

Prejudice and extremism: Explanations based on ingroup projection, perspective divergence, and minimal standards

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Extremism can be characterized by extreme attitudes and extreme actions. However, in order to understand extremism one first has to develop a sense of normality and normativity. Social Psychology might contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of why and how people evaluate a person or a certain behavior as either normal or as extreme. According to the ingroup projection model,¹ groups provide a frame of reference for the included individuals and subgroups. The ingroup prototype defines what is perceived as normal and what is deviant and extreme within this group. Individuals or groups that are not perceived as fitting the prototypical characteristics will be devalued or even excluded. This process of normative differentiation may be particularly problematic between groups that share a common superordinate group, in which each subgroup tends to generalize and project its attributes onto frames of reference for the common superordinate group. In this way, normative differentiation produces perspective divergence, misunderstandings, disagreement and conflict between groups. The members of different groups may also disagree on what behavior would be appropriate and acceptable as means to deal with normative differences. Here, again, perspective divergence on the legitimacy and appropriateness of intergroup behavior may lead to a mutual perception of extreme behavior on the side of the respective outgroups. As intergroup conflict has the tendency to polarize the groups, we will discuss processes of individualizing attitudes and behavior within a common superordinate group as means to transfer intergroup conflict into intragroup conflicts, which may have a greater potential for resolution.

I. Introduction

As we write, the Israel Defense Forces invade Gaza because members of the Hamas shoot rockets on civilian targets in Israel. During this military operations many civilians, children and women are killed. On the one side, many people in Israel support military action because of the threat caused by the extremist Hamas. On the other side, many people in Palestine support Hamas because they are seen as defending their people against Israeli extremism. Who is extreme in this case? We have a similar situation in Ukraine where Pro-Russian extremists fight for separation from the Ukrainian state. From a Russian perspective, Ukrainian freedom fighters battle against Ukrainian right wing extremists. Extremism in various forms seems to be a central challenge to current societies in terms of psychological, legal, and political approaches. Extremists have attitudes and show behavior that people perceive as norm deviating and illegitimate. Usually, when people think about extremists they assume that there is mutual agreement about the norms and standards that are used to decide whether a certain kind of behavior is deviating from normality. Hence, the perception of extremism depends on a set of norms that

people use in order to define normality. However, such a set of norms can vary between groups, societies, and times; the perception of normality, deviance and extremism may vary accordingly with group membership, society and time. For instance, given the norms of the 19th century, the first feminists (suffragettes), who fought for their right to vote, have been seen as extreme. Norms changed. Today feminism is an expression of a legitimate and active struggle for equal participation in our society.

Whom do we have in mind when we talk about extremists? The usual suspects that many people in our society perceive as extremists are right wing extremists and Muslim extremists. Less directly in the center of our attention are environmental activists, radical animal right supporters, anti-atomic plant activists, and various religious extremists from all religions around the world.² An obvious aspect of the perception of extremism seems to be that those who are labeled as extremist are minority groups or individuals. It is much more difficult to perceive majorities as extremists. Nevertheless, it is likely that majorities exhibit extreme attitudes and actions. Think of America's Guantanamo Bay Prison, the NSA surveillance scandal, Christian antiabortion activists, and many more. Whenever people refer to extremist features of majorities, they have to be very precise in their description and identify specific dimensions, attributes, or behaviors as extreme. In contrast, when referring to minorities, people tend to generalize to the minority groups and call the group itself "extremist".

In this chapter, we will examine factors that produce the perception of others as extremists from a social psychological perspective. Thus, after introducing a social psychological perspective of humans' mental process and behavior, we will elaborate on the concept of *social groups*. Social groups have multiple functions: First, they provide a basis for a positive identity, coordination and collective action. Second, they provide a frame of reference for comparisons between included individuals and subgroups. We will discuss how group members deal with deviants and extremists within a certain frame of reference. In a final section, we will briefly report studies that illustrate what makes individuals show unfair, illegitimate and extreme behavior – at least in the eyes of others.

II. The unique perspective of social psychology

The unique *perspective of social psychology* is on the psychological processes of individuals as they are influenced by the actual, imagined or implied presence of other people.³ Thus, a social psychological perspective focuses on social factors, such as group processes or social influence that shape the behavior of the individual. Moreover, we will also talk about the glue that binds people together (such as group identities),

¹ Mummendey/Wenzel, *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 3 (1999), 158.

² Juergensmeyer, *The global rebellion, Religious challenges to the secular state, from Christian militias to Al Qaeda*, 2008.

³ Allport, *The nature of prejudice*, 1954.

and lead to actual and psychological group formation, collective intention and behavior. Although the unit of analysis is the individual, we will refer to a broader set of social determinants that affect and shape individual psychology. Such a perspective implies that we use objective methods in order to capture the subjective psychological reality of individuals, which may sometimes diverge from purely external descriptions. As will be elaborated below, individuals can act as group members because a group identity is active, despite external observers may have the impression that no group context is involved (e.g., when no other group members are present). In contrast, there may be several objective groups available that do not guide the behavior of an individual because, psychologically, the person does not identify with any of these groups in that particular situation. For instance, people go to a football stadium in order to support and cheer for their team. Although there are many other group memberships to which these people belong (age, gender, education, socio-economic status), it is their identification as a supporter of a particular team that explains their behavior.

Prejudice, social discrimination, extremism and radicalism are notoriously difficult terms to define. Nonetheless, we will give some very brief and broad definitions in order to get some common ground for the following discussion. Although the concept of *prejudice* often refers to negative attitudes towards individuals on the basis of their group membership⁴ or the antipathy towards outgroups,⁵ we refer to a broader definition that includes positive and negative evaluations of individuals because of their group membership. Thus, prejudice is basically an evaluation of a social group and its members.⁶ *Social discrimination* consists of two components: on the one hand, it is the differential treatment of individuals or groups based on the categorical distinction between “us” and “them”. Such a differential treatment becomes social discrimination when the victims of such differential treatment (or observers) claim that the behavior is illegitimate and inappropriate.⁷ If somebody treats males and females differentially, then this may be seen as social discrimination when such a differentiation is inappropriate as in job applications. However, it may be seen as un-problematic if the differentiation is seen as appropriate such as recommendation to which specialist doctor one should send people (gynecologist, urologist). Thus, it is not the differentiation alone but the normative context that can turn social differentiation into social discrimination. Finally and according to the Oxford dictionary, an *extremist* is a person who holds extreme political or religious attitudes and/or advocates illegal, violent, or other extreme actions. In that sense the perception of somebody or a whole group as extremist implies the perception of deviance from common norms, standards, and values. Although extremism

implies deviance, not all deviance is necessarily extreme. Thus, in order to understand extremism we have to explain how people perceive deviance in the first place. Deviance is not strictly a descriptive term and may imply sometimes negative evaluation, the case is much clearer with extremism: Here, people who characterize other individuals or groups as extremists also imply that they are bad and that these individuals or groups should change their attitudes and behavior. Thus, the major difference between deviance and extremism is that although deviance may be seen as negative but tolerable, extremism is negative and beyond the limits of tolerance. In the case of extremism we have to explain first, how people perceive somebody as deviant and, second, why is this form of deviance evaluated as un-acceptable.

III. How to perceive extremism?

Perceived in isolation nobody is normal, deviant or extreme. Only in comparison to norms and standards people assess what is normal and what is deviant and extreme. Thus, we have to refer to shared knowledge and a common understanding of people, which usually characterizes social groups. Not all people are equally important as providers of informative and normative influence; information conveyed by ingroup members has a stronger impact on other group members than information conveyed by outgroup members. For instance, critique against European culture has a greater impact if it comes from a European country, than the same critique raised by an Asian country. Thus, the groups to which one belongs are most important in providing information about common norms, standards, and values. These groups are called *ingroups*.

According to an early definition social groups exist when two or more people perceive themselves to be members of the same social category.⁸ More specific characterizations of groups refer to shared knowledge, norms, roles, attitudes, and goals.⁹ Although generally compatible, both definitions of social groups stress two different aspects: The first definition refers to the subjective perception of being connected with other people in a common category and different from others, which is *psychological group formation*. The second definition refers more to objective features of groups such as shared knowledge, values coordinating and regulating the behavior of group members and establishing an internal organization of the group. This *actual group formation* is not purely psychological, but manifests itself in actual and real group formation. These two characterizations of social groups imply that individuals perceiving themselves as group members coordinate, influence and shape each others' behaviors. Coordination means on the one hand synchrony of group members as one can observe in armies walking in step, or religious rituals but also in greeting conventions and the use of lan-

⁴ R. Brown, *Group processes, Dynamic within and between groups*, 2000.

⁵ Allport (Fn. 3).

⁶ Crandall/Eshleman/O'Brien, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82 (2002), 359.

⁷ Mummendey/Otten, *European Review of Social Psychology* 9 (1998), 107.

⁸ Tajfel/Turner, in: Worchel/Austin (eds.), *Psychology of inter-group relations*, 2nd ed. 1986, p. 7; R. Brown (Fn. 4).

⁹ Sherif, *In common predicament, Social psychology of inter-group conflict and cooperation*, 1966.

guage and dialect.¹⁰ However, it can also mean complementary action as one can observe it in orchestras or in collaborative work. Coordination is the basis of collective group behavior. Moreover, this coordinated and cooperative action within groups explains in part the value of conformity to group norms as well as the negative reaction to deviance from ingroup norms. Unacceptable deviations from ingroup norms (i.e., extremism) disrupt ingroup functioning severely.

Psychological group formation emerges even under the most minimal conditions when individuals have knowledge of being a member of an arbitrary category, only.¹¹ For instance, participants of a study were categorized according to their putative preferences for abstract paintings by Klee or Kandinsky. Then, each individual was seated in a cubicle and asked to complete payoff-matrixes, allocating points to two people. Later, these points would be added up and given in form of money to the two people. What did participants do? Even without having contact with the other participants, they allocated more points to those who were allegedly in the same group. That is, someone being told that she prefers Klee over Kandinsky would allocate more points to another person that likes Klee compared to a person that prefers Kandinsky. Even such arbitrary categories lead to a favorable treatment of fellow ingroup members; but group favoring behavior is much more pronounced in group with which group members feel attachment and identify.¹² Ingroup identification means that the self becomes part of a social group.¹³ Following *James*'¹⁴ distinction between "I" (the active self) and the "me" (the self-concept or self as an object), group membership and ingroup identification transform the "I" into a "We", which provides a self-definition in terms of a group. Only when individuals act in terms of a group membership ("we"), they show instances of group behavior.¹⁵ For instance, individuals who strongly identify with an environmental organization, such as Greenpeace, will take action, sometimes even extreme or illegal action, in order to raise environmental issues to public knowledge. Ingroup identification has many social effects: individuals tend to favor their ingroup over outgroups,¹⁶ they expect other group members to share their opinion¹⁷ and grant other ingroup members to influence them-

selves,¹⁸ they expect positive interdependence with other group members¹⁹ and generalized reciprocity and cooperation within their group.²⁰ Even the word "we" gets a positive connotation.²¹ These effects follow *psychological group formation*. However, they also affect *actual group formation* as psychological group formation precedes the coordination of group members and the establishment of real groups. Group members have a strong tendency to imitate each other,²² show behavior that is in line with the expectations of ingroup members (behavioral confirmation),²³ and conform to the majority of the ingroup members.²⁴ These processes make group members more similar to each other and facilitate communication and interaction. This leads to the general conclusion that group behavior is not independent from the individual psychological processes, but cannot be reduced to it.²⁵ According to *Merton's* conception of a *self-fulfilling prophecy*, psychological group formation precedes and is influenced by actual group formation.²⁶ Here, groups emerge because group members believe and act "as if the group is there" and in that way, the group actually arises. Such group-based dynamics have been shown to be one explanation of radicalization processes,²⁷ arguing that people do not radicalize on their own, but rather as part of the socially constructed reality of their group.

Although this is a powerful process, it nonetheless rests on the subjective perception of being a member of a social group. When individuals act like group members, they frequently do it because they subjectively perceive themselves as group members. However, sometimes they may act on behalf of their individual motives that lead to behavior that happens to coincide with what members of a particular group may do. Thus, when individuals participate in a right wing rally, most may participate, shout, and wear certain clothes because they express their identity as a right wing person. But there may be some individuals who participate because they want to meet some friends there, without being a committed group member. This leads to the caveat that it is risky to infer group identities and the connected behavioral tendencies from

¹⁰ *Billig*, *Ideology and opinions: Studies in rhetorical psychology*, 1991; *Wiltermuth/Heat*, *Psychological Science* 20 (2009), 1.

¹¹ *Tajfel/Billig/Bundy/Flament*, *European Journal of Social Psychology* 1 (1971), 149.

¹² *Brewer*, *Psychological Bulletin* 86 (1979), 307; *Brown/Brewer*, in: *Gilbert/Fiske/Lindzey* (eds.), *The handbook of social psychology*, Vol. 2, 4th ed. 1998, p. 554.

¹³ *Smith/Henry*, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 22 (1996), 635; *Wright*, in: *Otten/Sassenberg/Kessler* (eds.), *Intergroup relations, The role of motivation and emotion*, 2009, p. 243.

¹⁴ *James*, *Principles of Psychology*, 1890.

¹⁵ *Wright* (Fn. 13), p. 243.

¹⁶ *Brewer*, *Psychological Bulletin* 86 (1979), 307.

¹⁷ *Turner*, *Social influence*, 1991.

¹⁸ *Kruglanski/Mackie*, *European Review of Social Psychology* 1 (1990), 229.

¹⁹ *Platow/Grace/Smithson*, *Journal of Personality and Social Science* 3 (2012), 5.

²⁰ *Campbell*, in: *Levine* (ed.), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation* (Vol. 13), 1965, p. 283; *Yamagishi/Kiyonari*, *Advances in Group Processes* 16 (1999), 161.

²¹ *Perdue/Dovidio/Gurtman/Tyler*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 59 (1990), 475.

²² *Hess/Fischer*, *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 2013, 142.

²³ *Jones*, *Science* 234 (1986), 41.

²⁴ *Claidière/Whiten*, *Psychological Bulletin* 138 (2012), 126.

²⁵ *Asch*, *Social Psychology*, 1952; *Sherif* (Fn. 9).

²⁶ *Merton*, *The Antioch Review* 8 (1948), 193.

²⁷ E.g. *van Stekelenburg/Oegema/Klandermans*, in: *Azzi et al.* (eds.), *Identity and participation in a culturally diverse society: A multidisciplinary perspective*, 2011, p. 256.

observed behavior because this could always be determined by other factors than group membership.

IV. How groups become “extreme”: The role of group norms

Social groups (e.g., nations, societies, religions, professional groups, etc.) provide a frame of reference for the included people. They provide certainty about what to do and what is appropriate behavior for their group members.²⁸ The more group members identify with their ingroups, the more important the set of norms, standards, and values become. Moreover, group members also tend to assume that other ingroup members are similar to each other, they perceive others as similar to themselves, and they tend to behave in similar ways to other group members. Thus, a common group membership is the basis for mutual influence of group members.²⁹ Finally, people not being included in a common ingroup tend to disappear from the focus of group members as less relevant.³⁰ Within such a shared frame of reference, individual group members who move away from what is perceived as normal and normative are perceived as deviant. They are in the center of attention³¹ and tend to be evaluated as less positive than normal group members.³² In addition, individual group members who embody the group norms better than others are perceived as particularly typical and as “standing for us”, which leads to the endorsement of these group members as group leaders and particularly influential.³³ Thus, Angela Merkel may be perceived as a very typical and therefore highly endorsed leader of the Christian Democratic Party (CDU), whereas others, like Martin Hohmann (because of his Anti-Semitic statements at October 3rd, 2003), are seen as extremist and have been excluded. Such normative differentiation is not only limited to the evaluation of individual group members but also to subgroups within a common frame of reference.³⁴ Here, a particular deviant may be seen as a member of a subgroup which does not fit into the common group as well as “we”, the ingroup. The perception of subgroups as deviants leads to the negative evaluation of the whole subgroup. When we hear in the news about a burglar from Poland, some people may generalize such information towards to whole group of Poles. Hence, prejudice emerges. The evaluation of deviating individuals as members of a subgroup may generalize to the whole group and, vice versa, the membership in a devalued group leads to the negative evaluation of

an individual. Thus, the devaluation and punishment of individual deviants as well as prejudice against social groups seems to depend on normative differentiation within a common frame of reference.

The perception of deviance of individuals and subgroups may differ with respect to at least two aspects: First, perceived deviance of subgroups leads to assimilate individual group members to the image of the subgroup as a whole and, vice versa, the evaluation of deviating members of a subgroup may generalize to the whole subgroup. Second, confronted with a deviating subgroup, the prototype of the ingroup shifts away from the outgroup. Thus, the ingroup itself becomes more extreme. This process leads to group polarization, which may also lead to various forms of *group think*,³⁵ a phenomenon that occurs within a group of people, in which the desire for conformity results in an irrational, extreme or dysfunctional decision-making outcome (at least, as perceived from outside). It also changes the ingroup structure, because more extreme ingroup members are seen as typical for the group as a whole and therefore guide the ingroup behavior. Think again about our introductory example of the war in Gaza: When Hamas shoots rockets on civilian targets in Israel the Hamas is seen as increasingly extreme by Israelis and this perception of the Hamas as extreme generalizes towards all Palestinians or even all Arabs. In consequence, the public opinion in Israel shifts towards Anti-Palestinian attitudes and the endorsement of strong military reactions. It follows that the moderate Israelis tend to be seen as deviants and sometimes even as extremists within their own society. We can mirror similar processes on the Palestinian side: With increasing numbers of civilian deaths in Gaza, people support Hamas more, even in the West Bank and Jerusalem, as Hamas is perceived as defenders of their people. Hence, both groups tend to become more extreme and show a form of group think in that they tend to reject all critique of their actions as driven by prejudice against their group.³⁶ However, it is important to realize that for each group the reaction of the own group seems to be rational and the only possible strategy and that only the outgroup is the extremist group (certainly, outsiders may disagree with one or the other group or both, depending on their relation to the adversaries).

Moreover, group members seem to display a tendency to see the norms, standards and values of a common superordinate group in terms of their particular (sub)ingroup.³⁷ They perceive the subgroup norms, standards, and values as given and *project* them on the common group or frame of reference. If one asks Germans how they perceive Europeans, they project their attributes on Europe; similarly for Italians. Hence, from a German perspective Europe is more German, from an Italian perspective it is more Italian. In consequence, group members tend to see themselves and their fellow group members as normal and normative. Outgroups and their members, however, differ from the ingroup and (because of the projec-

²⁸ Hogg, *European Review of Social Psychology* 11 (2000), 223; Kruglanski *et al.*, *Psychological Review* 113 (2006), 84.

²⁹ Turner (Fn. 17).

³⁰ Waldzus/Mummendey/Wenzel, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 41 (2005), 76.

³¹ Schachter, *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 46 (1951), 190.

³² Marques/Yzerbyt, *European Journal of Social Psychology* 18 (1988), 287.

³³ Steffens *et al.*, *European Journal of Social Psychology* 43 (2013), 606.

³⁴ Mummendey/Wenzel, *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 3 (1999), 158.

³⁵ Janis, *Victims of groupthink*, 1972.

³⁶ Pettigrew, *Journal of Peace Psychology* 9 (2003), 69.

³⁷ Wenzel/Waldzus/Mummendey, *European Review of Social Psychology* 18 (2007), 331.

tion) also from common norms, which makes them deviant in the eyes of ingroup members. Moreover, this ingroup projection applies to all groups. Thus, groups seem to be in conflict about the proper perception of the norms, standards and values of a common ingroup and about who (the ingroup or the outgroup) is more typical or prototypic. This divergence of perspectives is one core feature of conflict and the perception of extremism. In short, as “we” are normative, “the others” deviate from how one should be and with increasing deviance are perceived as increasingly extreme.

V. Variations in standards

The perception of deviance also depends on the conception of the norms, standards and values of a common frame of reference, or in short on its *prototype*. If the structure of a prototype is conceived of as simple with only one or a few comparison dimensions then deviation as well as the perception of deviation seems to be nearly inevitable. In contrast, if the prototype of a common ingroup is perceived as complex, then a greater variety of people (with different attributes) would fit equally well. In such situations, various groups can demonstrate that they are positive, without derogating other outgroups.³⁸ This has nicely been shown in several studies:³⁹ Participants had to compare their ingroup (Germany) with a particular outgroup (either Italy or Great Britain, depending on the condition) within a common frame of reference (Europe). When participants conceived of Europe as a simple comparison frame, they differentiated Germany from either Italy or Great Britain, perceived Europe in terms of their ingroup (ingroup projection) and devalued the outgroups depending on the perceived lack of typicality. In contrast, when participants conceived of Europe as diverse and complex, the ingroup projection was significantly reduced and the outgroups (Italy, Great Britain) were evaluated as positive as Germany. Nonetheless, even a very complex prototype excludes certain attributes and behavior and therefore will also show limits of appreciation and tolerance.

The limits of tolerance are more easily understood, when we consider an additional difference in the representation of standards. Standards can be represented as minimal or maximal standards. A maximal standard represents the above mentioned standards which define an ideal point from which behavior or individuals can deviate gradually. The closer an individual or behavior comes to the ideal the more positive it will be seen. The more it deviates from the standard the more negative it is seen and the more group members may endorse punishment of the individual. In contrast, a minimal standard defines a threshold that can either be reached or failed. If reached, the behavior will be seen as acceptable, when failed then group members are perceived as unacceptable, punishable, and to be excluded. Think, for instance, about the standard of avoiding collateral damage in war activities. Some people may think this as a regrettable side effect of war that should

be reduced as much as possible. The ideal would be no collateral damage (maximal standard as this ideal can be achieved gradually). Here, military actions that produce less collateral damage would be preferable to military actions producing more. In contrast, some people may think of collateral damage (in particular children) as something that has to be avoided and any collateral damage would show the ugly and unacceptable face of war. These people would judge any military actions that cause civilian casualties as unacceptable and extreme.

VI. Norms and prejudice

According to the presented approach, groups have their own, sometimes specific norms, standards and values. If the perception of extremism depends on the deviation from shared norms, then one could expect that norms and prejudice will be very closely related within a group.⁴⁰ To examine this idea, we approached students at the University of Exeter. In order to assess *norms* for prejudice, we asked one randomly selected group of students whether it would be “acceptable”, “undecided”, or “unacceptable” to express negative feelings towards a list of more than 100 groups including blind people, blacks in the UK, obese people, wife beaters, fascists etc. We also asked a second group of students how they personally *feel* towards the same list of groups (ranging from 1 = cold/negative to 100 = warm/positive). The correlation between the *norms* for prejudice and the expressed *feelings* towards the groups between the two different participant groups was very high, $r = .94$, which is a nearly perfect relation. Here, people may argue that we assessed basically the same. However, this is exactly the point of the study: the perceived norm to express prejudice against certain groups and actual prejudice casualties are highly related. Although this finding only represents a correlation, one may speculate whether group members follow the group norms when expressing their prejudice. Thus, prejudice may express the value of a group and may be therefore not seen as something socially problematic. However, sometimes, there may be a discrepancy between norms and prejudice. Such discrepancies may occur – according to *Crandall et al.*⁴¹ – when the norm within a group (e.g., a society) changes. Under these conditions, the prejudice becomes obvious and a social problem because of the perceived deviance of evaluations from the social norms. Prejudice against homosexuals is a good example. Societal attitudes towards same-sex relationships have varied over time and place. Whereas even in western societies it was allowed to openly express prejudice against homosexuality, which was seen as a deviation from normality a few decades ago, this is not legitimate anymore. Alternatively, when for instance some subgroups in a society endorse other norms and prejudices than the rest of the society, then the prejudice of such subgroups are seen as deviating from prevailing norms. For instance, when conservative people show more negative evaluations of

³⁸ *Mummendey/Kessler*, *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 48 (2008), 513.

³⁹ *Waldzus/Mummendey/Wenzel*, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* 41 (2005), 76.

⁴⁰ See *Crandall/Eshleman/O'Brien*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82 (2002), 359.

⁴¹ See *Crandall/Eshleman/O'Brien*, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82 (2002), 359.

foreigners in a society, this is seen as socially problematic by liberals or left-wingers. They claim that the problematic prejudices of the outgroup need to be changed. Thus, the most obvious and socially problematic prejudices are those that are perceived as norm deviant by a majority. Norm conforming prejudice is not only accepted but also tends to be perceived as rather valid and objective.⁴²

VII. How to deal with deviants?

A good body of research indicates that people like to see norm deviants to be punished.⁴³ This means that individuals who are seen as norm deviant, uncooperative, or unfair tend to be punished. The punishment depends on the perceived maliciousness of the intentions with which the deviant behavior is enacted. Moreover, the damage done also determines the punishments. Following a finding of *Kahneman et al.*,⁴⁴ the assigned amount of punishment seem to follow the strength of the perpetrator (bigger firms tend to be punished harsher than smaller firms for the same deviant behavior). Interestingly, independent of their explicitly acknowledged ideology, people assign punishment as if they are following broadly philosophical conceptions of retributive punishment or “just desert”. Thus, regardless of whether they explicitly endorse utilitarian or retributive philosophies, the intuitions of people follow the just desert factors. One may speculate whether, broadly speaking, the legal punishment may follow the intuitions of the people in a society. The bigger the discrepancy between legally applied punishment and the intuitions of people the more one may expect dissatisfaction with the legal system. Although an acceptable legal system may be in line with most of the ingroup members (e.g., national ingroup) intuitions, there is ample possibility to produce a perspective divergence that will lead to contested punishment practices.

Moreover, not all group members tend to perceive deviance and endorse punishment in a similar way. The more group members are identified with their group the more they may be shocked by perceptions of deviance and the more they tend to recommend punishment. In contrast, less identified group members may care less about ingroup norm deviance as these norms are perceived as less important. Social psychology has searched for nearly a century for an answer to the question of whether there are some people that tend to punish more harshly than other people. Prejudice and punishment were thought to be the product a particular kind of personality. *Adorno et al.*⁴⁵ developed a portrait of the authoritarian personality, a character that adheres rigidly to social conventions, that shows unquestioned submission to authorities, and who behaves particularly aggressive towards norm deviants.⁴⁶ However, in recent years it has become increas-

ingly clear that authoritarianism may be more dependent on group processes⁴⁷ than on personality differences. This means that we will find people who are committed to particular groups more than to others and therefore, they tend to defend the norms of their ingroup’s stronger than norms of groups that are less important for them. To illustrate, we conducted a series of studies that show that highly identified Germans (i.e., national identity) tend to act harsher against norm deviance within Germany, but did not show extreme reactions with regard to different topics, such as environmentalism, whereas highly identified environmentalists tend to punish deviations against environmental protection, but they were less likely to punish deviance against norms that are central to highly identified Germans. Moreover, data of a longitudinal study demonstrated that ingroup identification influences and predicts the change in authoritarianism.⁴⁸ Thus, it is ingroup identification that leads to “authoritarian reactions” such as punishment of ingroup deviants.

VIII. Black Sheep or defense of ingroup members

If the punishment of ingroup deviants is a typical and pervasive reaction to ingroup norm deviance, how does the perception of extremism emerge in this context? And, is there something special about the punishment of ingroup members? A prominent finding in the literature is the so called *black sheep effect*.⁴⁹ The black sheep effect indicates that deviant ingroup members are evaluated more negatively and punished more harshly than deviating outgroup members. This can be explained in a variety of ways. Ingroup members are perceived more in detail whereas outgroup members are perceived more homogeneous.⁵⁰ This leads to a broader variety of judgments: positive ingroup members are perceived as more positive and negative ingroup members are perceived as more negative than outgroup members. On the other side, group members may be motivated to keep up their group norms. This would lead to a harsher assessment of deviants within the ingroup but would imply some leniency toward outgroup deviants. Thus, ingroup members are punished harsher than outgroup members.⁵¹ Recent studies underline this because they show that new members tend to be punished less but are educated about group norms, whereas long-term ingroup members attract most punishment. The black sheep effect seems to be a robust finding. However, we may understand the effect even better, if we add an additional aspect to the existing studies. So far, research has mainly studied situations in which deviant

⁴² Turner, *European Journal of Social Psychology* 35 (2005), 1.

⁴³ Carlsmith/Darley/Robinson, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 83 (2002), 284.

⁴⁴ Kahneman/Schkade/Sunstein, *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty* 16 (1998), 49.

⁴⁵ Adorno et al., *The authoritarian personality*, 1950.

⁴⁶ Doty/Peterson/Winter, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 61 (1991), 629.

⁴⁷ Duckitt, *Political Psychology* 10 (1989), 63; Stellmacher/Petzel, *Political Psychology* 26 (2005), 245; Kreindler, *Personality and Social Psychology Review* 9 (2005), 90; Kessler/Cohrs, *Group Dynamics Theory, Research, and Practice* 12 (2008), 73.

⁴⁸ Kessler, Unpublished data, University of Jena 2014.

⁴⁹ Marques/Yzerbyt, *European Journal of Social Psychology* 18 (1988), 287.

⁵⁰ Brewer/Weber/Carini, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 69 (1995), 29.

⁵¹ Abrams et al., *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* 5 (2002), 163.

ingroup members harm the ingroup or its members, whereas outgroup members harm the outgroup. There is a potential confound in these studies in that deviants and victims of these deviations belong to the same group. To disentangle this confound, we conducted several studies within a third-party punishment design.⁵² In such a design, participants observe an actor treating another individual fairly or unfairly by distributing an amount of money either fairly (50:50) or very unequally (e.g., 80:20). The participants are asked to decide whether and how much they would like to punish the actor. Punishment is defined as spending an amount of one's own money in order to reduce the money of the actor by a certain amount (usually, for one spend money unit the punished person would lose three money units). Participants were assigned to minimal groups. Then, they observed the interaction of an actor (distribution of money) and a receiver (getting a certain amount of money). We varied the group membership of the actor and the receiver: they could either be ingroup or outgroup members from the participants' point of view. Thus, the study had four different conditions: Participants observed

- 1. ingroup actors distributing money to ingroup receivers
- 2. ingroup actors distributing money to outgroup receivers
- 3. outgroup actors distributing money to ingroup receivers and
- 4. outgroup actors distributing money to an outgroup receivers.

The results clearly show that participants punish all actors who behave unfairly towards ingroup members of the participants and punish significantly less actors who behave unfairly towards outgroup members, irrespective of the actor group membership. Moreover, the black sheep effect was also replicated as ingroup members behaving unfairly towards ingroup members were punished harsher than outgroup members behaving unfairly toward outgroup members. These results indicate that although group members may predominately defend ingroup norms, they distribute punishment in a way that seems to defend ingroup members in general. This bias is one additional aspect that leads to the perception of unfair punishment as perceived from outside because ingroup norm defense turns out to a less principled but oriented in favor toward a defense of ingroup members. Thus, the harsher punishment of people who harm one of us is likely to be perceived as extreme by outsiders or outgroup members.

IX. Minimal and maximal standards

As mentioned above, the nature of values, standards and norms may also shape the perception, reaction and the treatment of deviants. We suggest that standards can be perceived in two different ways. They may either be seen as a minimal standard defining a cutoff point. Behavior perceived from such a minimal standard perspective will be evaluated as either acceptable (in the case of non-deviation) or as unacceptable (in the case of deviation). In contrast, standards can also be

perceived as maximal which means that they define an ideal point that should be approached. Behavior perceived from a maximal standard perspective will vary in positivity or negativity depending on the relative and gradual distance from such an ideal. This representation of a value, standard, or norm as minimal or maximal is not inherent to a particular standard but depends on a perceiver. Thus, for instance torture might be perceived by all people as undesirable. However, people may differ in their perception of torture as something completely unacceptable (minimal standard) or as something that can be balanced with higher values such as saving the life of innocent people. This distinction between minimal and maximal standards may produce various ways in which actions can be perceived as extreme: first, even if people (or ingroup members) agree in principle about certain values (no torture, environmental protection, not eating meat) they may disagree about the nature of the standards. The harsh reactions toward norm deviations by people holding a minimal standard representation may be perceived as overly harsh by people holding maximal standard representations. We examined the difference in type of standards on recommended punishment in several studies (e.g., *Kessler et al., 2010*).⁵³ First, in an unpublished study we asked members of various political parties about whether they perceive deviant party member behavior as a deviation from absolute standards or a relative deviation. Moreover, we also asked them what action they would recommend as a proper reaction towards such behaviors. The reactions range from political argument to exclusion from the party. The results show that for deviant behaviors that are categorized as deviating from maximal standards participant recommend political argument whereas they recommend social exclusion for violations of minimal standards. Participants also perceived deviations from maximal standards as less severe than violations of minimal standards. We controlled for perceived severity of deviance in a second step. The results show that even when the severity of deviance is controlled for, the recommended punishment of violations of minimal standards still leads to harsher punishment (more social exclusion) than the deviance from maximal standards (more political argument).

In a more controlled experimental study, we examined again the difference of types of standard (minimal, maximal). The topic of this study was the acceptance of torture during police interrogations. The perception of rejection of torture as minimal or maximal was manipulated with a framing procedure. In the maximal standard condition, participants read a text allegedly written by a prominent lawyer indicating that torture could be allowed if a higher good than torture freeness could be achieved. In the minimal standard condition, participants read in a text allegedly written by a prominent lawyer that torture cannot be accepted without any exceptions on a global and national level. In addition, we manipulated the severity of applied torture in a vignette ranging from "milder" (e.g., slap in the face) to "harsher" (e.g., punch with a fist). The measured variables include the evaluation of behavior (in-

⁵² *Fehr/Fischbacher*, *Evolution and Human Behavior* 25 (2004), 63.

⁵³ *Kessler et al.*, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 36 (2010), 1213.

human, brutal etc.), emotions (disgusting), and recommended behavior (exclusion from the police). As they correlated highly, we formed one index of these reactions. The results of the experiment show that participants in the maximal standard condition punish deviant behavior according to its severity that is a slap in the face is punished less than a punch with a fist. In contrast, in the minimal standards condition both actions are punished harsh and not significantly different.⁵⁴

These studies demonstrate that within social groups but also between them, the type of standards determining the perception of deviation may be important for the differential evaluation of deviation and extremism. People who conceive of a standard as maximal tend to assign punishment in a gradual way reflecting the strengths of the deviation. In contrast, people who conceive of a standard as minimal tend to be very harsh for deviations that just violate the standard. This harsh punishment may be perceived as too harsh by all people who do not share the minimal conception of a particular standard. However, here the mutual misunderstanding may go in both ways: Whereas the assigned punishment of minimal standard violations might be seen as too harsh, the more tolerant reaction of the maximal standards oriented people may be seen as inappropriate in the face of the “extreme” deviation as punishment as illegitimate and irresponsible (e.g., “extreme tolerance”).

X. Discussion and conclusion

In this chapter we developed the argument that group formation and group processes are essential aspects of extremism. Social groups define what are normal, correct, and acceptable attitudes and behavior. Deviations from what is perceived as correct lead to the perception of deviance. In contrast to tolerable deviance, unacceptable deviance is perceived as extremist. The inclusion of individuals and group in a common category provides the comparison frame for the evaluation of the included individuals and, hence, the basis for perceptions of deviance and extremism. Normative differentiation within a common frame of reference is the basis of the evaluation of individuals and groups as deviant. However, individual and group targets differ because of generalization from individuals to whole groups. Moreover, groups as targets lead to differentiation between groups and group polarization. Through group polarization the conception of ingroup

and outgroup change and become more extreme when they compare to each other.

As group members tend to project their ingroup attributes onto the common frame of reference, they tend to develop a perspective divergence that leads to the mutual perception of deviance and lack of acceptability. The perspective divergence between social group leads also to the mutual perception of being prejudiced as each group has different norms for the evaluation of outgroups. “Obvious” and detectable prejudices are usually those that deviate from the normative standards of each group.

People seem to have a general tendency to punish deviants retributively. However, the intuition of group members is shaped by their group identities as they tend to punish all people more when they harm the ingroup or its members than when they harm the outgroup. This biased punishment may lead to the perception of illegitimate punishment because the punishment is differentially assigned to people depending on whom they do some damage. Especially for outgroup members, this differential treatment may be seen as extreme and unacceptable.

Finally, the conception of standards as minimal or maximal leads to different perceptions of deviance and assignments of punishment. This is an additional and important source for the understanding of extremism. People perceiving violations of minimal standards tend to perceive such deviations as extreme and react with harsh and severe punishment towards the extremists (e.g., social exclusion, extermination). However, other people who do not share such minimal standards tend to perceive such harsh and severe punishment as extreme, which may, in turn, lead to extreme reactions. Here, extremism breeds extremism.

⁵⁴ One may argue that minimal standard violations are punished harsher because participants are brought into an avoidance mindset (*Higgins*, *American Psychologist* 52 [1997], 1280) in which they tend to focus on negative events predominantly. With maximal standards in contrast they may be more in an approach mindset or motivation which leads participants to focus predominantly on positive information. *Kessler et al.* (*Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 36 [2010], 1213) tested the factors type of standards orthogonally against the factor motivation (approach, avoidance). The result of the study nicely shows that only the types of standards, minimal and maximal, made a significant difference for the assigned punishment. The motivational factor did not affect the punishment of deviants.