also had the choice to not specify, by checking the respective box. As in Study 6, participants were then asked to indicate how surprised they were about the different statements. This time, I used an inverted scale version that reflected participants' expectations ("To what extent is the statement 'Maray are good/bad people' in line with your expectations?"). The item was assessed on a 6-point Likert-scale, ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 6 = *very strongly*.

Procedure

As in Study 6, I conducted an online survey in several Facebook groups, with the goal to gain a mixed and diverse sample of the German society. Participants were randomly assigned to the different conditions. Analogous to the two previous studies, the four conditions were the following: (1) manipulation of prejudice expressions to be normative and presentations of a positive statement, (2) manipulation of prejudice expressions to be normative and presentation of a negative statement, (3) manipulation of prejudice expressions to be non-normative and presentation of a positive statement, (4) manipulation of prejudice expressions to be non-normative and presentation of a negative statement. After reading the manipulation and answering the manipulation check question, participants completed the scale. Participants indicated their causal attribution of the either positive or negative statement about the group of Maray. Subsequently, participants were asked about their demographics, their previous knowledge about the two groups (on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *nothing* to 6 = *very much*), and whether they had previous contact with the Maray (*yes/no*). The time needed for the whole procedure was about five minutes.

Participants

34 participants were excluded from the analyses, because they were either shown to not have attended to the consensus information, indicated to have *very much* or *much* knowledge about the fictitious group of Maray or to have had contact with them. These participants obviously confused the group with a real existing one or did not answer earnestly. In order to investigate the nature of the process without confounding, it was important to ensure that all participants had about the same knowledge about the groups, exclusively gained from the information that was provided in the experiment.

Of the 255 participants that remained for the analyses, 65 were male, 188 female and 2 unspecified. 42 participants indicated to have migration experiences, 213 did not. The average age was 28.67 years (*SD* = 9.29), ranging from 17 to 66. 109 participants indicated a university diploma to be their highest educational degree, 103 had finished high school, 38 secondary school and 5 participants were still school students. Political ideology was measured on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *very left* to 7 = *very right*. The mean score was 3.22 (*SD* = 1.06). The composition of the participants regarding their demographics did not significantly differ for the four conditions. Participants were not financially reimbursed.

4.9.2.   Results and discussion

Manipulation check / effects on perceived prejudice acceptance and prejudice expression

I conducted a one-way ANOVA in order to assess whether the manipulation had successfully influenced the perception of social norms regarding the acceptance of expressing prejudices against the Maray. Additionally, I conducted a one-factorial ANOVA to assess whether the participants' personal expressions of prejudice were affected by the norm manipulation. 162 participants reported their perceptions of the social norms of prejudice acceptance, whereas 93 did not specify. 119 participants reported their personal feelings towards the Maray, whereas 136 did not specify. The analysis yielded a significant effect of the norm manipulation on the perception of acceptance of prejudice against the Maray, $F(1, 161) = 10.37$, $p = .002$. The manipulation in the direction of a negative social consensus regarding the evaluation of the Maray led to a significantly stronger perception of social acceptance of prejudices against this group ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.31$) than did the manipulation, in the direction of a positive social consensus ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.35$). The manipulation also highly affected the prejudice expression of the participants, $F(1, 118) = 145.65$, $p < .001$. When the Maray were presented as consensually evaluated little favorable, participants indicated to have less positive feeling towards them ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 0.83$) than when the Maray were presented as consensually evaluated highly favorable ($M = 4.48$, $SD = 0.85$). Hence, the perception of social norms regarding the expression of prejudices against the previously unknown group directly affected participants' personal expressions of prejudice.

Causal attribution

I conducted a two-way ANOVA with the factors "social norms of prejudice acceptance" (accepted or not accepted) and "valence of statement" (negative or positive). The analysis yielded a significant interaction effect, $F(1, 251) = 4.96$, $p = .027$. When a low acceptance of prejudices against the Maray was indicated, a positive statement was attributed to objective reality, whereas a negative statement was attributed to a bias of the expressing person. Also for indications of a high acceptance of prejudice expression, a positive statement was attributed more strongly to objective reality, whereas a negative statement was attributed to a bias of the expressing person. The ANOVA further yielded a main effect for the valence of statement, $F(1, 251) = 44.05$, $p < .001$. Positive statements were generally perceived as being truer than negative statements. The descriptive data is presented in Table 19.

To receive further insight, the differences of means were compared separately in the four conditions. T-tests were conducted. The t-tests, comparing the two statement conditions (positive/negative) yielded significant results for the condition of low prejudice acceptance, $t(123) = -6.47$, $p < .001$, and the condition of high prejudice acceptance, $t(128) = -3.04$, $p = .003$. The in the ANOVA identified and above illustrated effects were confirmed. I conducted two further t-tests to compare the means for the remaining single conditions separately. When a positive statement was presented, the attributions did not significantly differ between the conditions of low acceptance of prejudice or high acceptance of prejudice, $t(128) = -0.83$, $p = .410$. However, importantly, the attributions did significantly differ when a negative statement was presented, $t(123) = 2.43$, $p = .020$. When the social norms indicated a high acceptance of prejudice expressions, a negative evaluation of the Maray was significantly stronger attributed to objective reality than when the social norms indicated a low acceptance of prejudice expressions. Hence, the expression of the same negative statement about the same group was attributed significantly different, depending on the indicated social norms. When the valence of the statement was congruent (in this case, negative) to the socially shared acceptance of negative evaluations of the Maray, it was less strongly perceived as biased and more strongly as corresponding to reality and objective facts, than when the valence of the statement was incongruent (in this case, positive).

Since the study was conducted in a controlled setting, with only the valence of the social consensus/norms varied, the effects can de facto be completely ascribed to the perception of social norms. Participants seem to have used the information about others' beliefs as basis for their sense of reality (e.g., Hardin & Higgins, 1996) Therefore, they perceived group-based evaluations only as prejudices when they distorted this reality.

Table 19
Means and standard deviations of participants' causal attributions and expectation as a function of social norms on prejudice acceptance and valence of statement

	Social norms of prejudice acceptance	
	Prejudice accepted	Prejudice not accepted
	M (*SD*)	*M* (*SD*)
Attribution		
Valence of statement		
Negative	2.65 (0.94)	2.28 a (0.78)
Positive	1.11 (0.69)	1.75 (0.90)
Expectation/ surprise		
Valence of statement		
Negative	1.94 a (1.27)	1.54 a (0.80)
Positive	2.59 a (1.08)	3.26 a (1.27)

Note. M = Mean; *SD* = standard deviation; Means within a row, marked by subscripts are significantly different at *p* < .05; All means within a column are significantly different at *p* < .05; The mean scores of attribution are based on a scale ranging from *0 = completely bias-based to 5 = completely reality-based*; The mean scores of expectation are based on a scale ranging from 1 = *not at all* (surprised) to 6 = *very strongly*

Expectation / surprise

I further tested in a two-factorial ANOVA with the factors social norms of prejudice acceptance (accepted or not accepted) and valence of statement (negative or positive), whether the expression of prejudice corresponded to the participants' expectations or rather caused surprise. The analysis yielded a significant interaction effect, $F(1, 251) = 14.46$, $p < .001$. When the prejudice expression was non-normative, a negative statement was highly surprising, whereas a positive statement met the expectations (see Table 19). In contrast to that, when the prejudice expression had been manipulated to be normative, a positive statement was more surprising and a negative statement more congruent to the expectations. Furthermore, the analysis yielded a significant main effect of valence of statement, $F(1, 251) = 71.58$, $p < .001$. Negative statements about the Maray were, in both conditions, less expected than positive statements. That may indicate that positive statements about a newly acquainted group, rather than negative, form the baseline. As surprise can be understood as reflecting abnormality (Kahneman & Miller, 1986), this result might help to explain the main effect of statement valence on attribution and further underline the mutual relation between normativity, normality perceptions and prejudice attribution. The highly significant correlation between expectation of prejudice and attribution of prejudice ($r = .46$, $p < .001$; the procedure was as in Study 6) supports this notion. A discussion of the results of all four studies, their meaning for the

perception and identification of prejudices as well as their limitations and further implications, is provided in the next section.

4.10.   Discussion of Studies 4 to 7

Studies 4 to 7 examined whether the perceived social norms lead individuals to attribute prejudiced statements (following the broad definition, see Chapter 4.5.) to a bias of the expressing person or objective facts. In line with the hypotheses, norm-incongruent group-based evaluations were judged as being faulty and reflecting distorted perceptions. Norm-congruent group-based evaluations, in contrast, were perceived as correct, valid and true. Only prejudices that were non-normative were identified as such. These prejudices matched the narrow definition (see Chapter 4.5.). The influence of the social norms was shown to occur as a result of long-term societal learning (Studies 4-6) as well as ad hoc regarding an unknown group (Study 7).

According to the group norm theory, social norms are internalized and determine individuals' attitudes (e.g., Sherif, 1936; Crandall et al., 2002). In line with that, in the current studies, personal expressions of prejudices can almost be superimposed with the perceived social norms of acceptability of the respective prejudices. Beyond that, the studies show that social norms appear to determine whether a prejudice is identified in the first place – or perceived as a factual statement. Whichever prejudice is widely shared among a group does not appear as prejudice, but instead attains the phenomenological status of reality (see also Festinger, 1950; Hardin & Higgins, 1996). This displays the strength and permanence of effects of social norms and clarifies in what way norms shape society. A person that expresses a non-normative prejudice is perceived as the deviant in the group. In contrast to that, the expression of a normative prejudice seems to be appropriate and may even have a function regarding group processes. Whilst an expression of a prejudice against a handicapped person most likely will be marked and rejected, a prejudice against a pedophile will either remain unmarked and unnoticed or even be supported and validated. A statement might have the same formal quality but be judged differently, purely depending on the normativity and normality of prejudices against the respective target group. Individuals seem to perceive the righteousness and correctness of their judgments as based in natural causes, when in fact, they are grounded on social norms.

Individuals who express prejudices or resentments towards groups like racists, pregnant women who smoke, ex-convicts and lazy people will neither be socially sanctioned, nor be corrected. Social norms are rarely contested by the individuals bound to them. Therefore, individuals do not have or see reasons to change their attitudes. Hence, the social norms are likely to self-perpetuate. Studies 4 to 7 not only show that against many groups prejudices are normatively accepted, but that the according attitudes and expressions are not even perceived as potentially being prejudiced, biased or abnormal. The normativity of a prejudice seems to be accompanied by or anchored in normality. Whilst the open expression of prejudices

against single mothers is likely to be perceived as abnormal and causes surprise, the open expression of prejudices against anti-abortionists is likely to be perceived as unsurprising and normal. In contrast to that, individuals would most likely be surprised by the expression of a positive group-based evaluation with regards to anti-abortionists. Thus, also statements that deviate from a negative standard are likely to stand out and be rejected when they are not in accord with the internalized norms. The studies suggest that the social norms have been deeply internalized and strongly shape individuals' world views. Therefore, in line with research on the third tenet of naïve realism (e.g., Bäck et al., 2010; Bäck & Lindholm, 2013), deviating voices that relativize the acceptance of prejudices for certain groups (like pedophiles and anti-abortionists), assumingly, will be rejected. Therefore, changes are unlikely to occur. A change of reception of prejudices against different groups seem only expectable when the social norms change drastically.

The results of the four studies further suggest that even in a country like Germany, which is generally conscious regarding the issue of prejudices, nonetheless, prejudices against certain groups are widely accepted. These are just not the typical prejudices. Prejudices are accepted when they are in line with the social norms – when they have been internalized and normalized, with the result of being perceived as reflecting objective facts. The result is a one-sided understanding in society with regards to what prejudice is, and against whom it is "possible" to be prejudiced at all.

This one-sidedness is also reflected in current and historical research on prejudices (e.g., Crandall et al., 2002). Throughout the history of prejudice research, the focus has been on prejudices based on race, gender and sexuality (e.g., Iyer et al., 2014). As a result, prejudices against these groups are widely perceived as non-accepted in society (see Table 17). However, prejudices against other groups, specifically unpopular groups, have been generally neglected by society, as well as science. This set of studies suggests that for an essential understanding of prejudice emergence, maintenance and reduction, the research focus needs to be upon a wide range of prejudices and/or the general and underlying dynamics, and particularly with regard to the normativity and normality of prejudices. Research still misses the general picture of prejudice. This set of studies suggests that a change towards research on the basic mechanisms is needed and would set an important foundation. Likewise, society should be generally sensitized and interventions should be carried out with reference to a norm perspective.

Studies 4 to 7 underline the importance of a broad definition of prejudice (Crandall et al., 2002; Haslam, 2016). Definitions of prejudice need to be independent of social norms. The narrow definition of a prejudice as "an antipathy based upon a faulty and inflexible generalization" (Allport, 1954, p. 9), however, is highly dependent on the social norms. These define what appears as faulty. Thus, currently normative prejudices are not captured by this definition. This is the crux: the specific groups against which prejudices are accepted or not accepted, can change. The general notion, however, that norm-congruent prejudices are not identified as such and, instead, are perceived as objective and natural facts, remains. This is preserved

as long as these effects are not considered in scientific research and/or are visible to society, with individuals accordingly sensitized.

5. General Discussion

In this body of work, a social psychological concept of normality was developed and stated in two models. Within these, single components were empirically examined. The need for these models resulted from a lack of a holistic approach in socio-psychological and social science literature. Perception of normality and its consequences are rarely used as explanatory patterns for behavior. Whilst in philosophy (e.g., Husserl, 1973, as cited in Zahavi, 2003), linguistic (Link, 2013) and clinical psychology (e.g., Saß, Wittchen, & Zaudig, 1996) attempts have been made to develop holistic concepts of normality, in social psychology, concepts referring to individuals' normality were along separate, singular lines of research. This dissertation therefore firstly aimed at identifying, gathering and integrating relevant lines of (social psychological) research in order to develop a comprehensive and extensive concept of normality. The different concepts and approaches that were included stemmed foremost from norm theory (e.g., Kahneman & Miller, 1986), research on the status quo (e.g., Eidelman & Crandall, 2009), naïve realism (e.g., Ross & Ward, 1996), shared reality (e.g., Hardin & Higgins, 1996) and social norms research (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Cialdini, et al., 1990). A model of normality and a model of shifts of normality were developed and extensively illustrated in Chapter 3. The model of normality illustrates which factors promote the emergence of normality, which processes are associated with the perception of a stimulus as normal, and to what extent normativity and objective reality are inferred from normality. In addition, the model shows the behavioral consequences of normality / normality evolvement and the circulatory nature of normality developments. The model of shifts of normality illustrates the interrelationship between the incorporation of stimuli and events into the scope of normality and the decrease in contrast to stimuli and events that are similar to the former. The model also explains how normality can shift in a particular direction without the affected individuals realizing.

The theories of social theorists and sociologists in the context of normality often lack an empirical examination (see Chapter 1.3.2.). Nevertheless, I still consider these to be of importance in order to determine the actual conceptions individuals have of normality and to grasp the relationship between normality, normativity and reality. In addition, potential behavioral consequences can be suitably tested. Therefore, the second aim of this dissertation was to empirically examine core aspects of the models of normality and normality shifts and set out their relationship. It was of particular concern to implement and examine the basic research in different applied settings. The empirical section was set up in three different domains of the social psychological concept of normality. Firstly, the emergence, shift and influence of normality in social contexts was examined, and the role of certain promotive factors tested. Secondly, the shifts and differences in perceptions of groups' normality were assessed. Finally, the relationship between and the mutual influence of normality, normativity and reality were elaborated further.

The third aim of this dissertation was to highlight the general explanatory potential of a normality approach/perspective, the societal relevance and specific practical implications. It was a specific objective to help explain shifts of behavior towards what is considered extreme and morally dubious (from an outsider's perspective and/or a different time- or societal context). Part of the underlying motivation to build strong ties between the theoretical concept, the empirical explanations and the practical implementation, was the awareness that academic research can and should have an impact on society (e.g., Bornmann, 2012). Throughout the dissertation, emphasis was placed on balancing this notion with good scientific practice, such as balanced and holistic testing of theories (e.g., Kessler, Proch, Hechler, & Nägler, 2015).

The structure of the general discussion is as follows. Following this general introduction, and references to the objectives of the dissertation, Section 5.1. presents an overview of the empirical examinations. The purpose, a brief description and a summary of results will be presented for each study, supplemented by references to the models of normality and shifts of normality. Throughout the studies, certain topics and findings have repeatedly appeared and/or have proven to be of particularly significance, and as such will be presented and discussed in detail (Section 5.2.). Alongside these topics, the references of the results of the empirical part to the models shall be illustrated and discussed, allowing for a more coherent/holistic view of both the relevant topics as well as the models of normality and shifts of normality. These topics include dynamics of normality emergence, maintenance and shift, the influential role of the close environment, questions of dissent, disagreement and diversity, and indications for the emergence of immoral behavior and the understanding of extremism. In Section 5.3., a brief reference to the introduction shall be given. Here, the dynamics of becoming normal shall be discussed in reference to the specific example of polarization in German society. The findings of the dissertation will be related in brief to actual events. Among other points, the role of unilateral information circles and the anchoring effect of extreme statements and behaviors will be highlighted. In Section 5.4., strengths, limitations and further implications of the dissertation will be addressed, including suggestions for future studies. The question of the heterogeneity of study fields as well as the broadness of the scope of the concept/models shall be discussed. With regards to further implications, it is firstly emphasized that the perception of the status quo as normal can contribute to the acceptance of oppressive states. Secondly, the models' significance for the fields of organizational development as well as innovation cycles is addressed. In terms of future studies, examinations addressing the missing links as well as holistic assessments of the models are stimulated. In Section 5.5, concluding remarks are stated. The crux of the phenomenon of normality is highlighted and discussed. In a final step, the significance of the examinations and findings of this dissertation are discussed in reference to the procedures and reflection processes in (social psychological) research.

5.1.   Overview of the studies

In the seven studies of this dissertation, I examined different factors and dynamics of the developed models of normality and shifts of normality. The examinations focused foremost on the model of normality. All seven studies made use of quantitative measures. The first two studies focused on how normality emerges in social contexts, and its influences on individuals' behavior. Study 1 examined the emergence of normality in a for the individuals new context. The study tested the relationship between attitudes and norms in a setting of evolving normality. Specifically, the influence of others' behavior on individuals' behavioral preferences was assessed (see, e.g., Prentice & Miller, 1993; Paluck, 2009b). An initial insight into the processes and factors that accompany and promote an increasing normality was gained. The study scenario was the simulation of a UN General Assembly. There was a good fit between the intent of the study and the chosen scenario. The hypotheses were examined using a survey that was conducted at the start and end of the simulation. The normality approach provided some indications as to why and how political debates often end up in deadlocked repetitions of each party's standpoint. At the same time, a scenario could be provided, for which the participants had not acquired behavioral norms yet. Individuals' perceptions of others' behavior and their own behavioral preferences/intentions differed largely. Others' were perceived as using more negative and less positive strategies within the General Assembly simulation. As indicated by the model of normality, the individuals partly adapted to what they perceived as the descriptive norms. Interestingly, these shifts only occurred for behaviors that are usually devalued and sanctioned. For the other strategies, rather than a shift towards the perceived descriptive norms, a different adaptation process was observed: Individuals shifted from both sides/ends of the spectrum towards a center score, which reflected the mean of all participants' personal behavioral preferences. Furthermore, the number of retrievable alternatives regarding possibilities to compromise and alternative ways to hold a General Assembly significantly decreased with time spent in the simulation. Thus, the study showed that with the acquisition of behavioral norms, the availability of alternatives to these norms seems to diminish.

Study 2 had two objectives. Firstly, the study was set up to assess and compare the influence of different promotive factors of norm perception on individuals' behavior. To my knowledge, it is the first study to integrate norm information from past personal behavior, perceptions of mainstream media and perceptions of peer information that were either developed over a longer time span or situationally presented in the study. The second aim was to examine the preconditions for the evolvement and change of normality perceptions, particularly in regard to spiraling/self-perpetuating effects, as they are suggested by the models of normality and shifts of normality as well as pluralistic ignorance and the spiral of silence (Prentice & Miller, 1993; Noelle-Neumann, 1993). The context of the study was the 2013 German federal election. The hypotheses were examined using an online-survey disseminated in diverse Facebook groups. It was assessed whether different sources of norm information would influence the participants' willingness to publicly

speak about their preferred political party. Above all, these were an election poll, perceived media coverage and anticipated evaluations by friends. The situationally presented descriptive norms strongly influenced a percentage of the participants. Conservatives were significantly less willing to speak out publicly when they perceived the majority to disagree with their opinion. Thus, the basis for continuative dynamics of pluralistic ignorance and the spiral of silence was laid. For liberals however, I found no effect of the situationally perceived descriptive norms. Of the different sources of norm information, besides the situationally presented descriptive norms, the anticipated reaction of friends (i.e., the long-term developed descriptive norms), the perception to be judged negatively because of the choice of party and the perceived media climate, all had an influence on conservative as well as liberal voters. Interestingly, against the classical hypotheses of the spiral of silence, individuals were more willing to speak about their preferred political party when they perceived the media climate to be in opposition, apparently rejecting the world view of the mainstream media as differing from their own. Accordingly, the perceived rejection by the media led to the strengthening of individuals' own views and the need to share them.

In the third study, perceptions of the differential normality of different groups was assessed. Specifically, native Germans (majority group) and Arab migrants in Germany (minority group) were compared as to the degree to which they perceived the respective ingroup and outgroup to be normal. Furthermore, the influence of intergroup contact on these perceptions was examined. Different researchers (e.g., Hegarty & Pratto, 2001; Bruckmüller, 2013) have shown that in the context of categories, one group can be taken as the norm, whereas another one is perceived as the effect to be explained and as changeable. Membership of a group that is perceived as more normal comes with unstated privileges (Pratto et al., 2007). A group that is perceived as less normal is more likely to be stereotyped and met with more negative attitudes (e.g., Hegarty & Pratto, 2001; Wenzel et al., 2008). These findings were used as basis and background to assess whether majority and minority groups are perceived/perceive themselves to be differentially normal. Differential perceptions of groups' normality were hypothesized to play a role in integration and migration processes. Groups' normality perceptions were examined specifically with the intent of clearing up the paradox of Germans' relatively negative attitudes towards immigrants, despite trends to support diversity and multiculturalism (e.g., Guimond et al., 2013). The study was implemented via a mentoring program that brings together native Germans and Arab migrants. The data was collected using a single survey for each group. As a framework, the ingroup projection model was used (e.g., Mummendey et al., 2003). As hypothesized, native Germans perceived themselves as relatively more prototypical for people living in Germany than they perceived Arab migrants. The Arab migrants, in contrast, perceived their group as equally (or even less) normal/prototypical than they perceived the native Germans. Regarding the ingroup contact, a longer duration in the mentoring program was associated with an increase of (absolute) perceptions of the own group's normality for students with Arab migration background. In contrast, a longer

duration in the mentorship led to decreases in absolute perceptions of normality for native Germans. Perceptions of relative prototypicality/normality did not change significantly for either group. Furthermore, a higher percentage of cross-group peers in the close environment led the native Germans to perceive their ingroup as less relatively normal, whereas it led the Arab migrants to perceive their ingroup as more relatively prototypical. Thus, a more diverse environment was associated with a shift of perceptions of normality towards a center score, with both groups approaching each other. With regard to the models of normality and shifts of normality, differential perceptions of different societal groups' as well as promoting and changing factors were illustrated. Inferences to normativity and perceptions of reality as well as specific status- and behavioral consequences for the groups that are considered as highly or little normal were indicated.

The main objective of the set of Studies 4-7 was to examine and highlight the impact of social norms on reality perceptions. It was assessed whether social norms lead individuals to either perceive group-based evaluations (i.e., prejudices; see Crandall et al., 2002) as corresponding to reality or attribute them to the personal characteristics and biases of the person expressing them. It was proposed that only prejudices that are socially inacceptable / non-normative are eventually perceived as prejudices. Socially shared prejudices, in contrast, are not identified as prejudices. In Study 4, a list of groups was created for whom prejudices potentially exist. Participants' perceptions of the societal acceptance of prejudices against these groups as well as participants' personal prejudices were assessed. The perceived social norms and the personal prejudices showed a high correlation. This suggests that individuals' personal expressions of prejudices are highly intertwined with their perception of what is generally normal and accepted in their environment/group. For Study 5, four groups against which prejudices are accepted and four groups against which prejudices are not accepted, were selected from the list. It was tested whether a negative or positive statement about these groups would be rather perceived as true, real and objective or as being based on personal characteristics or bias of the expressing person. As hypothesized, when the valence of the statement was congruent to the social norms, it appeared as true, real and objective. When the valence of the statement was not congruent to the social norms, the statement was perceived as distorted. Study 6 replicated Study 5 in a more diverse sample and for different target groups. The results were similar to Study 5's, also strongly supporting the hypotheses. In Study 7, the influence of social norms on the attribution of group-based evaluations was examined in an experimental study, in which expressions of prejudice as well as the norms of prejudice acceptance were manipulated. Similar effects to those exhibited in previous studies were observed, even when the target groups were previously unknown, and the social norms regarding the acceptability of prejudice expression were influenced at the beginning of the study. In Study 6 and 7 it was further assessed the degree to which the expression of either norm-congruent or norm-incongruent prejudices evoke surprise. According to Kahneman and Miller (1986), surprise indicates the abnormality of

a stimulus or event. A negative statement was less surprising when it was about a group for whom prejudice is socially accepted, than when it was about a group for whom the expression of prejudice is not accepted. In contrast, a positive statement was more surprising when it was about a group against which prejudice is normative. Across the groups, greater surprise was associated with stronger attribution to bias, whereas less surprise was associated with weaker attribution to personal biases. The norms regarding the acceptance of the expression of prejudices seem to have been strongly internalized and integrated in the individuals' world views. The results of Studies 4 to 7 underline the close and reciprocal relationship of normality, normativity and reality as suggested by the model of normality.

5.2.   Core findings and recurring topics: integration, discussion and reference to the models of normality and shifts of normality

In this section, the core findings and recurrent topics of this dissertation's studies are discussed and referenced with regards to the developed social psychological concept and the models of normality and shifts of normality. Additionally, practical implications are discussed briefly. First, the dynamics of normality emergence, maintenance and shift will be discussed. In contrast to the other sections of this chapter, these topics are illustrated in a more general manner. They lay the groundwork for the following aspects, which are more specific. Then, the particularly strong role of the close environment and the circulatory character of normality dynamics will be highlighted and discussed. The role of diversity, disagreement and dissent in the evolvement of normality will be then discussed. We then move to a discourse on the deductions from normality to normativity and objective reality, and the relationship between the three phenomena. Finally, consequences for the understanding and expression of immoral and extreme attitudes and behaviors are discussed.

5.2.1.   Dynamics of normality emergence, perpetuation and shift

Normality emergence, maintenance and shift are highly subjected to mutually influential dynamics. This was indicated in the theoretical background as well as the models, and reflected in the empirical studies. The studies have underlined how easily and promptly normality can emerge and be shifted and how far-reaching the consequences can be. The strong influence of norms and normality in different domains and contexts has been illustrated. It was shown how perceptions of seemingly usual behavior in a newly build group context can shape individuals' personal behavioral intentions (Study 1). The emergence of norms in a field context (i.e., a non-influenced societal background) reflects a more complex, practical and realistic version of Sherif's experiments (1936), in which individuals shifted their judgments about the distance of light movement according to perceived norms. Jacobs and Campbell (1961) have shown that individuals do

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not only adapt their behavior to that of others but also serve themselves as providers of meaning for their peers. They pass on a norm to subsequent generations, even when the norm is arbitrary. In the context of a new / previously unknown societal situation, individuals' behavior has been shown to be influenced by others' behavior, whilst at the same time influencing others' behavioral intentions. Thus, normality seems to emerge in mutual perceptions, interactions and discourse of individuals within the same context (see also Stangor & Leary, 2006; Paluck, 2009b). The circular nature of normality formation suggested by the model is well received here. Once established, norms are not only passed on to future generations (as indicated by Jacobs & Campbell, 1961), but also to peers who experience the same situation – every observer of an individual's behavior (see Markus & Kitayama, 2010; Paluck & Shepherd, 2012). During that process, peers' attitudes and behaviors may become more similar and shift towards each other, throughout a process of mutual orientation. As suggested by the model and contrary to the indications of various social theorists, one can speak of *becoming normal* rather than a (targeted / directed) normalization. The model advocates that every individual is a standard of orientation for every other individual due to their contributions to normality perceptions. Consequently, in the process of mutual adaptation, normality continues to converge and solidify. Whilst in Study 1, the mutual influence of peers in creating and establishing a certain normality was illustrated, Study 2, emphasized above all the influence of certain pre-existing perceptions of normality. The perception that peers' norms are opposing to ones' own opinion led a number of the participants to avoid freely expressing their opinion. This suppressed information is thus not available to others for use in their normality perception. From the literature, it can be seen that this has considerable influence on further behavioral developments and expressions (e.g., Miller & Prentice, 1993; Noelle-Neumann, 1993; Paluck, 2009b). According to the concept of pluralistic ignorance, despite holding different private attitudes, individuals tend to publicly express attitudes and show behaviors that they perceived to be in accord with peer norms (Miller & McFarland, 1991; Prentice & Miller, 1994). The concept of the spiral of silence (Noelle-Neumann, 1973) captures that in a downward spiral; opinions that are perceived as being shared only within a minority will diminish. In contrast, opinions that are perceived to reflect a majority become stronger and more widely shared. Thus, as suggested by the literature, the models, and the results of the studies, an attitude, opinion or behavior perpetuates and is transmitted when it appears to be shared by a majority and to be normal. In this respect, normality reflects an implicit agreement of what appears to be the widely shared behavior within a certain group and context. Whatever seems to be socially validated is expressed, and therefore perpetuates (see Schultz et al., 2007; Paluck, 2009b). With regard to the model of normality, the particularly strong role of social factors in the emergence of normality as well as the circulatory nature of normality perceptions and influence are highlighted.

As illustrated in the theoretical background and stated in the model of normality, the singular observation or personal exertion of a certain behavior can already lead to its perception as comparatively

normal (e.g., Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Kahneman & Miller, 1986). A singular experience already influences subsequent perceptions, judgments and actions. Thus, every expressed attitude or behavior can contain norm information for oneself or others. As shown throughout the studies, the sole experience of a certain behavior or stimulus can already lead to the emergence and maintenance of stimuli and behaviors as normal. In the empirical part of this dissertation this was shown to be true for different experiences. These were, the notion that others indicated to vote for a certain political party (Study 2), that others used a certain strategy in a political debate (Study 1), and that the participants themselves read about individuals judging members of a certain group negatively or positively (Study 7).

Crucially, the appearance of validation and majority support does not necessarily need to correspond to facts in order to be influential (e.g., Noelle-Neumann, 1973; Miller & Prentice, 1994). Minority opinions can also lead to the establishment of a certain attitude or behavior as normal when persistently and/or consistently expressed (Moscovici et al., 1969; Nemeth & Wachtler, 1974). Weaver et al. (2007) illustrated how a higher frequency of expressing a certain opinion led to its perception as more widely shared, and therefore normal. In Study 1, the strategy of threatening was collectively perceived more strongly as being accepted and executed by the others than it was in actuality. Despite being incorrect, the perceptions led to a shift of individuals towards being more open towards threatening in the course of the simulation. In Study 2, it was a bogus election poll that supposedly started dynamics, at the end of which there may be a real decrease in support for the conservative parties (see, e.g., Noelle-Neumann, 1973). Thus, perceptions of norms do not have to correspond to facts in order to be influential. Attitudes and behaviors do not necessarily need to be true or be approved by a majority in order to appear as normal and factually become widely shared.

5.2.2. The particularly strong role of the close environment in the process of normality evolvement

Throughout the dissertation, close peers and acquaintances have been shown to have an exceptional impact on the emergence, maintenance and shift of normality. In Study 2, for example, the anticipated reaction of friends was a strong predictor of the willingness to publicly speak about the preferred party. Those with whom an individual regularly communicates, whom he values and spends time with, appear to have a strong influence on what he perceives as normal and how he behaves.

Due to individuals' preference to be partnered with other individuals who share their own impressions (Hardin et al., 1995) and effects of selective exposure (e.g., Crocker, 1981), close peers can be assumed to be relatively similar to the individuals themselves. Close acquaintances of individuals often live in the same social reality as themselves (e.g., Matsumoto, 2007). It follows that the norm information individuals receive from their close peers are relatively one-sided and similar to their own opinions and behaviors. The information is continuously reproduced within the individuals' circles of acquaintances.

Close friends are more likely to intersubjectively experience the world and share reality (see Hardin & Higgins, 1996). Close peers/acquaintances therefore mutually strengthen their views. As a consequence, perceptions of normality within circles of close acquaintances can become increasingly rigid, one-sided and extreme (see also Janis, 1982, on group think; Brauer & Judd, 1996, on group polarization). Misjudgments in the sharedness and approval among peers may also come to pass. Goel, Mason and Watts (2010), for example, have shown that individuals overestimate their friends' similarity in attitudes and behavior. Attitudes and behaviors that are commonly and widely shared within an individual's circle of acquaintances may be abstracted to the general society and perceived as consensually supported (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973; Marks & Miller, 1987; Weaver et al., 2007). This may lead to an overestimation of the sharedness of their own views in the population. Thus, as stated in the model of normality, the norms of a small subgroup might shape an individual's general view of what is true, real and objective.

In a time when individuals have less trust in the mainstream media (see "Medien in der Glaubwürdigkeitskrise?," 2016) and experience reports about "fake news" and "alternative facts" on a regular basis, the personal environment appears to become a more important and more trusted source of information. This notion finds support in the paradox influence of the perceived prevailing media climate in Study 2. The judgments of friends led to a strengthening of the opinion expression when it was congruent to the individuals' opinion. In contrast, the prevailing support of the mainstream media of a certain opinion or political spectrum led to a strengthening of the opinion expression when it was incongruent to the individuals' opinion.

A suitable analogy for the strong influence of individuals who share similar norms or think alike (compared to random persons) may be the thought experiment of a modification of the study by Jacobs and Campbell (1961) on the perpetuation and transmission of arbitrary norms (for a more detailed study design, see Chapter 2.4.2.). One may imagine that instead of entering the experiment as uninfluenced individuals, (the in the different stages of the experiment joining) participants had already been acquainted to and affected by the respective norms regarding the distance of light movement. With all individuals being shaped by similar experiences, processes of mutual adaptation and implicit negotiating of a group norm would not (or only little) lead to a successive decreasing of the originally arbitrary norm. With the individuals sharing similar experiences (i.e., perceiving a certain norm of the distance of light movement beforehand), the arbitrary norm will perpetuate more strongly and for a higher number of generations. In summary, how individuals' close acquaintances think, feel and behave, shapes their normality substantially and consequently, their own thoughts, feelings and behaviors.

5.2.3. Effects and interrelations of close environment, diversity, dissent and disagreement

In Study 3, majority and minority group members' perceptions of the respective ingroup's and outgroup's normality were shown to depend on the percentage of cross-group peers in the close environment. It appears that a higher diversity in the close environment led the majority group to relativize their own normality and to include the minority group more strongly (see also Wenzel et al., 2008; Ehrke et al., 2014). For the minority group, in contrast, a higher diversity appears to have led to a stronger relativization of the outgroup's normality and a stronger perception of the ingroup's normality regarding the superordinate group. Again, the close environment has had a particularly strong influence on perceptions of normality. It appears that a high diversity of members in an individual's group/environment prevents his normality from becoming narrow and extreme. The phenomena of group think (Janis, 1982) and group polarization (Brauer & Judd, 1996) in this regard describe how groups with a high internal consensus become locked in their course of actions, neglect to consider alternatives, and become increasingly extreme in their opinions. Dissent, disagreement and a more heterogeneous group composition, in contrast, hinder these dynamics (see Fishkin & Luskin, 1999; Nemeth & Goncalo, 2005). Further, Wojcieszak and Price (2009) have shown that experiencing disagreement attenuates the false consensus effect. A higher diversity in the close environment, including individuals who are different from oneself, may increase the potential for experiences of dissent and therefore mitigate the establishment of fixed, rigid and extreme normalities. As illustrated, the results of this dissertation's studies support this notion.

In Study 1, instead of a shift of attitudes to the extremes, in a setting of balanced opinions and behaviors (i.e., representations of behaviors along the whole spectrum of extremity), a shift of individuals' behavioral preferences towards the center score of all involved individuals' preferences occurred. Therefore, it seems that peers' attitudes and behaviors become more similar and shift towards each other in a process of mutual orientation. Seemingly, besides the diversity of individuals and information sources, the balance of opinions and the perception and experience of diverse situations may prevent an individual's or group's normality to be one-sided, rigid and extreme. Taking the model of shift of normality into account, a diversity and balance of stimuli results in a lower likeliness that only one particular line/direction will reach the status of normality. In such a case, one branch of stimuli or events is perceived as more normal than others. Different behaviors are considered to be similarly normal, leaving the scope of normality relatively wide. In Study 3, the perceptions of the normality of the native (majority) and migrant (minority) group approached each other, shifting to a center score. This indicates that the scope of normality may not only remain relatively wide, but may also move to the center of the various stimuli involved. In the case of diversity / balance of norm information, the attitudes and behaviors of individuals tend to move towards a center. This may reflect a consensually accepted mainstream culture (see Saito, 2007). It can be assumed that the synchronized culture reflects a much more open and moderate normality. In this context, an anchor

(a certain attitude or behavior) may not lead to adaptation if it is presented or expressed among a variation of information (see Chapter 2.2.2.). Thus, diversity, dissent, disagreement and a plurality of opinions/behaviors, are crucial for creating or maintaining critical reflection as a counterpart of a one-sided and rigid normality.

5.2.4. Disagreement, dissent – and objective reality

Studies 4 to 7 show that disagreement and dissent do not always have the potential to influence individuals' sense of normality. When individuals encounter statements that are incongruent to their social norms, they reject these statements as well as the person expressing them as biased and distorted. These effects reflect notions of normativity as well as normality. In Studies 6 and 7, the deviating statements caused devaluation and rejection (reflects normativity) as well as surprise (reflects normality). In contrast to the situations of dissent and diversity illustrated in the previous section, a dissenting statement was devalued and its information discarded in these studies. It appears that the social norms here have led to a fixed and rigid perception of what is real, true and objective. In Studies 4 to 7, the group norms already had been validated, verified and manifested and therefore achieved the "phenomenological status of objective reality" (Hardin & Higgins, 1996, p. 28). According to the concept of naïve realism, the perception to see the world as it truly is, leads individuals to believe that the failure to share their views and beliefs must be ascribed to another person's characteristics or biases (e.g., Ross & Ward, 1996). If an individuals' or groups' normality has attained the status of objective reality, dissent and disagreement have no – or potentially even oppositional – effects (see Lord et al., 1979). As stated in the model of normality, from an individual's perception of objectivity deviating expressions are directly devalued and rejected (see Chapter 3). The results of this dissertation's studies indicate two decisive factors regarding the efficacy of disagreement and dissent. Firstly, the point of time, the disagreement is expressed, is relevant: Early expressed disagreement is more effective. Secondly, it is relevant whether disagreement, dissent and pluralistic opinions have been regularly expressed before. It is crucial that disagreement is expressed before the critical attitude or behavior is acquired as prescriptive, objective and true, that means, as soon as it is expressed. An approach to preventing problematic normality developments would therefore be an open and pluralized society in which citizens are encouraged to express their views freely and not to shy away from disagreements. It is hence crucial that all persons and opinions (as long as they are compatible with the Constitution) are generally permanently included in the public discourses. This applies, for example, to the democratic discourse. By fostering diversity, disagreement and dissent, the emergence of different single one-sided, hermetic and rigid normality perceptions within a society, can be prevented. General isolation or neglect of certain individuals or groups should therefore be prevented. The studies indicate that a higher plurality, diversity

and balance may lead to the reduction of prejudice (see Studies 4 to 7), an improvement of mutual social integration (Study 3) and less extreme opinions and behaviors (Study 1).

5.2.5. Normality and morality

There is a range of studies that indicate that individuals are drawn to behave immoral (i.e., to violate universal and higher principles concerning right and wrong or good and bad behavior) either because it reflects their personality, or because authorities demand it (e.g., Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Milgram, 1963). In many classical approaches, obedience has been highlighted as the decisive factor in driving individuals to express morally dubious behavior. However, the results of this dissertation imply that authorities do not need to be present and obedience not be required for morally dubious behaviors and attitudes to be performed. Examples for this are the increasing use of threats in Study 1 as well as the attribution of prejudices to facts in Studies 5 to 7. The results indicate further that an important factor for individuals enacting immoral behavior appears to be an unawareness of the moral dubiousness of the act, and consequentially, individuals' lack to even question its morality. Both factors are captured in the model of normality. In Study 1, no authority demanded use of a certain strategy. Nevertheless, the participants increasingly used and accepted threats as a strategy within the General Assembly simulation. During the course of the simulation, the participants adapted their attitudes to what they perceived as a widely shared behavior. The perceived consensus of support for these practices apparently shifted individuals to be more positive and acceptable towards these morally dubious practices, which they before had accepted significantly less. However, also following the shift of the own acceptance/preferences, individuals perceived the others to use and accept threats more frequently than themselves. Others' norms may be used as a contrast and/or justification by the individuals, leading to the perception of the own attitudes and behavior as less aversive and hostile (see Herr, 1986; Norris et al., 2010). Two circumstances suggest that further shifts towards immoral behavior are likely to occur. Firstly, the individuals themselves provide norm information for others. Therefore, these others will also perceive the immoral behavior as widely shared (e.g., Prentice & Miller, 1994; Markus & Kitayama, 2010; Paluck & Shepherd, 2012). According to the models of normality and shifts of normality this will promote the immoral behavior to be reproduced (see Chapter 3). Secondly, as the model of shifts of normality indicates, by expressing the immoral behavior (e.g., threats in the simulation), the magnitude of contrast between the already existing background norms and the particular behavior decreases. As a consequence, the behavior is increasingly integrated into the background norms, becoming the unnoticed standard. With this development, the contrast to similar but more extreme behaviors may also decrease – and the behaviors therefore seem increasingly acceptable and appropriate. The model of normality indicates that the diminishing availability of alternatives may also contribute to the continuation of these normality dynamics

(see, e.g., Marks & Duval, 2001). Furthermore, in Studies 5 to 7, participants perceived prejudices that were in line with the social norms as being factual, objective and true. As individuals' attitudes corresponded to their perceptions of the norms, their own and others' morally dubious behaviors and views remained widely unnoticed and unquestioned. This supports the propositions of the model of normality.

Thus, the process of (gradually) becoming normal seems to be a suitable explanation for the occurrence of certain morally dubious behaviors and attitudes. Individuals may not necessarily express immoral behaviors because they are forced to or because it reflects their personality. Instead, individuals may express respective behaviors because it is, or has, become normal to them. Whatever counts as normal, seems to be justified in moral terms. As illustrated a number of times, behavior that counts as normal, remains unquestioned, unnoticed, and with few alternatives. Therefore, individuals may be unaware of the potential immorality of their behavior. As individuals' attitudes and behaviors are integrated into their understanding of reality, truth and objectivity, they neither place focus on them nor question them regarding their morality. Importantly, individuals do not perceive normality as an external factor that needs to be reflected and evaluated. Instead, individuals' perception of normality is in line with the self-concept and remains unquestioned.

5.2.6. Normality and extremism

The notions and discussion points of the previous section also have significance regarding the understanding and definition of extremism and extreme behaviors. The results show that extreme behaviors are not only expressed by individuals who are at the margins of the societal/political spectrum, as often perceived and proclaimed (for thoughts on definitions, see Rommelspacher, 2011; Heitmeyer, 2017). Instead, this dissertation shows that individuals are capable of expressing extreme behaviors when they perceive them to be in line with their perceptions of normality. In the case of the congruence of one's own with the perceived behavior of others, threats have been accepted as an increasingly effective means, and prejudices continued to be expressed and accepted. Most likely, however, the individuals did not consider themselves extreme because their behavior did not differ from that of the majority. This shows the difficulty in understanding and defining extremism: if one understands extremism as a deviation from the norms, majority behavior or the center of a society, one misses to consider extreme behavior that is not viewed as deviant, but by a majority perceived as normal and justified. It is crucial to bear in mind that an individual does not perceive the behavior in question as extreme because he perceives it in accordance with his normality. Also other members of the individual's group will most likely not mark it as extreme. The understanding of the extremity of individuals' attitudes and behaviors seems to be tied to the (social) group they are in and/or with whom they identify. As individuals in different groups have a unique shaping of and by normality, they also understand/define distinctly which attitudes and behaviors are extreme. A suitable

example is the cases illustrated in the introduction. Within their normalities, individuals are not considered extreme – and are unlikely to regard themselves as extreme. Within each group and/or normality there is an own spectrum of opinions and behaviors; extreme behavior is understood and identified as being at the edges/margins. As long as an individual understands himself as being in the center of a group, that is, his behavior appears to be shared by many others and there are individuals who are further on the edge of the spectrum, he will not consider his own behavior as extreme. In Study 1 of this dissertation, for example, participants accepted threats increasingly, but still distinguished themselves from the others, who allegedly used even more threats. Once more, what is considered extreme is strongly influenced by the respective normality. It is therefore difficult to recognize extreme behavior of the own group and to mark it as such – since it always refers only to extremity in relation to ones' own normality. As a result, some forms of extreme attitudes and extreme behaviors may be overlooked and others conventionalized as typical forms of extreme behavior. Accordingly, in Studies 4 to 7, prejudices were not considered prejudices if they corresponded to the participants' normality/normativity. The extremism that does not deviate from the perceived normality / group norms can therefore only be reflected and marked as extreme by those who stand outside of the respective normality. This dissertation therefore suggests that when considering which behavior is extreme, the personal standpoint of normality should be considered. Furthermore, the use of criteria that are valid and have significance independently of the current norms is suggested.

5.3.   Normality and shifts of normality in current German society

To close the circle, this section is referenced to the context illustrated in the introduction (see section 4.2.6.). During the course of the dissertation, the basic dynamics and mechanisms of normality evolvement, perpetuation and transmission have been illustrated, examined and discussed. References to practical/societal examples were repeatedly implied – nevertheless, in this section the following questions regarding the current developments in German society shall be addressed. In what way do the models of normality and shifts of normality as well as the results of the empirical studies help to understand current societal dynamics, particularly in Germany? To what extent do normality and the resulting deductions explain the extensive polarization in German society, the open expressions of mutual exclusion, and extreme behaviors from the different groups and individuals? What role do mainstream media, social media and expressions by public figures play?

Throughout this dissertation, the emergence and evolvement of normality have been shown to be driven by perceptions of agreement by close acquaintances and mutual reproduction of one-sided information. These developments may lead to different, detached and internally secluded notions of truth, reality and objectivity. In these times of heightened use of online communication, particularly via social media channels, the propagation and inclusion of one-sided information has been strengthened (e.g., Pariser,

2011; Berger, 2015; Del Vicario et al., 2016). Echo chambers emerge in which the participants only encounter and include information that resembles their own opinions. Del Vicario et al. (2016) illustrated how homogenous selections of online content as well as echo chambers, strengthen in cascades certain opinion circles and lead to polarization in the society. Pariser (2011) hypothesized that certain algorithms of social media platforms (such as Facebook) lead to the phenomenon of "filter bubbles" (i.e., a state of information isolation). Therefore, individuals do not necessarily need to actively search for information that verify their world views, but are automatically and passively confronted with them. This occurs, for instance, in individuals' Facebook news feeds. In order to escape the one-sided information, the individuals would need to become active on their own. Berger (2015) illustrates that the cascades, dynamics and filter bubbles also apply to the German context, for both the right and left political spectrum. Hence, in the German society, the basis was, and is, laid for diverging developments of normality perceptions. One consequence is the divergence of perceptions of reality, truth and objectivity in different parts or groups of society. In the current German context, this separation mainly concerns the issue of refugees. As illustrated, in an early stage of this development, disagreement and dissent may still have effectively influenced the norm shifts. The emergence/expression of information that differs from / contradicts that which is commonly shared, could have counteracted the fixation of normality perceptions and the polarization of reality views. In a study on behavior in online forums, in which dissent was forced by moderators, both echo chamber effects and consensus of opinions decreased (Soma, 2009). Wojcieszak and Price (2009) have shown that a higher diversity in the close environment and the experience of disagreement attenuate the false consensus effect. The phenomenon that dissent and disagreement are rarely expressed in individuals' close environment and information circles also applies for the German context. Within the polarized groups, dissent diminishes. At this advanced point of polarization, dissent and disagreement from the opposing camp in most cases is directly rejected, strengthening the prevailing opinions. In Germany, members of different socioeconomic classes have little intercontact and experience of common ground and sharing reality are rare. The social segregation in Germany increases, for example, along the division lines of income and ethnicity in cities as well as demographical differences between the population in cities and rural areas (Großmann et al., 2014; TNS Emnid, 2015). Specifically in reference to the introductory example, in the absence of contradiction within the groups, individuals who strongly favor the reception of refugees, perceive their attitudes and behaviors as entirely normal and deviating attitudes as abnormal. The opponents of the reception of refugees perceive in a similar but opposing manner.

As illustrated, the normality can shift without the attitudes and behaviors being questioned. Individuals act in morally dubious ways, without even being aware of it. When not explicitly devalued, extreme opinions and behaviors of individuals can be understood as socially accepted normality standards. In German society, aggressive comments and actions by public figures in connection with the reception of

refugees have increased. For example, Beatrix von Storch (AfD) declared on Facebook that the usage of weapons against women and children is justified when it serves the purpose of preventing immigrants from crossing the German border ("Von Storch bejaht Waffengebrauch," 2016). Moreover, Björn Höcke (also AfD) devalued the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin by calling it a "Denkmal der Schande im Herzen der Hauptstadt" ("memorial of shame in the heart of the capital"; e.g., Görs, 2017). Opinions like these are not new – but they rarely had been previously expressed by public figures with a relatively large influence and wide reach. At the same time, potentially as a consequence, a higher amount of (more extreme) hate postings in social media, online forums and newspapers appeared (Stürzenhofecker, 2016). Sanctions, which may potentially hinder these dynamics (see for instance, Soma, 2009), were not imposed or were perceived as illegitimate by a relevant part of the population, and therefore rejected. Therefore, some individuals perceived these expressions as socially accepted and normal. What formerly may have been considered as extreme, became normal and validated (see also Heitmeyer, 2017). Based on mutual validation, contrast and shift effects, the center of (German) society seems to stabilize the extremes, by not clearly disagreeing. At the same time, the extremes pull the center in the particular directions by setting extreme standards (see also Zick et al., 2016). These developments are not unique for this specific German context but can be applied to other current and historical examples of normality shifts in all kinds of groups.

5.4.   Strengths and limitations, future studies and further implications

Strengths and limitations

This dissertation's studies have been set up in heterogeneous and diverse contexts. This was, on the one hand, in order to underline the relevancy of the newly developed concept of normality for different areas of social psychological research. On the other hand, the assessment of the influence of normality perceptions in different fields of application allows the drawing of a comprehensive and diverse image of the concept. Eventually, this dissertation's approach led to productive results. A diverse and in-depth image of normality was obtained, and its nature and effectiveness were examined for different contexts and fields of research. The heterogeneous study contexts have proven to have been selected rationally with regard to the dissertation's objectives. Using variations of a consistent study setting, however, would have had the advantage of higher and clearer comparability in regard to the investigation of the interrelations and dynamics of the different components of normality and shifts of normality. It is generally a challenge to assess basic research in applied settings. However, it does increase the ecological validity of the object of examination. The choice of settings determines the direction a study is headed. For the purposes of this dissertation, to create and examine a concept/models of normality and at the same time to answer practically implied questions, this approach has proved reasonable.

A double-edged sword is the broad applicability and significance of the general concept and the models of normality and shifts of normality. The more phenomena and dynamics to be captured, the more complex and difficult to examine a concept becomes. It is, for instance, impossible to study all propositions of the models in just a few studies. This was not, however, the goal of this dissertation. In the development of comprehensive models such as those of this dissertation, the ridge to arbitrariness is narrow. What claims to be able to explain everything, may end up not explaining anything. I am aware of this hazard and still consider the comprehensive and holistic approach to be right and important. The developed – and in first steps tested – models provide a paradigm and perspective that sheds new light on otherwise difficult-to-understand behavioral dynamics. The complete models as well as the single sub-processes can already be used as explanations. However, they should be subject to further systematic examination in the future.

Future studies

In this dissertation, single factors of the normality models have already been examined. For example, the inferences to the perception of reality and the circulatory character of normality development were highlighted. However, it was not the objective of this dissertation to study all propositions of the models in detail. In future studies, the proposed dynamics of the models should be examined in their entire course, focusing on the interlocking of the various factors of the models. The explanation of the processes should be further differentiated from other phenomena and models. An appropriate study setting, for example, could be the one regarding the perpetuation of normality (based on work by Jacobs & Campbell [1961] and Sherif [1936]) that I have illustrated in Chapter 5.2.2. as an analogy. The long-term assessment of a societal group (e.g., a social movement) would also provide an interesting setting. The focus of such an examination could be placed on the gradual character of shifts as well as on questions of awareness and implicit endorsement of normality. From the propositions and the results many more ideas and questions raise their heads. Amongst others: What happens if individuals are explicitly made aware that their choice of attitude or behavior is or was mainly based on the socially sharedness of behavior and/or inferences from the descriptive to be prescriptive? To what extent would individuals be capable of using this information to change/correct their attitudes and behaviors? There seems to be a thin line between evolving and flexible normality perceptions and the rigidity and fixedness of reality perceptions. Future studies should assess in greater detail, in which cases dissent and disagreement are still influential, and in which opposing opinions are directly rejected and potentially lead to a strengthening of the existing world views. In relation to theoretical notions, a further interesting research question is implied: In which way and to what extent is a notion of social validation and intersubjectivity inherent in subjective perceptions of the status quo?

Further implications

These dissertation's implications go beyond the meaning and significance for the respective research lines as well as the practical examples. The concept and models of normality offer a fundamental viewpoint and paradigm to explain social phenomena. This dissertation emphasizes that normality is as an unnoticed state that individuals implicitly endorse and understand as prescriptive and unchangeable. It is further stated that perceptions of normality are self-perpetuating and potentially emerge on an arbitrary basis and without directed and purposeful intention. Normality is particularly influential, because it is in accord with individuals' interpretations and meaning-making of the world.

One practical field in which the effects of normality unfold, is dynamics, in which a certain state is obtained, although many individuals suffer from or disagree with it. Individuals may tolerate oppression and suppression, because the status quo is normal to them. As in the case of digital monitoring (e.g., Trojanow & Zeh, 2009), the dissertation suggests that normality may shift gradually in such cases: Each new step that is made or occurs, implicitly promotes the following (see, e.g., Chapter 3.2.). Rights and freedom can constantly be dismantled when performed gradually, and with only little focus placed on the process.

Beyond these aspects, the social-psychological concept of normality (as well as the two models) is relevant to a broad field of social phenomena. These are, for example, questions of progress of society, organizations and products. Specifically, the models apply to organizational change (-management) processes and the establishment of (technological) innovations. This dissertations' approach can explain why (organizational) change in some cases is unlikely to occur, and offers suggestions for how and why a certain innovation is accepted and established, whereas an alternative is not.

5.5. Concluding remarks

The crux of normality is that once it is attained, it is no longer (explicitly) perceived. Whatever attitudes, opinions or behaviors are encountered as normal, become the unstated and unquestioned comparison background. In this dissertation, I have illustrated and examined processes and consequences of the phenomena of normality and shifts of normality, always highlighting this crux. The influence normality has on an individuals' behavior is generally underestimated, foremost because it is in accord with an individual's perception and meaning-making of reality. Individuals do not, by way of example, notice their behavior shifting towards the extreme, nor become aware of potentially overstepping the borders of morality. Individuals do not perceive normality as an external, behavior-guiding factor that needs to be reflected and evaluated. An Individuals' or groups' current normality is highly intertwined with its history, a specific context and the self-understanding of the individual or group. Current perceptions and

interpretations are therefore difficult to uncouple from these influences. The influence of normality is mainly implicit. For an individual to become aware of, and question one's normality and entanglement in certain perceptions of normality, an extraordinary event needs to occur, and/or focus must explicitly be placed on this circumstance. In the gradually shift of normality, however, heuristics, biases and information-behavior dynamics are involved that often proceed automatically and without directed and/or purposeful intention. Attempts to influence these dynamics would require conscious and active counteraction. An individual must first himself be compelled to question his own view.

This dissertation emphasizes that perceptions of normality are ubiquitous and highly influential. Moreover, the dissertation has illustrated that individuals from different groups and with different demographics and ideologies are affected by perceptions of normality. Individuals usually only perceive others to be afflicted by a certain rigid and one-sided normality, perceiving themselves, in contrast, as unaffected. It appears to be the basic understanding that it is always others who are influenced and extreme. In that context, as one example, challenging widely shared views, this dissertation has illustrated that the prejudice gap (conservatives appearing less tolerant and egalitarian than liberals; see Sears & Henry, 2003; Chambers, Schlenker, & Collisson, 2013) may be illusionary. Liberals can also be highly prejudiced. As conservatives, they perceive group-based evaluations against certain groups as objective, real and true. However, these groups are simply different groups than the ones the conservatives are prejudiced against and the ones that are usually understood as the typical targets. They depend on the respective social norms. Both liberals and conservatives have difficulties recognizing evaluations of the respective specific groups as a prejudice. Only prejudices that are non-normative or not normal in the respective group are noticeable.

In a final remark, the findings of this dissertation are related to the general proceeding of social psychological research. This dissertation's implications are highly relevant with regard to proper and balanced scientific conduct. Throughout the history of social psychology, certain topics have been looked at and treated ideologically rather one-sided. This can particularly be observed for the domain of stereotypes, prejudices and discrimination (see, e.g., Duarte, Crawford, Stern, Haidt, Jussim, & Tetlock, 2015; see also Chapters 4.5-4.10.). Academics are also afflicted in their normality (of conducting research), without being aware of it. As scientific objectivity (i.e., independency of specific perspectives and biases) is a central claim of science (e.g., "Scientific Objectivity," 2014), this notion can have far-reaching significance. As one approach to challenge this status, this dissertation suggests (in line with Duarte et al., 2015) heightening the diversity of the community of researchers. Whether the diversity needs to be built up along the line of political ideology (as it is suggested by Duarte et al., 2015), remains to be seen. Demographic, ethnical and disciplinary diversity should also be eligible. Another indication from this dissertation, with the aim to hinder effects of academics' one-sided, narrow and rigid normality, is in line with the approach by Kessler et al. (2015). Instead of or additionally to diversifying the researchers, Kessler et al. emphasize the

significance of varying the stimuli when conducting research, in order to avoid ideological bias of any kind. The use of the same stimuli and/or the same study material (for example, certain questionnaires or scales) would facilitate the reproduction and projection of normality that evolves/evolved within the research discipline. Furthermore, this dissertation suggests that researchers should be encouraged to challenge each other's views and concepts and to disagree and dissent. Moreover, academics should regularly question the research they conduct themselves, particularly regarding the perspective-diversity and balance of their concepts as well as potential effects of personal biases, despite the effort that this costs. No doubt attempts of critical reflection are also potentially subjected to effects of normality. Baumeister (2015) in that context suggested, that since one can never be aware of the own biases with certainty, it is necessary to always assume that one is biased. A mindset that considers that ones' own perceptions of what is normal may be arbitrarily emerged, and may not necessarily reflect the best or most correct of all possibilities, may be helpful. The evolvement, maintenance and shift of a uni-directional and narrow normality can only be challenged when individuals become aware of it.

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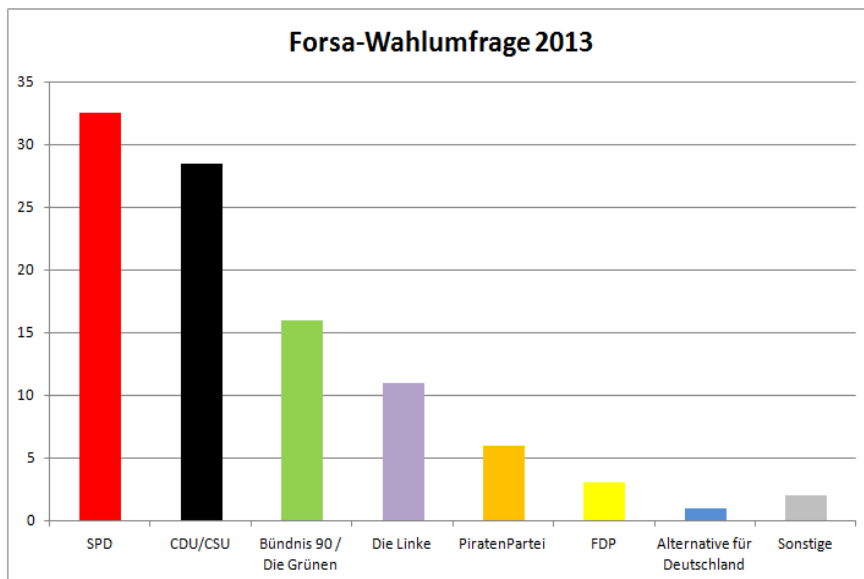
Appendix

Appendix A. Manipulation of descriptive norms (Study 2)

Manipulation of descriptive norms (bogus election poll) of voting behavior as included in study material of Study 2.
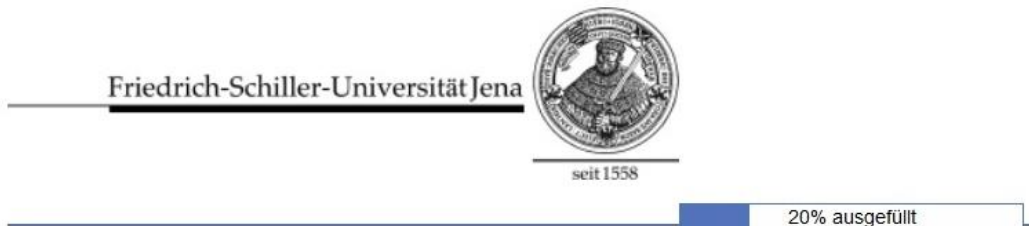
"Pro-center-right" condition:
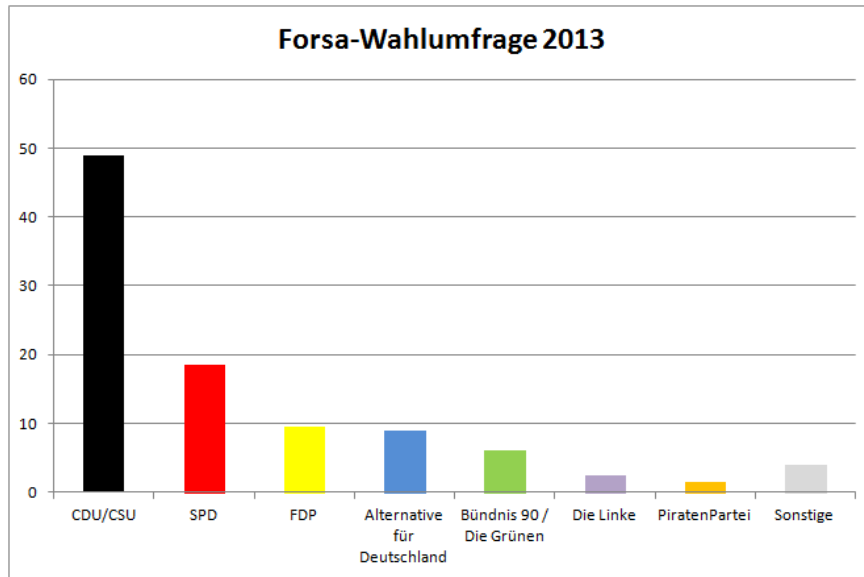
"Pro-center-left" condition:

Appendix B. Manipulation of social norms (Study 7)

Manipulation of social norms of prejudice acceptance as included in study material of Study 7.

(a) "Prejudice accepted" condition:

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena

seit 1558

20% ausgefüllt

Dies ist unsere dritte Studie zur Erforschung, wie *Maray* und *Sanguren*, zwei in Deutschland lebende, eher wenig bekannte ethnische Gruppen, in der Gesellschaft wahrgenommen werden.

In den ersten beiden Studien haben 231 Personen teilgenommen, die bereits Maray und Sanguren kennen. Wir haben den Teilnehmern und Teilnehmerinnen eine Liste von 10 Eigenschaften präsentiert und sie gebeten, einzuschätzen, wie viel Prozent der Maray bzw. der Sanguren Sie durch die jeweilige Eigenschaft charakterisieren würden.

Hier sind die Ergebnisse:

Maray sind...		Sanguren sind...	
egoistisch	91%	egoistisch	24%
intelligent	17%	intelligent	81%
aggressiv	84%	aggressiv	17%
hilfsbereit	13%	hilfsbereit	93%
rücksichtslos	88%	rücksichtslos	11%
faul	89%	faul	13%
engagiert	13%	engagiert	87%
herzlich	15%	herzlich	91%
unhöflich	93%	unhöflich	21%
fleißig	11%	fleißig	91%

1. Basierend auf diesen Charakterisierungen, wie würden Sie die <u>Maray</u> einschätzen?

- ⊙ Eher positiv
- ⊙ Eher negativ

2. Basierend auf diesen Charakterisierungen, wie würden Sie die <u>Sanguren</u> einschätzen?

- ⊙ Eher positiv
- ⊙ Eher negativ

Auf der nächsten Seite zeigen wir Ihnen die Einschätzungen der Teilnehmenden der ersten und zweiten Studie, damit Sie einordnen können, wo Sie mit Ihrer eigenen Wahrnehmung im Vergleich mit anderen liegen.

Die Teilnehmer und Teilnehmerinnen der ersten beiden Studien erleben die Maray und Sanguren als:

<u>Maray:</u>

eher negativ: 94%

eher positiv: 6%

<u>Sanguren:</u>

eher negativ: 17%

eher positiv: 83%

Als **Begründung** für ihre Einschätzungen berichteten die Teilnehmenden von ihren **persönlichen Erfahrungen** mit den Maray und/oder Sanguren:

Erfahrungen mit den **Maray**:

Susanne H.: „*Mich hat mal ein Maray beinahe angefahren, als er ohne zu schauen und viel zu schnell um die Ecke gefahren ist in seinem protzigen Auto. Ich bin ihm später noch mehrmals über den Weg gelaufen, habe ihm die Möglichkeit zum Gespräch angeboten – er hat immer abgelehnt und sich nie entschuldigt.*"

Alexander K.: „*Die meisten Maray, die ich kennengelernt habe waren sehr faule und egoistische Menschen!*"

Aisha M: „*Ich habe mal mit einer Maray zusammengearbeitet. Wir hatten eigentlich ein neutrales Verhältnis, haben häufiger zusammen im Aufenthaltsraum eine gequalmt. Als ich schwanger geworden bin, habe ich natürlich damit aufgehört und sie gebeten, Rücksicht zu nehmen und aufs Rauchen zu verzichten, die paar Male, die ich im Aufenthaltsraum bin. Sie hat aber einfach immer weiter geraucht, es hat sie einfach nicht interessiert, dass das meinem Baby schaden kann.*"

Siegfried F.: „*Ich bin sehr, sehr froh, dass ich mit keinem Maray mehr etwas zu tun habe!*"

Anna S.: „*Die meisten Maray scheinen leider keine guten Menschen zu sein.*"

Erfahrungen mit den **Sanguren**:

Fatma A.: „Ich habe die Sanguren stets als aufrichtige und hilfsbereite Menschen kennengelernt."

Christian S.: „Ich war neulich mit ein paar Sanguren-Freunden von mir Fußball spielen. Hat riesigen Spaß gemacht!"

Linda B.: „Als mein Mann und ich neu nach Köln gezogen sind, kannten wir niemanden. Ein mittlerweile befreundetes Sanguren-Ehepaar stand nach ein paar Tagen mit Sekt vor unserer Tür und hat uns im Haus begrüßt. Seitdem haben sie uns immer wieder eingeladen und ihren Freunden vorgestellt. Wir fühlen uns dank ihnen schon richtig wohl in Köln."

Victor W.: „Nachdem ich mir bei einem Fahrradunfall mein linkes Bein gebrochen hatte, hat mich meine Nachbarin, die Sangurin ist, 2 Wochen lang jeden Morgen zur Uni gefahren. So etwas Nettes habe ich selten erlebt!"

(b) "Prejudice not accepted" condition:

Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena

seit 1558

20% ausgefüllt

Dies ist unsere dritte Studie zur Erforschung, wie *Maray* und *Sanguren*, zwei in Deutschland lebende, eher wenig bekannte ethnische Gruppen, in der Gesellschaft wahrgenommen werden.

In den ersten beiden Studien haben 231 Personen teilgenommen, die bereits Maray und Sanguren kennen. Wir haben den Teilnehmern und Teilnehmerinnen eine Liste von 10 Eigenschaften präsentiert und sie gebeten, einzuschätzen, wie viel Prozent der Maray bzw. der Sanguren Sie durch die jeweilige Eigenschaft charakterisieren würden.

Hier sind die Ergebnisse:

Maray sind...		Sanguren sind...	
intelligent	83%	intelligent	19%
egoistisch	9%	egoistisch	76%
aggressiv	16%	aggressiv	83%
hilfsbereit	87%	hilfsbereit	7%
rücksichtslos	12%	rücksichtslos	89%
faul	11%	faul	87%
engagiert	87%	engagiert	13%
herzlich	85%	herzlich	9%
unhöflich	7%	unhöflich	79%
fleißig	89%	fleißig	9%

1. Basierend auf diesen Charakterisierungen, wie würden Sie die <u>Maray</u> einschätzen?

- ⚪ Eher positiv
- ⚪ Eher negativ

2. Basierend auf diesen Charakterisierungen, wie würden Sie die <u>Sanguren</u> einschätzen?

- ⚪ Eher positiv
- ⚪ Eher negativ

Auf der nächsten Seite zeigen wir Ihnen die Einschätzungen der Teilnehmenden der ersten und zweiten Studie, damit Sie einordnen können, wo Sie mit Ihrer eigenen Wahrnehmung im Vergleich mit anderen liegen.

Die Teilnehmer und Teilnehmerinnen der ersten beiden Studien erleben die Maray und Sanguren als:

<u>Maray:</u>

eher positiv: 94%

eher negativ: 6%

<u>Sanguren:</u>

eher positiv: 17%

eher negativ: 83%

Als **Begründung** für ihre Einschätzungen berichteten die Teilnehmenden von ihren **persönlichen Erfahrungen** mit den Maray und/oder Sanguren:

Erfahrungen mit den **Maray**:

Sarah K.: „Mein Mann ist Maray und wir sind seit über 15 Jahren glücklich verheiratet. Er und seine Familie sind so herzlich, dass es einfach schön ist, Zeit mit ihnen zu verbringen. In dem Ausmaß habe ich das vorher noch nicht gekannt."

Christian S.: „Ich war neulich mit ein paar Maray-Freunden von mir Fußball spielen. Es hat einfach riesigen Spaß gemacht!"

Ina H.: „Ich habe mittlerweile schon 6 Maray-Familien kennengelernt und habe immer sehr gute Erfahrungen gemacht. Vor allem die Kinder waren süß, wohl erzogen und schon sehr, sehr schlau für ihr Alter!"

Victor W.: „Nachdem ich mir bei einem Fahrradunfall mein linkes Bein gebrochen hatte, hat mich meine Nachbarin, die Maray ist, 2 Wochen lang jeden Morgen zur Uni gefahren. So viel Hilfsbereitschaft habe ich selten erlebt!"

Wiebke K.: „Alle Maray, die ich kenne, sind tolle Menschen!"

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Erfahrungen mit den **Sanguren**:

Susanne H.: *„Mich hat mal ein Sangure beinahe angefahren, als er ohne zu schauen und viel zu schnell um die Ecke gefahren ist in seinem protzigen Auto. Ich bin ihm später noch mehrmals über den Weg gelaufen, habe ihm die Möglichkeit zum Gespräch angeboten – er hat immer abgelehnt und sich nie entschuldigt.“*

Alexander K.: *„Die meisten Sanguren, die ich kennengelernt habe waren eher faule und egoistische Menschen!“*

Aisha M: *„Ich habe mal mit einer Sangurin zusammengearbeitet. Wir hatten eigentlich ein neutrales Verhältnis, haben häufiger zusammen im Aufenthaltsraum eine gequalmt. Als ich schwanger geworden bin, habe ich natürlich damit aufgehört und sie gebeten, Rücksicht zu nehmen und aufs Rauchen zu verzichten, die paar Male, die ich im Aufenthaltsraum bin. Sie hat aber einfach immer weiter geraucht, es hat sie einfach nicht interessiert, dass das meinem Baby schaden kann.“*

Anna S.: *„Ich bin sehr froh, dass ich nichts mehr mit Sanguren zu tun habe.“*

Ehrenwörtliche Erklärung

Hiermit erkläre ich, dass mir die geltende Promotionsordnung bekannt ist. Ich habe die Dissertation selbstständig und ohne unerlaubte fremde Hilfe angefertigt. Des Weiteren habe ich keine Textabschnitte eines Dritten oder eigener Prüfungsarbeiten ohne Kennzeichnung übernommen und alle von mir benutzten Hilfsmittel, persönliche Mitteilungen und Quellen angegeben. Ich erkläre, die Dissertation nicht als Prüfungsarbeit für eine staatliche oder andere wissenschaftliche Prüfung eingereicht zu haben. Eine gleiche oder in wesentlichen Teilen ähnliche Abhandlung habe ich nicht in einer anderen Fakultät oder Hochschule eingereicht.

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Datum, Florian Jäger