Identifying Normativity in Communication Research: A Typology and a Framework for Assessing Scientific and Extrascientific Norms

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Normativity in communication research is indicated in identifying a problem, a theory, or a methodology; in interpreting empirical data; and in acknowledging a scholar's association or affiliation with a particular school of thought. However, scholars are often not aware of—or do not acknowledge—their normative assumptions, resulting in the exclusion of audiences from their arguments. This article, therefore, in arguing for an explication of norms in communication research, distinguishes among three levels of normativity, discusses the legitimacy of norms at those levels, and introduces a framework that enables scholars to reflect on their norms, an action that will help them to further compare, bridge, and synthesize different perspectives, theories, and methodologies in communication scholarship.

Keywords: meta-analysis, normativity, norms, value-freedom, Werturteilsstreit

Worldwide, an acknowledged understanding of the importance of scientific research to national economies, to societies' well-being, and to public health has upped the ante for research institutions and independent investigators to engage more in value-added, society-relevant research programs grounded in normativity. But it is not only studies with a far-reaching impact on national policies or media systems that follow certain norms, as enunciated by Gattone (2012):

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> Any analysis of social science must begin with the observation that social research does
> not take place in a vacuum. It always emerges in a specific context, with particular
> constraints and opportunities and within the framework of specific cultural norms and
> conventions. (p. 176)

The purpose of this article, then, is to establish the case for scholars to increasingly elaborate and explicate norms in communication research. It argues that social science research is, to a great extent, normative and that communication research is not an exception in this context. How to communicate effectively during a crisis, how to communicate credibly in an international context, and how journalists can address social issues responsibly and ethically are some of the fundamental questions that communication research seeks to answer. It also criticizes, cultivates, improves, and transforms social practices. In addition, it suggests solutions to social problems and drives professionalization, as does research in other forms of the social sciences (Craig, 1996; Law & Urry, 2004; Littlejohn, 1999; Zima, 2007).

Nyre (2009), while calling for an "*instructive attitude* towards mass media and communication" (p. 4, emphasis in original), observes that communication scholars "have a moral duty to use our knowledge in an attempt to improve public communication" (p. 11). Similarly, Brosius (2003) describes communication research as an "empirical normative social science"[2] (p. 411) more influenced by normative demands from society than from other disciplines. Given its practical orientation, communication research could have an opportunity to demonstrate stronger normativity than the other social sciences. As will be shown presently, taking the micro-meso-macro framework of German sociologist Schimank (1996, 2010), normativity is present and originates at various levels. The Schimank model was chosen because it describes how the potentially infinitely large space of possibilities for action is restricted by generalized orientations for action that manifest themselves in social structures.

Normativity in the social sciences in general, and in communication research in particular, is not only restricted to normative advice that scholars have offered on effective social practice. Norms already influence, explicitly or implicitly, the selection of a problem, a theory, a method, as well as an interpretation and a representation of research data, even in empirical, number-crunching research. However, the mere attention to a certain social problem is rooted in the scholar's normative framework. As Coleman (2013) states, "Social scientists can never simply describe the world as it is, but, through their choice of questions, methods and interpretations, contribute to the construction and classification of social reality" (p. 90). For instance, while examining the framing of homosexuality and heterosexuality in the media, communication researchers assume, implicitly or explicitly, that this conforms to the principle of equality, making it a sine qua non that journalists ought to report in a nondiscriminatory manner. This "oughtness" manifests normativity—as both a norm-setting and a norm-applying attribute of research. But only seldomly do communication scholars themselves or other scientists reflect on the normative underpinnings of their work (Blumler & Cushion, 2014). An issue here is the palpability of normativity, a point noted by Hansson (2014), who complains that in many disciplines, normativity is played down and concealed instead of revealed. In part, this can be explained by the fact that very often, scholars are not aware of their own normative assumptions (Weber, 1949) and the different levels of normative influence. Rather, they are cautious not

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[2] German citations were translated by the authors.

to damage their so-called value-neutral empiricism with too much normativity (Althaus, 2012). For this reason, scholars often try to present their research as objectively as possible, a practice Völker and Scholl (2014) describe as "objectivism" or a "strategy of argumentation based upon ontological premises and realistic epistemology, including normative consequences" (p. 142). Usually, a scholar's first attempt at a brief normative forecast is described at the end of a research article, often "as throwaway lines in an empirical study's concluding discussion or as preparatory throat-clearing before an empirical study is introduced" (Althaus, 2012, p. 97). However, to meet the global challenges of the expanding field of communication, scholars must clarify and reflect on their own norms within a diversity of perspectives and a pluralism of frameworks (Scheufele, 2011). By suggesting that, Scheufele contributes to a discussion first elucidated by Weber's (1949) argument for value-freedom in the social sciences and the subsequent value judgment dispute,[3] or *Werturteilsstreit* and positivism—the political-philosophical dispute between the German critical rationalists and the Frankfurt School about the methodology of the social sciences. It argues that scholarship "is inextricably embedded in the historical contexts, social values, material interests, and social struggles that produce and constitute it" (Jansen, 2002, p. 11). This, for example, is indicated in studies demonstrating that the age of researchers and a negative attitude toward youth are predictors of negative attitudes toward video games (Ferguson & Colwell, 2017).

We use Scheufele's appeal as a point of departure in this article and intend to present a framework that supports scholars in reflecting on the norms that influence their own work. Thus, this article is organized into five parts. The first delineates levels of normativity in the social sciences. The second discusses the functions and legitimacy of norms at these levels in social sciences and addresses why norms should be explicit—a normative demand in its own right. Adopting the micro-meso-macro framework of German sociologist Schimank (1996, 2010), the third introduces a framework that describes levels of normative influence on the individual scholar. Throughout, we proffer examples from communication research, particularly from journalism research, a problematic field in this regard. The fourth critically describes practices associated with various subdisciplines, schools of thought, and research traditions in communication research. The last part presents the extent to which this perspective contributes to the advancement of communication research worldwide.

A Three-Level Approach to Identifying Normativity in Communication Research

Analyzing norms poses challenges in light of the multiplicity of meanings engendered by that term, particularly across academic disciplines limiting, as it were, the chances for a consensus on social norms among scholars (Hechter & Opp, 2001; Interis, 2011). As Stemmer (2008) observes, "At least, a modest convergence lies in the fact that normativity is often associated with the idea of compulsion. Something that has normativity develops a compulsion to act" (p. 12). We therefore define norms as a group's imaginings of conditions that regulate behavior. Thus, the norm-setter, promoter of norms, or norm-sender expresses an expectation of how a norm-addressee (i.e., the target of the normative statement) ought or ought not to behave or perceive something. Hence, norms cannot be right or wrong, only valid or invalid. Their function is to ensure behavioral regularities that offer a guarantee for certain behavior and, accordingly, constitute social systems. Norms are general because they do not address a specific person, but rather all members

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[3] Even as Weber talks about values, he refers to a larger class of normative statements (Albert, 2006).

of a community sharing a specific feature, such as a nation or a group of scholars (e.g., communication researchers; Morris, 1956; Opp, 2001).

For analyzing norms in the social sciences, it is necessary to separate levels of normativity that in practice may not be discrete, but that—on an analytical level—should be delineated.[4] We suggest, therefore, a three-level approach: empirical, object related; theoretical; and metatheoretical (Table 1).

Table 1. Three Levels of Normativity.	
Empirical, object-related level	*The empirical study of norms:* Norms and values of the scholar's research object (e.g., the journalist) • Social norms (macro level) • Norms and values of an organization (meso level) • Individual norms and values (micro level)
Theoretical level	*Scholars as norm-setters:* Scholars develop or enhance existing norms and values of the research objects (micro and meso levels) and give normative advice on social issues (macro level).
Metatheoretical level	*Scholars as norm-addressees:* In their research, scholars are influenced by social norms and values. • Social norms (macro level) • Norms and values of their research institution, research group, or school of thought (meso level) • Individual norms and values (micro level) *Scholars as norm-addressees and norm-setters:* Norms of scientific practice, recruitment, scientific education *The meta-analysis of scientific norms and values:* Norms and values of research disciplines as research objects of metatheoretical studies

First, norms are an object of empirical research, as are those for the practice of public relations or journalism. They are analyzed with regard to how they manifest in practice and how journalists or public information officers comply with them. This is accomplished through empirical methods such as content analysis, guided interviews, or experiments (*empirical, object-related level of normativity*). In this article, we address secondarily this level with regard to the norms of nonscientists as research objects, but substantially discuss it with regard to the norms of scholars at the metatheoretical level.

Second, on a theoretical level, scholars mostly implicitly, but sometimes explicitly, apply or even enhance social norms or norms of a professional practice (*theoretical level of normativity*). Many theories imply

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[4] Rothenberger and Auer (2013) made a first attempt at this.

norms and value judgments because they are based on a certain conception of the self. The uses-and-gratifications approach, for instance, allocates autonomy to the individual. Objectivity is an example of an explicit guiding principle in journalism research. Many scholars have conceptualized objectivity as *the* outstanding occupational norm in journalism (e.g., Schudson, 2001; Skovsgaard, Albæk, Bro, & de Vreese, 2013; Vos, 2012). Waisbord (2013) identified several norms implicit in our "Western" apprehension and ethical guidelines of what is "good, professional journalism" in a democracy: "As a normative concept, professional journalism is typically associated with the kind of reporting that follows the ideals of modern, 'Western,' particularly U.S., journalism, such as objectivity, fairness, and public interest" (p. 7). However, in non-Western countries, he identified many other occupational practices and normative standards.

In this regard, Grunig's (1989) two-way symmetrical communication model is also an illustration of a normative model (theoretical level) in public relations research because it "explains how public relations *should* be practiced" (Grunig, 2001, p. 13, emphasis in original). Similarly, citizen journalism studies (e.g., Allan & Thorsen, 2009; Burns, 2008; Kim, 2011; Lewis, Kaufhold, & Lasorsa, 2010) are often explicitly oriented toward the assumed democratic potential of the Internet. Several guiding principles such as democracy and participation, based on a Habermasian idea of a deliberative public sphere, are therefore at the forefront of the analyses of citizen journalism: These guiding principles are built on the idea that the participation of citizens in news production and distribution enhances political participation, which leads to a "democratic shift" (Markham, 2009, p. 4) and ultimately creates new "power" that opposes the well-practiced hierarchical structures of classic news production. Citizen journalism is thus constructed as a "normative activity" (Kim, 2011, p. 2). In China, from another normative point of view, it could be interpreted by the powers as a threat to the status quo.

Third, from a metatheoretical perspective, norms also influence and guide scholarly research (*metatheoretical level of normativity*). Norms prevalent in a society, in a certain research institution, or in a research team, as well as those guiding an individual scholar, influence scientific practice. Certain European Union and other European government-subsidized institutions are, for example, the most important donors of external funding to various European research associations. In return, these funding institutions expect a commitment from funded institutions and individuals to be guided by certain democratic, pro-European norms that are then enhanced through the scientific work that commits to them (see theoretical level of normativity). As such, scientific norms inform scientific practice, be it in the form of self-proclaimed tasks or in certain requirements for the quality of scientific practice, and by the theories and methods adopted for conducting a scientific study (e.g., Hathaway, 1995; Popper, 2002; Slawski, 1974). There are scientific norms that are applied in a number of disciplines, as well as those that guide and influence a coterie of researchers in specific fields (e.g., in the social sciences; Weingartner, 2006).

As a standard practice, one also finds traces of normativity in the mission statements of various communication research associations. The Environmental Communication Division of the International Communication Association mission statement, for example, states, "It will help communication scholars improve the environmental performance of their universities, the media industries, and environmental organizations. The group will support members to integrate sustainability issues into their teaching and promote research in this area" (International Communication Association, n.d.) Such a mission statement

mirrors the existing practices through which researchers belonging to a research association or institution prescribe their own behaviors.

A more special norm discussed in the social sciences is value-freedom. Weber (1949) argues (certainly normatively) that scholars ought to make their norms and values explicit: "to keep the readers and themselves sharply aware at every moment of the standards by which they judge reality and from which the value-judgment is derived" (p. 59).

Finally, if theoretical or metatheoretical levels of normativity in research are research objects themselves (e.g., Popper, 2002; Ritzer, 1991), these studies can be called meta-analyses of normativity. From that perspective, this article is, for the most part, a meta-analysis.

Functions and Legitimacy of Normativity in Communication Research

What follows from this conceptualization of normativity in science is the question on its legitimacy because, in a methodological sense, norms, like values, are judgments, or "ought statements." Such judgments could be observed on the object level, and their representation in the context of object-related research are acceptable because they are articulated by the research objects as undertaken, for example, by journalists and by public relations or advertising practitioners. In fact, if communication research does not exclude parts of a social practice, then its norms and values must naturally be the object of empirical investigation.

At the metatheoretical level, norms of scientific work that impose requirements on the quality of scientific practice and on the theories and methods resulting therefrom are indispensable: "In order that scientific research activity be able both to ever reach its aim (truth or approximate truth) and to more efficiently reach it, it must be organized or regulated by methodological rules or norms" (Weingartner, 2006, p. 58). According to Tranøy (1980), their function is to justify and to steer, to act as guiding and legitimating principles for actions and decisions. The technical norm of logical consistency, for example, serves as a "prerequisite for systematic and valid prediction" (Merton, 1968, p. 606).

The necessity of scientific norms usually becomes clear when they are violated. If, for example, theoretical terms and concepts are not clearly defined (a normative claim many journal editors make), equivocations and misunderstandings may occur, and if results are distorted, wrong consequences can be drawn (Weingartner, 2006, p. 59). For example, in a study of articles that used content analysis as a method and were published between 1985 and 2010 in three major communication journals—*Communication Monographs, Journal of Communication and Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*—Lovejoy, Watson, Lacy and Riffe (2014), found that "a majority of the articles did not use a census or probability reliability sample and were not transparent about the sample selection process" (p. 220). It is not that the specific articles studied in these flagship journals failed to demonstrate research norms; rather, it is that they illustrated a nonstandard norm of nondisclosure. This nondisclosure might lead to a situation where, because of a lack of knowledge, conclusions and inferences are drawn for areas that were not investigated.

Gieryn's (1983) concept of "boundary-work" contends that a field stands out because of the characteristics that simultaneously create a social boundary or demarcation in regard to adjacent fields. If one wants to gain social recognition in this field, one is better advised to conduct oneself in accordance with the collective efforts to set up boundaries, to develop specific norms, and to cultivate a distinctive logic (Waisbord, 2013). Thus, a field's autonomy, intellectual authority, contributions to humanity, and resources (financial and social) can be strengthened. However, the boundaries of a field like communication research are flexible. These boundaries change with the passing of time, and they can vary with regard to the mutability of boundary-spanning fields, as was apparent in Germany, from the cultural sciences to a rapprochement to sociology. Even though Gieryn (1983) developed his concept to distinguish scientists, their work, and their products from those of nonscientists (Gieryn, 1983), it can be applied to explain the boundaries and normative differences among scientific fields as well. In his conclusion, Gieryn (1983) argues that his concept is "no doubt useful for [examining] ideological demarcations of disciplines, specialties or theoretical orientations *within* science" (p. 792, emphasis in original).

Inarguably, one can have doubts about the presence of a homogeneous canon of material and formal objects, of theories, and of methods of communication research. Certainly, the actions of distinctiveness with reference to similar or even competing academic fields have seen changes over time. For example, empirical communication research continuously increases its claim for distinction from media research and from the humanities (Huber, 2010) by using different theories and methods. Distinction is also important, particularly to find answers to the question, what will happen if the distinctive norms of an academic field are challenged?

To answer that question, it is important to acknowledge that different academic journals, editors, scholarly book publishers, research traditions, and social science research institutes—be they in the United States, Europe, or Asia—all monitor the boundaries of academic scholarship in different ways. Accordingly, an important component of dealing with norms is group pressure: orienting oneself toward the agents of the same group (field) and having the fear of expulsion if the same norms are not observed (e.g., by violating the truth and originality norm when plagiarizing in science). It is to Parsons' (2010) credit that he connects the meso-level influence on a scholar with norms. Certain normative standards may exist in publishing houses and academic institutions (meso level) that do not have to be explicated. "In some societies and groups, almost all normative patterns, including the most important institutions, are entirely informally enforced" (Parsons, 2010, p. 157). If the informal norms are not met, moral or ethical sanctioning on the part of the agents belonging to the institute will occur. "Deviant behavior typically arouses the reaction, on the part of others, of moral indignation" (Parsons, 2010, p. 153). Bunz (2005), in a study of communication discipline's publication conventions, found that if "an editor indicates a clear preference for quantitative studies, then scholars favoring quantitative methods are more likely to have their manuscripts accepted during the tenure of this editor than scholars favoring, for example, rhetorical or ethnographic methods" (p. 717). Boundaries are created and set, and subsequently, new conditions or a new generation with new assumptions emerges and breaks from the old boundaries, testing "usually tacit assumptions that theorists make about the domains with which they concern themselves" (Gouldner, 1970, p. 34).

Norms arise within the field and in contradistinction to other fields: "When the goal is *monopolization* of professional authority and resources, boundary-work excludes rivals from within by defining them as outsiders" (Gieryn, 1983, p. 792, emphasis in original). Gieryn (1983) identifies expansion, monopolization, and protection of autonomy as "generic features" (p. 792) of professionalization. The actors in the field will be reinforcing and justifying the norms of their profession in the face of threats, and they will try to keep their privileges, such as research grants, within the autonomous group. Gieryn (1983) refers to it as "antinomies in the institution of science" (p. 792). We refer to it as contradicting norms that are defended by different agents and groups in the subfields of the communication research: pureness versus application of research, objectivity versus subjectivity, exactness versus estimation, and democratic confirmation versus elitist confirmation.

With regard to the influence of extrascientific norms on scientific practice (*metatheoretical level*), the issue gets more contentious: In the first phase of the scientific research process, norms are constitutive for the identification of a social problem (Weber, 1949) and thus have a heuristic function. Without guiding principles, some questions would not arise. For instance, without taking up the guiding principle of democratic jurisdiction, it would be irrelevant for scholars to analyze if a judge or state attorney acts according to the media logic (Scheufele, 2011). An article about the fact that social media and Web TV increase audience segmentation will have to answer whether this is "good" or "bad" from a normative point of view. And one takes a different normative starting point if one analyzes the role of the media from a watchdog perspective or from a lapdog view of submissive media (Donohue, Tichenor, & Olien, 1995).

There are existential and normative background assumptions that in fact cannot be separated from each other. The normative background assumptions are "beliefs about their moral value, their goodness or badness" (Gouldner, 1970, p. 32). Hence, research is carried out on the basis of prior assumptions. These are incorporated into a lifelong process (for a Bourdieusian perspective on this issue, see Rothenberger, Auer, & Pratt, 2017). Gouldner (1970) defines them as follows:

> They are affectively-laden cognitive tools that are developed early in the course of our socialization into a particular culture and are built deeply into our character structure. They are therefore likely to change with changes in modal or "social character," to vary with changes in socialization experiences and practices, and therefore to differ with different age or peer groups. (p. 32)

The influence of extrascientific norms and values, however, becomes problematic with regard to the theoretical level. Weber's value-freedom postulate resonates with this level. But, whereas he and his followers contend that "value-orientations may . . . have an impact on the way a question is objectively formulated, but the question itself can be dealt with without the interference of value judgments" (Albert, 1976, p. 175), we argue that this obscures the fact that both theories and empirical research are normatively shaped (e.g., Zima, 2007). Following Zima (2007), we therefore argue that in the social sciences, and, thus, in communication research in particular, "value-freedom only makes sense if it is interpreted . . . as critical distance towards one's own ideology . . . and towards one's own discourse" (p. 61). This becomes even more relevant with regard to the fact that scholars have the power to establish and share norms (theoretical level of normativity). With regard to the close connection between research

and education, consider, for example, that journalism is a research discipline and a training area—scholars let their findings be known in seminars and in literature of academic journalism education (Weaver & McCombs, 1980). In this context, then, normative ideas enunciated in research enter social practice (for a critical view on this, see Blumler & Cushion, 2014). This makes it even more important to stress the normative influences on research results and the consequences drawn therefrom for social practice.

But why would scholars need to explain constantly in their works that their studies are based on democratic ideas, especially when their work is likely to be perceived by a community that shares the same idea of democracy? It is primarily because it may exclude from the argument certain audiences who may not share the same idea of democracy indicated in a study. This argument takes us to Weber (1949), who asserts,

> It has been and remains true that a systematically correct scientific proof in the social sciences, if it is to achieve its purpose, must be acknowledged as correct even by a Chinese—or—more precisely stated—it must constantly strive to attain this goal. (p. 58)

Yet, some researchers assume that what they think the media should be or should do in democratic Western societies is transferrable to a global context, regardless of a multitude of restrictions in socioeconomic and security environments in which the media in some countries have to function (e.g., Ward, 2010). To demand that media equality, diversity, or impartiality should offer a normative base to globalized journalism means to turn against or underestimate the manifold normative approaches practiced in other parts of the world; in Asia and Africa, for example, envelope journalism is standard practice. To be sure, the demand to recognize other normative approaches is a normative stance in itself.

There is an abundance of literature on the "Global North/Global South" complex of problems that underpin the inequality of country representation in communication science. Curran and Park (2000) write about "a growing reaction against the self-absorption and parochialism of much Western media theory" (p. 3). The results of Demeter's (2017) network analysis of leading publications in communication and media studies journals show that "most of the scientific publications are written by authors from a very few winner-countries, and the real loser of the field is obviously the CEE region" (p. 402). These dominant countries "represent only 9% of the international community, but they have almost 90% of the articles in Q1-level journals" (p. 419). It goes without saying that the norms inherent to our discipline are shaped by (English-language native) representatives of these "winner countries," taking into account that 84% of all managing editors of 40 communication journals were from the United States (Lauf, 2005). With Wiedemann and Meyen (2016), we can conclude—drawing on the terminology of Pierre Bourdieu—that "the field's power pole is still a U.S.-centered enterprise" (p. 1489).

Media systems, as well as academic systems and communication styles, differ tremendously across world regions. A strong commitment to the principles of democracy is a prominent example where Western scholars are influenced by ancient (Greek) philosophical tradition—in contrast to many other de-Westernized approaches around the world (Grüne & Ulrich, 2012). Lauk (2015) gives the example of Central and Eastern European countries in which

the efforts at exporting the philosophy and elements of the liberal (Anglo-American) model of journalism were not successful . . . although this model has been generally accepted by media practitioners and theorists as the dominant ideal of a responsible and professional journalism. (p. 1)

However, the purely Western perspective was not able to entirely explain the media development in the transforming societies.

While reviewing different publications in journalism and the media, Josephi (2005) also found that Anglo-American (democracy) models are dominant—in the sense of "quality journalism [as] independent, accurate, open to appraisal, edited and uncensored" (in Shapiro, 2010, p. 143). However, normatively defining journalism in relation to democracy (*theoretical level*) has consequences for communicators in societies that adhere to other normative claims; professional communicators in many countries would then be seen not as journalists but as simple information providers (Josephi, 2005). As such, "normative expectations skew results and veil actual practice" (Josephi, 2005, p. 575). For instance, in the socialist norm and value system of the former USSR and the German Democratic Republic, we find different assumptions about the closeness and role of journalism with regard to that particular political system (Sektion Journalistik, 1979). Hence, claims on a theoretical level are problematic, particularly when a scholar does not explain the normative background that led thereto—whether she or he argues from a libertarian, utilitarian, socialist, or another viewpoint.

During the course of a research study, attempts are made to identify and deactivate the subjectivity of the research by including empirical testing procedures or consensual validation of theories, intercoder reliability tests, and interpersonal criticisms found in reviews. Still, despite all these efforts, extrascientific values and norms cannot be excluded from scientific practice: "We cannot rob the scientist of his partisanship without also robbing him of his humanity, and we cannot suppress or destroy his value judgments without destroying him as a human being *and as a scientist*" (Popper, 1976, p. 97, emphasis in original). But what scientists can do is make such judgments explicit.

Some authors already do, as an informal review of recent journal articles suggests (and it might even be the case that book authors provide more [often] space to normative reflections). In mid-November 2018, we examined the abstracts and the introductory section of the first 20 articles posted on the website of the *International Journal of Communication*. In seven articles, we found implicit or explicit statements of normativity. (We noted that there was a fine line between both forms of statements.) Some articles implicitly criticized conditions such as the imbalance in global media flows, with a continuing dominance of productions from the Global North (Iordache & Livémont, 2018). One article explicitly advocated the norm of the media's watchdog role and "the media's role as a global forth estate" (Berglez & Gearing, 2018, p. 4573). Only one study admitted that it would be "a normative study of broadcast regulators in the Arab World" (Zaid, 2018, p. 4401), thus acknowledging the norms of regulatory institutions as a research object. In other articles, norms like fairness, confidentiality, honesty, and helpfulness were scrutinized. One article asked normatively how emerging democracies can engage rural and mobile citizens in deliberative democracy (Hahn, 2018, p. 4379), once again adopting an avowedly "Western" perspective.

A Typology of Scientific and Extrascientific Norms

What is largely missing in contemporary communication research is a theoretical framework for explaining the influences that emanate from different levels of normativity, a framework that could inform a scholar's normativity at theoretical and metatheoretical levels. Therefore, we propose a theoretical framework while building on the social integrative multilevel approach presented by German sociologist Schimank (1996, 2010).

Similar to the argument of Giddens (1984), Schimank (1996) states that human action is influenced by social structures that are simultaneously reproduced by that action. However, he makes analytical distinctions among these social structures with regard to the micro, meso, and macro levels of society. This delineation of social structures helps us understand the different occurrences of norms. The following framework can help a researcher explicate her or his own, as well as others', normativity. Referring to Schimank (1996), we assume that scientific practice on all the aforementioned levels is guided by social structures.

Macro level: Scientific practice is influenced by the logic of the scientific system, the so-called subsystemic orientation horizon. This horizon constitutes specific rationalities of action through a binary code (Schimank, 1996). Like any other scientific discipline, communication research epistemologically commits to the binary code of science—that is, according to Luhmann's (1995) systems theory, "true"/"false." It affects the researcher, but also the publishing or funding processes by its postulated norms of scientific practice like scientometry, the adherence to the double-blind peer review system that checks the theoretical, analytical, and methodological soundness of scientific articles. Influences are further social norms and value of a specific political or economic system, be it, for instance, liberal or socialist (Ritzer, 1991).

Meso level: At this level, research is influenced by institutionalized normative expectations of professions and institutions, such as various laws and codes of conduct, but also by informal normative expectations such as rites or manners (Schimank, 2010). The more complex a social system is, the more norms and rules become institutionalized in contracts, conventions, laws, or statutes to ensure synchrony of modes of behavior (Lamnek, 2002). Norms are thus part of the (national, organizational, or group) culture and are assumed to be transmitted through socialization (Opp, 2001). At the meso level, there is an overarching importance of theoretical traditions or methodological preferences of a scholar's institution or school of thought across institutions, as was the case in the Frankfurt School, the Birmingham School, and the Chicago School (e.g., Bryant & Miron, 2004; Ritzer, 1991; Rosengren, 1993). For instance, the quantitative research orientation of the Columbia School to which Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz belonged stood in contrast to the Chicago School of Robert E. Park, George Herbert Mead, and Kurt and Gladys Lang that followed more qualitative paths to exploring social (communication) problems. Similarly, scholars belonging to these two opposing schools of thought follow and coin specific guiding principles. Differences are visible even in the faculty and student recruitment criteria of these schools because only scholars with similar normative backgrounds are accepted. Within each group, implicit or explicit norms are mutually reinforced by its followers. Institutionalized normative expectations also help explain why communication scholars belonging to a certain school of thought deal extensively with certain societal problems that are in sync with the objectives of their institutions, while leaving other equally important issues untouched or

responding to them only marginally. Throughout the history of communication studies, we observe certain adjustment processes aimed at mainstreaming communication research. As Potthoff and Weischenberg (2014) state, "Communication science, e.g., has to query, *why* its main focus traditionally is on mass communication even though interpersonal communication constitutes a substantial part of the occurring communication as well" (p. 273, emphasis in original). Critics have also raised concerns regarding the selection and application of methods by scholars for communication research, as Meyen (2012) observes: "Quantitative methods promise recognition in both academia and industry and therefore more symbolic capital than purely theoretical pieces or a study based on in-depth interviews only" (p. 2390). Löblich (2010) terms the tendency of contemporary research to prove scientific statements with quantitative data as the "norms of the empirical analytical research" (p. 84). This leads to the assumption "that existing research traditions operate like a norm which defines research outside this tradition as more or less unimportant" (Potthoff & Weischenberg, 2014, p. 273). Hence, the selection of a topic, theory, and research method for a scientific study also influences the chances of its success in a publication process. In addition, research traditions shape the funding programs for scholars and vice versa: "Scholars working in interpersonal, nonverbal, or everyday communication are . . . familiar with this problem. 'Grants are rare' in those areas, said Steve Duck [an ICA fellow Meyen interviewed]" (Meyen, 2012, p. 2393). Thus, organizational normative influences on the meso level shape the trajectories in communication research.

Micro level: *Personal characteristics*, attitudes, ideas, and role understandings of a scholar, as well as her or his interactions with other scholars, are influential when it comes to norms on the micro level. In his interviews with ICA fellows, Meyen (2012) observes that the "focus on making a difference"—which he later (Meyen, 2013, p. 118) identifies as a norm in U.S. communication studies—"was . . . strengthened by the values instilled by a religious education and the idea of contributing socially, learned early in life" (p. 2388). The mere attention to a certain social problem is rooted in the scholar's own normative framework. Similarly, membership in a political party or in a confessional binding may normatively influence the research design and interpretation of research findings. Whoever decides to investigate ombudspeople on editorial teams takes the view that they are either necessary or not. After an analysis of the case of German scholar Gerhard Maletzke, Lacasa-Mas, Meyen, and Löblich (2015) highlight "the importance of reviewing a scientific study in the context of the biography of its author and the structures of science" (p. 101). Waisbord (2013) also adheres to the opinion that "normative limitations and contributions of professionalism cannot be dissociated from specific historical and political contexts" (p. 9).

In interactions, a set of normative interaction patterns offers a frame of reference for the meanings shared by the agents. This, at the same time, again stabilizes the pattern of the interaction. This interaction can take place among individuals, organizations, or fields, as well as among systems. The cultural patterns or standards always codetermine these interactions. In sum, norms and hereditary and environmental factors influence action (Funk, 2009). This was palpable vis-à-vis German communication studies during the Nazi era, when an extreme group pressure demanded conformity with the then-valid norms, such as the notion of the press as the leader of the masses. Accordingly, an important component in dealing with norms is group pressure: orienting oneself toward the agents of the same group (field) and fearing expulsion if the same norms are not observed (e.g., by violating the truth and originality norm when plagiarizing in science). Certain normative standards may exist in institutions (meso level) that do not have to be explicated. "In some societies and groups, almost all normative patterns, including the most important institutions, are

entirely informally enforced" (Parsons, 2010, p. 157). If the informal norms are not met, moral or ethical sanctioning on the part of the agents belonging to the institute will occur. "Deviant behavior typically arouses the reaction, on the part of others, of moral indignation" (Parsons, 2010, p. 153).

The individual behavior of scholars influenced by norms at the micro, meso, and macro levels therefore reproduces or modifies the norms that then again inform individual behavior. Here, Schimank builds on Giddens' (1993) "duality of structure," which asserts that structures are a medium and result of action. This conceptualization helps explain why norms are transitory as normative principles continuously appear and disappear. They are produced, negotiated, rehearsed, and perpetuated—and from time to time also negated and abolished. This "oblivionism" depends on whether scientists turn toward (reproduction of norms) or turn away from previous normative research traditions (norm change).

Conclusion and Discussion

"The broad church of public communication . . . is an inescapably normative domain" (Blumer & Cushion, 2014, p. 261). This is why we proposed a way to unpack the influences of norms for best practices in communication research. We have attempted to demonstrate that scholars take a normative stance in different phases of a research process, and we have demonstrated why it is problematic that communication scholars seldom reflect it. A discussion about norms and values is both necessary and possible because it elaborates and explicates the premises on which researchers often base their work (Rothenberger et al., 2017; Weber, 1949). In this article, we outlined a scheme based on the three aforementioned levels that can help scholars reflect on and project their own or others' normative stance. The integrative conceptualization of the influence of norms helps guide responses to those questions at the following three levels.

Macro level: At this level, scholars can ask which social norms they adhere to. In this context, it is also important to clarify the scope and conditions of the study and its theory to protect it "from being tested under conditions never intended by the theorist" (Markovsky, 2005, p. 832). Freelon (2015) provides a good example of how to introduce general normative expectations guiding one's study:

> Studies of political discussions online have been dominated by approaches that focus exclusively on deliberation, ignoring other equally relevant communication norms. This study conducts a normative assessment of discussion spaces in two prominent web platforms . . . applying the norms of communitarianism, liberal individualism, and deliberation. (p. 772)

Meso level: Scholars can ask which norms and values of their research institutions, research groups, or schools of thought in communication studies or in the broader scope of social sciences they follow. As noted by Lacasa-Mas and colleagues (2015), scientific investigations are "influenced by the social location of thinkers" (p. 102). This locating is heavily influenced by the scientific environment, by the surrounding institutional body, and by the school of thought inspiring a respective department. One possibility to explicate it is presented by Stromer-Galley (2014): "The philosophical orientation of this book aligns with the normative vision set forth by Benjamin Barber in *Strong Democracy*" (p. 4).

Micro level: At this level, scholars can clarify the individual norms and values they adhere to, for example, in how far their upbringing or their cooperation with other authors influences their own guiding principles. Coleman (2013) gives an example on how one can start with an article and lay out one's normative background: "At the normative core of the analysis set out in the following pages is the assumption that, like any other complex communicative act, the expression of preferences calls for affective investment" (p. viii).

As soon as scholars become aware of their personal (micro level), institutional (meso level), and social (macro level) normative backgrounds, their respective disciplines engage in dialogue with themselves and diminish what Rosengren (1993) calls "fragmentation" or "isolated frog ponds" (p. 9) with little productive croaking among them. The theoretical framework can thus help clarify normativity regarding issues that relate to different perspectives, research traditions, theories, and methodologies in communication scholarship worldwide. It can be a tool that connects analytical dots across subfields in communication studies, a tool to compare, bridge, and synthesize frameworks, if open discourse about normativity in communication scholarship is made possible and taken seriously. However, norms becoming explicit could lead to more lines being drawn and more dialogues being muted, as often happened in the divide between critical scholars and empirical social scientists; this should be avoided.

Furthermore, as scholars are continuously asked to communicate their findings and (policy) recommendations to the public, politicians, and educators, it will not suffice to make normative implications explicit purely in scientific discourse, at academic conferences, or in research journals. Rather, scholars also need to address the issue of normativity with regard to transferring scientific knowledge to the public. In none of these cases will normative assertions narrow a scholar's claim to objectivity; rather, they will undergird her or his standpoint and suggestions—for example, voting for a public service broadcasting system, arguing for specific times during which children are allowed to watch television (perhaps unsupervised), or advocating two-way symmetrical communications.

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