

When Policy Illegitimacy Provides Cause for
Acceptance of Political Violence:
Experimental Evidence from Denmark

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Steffen Selmer Andersen
Aarhus, October 2021

Chapter 1:

Introduction

On 17 November 2017, mass demonstrations broke out in France. The Yellow Vests were mobilized because of rising oil and fuel prices, the high cost of living and economic inequality. In the following weeks, protests across France turned violent, and protesters lit fires in the street, vandalized the Arc de Triomphe, torched hundreds of cars, built barricades and tore up cobble stones (Lichfield, 2018). Thousands were severely injured (Cnews, 2019). While the weekly protests and occasional violent encounters were still occurring around France, the 2019-2020 Hong Kong protests against the Fugitive Offenders amendment bill on extraction erupted. By 9 December 2019, two people had died during the protests and 2,600 were injured (RTHK News, 2019). Several reports documented extreme police brutality, and the resulting property damage was estimated at more than 755 million USD (Law, 2019; Tam, 2019; Yau, 2019). More recently, on the afternoon of 6 January 2021, the United States Capitol in Washington D.C. was breached by a mob of supporters of then President Donald J. Trump. Five people died during the event, and 138 police officers were severely injured (McEvoy, 2021).

Unfortunately, these events illustrate that political violence is a reoccurring global phenomenon, which in addition to its atrocious costs in human lives, has detrimental social, political and economic consequences. These events illustrate that political violence is often the outcome of citizens' conceptions of current policies and political leaders as being fundamentally illegitimate. In France, protesters blamed the government and president Emmanuel Macron personally for increasing oil and fuel prices, referring to them as 'traitors of France'. In Hong Kong, protesters targeted both their government and mainland China for its involvement in the enactment of the Fugitive Offenders amendment bill on extraction, which they saw as a violent of the 'one country, two systems' principle. Similarly, Trump supporters yelled 'Stop the steal', referring to the presidential election victory two months of the Democrat John Biden, which they believed to be the consequence of electoral fraud. Even though the eruption of these events undoubtedly was affected by deeper structural conditions such as growing inequalities in wealth, education and health along with increased social and political polarization, the aggrieved citizens all shared deeply felt perceptions of current policies as illegitimate. Moreover, these underlying grievances were combined with views on specific policies and political figures as being fundamentally unfair, inappropriate and wrong.

As such, one would think that the literatures within the social sciences at least to some degree had covered the importance of policy illegitimacy as a potential causal factor for political violence. However, this is not the case. Instead, scholars have (not necessarily intentionally) neglected the study of policy illegitimacy, while being preoccupied with other explanations such as mental illnesses (Gill & Corner, 2017; Misiak et al., 2019), personality traits (Chabrol et al., 2020; Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2021a), situational factors (Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2021b; Hogg & Adelman, 2013; Kruglanski et al., 2009; Kruglanski et al., 2017), group dynamics (Bokhari, 2006; Sageman, 2004), social media (Huey, 2015; Thompson, 2011) or recruitment (Hegghammer, 2006, 2013; Wiktorowicz, 2004), and to some degree structural factors such as unemployment rates (Bhatia & Ghanem, 2017; Botha, 2014), globalization (Moghaddam, 2008; Ozer, 2020), poverty (Mkutu & Opondo, 2021; Taylor, 2020) or discrimination (Frounfelker et al., 2019; Lyons-Padilla, 2015). According to Malthaner (2017), scholars simply tend to assume that perceived policy illegitimacy and accompanying political grievances matter, without actually investigating the degree of their importance and how they might matter. This is not a recent state of affairs; well-known scholars (e.g. Crenshaw, 1981; Sprinzak, 1991) made this point more than 30 years ago. As such, it is puzzling that we have not come further in theorizing, investigating or discussing the role of policy illegitimacy as a potential driver for political violence. This puzzle led to the following question, which guided the research conducted in this dissertation:

*Does policy illegitimacy affect acceptance of political violence,
and (if so) under which circumstances?*

In this dissertation, which is comprised of three papers and the present summary report, I suggest that to better understand and counter political violence, we must start taking policy illegitimacy more seriously by elevating it from being mentioned as a background factor in radicalization to a potential independent process trigger. Only by understanding the causes of political violence are we able to develop well-functioning interventions and channel legitimate political grievances into democratic input rather than political violence. Below, I provide an overview of the research undertaken to answer the research question, and the structure of the summary report.

1.1. What to be gained from this dissertation and where to find it

This summary report encapsulates my PhD dissertation: *When Policy Illegitimacy Provides Cause for Acceptance of Political Violence: Experimental Evidence from Denmark*. The dissertation serves as the conclusion of a PhD project conducted at the Department of Political Science, Aarhus University. In this summary, I present the dissertation's essential elements and the specific research carried out. The aim of the summary is twofold. First, it binds together the three papers in a comprehensive way. Second, it promotes further reflection and discussion of the presented themes by considering the academic and practical implications of this dissertation.

The overall contribution of the dissertation is to link perceptions of policy illegitimacy causally with acceptance of political violence, and moreover illustrate how this process might escalate because of enclave deliberation. This finding can be divided into four independent contributions. First, I bring policy illegitimacy to the forefront as a driver for acceptance of political violence, which hitherto has been neglected in the literature. Second, I identify both a theoretical and a methodological gap in the literature on the causes of acceptance of political violence. Third and related, I fill the theoretical gap by developing a theoretical model with inspiration from various academic fields, which connects specific policy features with policy illegitimacy perceptions and acceptance of political violence. Lastly, I provide causal evidence backing this theoretical model by developing and implementing novel experimental research designs, thus filling the methodological gap as well.

To answer the research question, I engage with the academic literature on the causes and consequences of political violence. By utilizing knowledge on political violence gained within academic fields including political science, communication, terrorism studies, criminology and psychology, I develop a theoretical framework that connects policy, legitimacy evaluations and acceptance of political violence. Moreover, in this work, I developed novel research designs with the aim of gaining causal evidence. As such, the papers' theoretical components should be seen in relation to each other, while the use of experimental designs provides initial steps toward a literature on political violence focused more on providing causal evidence. Table 1 gives an overview of the three papers. Each papers contain detailed walkthroughs of theoretical arguments, methods, measurements and analyses regarding each paper's independent research question.

In Paper A, I take a step back from the research question presented above and investigate how citizens form their policy legitimacy evaluations. It is an ongoing debate whether these evaluations stem from perceptions of a policy's

substance or the procedures by which the policy was enacted/abolished. In the paper, I develop and utilize two large-N factorial survey experiments to find that citizens seem to favour outcome over procedure when they evaluate policy legitimacy. While this is a contribution in itself to the literatures on policy legitimacy and procedural justice, I utilized the knowledge on how policy legitimacy perceptions are formed to develop experimental stimuli for the designs used in the other papers. Specifically, I find that citizens to more greatly value policy substance relative to policy-making procedures, and I utilized this causally backed evidence in the other two papers to manipulate citizens' perceptions of current policies' legitimacy. Building on this work, I show in Paper B that perceptions of policy illegitimacy increases citizens' acceptance of violence, which is backed by evidence gathered from a nationally representative large-N survey experiment conducted in Denmark. Moreover, this effect is not reserved for people with specific ideologies, which means that people might accept political violence regardless of their ideological worldviews. In this sense, ideology serves as a lens that might provide citizens with a diagnosis of why a given policy is wrong, and a prescription for what to do about it, which might include violent action. Lastly, in Paper C, I examine how enclave deliberation may lead to amplification of perceptions of policy illegitimacy but also a generally higher acceptance of political violence at the meso level. Specifically, I test how enclave deliberation of policy illegitimacy might trigger a process of delegitimation that potentially translate into acceptance of political violence.

This summary proceeds as follows. I conclude this introduction by presenting the three key contributions of this dissertation in the next subsection. In Chapter 2, I review the existing literature on the factors that have been argued to explain political violence and generally violent behaviour. In this chapter, I identify two gaps in the existing literature, one being the tendency to neglect the importance of policy illegitimacy as a potential driver for radicalization, and the other concerning the continuing lack of causally-oriented studies within the literature on political violence. After discussing these gaps, I fill the theoretical one by presenting a theoretical model in Chapter 3 that links perceptions of policy illegitimacy to acceptance of political violence. Specifically, I discuss how policy legitimacy evaluations are formed, and how perceiving a policy as illegitimate might increase one's acceptance of political violence via a process of delegitimation. I add to the theoretical model by theorizing how the process of delegitimation functions at the meso level, specifically through enclave deliberation. Next, I discuss how to fill the methodological gap in our literature in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I present the methods utilized to investigate the proposed theoretical model. Specifically, I argue that we have come a long way with qualitative research and correlational studies,

but we still need other methods with a special emphasis on causality to test the theoretical propositions. I discuss why I chose an experimental approach to investigate the proposed theoretical model, the ethical considerations regarding this approach and its limitations. After identifying and filling the two gaps, I present the main findings from the three papers in Chapter 5. Secondary findings are addressed in detail in the individual papers. Finally, I summarize the findings in Chapter 6 in relation to the presented theoretical model, and discuss them along with their implications for both academia and efforts to counter radicalization, extremism and political violence.

I conclude by asserting that my research illustrates how we can widen our understanding of why acceptance of political violence might rise by investigating policy illegitimacy as a potentially independent causal factor. Citizens might be triggered by – in their eyes – illegitimate policy content and thus partake in a process of delegitimation of the state and its officials, which ultimately may lead to political violence. Through collective activities like discussions in likeminded groups, aggrieved citizens' illegitimacy perceptions might amplify alongside their acceptance of political violence. This work does not imply that we should stop enacting contested policies – this is a part of democratic systems. However, it implies that new preventive interventions can be fruitful, when they focus on (1) treating politically aggrieved and potentially violent actors as political actors with legitimate political goals, (2) countering acceptance of political violence rather than specific ideological viewpoints, and (3) fostering the usage of existing or new democratic channels for addressing political grievances.

Table 1. Overview of papers in the dissertation

Paper	Title and publication information
A	Substance before Procedure? An Experimental Test of which Dimensions Matter When Citizens Evaluate Policy Legitimacy. <i>Under review.</i>
B	Perceived Policy Illegitimacy Leads to Acceptance of Violence: Evidence from a Nationally Representative Survey Experiment in Denmark. <i>Under review.</i>
C	Accepting Violence? A Laboratory Experiment of the Violent Consequences of Deliberation in Politically Aggrieved Enclaves. <i>Under review.</i>

Note: All papers are single-authored. Papers' identifying letters are used throughout this summary.

Chapter 2: Extant Literature

Despite the fact that the literature on political violence is relatively well-developed, it still suffers from at least two shortcomings. First, few scholars have studied the potential violent effects of policy illegitimacy, which I argue might be caused by a preoccupation with factors such as mental health, the hunt for a ‘radical profile’ and a strong emphasis on social networks and recruitment. Second, several recent reviews of this literature suggest that we still lack causally oriented studies to supplement our hitherto strong emphasis on qualitative research and correlational studies (Feddes & Gallucci, 2015; Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2018; Jensen et al., 2020; McGilloway et al., 2015; Schuurman, 2020; Vergani et al., 2020).

I open this chapter by discussing how we should understand the concepts of political violence and radicalization. Second, I present the literature on the causes of radicalization and political violence, in which I identify the two shortcomings mentioned above. As a consequence I split the literature review into two parts. In the first part, I present a brief overview of some of the most prominent theoretical explanations for political violence, which I place into three broad categories covering (1) psychopathy and mental disorders, (2) dispositional and situational factors and (3) social networks and recruitment. It would be incorrect to characterise these categories as mutually exclusive, as scholars (especially in more recent work) draw on a multitude of factors when explaining actions of political violence. I, however, stick with these categories for the sake of theoretical clarity. I end this first part of the review with a short walkthrough of what we actually know regarding the potential violent consequences of policy illegitimacy, which also serves as a fundament for the theoretical argument presented in Chapter 3. In the second part of the review, I present the most recent findings regarding how scholars have methodologically investigated the question of why political violence occurs. As such, I rely on the most recent meta-studies and literature reviews in order to emphasise that we still lack causally oriented studies to test existing theories, supplement existing case-studies and develop the field further.

2.1. Defining acceptance of political violence and radicalization

Before delving into the literature review, we need conceptual clarity on the primary object of interest in this dissertation, namely acceptance of political

violence. In this subsection, I present two key distinctions related to the term ‘acceptance of political violence’.

In their seminal work, McCauley and Moskalenko (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017; Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009) distinguished acceptance of political violence from both political activism and violent political behaviour, which are distinctions I follow in this dissertation. First, these authors differentiate between what they call political radicalism and political activism. The former includes illegal violent behaviour such as attacks on police, rioting, politically motivated attacks on perceived foes and so on, and the latter contains legal non-violent actions, for example participating in demonstrations, raising funds, engaging with local policies or administering a petition. In this view, radicalism is a substantially different category of political behaviour, and not just an extreme or escalated form of political activism (Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009). Thus, political violence should not be seen as a homogenous category, but instead as a variety of different political actions, which typically are illegal. The common denominator for these actions is a willingness to risk violent outcomes on your own or others’ behalf in situations where peaceful responses are possible. In distinguishing these two categories of political action, the authors argue that radicalism is more than an extreme form of political action (Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009, 255). Thus, political activism and political radicalism may be competing types of responses to a perceived political change. As such activists and radicals might be fighting for the same cause, but disagree on how to best bring about their preferred change.

The second important distinction McCauley and Moskalenko make is between extremist attitudes and violent behaviour. Similar to the fact that activism does not necessarily lead to radicalism, having extremist attitudes does not necessarily lead to violent political behaviour. It might be that substantially more people accept political violence, but inferring that the same people for that reason might partake in violent action themselves is a conceptual stretch. One can accept political violence without ever having engaged in political violence. As such, we might expect more people to accept political violence than the number of people who actually have participated in politically motivated violent action. Thus, the object of interest in this dissertation – acceptance of political violence – should be seen as an extremist attitude.

Even though the radicalization literature still discusses how to properly define radicalization (Schmid, 2013; Sedgwick, 2010), I believe that we can utilize McCauley and Moskalenko’s distinctions in this endeavour. In this view, radicalization can be understood as the process by which one come to accept political violence or ultimately partake in a violent political action.

Although these dimensions provide us with a tool to conceptually distinguish activism from radicalism, and extremist attitudes and acceptance of violence from behaviour, the literature seldom makes this distinction (Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2019). In this dissertation, I acknowledge these distinctions, and thus specifically zoom in on acceptance of political violence as the object of analysis. I elaborate further when discussing the operationalization of this key object of interest in Chapter 4, Section 4.6.2.

In the next subsection, I review the literature on the causes for radicalization and acceptance of political violence. In the review, I include studies that investigate the causes for violent action. I do so, because I hold that we must expect that acceptance of political violence to some degree is a predecessor for undertaking violent political action. Simply put, one has to accept violent means to actually use them, which is different from saying that acceptance of political violence leads to violent behaviour. Therefore, I believe that there is a substantial overlap in the causes for acceptance of political violence and the causes for violent political action, even though the concepts are distinct. As a consequence, this dissertation aims at understanding the psychological state that most likely preludes actual violent action.

2.2. A theoretical gap: What causes political violence?

2.2.1. ‘They must be psychopaths!’

A popular notion when answering the question of why some people act violently is that the perpetrators must be insane or psychopathic. Within terrorism studies, this notion has received considerable scholarly attention (e.g. Cooper, 1977; Hacker, 1976; Pearce & Macmillan, 1977; Skeem et al., 2011). In what Gill and Corner (2017) call the first paradigm of the study of the relationship between mental disorders and terrorist engagement, many early published analyses concluded that psychopathy was *the* core explanatory variable. Scholars referred (often anecdotally or grounded in views presented in popular culture) to terrorists as having deviant characteristics. Pearce and Macmillan (1977) perceived terrorists as sociopaths due to their lack of self-monitoring, and violence and extremism provided an outlet for underlying mental health problems. Based on an analysis of Reinhardt Heydrich and Andreas Baader, Cooper (1978) argued that terrorists possess psychopathic or sociopathic personalities, and if ‘such people’ did not partake in political violence, they would find another arena for their violent tendencies – it was simply inevitable. Tanay (1987) similarly argued that terror attacks are merely psychopathic acts of violence which are hidden behind political rhetoric as a

smokescreen. This ‘psychopath-as-terrorist’ perspective advanced with limited empirical evidence, which made Viktoroff (2005) raise the question of whether acts of terrorism are perceived as antisocial or rather pro-social by the actors. In a thorough review, he argues that many terrorist acts should be understood as prosocial acts in the eyes of the terrorists. As such, Viktoroff illustrates that while some antisocial individuals with what we can call psychopathic tendencies at times use the moral cover of group affiliation to disguise their aggressive and remorseless drives, more often terrorists believe themselves to be serving society and might be judged similarly by their in-group. As Ferracuti stated: ‘Sociopaths may sometimes be among the terrorists, but terrorists are not, by virtue of their political violence necessarily sociopaths’ (Ferracuti, 1982).

This led to a tendency in the radicalization literature to disregard the notion that mental illnesses predict political violence (Gill & Corner, 2017). However, Skeem et al. (2011) conclude in their more recent review of the relationship between psychopathy and criminal behaviour that psychopathic criminals are at elevated risk for future crime. Along these lines, Gill & Corner (2017) find an overrepresentation of people with mental illnesses among the subgroup of people who engage in political violence on their own (i.e. lone actors). Similarly, Weenink (2015) finds that 8.6 % of a sample of 140 foreign fighters who travelled from the Netherlands to fight in the Syrian civil war had a diagnosed disorder.

In sum, policy illegitimacy played a minimal (if not non-existent) role in this line of scholarly research, as actions of political violence were seen as consequences of psychopathic violent impulses or mental disorders among the perpetrators. It might be unfair to expect that these studies should have put policy illegitimacy up front, as their theoretical and empirical focus was entirely different. However, the point in this part of the review is not to pass judgment on these earlier studies’ analytical focus, but rather to describe how their preoccupation with other explanations such as psychopathy and mental illness led to the neglect of the study of policy illegitimacy as a cause for political violence.

2.2.2. ‘They are not sick but troubled’

The research on other psychological factors strongly took off in 1985, when Hare developed the Psychopathy Checklist measure. This widely accepted and validated measure led to a ‘gradual demise of the psychopath-as-terrorist perspective’ (Gill & Corner, 2017, 232). This opened the field to other psychological theories with a strong emphasis on both dispositional and situational factors (Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2019), and which essentially regard political violence

to be a consequence of the individual's troublesome personality traits or unfortunate context.

Dispositional factors can be understood as the ways people systematically differ from each other in their thinking, feeling, relating and behaving – in other words their personality traits (Widiger, 2012, 27). In this field, we still lack theorizing regarding the role of individual differences (Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2018), but the literature contains a multitude of empirical studies tying different traits to political violence. For instance, Brandt et al. (2015) find traits like anxiety, aggression, impulsivity and low openness to experience in those who radicalize into violent extremism, whereas Paulhus and Williams (2002), Pailing et al. (2014) and Webster (2018) emphasize how high agreeableness is the strongest negative predictor of violence. Kalmoe (2013, 2014) showed a relationship between aggression, political activism and support for violent state repression. Other traits that have been linked to support for violence are social dominance orientation and authoritarianism (Henry et al., 2005; Thomsen et al., 2014). A trend within this literature is to investigate whether particular 'dark' traits such as Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy predict violent outcomes such as violent political behaviours (Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2021a, 2021b; Pavlović & Franc, 2021), workplace and sexual deviance, cheating, interpersonal aggression and crime (Book et al., 2015; McKee et al., 2017; Muris et al., 2017).¹

Turning to the situational factors, which in contrast dispositional factors are defined as factors that are activated under certain circumstances for most persons (Jasko et al., 2021), a core argument is that the process towards violence is *triggered* by one of a broad range of potential negative events that detach people from their lives. In the 'quest for significance' theory, a key point is that people have a universal desire to feel respected, valued and important (Kruglanski et al., 2009; Kruglanski et al., 2014; Kruglanski et al., 2017), which echoes other motivational elements such as self-esteem, need for achievement, status, competence and meaning (Anderson et al., 2015; Frankl, 2014; Maslow, 1943). If this desire is not met and an individual experiences a loss of significance (e.g. stemming from personal failings or an affront to one's social identity) or an opportunity to gain special significance through performance of socially valued actions (Jasko et al., 2021, 571), violence might be perceived as a viable tool to gain significance. Similarly, scholars (e.g. Kepel & Milelli,

¹ Machiavellianism covers extraordinary cynicism, lack of principle and a tendency to attempt interpersonal manipulation. Narcissism equals grandiosity, entitlement and a need for dominance. Psychopathy entails a lack of empathy, high impulsivity and thrill-seeking tendencies. These three scales represent traits rather than denote categories of individuals (Edens et al., 2006).

2008; Khosrokhavar, 2006) argue that radicalization occurs as individuals seek to reconstruct a lost identity in a perceived hostile and confusing world (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010). Other psychological needs have also been identified as motivating political extremism and violence such as thrill-seeking and a need for cognitive closure. Thrill-seeking refers to the need to seek adventure, thrills or novel experiences (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2016, 58ff; Zuckerman, 1994), whereas need for cognitive closure denotes a desire for decisive answers and the eschewal of ambiguity (Kruglanski & Webster, 1996; Webster & Kruglanski, 1994).

These different needs have often been tied to experienced self-uncertainty (Jasko et al., 2021), which also has been argued to be linked to participation in political violence (Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2021b). Hogg et al. (2010) argue that radicalization is often caused by experienced uncertainty about oneself – who am I, where do I belong and where am I going. This experienced self-uncertainty might drive individuals to rely on social identity with specific groups. Hogg and colleagues hold that individuals are primarily driven towards what they call high-entitative groups as they are good at reducing self-uncertainty (Campbell, 1958; Hogg et al., 2010). If these groups are violent, the individuals will tend to also become so in order to feel less uncertain. Specifically, Goldman and Hogg (2016) suggest that acceptance of political violence occurs because individuals who feel they are peripheral rather than central group members might try to increase their probability of securing acceptance in the group by utilizing extreme/anti-social in-group serving behaviour, including violence.

While both the quest for significance theory and uncertainty-identity theory stem from mainly social psychology, the ‘unfreezing’ theory stems from work within the social movement literature. In their seminal work on the causes of radicalization and political violence, McCauley and Moskalenko (2016) describe unfreezing. Based on work by Lewin (1947), a basic assumption in this theory is that our values stem from groups and social connections. As a consequence, if we leave behind our social ties, or if our social connections leave us, we become open to new social ties and values. As such, unfreezing is linked to the concept of ‘biographical availability’ found in the social movement literature, which is defined as the absence of personal constraints that may increase the costs and risks of movement participation (McAdam, 1986). The key point is that social ties may serve as personal constraints that make one less available for the commitment required to participate in political action, including violence.

Especially within this situational paradigm, some scholars (e.g. Doosje et al., 2013; Jensen et al., 2020; Piazza, 2006) have mentioned specific perceived illegitimate policies as potential triggers for the quest for significance or as

causing a loss of social ties, making an individual biographically available. However, even though policy-related grievances are mentioned as important for understanding why some people turn to political violence, their link between policy illegitimacy and political violence is seldom explicitly theorized (Masters & Hoen, 2012; Nivette, 2014). In fact, most of these scholars often describe the importance of policy illegitimacy rather vaguely as a relevant background factor instead of a potentially independent trigger (Malthaner, 2017, 383f).

2.2.3. ‘Look at their friends’

While the first two broad categories of explanations for radicalization to political violence focus primarily on differences between individuals, there is also research related to the specifics of recruitment, social networks and intra-group roles – i.e. explanations at the meso level. The key notion in this line of research is that radicalization into violence is primarily about who you know (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010). Broadly, one could say that theories in this category share the idea that radical and violent ideas are transmitted by social networks. Thus, violent radicalization takes place in smaller groups, where bonding, peer pressure and indoctrination gradually change the individuals’ views of the world. These theories are related to the group dynamics I discuss in detail in Paper C and Section 3.5 below.

Scholars like Wiktorowicz (2004) and Sageman (2004) paved the way for this research agenda through empirical research relying primarily on participant observation, interviews, biographical data and information gained from open source data. Wiktorowicz was especially interested in the social production and dissemination of meaning and how individuals come to understand themselves as a collectivity, which he used framing theory to grasp (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010). A frame is defined as an individual’s worldview, consisting of both values (notions about right and wrong) and beliefs (assumptions about the world, attributes of things and mechanisms of causation) (Snow et al. 1986, 464). In this view, events or political decisions are not self-explanatory, and therefore various frames will compete to establish themselves as the ‘right’ interpretation of social reality (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010). Recruitment serves the purpose of promoting a specific version of reality and making this version resonate with the worldview of potential recruits (Crenshaw 1992, 31; Porta 1992, 31). When there is congruence between an individual’s and an organization’s interests, values and beliefs, scholars refer to it as *frame alignment*, which requires a varied amount of effort on the part of the recruiter, depending on the degree to which the potential recruit is already somewhat aligned.

As such, framing theory explains violent radicalization and terrorism by emphasising the distinct constructed reality into which members of violent groups are socialized. In Wiktorowicz's case study of the U.K. charter of the group al-Muhajirioun, he shows that radicalization is a social process that gradually develops from interaction with and within a radical group (Wiktorowicz, 2004). Similar work done by scholars like Neumann and Rogers (2007) echo this finding.

In contrast to Wiktorowicz's emphasis on the importance of recruitment, Sageman (2004) indicates that radical groups do not necessarily need to actively recruit new members, which he illustrates through his empirical work regarding individuals affiliated with Osama bin Laden's al Qaeda, specifically (but not restricted to) the Hamburg Cell. Instead, he argues that recruitment in these cases occurred as a bottom-up process that can be divided into three stages. It starts with an individual feeling a moral outrage at violence or discrimination against Muslims. This feeling is followed by the perception that personal experiences of discrimination or failure to achieve are part of a pattern resulting from the West waging war against Islam. Finally, these experiences might escalate into believing that violent action is necessary through a gradual rhetorical escalation among 'bunches of guys' (Sageman's wording). As such, this gradual escalation process is as much about love of an in-group consisting of close friends as it is about hatred to an abstract out-group (Sageman, 2004, 135).

Lastly, where both Wiktorowicz and Sageman focus on the importance of recruitment and in-group dynamics, other scholars (e.g. Bokhari et al., 2006; Nesser, 2009) have identified a distinct set of profiles amongst members in radical groups. Members play different roles, where Bokhari and colleagues (2006) describe the entrepreneur, his protégé, misfits and drifters, and moreover that these different characters join radical groups for very different reasons. Again the empirical context is radical Islamism and jihadist terrorism in Europe, which also affects how these roles are perceived, and thus portrayed. For instance, the roles of the entrepreneur and protégé are seen as typically religiously devout idealists who appear to join radical groups through intellectual processes. Additionally, they seem to be driven mainly by political grievances and a call for social justice. However, the bulk of these groups' members fill the role of misfits, who appear to join cells mainly to deal with personal problems or out of loyalty to other cell members, whereas the drifters join a cell more unconsciously, through their social networks (Bokhari et al., 2006). As such, the 'entrepreneur' plays a critical role in establishing and upholding a radical group, and acts as an active 'recruiter'. This role is often filled by a politically driven idealist, and thus, policy illegitimacy might play a role in the

recruitment processes to such radical groups, but how it might affect acceptance of political violence is still to be studied.

Here again, all three perspectives lend support to the notion that political grievances and policies' perceived illegitimacy play a role in recruitment processes, in group-activities and roles in radical groups. However, how policy illegitimacy plays a role is still unclear. Even though policy illegitimacy relates to recruitment strategies, in-group discussions and activities and narratives produced by group leaders described throughout this work, it still serves as a background factor rather than an important independent contributor to group members' acceptance of political violence.

2.2.4. What about policy illegitimacy and political violence? What do we know?

So what do we know about the role of policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence? It is clear that policy illegitimacy is more or less directly present in several studies. Ehud Sprinzak (1991) and Marta Crenshaw (1981) first tied policy illegitimacy to political violence through their studies of the causes of terrorism. Masters and Hoen (2012) link lack of state legitimacy to the occurrence of domestic terrorism. Within criminology, Nivette (2014) develops a theoretical model in which policy illegitimacy is argued to cause withdrawal from state institutions, vigilantism and increased crime rates, but the model still lacks empirical backing. In their case study, Nagtzaam and Lentini (2007) connect policy illegitimacy to radicalization processes within the Sea Shepherd, which bridges the field to studies of environmental-related political violence. Legitimacy (broadly understood) is even argued to matter for youth involvement in politically motivated violence (Pauwels & De Waele, 2014).

Related to the situational factors mentioned above, Doosje et al. (2013) argue that illegitimacy might be a triggering factor for the quest for significance or unfreezing. Within the last category, Wiktorowicz (2004) indirectly mentions illegitimate policies as a part of the frames radical Islamic groups utilize in order to sway potential recruits to their cause. Similarly, Sageman (2004) and Porta (1995) argue that perceived illegitimate policies play a role in the gradual escalation of violent rhetoric within terrorist cells. Particular important individuals in potentially violent organizations might also share their typically deeply felt political grievances, and thereby utilize policy illegitimacy perceptions as both a recruitment tool and as the in-group glue tying group members together (Bokhari, 2006).

Thus, several studies acknowledge the importance of policy illegitimacy in radicalization processes. However, the concept has not received theoretical attention since Sprinzak's seminal contribution in the late 1980s and early 1990s, notwithstanding Nivette's work from 2014 tying legitimacy to crime rates and a recent study by Gøtzsche-Astrup and colleagues (2021) that connect policy legitimacy of prevention policies with the willingness to report concerns of radicalization to authorities. Instead, the concept has served more as a background factor in several studies, rather than an important independent causal factor for political violence, despite it being central to the stated rationale for political violence in many instances. To some degree, I believe these shortcomings relate to the challenges associated with defining, grasping and measuring the concept of policy illegitimacy, but theoretical and operational difficulties should not discourage scholars interested in understanding the causes for political violence from trying (Gerschewski, 2018).

2.3. A methodological gap: The lack of causal-oriented studies

While the above review arranges a multitude of explanatory factors into three broad categories that have received scholarly attention both historically and recently, this second part of the review focuses on *how* scholars have investigated factors that are argued to affect acceptance of political violence.

The literatures on terrorism and later radicalization have long been subject to self-criticism (Schuurman, 2020). Well-known terrorism scholars such as Schmid (1982), Gurr (1988) and Crenshaw (1986) all noted in the mid-1980s that much of the existing terrorism research was anecdotal, superficial, unsystematic and highly reliant on far-reaching generalizations on the basis of episodic evidence. Thus, more than a decade later, Silke (2001) reviewed all research published in the field's leading journals between 1995-1999. He found that 80 % of the publications relied on data gathered from secondary sources. The dominant method used was the literature review, where other methodological approaches like conducting interviews and usage of databases lagged far behind. In addition, Silke (2001) noted that the majority of the published research did not use any kind of statistical analysis.

However, since then the research field has come a long way, and we have seen great developments especially in the last decade. In a recent review, Schuurman (2020) reports that the use of primary data increased considerably between 2007 and 2016. Similarly, leading scholars argue that we have seen considerable advancements in our understanding of key issues (Crenshaw, 2014; Horgan & Stern, 2013; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2014; Sandler, 2014). Specifically, scholars rely to a lesser degree on literature reviews, and

have instead more frequently adopted a wider variety of data-gathering techniques (Schuurman, 2020). Quantitative approaches seem to be more frequent (LaFree & Freilich, 2012; Mahoney, 2017), and the opportunities to gather primary data has improved markedly (Loadenthal, 2015). In a similar review of the scientific evidence about radicalization into violent extremism, Vergani et al. (2020) report that out of the 148 articles they included in their review, 53.4 % utilized predominantly qualitative methods, 39.9 % relied on quantitative strategies, 6.1 % reported mixed methods and 0.7 % used social network analysis, which indicates a more diverse literature in terms of the methods utilized. In essence, the field seems to have matured as an academic discipline (Gordon, 2010).

Despite these promising signs, problems remain regarding the quality of the quantitative research being conducted. Specifically, awareness has been raised concerning the tendency to design research based on available data rather than gathering data in order to answer a given research question (Feddes & Gallucci, 2015; Mahoney, 2017; Schuurman, 2020). As such, much of our quantitative research is grounded on observational data and correlational analyses. This was documented by Vergani and colleagues (2020) who show that only 12.8 % of the articles they included in their review tested their hypotheses using some sort of control group. This implies that we are only able to draw causal inferences to a limited degree, and thus it seems that we still need new well-developed, causal-oriented studies, which could be experimental studies (Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2018; Jensen et al., 2020; McGilloway et al., 2015; Schuurman, 2020; Vergani et al., 2020). In such studies, we are forced to think about cause, effect, control groups and potential outcomes, and therefore also forced to think about the causality of our theoretical models before testing them empirically. Gøtzsche-Astrup (2018) also notes that our theoretical approaches propose cause-and-effect relationships, and therefore it seems reasonable to suggest that the field increasingly shifts its focus to experimental research designs capable of testing such propositions.

2.4. Summary

This review served two primary purposes. The first was to illustrate how our scholarly emphasis on the categories of explanatory factors for political violence mentioned above has had the side effect of neglecting the importance of policy illegitimacy as a causal factor for radicalization and acceptance of political violence. Simply put, we have been preoccupied with these explanations, and thereby neglected policy illegitimacy as a potentially important causal factor. Second, I highlight that even though the research field is moving towards an agenda with more methodological pluralism, we still lack causally oriented

studies to supplement our hitherto strong emphasis on case-studies, interviews with former radicals and open source based correlational studies. We need such studies to provide empirical backing to our often causal-oriented theoretical models.

In essence, this dissertation's contributions are placed in the intersection between these two gaps in the literature, by (1) placing policy illegitimacy at the forefront as an independent driver of political violence and (2) testing the suggested propositions with experimental research designs suited for drawing causal inference.

Chapter 3: The Theoretical Argument

In this chapter, I utilize the literature review as a foundation for presenting a theoretical argument that links perceptions of policy illegitimacy with acceptance of political violence. As such, this chapter fills the theoretical gap identified in the first part of the literature review. Overall, I argue that perceptions of policy illegitimacy increase citizens' acceptance of political violence, where both components are amplified through deliberation in politically aggrieved enclaves. These arguments are also covered in detail in Papers B and C. However, I open this chapter with a discussion of how we should understand the concept of policy illegitimacy. Second, I discuss the first component of the theoretical framework, which I develop in order to connect policy to acceptance of political violence. Specifically, I discuss theoretically which features might affect citizens' policy legitimacy evaluations. This question is also the specific focus of Paper A. Hereafter, I further discuss the theoretical framework by linking policy illegitimacy with acceptance of political violence, where I primarily rely on Sprinzak's theory of delegitimation as this theory paves the way for theorizing this link. Fourth, I develop this theoretical link by specifying how the process of delegitimation functions among aggrieved citizens in a group setting. Lastly, I summarize the theoretical framework and its specific hypotheses linking policy causally with acceptance of political violence.

3.1. What is policy (il)legitimacy?

If we open a dictionary and look up the term 'legitimacy', it is defined as 'the quality of being legal' (Cambridge English Dictionary, 2021). If something is legitimate, it is 'accordant with law or with established legal forms and requirements' (Merriam-Webster, 2021). However, as Lamb (2014) notes, the concept has moved far beyond its originally strong emphasis on legality, and has on several occasions been deemed an 'essentially contested concept' (Blühdorn, 2009; Hurrelmann et al., 2007; Ioannidis, 2020). In this section, I discuss key elements of the concept of *policy legitimacy* based on Weber's and Easton's seminal work.

Max Weber's work on the concept of legitimacy was pioneering. Weber pointed out that legitimacy is a relational concept, and thus a matter of belief (Weber, 1946). In his original work, legitimacy relations were between the ruler and the ruled. In a simple *illegitimate* relation, a superior A gets her will irrespective of an inferior B's attitude – in other words, A *dominates* B. In such a situation the 'command' of the ruler is meant to influence the behaviour of

the ruled and actually does so (Weber, 1978, 946). From the perspective of the ruled, we deem this *obedience*. However, in a *legitimate* rule relationship, A's authority is acknowledged by B because she sees the entitlement claim of A as justifiable. A rules, *because* B believes in the right of A to rule. Thus, the relationship entails a commanding A and an obedient B, but only because B acknowledges A's right to command.

David Easton (1965) translated these ideas in his analysis of modern political systems by arguing that legitimacy can be understood as convictions held by members of political systems about how political objects are morally proper, fair and appropriate (Muller, 1970, 392). In a recent contribution, Peters (2016) echoes this interpretation by arguing that legitimacy is 'a belief on the part of citizens that the current government represents a proper form of government and a willingness on their part to accept the government's decrees as legal and authoritative'. Again, it is clear that the relation between decision-makers and citizens is key for a political system if it is to be perceived as legitimate. Such a relation feeds directly into the context of policy, as a government will typically try to justify a policy. However, the policy cannot be legitimate without the citizens' acknowledgment of that justification. This logic leads von Haldenwang (2017, 270) to argue that legitimacy is a contingent property of political order, and legitimacy stipulates a collective order which binds members of that collectivity under a common set of values and norms. Accordingly, if policies gradually come to be perceived as illegitimate, aggrieved citizens might begin to see the political order as being compromised (Magalhães & Aguiar-Conraria 2019; Strebel et al. 2019; von Haldenwang, 2017). As such, if we assume that a policy's legitimacy can be evaluated on a continuum, we can define policy illegitimacy as a relationship between the government and its citizens in which the citizens see the entitlement claims of the government as being morally improper, unfair and inappropriate. In this regard, policy illegitimacy is largely a psychological property linked to citizens' worldviews (Peters 2016, 60).

This implies that legitimacy evaluations are guided to a large degree by ideology, because citizens draw on it (directly or indirectly) when evaluating political decisions (Hamilton, 1987; Seliger, 2019).² In other words, ideologies provide lenses through which citizens sort political decisions into right and wrong, fair and unfair, appropriate and inappropriate, and hence legitimate

² Ideology can be defined as a set of ideas that combine descriptive and analytical propositions of how politics and social organizations work with normative images of desirable end states of a reformed or rebuilt social and political order and strategic prescriptions about how to move from the status quo to a desirable state (Kitschelt & Rehm, 2011, 347).

and illegitimate. Therefore, we should take citizens' ideological considerations into account when theorizing about how citizens form their policy legitimacy perceptions. However, in the procedural fairness literature, scholars still disagree on whether alignment between policy substance and ideological views or democratic procedures like inclusion and representation shape legitimacy evaluations the most. In the next section (and Paper A), I present the scholarly discussion in detail as a theoretical starting point for my theoretical framework. One could frame the question slightly differently and ask, which policy features might lead citizens to evaluate a policy as illegitimate, and thereby potentially experience the political order as being compromised.

3.2. What shapes policy illegitimacy perceptions?

One strand of research argues that the normative value of democracy lies in the outcome it produces. In essence, policymakers and authorities need 'to promote the common welfare of the people' to be legitimate (Bühlmann & Kriesi, 2013, 44). Accordingly, policy substance affects citizens' legitimacy evaluations, because citizens ask themselves whether a given policy aligns with their general political attitudes (George, 1980; Peters, 2016; Smoke, 1994; Wallner, 2008). If they differ, a policy may be seen as illegitimate. Another strand of literature emphasizes that political systems, authorities and decisions receive their legitimacy primarily from fair procedures like inclusion and representation. In this view, policy substance is always contested, and the only way to create democratic legitimacy is through having democratic procedures that meet high standards (Dahl & Shapiro, 2015; Strebel et al., 2019, 490). Moreover, advocates of this perspective argue that when citizens have a say in decisions, policies become the product of decisions *by* the people, instead of being *imposed on* the people (Arnesen, 2017, 148; Dahl & Shapiro, 2015). Ideally, inclusive processes provide the opportunity for every argument to be presented and discussed until 'the right decision' is made (Andersen, 2013, 401-403; Habermas, 1996: 138). From these strands of literature we end up with somewhat competing hypotheses, especially regarding the importance of democratic procedures, which could be formulated as follows:

H1a: Policy content that is aligned with an individual's political attitudes increases perceived policy legitimacy.

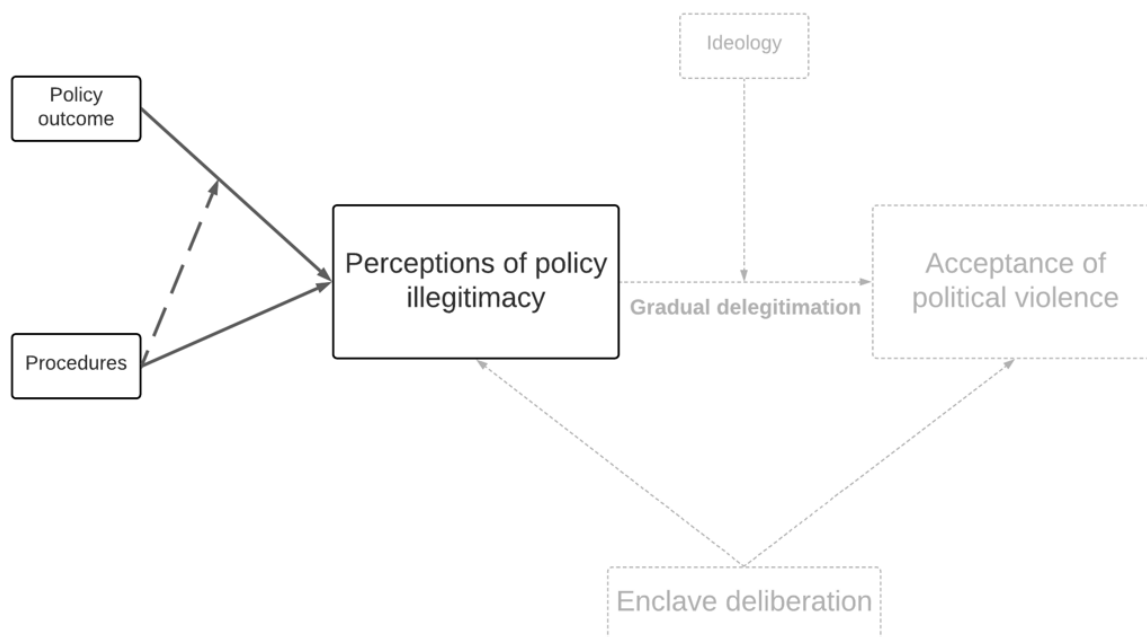
H1b: An inclusive policy-making process increases perceived policy legitimacy.

Moreover, as I discuss in Paper A, recent studies (e.g. Bernauer et al., 2020; Magalhães and Aguiar-Conraria, 2019; Strebel et al., 2019) hypothesize that procedures and policy content interact in shaping citizens' legitimacy perceptions. If we follow their logic, we should expect especially fair procedures to have legitimacy-inducing effects. For instance, Marien and Kern (2018, 860) argue that fair procedures can accommodate potential negative effects of policy substance that citizens do not like. Citizens might not get their preferred outcome, but because they were included directly or indirectly through representation, they can accept it. This acceptance is argued to stem from the fact that in the case of unfair processes citizens compare the outcome that occurred with one that could have been obtained if processes had been fair and inclusive (Kahneman & Tversky, 1982). Moreover, inclusive procedures make citizens feel responsibility for policy content, which increases acceptance (Magalhães and Aguiar-Conraria, 2019, 168). In contrast, citizens who feel they were not included directly or through representation might get the sense that unfavourable content could have been avoided (Lind and Tyler, 1988). Hence, the degree to which processes are deemed fair might affect the way policy substance affects policy legitimacy. This leaves us with a third hypothesis, which should be understood as an interaction.

H2: The effect of policy content on perceived policy legitimacy is moderated positively by inclusive democratic procedures.

We can summarize these hypotheses as the starting point for the theoretical framework, and they guide us in understanding how policy illegitimacy perceptions are shaped. One branch of the literature argues that the alignment between policy substance and citizens' ideological views might affect policy legitimacy (Arneson, 2003; Esaiasson et al., 2019, 294), while other scholars (e.g. Dahl & Shapiro, 2015; Habermas, 1996) argue that the degree to which procedures were inclusive and representative shape legitimacy evaluations. Finally, some scholars (e.g. Bernauer et al., 2020; Strebel et al., 2019) hold that these two components might interact in shaping these evaluations. I summarized these arguments in the left side of Figure 1.

Figure 1 (Part 1). Policy features that are argued to affect citizens' policy illegitimacy perceptions



3.3. The link between policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence

These strands of literature focus on which features affect citizens' legitimacy evaluations. However, they do not cover how such evaluations might lead to perceptions of the political order as being compromised. In other words, regardless of which features produce policy illegitimacy, what are the potential consequences of policy illegitimacy perceptions – specifically, might policy illegitimacy increase acceptance of political violence?

To answer this question, I turn to the next step in the theoretical framework, namely the nexus between policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence. This link received some scholarly attention almost 30 years ago, but as the first part of the literature review showed, it has since been neglected not necessarily intentionally, but due to a preoccupation with other explanations for acceptance of political violence. To unfold this link theoretically, I first present Sprinzak's (1991) original theoretical model linking the two phenomena, which I supplement with insights provided in a more recent contribution by Nivette (2014). The common denominator for these theoretical models is that both regard policy illegitimacy as a potential trigger for a process of delegitimation, which ultimately might result in acceptance of political violence (and

violent behaviour).³ Second, I address how ideology might provide a lens through which policies become illegitimate from some citizens' perspectives, and thus decide which policies might trigger different groups of citizens. Lastly, I theorize how the process of delegitimation plays out at the meso level through group discussions among politically aggrieved and likeminded individuals, which is the last part of the theoretical framework linking policy with perceptions of policy illegitimacy, enclave deliberation and finally acceptance of political violence.

3.3.1. The process of delegitimation

A commonly held view within radicalization research is that acceptance of political violence often emerges in stages (e.g. Moghaddam, 2005; Sprinzak, 1991; Wiktorowicz, 2004). In 1991, Sprinzak presented such a stage model, in which he theorized a potential link between policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence. He held that in order to accept violence, politically aggrieved citizens need to undergo a prolonged process of deviance from the mainstream and delegitimization of the state. This process consists of three distinct stages, which he named the *crisis of confidence*, the *conflict of legitimacy* and the *crisis of legitimacy*.

In the first stage, a group of aggrieved citizens come to believe that the state no longer can or will protect their interests, because they find its policies unfair, stigmatizing or silencing (Ferree, 2004). Specific political decisions function as potential triggers for the process of delegitimation as they might provide the fuel for aggrieved citizens to identify and meet up with other politically distressed people (Sprinzak, 1991). The emergence of Gush Emunim underground serves as an example of how specific political decisions might feed into a process of delegitimation. The messianic movement Gush Emunim established in 1974 was committed to establishing Jewish settlements in the West Bank due to its religious importance (Sprinzak, 1987, 195ff), and served as the ideological mouthpiece for the philosophy of a Greater Israel (Newman, 2005). After the signing of the Camp David Accords, and thus the return of Sinai to Egypt in September 1978, Emunim's members were stunned and in disbelief (Sprinzak, 1987, 197). After this political decision, Emunim's leading figures characterized President Begin and his Likud government as traitors. This eventually triggered the formation of Gush Emunim underground which among other incidents, planned blowing up the Muslim Dome of the Rock.

In the second stage, aggrieved groups become more militant as they see non-violent forms of political protest as having limited success. This stage

³ In Sprinzak's model, his object of interest is terrorism, and therefore violent political action, whereas Nivette's interest lies in understanding criminal behaviour.

evolves when a group or movement is ready to question the legitimacy of the entire political system. It commences when an aggrieved group reaches the conclusion that the erroneous rulers are able to ‘mislead the people’, not because they directly manipulate, but because the system itself is devious and repressive (Sprinzak, 1991, 55f). In the eyes of the aggrieved group, this situation cannot change through existing channels. Rather they come to believe that the only way to alter this situation is to transform the system altogether. This implies the emergence of an alternative ideological and cultural system that delegitimizes the existing regime and its social norms. An example that comes to mind is when Trump supporters realized that Biden was about to become president after the 2020 US election. They went from targeting the Democrats’ political campaign and ‘the establishment’ to seeing the electoral system as fundamentally illegitimate and built on a foundation of fraud, designed to keep Trump out of the White House for another term.

In the final stage, violence is perceived as a viable and effective strategy to publicize and achieve aggrieved citizens’ political goals. Anyone the aggrieved associate with the regime – not just state agents – are seen as legitimate targets if they directly or indirectly hinder their political goals. As such, this stage represents the behavioural and symbolic culmination of the two preceding psycho-political stages. The delegitimation intensifies from including specific policies or political figures to the system as a whole to every individual associated with the political system (Sprinzak, 1991, 56, 1995, 20). Individuals who are identified as a part of the existing political and social order are dehumanized and depersonalized by the aggrieved, which makes it possible for the aggrieved to disengage morally and to commit atrocities (Bandura, 1998, 163ff, 180ff). In this stage, the aggrieved divide people dichotomously into those of light and those of darkness, where violence performed by the former against the latter is fully acceptable, almost expected (Ferracuti, 1982, 136f). Moreover, phrases regarding perceived opponents extend beyond conventionally political or social expressions to a language of objects. Political opponents and state officials are re-branded as inferior objects, best exemplified by Ulrike Meinhoff, a leader of the Baader-Meinhoff Group: ‘The person in uniform is a pig ... he is not a human being and thus we have to settle the matter with him. It is wrong to talk to these people at all, and shooting is taken for granted’ (Demaris, 1977, 228).

Throughout these stages, we should expect citizens to gradually withdraw from state institutions (Nivette, 2014), and therefore, ceases to be shaped by the ‘cultivating function’ state institutions are argued to have (Karstedt, 2010). In this view, the state is a functioning and often decisive actor in building and maintaining social order (Nivette, 2014, 94). Specifically, institutions maintain order by embedding individuals into direct and indirect responsibilities,

teaching non-violent moralities, constructing social interactions based on trust and reciprocity, and overall encouraging obedience to authority and a willingness to co-operate as agents of informal social control (Nivette, 2014). When not embedded into state institutions, aggrieved citizens might seek out alternative value systems where violence is seen as an efficient and legitimate means to political ends. Consequently, citizens might solve potential conflicts in accordance with this alternative value system by using their own tools, including violence (Black, 1983; Goldstein, et al., 2003; van Dijk, 2007). Taken together we can summarize these theoretical perspectives into the following hypothesis:

H3: Perceived policy illegitimacy increases citizens' acceptance of political violence.

3.4. The role of ideology

As discussed above, ideology is important in this process of delegitimation, because citizens draw on it (directly or indirectly) to evaluate political decisions (Hamilton, 1987; Seliger, 2019). In other words, ideology provides a lens through which citizens perceive different policies as right and wrong, and thus, it serves as a tool that determines which policies might trigger a process of delegitimation. This raises the question of whether we should expect the relationship between policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence to be particularly strong for specific types of ideologies.

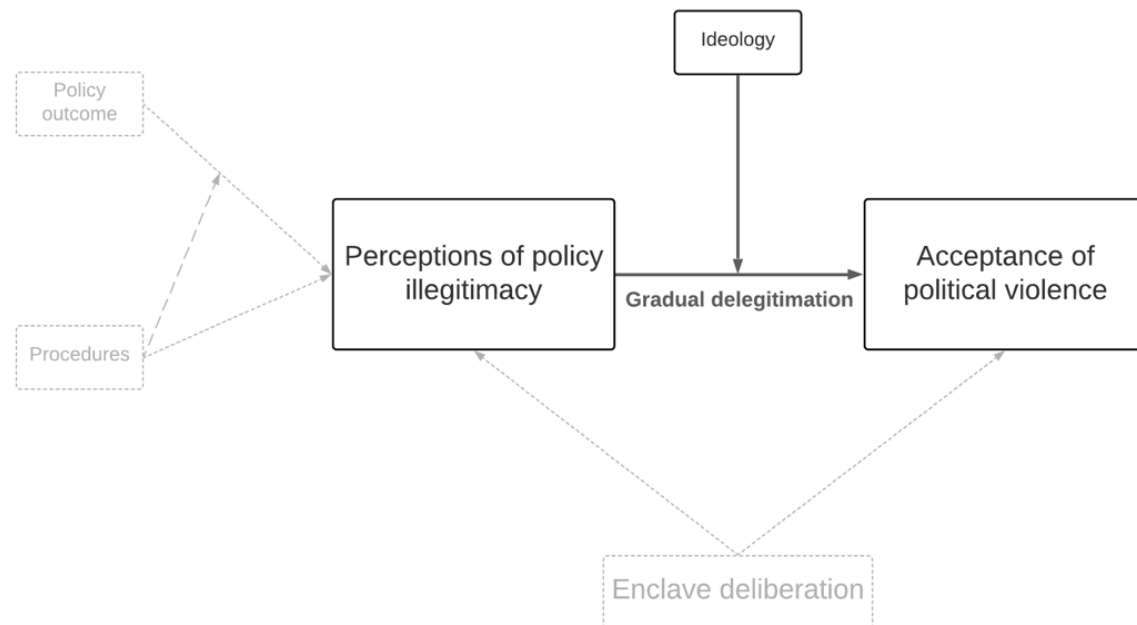
As I discuss in detail in Paper B, we have some evidence suggesting that specific ideologies drive violent behaviour (Hogg & Adelman, 2013; Weber & Kruglanski, 2018). However, we also have evidence indicating that mechanisms that amplify existing beliefs work similarly for citizens adhering to different ideologies (Schkade et al., 2010). This second perspective resembles insights from frame theory as presented in Section 2.2.3, where specific ideologies matter little. Instead what matters is the degree to which a specific (e.g. ideological) frame aligns with an individual's worldview (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2010; Wiktorowicz, 2004). As such, we have different views on how specific ideological views interfere with the process of delegitimation, and thereby the relationship between policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence. We can summarize these views in two competing interaction hypothesis:

H4a: The effect of policy illegitimacy on acceptance of political violence is stronger for people with specific ideological worldviews.

H4b: The effect of policy illegitimacy on acceptance of political violence is similar for people with different ideological worldviews.

Here too, I have highlighted how these hypotheses relate to the general theoretical framework in Figure 1.

Figure 1 (Part 2). The link between policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence with the potential moderation of ideology



3.5. Amplification of policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence in enclaves

How does this process of delegitimation unfold at the meso level? Specifically, how does this process translate perceptions of policies as illegitimate into acceptance of political violence? Sprinzak (1995) holds that prolonged sessions of group deliberation are important activities that foster this escalation. However, this part of the theory needs development. I discuss this in detail in Paper C, where I suggest that we should look to the social psychology literature on echo chambers, group polarization and group fusion. I start this theorization in the next subsection by discussing how to define concepts like echo chambers, enclaves and enclave deliberation.

3.5.1. What are echo chambers and enclave deliberation?

An *echo chamber* is a metaphor based on the acoustic echo chamber where sounds reverberate in a hollow enclosure (Levy & Razin, 2019, 305). It describes a closed setting in which like-minded individuals exaggerate, amplify,

and reinforce their beliefs through communication and repetition. A related concept is *filter bubbles*, which Pariser (2011) defines as a result of internet filters tracking people's online activity and creating custom-designed information pools, 'which fundamentally alters the way we encounter ideas and information'. A key difference between these concepts is the degree of human agency. In echo chambers, group members consciously choose to connect while excluding others, whereas in filter bubbles, algorithms form groups (Bruns, 2019; Sumpter, 2018). In modern societies, both phenomena impact group and attitude formation, and while the literature on filter bubbles is growing, this dissertation is limited to a focus on human agency and therefore echo chambers.

Echo chambers have been tied to many malicious phenomena (Levy & Razin, 2019), and some scholars even argue that they are a threat to the future of democracy (Grönlund et al., 2015; Strandberg et al., 2019; Sunstein, 2007). Why then do people end up in them? There are three answers to this question: one empirical; stemming from sociology, another theoretical; grounded in economics, and a third; stemming from uncertainty-identity theory. In many contexts, sociologists have observed that people tend to connect with and favour others who are similar – known as homophily (Levy & Razin, 2019, 306). People have been showed to display homophily based on various demographic and psychological characteristics (McPherson et al., 2001). In addition, evidence from social psychology illustrates that this tendency to form echo chambers – also known as enclaves – can be based on minimal similarities between people (Tajfel et al., 1979).⁴ From an economic perspective, the reason for this tendency to segregate stems from complementarities (Levy & Razin, 2019). Complementarities in preferences or beliefs enable better economic or political interaction, thus maximizing individuals' utility. As such, enclave formation occurs as rational individuals reach the conclusion that the benefits of being in an enclave outweigh the drawbacks. Third, from uncertainty-identity theory, scholars (e.g. Hogg, 2020; Hogg & Adelman, 2013) argue that citizens end up in echo chambers because they want to reduce feelings of self-uncertainty. Groups with individuals who look like you, talk like you, have the same struggles as you and so on are good at reducing feelings of self-uncertainty, as social codes are known. As such, we have both empirical and theoretical arguments for why citizens tend to end up in echo chambers.

Thus, we should expect politically aggrieved citizens to seek out or form enclaves in which they discuss their shared perceptions of policy illegitimacy. I argue that such enclave discussions have the potential to both amplify existing perceptions of policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence. As

⁴ I use the words 'echo chambers' and 'enclaves' interchangeably.

in Paper C, I elaborate on the mechanisms behind these amplifying effects of enclave deliberation in the next subsection.

3.5.2. Amplification of policy illegitimacy attitudes

The literature on ‘group polarization’ is useful in this regard, as it provides well-tested mechanisms linking enclave deliberation to amplification of attitudes. Group polarization describes the process in which group discussion moves decisions to more extreme points in the direction of the original inclination (Brown, 1986, 211; Sunstein, 2002). There are multiple reasons why this shift occurs, and the two most prominent ones are social comparison and exchange of ideas (Friedkin, 1999; Isenberg, 1986). First, people want to perceive themselves favourably, but they also want to be perceived as favourably by other group members (Isenberg, 1986, 1142; Sunstein, 2002, 179). When the distribution of all group members’ positions on a given topic becomes known, those who are not where they want to be – but thought that they were – will be motivated to change positions (Brown, 1986, 215). Second, group polarization occurs due to an intellectual exchange of ideas (Burnstein & Vinokur, 1973). Prior to discussion, every group member typically has an opinion on a given topic, formed for various reasons or with varying information. These reasons or pieces of information might not be the same, and after listening to each other, deliberators will have gathered more reasons to support their position. Therefore, several like-minded group members will leave an enclave deliberation with stronger support for their initial position. In a few recent studies, Jones (2013) found evidence of the polarization of political opinions in a workplace environment, especially among Republicans. Similarly, Bekafigo et al. (2019) found that people’s opinions of former US president Donald J. Trump became more extreme after discussion within enclaves. As such, we would expect attitude polarization among politically aggrieved citizens as well. The expectation can be summarized in the following hypothesis:

H5: Enclave deliberation amplifies existing perceptions of policy illegitimacy.

3.5.3. Amplification of acceptance of political violence

However, the question remains how enclave deliberation in aggrieved enclaves functions through a process of gradual delegitimation to affect acceptance of political violence. Research within social psychology and radicalization studies provides an answer to this question. In these literatures, we learn that enclave deliberation enables the development of politicized identi-

ties and group fusion, which might increase the acceptance of violence in defence of the group. Through causal-oriented studies, this research has consistently found that strong group identification in itself is enough to influence political opinions and actions (Jasko et al., 2021, 578). Several scholars (e.g. De Weerd & Klandermans, 1999; Simon & Klandermans, 2001) find that the likelihood of an individual participating in collective action on behalf of a group is higher if he/she identifies with it. In addition, group deliberation in enclaves is known to increase group identification (Doosje et al., 2002). As such, enclave deliberation increases individuals' identification with a given group, which increases the chances of them partaking in collective action on behalf of the group. However, an increased chance of partaking in collective action does not equal acceptance or participation in violent action on behalf of a given group. On this front, Jasko et al. (2021) provide a link. They argue that specific types of social identities are particularly strongly related to extreme motivation on behalf of the collective cause – one of them being politicized identity.

Politicized identity is defined as an awareness of the power dynamics in society and a willingness to change these (Jasko et al., 2021, 578). When someone possesses a politicized collective identity, they see the world in terms of in friends and foes, which might increase their willingness to participate in collective action specifically aimed at foes (van Zomeren et al., 2008). Therefore, enclave deliberation among aggrieved citizens strengthens group members' politicized identities, which amplifies their feeling of being in an existing power struggle and thereby the risk of them seeing violence as a legitimate tool in this struggle. Moreover, enclave deliberation enables the collective identification of those responsible for the perceived injustice and related attribution of blame, which opens up for mechanisms linked to the acceptance of violence such as depersonalization of victims (Porta, 1995, 173), euphemistic labelling and dehumanization (Bandura, 1998). In aggrieved enclaves, group members already have such politicized identities – it could be the reason why the group formed in the first place – that the logical 'next step' is to distance themselves from their 'opponents' and discuss how to overcome their grievances.

Another consequence of joint group activities such as enclave deliberation is group fusion, which can be defined as having strong attachment to a given group (Jasko et al., 2021, 578). Fredman et al. (2015, 468) argue that fused group members easily come to endorse their group's goals as their own. In some extreme cases, group fusion leads group members to build strong, almost familial bonds and therefore become more likely to support fighting and dying for their in-group (Atran et al., 2018; Swann et al., 2012).

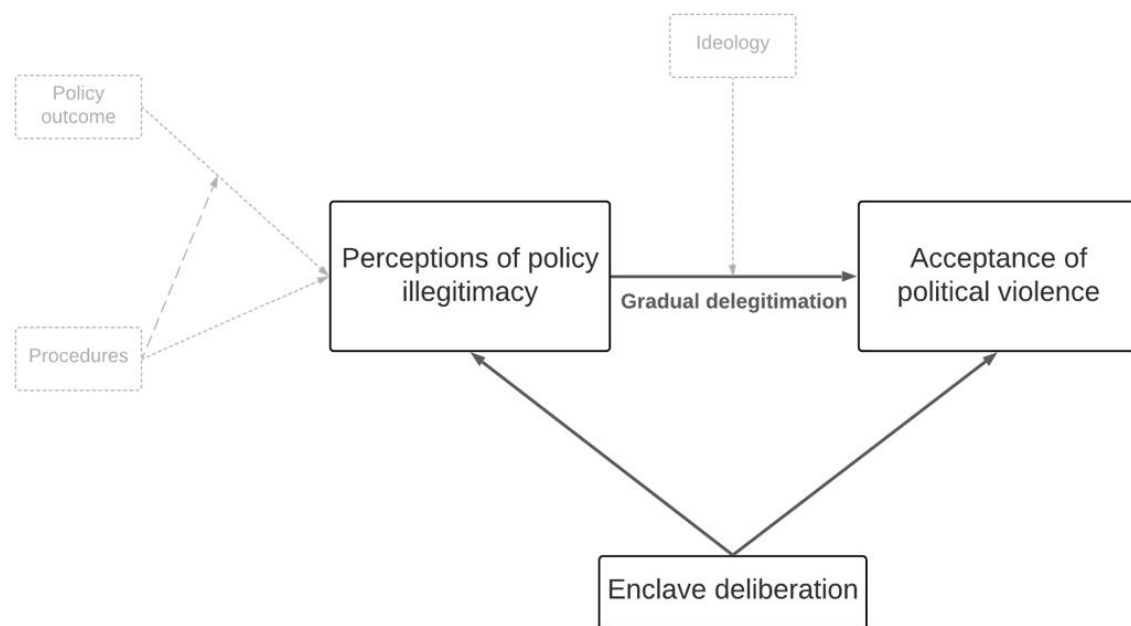
As such, enclave deliberation might provide a group structure and joint activities through which group members become fused with the enclave and

therefore come to endorse group goals as their own, even if they are violent. During this process, existing and newly formed affective social ties might increase the social cost of backing down from accepting violence if that is the group norm (Porta, 1995, 177; Moskalenko & McCauley, 2020, 49f). In addition, Segal et al. (2018) add that group fusion is more likely to occur in times of crisis because this primes individuals to think about the collective suffering of the in-group. Such priming could be initiated by building aggressive narratives around former struggles or current perceived unjust and illegitimate policies. These mechanisms can be summarized in the following hypothesis:

H6: Enclave deliberation among aggrieved citizens increases their acceptance of political violence.

Again, I illustrate the suggested hypotheses from these subsections in relation to the general theoretical framework in Part 3 of Figure 1.

Figure 1 (Part 3). How enclave deliberation amplifies existing perceptions of policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence



3.6. Summary and overview

This section summarizes the hypotheses presented above. By doing so, I present a theoretical model of (1) how perceptions of policy legitimacy are formed, (2) why perceptions of policies as illegitimate might increase acceptance of violence, and (3) under which circumstances this occurs, specifically at the meso level.

First, I discussed the competing views on how perceptions of policy legitimacy are formed. On the one hand, we expect policy-making procedures like inclusion and representation to be important, because political substance will always be contested. On the other hand, some scholars argue that we should expect citizens to favour their preferred outcome regardless of policy-making procedures. Still, this is an open empirical question. Beyond its independent contributions, this step back also serves an important methodological purpose, which I describe in the next chapter. Second, the primary hypothesis of this dissertation is that perceptions of policy illegitimacy increase citizens' general acceptance of political violence. When policies oppose citizens' ideologically informed views of the world, they might identify other people with similar grievances or simply meet in already formed enclaves and together undergo a process of gradual delegitimation of the state. Moreover, they are more likely to gradually withdraw their commitment from existing state institutions, and thereby be more open to value systems in which violence is acceptable. Ideology is important in this regard, as it provides the lens through which citizens evaluate specific policies. Whether specific types of ideologies moderate the relationship between policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence is an empirical question. Lastly, I argue that the delegitimation of the state develops through group activities and discussions in which enclave members' initial perceptions of policy illegitimacy are enhanced via mechanisms of social comparison and persuasion. Moreover, normative barriers that usually prevent group members from accepting violent political means are more likely to break down, because group members feel more strongly attached to their group and feel that the policies responsible for their grievances directly targets them and put their group at risk.

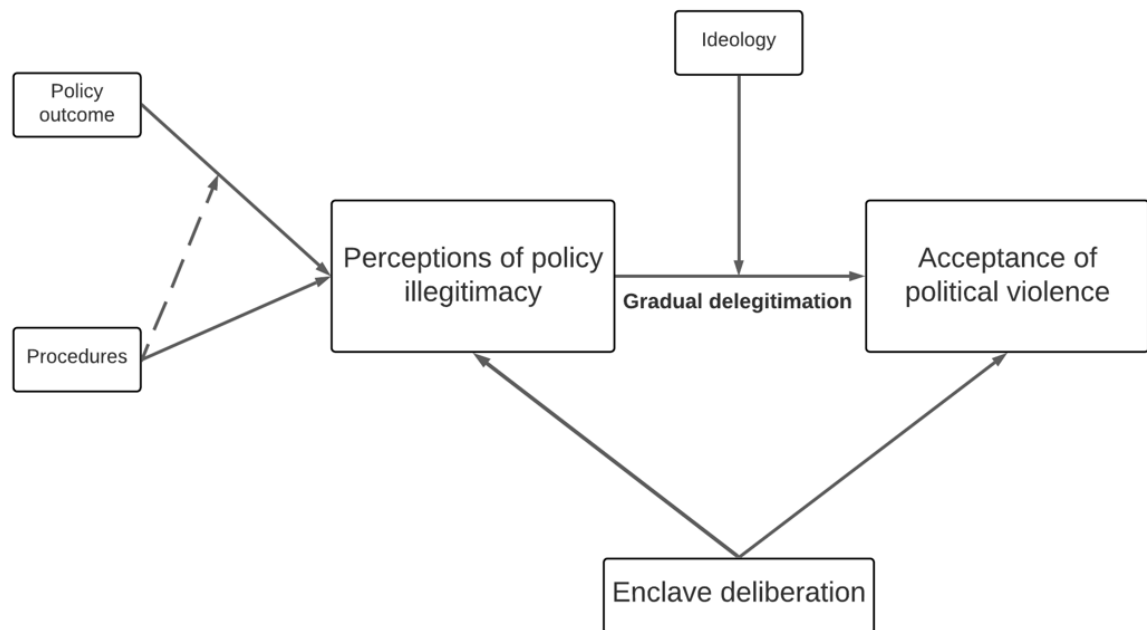
It is important to note that I do not suggest a deterministic model, where policy illegitimacy always leads to acceptance of political violence, nor that enclave deliberation always enhances this effect. Rather, policy illegitimacy prompts a situation in which individuals or groups may discuss their grievances with likeminded individuals, in which a gradual delegitimation of the state and its officials might take place, which ultimately could include a higher acceptance of political violence.

Given these theoretical considerations, I summarize the primary hypotheses of this dissertation in the final version of Figure 1. In essence, I have presented a theoretical framework that shows that acceptance of political violence might be grounded in political decisions. As seen in France, the United States and Hong Kong, political decisions increased the likelihood of political violence, and this theoretical model provides mechanisms in three steps as to why they did so. While decisions regarding what to include and exclude in this the-

oretical argument are contestable, I have based my hypotheses on several distinct but often related literatures across political science, social psychology, terrorism studies and criminology.

In the next chapter, I discuss the methods utilized to test this theoretical model empirically. Where this chapter served as an attempt to fill the theoretical gap identified in the literature review in Chapter 2, the next chapter fills the methodological gap.

Figure 1 (Final version). Overview of the theoretical model suggested in this dissertation tying acceptance of political violence to policy



Chapter 4: Methods

In this chapter, I turn to filling the second gap identified in the literature review in Chapter 2, namely the lack of causally oriented studies. I do so in five steps. First, I present the dissertation's experimental foundation, and how causality should be understood in this regard. Also in this step, I briefly present the logic behind each of the research designs used in the three papers, and how they each relate to the experimental foundation. Second, I turn to a discussion of the benefits and limitations of studying the theoretical model in Denmark, which is followed by an overview of the data collected. The third part considers the operationalization of key concepts such as policy legitimacy, aggrieved enclaves and acceptance of political violence. Here, I also discuss how I manipulated policy legitimacy experimentally. Fourth, I discuss ethical considerations regarding conducting experimental studies with human subjects, and how I aimed to minimize the risks connected to participating in especially the laboratory experiment. I wrap up this chapter by reflecting on the reasons for studying political violence in samples of 'ordinary people', despite the limitations of this approach.

4.1. An experimental foundation and the risks connected to 'getting it wrong'

Throughout Chapter 3, I argued that different factors might *cause* other phenomena. Broadly put, I argued for three different steps in which the enactment of policy might cause acceptance of political violence to rise. In the first step, I argued that a policy's content or the procedures by which it was developed might cause citizens to perceive it as more or less legitimate. In the second step, I argued that we should expect perceptions of policy illegitimacy to cause an increase in citizens' acceptance of political violence. In the last step, I argued that enclave deliberation might cause both an increase in policy illegitimacy perceptions and acceptance of political violence.

In general, it is a difficult task to claim that one factor caused another to change from one state to another. David Hume (1748) sceptically noted that the human mind is not equipped to with an *a priori* ability to observe causal relations. From an epistemological view, he argued that the human being can only experience causality as one event following another (Hollis, 1994). A simple example is the billiard ball striking another, causing it to move. In this ex-

ample, it seems rather easy to determine causality, because we are able to observe the cause and the effect. However, there are also causal relationships that are not so easily observed, and observable relationships that appear connected as cause and effect but that might be far from being so. Instead, they often are contingent on some third, unobserved factor. That is why we as social scientists hear about ‘control logic’ or use the expression ‘*ceteris paribus*’ when we are introduced to basic statistics. In theory, this would not be a problem if we were able to observe all potentially contingent factors. If this were the case, we would be able to model all potential contingent factors and simply observe any given causal relationship. Instead, causality is an exercise in falsification, and thus the litmus test of any claimed causal relationship is whether the relationship holds when taking alternative explanations into account.

In positivistic science, being ‘right’ about the cause and effect is an important task – sometimes it is the only task. However, in the study of political violence this task is especially vital, as making false claims may have consequences for the success of interventions designed to counter extremism and radicalization. Some scholars (e.g. Awan, 2012; Lindekilde, 2012; Ingram, 2019) even argue that our interventions might have iatrogenic effects if we are wrong. In other words, if we fail in getting the cause and effect ‘right’, our interventions might have negative unintended consequences, and even fuel the problem we are trying to solve. Scholars (e.g. Awan, 2012; Heath-Kelly, 2013; Thomas, 2019) often point to the implementation of Prevent I in the United Kingdom as an example of a policy that had iatrogenic effects. Prevent I introduced surveillance of particular neighbourhoods, or ‘community initiatives’, which was meant to increase safety and reduce radicalization into extremism, but instead increased Muslims’ sense of being discriminated against (Awan, 2012; Shanaah, 2019).

In the next section, I discuss the principles of causality and why an experimental approach might help us in ‘getting it right’ when we are trying to determine the causes of acceptance of political violence. Moreover, I discuss the benefits and limitations associated with such an approach in this field of research.

4.2. The principles of causality and why experiments might help us ‘get it right’

As argued above, we lack causal-oriented studies to test our understandings of the causes of political violence. To design such studies, we need to define both cause and effect. Many definitions exist, but a highly influential one is

the potential outcomes framework (Angrist & Pischke, 2014; Holland, 1986; Rubin, 2005).⁵

Rubin (1974) famously defined the causal effect in relation to a treatment, X, over another, Z, for a particular unit in an interval of time from T1 to T2. The causal effect is the difference between what would have happened at T2 if the unit had been exposed to treatment X at time T1, and what would have happened at T2 if the unit had been exposed to treatment Z at T1 instead. To clarify this rather tedious definition, imagine the situation where you last had back pain and took painkillers to ease the pain. The causal effect of you taking or not taking painkillers one hour into your back pain is the difference between how your back would have felt in scenario 1 (taking painkillers) and scenario 2 (not taking painkillers). If your back pain would remain without painkillers but vanish if you took the painkillers, then the causal effect of painkillers is back pain relief. In essence, when we are interested in the causal effect, we are interested in comparing two potential outcomes of a given factor, one where a factor is in state X, and one where it is in state Z.

Why is this framework useful when examining the causes for political violence – why might it help us in ‘getting it right?’ First, this framework forces scientists to think about the different potential states a potential cause might be in, which helps us clarify our potential drivers conceptually and operationally. For example, the phrase ‘X causes Y’ usually means that X causes Y relative to some other cause that includes the condition ‘not X’ (Holland, 1986). From my theoretical model, we can think of the claim posed in H3: policy illegitimacy increases acceptance of political violence. In this example, policy illegitimacy is argued to cause increased acceptance of political violence, where the condition in which policy is deemed legitimate does not. Second, the framework specifies the cause of the effect (e.g. the painkillers, policy illegitimacy etc.), and highlights the importance of ruling out alternative explanations that might create omitted variable bias (and make us ‘get it wrong’). Third, within this framework causality is described in the language of treatment, control and randomization, which connects the assessment of causal relationships to the experimental design as an ideal type (Gerber & Green, 2012). Even though I frame this as a strength of using this framework, it does not mean that experiments are the gold standard for all of social science or for all research on political violence. We have room to make choices and to compromise, when we chose our research designs (Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2019; p.41). Fourth and relatedly, this framework provides a language in which we can be open about our choices, and how we deviate from the ideal type. Finally, the

⁵ The words cause and treatment will be used interchangeably throughout the dissertation.

potential outcomes framework addresses the point that we cannot observe any single factor in both potential outcomes. In other words, we cannot observe the same phenomenon in both states X and Z. Thus, any determination of a causal effect must always rest on untestable assumptions of average causal effects across similar phenomena (Holland, 1986).

Experiments, which can be defined as a procedure carried out to support or refute a hypothesis (Gerber & Green, 2012), allow us to follow this framework, as they are artificial by nature. In other words, experiments allow us to observe situations that have been designed rather than those that occur in nature. This means that we are able to incorporate theoretically proposed explanations for a given phenomenon, while eliminating or minimizing factors that have not been identified theoretically as causal (Webster & Sell, 2014, p.10). Because they are artificial, experiments permit direct comparison between a situation in which a factor is present (an experimental/treatment condition) and another situation where the same factor is absent (baseline/control condition). Thereby, we are able to determine the effects of a factor in the experimental condition.

Another feature of the experiment that helps us establish causation is the random assignment of treatment and control to each state (presence/absence) of the factor of interest. If done correctly, this technique also safeguards against the problem of omitted variable bias. As mentioned above, omitted variable bias occurs when an alternative factor affects the state of both the cause and the outcome of interest, thus making it impossible to establish a relationship as casual. As an example of this potential problem, recall H4, where I propose that policy illegitimacy increases acceptance of political violence. This hypothesis might find support if we follow the theoretical arguments presented above. However, it might be that people's political interest correlates with their perception of a given policy, but also affects their acceptance of political violence. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that we can be assured that no factor other than our randomization has allocated objects to the treatment and control conditions. If the random allocation of objects into these two states (i.e. perception of policy as legitimate vs. illegitimate) is successful, any differences in the outcome (i.e. acceptance of political violence) is an estimation of the average causal effect of being in the treatment condition relative to being in the control condition. Moreover, if we control the allocation of the two states of our potential causal factor, we also prohibit our test subjects from selecting into the different states, thus alleviating a potential selection bias (Angrist & Pischke, 2014). As such, the artificiality of our experiment and randomized assignment provide us with a setting in which we as researchers are able to rule out alternative explanations.

Lastly, the experimental design solves two related problems concerning endogeneity and reverse causality. Endogeneity refers to a situation where an explanatory variable is correlated with the error term (Stock & Watson, 2015, 471), and reverse causality is defined as a situation where our outcome of interest, instead of being caused by our explanatory factor, actually determines the state of it. In the experiment, we as experimenters control the timing in the allocation of the treatment and the measurement of the outcome of interest, and thus our explanatory variable is determined outside the system and in the order we are interested in – in other words, our treatment serves as an exogenous variable whose timing occurs before the measurement of the outcome of interest.

As such, an experimental approach comes with several benefits in terms of applying the potential outcomes framework in practice. However, as Gøtzsche-Astrup (2019) notes ‘all studies make compromises to the experimental ideal’. Therefore, I present the specific research designs I utilized when conducting this work and their potential limitations in the next subsection.

4.3. The three types of experiments used in the dissertation

The laboratory experiment described in detail in Paper C comes close to following the experimental ideal. In this design, participants are physically present in the laboratory with an experimenter, who allocates treatment and control and measures the relevant outcomes on the object of interest. In general, laboratory experiments in social science have been subject to criticism primarily that they often rely on small study samples mainly comprised of student participants. Such samples are usually used because students are easily accessible, cost- and time-efficient, and they might learn from the research process (Payne & Chappell, 2008). Small samples imply that such studies typically have low statistical power, which equals a higher probability of making Type II errors (i.e. false negatives). In other words, this increases the chances of not rejecting the null hypothesis when in fact it is false (Stock & Watson, 2015, 124).

In terms of using student samples, five primary concerns exist. First, the use of student pools can be problematic, because students are usually more homogeneous and less attentive than the adult population, which might lead to both inflation and attenuation of the average causal effect (Hauser & Schwartz, 2016; Peterson, 2001). As I am interested in the mechanisms related to policy illegitimacy that lead ‘ordinary’ people towards acceptance of political violence, homogeneity is a problem. A second concern regards gener-

alizability. In short, while students are ‘people’, they may not be like the general population, which makes drawing causal inference more difficult (Hanel & Vione, 2016). For instance, scholars (e.g. Buhrmester, et al., 2011; Henrich et al., 2010) find that results from studies with only student samples tend to be different in effect size estimates than studies using nationally representative populations. As such, by using a student sample in the laboratory we might estimate the average causal effect of the treatment on the participants. This, however, only tells us something about the average causal effect on the entire population of interest if we assume participants are similar to the population group on parameters that could influence the effect (Klein et al., 2014). Fourth and related, laboratory experiments (along with experiments in general) have been criticized for being ‘artificial’. In other words, scholars have claimed that results found in laboratories travel poorly to settings outside the laboratory (Webster & Sell, 2014). Both the third and fourth critiques are addressed in detail regarding the specific experiment used in Paper C. Lastly, in some university settings, students are expected to participate as subjects in research projects, which bodes ethical concerns, as ‘forced participation’ by definition is not voluntary (Payne & Chappell, 2008). I address ethical considerations below in Section 4.7.

In order to alleviate some of these critiques related to the use of laboratory experiments, other experimental approaches might be fruitful. Survey experiments like the one used in Paper B are advantageous in this regard, as they increase statistical power by increasing the number of participants, while also taking monetary and time constraints into account. Moreover, with the existence of survey companies, recruitment issues are less of a concern, and these companies administer their own panels, which provides access to populations that are more heterogeneous than college students are. Thus, it is possible to work with samples that are nationally representative on important sociodemographic factors that are relevant when investigating the causes for acceptance of political violence. Moreover, survey experiments also allow a large group of people to be randomly allocated to the treatment condition, which increases statistical power and thus the opportunity to reject the null hypothesis even when the treatment effect is relatively small. Furthermore, computer algorithms enable precise and careful administration of the randomization process into conditions, which increases both transparency and replicability of our studies. Lastly, our methodological toolbox for survey experiments has been expanded in recent decades, which opens for the investigation of questions that we previously were not able to test with such designs. For instance in Paper A, I was able to utilize a relatively new type of survey experiment, the factorial survey experiment, in which multiple potential explanatory factors can vary at the same time (Auspurg & Hinz, 2015; Jasso, 2006; Rossi, 1979). In

this design, I was able to examine the concept of policy illegitimacy in four different political areas in a vignette format mimicking real-life news coverage. The design enabled the disentanglement of the relative weight of the content and procedural dimensions in an analysis that also took into account citizens' political attitudes.

As such, the use of survey experiments helps us minimize the potential problems that laboratory experiments might come with. Yet despite the benefits of both old and new survey experiments, they also come with some caveats. First, options for treatment and measurement are restricted, because respondents typically meet the experiment online in a written format (Groves et al., 2011). Second, even though algorithms are a significant help in randomly allocating participants into conditions, we cannot be certain that respondents actually receive or engage with the material in the assigned condition. Simply, we do not know whether they actually read, reflect or engage with material, regardless of our instructions. Compliance might be a problem. Other related issues are inattention, people who speed through the survey and 'trolls', and these can never be completely alleviated with attention checks and robustness analyses.

Thus, experimental designs that aim at the experimental ideal all come with benefits and limitations. One of the features of experiments – their artificiality – offers many benefits when investigating proposed causal relationships (Webster & Sell, 2014). However, experiments also receive a great deal of criticism because of this defining feature (e.g. see Babbie, 2020, p.228ff). I chose to investigate the theoretical model through an experimental logic for three primary reasons. First, in my theoretical model, I developed testable hypotheses that emphasise causality. The experiment is the golden stand for testing such hypotheses. Second, the use of causal-oriented experimental designs fills an important gap in our existing literature, and force us to think about concepts like cause, effect, alternative factors and potential outcomes, which are key if we are to draw causal inferences. Finally, evidence gained from experimental studies does not supplant existing knowledge on the causes of political violence gained through other methods. Rather than ousting, it supplements our existing evidence.

In the next section, I discuss the strengths and weaknesses of fielding the experiments in the context of Denmark.

4.4. Case selection: Denmark

In this subsection, I discuss the implications of conducting the research within this dissertation in Denmark in terms of the practical design of experimental treatments and my ability to manipulate core variables.

First, conducting the empirical test of the presented theoretical model in Denmark enhances my ability to draw causal inference within the Danish context. Throughout the dissertation, I utilize various empirical cases as treatments in the experimental designs, including cases on immigration and refugees, climate change, surveillance and law and order. If instead I had tested the theoretical model on policies within only one policy area but across countries, the results might have been biased by characteristics uniquely related to this policy area – they might have been case-dependent. Because I focused my efforts in Denmark, I was able to broaden the themes of the experimental treatments, and thus rule out case-specific tendencies. As such, fielding the experiments within one location allowed me to draw causal inferences in several policy areas rather than only one. One could thus say that I maximized external validity in terms of political topics within Denmark but limited generalizability in terms of cross-country comparison. In this regard, I prioritized testing the full theoretical argument in detail with high internal validity across various policy topics in one country.

Second, using Denmark as a case influenced my ability to manipulate core variables. Denmark is an advanced representative democracy with developed procedures regarding policy-making and implementation, and Danes have very high levels of institutional trust, not least in the national parliament (Citrin & Stoker, 2018; OECD, 2017: 228). Consequently, we might expect Danes to have a comparably high baseline of policy legitimacy, which could have consequences regarding my ability to manipulate this variable. On the one hand, it might be difficult to experimentally induce political grievances, because participants do not trust the experimental manipulations. Simply put, they see something they are not used to, and therefore dismiss it as fictional. On the other hand, we might expect Danes to be ‘overly’ affected by manipulations intended to decrease their policy legitimacy perceptions, because they have higher standards. When meeting manipulations designed to induce feelings of policy illegitimacy, they might exaggerate their answer, because they are not used to such experiences.

However, a recent study by Frederiksen (2021) contravenes this latter argument. A central finding in this study is that citizens in older democracies like Denmark are so used to democratic principles that they are less attentive and more willing to overlook undemocratic political decisions relative to citizens in new democracies (Frederiksen, 2021). Thus, testing the theoretical arguments might be difficult in a case like Denmark, because of the difficulties connected to manipulating policy legitimacy perceptions in this setting. As such, I argue that we should think of Denmark as a ‘least-likely-case’ for finding empirical support for the suggested theoretical model, and the empirical

evidence reported should be interpreted in light of this methodological context.

4.5. Data collected

In Table 2, I summarize the data collected for this dissertation's research. In total, I have surveyed more than 7,000 Danes in three nationally representative samples (Studies 1, 2 and 3) and one sample collected through a participant pool (Study 4a). From Study 4a, I invited participants for the laboratory experiment (Study 4b), where 188 participated.

Table 2. Overview of data collected in relation to the dissertation

No.	Used in article	Description	Design
1	A	Danish survey (N=2948), experimental manipulation of policy substance and procedures, measuring legitimacy perceptions.	Factorial Survey Experiment
2	A	Danish survey (N=2038), optimized version of Study 1. Nationally representative on gender, age (15 years or older), geographical region, education and income.	Factorial Survey Experiment
3	B	Danish survey (N=1558, after screening), experimental manipulation of policy illegitimacy, measuring acceptance of political violence, ideology, Big Five personality traits, self-uncertainty. Nationally representative on gender, age (18 years or older), geographical region and education.	'Classical' survey experiment with screening question on ideology
4a	C	Danish survey (N=500), sample from participant pool, measuring Big Five personality, self-uncertainty, acceptance of political violence, collection of background information on age, gender, education, geographical region, political interest and trust.	Survey with screening question and collection of background information
4b	C	Laboratory experiment (N=188 Danish-speaking primarily university students). Participants were invited based on the screening question in Study 4a. Primed policy illegitimacy, experimentally manipulated enclave deliberation/solo reflection/control, measured policy illegitimacy and acceptance of specific and general political violence.	Laboratory experiment

4.6. Operationalization of key variables

In this section, I elaborate on how I measured (and experimentally manipulated) policy legitimacy and enclave deliberation, and measured acceptance of political violence.

4.6.1. Policy (il)legitimacy

One specific methodological contribution of this dissertation is to operationalize policy illegitimacy. In the dissertation, policy illegitimacy evaluations are treated both as a dependent variable (Paper A) and an independent variable which is experimentally manipulated (Papers B and C). I go over these two functions in this section, and elaborate on how policy illegitimacy was operationalized in each.

In Paper A, the key question is which features of a policy shape citizens' policy legitimacy evaluations: is it substance, procedures or both? In order to answer this question, I developed a policy legitimacy measure based on the conceptualization presented in Section 3.1. In essence, respondents were asked to evaluate policy's legitimacy on three 11-point response scales ranging from 0-10, as recommended when testing multidimensional concepts (Auspurg and Hinz, 2015: 69-72; Sauer et al., 2020). The three items measured the degree of fairness (from completely unfair to completely fair), appropriateness (completely inappropriate to completely appropriate) and rightfulness (not at all right to completely rightful) of the given policy vignette (Arnesen, 2017; Easton, 1965: 278; Møller, 2019: 36; Peters, 2016: 89). Based on these items, I constructed a policy legitimacy scale ranging from completely illegitimate (0) to completely legitimate (1). In Paper A, I determined that these three items had both high internal correlation and reliability.

After finding in Paper A that the primary feature that shapes policy legitimacy perceptions is alignment between policy content and political attitudes, I used this information to develop treatments designed to induce perceptions of policy illegitimacy in Papers B and C. Accordingly, I developed treatments meant to conflict with citizens' preferred policy outcome. For instance, citizens who favour loose immigration and refugee laws received treatments indicating that the Danish parliament decided to accept fewer refugees relative to recent years (Papers B and C), which was expected to decrease their policy legitimacy evaluations. Participants' *a priori* political views were captured using screening questions. In addition, citizens' policy legitimacy perceptions were primed in the studies presented in Papers B and C by using a two-stage method. First, participants read the fictional policies meant to induce policy illegitimacy, and second they were asked to reflect and write down three sentences about their immediate reactions to the policies in the treatments. A similar priming method has been used successfully in previous studies (Hogg et al., 2010; Sherman et al., 2009). Finally, they evaluated the policies on the 11-point policy legitimacy scale. In Paper B, this two-stage procedure was adapted to an online survey format, where participants had approximately one minute to consider the treatments. In the laboratory experiment, participants

signed up for at least one hour of participation, so here they had approximately five minutes. For further details on how I specifically primed participants' policy legitimacy perceptions with knowledge gained from screening surveys, see the sections in Papers B and C regarding the specific experimental procedures.

4.6.2. Acceptance of political violence

To measure the primary outcome of interest of this dissertation, namely acceptance of political violence, I utilized two different operationalizations. In Papers B and C, I relied on the Radical Intentions Scale (RIS) developed by McCauley and Moskaleiko (2009) and refined by Gøtzsche-Astrup (2019), and in Paper C, I developed another measure inspired by the 'choice dilemmas' developed by Wallach and Kogan (1959) and advanced by Stoner (1961).

First, I utilized a modified version of the Radical Intentions Scale (RIS) as an operationalization for acceptance of political violence. The RIS has previously been successfully used to measure people's readiness to participate in illegal or violent political action (e.g. by Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2019, Moskaleiko & McCauley, 2009,) in diverse settings such as the United States, Ukraine and Denmark. In other words, this measure captures violent behavioural intentions. The original RIS consists of four primary items and two supplementary items. This dissertation also included Gøtzsche-Astrup's additional three items (2019, 48), because they add actions that were not previously encapsulated in the original measure. Moreover, the modified 9-item version, which I show in Table 3, was successfully implemented in a Danish context recently (Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2019). Respondents evaluated the modified 9-item RIS on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'.

Table 3. Original and modified Radical Intentions Scale

Original RIS (Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009)	<p>Primary items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I would continue to support an organization that fights for my group's political and legal rights even if the organization sometimes breaks the law. 2. I would continue to support an organization that fights for my group's political and legal rights even if the organization sometimes resorts to violence. 3. I would participate in a public protest against the oppression of my group even if I thought the protest might turn violent. 4. I would attack police or security forces if I saw them beating members of my group. <p>Supplementary items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. I would go to war to protect the rights of my group. 6. I would retaliate against members of a group that had attacked my group, even if I couldn't be sure I was retaliating against the guilty parties.
Additional items from the modified RIS (Götzsche-Astrup, 2019)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. I would participate in threatening those who attempted to curtail the political rights and interests of people like me. 8. I would help plan illegal actions against authorities that regularly suppressed the political rights and interests of people like me. 9. I would encourage others to participate in violent protest against the oppression of people like me even if I knew it was illegal.

The second measure of the dependent variable was developed to determine subjects' acceptance of political violence as a response to an aggrieving fictional policy they met in the laboratory.⁶ In Wallach and Kogan's work (1959), each choice dilemma describes a situation in which a person is faced with a choice between two actions whose outcomes differ in their attractiveness and probability of occurring. The respondent is to act as an advisor to the person in the scenario and is asked to indicate the minimum probability of success that he/she would demand before recommending a given action. Instead of acting as an advisor to a person, participants in this study were asked to act as advisors to a group of citizens of which they themselves were a part. After reading an introduction, participants were asked to indicate the minimum likelihood of success that they would demand before recommending that a civic group hold a demonstration in three scenarios, where one is considered

⁶ To limit complexity, participants were only asked to evaluate the different scenarios as a response to the policy on immigration and refugees.

more violent than the others (see the supplementary material for Paper C for task introduction and answer sheets). The scenarios were:

1. The civic group holds a public demonstration.
2. The civic group holds a public demonstration at rush hour, and it is expected that traffic will be disturbed for several hours.
3. The civic group holds a public demonstration, and a counter-demonstration must be expected. The counter-demonstration is organized by a group that has previously used violence to further their cause. If your civic group holds the demonstration, there is a very high risk of confrontation with the counter-demonstration.

How is the amount of risk and acceptance of violence determined in these dilemmas? In essence, participants were asked to consider what risk they were willing to accept in the different scenarios in order to make the politicians undo the grievance-inducing policy. A higher degree of acceptance of the more violent Scenario 3, where violence is almost unavoidable, indicates a higher willingness to endanger your own as well as your fellow group members' safety for a political cause.

4.6.3. Enclave deliberation

In this subsection, I describe how I operationalized enclave deliberation in aggrieved groups. In order to do so, I will briefly elaborate on the experimental procedure used for Study 4b. A full-detailed procedural walkthrough can be found in Paper C.

The procedure for this study comprised of three steps, one prior to the laboratory experiment, and two once participants were physically present in the laboratory. In the pre-laboratory element participants filled out an online screening survey, in which I was able to determine their ideological views on policies regarding both climate change and immigration and refugees. Based on their answers, participants were invited to the laboratory with ideologically likeminded people whom they did not know prior to the experiment. Once in the laboratory, the second step could commence. In this step, participants' policy illegitimacy perceptions were primed via the two-stage method described above using two fictional policies. After being primed with policy illegitimacy, participants were randomly assigned to only one of three conditions: enclave deliberation, solo reflection or control.

In the *enclave deliberation condition*, participants were asked sit together, discuss and evaluate the fairness, appropriateness, and rightfulness of the two fictive policies with the aim of reaching a group consensus. They had 15 minutes to discuss each fictive policy, and everyone was encouraged to partake

in the discussion. In the *solo reflection condition*, participants instead undertook two reflection exercises alone.⁷ Participants were instructed on a computer monitor to use approximately 15 minutes on each grievance-inducing policy to write how they felt about the policies and how they would present their position to the responsible politicians. After either deliberating or reflecting alone, participants in these two conditions were asked to evaluate the policy legitimacy of the aggrieving policies as a post-exercise measure. In the *control condition*, participants did not perform any exercises after the two-stage priming procedure and therefore skipped the re-evaluation of the policies. Before being debriefed, participants filled out both measures of acceptance of political violence as described above.

Thus, enclaves are operationalized in this laboratory setting through groups of 3-6 ideologically likeminded individuals who have no prior knowledge of their shared ideological positions and who are primed to perceive two fictional policies as illegitimate. The facts that I needed to prime participants before enclave deliberation and that participants were strangers to one another are suppressing factors, as we would expect ‘real-life’ aggrieved individuals to know each other and already have perceptions of policies as illegitimate. As such, we should expect that these circumstances should make it harder for me to find support for the suggested theoretical mechanisms, and thus, the analysis provides conservative estimations of the ‘real-life’ connection.

4.7. Research ethics

Especially when we as social scientists conduct experimental research, we need to consider the potential ethical implications of our studies. Not only does modern regulation protect the rights and welfare of human research participants, but many universities and administrators of experimental facilities also require researchers to follow the contemporary consensus on what the academic profession believes to be reasonable research practice (Hegtvedt, 2014). Therefore, I discuss the measures taken to eliminate or at least minimize three potential risks that concern the participants’ well-being and potential impacts on society at large. These risks all link to the use of experimental stimuli. This is especially crucial when we expect that the experimental stimuli will increase participants’ acceptance of political violence. Participants might come to see sides of themselves they did not know and do not like – even sides

⁷ The two separate laboratories enabled us to separate participants in different conditions without them knowing about the content of the other conditions.

that were best kept hidden. Or even worse, on a societal scale, they might utilize the grievances amplified through the experimental stimuli to hurt other people in or outside of the experimental setting.

First, the sensitive nature of the topics studied (especially in Papers B and C) might have caused participants to feel some discomfort. Specifically, answering questions regarding politics, grievance-inducing policies and behavioural intentions regarding violence might distress some participants. To mitigate this risk in the fielded surveys, participants were clearly told in the informed consent that they could decline to answer any question or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Specifically, there was an ‘I withdraw’ box at the bottom of every screen, which would bring the participant to the debriefing page. In the laboratory, participants also had to sign an informed consent form in order to participate in the study. In the form and again prior to group sessions, participants were clearly informed that they could withdraw from discussions at any time without penalty. After completing the surveys and the laboratory experiment, participants were also thoroughly debriefed. In these sessions they were given contact information for the author and the Research Ethics Committee (IRB) at Aarhus University, so that participants were provided with a list of resources they could use to confidentially discuss any negative experiences arising from their participation in the studies.

Second, some participants might have felt that if their opinions about topics such as climate change, immigration and refugees, and behavioural intentions regarding violent actions were made known, they could face consequences from peers and employers. Accordingly, their answers were anonymized in such a way that none of their data could be associated with them and all analyses report results on aggregate data only. Moreover, the data was kept confidential and submitted to a secure encrypted database. Participants were reminded of these safeguards multiple times.

Lastly and related to the laboratory experiment, the experimenter left the room during enclave deliberation sessions in order to encourage a free and open debate. Such an approach when studying human behaviour with real people contains an embedded risk of the group session ‘spinning out of control’ in a way that potentially turns harmful for some participants. However, the laboratory experiment was designed to imitate everyday scenarios where participants meet up and discuss their day-to-day lives. The only exception is that in this setting, the topics for discussion were fixed and controlled by the experimenter. As discussed in Section 3.5.1, people tend to form groups based on common interests, opinions and other characteristics. Thus, the experimental setting did not involve risks that participants could not encounter in

their normal lives at their jobs/educational institutions, leisure activities, when with friends etc.

I was aware of these risks prior to conducting the research within this dissertation (and especially the laboratory experiment). Therefore, I took several precautions in terms of the specific designs of the studies, but I also decided not to conduct experimental research with the purpose of testing the effect of policy illegitimacy on acceptance of political violence before receiving the relevant ethical approvals and human subjects training. As such, no studies were conducted without ethical approval from the relevant IRB at Aarhus University. Specifically for the laboratory experiment, I went through a specialized ethical approval affiliated with conducting research at the Cognition and Behaviour Lab at the Business and Social Sciences faculty. Inevitably, the choice of experimentally inducing policy illegitimacy with a view to testing the effect on acceptance of political violence is questionable regardless of all the ethical approvals. However, I decided to carry out this research based on the belief that its potential benefits outweighed the potential risks. Data collected in a controlled setting allow us to make causal claims about policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence, which is relatively rare in our literature. As such, the studies might provide knowledge that can help us develop and test effective initiatives to reduce people's acceptance of violence as a means to meet political goals. If successful, such initiatives could help minimize the polarizing dynamics typically found in extremist groups.

4.8. Studying acceptance of political violence in 'normal' populations

Above, I assumed that it is possible to investigate the different relationships potentially connecting policy with acceptance of political violence in the general population. However, this assumption needs to be discussed, which I do in this section. First, I discuss why it make sense to study what we might deem deviant attitudes within 'ordinary' people. Second, I argue that the mechanisms outlined in the theoretical framework are normal mechanisms, meaning that all people could potentially get involved in a process of delegitimation under the 'right/wrong' circumstances.

As mentioned above, one challenge to conducting causal-oriented studies lies in acquiring a large number of participants in order to boost statistical power. This is especially important when testing potentially small effect sizes. One solution to this challenge is to use the general population as participants in our studies. This means recruiting participants who most likely do not hold radical views, have never engaged in political violence and are not likely to risk accepting it (Bandura, 1998; Grossman, 1996). A benefit of this solution is that

the general population is readily available to researchers interested in political behaviour, with only research ethics, our budget, and respondents' willingness to participate as our constraints. By using the general population as participants, we can rigorously design studies aimed at testing theoretical propositions directly rather than limiting ourselves to studies after a given event. In addition, we can utilize the potential outcomes framework through a logic of treatment and control to investigate potential differences between those who more readily accept political violence and those who do not. However, because citizens typically do not adhere to violence or accept it, one could doubt the value in studying the general population when we are interested in studying deviant behaviour.

Against this doubt, two arguments might illustrate that there is value in studying acceptance of political violence in samples of normative populations. First, investigating when and why citizens are likely to support or consider participating in political violence is important in its own right (Littman & Paluck, 2015). Unfortunately, acceptance of political violence is a part of our modern societies, and thus investigating it should play a substantial role in public discourse and academic research (Fujii, 2010; Ward, 2015). Moreover, exactly because citizens are resistant to violence, it is especially worthwhile to study the factors that might drive them towards accepting it. Second, studies of the general population might provide insights into the mechanisms that apply to all individuals. If we can make 'ordinary' people – even for a short time – acceptant of political violence through short stylized primes, we should expect stronger versions of these primes to have severe effects on people who are already at the fringes of normative political behaviour (Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2019).

A general criticism of the arguments presented above is that those who accept political violence are categorically different from others. As a consequence, comparisons between those who accept violence, and those who do not are meaningless. However, the theoretical model put forth in this dissertation rests on the assumption that this is not the case. Rather, in line with other scholars (e.g. Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2019; Jasko et al., 2021; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2016), I argue that we need to assume that the relevant mechanisms differ only dimensionally, not categorically, between 'ordinary' people and radicals. I follow these scholars for two reasons. First, in the literatures on political violence and radicalization, there is consensus that the mechanisms that drive acceptance of political violence are normal psychological mechanisms taken to the extreme rather than psychotic worldviews (Fiske, 2013; Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2019). Second, although the action of engaging in violence is binary and categorical, attitudes towards violence and intentions to engage in it are not. One can accept violence to a greater or lesser degree, which is

demonstrated in existing empirical studies (Thomsen et al., 2014; Stankov et al., 2010). ‘Ordinary’ people across multiple contexts do vary in the degree to which they support political violence, and even the degree to which they consider engaging in it (Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009). Therefore, if we are to investigate the hypotheses in the suggested theoretical model linking policy to acceptance of political violence, these two arguments combined support the use of general populations in studying the central phenomenon.

4.9. Summary

In this chapter, I aimed to fill the methodological gap identified in the literature review in Chapter 2. Specifically, I argued that through the use of the potential outcomes framework we can develop rigorous experimental designs such as laboratory and survey experiments that can help fill this gap in the literature. Moreover, while presenting the data collected for this dissertation, I discussed how fielding the experiments in the Danish context had important consequences for the experimental stimuli, external validity and estimated effect sizes. I hold that Denmark is a least-likely case, and we should expect conservative estimates. I have argued that we can measure policy illegitimacy by asking questions regarding fairness, appropriateness and rightfulness, and that the factors have high internal correlation and reliability. Regarding the measurement of acceptance of political violence, I hold that we can utilize the Radical Intentions Scale and choice dilemmas, which make possible the use of ‘ordinary’ people as participants. Even though I hold that experimental designs have merit and unfulfilled potential in the study of the cause of political violence, a key point from this chapter is that this approach offers an important complementary avenue, which does not devalue existing approaches. In the next chapter, I turn to presenting the results of the empirical studies and papers in this dissertation.

Chapter 5: Central Findings

In this chapter, I present the central findings from the dissertation in relation to the research question: *Does policy illegitimacy affect acceptance of political violence, and (if so) under which circumstances?* I structure this chapter in four parts. First, I present descriptive statistics for the primary object of interest, acceptance of political violence. Second, I turn to the results related to the first part of the theoretical model and the accompanying hypotheses (H1a, H1b and H2). Next, I discuss the relationship between policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence (H3, H4a and H4b), which directly addresses the first part of the research question. Lastly, I present the results related to the second part of the research question – whether enclave deliberation increases existing perceptions of policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence (H5 and H6). With the results in place, I wrap up this chapter by summarizing the findings and enabling an answer to the research question, which I present in Chapter 6. The different sections of the chapter draw on all papers, addressing the findings that relate to the suggested theoretical model and accompanying hypotheses. I discuss additional robustness analyses and specific model specifications in the three papers and their supplementary material.

5.1. Variation in acceptance of political violence?

Before delving into hypothesis testing, I provide descriptive statistics for the primary dependent variable, acceptance of political violence. I do so to document that the ‘ordinary’ people in my samples vary in terms of their acceptance of violence, and to investigate whether the primarily student-driven samples used in Studies 4a and 4b are more homogeneous in terms of acceptance of violence, as is the case for other parameters (Hauser & Schwartz, 2016; Peterson, 2001). Table 4 draws from Studies 3, 4a and 4b, and shows descriptive statistics for the Radical Intentions Scale (RIS). Note that I only show data from Study 3’s control conditions, as approximately half of the sample’s respondents were primed with treatments intended to induce policy illegitimacy perceptions.

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for the Radical Intentions Scale, Studies 3, 4a and 4b

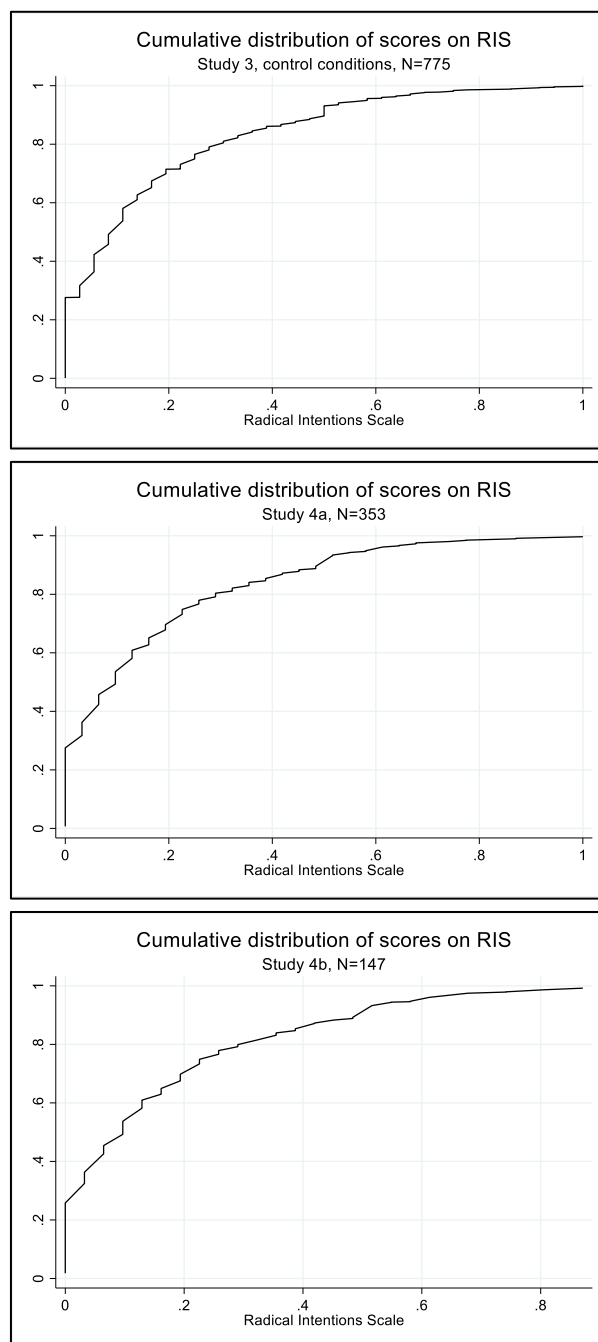
Study sample	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
Study 3, control conditions	775	0.16	0.21	0.01	0.14	0.17	0	1
Study 4a	353	0.17	0.19	0.01	0.15	0.19	0	0.99
Study 4b	147	0.20	0.18	0.01	0.17	0.23	0	0.87

Note: Data drawn from Study 3 (control conditions): Nationally representative sample of Danish adults. Data drawn from Study 4a without laboratory participants: sample of Danish adults, primarily students at Aarhus University. Used as a screening survey for Study 4b. Data drawn from study 4b – laboratory participants. The Radical Intentions Scale is scaled from 0-1, where greater values indicate higher acceptance of political violence.

The sample used in Study 3 is nationally representative of the Danish population, while the samples in Studies 4a and 4b are samples consisting of primarily university students (age, mean = 24.7, std. deviation = 6.9) who speak Danish, drawn from a participant pool administered by the Cognition and Behaviour Lab at Aarhus University. I conducted a one-way ANOVA to determine whether or not there is a statistically significant difference between the means of the three independent samples. The test revealed that this was not the case. Specifically, the one-way ANOVA revealed that there was no statistically significant difference in mean RIS scores between at least two samples ($F(2, 1272) = [2.92], p = 0.054$). As such, the student samples used in Studies 4a and 4b indicate higher average RIS scores, but they are not significantly higher than the average RIS score gathered in Study 3.

In Figure 2, I plotted the cumulative distribution functions for the RIS from both study 3, 4a, and 4b in order to assure that there is meaningful variation in this measure.

Figure 2. Cumulative distributions of scores on the acceptance of political violence scale, Studies 3 (control conditions), 4a and 4b



A number of respondents in all of these studies indicate intentions to engage in violence. In Study 3, 12,7 % of the people in the control conditions gave a raw score above 3 on the 1-5 scale, indicating an ‘average’ actual response of ‘neither agree nor disagree’ or above to each of these items. This proportion is similar to previously reported results using nationally representative samples in Denmark and the United States (Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2019, 55). In Studies 4a and 4b only 4.25 % and 4.08 % respectively gave a similar response. This indicates that the variation in Study 3 was higher than in Studies 4a and 4b,

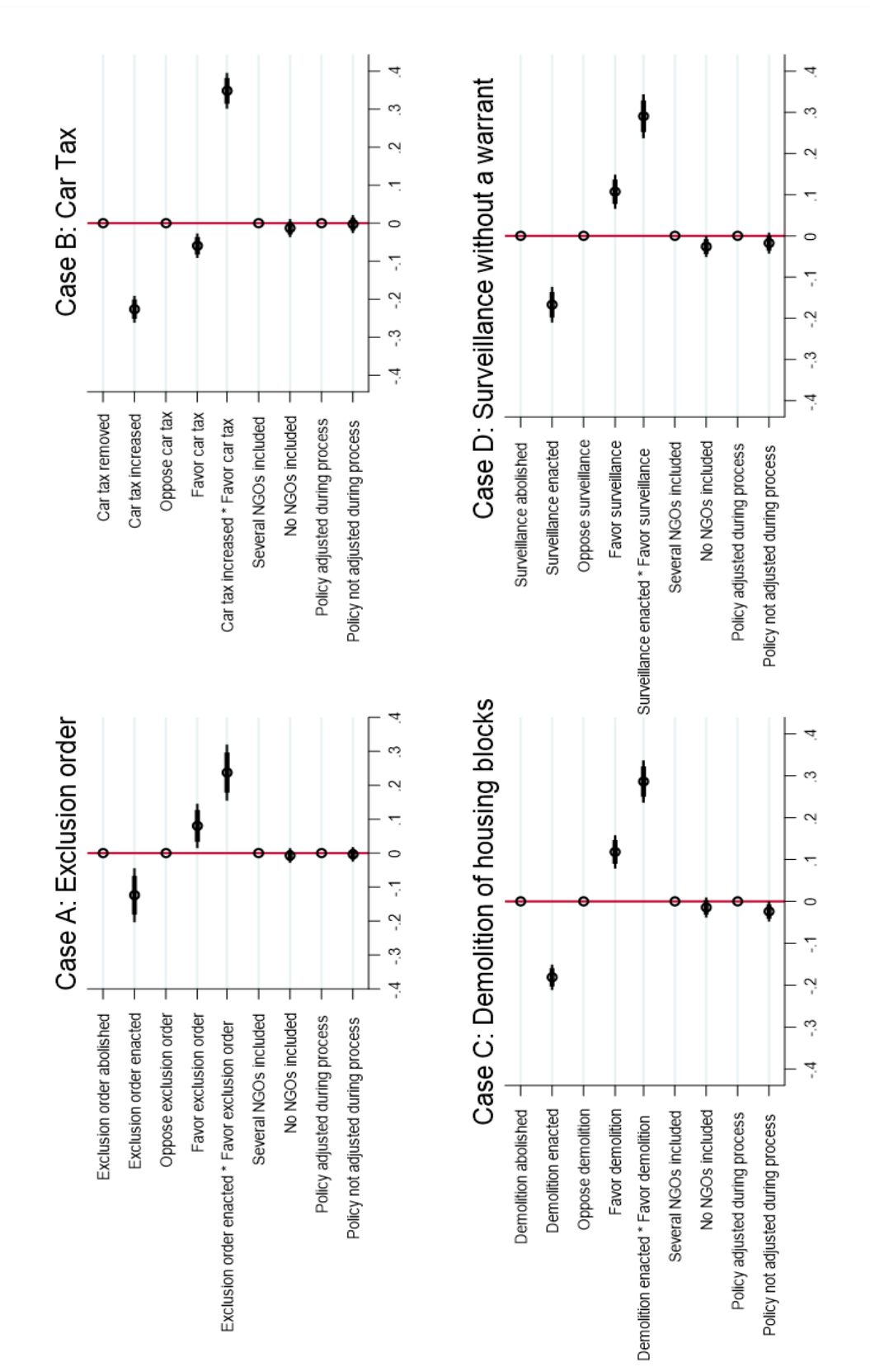
and in the nationally representative sample more people generally had a higher acceptance of political violence. Recall, that the RIS items included for example attacking security and police forces, supporting violent and illegal groups, and participation in violent retaliation on behalf of one's group. Also recall that the samples consist of regular Danish citizens, which is why these proportions still seem relatively high. If we look at the participants across the three samples that reported a raw average score above 4, indicating an average response of 'agree' or 'strongly agree' to each item included in the RIS, we also find substantial proportions of people who accept political violence. 2.2 percent (Study 3), 1.13 % (Study 4a) and 0.68 % (Study 4b) indicated a raw average score above 4. This corresponds to 22 out of a total 1275 surveyed people indicating relatively strong intentions to partake in political violence.

From this short overview of the distribution on the primary outcome of interest, acceptance of political violence, I focus on testing the hypotheses presented in the theoretical model in Chapter 3.

5.2. Which features matter for citizens' legitimacy evaluations?

I now turn to the results related to the first part of the theoretical model and the accompanying hypotheses (H1a, H1b and H2). I provide the results from Paper A, in which I investigate which principles matter for citizens' legitimacy evaluations of government policies. Specifically, I utilize two factorial survey experiments with more than 5,000 respondents in Studies 1 and 2 to shed light on peoples' underlying judgment principles when making policy legitimacy evaluations.

Figure 3. Effect of policy features on legitimacy evaluations of the four different cases with 95 % and 84 % confidence intervals



I start by testing H1a and H1b. H1a proposed that the effect of policy content on policy legitimacy was positively moderated by the degree of alignment with political attitudes, while H1b suggested that more direct or indirect inclusion in the policy-making process increases citizens' perceptions of the policy's legitimacy.

In Figure 3, I plot the coefficients from four regression models testing these two hypotheses with data from study 2.⁸ Here, I find support for the claim that the effect of policy content on policy legitimacy is positively moderated by respondents' political attitudes (H1a). We see that interaction terms ('Case policy enacted * Favour case policy') across the four panels between policy content and political attitudes are positive and statistically significant. In other words, when policy content aligns with citizens' favoured outcome, they on average evaluate the given policy as more legitimate. Specifically, the positive coefficients range between 0.24 (Case A) and 0.35 (Case B), and they are statistically significant at the 0.001 level. As an example, this indicates that those who favour an exclusion order on convicted gang criminals, on average evaluate the exclusion order policy as approximately 24 percentage points more legitimate relative to those who oppose such a policy. Thus, we find that H1a gains relatively strong support from the results in Study 2. What about policy-making procedures? In H1b, I use arguments from the procedural justice literature and democratic theory to argue that an inclusive policy-making process increases perceived policy legitimacy. In Figure 3, the results do not support this hypothesis. While 5 out of 8 coefficients ('No NGOs included' and 'Policy not adjusted during process') are in the suggested direction, namely negative, none of them are statistically significant. Lastly, I suggested in the theoretical model that the relationship between policy content and legitimacy evaluations is positively affected by the quality of democratic procedures (H2). In terms of this hypothesis, I find no statistically significant support for this, as none of the estimated regression coefficients are statistically significant across the four different vignettes.⁹

In sum, I found support for the claim that alignment between policy content and citizens' political attitudes produce perceptions of policy legitimacy that are more positive (H1a). In terms of the procedures hypothesis (H1b), none of the tests conducted supported the assertion of a direct negative effect of having a non-inclusive policy-making process on policy legitimacy perceptions. In fact, they seemed to matter less than previously thought. Similarly, I did not find causal evidence for the claim that the effect of policy content on

⁸ I report both 95 % and 84 % confidence intervals as suggested by Julious (2004) when conducting this test.

⁹ Tests not shown. They can be found in Table 4 in Paper A.

legitimacy perceptions is positively moderated by democratic procedures (H2).

5.3. Policy legitimacy affects acceptance of violence

Policy illegitimacy was conceptually inspired by the work of Weber and Easton as a relationship between the government and its citizens in which the citizens see the entitlement claims of the government as being morally improper, unfair and inappropriate. The concept is the primary independent variable of the dissertation and in Papers B and C. In this second part of the analysis, I test whether policy illegitimacy increases acceptance of violence, and whether this potential effect is reserved for people who adhere to specific ideologies. Before I present the findings related to Hypotheses H3 and H4a and H4b, I briefly show findings in Table 5 related to the question of whether the manipulations used actually induced policy illegitimacy perceptions.

In Studies 3 and 4b, I primed study participants with treatments designed to induce policy illegitimacy perceptions, which was done by presenting them with content that was opposed to their political worldviews. In order to so in Study 3, I divided respondents into two ideological sub-samples based on a screening question. Within these sub-samples respondents were randomly assigned to a treatment or control condition. In Table 5, I show that the experimental manipulation worked as intended, as respondents in the treatment conditions on average found current Danish policies less legitimate compared to those in the control condition. This was the case within both ideological subsamples. These treatments were designed based on the findings from Paper A which indicated that policy content that does not align with citizens' political attitudes tend to be perceived as less legitimate. I consider this an important finding, as it indicates that the empirical work in Studies 1 and 2 provided the background knowledge to experimentally manipulate a variable that should be difficult to manipulate in the Danish context, as discussed in Section 4.4.

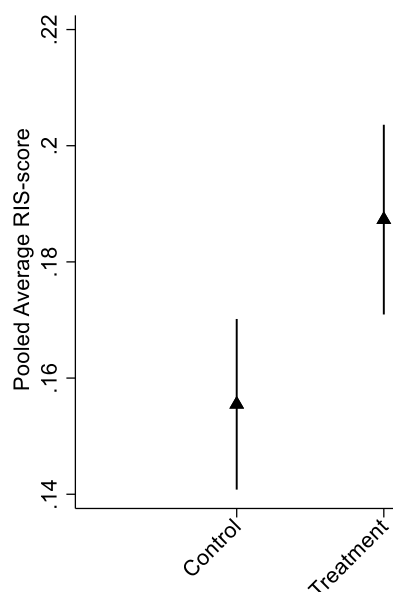
Table 5. Policy legitimacy evaluations across conditions (Study 3)

	Control	Treatment	Difference
	Mean	Mean	
Left-leaning (N=619)	5.63	4.95	-.68***
Right-leaning (N=939)	5.23	4.92	-.3*

Note: *: $p < .05$, **: $p < .01$, ***: $p < .001$. The policy legitimacy scale ranges from 0-10, where higher values indicate higher policy legitimacy.

Turning to the test of H3, which claimed that policy illegitimacy increases acceptance of political violence, I primarily show results from Paper B. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the primary findings regarding this hypothesis. In Figure 4, we see pooled average RIS scores within the treatment and control conditions. In other words, this figures illustrate a comparison of the respondents who received the treatment and those who got the control text instead, which in this particular study concerned an archaeological excavation in Mexico. First, respondents in the treatment condition reported significantly higher acceptance of political violence relative to those in the control condition. As can be seen, treated respondents reported an average RIS score of 0.19, which is 0.03 scale points higher than respondents in the control condition. As discussed in Paper B, this initial difference might not seem substantial, but it in fact translates to a 17 % higher acceptance of violence compared to the RIS score of the non-treated. Recall that respondents had only around one minute to consider the treatments.

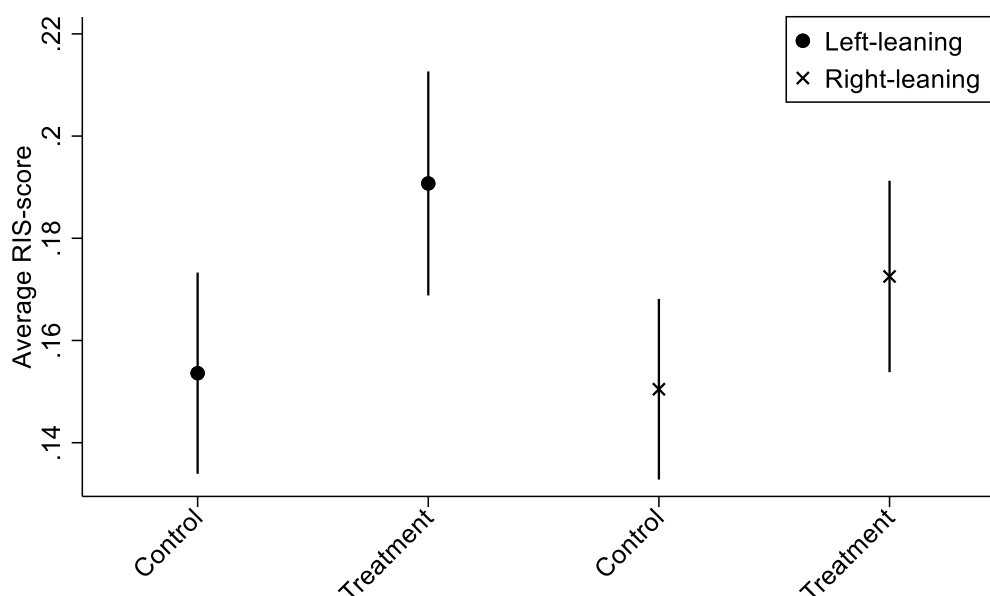
Figure 4. Pooled average RIS-score with 95 % confidence intervals within control and treatment conditions



In Figure 5, I plot the data within the two ideological subsamples to further test H3. In short, within each ideological subsample we also find evidence supporting the claim that policy illegitimacy increases acceptance of political violence. Specifically, we see that the treated left-leaning respondents reported significantly higher RIS scores than ‘lefties’ in the control condition. The same result emerges when turning our attention to the right-leaning respondents. Again, these differences might not at first sight seem substantial, although

they are statistically significant at conventional levels. However, when we take the average RIS score of the non-treated into account, we find that treated ‘lefties’ had a 24 % higher acceptance of political violence, and treated right-leaning respondents had 15 % higher acceptance of political violence. As such, the overall takeaway point is that policy illegitimacy seems to increase acceptance of political violence, which is backed by causal evidence gained from an experimental study of both politically left-leaning and right-leaning respondents.

Figure 5. Average RIS score with 95 % confidence intervals within control and treatment conditions across ideological divides



Returning to the theory behind this causal relationship, policy illegitimacy perceptions were hypothesized to be connected to different ideologies. Or phrased differently, perhaps the effect of policy illegitimacy on acceptance of political violence is moderated by ideology. On the one hand, I argued that the effect might be stronger for people with specific ideologies (H4a). On the other, I argued that this might not be the case, and that the effect is not reserved for people with particular ideological worldviews (H4b). In essence, this is an empirical question, which I also test in Study 3.

The plot presented in Figure 5 provides some initial support for the latter hypothesis. In this figure, we saw that both treated groups accepted political violence to a greater degree than to their respective control groups. Specifically, treated respondents’ RIS scores increased by between 24 % (left) and 15 % (right) depending on their political leaning. To test these hypotheses more directly, and whether the difference between these increases were significantly different, I constructed a binary variable measuring respondents’

political leaning (left/right) and interacted it with the treatment variable. This interaction (reported in Model 2, Table 3 in Paper B) showed no indications of a statistically significant relationship. Moreover, the coefficient is close to zero. As such, this backs the initial finding provided by the plots in Figure 5, that the positive effect of policy illegitimacy on acceptance of political violence was almost identical for left- and right-leaning respondents. In essence, this means that we do not have empirical support for the claim that the effect of policy illegitimacy on acceptance of political violence is stronger for people with specific ideologies (H4a). Rather, it lends some support to the proposition that the effect is not reserved for people who adhere to specific ideologies (H4b).

5.4. The amplifying effect of enclave deliberation

5.4.1. For policy illegitimacy perceptions

In this last part of the analysis, I test the final part of the theoretical model, namely under which circumstances policy illegitimacy affects acceptance of political violence. Specifically, I test whether enclave deliberation has an amplifying effect on existing policy illegitimacy perceptions (H5) and whether it increases acceptance of political violence (H6). Here, I rely on the evidence gathered in Study 4b – the laboratory experiment with left-leaning participants. Recall from Section 4.6.3 that participants were randomly assigned to three different conditions: enclave deliberation, solo reflection and control. Before being assigned to these conditions, participants were primed with fictional policies designed to induce policy illegitimacy. When allocated to the conditions, participants either participated in a group discussion, reflected on their initial legitimacy evaluations individually or moved on directly to answering the measures capturing acceptance of political violence. Therefore, I report findings based on two different kinds of empirical tests: a paired two-sided t-test of the differences in means before and after deliberation, and a differences-in-differences (DD) analysis using regression taking the solo reflection condition into account. In Table 6 I summarize the results from the first test.

Table 6. Legitimacy evaluations before, during, and after enclave deliberation (Study 4b)

	Before deliberation	Group consensus	After deliberation	Difference between before and after
	Mean	Mean	Mean	
Refugees and immigrants	2.34	2.11	1.9	-0.44 [†]
Climate tax	2.36	2.07	1.48	-0.88**

Note: N = 50 (12 enclaves). One out of 12 enclaves could not reach consensus on the immigration case. Legitimacy is scaled from 0–10, where 10 equals ‘completely legitimate’. [†]: $p < .1$, *: $p < .05$, **: $p < .01$, ***: $p < .001$.

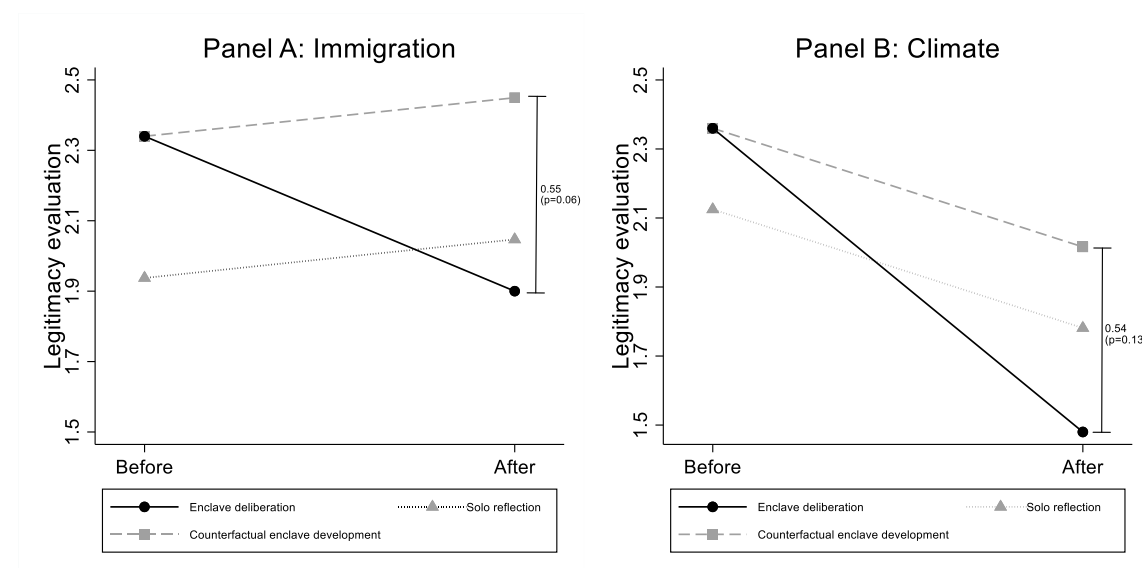
In this table we see that deliberating subjects showed clear signs of group polarization on both topics. In terms of reducing the amount of refugees and immigrants Denmark accepts each year, participants on average found this policy less fair after ($M=1.9$, $SD=1.74$) enclave deliberation relative to before ($M = 2.34$, $SD = 2.04$). This decrease, -0.44 , 95 % CI $[-.93; .05]$, which converts into a 17 % drop is statistically significant at the 0.1 level, $t(49) = -1.8$, $p < 0.078$. Regarding decreasing the climate tax on foods with high CO₂ emissions, a similar pattern emerges. On average, the policy was evaluated as more legitimate before ($M = 2.36$ $SD = 2.51$) than after enclave deliberation ($M = 1.48$ $SD = 1.64$). This decrease, -0.88 , 95 CI $[-1.48-.28]$, translates into a 37 % drop, and it is statistically significant, $t(49) = -2.94$, $p < 0.005$. In short, we see the well-documented group polarization effect at play as participants’ initial policy legitimacy perceptions are amplified after enclave deliberation, thus lending immediate support to H5. Additionally, it is interesting that deliberating participants evaluate the policies as less legitimate than the mean of group consensus, indicating that they not only adhere to group positions but actually ‘go beyond’ them.

One might wonder, however, whether these results could be driven by the fact that participants simply engaged with and reflected on the two aggrieving policies during deliberation. In other words, we need a better causal estimate of whether enclave deliberation *caused* the observed amplification of policy legitimacy perceptions or whether mere engagement with the material caused the shifts. To adjust for this potential ‘engagement-with-the-material effect’, I applied a differences-in-differences (DD) logic (Angrist & Pischke, 2014, 178ff) to provide a better causal estimate of the effect of enclave deliberation on legitimacy evaluations. In this logic, the development in policy legitimacy evaluations for the participants in the solo reflection condition (in Study 4b) is used as a counterfactual estimate of how legitimacy evaluations would have

developed for the participants in the group deliberation condition had they not deliberated. This counterfactual logic assumes common trends, meaning that without any enclave deliberation, participants should have followed the trend in the solo reflection condition, which is a fair assumption to make, because participants were randomly assigned to the different conditions.

In Figure 6, I present the DD analyses for both fictional policies graphically. Here, I plot the development (for both policies) in the mean of legitimacy evaluations for (1) deliberating subjects, (2) solo reflecting subjects and (3) deliberating subjects had they followed the development of the solo reflecting participants.

Figure 6. Actual and counterfactual development in legitimacy evaluations on both aggrieving policies



Starting with the immigration policy (Panel A), it is clear that enclave deliberation *caused* the shift in political attitudes. In this panel, the important difference to note is the 0.55 point difference (on a scale from 0–10) in the post-deliberation legitimacy mean between the enclave deliberation condition and the counterfactual scenario. If deliberating participants had followed the counterfactual development, and thereby not participated in enclave deliberation, we would expect their average legitimacy evaluation to increase slightly. However, as can be seen, this did not happen. Instead, deliberating participants, on average, evaluated the immigration policy as significantly less legitimate after deliberating. Consequently, this DD analysis clearly lends support to the claim that enclave deliberation increases existing policy illegitimacy perceptions (H5). Regarding the climate tax policy, Panel B similarly lends some support to the claim that enclave deliberation caused the amplification

of policy illegitimacy perceptions (H5). Again, the relevant difference to note is the difference between how deliberating participants' fairness evaluations developed and how we expected them to develop. We see that the deliberating subjects found the climate tax policy to be less legitimate after deliberation, but as seen in Panel B, we would also expect them to do so even if they had not discussed it. However, the drop in legitimacy evaluations was 0.54 points (on a scale from 0–10) larger for deliberating subjects and thus in the expected direction, even though it is not statistically significant at conventional levels ($p < .133$).

In sum, both the t-test of the differences in means before and after enclave deliberation and the DD analysis lend relatively clear evidence that enclave deliberation *caused* participants to evaluate the policies as less legitimate than if they had not partaken in enclave deliberation.

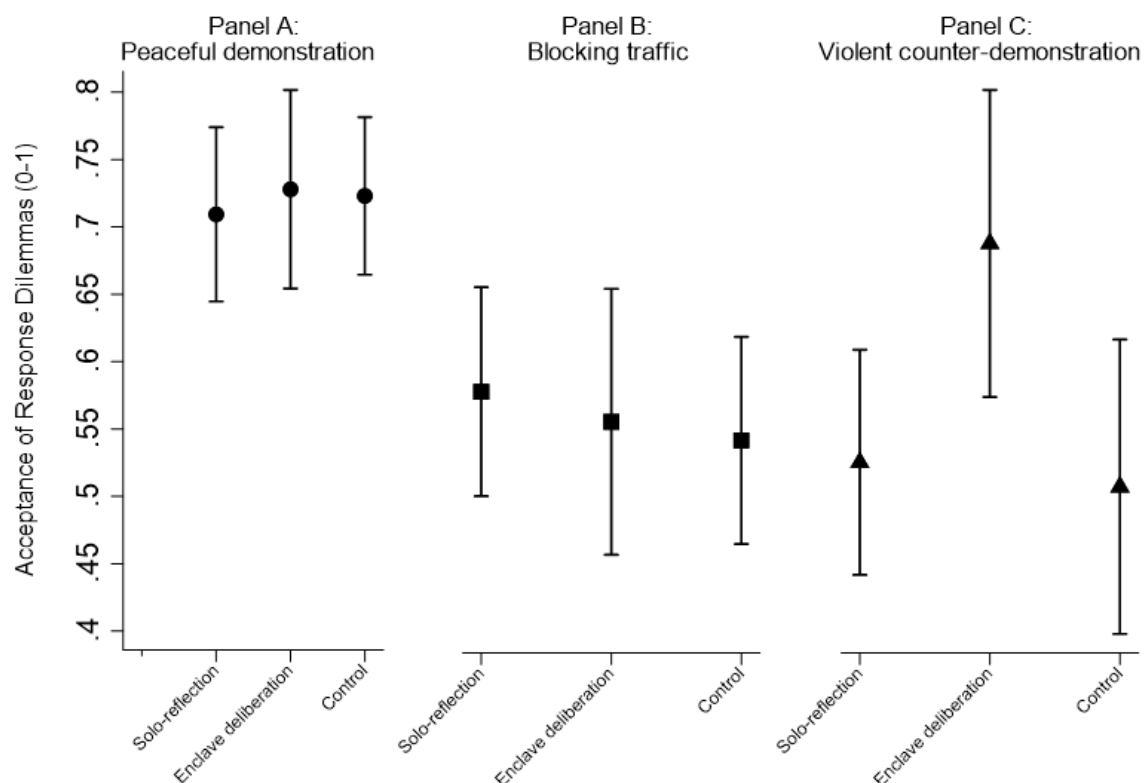
5.4.2. For acceptance of political violence

We turn now to the test of H6, in which I claimed that enclave deliberation among aggrieved citizens increases their acceptance of political violence. Recall that I utilize two different measures for acceptance of political violence: response dilemmas and the RIS. Accordingly, I present the results in turn using these two different measures of acceptance of political violence.

First, I test whether enclave deliberation increases the acceptance of violence as a specific response to an aggrieving policy measured through risk willingness on the three different response dilemmas presented in Paper C. In Figure 7, I plotted participants' acceptance of the three response dilemmas along with 95 % confidence intervals. If the hypothesis is to gain support, we should find higher acceptance of the most violent scenario for deliberating subjects relative to participants in both the solo reflection condition and the control condition. In Figure 7, Panel C, we see that deliberating participants were markedly more willing to accept the scenario in which political violence was described as almost unavoidable. Specifically, being in the enclave deliberation condition increased participants' average willingness to accept the violent scenario by 15 percentage points relative to being in the control condition. When comparing this to the solo-reflection condition, deliberators became 13 percentage points more willing to accept the violent scenario. These differences are statistically significant. Moreover, we see no statistically significant differences between conditions in the acceptance of the two peaceful scenarios. As such, this part (H6) of the theoretical framework receives support. In addition, as I discuss in Paper C, we identify a hierarchy in the acceptance of the given scenarios, in which the peaceful demonstration is the most accepted and the demonstration with a violent counterdemonstration is

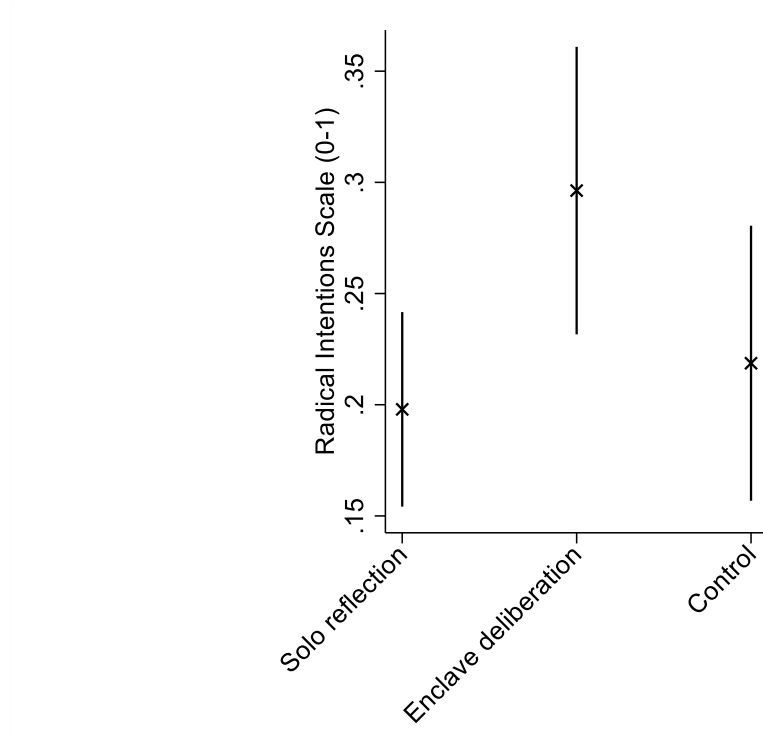
the least accepted. However, enclave deliberating participants were more willing to accept the violent scenario than blocking traffic, and thus, enclave deliberation altered participants' 'response hierarchy'. This further supports the notion that enclave deliberation increases acceptance of violence compared to other, more peaceful types of responses to aggrieving policies. In fact, it shows that enclave deliberation might alter the ways in which we prioritize between different types of political action, even for actions that might include violence.

Figure 7. Acceptance of response dilemmas across conditions (Study 4b)



In the second analysis of H6, I utilize the modified nine-item RIS as a dependent variable. Recall that this measure was developed to tap into people's general radical intentions and their general acceptance of violence. In Figure 8, I visualize participants' general acceptance of violence across conditions with 95 % confidence intervals. Similar to the first part of this analysis, if H6 is to gain support, we should find that deliberating participants have significantly greater acceptance of political violence compared to the participants in the remaining conditions.

Figure 8: Radical intentions across conditions (Study 4b)



This is exactly the pattern that emerges in Figure 8. On average, deliberating participants had more radical intentions than participants in the other conditions. Specifically, they had, on average, an 8 percentage point higher RIS score than subjects in the control condition, and 10 percentage points higher than participants in the solo reflection condition. Phrased differently, deliberating participants' acceptance of political violence went up approximately 40 % relative to participants in the control condition, and even higher when comparing to subjects in the solo reflection condition. These differences are statistically significant at the 0.1 level. These results hold across multiple robustness tests, which I elaborate on in Paper C and its accompanying supplementary material.

In conclusion, these two analyses with different dependent measures of acceptance of political violence strongly indicate that enclave deliberation increases acceptance of political violence (H6). This becomes clear when we compare deliberating participants' responses to those given by the participants in the remaining conditions. Specifically, deliberating participants were significantly more willing to accept a response to an aggrieving policy where violence was almost unavoidable, and they also had significantly higher general acceptance of political violence. In fact, their acceptance of political violence went up by approximately 40 % *because* they deliberated in politically aggrieved enclaves.

5.5. Summary

This chapter presented the main findings of the empirical studies in the dissertation as they relate to the proposed theoretical model developed in Chapter 3. In essence, we can summarize the findings in three steps.

First, I found support for the claim that alignment between policy content and ideological views shapes policy legitimacy perceptions, whereas procedures play a smaller role than expected. Second, I found causal evidence backing the claim that experimentally induced policy illegitimacy perceptions increases acceptance of political violence. This effect was not driven by specific ideological worldviews. Lastly, I found that enclave deliberation amplifies existing policy illegitimacy perceptions and acceptance of political violence. In the next, and final, chapter, I answer the research question, discuss limitations of the finding, and consider implications for the academic field as well as for policy practice in the area of preventing radicalization, political violence and violent extremism.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This dissertation presents my analysis that has revolved around answering the following research question: *Does policy illegitimacy affect acceptance of political violence, and (if so) under which circumstances?* In the preceding chapters, I contextualized this question, reviewed the existing literature and identified two gaps, proposed a theoretical model and accompanying methodological approach to fill these gaps, and presented the central findings of the empirical studies and papers in my dissertation. This final chapter is divided into four subsections. First, I revisit the (now empirically grounded) theoretical model and provide an answer to the research question. Second, I discuss some of the limitations and possible criticisms of my work as hinted at in the methodological chapter. Third, I discuss to which degree this study of acceptance of political violence relates to the study of violent behaviour. Finally, I consider implications for policy-makers and front-line workers and suggest avenues for future academic research to enlighten related unanswered questions.

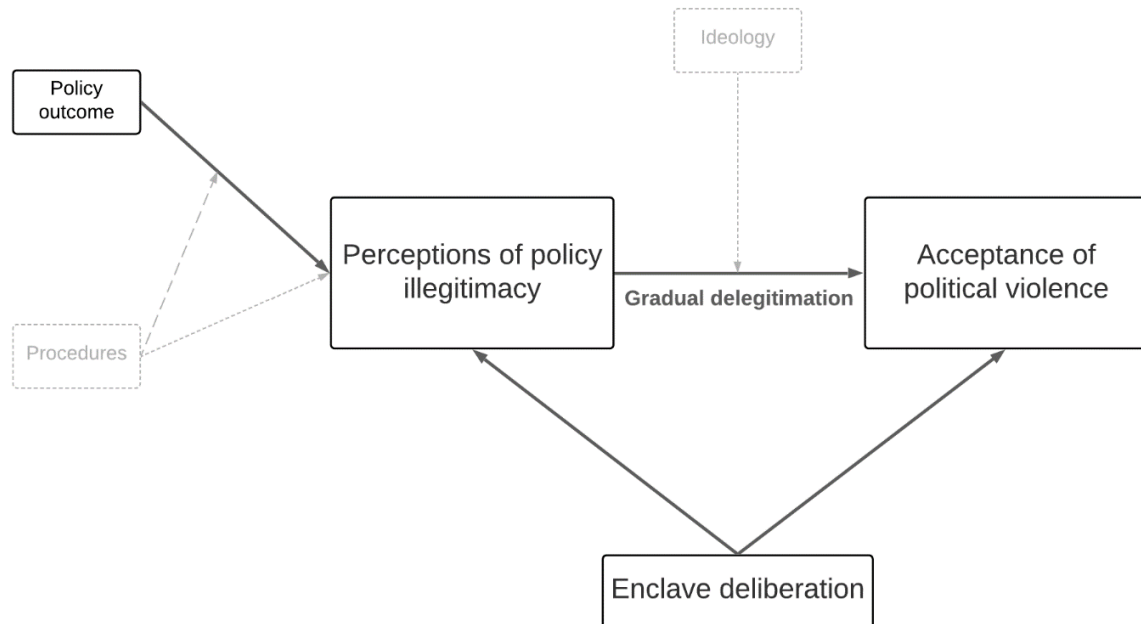
6.1. Revisiting the theoretical model

In this subsection, I discuss the empirical backing of the suggested theoretical model. I do so by answering the two parts of the research question. First, does policy illegitimacy affect acceptance of political violence? We can answer this question affirmatively with the findings from Study 3. After being primed with a short text intended to induce perceptions of policy illegitimacy, participants reported significantly higher acceptance of violence than those who read the control text. In this study, treated participants reported a 17 % higher acceptance of political violence compared to the non-treated participants. Second, under which circumstances is this the case? From Study 3, we learned that the effect of policy illegitimacy on acceptance of political violence is not reserved for people with particular ideological views. The direct effect was the same for right-leaning respondents as for left-leaning ones. From Study 4b, we saw that enclave deliberation functions as an important meso-level driver for the process of gradual delegitimation. Enclave deliberation amplified both existing perceptions of policies as illegitimate and acceptance of political violence. As such, we should expect the effect of policy illegitimacy on acceptance of political violence to be especially potent if/when politically aggrieved enclaves partake in collective activities that include discussions concerning the perceived illegitimate policies. Lastly, the results from Study 2 specifies the

circumstances under which policy illegitimacy perceptions occur. I suggested that such perceptions might stem from particular policy features such as its specific content, the procedures by which it is enacted/abolished, or the interplay between these factors and citizens' degree of ideological alignment with the policy. I found that the extent to which policy content aligns with citizens' ideological views is what primarily shapes policy illegitimacy perceptions. These results serve indirectly as a precondition for situations in which policy illegitimacy increases acceptance of political violence, and thus nuance the answer to the second part of my research question.

I have summarized these empirical findings in the theoretical model presented in Figure 9. The findings suggest that there is a causal connection between policy content and acceptance of political violence, when circumstances are right/wrong. When a particular policy greatly misaligns with citizens' ideological views, it can induce policy illegitimacy perceptions and accompanying political grievances that in themselves can increase acceptance of political violence, especially if they are articulated and discussed in politically aggrieved enclaves.

Figure 9. An empirically grounded theoretical model tying policy content with acceptance of political violence



How does this empirically grounded theoretical model relate to our existing knowledge, and how does it move beyond what we already know? First, the model brings forth the importance of a hitherto neglected driver for acceptance of political violence, namely policy illegitimacy. Second, this framework combines insights from different branches of the academic literature on

the causes of acceptance of political violence, shedding light on how the process of delegitimation evolves. By integrating insights from the literatures on group dynamics and radicalization, this model brings us closer to understanding the mechanisms escalating a ‘crisis of confidence’ into a ‘conflict of legitimacy’ and ultimately a ‘crisis of legitimacy’, as theorized by Sprinzak (1991, 1995). Thereby, we are now closer to a more comprehensive theoretical model linking perceptions of policy with acceptance of political violence. Third and related, the model relates to theories I placed in the category ‘social networks and recruitment’ in my literature review. Specifically, group dynamics within ‘bunches of guys’, as documented in the case studies by Sageman (2004) and Wiktorowicz (2004), resemble the results I found in Study 4b. Yet, the theoretical model presented here broadens our understanding of how enclave discussion within aggrieved groups functions. The discussions do not only serve as arenas for voicing political grievances, but also fuel the amplification of these grievances and acceptance of political violence. Thus, this empirically grounded model addresses the question of when such discussions might escalate by pointing to situations in which perceived illegitimate political decisions are the topic of debate. Lastly, the suggested theoretical model has affinities to theories focusing on situational factors as causes for radicalization such as significance quest theory and uncertainty-identity theory. Perceptions of policy illegitimacy might induce a loss of significance or increase citizen’s experienced uncertainty. However, this model provides a novel perspective that situate the driver of change at the level of current political affairs rather than at the level of individual living conditions, and thus expand our theoretical focus.

6.2. Potential limitations

In this subsection, I discuss four potential limitations and criticisms of the research conducted in this dissertation: lack of variation in key variables, lack of ecological and external validity in using an experimental approach, social desirability bias, and external validity in relation to conducting my studies in Denmark. I end this subsection by discussing a specific methodological limitation regarding Study 4b.

6.2.1. Lack of variation in key variables

First, I mentioned in the methods chapter that a lack of variation in the primary outcome of interest, acceptance of political violence, could pose a potential problem. Even though I argued that acceptance of political violence is a matter of dimensionality, it could be that most people sampled were very close to one another on this dimension. However, as Section 5.1 in Chapter 5

showed, I did find meaningful variation on the two used measures of acceptance of political violence. While it is true that most people disagreed with statements regarding potential violent intentions (RIS), and also indicated an unwillingness to respond to aggrieving policies with violence (response dilemmas), I still found substantial and statistically significant differences. In fact, the results showed variation on these measures similar to that seen in other studies measuring acceptance of political violence (e.g. Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2019).

Similarly, a lack of variation in the primary independent driver of interest, policy illegitimacy, would also cause an estimation problem. In Section 6.2.4, I discussed the potential consequences of Denmark being a country with comparatively high levels of policy legitimacy, which might have made it difficult to manipulate participants' policy legitimacy perceptions. However, as I demonstrated in Section 5.3. in Chapter 5, it was possible to prime participants to perceive policies as more illegitimate, even by using a relatively simple two-stage priming technique. Moreover, the findings in Paper A also show that people perceived similar policies' legitimacy differently dependent on their ideological worldviews. Accordingly, I primed policy illegitimacy with this knowledge in mind in the studies presented in Papers B and C.

6.2.2. The experimental approach

Throughout this dissertation, I have relied on experimental designs, and thus I developed designs in accordance with the potential outcomes framework. As such, an important contribution of the dissertation is to show that it is possible to investigate themes like radicalization and acceptance of political violence using causal-oriented studies without departing from ethical standards.

To do so, I developed three different experiments to test my suggested theoretical model, but such an approach may also come with potential costs in terms of ecological validity and generalizability. First, one could ask whether short primes intended to induce perceptions of policy illegitimacy work similarly to real-life policy. I argue that this could be the case as the fictional policies developed for my experiments resemble policy proposals put forth in ongoing public, political discussions in Denmark. For instance, the four cases used in the factorial experiments were derived from specific real policy proposals put forth at the time the research was conducted.¹⁰ I acknowledge, however, that the fictional policies used in both Papers B and C were more coarse-grained in their wording, which was the intention. The findings from Paper A taught me that I could tap into perceptions of policy legitimacy by using

¹⁰ The specific inspiration for the cases can be found in the supplementary material for Paper A.

coarse-grained fictional policies aimed at conflicting directly with citizens' general political standpoints on policy areas such as immigration and refugees and climate change. Second, a related question concerns whether my experimental manipulations reflect how citizens see real-life politics. Policies are not passed in a vacuum and citizens always perceive their legitimacy (or illegitimacy) in relation to other policies on the same and related political areas. While this is true, I believe that this fact should only increase the credibility of my results rather than pose a potential caveat. If we primed citizens with additional policies citizens found illegitimate I would expect the causal effect of policy illegitimacy on acceptance of political violence to be more potent than I have shown here.

According to the theoretical model, multiple policies from several political areas that are perceived to be illegitimate would interact in boosting aggrieved citizens' perceptions of the existing political system as flawed. In such a situation, grievances would probably be further nurtured in a group setting during enclave deliberation contributing to the process of delegitimation and serve as a potential escalator for group members from a 'crisis of confidence' towards a 'conflict of legitimacy'. This delegitimation process can lead to acceptance of violence and ultimately violent behaviour. In other words, if multiple policies are perceived as illegitimate, the increase in acceptance of political violence might only be stronger than what my findings show. Thus, these findings should be seen as conservative estimates of the real-life process that I mimic.

6.2.3. Social desirability bias

Another potential caveat is related to my use of survey designs and written questioning. The strengths of surveys include the possibility for high-powered analyses, transparency and access to heterogeneous populations. Risks affiliated with this design, however, are loss of control of the research situation, inattention and response bias. People might conceal their 'actual' response, and report what they consider to be socially desirable. Even though the potential correlation with the error term in my estimation is sorted due to randomization, it is difficult to determine the actual degree to which participants accepted political violence. I could have tried to 'hide' measures of acceptance of political violence to solve this potential problem through, for instance, a 'list experiment' (Jerke et al., 2021). However, this method also has its limits, as it reduces statistical power and is incompatible with multi-item scales (Glynn, 2013). In essence, if respondents were reluctant to indicate their 'real' level of acceptance of political violence, we should expect the effect of policy illegitimacy on acceptance of political violence to be underestimated throughout my studies.

6.2.4. Denmark as a case

Another potential concern regards the fact that I conducted all the empirical studies in Denmark. One could question my ability to generalize the findings to a broader empirical setting. Recall that I chose to study several policy topics in Denmark rather than one political topic in several countries. As such, I maximized the generalizability of my results in terms of various policy areas in Denmark, and I chose to test the full theoretical argument in detail with high internal validity across various policy areas in one country. Moreover, Denmark is a case of high general policy legitimacy and few incidents of political violence. Thus, it serves as a ‘hard’ case for finding support for my theoretical model. In countries with generally lower policy legitimacy and higher acceptance of political violence, we might expect policy illegitimacy to increase acceptance of political violence further than what I found. In such settings, where perceptions of policy illegitimacy are something citizens feel more or less often, we might expect stronger reactions, as the most recent illegitimate policy might be the one that drives citizens’ towards aggrieved enclaves and acceptance of political violence. Still, a valuable next step is to test this proposition in other contexts.

6.2.5. Only testing liberals/greens in Study 4b

A specific methodological limitation is the fact that I only test the effects of enclave deliberation on a liberal/green group of students (the ‘lefties’). As such, even though I provide a rigorous test of the hypotheses put forward, I am only able to infer for people with similar political attitudes. However, as I show in Paper B, the effect of policy illegitimacy on acceptance of political violence is not reserved for people with specific ideological views. As such, I have no reason to believe that the mechanisms would work differently for more conservative people on topics like immigration and climate taxes. Still, I acknowledge that the logical next step would be to test whether the results hold for people with such views.

6.3. Measuring acceptance of political violence – and so what?

In this dissertation, my main object of interest has been acceptance of political violence. As I lay out in Section 2.1. this object can be categorized as an attitudinal concept. But as I also discuss in this section, this is conceptually different from actual violent behaviour. Thus, a logical question might be what this dissertation’s results concerning violent attitudes tell us about actual violent behaviour.

This is an intriguing question, and I need to elaborate on two points before answering. First, I did not sample any of the participants with the intention of ‘finding’ those who accept or even engage with political violence. I was interested in the potential dark path that we all might follow under the wrong circumstances, while mindful of the fact that accepting violence is categorically different from actually committing violent acts. Therefore, I deliberately chose to invite ‘ordinary’ adult Danes, college students and members of survey company access panels, simply because it was the causes of their potential dark paths that I was interested in explaining. Second and related, I did not measure actual violent behaviour, as my focus was elsewhere, but also due to ethical considerations. However, I did measure behavioural intentions and used it as a proxy for accepting political violence. In other areas of research, behavioural intentions have been tied to corresponding behaviours. For instance, scholars have found a close relationship between intentions and behaviours in a variety of contexts including health-maintenance behaviours (Black & Babrow, 1991), sexual behaviours (Boldero et al., 1992), driving (Parker, 1992), and pro-environmental behaviours (Boldero, 1995; Cheung et al., 1999).

As such, behavioural intentions do not translate directly into political action, and this dissertation’s results do not tell us anything specifically about the causes of violent behaviour. However, the results might still be helpful in understanding and predicting such behaviour, or at least one of the steps towards engaging in such behaviour. More research within the scope of our ethical responsibilities is needed to shed light on whether violent behavioural intentions translate into actual violent behaviour.

6.4. Implications

The response to the research question has implications for the general public, for the general principles by which we design initiatives to counter political violence in modern societies and for future research.

6.4.1. For the broader public

When considering the implications of this dissertation for the general public, the current situation can seem rather bleak. In many countries, we see increased political polarization and settling differences appears more difficult than ever (Pierson & Schickler, 2020; Wilson et al., 2020). The emergence of modern social media platforms provides arenas where (mis)information can spread like wildfire. Moreover, these platforms are designed to filter people into enclaves, and thereby, online group polarization is almost inevitable (Kubin & von Sikorski, 2021). Additionally, on these platforms extreme organiza-

tions and groups now have access to larger audiences through targeted advertisements, and thus, a new and larger pool of potential recruits. Even though these platforms ideally broaden the scope of the political debate and invite new perspectives, as many people hoped when they emerged, when unregulated they come with severe risks. In the modern age, when policies are seen as illegitimate it is much easier for the aggrieved to spread their point of view, frame the policy in line with their political goals and promote a one-sided narrative that will often stand uncontested due to an algorithm pushing the narrative to the politically likeminded. Thus, perceptions of policy illegitimacy might be more salient than ever, and people have easier access to likeminded aggrieved citizens online. For instance, it seems reasonable to suggest that the breach on the United States parliament not necessarily would have happened, had social media allowed likeminded aggrieved citizens to meet, discuss and amplify their grievances and plan ‘what to do about it’.

As such, I suggest that the research presented in this dissertation be used to consider whether we as citizens in a world with social media are willing to accept the risks connected with these altered scope conditions. Obviously, policies will always be contested, and we should not be afraid to enact or abolish certain policies for fear of potential violent repercussions. Rather, we should be aware firstly that these scope conditions are different from before, and secondly that especially policies on divisive political topics come with not only political and economic risks, but also potentially severe and grave social consequences that ultimately might cost human lives.

6.4.2. For policymakers and practice

Shifting the focus from the implications for the broader population, the results of this dissertation also have implications for initiatives designed to counter political violence in modern societies. In this subsection, I discuss two implications: (1) we should design our counter-measures to counter acceptance of violence rather than ideology, and (2) rather than de-segregating aggrieved enclaves there might be other initiatives that provide circumstances in which deliberation does not lead to acceptance of political violence.

First, an interesting finding of this dissertation is that policy illegitimacy increases acceptance of political violence regardless of citizens’ ideological views. This implies that we should not design our initiatives to counter specific ideologies or perceptions of policy illegitimacy. These perceptions will always exist, and most policies might be framed in a specific ideological light, which for a particular group of people renders it illegitimate. Rather, the results indicate that we should design our countermeasures and interventions in a way that funnels political grievances into the democratic system through peaceful

channels. In other words, countering acceptance of political violence rather than potentially legitimate political ideas should be a priority.

Another interesting finding from the dissertation that have important implications for practice is that enclave deliberation on aggrieving policies might amplify existing grievances and also increase acceptance of violence. These results are in line with existing research conducted by for instance by Schkade et al. (2010), but go a step further in testing the effects on acceptance of political violence instead of ‘only’ amplification of political ideas. On the one hand, this evidence gathered outside of the United States is important, as it suggests that de-segregating politically aggrieved enclaves might be a useful countermeasure. On the other hand, other measures such as moderation and rule-setting might also be effective, especially online, and some existing studies (e.g. by Grönlund et al., 2015; Strandberg et al., 2019) indicate that under certain circumstances, like-minded deliberation might diminish group polarization. This is promising work, and a natural next step for practice is to figure out how to translate these potentially hopeful circumstances into ones that could reverse the violence-inducing effects of enclave deliberation within aggrieved enclaves. Thereby, we might not necessarily have to break up aggrieved enclaves, but rather provide the scope conditions that might foster democratic debate rather than polarization and acceptance of violence. Moreover, the results suggest that de-platforming might be a less efficient countermeasure, as this tool potentially amplifies the aggrieved’s perceptions of the current system as being illegitimate. Instead of countering acceptance of political violence, we risk redirecting the aggrieved from a place we know and might be able to moderate to arenas that are potentially outside our reach.

6.4.3. For academia and future research

The three papers, five empirical studies and this summary have theoretically connected policies’ specific content with policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence, and empirically tested these connections. However, the work is not done, and in this section, I suggest three immediate avenues for futures studies that build upon the research presented in this dissertation.

First, we need to test the empirically grounded framework in other empirical contexts. I argued that Denmark is a least-likely case for this theoretical model to find support, and thus we should believe that the results will hold in cases where policy legitimacy is generally lower and violent political events occur more frequently. However, this proposition needs empirical testing, and I suggest testing the different elements of the theoretical framework in cases with lower levels of policy legitimacy than Denmark by utilizing fictional cases on divisive policy topics, which are dependent on the chosen context.

Second, as I discuss above, it would be beneficial to test the theoretical model's explanatory power in relation to politically violent acts, if it is feasible within the scope of ethical limitations. One option lies in utilizing existing datasets (e.g. the datasets PIRUS and GTD managed by The National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism) on those who have engaged in political violence to attempt replication of the findings presented in this summary. This would require systematic operationalization of the factors put forth in this framework, and valuable insights during this process might be gained from the use of open-source data.

Finally, future research should investigate the relative importance of and potential interplay between the suggested theoretical mechanisms that link policy illegitimacy and enclave deliberation with the acceptance of violence. From the radicalization literature, the mere amplification of existing political grievances in itself can lead to a discussion of 'what to do about it', where violence for some could be a viable solution (McCauley & Moskalenko, 2016; Schmid, 2013). Within social identity theory, mechanisms such as specific identity types and their strength are suggested to be at play. However, the jury is still out in terms of determining which of these mechanisms matter the most. Do they interact, and if so, how? These are questions that could guide and promote this research field.

6.5. Concluding remarks

I introduced this summary with three observations. First, I observed that acts of political violence are a recurring global phenomenon, which besides their irreplaceable costs in human lives have detrimental consequences for all aspects of social, political and economic life. Second, I observed that many of these events are the outcome of citizens' conceptions of current policies and political leaders as being fundamentally illegitimate. Lastly, I noted that few scholars have covered the importance of policy illegitimacy as a potential causal factor for acceptance of political violence. These observations led to the puzzle of why we had not come further in theorizing, investigating or discussing the role of policy illegitimacy as a potential driver for acceptance of political violence. In addition, the observations led to a literature review on the subject in which I identified both a theoretical and a methodical gap. I sought to fill these gaps by suggesting a theoretical model that revolves around the potentially problematic consequences of policy illegitimacy, but also by testing the model through reliance on the potential outcomes framework and experiments. While this model and this methodological approach have trade-offs, I

believe they are sensible. The empirical studies have shown that this theoretical model and experimental approach can yield results, and the current chapter has discussed their implications for modern society and practice.

I do not claim that the research in this dissertation provides all the answers to either the causes of political violence or how to counter it. However, I hope that it might be enlightening for academics, policymakers and front-line practitioners when balancing considerations of public security and citizens' civil liberties in the future.

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Summary

Unfortunately, extreme political action and hostility is a global phenomenon that is here to stay. Recent political actions orchestrated by the Yellow Vests in France, Hong Kong protesters, or Trump supporters illustrate that political violence often is the outcome of citizens conceiving current policies and political leaders as being fundamentally illegitimate. Therefore, we would expect that the academic literature had investigated policy illegitimacy as a potential driver for acceptance of political violence. This, however, is not the case. On the contrary, the literature that investigate potential drivers for acceptance of political violence have been preoccupied with other explanations such as, mental health, situational and dispositional factors, and social networks and recruitment. In this dissertation, I address this puzzle by asking: *Does policy illegitimacy affect acceptance of political violence, and (if so) under which circumstances?* In three separate papers, I scrutinize the process from when citizens make policy legitimacy evaluations to when these evaluations translate into acceptance of political violence. Throughout the papers, I develop a theoretical model linking policy illegitimacy with increased acceptance of political violence. Moreover, I test the suggested causal relationships with experimental designs aimed at providing causally backed claims.

The findings demonstrate that policy illegitimacy increases acceptance of political violence, and enclave deliberation boosts both existing perceptions of policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence – thereby being an important circumstance fueling this relationship. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the nexus between policy illegitimacy and acceptance of political violence is not reserved for particular ideologies. Finally, the results show that citizens to a large extent draw on the degree to which policy content aligns with their political attitudes rather than democratic procedures when evaluating policies' legitimacy.

The dissertation thereby provides an argument for when and how policy illegitimacy increases acceptance of political violence. In a world with unregulated social media platforms designed at filtering people into enclaves and increased political polarization, scholars and policymakers should be aware of the potential violent consequences such conditions might have in the future.

Dansk resumé

Ekstreme politiske handlinger og fjendtlighed er et globalt fænomen, som desværre ikke ser ud til at forsvinde foreløbigt. På det seneste har vi fra forskellige dele af verden såsom Frankrig, Hong Kong og USA set eksempler på, at politisk vold ofte sker som konsekvens af nogle borgeres opfattelse af politiske beslutninger eller beslutningstagere som fundamentalt illegitime. Grundet disse forhold burde man forvente, at den akademiske litteratur, der interesserer sig for årsagerne til accept af politisk vold, havde afdækket politisk illegitimitet som en potentiel årsagsforklaring til accept af politisk vold. Dette er dog ikke tilfældet. Tværtimod, synes de litteraturer, der interesserer sig for årsagerne til accept af politisk vold, at have været (og stadig være) optaget med andre mulige årsagsforklaringer såsom mental sundhed, individuelle dispositioner og situationer samt sociale netværk og rekruttering. I denne afhandling adresserer jeg disse modsatrettede forhold ved at undersøge følgende forskningsspørgsmål: *Påvirker politisk illegitimitet borgeres accept af politisk vold, og (hvis det er tilfældet) under hvilke forhold?* I tre separate forskningsartikler undersøger jeg processen fra, at borgerne vurderer politiske beslutningers legitimitet, til disse vurderinger transformeres til accept af politisk vold. Gennem artiklerne udvikler jeg en teoretisk model, der binder opfattet politisk illegitimitet sammen med øget accept af politisk vold. De hypoteser, jeg opstiller, tester jeg ved hjælp af eksperimentelle forskningsdesigns, der har til formål at tilvejebringe evidens for kausalitet.

Resultaterne viser, at politisk illegitimitet øger borgeres accept af politisk vold. Under denne proces finder jeg yderligere, at enklave deliberation spiller en væsentlig rolle i at forstærke både eksisterende opfattelser af politiske beslutninger som illegitime samt accept af politisk vold. Derudover viser resultaterne, at sammenhængen mellem politisk illegitimitet og accept af politisk vold ikke er reserveret for mennesker, der har bestemte ideologiske verdensanskuelser. Tværtimod synes effekten at være gældende for et bredt udsnit af befolkningen. Slutteligt finder jeg, at borgere i overvejende grad spørger sig selv, hvorvidt der er sammenfald mellem politisk indhold og deres holdninger, når de evaluerer politiske beslutningers legitimitet.

Afhandlingen udvikler og tester hvornår og hvorfor, politisk illegitimitet øger accept af politisk vold. I en verden med både uregulerede social medier, der er designet til at filtrere mennesker ind i enklaver, samt øget politisk polarisering, bør forskere, praktikere og beslutningstagere være bevidste om, at disse forhold øger risikoen for, at politiske beslutninger får voldelige implikationer i fremtiden.