**Design for a replication of the “Conformity to the descriptive norms of people with opposing political or social beliefs study” (C. Pryor, A. Perfors, P. D. L. Howe, 2019)**

**Background**

Our decisions and judgements are influenced by the way other people decide and judge. Particularly research has shown that individuals tend to prefer behaving in the same way as other people, if their behaviour is known. This finding is called the descriptive norm effect. The study we aim to replicate now is concerned with the question whether individuals still conform to other people’s decisions or judgements when they do not identify with these people. In other words, what do people do when they get information about how somebody from the outgroup behaved. Self-categorization theory is one way to predict people’s behaviour in these cases. It predicts that people will actively avoid conforming to the norms of the outgroup, so people allegedly behave the opposite way than their outgroup does. However there is another hypothesis which predicts that a general desire to conform with others is stronger than a mental ingroup vs outgroup mentality. From this would follow that people respond similarly to ingroup and outgroup norms and just do whatever is more popular in general.

**Hypothesis**

In the paper the prediction of self-categorization is tested against an alternative explanation for the descriptive norm effect:

**H0**: people’s behaviour will shift away from behaviour common amongst an outgroup

**H1**: people will simply conform to the overall descriptive norm

**Design:**

**Materials:**

The topics participants can choose among according to what they care about most are:

* Animal products
* Protesting
* Vaccination against Covid-19
* Abortion
* Political orientation

When they have chosen a topic they are presented with a statement corresponding to this topic:

* “People should not buy or eat animal products”
* “It is alright if political protesters use violence to enforce their demands”
* “Everybody who is medically suited to receive a vaccination against Covid-19 should get such a vaccination”
* “Abortion should be illegal”
* “I am politically oriented towards the left”
* “I am politically oriented towards the right”

They are also asked to answer a moral dilemma:

* “Imagine you have witnessed a man rob a bank. However, you then saw him do something unexpected with the money. He donated it all to a run-down orphanage that would benefit greatly from the money. You must decide whether to call the police and report the robber or do nothing and leave the robber alone.”

**Procedure:**

The experiment consists of four parts:

1. Introduction & instructions
2. Short questionare about demographics
3. Ingroup/outgroup determination
4. Moral dilemma

First participants will provide basic demographic information about their age and sex.

Then they have to select which social issue out of a set of five they care most about. After that participants are presented with a statement about their chosen issue, for example if they chose the topic animal products they will be presented with the statement “People should not buy or eat animal products”. Participants will have to rate on an 11-point Likert scale about this statement ranging from “Strongly dislike” (-5) to “Strongly like” (+5). These ratings will then be used to define the ingroup and the outgroup.

After that participants are shown written instructions about the task… They will be told that this study is the follow up of a previous study investigating how people feel during a moral dilemma. This background story is necessary to justify why later they will be presented with descriptive norms.

Then the participants are told that they will be presented with a scenario describing a moral dilemma and they have to choose with action they would take and rate how they would feel about it. After the presentation of the moral dilemma participants will be presented with a text informing them that 60% of the previous participants who had agreed with them about their chosen social issue chose to decide in a certain way. This constitutes an ingroup descriptive norm. Half of the participants were told that their ingroup members mostly chose to “call the police and report the robber” while the remaining half were told that their ingroup members mostly chose to “do nothing and leave the robber alone”. For example if a participant indicated that he cared most about animal products, he might have been told that “approximately 60% of participants who agreed with you about animal products chose to call the police and report the robber”. One half of the group is also told that in the previous study 85% of the participants that disagreed with them on the respective issue chose the other option.

Following this is an understanding check where participants are asked which of the following option is true about the previous study. This is to ensure that the participants are paying attention:

1. Participants chose which action they preferred (correct)

2. Due to a computer error, participants were not allocated equally to imagine performing the different actions (incorrect)

3. No data was saved during the experiment. (incorrect)

4. The participants completed the experiment with their eyes closed. (incorrect)

Finally the participants are asked to which extent they agree with two statements about identification with designated ingroup and outgroup. The statements were “I identify with [INGROUP]” and “I identify with [OUTGROUP]”, where [INGROUP] and [OUTGROUP] were replaced with the appropriate descriptions (e.g. “Pro-Animal products” and “Anti-Animal Products”). By means of these questions it should be tested whether individuals identify with the relevant ingroup and do not identify with the relevant outgroup.