It is a commonplace in sociology and other social sciences that norms govern a great deal of our behavior. We go to the polls because we feel obliged to do so as good citizens of a democratic state. We would have a bad conscience when we do not leave a tip – and we even leave tips when nobody observes us and when we are sure that we will never come back to the restaurant. Of course, those behaviors may not be performed for the purpose of conforming to a norm but for other reasons as well. For example, people may vote only in order to avoid negative reactions of their spouse. Furthermore, norms may trigger a behavior in conjunction with other factors. For example, people may vote in order to get positive sanctions as well as in order to avoid a bad conscience. Even if it is accepted that existing norms govern behavior they may nevertheless be broken: the benefits of not obeying a norm may be so high that people bear the costs of a bad conscience.

As these examples indicate, norms may cause behaviors in very complex ways. It is therefore not surprising that the role of norms as explanatory variables for behavior is still a much debated issue. One of those issues concerns the question whether the explanation of rule-governed behavior requires another theory than the explanation of other forms of behavior. This issue has been discussed for Rational Choice Theory (i.e. the economic model of man). It has been argued that this theory explains «rational» behavior, and because norm-governed behavior is not rational it cannot be explained by Rational Choice Theory (RCT). Whatever the solution of this problem is, the general proposition that is held in the literature posits that norms are – or are under certain conditions – causes of behavior. We call this assumption the effect proposition.

Even if it can be shown that RCT is able to explain rule-governed behavior, it may be argued that in most situations norms are not causes of behavior. It is sometimes held that people usually invoke norms only for strategic reasons as rationalizations of selfish behavior. This is the general rationalization proposition. Obeying norms is thus not a motive for engaging in a behavior. Norms emerge or are adduced after the behavior occurred. If this argument is correct the theoretical issue whether RCT can explain...
rule-governed behavior loses importance: we need not further worry about including norms in models of rational action because they are practically irrelevant. Although the general rationalization proposition is mentioned in the literature there is no detailed theoretical discussion and no empirical test of the proposition.

Leaving the proposition that norms are only invoked after the behavior has been performed aside for a moment, let us assume that norms are determinants of behavior, but not the only explanatory variables. The question then arises what the relative importance of norms is — «relative» to other explanatory factors. This question has rarely been explored in the literature on the basis of empirical research. Whereas economists most of the time ignore norms in their explanatory models, sociologists fail to isolate in detail norms from other factors when they explain behavior, as has been recently noted by Taylor (1993).

This paper addresses these issues. We shall begin with a theoretical discussion: Can RCT explain rule-governed behavior or do we need another theory to tackle this type of behavior? The second issue we shall focus on is whether norms are only rationalizations of behavior or whether norms are causal factors for behavior. The third question we shall address is how large the effects of norms are compared with other variables. In answering the second and third question we will suggest some hypotheses and present the results of a survey to test these hypotheses. In doing so, we select a specific kind of behavior: participation in protest behavior.

1. THE CONCEPT OF NORM

Because the concept of norm has diverse meanings it is first useful to clarify how this term will be used in this paper. «Perhaps the most commonly recognized characteristic of a norm is a shared belief that persons ought or ought not to act in a certain way» (Gibbs 1965, p. 589). This belief may first be a personal belief, that has become a motive of its own. In other words, a norm may be internalized. This means «that to act in conformity with [a norm – KDO] becomes a need-disposition in the actor's own personality structure, relatively independently of any instrumentally significant consequences of that conformity» (Parsons 1951, p. 37). Norms may be more or less internalized: the stronger the intrinsic motivation is to act in conformity with a rule, the stronger is, by definition, the internalization of a norm. An internalized norm – one may speak of a «personal» norm – may be more or less shared in the sense that there are (normative) expectations in regard to performing the respective action. In other words, a norm may be more or less institutionalized (see, e.g., Parsons and Shils 1951, p. 20).

Many other definitions include a further property: norms specify how persons ought or ought not to act in given circumstances (see, e.g., Homans 1974, p. 96; see also Jasso and Opp 1997). There are other definitions that include sanctions: a norm is said to exist if there is some probability that sanctions obtain if a norm is broken. We do neither include conditionality nor sanctions in the definition of the concept of norm. It seems
more useful to determine theoretically and empirically the causes and effects of those properties separately. Thus, in the following we will address norms in the sense of personal (internalized) beliefs or (normative) expectations that some behavior ought or ought not to be performed.

2. CAN RATIONAL ACTOR THEORY EXPLAIN RULE-GOVERNED BEHAVIOR?

It is widely held that rule-governed behavior cannot be explained by rational choice theory. In a recent attack on RCT this argument is put in the following way: «... duty, or obligation, has no place in an economic, or utilitarian, explanation. Things we do because of duty, or obligation, are things done irrespective of benefit or outcome... » (UDEHN 1996, p. 87–88). In this section, we shall first outline how rule-governed behavior can be explained by RCT. We shall then discuss some arguments that are invoked against including norms in a rational choice framework.

How Norms Fit into Rational Choice Theory

Because the basic explanatory variables of RCT are preferences and constraints the effects of norms can be explained by RCT if norms are preferences or constraints. According to the foregoing definition, internalized norms are, among other things, individual preferences for conforming to norms. For example, individuals who have internalized the norm of helping others under certain conditions have a preference for obeying this norm. The reason is, that following a norm results in internal positive sanctions, i.e. internal benefits. Breaking the norm leads to internal negative sanctions, i.e. internal costs such as shame or anxiety. Thus, internalized norms entail costs or benefits or, put differently, internal (positive or negative) sanctions for the actions the norms refer to.

If a norm for a particular behavior exists there need not be a preference for the behavior itself. That is to say, it may happen that a person will not like to perform a behavior that is morally demanded but nevertheless regards it as to duty to engage in the behavior in order to obey the rule. For example, a person may not like to leave tips – he may prefer to spend the money for other purposes – but he feels obliged to heed the respective norm. Thus, if a norm is internalized the respective behavior may but need not be intrinsically rewarding (or rewarding due to non-normative consequences of the respective behavior). We can distinguish four cases – see Table 1. The simplest case is that there is neither a norm nor a desire for performing a particular action. Another case is that a behavior is demanded by a norm and the respective behavior is intrinsically rewarding. For example, a person may have a desire to help others, and he may feel that this is also his duty. Furthermore, there may be discrepancies between the desire to act and the norm to act. Of course, performance of the behavior becomes more likely if there is a preference for
conformity to a norm and if the behavior itself is intrinsically rewarding, i.e. if performing a duty is a pleasure.

Table 1: Norms, Actions, and Preferences for Norms and Actions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Desire (preference) for following a norm (internalization)</th>
<th>Desire (preference) to act</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>No preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>Only preference for norm conformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Only preference for action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preference for action and preference for norm conformity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Existing normative expectations of other actors – the definitional criterion of institutionalized norms – are not costs or benefits in themselves. If I tell you that I expect you to vote for an extremist party conformity or non-conformity to this expectation need not be a cost or benefit for you. But expectations of others will be incentives if the source of the expectation is a reference group or a reference person. This means that conforming to the expectations of the group or person is rewarding in itself. In other words, one identifies with a group or, put differently, the group is your role model.¹

Sanctions from other individuals or from other collective actors are, by definition, reactions to norm conformity or norm-violation. In terms of the economic model, sanctions are not always costs or benefits. For example, the verbal sanction of a policeman for the violation of a parking rule may not be a cost. Sanctions are, by definition, only costs if they reduce the realization of goals. Sanctions may even be benefits. For example, it happens that social movements try to elicit state violence in order to increase their constituency.

To sum up, internalized norms, expectations (if they come from reference persons) and sanctions (if they increase or lessen the realization of individuals' goals) are incentives (i.e. costs or benefits). This implies that the effects of sanctions and of norms can be modeled by applying RCT.²

The most detailed discussion about the various possibilities to integrate the explanation of rule-governed behavior in RCT is provided by VANBERG 1994. His major thesis is that in following rules decisions are not taken for each single action but rules are adopted as dispositions to act «morally» in certain situations. Although this seems to be the way individuals often behave, we do not agree with VANBERG that such a way of explaining norm-guided behavior requires a modification of RCT. VANBERG never

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1. The classical studies referring to reference group theory are reprinted in HYMAN and SINGER, 1968.
2. It seems that ADAM SMITH already included norms in explaining behavior in his «The Theory of Moral Sentiments» (1759). For a discussion see MEARDON and ORTMANN, 1996. See also MARINI, 1992:38.
shows convincingly why such a modification is necessary and he does not provide any ideas of how exactly an alternative RCT could look like. For a critique see OPP, 1993.

Why Norm-guided Behavior Does not Fit into Rational Choice Theory: Counter-Arguments

Although the foregoing argument seems simple and straightforward – at least to this author –, many economists and Rational Choice Theorists reject norms as possible costs and benefits in their model of man. Norms are typically invoked by sociologists as explanatory variables. «Economic man» acts «rational»: she or he calculates the costs and benefits of different courses of behavior and then makes a decision. It seems that «homo sociologicus» behaves quite differently: he or she does not really make a decision but is driven by norms and values. The argument that most economists would probably endorse is advanced by ELSTER (1989):

«Rational action is concerned with outcomes. Rationality says: If you want to achieve Y, do X. By contrast, I define social norms by the feature that they are not outcome-oriented. The simplest social norms are of the type: Do X, or: Don’t X. More complex norms say: If you do Y, then do X ... Rationality is essentially conditional and future-oriented. Social norms are either unconditional or, if conditional, are not future-oriented» (1989, p. 99).

Thus, there are two types of behavior: rational behavior and norm-guided behavior. Does this argument imply that we also need different theories to explain rational and norm-guided behavior? To answer this question let us look at the above argument more closely. ELSTER first defines «rationality» in a particular way. Of course, everybody is free to stipulate how he wishes to use an expression. However, the issue we are dealing with is not how the term «rationality» can or should be defined. The issue is whether RCT can explain norm-guided behavior. In order to answer this question it is entirely irrelevant how the term «rationality» is defined. Whether RCT can explain norm-guided behavior can only be determined by analyzing whether the concept of norms refers to kinds of costs and benefits. The foregoing analysis has shown that norms refer to such phenomena. It is thus irrelevant whether norms are future-oriented.

It may nevertheless be interesting to see whether ELSTER is right in claiming that norms are not future-oriented. To be sure, normative statements do not have any explicit reference to the future. The statement «you ought to participate in elections» does not refer to any specific future time. However, a norm that becomes part of the cost-benefit calculation of individual actors, i.e. that becomes internalized, will lead an actor to calculate or take into account the (future) effects of norm conformity. If an actor behaves

3. This alleged contradiction between homo sociologicus and homo oeconomicus is discussed by various authors such as BAURMANN, 1996; BRUNNER, 1987; LINDENBERG, 1990; MECKLING, 1976; OPP, 1979, 1984, 1985, 1986a.
in order to avoid internal sanctions he wishes to avoid certain consequences that are expected to occur in the future. Thus, for norms to be incentives for action it is not important whether normative statements refer explicitly to the future, it is only important what happens if an actor has internalized a norm.

In fact, ELSTER supports our foregoing analysis when he acknowledges that norms are «sustained by the feelings of embarrassment, anxiety, guilt and shame that a person suffers at the prospects of violating them. A person obeying a norm may also be propelled by positive emotions, like anger and indignation» (1989, p. 99–100). In other words, the «prospect» of norm violation is relevant for the decision to conform to or to violate a norm.

Another argument invoked against enhancing the economic model by new entities such as internalized norms is that including norms in explanations is an ad hoc procedure because internalized norms cannot be measured. We do not subscribe to the claim that norms cannot be measured. Below we will provide empirical data where we show how norms can be measured. But even if there is no way to measure norms that does not imply anything about the theoretical importance of norms. If norms cannot be measured one may only conclude that we cannot say anything about the validity of propositions including norms as explanatory variables. However, there is no way to conclude that norms are irrelevant explanatory factors.

It is further argued that introducing preferences such as the wish to heed norms requires a theory that explains norms (see, e.g., BAURMANN, 1996, chapter 6; HECHTER, 1993). It is not clear what the reasons for this claim are. The underlying argument could be that norms cannot be measured so that their existence has to be derived from a theory that explains the emergence of norms. This argument is questionable. First of all, the premise that norms cannot be measured is wrong, as we noted already. Secondly, if norms cannot be measured then a theory explaining norms cannot be tested either. Thus, claiming to formulate a theory that explains norms in order to avoid measuring norms does not solve any problems because testing such a theory requires the measurement of norms. But if norms can be measured, explaining the effects of norms does not require any theory that explains norms. In an explanation norms are initial conditions and it must be empirically examined whether these conditions are given. The requirements of an adequate explanation do not include the claim that initial conditions must be derived from a theory (see, e.g., HEMPEL, 1965).

But assume that one wishes to keep RCT «clean» by disregarding norms when explaining behavior. One consequence would be that RCT fails in situations where norms are important incentives. Assume, for example, that most people vote because of a perceived civic duty. An economic model would yield the wrong prediction that only a fraction of the population votes if «civic duty» is dropped from explanations of voting.

Another possibility to get rid of norms would be to restrict the range of application of RCT to situations where no norms exist. One consequence would be that the economic model is no longer a general theory of action because it is no longer applicable to certain types of situations. Its explanatory power would be diminished. Furthermore, the
practical application of RCT would be difficult because one has first to ascertain whether
norms are present in a situation where behavior is to be explained. This has to be
examined for each application because new norms may emerge in situations where
previously no norms existed. Thus, there seems to be no way to avoid including norms
in Rational Choice explanations of behavior.

These arguments suggest that norms are a variable that fits into RCT as a class of
possible costs and benefits. Thus, there is no need for another theory in order to explain
the effects of norm-guided behavior. Furthermore, because of the importance that norms
have in social science disciplines such as sociology, anthropology or political science it
is desirable to explore the emergence as well as the effects of norms by applying RCT.
In fact, there is an increasing number of proponents of RCT, including economists, who
have taken up this line of research.\(^4\) It is further important to note that the social
psychological theory of planned behavior – that is a variant of RCT – includes norms
explicitly as a variable for explaining behavior.\(^5\)

3. NORMS AS RATIONALIZATIONS OF BEHAVIOR

There is perhaps a way to avoid the elusive phenomenon of norms to enter RCT if the
following argument is correct: norms are in fact not causes of behavior as the effect
propoposition suggests. Instead, norms are used by individuals as rationalizations for a
behavior that is performed for non-normative reasons as the general rationalization
propoposition claims. A norm thus originates after the behavior has been engaged in.

It is hardly plausible that norms are only rationalizations that emerge after a behavior
has been performed for non-normative reasons. It is evident that we have internalized
plenty of norms that are shared by other people and that govern our behavior in many
everyday situations. It is further evident that breaking a norm ensues psychic costs, and
that conforming to a norm is rewarding. However, it can also not be denied that there
are situations where norms are only invoked for strategic reasons. If norms may induce
behavior and also may be rationalizations of behavior the question arises under what
conditions norms are causes or effects of behavior. It is thus plausible to search for a
conditional rationalization proposition specifying under what conditions norms will
ensue after a behavior is performed.

Advocating the conditional rationalization proposition implies or is at least consistent
with a feedback proposition: If behaviors elicit norms only under certain conditions it

\(^4\) In regard to the emergence and effects of property rights or institutions there is already an extensive
Rational Choice literature exemplified by the New Institutional Economics. The effects of internalized
and institutionalized norms are addressed by Rational Choice theorists as well. See, e.g., the work on
fairness in economics that explores the effects of a particular kind of norm, such as: KAHNEMAN, KNETSCH

may nevertheless hold that norms affect behavior, maybe only if those conditions do not exist. Figure 1 summarizes the foregoing hypotheses.

**Figure 1: Relationships Between Norms and Action**

**Effect proposition:**

\[ \text{Norms} \rightarrow \text{Behavior} \]

**General rationalization proposition:**

\[ \text{Behavior} \rightarrow \text{Norms} \]

**Conditional rationalization proposition:**

\[ \text{Behavior and Conditions} \rightarrow \text{Norms} \]

**Feedback proposition:**

\[ \text{norms t1 \rightarrow behavior and/or \rightarrow norms t3} \]
\[ \text{conditions t2} \]

Specifying propositions about the conditions for behavior to precipitate norms raises the following questions: (1) If norms originate as rationalizations, does this imply that these norms are not relevant for performing the respective behavior or will those norms be causes for behavior when they have come into existence? (2) Can any norm serve as a rationalization of a given behavior or are there constraints for the kind of norms that are spawned by a given behavior? If there are constraints, of what sort are they and how do they shape the norms invoked to rationalize a behavior? (3) If norms are used as rationalizations, what are the problems for RCT? These questions will be dealt with in the following section.

**When Do Rationalizations Occur?**

In order to find conditions under which rationalizations might occur it seems useful to look at situations where internalized or institutionalized norms exist. In those situations, a certain behavior may be performed that is or is not in accordance with the respective norms. The basic mechanism for the emergence of rationalization seems to be this: *If there is a discrepancy between an internalized, an institutionalized norm and a behavior, the respective situation is costly and an incentive for actors to produce rationalizations in order to reduce the costs of this disjunction.*

\[^5\]
Table 2: The Effects of Performing an Action on the Emergence of Norms as Rationalization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internalized norms exist</th>
<th>No institutionalized norms exist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Case 1</td>
<td>Case 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Conformity: no rationalization</td>
<td>(a) Conformity to internalized norms: rationalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Non-conformity: rationalization</td>
<td>(b) Non-conformity to internalized norms: rationalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case 3</td>
<td>Case 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a) Conformity to institutionalized norms: no rationalization</td>
<td>No rationalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) Non-conformity to institutionalized norms: rationalization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to further explore this idea let us look at Table 2. Assume first that there is no discrepancy between norms and behavior: there is an internalized as well as an institutionalized norm, and a person performs the action the norm prescribes – see Table 2, upper left cell, case 1 (a). There is no reason why a rationalization should obtain when there is a large consensus that a norm should be heeded, if individuals have internalized the norm and follow it.

The situation is different if there is no coincidence between an internalized norm, an institutionalized norm and the behavior a person performs. For example, assume that a norm of voting is internalized and institutionalized, but the person does not vote (case 1 [b], upper left cell of Table 2). There will be an internal cost, i.e. the situation will generate dissonance. Accordingly, the person will seek a justification for not having voted. The more the norm of voting is shared the more frequently others will ask the person for a justification if they learn that the person did not vote. There is thus also an external costs: if a person does not provide a satisfactory justification negative social sanctions will obtain.

Assume now, that there are personal (i.e. internalized) norms but that these norms are not institutionalized (see the upper right cell of Table 2, case 2). For example, a person

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6. This proposition is based on the theory of cognitive dissonance (FESTINGER, 1957): dissonance exists, among other things, if an individual does not engage in an action A and if this contradicts an existing internalized or institutionalized norm. In terms of RCT, this situation is costly. There are several possibilities to reduce this dissonance. The easiest possibility in most cases is probably to find some justification for having engaged in the respective behavior. This holds particularly if justifications are available and socially accepted – see below.

7. In this paper, the terms «justification» and «rationalization» are used interchangeably.
may think that she or he has a duty to vote but this norm does not exist in the community. In this situation there are two possibilities. First of all (case 2 [a]), the person acts in accordance with the personal norm. The foregoing proposition would imply that a rationalization ensues: the person «needs» some (internal) justification why she or he – in contrast to the community – thinks his behavior is «right». Furthermore, friends and acquaintances will ask him why he thinks that one should vote. The person will therefore try to find some rationalization in order to «explain» the behavior to others.

Second (case 2 [b]), a person may deviate from the personal norm, i.e. the person may feel obliged to vote but nevertheless refrains from voting. Again, the person will invoke a rationalization because she or he deviates from her or his conviction that voting is a duty.8

Third, assume that no norm is internalized, but that there is an institutionalized norm (case 3, lower left cell of Table 2). Furthermore, an action is performed that conforms to the institutionalized norm (case 3 [a]). For example, a person may not feel obliged to vote, but there is a norm of voting in the community. If a person votes in this situation for whatever personal reasons, there is no need for a rationalization: the person follows his goals and, in addition, his action is in accordance with a norm. Assume now the person does not vote (case 3 [b]). This time the person deviates from an institutionalized norm. When others hear about this action the person will feel pushed to say why he has not voted. In this situation, a person will probably anticipate that others will detect his deviance and therefore try to invoke rationalizations for his behavior.

The simplest case is that there is neither an internalized nor an institutionalized norm (case 4, lower right cell of Table 2). There is no need for a justification – however the person acts – and there is thus no incentive to find a rationalization.

To conclude, the important point to be made in this section is that a general claim that behavior is always rationalized by invoking norms is highly questionable. This conclusion is based on a version of RCT, namely the theory of cognitive dissonance.

What Kinds of Norms are Used as Rationalizations?

Are the rationalizations that are adopted by an actor arbitrary? Assume, for example, a citizen does not vote and has internalized the norm that one should vote. The belief «Switzerland has a very low crime rate» would certainly not be a pertinent rationalization. However, the rationalization «one need not go to the polls if one is seriously ill» will be accepted by the social environment as an excuse for not having participated in an election in case of serious illness, and it will ease a bad conscience of the actor. Why? In general, justifications that are used are part of our culture because they are in general regarded as conditions under which certain norms hold or may be broken. Rationaliza-

8. See, e.g., SYKES and MATZA, 1957 for examples of rationalizations that are adduced by persons who break internalized norms.
tions that are invoked for a given behavior are intuitively derived from more general norms.

The following example illustrates this proposition. Assume, a boy gets involved in breaking into a rich man's house. He may rationalize this by saying that rich people earn their money by engaging in illegal practices and don't pay their taxes. In others words, the boy regards it as justified to steal from persons who have acquired their wealth by illegal means. Why does he accept this «justification»? He may accept a general norm saying that persons are not entitled to possess goods they have not acquired in a legal way, and he accepts the empirical statement that rich men are this sort of people.

This argument implies that rationalizations are taken from the stock of norms available in a culture. Rationalizations are not logically derived in the strict sense, it is more of a «psychological» derivation, i.e. an intuitive and sometimes creative process. The reason is that the values of a culture do not form a logically coherent axiomatic system from which norms can be logically deduced and applied to specific situations. The important point in this context is that rationalizations are not invented on scratch but are already there, at least in rough form. The question of how exactly rationalizations are «drawn» from more general norms and to what extent there is some latitude in arriving at justifications that are effective is beyond the scope of this paper.

Is Behavior not Norm-guided when Rationalizations Obtain?

The argument in the foregoing section has important consequences for the general rationalization proposition. If rationalizations are taken from the general culture that the actor knows before he performs the behavior, the respective behavior is guided by norms even if rationalizations are applied. Maybe the actor expresses the rationalization only after the performance of a behavior, but the norm has in fact guided the behavior. This proposition becomes more plausible if we look again at Table 2. Take case 1b. A rationalization originates but, in addition, the existing norm will certainly be considered by the individual actor when he decides to carry out the behavior. If the behavior that is performed does not correspond to the (internalized or institutionalized) norm, costs of deviating from a norm will obtain, but the benefits of deviating from the norm will be relatively high. Thus, the norm has been an incentive for performing an action, although only one among several incentives. Similarly, for cases 2a and 2b rationalizations occur but norms are nevertheless incentives for action. The same holds for case 3b.

In all these cases, internalized or institutionalized norms exist which are incentives for those actions that the norm demands. In some of these situations, rationalizations occur. Thus, if rationalizations exist norms are nevertheless incentives for action. In other words, if norms exist, they are incentives for performing an action, even if rationalizations are applied after engaging in the behavior in question.

This argument assumes that the norms relevant for an action are available in the cognitive apparatus of an actor. It may happen, however, that an actor performs a
behavior without taking into account a given norm. Only after the behavior is performed it may occur to an actor that he has broken a norm and he searches for a norm that he or his social environment accepts. In this case, a norm is not a cause of behavior.

Thus, if rationalizations are adduced for a behavior, it may nevertheless be the case that the respective norm has contributed to performing the respective behavior. It would be an important topic for future research to ascertain how frequently those two types of situations occur.

4. THE ROLE OF NORMS IN COLLECTIVE POLITICAL ACTION: RESULTS OF A PANEL STUDY

In order to examine the extent to which the effect proposition and the (general or conditional) rationalization proposition hold we will focus on collective political action. We shall deal with three questions: (1) To what extent do internalized norms exist which demand political action under certain conditions? This question must be answered, because hypotheses with norms as dependent or independent variables can only be tested if norms exist and if their internalization varies across respondents. (2) To what extent do internalized norms, together with other costs and benefits, affect collective political action? We will thus test the effect proposition. (3) To what extent does collective political action lead to rationalizations? This question refers to a test of the general rationalization proposition.

In order to answer these questions we will for the first time use data from a three-wave representative panel survey referring to quite diverse social situations. The first wave was a representative survey of 1300 citizens of Leipzig that was conducted in the fall of 1990. The questions referred to the situation before the collapse of the communist regime. The second wave (513 respondents) was administered between June and August 1993, the third wave with 323 respondents between November 1995 and January 1996. Because the data collection ended in 1996, we shall speak, for the sake of simplicity, of the panel of 1996. The following analyses utilize the three wave panel, i.e. 323 respondents.

So far there is no empirical research that focuses in detail on the existing norms of political action based on a representative population sample (question 1). To be sure, there are several empirical studies that include norms as conditions for collective political

9. For details see OPP, VOSS and GERN, 1993 (English translation OPP, VOSS and GERN, 1995).
11. The high attrition is common in East Germany. We carried out several statistical analyses in order to find out to what extent the remaining respondents of the third wave were a biased sample of the respondents of the first wave. We further compared age and gender of our sample of the third wave with the age and gender distribution of Leipzig. In general, we found that the biases were rather low. Furthermore, for the present purposes representativity is not required because we are testing theoretical propositions. For this purpose, the sample used in this paper is appropriate.
action and in particular for political protest – see question 2 –, and these studies show that norms are among the factors that have a positive effect on political action. However, these are most of the time cross-sectional studies that cannot tackle the question whether norms cause behavior or whether norms emerged after the behavior has been performed (question 3). There is no empirical research that focuses on the third question: the effects of political action on the emergence of norms.

Do Internalized Norms Exist?

The questionnaires of the three waves include various questions referring to the extent to which respondents think they are obliged to participate in collective political action. In measuring norms the respondents were presented with statements to which they could more or less agree. Table 3 presents those statements in the first column. It is worth noting that most items refer to a situation, and the respondent is asked to what extent she or he thinks that one should (or should not) participate or if it is justified to participate if the respective situation is given. The idea behind this measurement procedure is that in general norms are conditional. In order to test this assumption we also included a general statement: «Politics should not be left to the elected representatives.» In disagreeing the respondent accepts an unconditional norm: politics should be left to the elected representatives. Furthermore, agreeing with the items under the heading «Justifications of violence» indicates that the respondents do not refute violence as principally immoral. This leaves it open under which conditions violence «can» be justified. For each item, a respondent could choose among five answer categories. For items 10 and 11 the five categories ranged from «doesn’t hold true at all» to «holds completely true,» for the other items from «fully disagree» to «fully agree».

The items for each wave were subjected to factor analyses. Items 1 to 4 that we call «norms of political action» (we did not find a better term for this group of items) loaded on one factor in each wave. Table 3 includes other statements as well that were in part grouped together because they measured similar norms (such as the two items 6 and 7 that refer to risk). Comparing the meanings of the items under the different headings (norm of political action, discontent norm etc.) in Table 3, we do not find any clear-cut differences indicating what dimensions may be measured. Whatever the reasons for the


13. The conditional character of norms is further explored in the second and third waves of this research by using the factorial survey design. For details see JASSO and OPP, 1997.

14. We used ULS (Unweighted Least Squares) with Varimax Rotation. For wave 1, the extracted factor explained 20% of the variance (wave 2: 28%, wave 3: 31%). The reliabilities were .46 (wave 1), .60 (wave 2), and .63 (wave 3).
Table 3: Consensus About Norms of Political Action: Percentage of Respondents Who Agree or Fully Agree to a Statement

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Norms of political action.</strong> Question: Respondents opinion to the following statements is ascertained (five values, from fully disagree to fully agree).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 A citizen should only engage in political action if she or he believes that this has an impact</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Nobody can be expected to take part in political action if she or he might be sent to prison</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 I feel that I should be politically active even if there are not sufficient others who participate</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Politics should not be left to the elected representatives</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discontent norm.</strong> Question: see «norms of political action».</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 If a citizen is very dissatisfied with the government’s policies, she or he should do something against it, such as demonstrate</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk norm.</strong> Question: see «norms of political action»</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 If one is convinced to effect something through a demonstration, one should not shrink from high risk</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 If discontent is very high among the population, one has to participate in political actions even if this is accompanied by personal disadvantages</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Norm to participate due to the situation in the new states (norm due to reconstruction).</strong> Question: see «norms of political action»</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 The current situation in the new states is so bad that a citizen has the duty to do something about it</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Even if a citizen is busy with building a new life it is not justified to refrain from participating</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protest norm due to external events</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 What did you feel when you learned that an increasing number of GDR citizens fled their country? I thought: Now I am obliged to do something for changes in the GDR in order to keep even more people from leaving (five answer categories, from «doesnt hold true at all» to «holds completely true»)</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 In 1989, there were political changes in Hungary and Poland such as the legalization of «Solidarity» ... What did you feel at that time? Here are again some statements. I thought that I am now obliged to become active in order to do something for changes in the GDR (five answer categories, from «doesnt hold true at all» to «holds completely true»)</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Justifications for violence.</strong> Question: see «Norms of political action»</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Violence against objects (such as setting a car on fire) can be morally justified</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Violence against persons can be morally justified</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The percentages refer to those respondents who chose answer categories 4 or 5 for the respective item. N=323. The data of wave 1 were collected in 1990, but refer to the situation before the collapse of the communist regime.
different loadings may be, we will treat the various sets of items separately in the following analyses.

Table 3 provides answers to two questions: (1) Are there personal norms in the sense that there are respondents who think one ought to participate in the situations described by the items? (2) To what extent are norms shared, i.e. how many respondents agree or disagree to a statement? Columns 2 to 4 show the percentages of respondents who agree to the respective item. That is to say, we added the percentages for two of the five categories. Let us first look at the distributions for wave 1. The percentages are most of the time higher than 50%, with the exceptions of items 2, 3, and 11. There is further almost unanimous rejection of justifications for violence (items 12 and 13). In general, thus, there are internalized norms, and they are largely shared in the sense that the majority of the respondents agrees or disagrees that political action should or should not be performed in certain situations. The data for 1993 (wave 2) shows the same picture: consensus here is even larger: there is only item 8 where less than 50% share a norm. For 1996 there is less homogeneity: less than 50% agree or disagree to five items. For item 8 there are only 23% who endorse the statement in 1996, 45% marked the medium value, i.e. they partly agreed and partly disagreed that in the situation described in item 8 participation is a duty, which seems to express indifference. It is further worth noting that the stability of the percentages for a given norm across the three waves varies: there are relatively stable norms such as item 5, and there are unstable norms such as item 8. Because the stability of norms is not the topic of this paper we will not further go into issues of stability. In conclusion, then, our results indicate that there are personal norms, and that they are shared to a relatively large extent.

To What Extent Do Norms Affect Collective Political Action?

Research Design

If norms and other incentives on the one hand and political action on the other are measured at two points in time, it can be ascertained whether there is a causal effect of norms and other incentives on action or whether action affects the emergence of norms. Assume, for example, a regression analysis is carried out where norms and other incentives, measured in 1993, are independent variables. Protest, measured in 1996, is the dependent variable. If the coefficients for the effects of norms are statistically significant, the hypothesis would be confirmed that there is a causal effect of norms on political action. At first glance, this argument is straightforward, but on a closer look it holds only under certain conditions. Assume we want to find out whether norms affect action, and we measure norms at time 1 and protest at time 2. It may happen that there are events that change the values of norms after time 1 and that these values produce new values of protest. Although there may be lawful relationships between norms and action, the norms may change in a way that norms, measured at time 1, may no longer
correlate with protest measured at time 2. In other words, although in such cases causal effects of norms on action exist, a panel study will not be able to find them. It may even happen, that we find causal effects of norms on action although they are not existent.

The common – and, in our opinion, plausible – assumption is that in general causal variables will not change in a way that statistical analyses cannot uncover existing causal relations. This assumption gains plausibility if there are more than two panels, and if the time periods between the measurements are different. This holds for the three panels analyzed in this paper. We shall test whether there are effects of norms on action in three ways, as the overview of Table 4 shows. In wave 1 most questions refer to the time before October 9, 1989. On that date, the famous Monday Demonstration took place in Leipzig that was not dissolved by security forces and that set the pace for the collapse of the communist regime. The questionnaire for wave 1 further included questions referring to the time period after October 9 and before March 18, 1990. On that date, the first free parliamentary elections in the GDR were held. These latter questions refer, among other things, to participation in protests. This enables us to execute statistical analyses with norms and other incentives, measured before October 9, and protest, measured for the time between October 9, 1989, and March 1990 (see analysis 1 in Table 4). We have thus a cross-sectional panel, i.e. we measured values of variables at two points in time within a cross-sectional research design. The time period between these dates is short, and the changes in regard to our variables do not seem very large.

We will then analyze the effects of norms (and other incentives), measured before October 9, 1989, on protest, measured in the second wave, i.e. in 1993 (see analysis 2 in Table 4). Unfortunately, we asked only a few questions for the time period between October 9 and March 1990 about norms and the other incentives, so that it is not possible to analyze effects of norms etc. for this time period on protest of the second wave. The data of the second wave were collected between June and August 1993. So the period between the two measurements is a little more than 2 \(\frac{1}{2}\) years. Finally, we will analyze the effects of norms and other incentives, measured in the second wave (1993), and protest, measured in the third wave (November 95 to January 96). The time period

15. The wording of the questions as well as their order were carefully designed. The first part of the questionnaire consisted of questions referring to the time before October 9, 1989. A second – smaller – part of the questionnaire referred to the situation after October 9 until March 18. The respondents were reminded time and again of these dates. Problems of the validity of the data in general are discussed in detail in OPP and GERN, 1993 and in OPP, VOSS, and GERN, 1995. Due to the arguments presented there we are confident that the respondents were able to give largely unbiased answers to our questions. This holds also for the ability of the respondents to discriminate between the period before and after October 9, 1989. These periods were so different in regard to the political situation in the GDR that we assume that the respondents could remember the events and their personal situation in those periods very well when they were interviewed in the fall of 1990. Furthermore, the events of October 9, 1989, were such a dramatic and clear rift that the respondents should be able to locate events before and after this date. As far as variables such as norms or discontent are ascertained for the period «before October 9» we assume that the respondents refer to the time very shortly before this date. The «after October 9» questions will probably refer to the time shortly after this date.
between the measurements is also about 2 ½ years. The final column of Table 4 shows the number of the table where the results of the analyses are presented.

Table 4: Overview of the Statistical Analyses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of analysis</th>
<th>Time 1: Independent variables (norms and other incentives)</th>
<th>Time 2: Dependent variables (protest)</th>
<th>Table no.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Before October 9, 1989 (wave 1)</td>
<td>After October 9, 1989, and before March 18, 1990 (wave 1)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Before October 9, 1989 (wave 1)</td>
<td>1993 - June/August (wave 2)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1993 - June/August (wave 2)</td>
<td>1996 – November 95/January 96 (wave 3)</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measurement

Let us first describe the measurement of the variables for analysis 1 in our overview. A summary of all measurements is provided in Table 5. In the study of 1990, we measured two types of participation in protest activities: working with opposition groups and participation in the peace prayers in the Nikolai Church in Leipzig. For each action, the respondent could indicate whether she or he has participated in these actions several times (code 4), once (code 3), whether she or he has thought about participation but not participated (code 2) and whether participation was not taken into account (code 1). For each respondent, the numbers referring to the codes were added. We call this scale participation in general protests. Thus, the higher the scale value of a respondent is, the more often she or he has participated. The second kind of political action is frequency of participation in the Monday demonstrations. Both variables were measured for the time before October 9, 1989, and for the time after that date and before March 18, 1990.

16. In regard to the Monday demonstrations, we asked in the first part of the questionnaire whether a respondent has participated on September 25, October 2 and October 9, 1989, and whether a respondent has participated in the demonstration on October 7 that took not place on a Monday. The scale could range from 0 (no participation) to 4 (participation in the four demonstrations mentioned). For ease of reference, we use the label «Monday demonstrations» for this scale. In the part of the questionnaire that referred to the time after October 9, we included a general question that ascertained how many Monday demonstrations a respondent had attended after October 9, 1989. The possible answers were «not participated» (code 1), once participated (code 2), twice or three times participated (code 3), more than three times participated (code 4).
Table 5: The Measurement of the Variables and Scales

Participation in general protest before October 9, 1989: Working for an opposition group, participating in peace prayers and other church activities (four answer categories for each item: had not taken the action into account [code 1], had thought about performing the action but had not performed it [code 2], had engaged in that action once [code 3] or several times [code 4]).

Participation in general protest after October 9, 1989, and before March 18, 1990: same items as before.

Frequency of participation in the Monday demonstrations before October 9, 1989. Number of demonstrations the respondent has participated in.

Frequency of participation in the Monday demonstrations after October 9, 1989, and before March 18, 1990: same items as before.

Legal political protest 1993: Working with or founding a citizen initiative, organizing or participating in demonstrations, collecting signatures or sign petitions, writing letters to newspapers or members of parliaments. Answer categories as for «participation in general protest before October 9, 1989».

Legal political protest 1996: Same items as before.

Illegal political protest 1993: Participating in an illegal demonstration; seizing houses, factories, offices and other buildings; participating in traffic blockades or sit-ins.

Illegal political protest 1996: Same items as before.

Norms: see Table 3.

Political discontent before October 9, 1989: Discontent (five categories, «very satisfied» to «very dissatisfied») with: environment, existence of two German states, possibility for free speech, demands of the socialist party SED, surveillance by the secret police (Stasi), possibilities of a fair political trial, possibilities of traveling to Western countries.

Political discontent 1993: Discontent with: unification of GDR and former FRG, possibility of free speech, work of the “Treuhand” (privatization agency), adopting the laws of the former FRG for the new Germany after unification.

Perceived personal influence by participating in general protests, before October 9, 1989: Respondents were asked to what extent it was likely that she could have changed the situation in the former GDR by working for an opposition group, participating in peace prayers. Answers from «very unlikely» (1) to «very likely» (4). For each respondent, the values of these items were averaged.

Perceived personal influence by participating in Monday demonstrations before October 9, 1989: Respondents could more or less agree to a statement saying: during the emigration wave of many citizens of the GDR I thought that I could now influence politics by participating in political protests. Another statement respondents could more or less agree with was: Concerning the liberalization in other Eastern countries, I thought that I could now influence politics by participating in political protests. (Answer categories from «fully disagree» [code 1] to «fully agree» [code 4]). For each respondent, the values of these items were averaged.

Perceived personal influence 1993 by legal protest: Respondents were asked to what extent it was likely that she could have changed the situation in the new states (former GDR) by each of those actions that are mentioned above under «legal political protest 93». Answers from «very unlikely» (1) to «very likely» (4). For each respondent, the values of these items were averaged.

Perceived personal influence 1993 by illegal protest: Same as for influence by legal protest 93, except that the question was asked for the three illegal actions the scale «illegal political protest 93» is composed of.

Expectations of reference persons before October 9, 1989: Extent to which important others such as friends or relatives value the respondents’ political action positively.


Membership in protest encouraging groups before October 9, 1989: Membership (no/yes) in groups that encouraged protest against the regime.
### Membership in protest encouraging groups 1993

Similar measurement as for 1989. In 1993 and 1996 it was ascertained for each membership group to what extent the respondent feels encouraged to protest.

### Member in opposition group before October 9, 1989

Number of opposition groups (such as the «New Forum») the respondent was a member of.

### Member in citizen initiatives 1993

This variable is not used because there were only few members. Affiliation with protestant church before October 9, 1989: Extent to which members of the protestant church feel close to it. Non-members receive value 0.

### Affiliation with protestant church 1993

Same measurement as for 1989.

### Number of critical friends before October 9, 1989

Estimate of the respondent of how many friends are (a) critical of the regime or (b) have been active against the regime (categories: nobody, some, many, almost all; codes 1 to 4). The scale «critical friends» consists of the average of the codes referring to the no. of critical friends and the no. of politically active friends.

### Number of critical colleagues before October 9, 1989

Estimate of the respondent of how many colleagues are critical of the regime or have been active against the regime (categories: nobody, some, many, almost all; codes 1 to 4). The scale «critical colleagues» consists of the average of the codes referring to no. of critical friends and no. of politically active friends, multiplied by the variable «closeness of relations with colleagues» (from «very loose» [1] to «very close» [4]).

### Probability of negative sanctions before October 9, 1989

Perceived likelihood of the respondent of getting arrested, getting injured by the police, getting trouble at work, difficulties for the family (partner and children) in case of protest (four categories from «very unlikely» to «very likely», from 0.2 to .8 with a distance of .2). The scale consists of the average of the codes.

### Probability of negative sanctions 1993

We measured the probability of two kinds of sanctions: expected sanctions at work in case of expressing political opinions, and probability of official sanctions in case of illegal action (being hurt or being arrested by security forces).

### Fear of negative sanctions before October 9, 1989

Fear of the respondent («very bad», «bad», «not so bad») that each of the sanctions (see before – probability of negative sanctions) occur in case of protest. The scale consists of the average of the codes.

### Fear of negative sanctions 1993

Fear of the respondent («very bad», «bad», «not so bad») that each of the sanctions (see before – probability of negative sanctions) occur. The scale consists of the average of the codes.

Note: The expressions printed in bold are the names of the scales or variables used in the text.

We constructed the norms scales by using those items of Table 3 that have percentages in the columns. Only those items have been presented to respondents in the respective survey. For example, items 8 and 9 have only been presented to respondents in waves 2 and 3. In constructing the norms scales some items were recoded so that agreement means that the statement expresses an obligation to protest. «Recoding» means that code 5 becomes 1, code 4 becomes 3 etc. Recoding was done for items 1, 2, 8, and 9. Thus, high values of a norms scale mean that the respondent endorses a duty to protest.

After the recoding we constructed additive scales from the statements written under a heading in Table 3. This means that the values of the items of a scale were added for each respondent and divided by the number of items. For example, for each respondent the values of the first four items were added and divided by 4 yielding the scale «norms of political action 1989.» We thus arrive at five measures for norms in wave 1: norms
of political action, discontent norm, risk norm, protest norm due to external events, and justifications for violence (see Table 3).

Because we want to examine the effects of norms and other incentives on political action, we included other variables in our analyses. Table 5 describes in detail the items the scales are composed of. We have included in Table 5 also the political action variables that were described before, but not the items measuring norms that are presented in Table 3. Here we will only briefly sketch the meaning of those variables.\(^{17}\)

In specifying the incentives for political action that are used in this study we draw on the results of previous research.\(^{18}\) The theory of collective action assumes that public goods preferences or, put differently, political discontent is irrelevant for performing political action. The assumption is that in a large group the individual actor has only a negligible impact on providing the public good. Empirical research disproves this assumption: individual actors’ perceived influence is by no means zero, and it varies. Therefore, it is hypothesized that political discontent, weighted by perceived influence, affects political action.\(^{19}\)

Another group of factors that have been shown to be important for explaining political action is social incentives. These are, among others, (a) the extent to which reference persons (i.e. important others such as relatives or friends) value political action of the respondent, and (b) the number of memberships in groups that encourage — from the perspective of the respondent — political action. (c) In addition, we include as a measure for social incentives membership in specific opposition groups (or citizen initiatives) where political action is presumably rewarded to a particularly high extent. (d) Because this holds also for affiliation with the Protestant church — at least under communist rule where many oppositional groups existed under the roof of the Protestant church —, we include this variable too. (e) Among the social incentives are further relations with friends and colleagues who are critical of the political situation or who are politically active. (f) Finally, we subsume under «social incentives» negative sanctions: we ascertained the extent to which respondents expect and fear negative sanctions in case of engaging in political action.

When we analyze the effects of incentives on political action we always include those incentives that refer to the specific action to be explained. For example, if we examine the effects of political discontent, weighted by perceived influence, on legal protest, we use perceived influence by means of legal influence; when we explain illegal protest in 1996 we include as a social incentive membership in groups that encourage illegal political action.

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17. If a scale consists of at least three items we performed factor analyses (ULS, varimax rotation) in order to test the dimensionality of the items. For limitations of space we will not report the results of these analyses. Furthermore, all scales are additive, i.e. the scores for each respondent were added and divided by the number of items.

18. For further references see, e.g. OPP and GERN, 1993, or OPP, VOSS, and GERN, 1995.

19. The respective interaction term is constructed by multiplying the discontent measure with the influence scale.
Statistical Analysis

We use regression analysis (Ordinary Least Squares) for analyzing the effects of norms and other incentives on the protest variables. For each dependent protest variable, we proceed in several steps. (1) Because we want to know how strong the effects of norms are – in comparison to other incentives – it is useful first to analyze only the effects of norms. This is the norms model. (2) Then we examine only the effects of the other incentives. This is the incentives model. This makes it possible to compare the explained variances of both groups of variables. (3) We then combine norms and the other incentives in one multivariate analysis – which is the combined model. This enables us to compare the simultaneous effects of norms and of the other incentives. (4) It is a common practice in panel analysis to include the lagged dependent variable in multivariate models. This means, e.g., that one of the independent variables will be participation in general protest before October 9, 1989, if the dependent variable is «participation in general protest after October 9 and before March 18, 1990.» If the lagged variable is included the effects of the regression coefficients describe the effects of the predictors on the difference between protests at time 1 and time 2. It is controversial whether and under what conditions the lagged variable should be included. We will not discuss this issue here but present results with and without including the lagged dependent variable. The full model thus includes norms, incentives and the lagged dependent variable.

Effects Of Norms And Other Incentives Before October 9, 1989, On Protest After October 9, 1989 And Before March 18, 1990

Table 6 shows the results of analysis no. 1 (see Table 4). The first column exhibits the variables whose effects are to be analyzed. Let us first deal with the dependent variable «participation in general protest.» Model 1 (column 1) – the norms model – has an explained adjusted variance of .12. Two norm variables have statistically significant effects: norms of political action and norms due to external events. The results of model 2 – the incentives model – are consistent with previous findings. The public goods term has the strongest effect. That is to say, if individuals are highly discontented and if they believe that their political participation could contribute to providing public goods to a relatively high extent participation in general protests is high. This result may surprise economists because due to the standard model of collective action public goods prefer-
ences should not have any significant effect because it is assumed that the single individual does not have any influence on providing the public goods. However, our data and many other studies indicate, as was noted above, that individuals' perception of their personal influence is in general not zero and varies across individuals.

Social incentives have significant effects on participation in general protest: membership in opposition groups, affiliation with the Protestant church, and the number of friends who are critical of the situation in the GDR and are politically active. It is worth noting that expected negative sanctions do not have any effect on participation in general protest.21 The adjusted explained variance of the incentives model (model 2) is .38 which is clearly higher than the explained variance of the norms model (model 1).

Model 3 combines the norm variables and the other incentive variables. If we compare the explained variance of the incentives model with the combined model the increase is only .03 when norms are added to the incentives model. In other words, the bulk of the explained variance is not due to norms. If we compare the standardized regression coefficients of models 1 and 2 on the one hand and model 3 on the other, we see that the coefficients of the norm variables decrease relatively strongly, whereas the coefficients of the other incentive variables remain rather stable. This means that part of the variance that norms explain is due to correlation of norms and other incentive variables.

Finally, we include the lagged dependent variable – participation in general protest before October 9, 1989 – in the analyses which yields the full model (model 4). As Model 4 shows the lagged variable has a strong effect and raises the explained variance from .41 to .62. Thus, participation in protests before and after October 9 is relatively stable (the bivariate correlation is .78). This is plausible: those who had attended demonstrations and peace prayers before October 9 participated in these activities also after October 9 when protest became less dangerous and when the prospect of effecting changes by participating increased. Furthermore, the lagged protest variable correlates relatively strongly with the incentives measured before October 9. This can be seen if we compare the coefficients of model 3 and model 4: they decrease to such an extent that only one other variable remains statistically significant.

In conclusion, then, norms, measured before October 9, affect general protests after October 9 and before March 18, 1990, but the effects of other incentive variables are much stronger than the effects of norms, and part of the effects of norms can be explained by the incentive variables.

In regard to participation in the Monday demonstrations the results are similar. There are small effects of norms (model 5 of Table 6) as well as relatively large effects of the other incentives (model 6). In the combined model, however, the effects of norms disappear. The explained variances of the models 6 (without norms) and 7 (with norms) are equal. Introducing the lagged variable (model 8) has similar effects as those described before. Thus, in regard to participation in the Monday demonstrations after October 9

21. This result is in detail discussed and explained in OPP, 1994; OPP, Voss and Gern, 1995.
Table 6: The Effects of Norms and Other Incentives before October 9, 1989, on Participation in General Protests and Monday Demonstrations after October 9, 1989, and before March 18, 1990 (Standardized Regression Coefficients, N=323)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incentives before October 9, 1989</th>
<th>General protest after October 9, 1989, and before March 18, 1990</th>
<th>Demonstrating after October 9, 1989, and before March 18, 1990</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Norms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms of political action</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>.12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontent norm</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk norm</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm due to external events</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>.16**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justifications of violence</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other incentives</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontent * Influence</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations of reference persons</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member in protest encouraging groups</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member in opposition groups</td>
<td>.20**</td>
<td>.20**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation with church</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical friends</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.16**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical colleagues</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability of sanctions</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of sanctions</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagged dependent variable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R2</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* significant at the .05 level; ** significant at the .01 level.
and before March 18, 1990, norms do not have any effects. Only the other incentives explain participation.

Effects Of Norms And Other Incentives Before October 9, 1989, On Protest In 1993

Let us turn to the situation of 1993, i.e. to a time when unification has existed for about three years. The dependent variables – legal and illegal protest 1993 – refer to this time. The independent variables were measured for the time before October 9, 1989, i.e. at a time when the communist regime was still in power. Would we expect that incentives effective at that time affect protest at a time when the political and economic system of the former GDR was no longer existent? At first glance, we would suspect that the incentives of 1989 are of little relevance to explain protest after the collapse of the communist regime. This is certainly plausible for incentives such as discontent and perceived influence. For example, discontent in 1989 was completely different from discontent in, say, 1993. Furthermore, social incentives of 1989 will be largely irrelevant for protest in 1993. For example, when citizens had encouraged each other to participate in the Monday demonstrations, this will hardly have any effect for protest in 1993, and encouragement will also not continue over time because the situation before unification was so different from the situation in 1993. In regard to norms, however, it is plausible that they are rather stable. Because norms are conditional they will instigate protest only if the conditions under which they are supposed to hold are given. For example, the discontent norm demands that one should protest if discontent is high. Another norm holds that protest is a duty when one’s protest makes a difference. If we assume that also after unification in 1990 some of those conditions are given we will expect that norms of 1989 will have an effect on protest after the unification.

The results displayed in Table 7 largely confirm the view that incentives in 1989 do affect political action in 1993 only to a small extent. In regard to legal protest 1993, the explained variances are low – compared to the models of Table 6. However, there are effects of the 1989 norm variables: including norms in the incentives model increases the explained variance of the incentives model from .06 to .12. Even in the full model with the lagged protest variable two norm variables have significant effects. It is striking that the norm to protest due to external events has the most pronounced effect. We may speculate that the items of this scale may measure a general normative disposition to participate.

In regard to illegal protest, there are almost no effects of the 1989 incentives (see Table 7, models 5 to 8). This is plausible: although the protests in 1989 were illegal, they were regarded by the citizens as legitimate. This is not the case for the illegal political actions of 1993. It is therefore not to be expected that incentives for those actions that are commonly accepted as legitimate ways to express one’s political opinion are incentives for illegal and non-acceptable political actions at a later point in time. Models
5 to 8 confirm these propositions: incentives of 1989 are largely irrelevant for participation in illegal action in 1993.

Table 7: The Effects of Norms and Other Incentives Before October 9, 1989, on Legal and Illegal Protest in 1993 (Standardized Regression Coefficients, N = 323)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incentives before October 9, 1989</th>
<th>Legal protest 1993</th>
<th>Illegal protest 1993</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Norms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms of political action</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.12*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontent norm</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk norm</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norm due to external events</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.23**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justifications of violence</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other incentives</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontent * Influence</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations of refer. persons</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member in protest encouraging groups</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.13*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member in opposition groups</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affiliation with church</td>
<td>.14*</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical friends</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical colleagues</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>-.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability of sanctions</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of sanctions</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagged dependent variable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R2</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* significant at the .05 level
** significant at the .01 level.
Effects of norms and other incentives of 1993 on protest in 1996

Next we turn to the situation where norms and the other incentives as independent as well as the dependent variables refer to the time after unification, namely to 1993 and 1996. Although the stability of this period is larger than the stability between 1989 and 1993 there are many changes during the unification process between 1993 and 1996 so that we cannot simply assume that the incentives are stable. In any event, we shall expect stronger effects of 1993 factors on 1996 protest than of 1989 factors on 1993 protest. Table 8 shows these effects. Unexpectedly, legal protest in 1996 is not very well explained by the incentive variables of 1993. Norms and other incentives explain almost the same variance (.10 vs. .09). If we expand the incentives model (column 2) whose adjusted explained variance is .09 by the norms the explained variance rises by .06 and becomes .15. It is worth noting that the effect of the lagged protest variable is relatively large (beta = .43).

The models for «illegal protest 1996» are worse: the explained variances are rather small. Norms of 1993 explain only .03, the other incentives .04 of the variance. If we include norms in the incentives model, the explained variance increases from .04 to .05. Including the lagged dependent variable further increases the variance only by .02 to .07.

Conclusion: norms as incentives to participation in protest behavior

The initial question was to what extent norms are incentives for participation in protest. The first conclusion that we can draw from the previous results is that there are causal effects of norms on behavior. Do the data allow us to draw more specific conclusions? One question this paper set out to answer is whether norms are causal variables for every behavior. Our data indicate that the effects of norms differ to a great extent across the behaviors examined – see the summary in Table 9. Three cases can be distinguished. First, norms may carry the major explanatory variance, as in analysis 3: including norms in the incentives model doubles the explained variance – which also holds for analysis 5. Second, norms increase the explained variance only slightly if they are included in the incentives model. This holds for analyses 1 and 6. Finally, there are cases where including norms does not add anything to the explained variance. This applies to analysis 2 and 4.
Table 8: The Effects of Norms and Other Incentives, measured 1993, on Legal and Illegal Forms of Protest, measured in 1995/96, Leipzig (Standardized Regression Coefficients)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Norms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms of political action</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontent norm</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Risk norm</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>-.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms due to reconstruction</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>-.14*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other incentives</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discontent.* infl.</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.13*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations of reference persons</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>-.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member in protest encour. groups²</td>
<td>.13*</td>
<td>.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affil. with church</td>
<td>.12*</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical friends</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical colleagues</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability of sanctions at work</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of sanctions at work</td>
<td>-.23*</td>
<td>-.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probability of official sanctions</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of official sanctions</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lagged dependent variable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adj. R²</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ N=323.
² Significant at the .05 level.
²² Significant at the .01 level.
² Due to the lack of cases the effect of membership in illegal protest encouraging groups could not be analyzed.
Table 9: Summary of the Results: Explained Variances of the Models of Tables 6 to 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Analysis no.</th>
<th>Table no.</th>
<th>Kind of model</th>
<th>Incentives model (only other incentives)</th>
<th>Combined model (other incentives, norms, no lagged variable)</th>
<th>Full model (Other incentives, norms, lagged variable)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Incentives before Oct. 9, 89 → general protest after October 89/before March 93</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Incentives before Oct. 9, 89 → demonstrations after October 89/before March 93</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Incentives before Oct. 9, 89 → legal protest 1993</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Incentives before Oct. 9, 89 → illegal protest 1993</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Incentives 1993 → legal protest 1996</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Incentives 1993 → illegal protest 1996</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The question arises why norms have those different effects. The most plausible hypothesis is that norms are important incentives only in low-cost situations. This is borne out by the analyses 1 and 2: participating in anti-regime protests under communist rule was certainly a high-cost situation. Participating in illegal protest is also a high-cost situation – see analyses 4 and 6, and here again norms do not contribute to explaining behavior. If this explanation is correct, another question arises: why are norms not effective in high-cost situations? Wouldnt one expect rather the opposite? In situations where collective political action is an option and where the costs are very high collective action will only come about when positive selective incentives are strong. Because in most collective action situations normal citizens are involved and because material rewards are not available in those situations one might expect that norms are among the selective incentives that work. Furthermore, empirical examples suggest that norms do not only obtain in low-cost situations. Norms of honor that demanded dueling among aristocrats

22. KIRCHGÄSSNER (1992), for example argues: «... when individuals have to make low-cost decisions, strong (economic) incentives can play only a minor role (if any at all), and, therefore, soft incentives, including ...moral rules, can be important» (p. 317).
for a long time regulated behavior that was very costly (see the account in HARDIN, 1995, pp. 91–99).

In explaining these results it should be kept in mind that in the three waves the same individuals were interviewed. Maybe this is a special population where norms were not so intense that they could outweigh the effects of other incentives. Further research is needed to tackle the question of why norms are sometimes effective and sometimes not.

Does Protest Lead to «Rationalizations»?

It is not possible to provide a detailed test of the conditional rationalization proposition because we did not measure the institutionalization of norms. We will therefore only test the general rationalization hypothesis. According to this proposition, we expect that protest measured in one wave will have a positive effect on norms measured in a later wave. In testing this prediction we shall include as (independent) control variables all incentives from the incentives model measured at the same time as the respective protest variable. If protest really affects norms this effect should be preserved if other incentives are included as independent control variables. We further include the lagged norm variable. The type of model to be tested for each norm variable corresponds to the diagram in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Testing the Existence of Rationalizations

Because we did not measure norms for the time between October 9, 1989, and March 18, 1990, only the following analyses could be carried out:

(1) General protest and Monday demonstrations before October 9, 1989 (controlling for the incentives of the incentives model before October 9, and for the lagged norm variable) → each of the five norm variables for 1993.

(2) General protest and Monday demonstrations after October 9, 1989/before March 18, 1990 (controlling for the incentives of the incentives model before October 9, 1989, and for the lagged norm variable) → each of the five norm variables of 1993.
(3) Legal and illegal protest in 1993 (controlling for other incentives in 1993, and for the lagged norm variable) → each of the five norm variables of 1996.

Thus, the first set of analyses consists of five analyses. In each analysis, one of the five norms scales, measured in 1993, is a dependent variable. This is symbolized by the small arrow. In each analysis, «participation in general protests» and «participation in the Monday demonstrations» – both variables referring to the time before October 9, 1989, were included as independent variables. Finally, the other variables of the incentives model, measured for the time before October 9, 1989, were entered in the analyses as independent variables as well.

The results of the analyses are easy to report – we will not present them in detail: in the fifteen analyses there are only two effects of protest on norms: first, there is an effect of participation in the Monday demonstrations before October 9, 1989, on the discontent norm 1993. This effect is negative and significant at the .01 level, i.e. participation in the Monday demonstrations attenuates the aforementioned norm – the bivariate correlation is -.09. Second, there is a positive effect of participation in general protest before October 9, 1989, on justifications of violence in 1993 which is significant at the .05 level.

Assume that we want to trim the models so that we satisfy proponents of the rationalization hypothesis, i.e. so that we get the strongest possible effects. We can achieve this by dropping the lagged norm variable. Furthermore, we could take from the two protest variables in each regression analysis only the one that shows the highest correlation with the dependent variable. The analyses show that from the 15 possible effects we find only 4 that are statistically significant at the .05 level. Even these analyses do not confirm the general rationalization hypothesis. Consistent with this conclusion are the low bivariate correlations between the protest variables and the norms scales in each analysis: from the 30 correlations the highest one is .21, the next highest .20, 10 others are larger than or equal than .10 and smaller than .20.

DISCUSSION

The theoretical argument and the data presented in this paper raise several questions that future theorizing and research should address. In order to test our propositions we constructed several norms scales. We found that each of these scales has different effects in a given analysis. We do not have an explanation for this result. Furthermore, we found that the effects of the norms scales are different across behaviors and waves. One possible explanation for these latter effects was mentioned: maybe the effects of norms depend on the costs of a behavior. However, as our previous discussion indicates, this proposition is problematic.

An important area for future research on rationalization is to explore in more detail the conditions under which rationalizations occur and what their effects are. A starting point may be our propositions summarized in Table 2. Dissonance theory – which in our
opinion is an extension of conventional RCT – could be helpful in extending our theoretical analyses.

One issue has not been addressed in this paper: the stability of moral (and other) incentives over time. To address this issue would have required detailed statistical analyses that were not carried out for limitations of space. Table 3 gives only overall percentages and does not imply anything about changes in norms of individual actors.

So far we have examined the effects of incentives at a certain time on protest at a later time. As was noted before, it is not clear how long it takes until a change in incentives leads to changes in protest behavior. It is therefore possible that we have only captured the indirect causal effects of incentives on political action. Assume that we measured protest at time 2 and that only those incentives have an impact on protest that occur immediately before this behavior which is also at time 2. Thus, the correct model might be:

Incentives time 1 → Incentives time 2 → Protest time 2

If we measure only incentives at time 1 and protest at time 2 we will ascertain the indirect causal effect of incentives at time 1 on protest at time 2, assuming that there is some stability of incentives at time 1 and time 2. But because we wanted to examine whether norms do have causal effects on protest we had to include in the analyses norms variables that were measured earlier in time than the protest variables. Further research is needed to test models where the time interval between measurements of incentives and protest is small.

REFERENCES


SUMMARY

Three issues are addressed: (1) Can Rational Choice Theory (RCT) explain rule-governed behavior? (2) Are norms explanatory factors for behavior or are norms only invoked as rationalization after the behavior has been performed for non-normative reasons? (3) What role do norms play in explaining behavior, in comparison to other factors? In regard to question 1, it is argued that RCT can explain under what conditions individuals follow rules. In order to investigate questions 2 and 3, several hypotheses are proposed and tested by a three-wave panel study conducted between 1990 and 1996 in East Germany. The hypotheses are tested for a specific behavior: participation in political protest. In regard to the causal role of norms for explaining behavior the analyses show that norms are causes of behavior, whereas there is no evidence for the hypothesis that norms are only invoked as rationalizations. In regard to the importance of norms compared with other factors the results of our research indicate that the role of norms heavily depends on the kind of protest behavior and on the situation. The results of the panel study are consistent with the proposition that norms are more important in low-cost than in high-cost situations. However, a theoretical discussion of this explanation indicates that it is problematic.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG