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Gallagher, A [orcid.org/0000-0002-2625-7715](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2625-7715) and Docherty, B (2022) What role[s] do expectations play in norm dynamics? *International Politics*, 59 (2). pp. 227-243. ISSN 1384-5748

<https://doi.org/10.1057/s41311-021-00297-1>

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# What role[s] do expectations play in norm dynamics?

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Despite the central importance often placed on expectations in defining norms, expectations are routinely invoked in a fleeting manner. When they are, expectations are utilised in many different ways, without anyone acknowledging this, which creates confusion. The article argues that expectations should not be viewed as playing a singular role in the norm process. Instead, it puts forward three roles that expectations play in norm dynamics, i) norms embody expectations, ii), norms generate expectations, iii), that different actor expectations have a direct bearing on how norms travel. In so doing, the article seeks to catalyse a much-needed conversation over the concept of expectations in norm dynamics. To aid this, the interdisciplinary analysis draws on *Political Psychology*, *Economics*, and *Political Science* to highlight that other disciplines have spent decades analysing the complexities of expectations. The conclusion offers five recommendations to guide future interdisciplinary research on this underexplored issue.

**Keywords** norms, expectations, roles, norm structure, norm travel, norm dynamics

The proliferation of norm research over the last twenty-five years is striking. Even for those working on norms, the exponential growth in publications has seen a bewildering list of categories emerge:

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norm ‘robustness’ (Legro, 1997: 34); norm ‘cascade’ (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 887); ‘norm boomerangs’ (Keck and Sikkink, 1998: 12-13); norm ‘spiral model’ (Risse et al, 1999: 3); norm ‘diffusion’ (Checkel, 1999: 83); norm ‘persuasion’ and ‘frames’ (Payne, 2001); norm ‘contested compliance’ (Wiener, 2004); norm ‘localisation’ (Acharya, 2004); ‘policy norms’ (Park and Vetterlein, 2010); norm ‘brokering’ (Contessi, 2010); norm ‘subsidiarity’ (Acharya, 2011); norm ‘degeneration’ (Panke and Petersohn, 2012); norm ‘translation’ (Zwingel, 2012: 115); norm ‘circulation’ (Acharya, 2013); ‘complex norms’ (Welsh, 2013: 384); ‘treaty norms’ and ‘principle norms’ (Betts and Orchard, 2014: 8-11); ‘stalled norms’ (Tacheva and Brown, 2015: 428); norm ‘death’ (Panke and Petersohn, 2015); norm ‘antipreneurs’ (Bloomfield, 2016); norm ‘translation’ (Bettiza and Dionigi 2015: 623); norm ‘clusters’ (Winston, 2018: 638); hollow ‘norms’ (Hehir, 2019); as well as norm ‘validity’ and ‘facticity’ (Deitelhoff and Zimmerman, 2019: 3).

The categories form part of on-going critical reassessments. The current ‘third wave’ of norm scholarship challenges ‘first’ and ‘second wave’ approaches (Bettiza and Dionigi, 2015: 623; also, Deitelhoff and Zimmerman, 2020, 2-4; Hoffman, 2010). Although these studies have undoubtedly advanced knowledge and understanding, this article exposes a lacuna at the heart of norm research: the omission of expectations. To clarify, by omission we mean that academics working on norms have either not mentioned expectations, or alternatively, reference them in a very fleeting manner. This is despite the fact that expectations are often cited in definitions of norms. As will be discussed, there are many cases where academics use a definition of norms that places expectations at its core but then never mention expectations again. This omission raises a series of questions. If, as is often proclaimed, a norm reflects shared expectations of appropriate behaviour then where do these expectations come from? Whose expectations are we talking about? What role or roles do expectations play in norm dynamics? Are these expectations fixed or fluid? How do we measure or interpret expectations? Are there different types of expectations at play? How do actor expectations interact with the expectations embodied within the norm? At present, the failure to study expectations in norm dynamics means that these questions have neither been asked nor answered.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines expectations as ‘the action or state of waiting, waiting for (something)’ (Onions, 1973: 704) In other words, to expect is to anticipate that something will

happen in the future. From this starting point, a broad spectrum of expectations emerges. For instance, one can have an empirical expectation that the sun will rise tomorrow, a behavioural expectation that most people will obey the law, a policy expectation that enforcing economic sanctions may result in certain outcomes, and, so forth. The examples begin to illustrate that expectations may or may not be normative in nature. As far as the authors are aware, Onuf is the only scholar to provide an overview on expectations in norm research (2008: 443-448). Drawing on Hurrell he differentiates between ‘factual’ and ‘normative’ expectations with the former ‘predicated on conditions’ and the latter ‘predicated on values’ (2008: 446). For example, Copeland’s ‘theory of trade expectations’ could be considered to be predicated on conditions as he studies ‘the expectations of future trade’ as a ‘new causal variable’ to analyse economic interdependency (1996: 6). In contrast, norm scholars are invoking ‘normative expectations’ (Onuf, 2008: 443) to reflect a sense of ‘oughtness’ (Finnemore and Sikkink, 1998: 891). Notably, whilst acknowledging that norms are made up of ‘expectations’, ‘ideas’, and ‘beliefs’, Onuf goes onto claim ‘[a]mong these terms, Katzenstein favored expectations, which Finnemore also adopted and Andrew Hurrell has more recently affirmed’ (2008: 444). The statement suggests a lineage exists in that Katzenstein, Finnemore, and Hurrell prioritise expectations over beliefs and ideas yet as far as the authors are aware this has never been discussed in the literature since.<sup>3</sup>

When one considers that other disciplines such as *Economics* and *Political Psychology* have spent decades analysing the complexities of expectations it is clear that no single article can address the omission of expectations in norm studies. To return to the list of questions set out above, it is necessary to clarify what this article will do. The first section is two-fold in that it explains the strange omission of expectations in norm studies and why it is important. It looks at three classic studies which all invoke a tri-partite structure when defining norms yet notably, expectations is the only component part that features in all three. Yet despite the fact that these have been cited extensively since; the role of expectations remains undertheorized which, as will be discussed, has problematic implications. The second section puts forward three different roles, i) norms embody expectations, ii), norms generate expectations and, iii), different actor expectations have a direct bearing on how norms travel. The three roles will help academics to reflect on their own use of expectations in their future research. Finally, the conclusion provides a summary of the article’s key points and goes on to suggest a number of ways in which norm orientated research can engage with the concept of expectations.

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<sup>3</sup> Linked to this, there have been many studies on aspects such as identity but not on expectations. For the former see Choi (2015) and Gurowitz (2007).

## The strange omission of expectations

At the outset, it is important to address a potential rebuttal. A case could be made that the role of expectations *has* been discussed extensively. After all, twenty years ago Finnemore and Sikkink defined norms as ‘shared ideas, expectations, and beliefs about appropriate behaviour’ (1998: 894). In many ways, however, Finnemore and Sikkink’s analysis encapsulates much of what we are talking about in that, on one hand, the authors attribute considerable value to expectations in that they place them at the heart of their definition but on the other hand, this is the only time that the authors ever mention expectations. Whereas the reader is presented with twenty-one references to ‘ideational’ and eight references to ‘beliefs’ *the only time that expectations are cited is in the definition*. If we are to conclude that ideas, beliefs, and expectations act as co-constitutive elements, why are expectations not given the same consideration? As we will see, other seminal studies also invoke ‘expectations’ as part of a tripartite structure when defining

In Axelrod’s study, *Evolutionary Approach to Norms*, he reflects on norm research at the time, ‘[t]he three most common types of definitions are based upon expectations, values, and behaviour. That these different definitions are used for the same concept reflects how expectations, values, and behavior are often closely linked’ (1986: 1096-1097). The statement is important for two reasons. First, it again invokes a tripartite structure. Whereas Finnemore and Sikkink would later discuss norms in terms of expectations, ideas, and beliefs, here we see an emphasis on expectations, values, and behaviour. In both formulations, therefore, expectations are identified as playing a critical role and in fact are the only element identified in both understandings. Second, it highlights that the three elements are interrelated. To put this another way, it is not that expectations, values, and behaviour operate in a vacuum. Instead, they influence and shape one another. The latter point may shed light on why expectations have been marginalised within subsequent studies on norms. Quite simply, it could be that scholars felt that they were incorporating expectations when they were analysing aspects such as beliefs, values, and ideas.

In Jepperson et al, (1996: 54) we see an explicit acknowledgement of expectations.

Norms are collective expectations about proper behavior for a given identity...The norms either define (“constitute”) identities in the first place (generating expectations about the proper portfolio of identities for a given context) or

prescribe or proscribe (“regulate”) behaviours for already constituted identities (generating expectations about how those identities will shape behavior in varying circumstances). Taken together, then, norms establish expectations about who actors will be in a particular environment and about how these particular actors will behave.

The statement places considerable importance on the role of expectations and suggests they form part of the structure of norms but also have implications for norm dynamics. Yet despite the fact that there are countless references to Katzenstein’s definition in the discourse, his engagement with expectations is neglected. Through our research we realise that the vast majority of references take the definition from page five of the book where norms are defined as ‘collective expectations for the proper behaviour of actors within a given identity’.<sup>4</sup> It is only later in the book that the role of expectations is fleshed out in the above passage. This may help explain why so many authors have used the definition from page five without ever mentioning expectations in the manner Katzenstein does on page fifty-four.

Over twenty years on, it is not an over exaggeration to say that there is a lacuna at the very heart of norm studies: the omission of expectations. To explain why the omission of expectations matters, we draw attention to two common trends. The first refers to the structures of norms themselves. Academics often (albeit not always), define norms as made up of beliefs, values, identity, and expectations. Although research has analysed beliefs, values, and identity, *there has been very little on expectations*. The authors struggle to think of another concept which is routinely defined by appealing to *X*, only for *X* to be neglected in the subsequent analysis. To illustrate this further let us consider international legitimacy which can be understood as made up of international law, morality, power, constitutionality, and consensus (Clark, 2005). Notably, studies have poured over each component part and how they interact within the legitimacy process. If academics ignored one of these then we would not have a holistic understanding of international legitimacy. Yet when it comes to norm studies, this is precisely what is happening. Contemporary research continues to cite classic definitions (see section one) which treat expectations as a co-constitutive element alongside beliefs, values, and identity but fail to engage with expectations in any meaningful way. Expectations are the black sheep of the family. If, as is often proclaimed, a norm reflects shared expectations of appropriate behaviour, whose expectations are we talking about? Where do these expectations come from? Are these expectations fixed or fluid? Surely, those that place

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<sup>4</sup> Wiener regards this as ‘the most influential definition of norms’ (2007: 49).

expectations at the core of their definition need to explain the role they play and how they interact with the other co-constitutive elements.

Second, across norms literature there are statements which refer to the importance of expectations that go beyond definitions. To offer a snapshot. Wiener's seminal 'meaning-in-use' argument sets forth the idea that cultures shape expectations but goes further to claim 'individually experienced and enacted expectations about norms hold the key for comparing interpretations in international settings' (2009: 179); 'individual elites carry normative baggage which informs their respective expectations towards the meaning of norms' (2009: 191). Hoffman's (2010) overview of norm studies refers to how norms 'stabilize' and 'shape' expectations. At other times we get fleeting references such as, 'Norms reduce uncertainty and stabilize mutual expectations' (Panke and Petersohn, 2012: 723); 'only when an idea or norm fails catastrophically – when it produces outcomes that vary radically and damagingly from expectations – is there typically much impetus for change' (Bloomfield, 2016: 323); 'the community does not attach the same moral and social expectations to norms in the earlier stages of their life cycle' (Stimmer and Wisken, 2019: 529).<sup>5</sup> In addition to this, we see expectations creep into discussions of specific norms. For example, we are told the Responsibility to Protect (RtoP) 'is not a single norm but a collection of shared expectations which have different qualities' (Bellamy, 2012: 392); or that it 'was designed both to legitimize a shift in expectations about how the international community should view situations involving atrocity crimes' (Welsh, 2016: 78). It is not that we disagree with these statements but that they begin to illustrate, a) the tendency to attribute value to expectations without engaging with the concept in any meaningful way and, b) expectations are utilised in many different ways, without anyone acknowledging this, which only adds to the confusion.

Bringing these two trends together, it appears that expectations are invoked fleetingly as though everyone knows what they mean. This creates two problems. First, how can we judge claims made in the name of expectations without a more rigorous understanding of the concept? Second, it may be that expectations are a missing variable which helps us explain what is going on. Consider that in Schmidt and Sikkink's analysis on the robustness of the anti-torture norm, they acknowledge agency, process, and structure related factors but go onto to add, 'In addition to these factors, we find an additional key explanatory variable: the *expectation* of norm enforcement and accountability' (2019: 117, emphasis in the original). This is important because it recognises that

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<sup>5</sup> For more examples see Park and Vetterlein (2010: 4); Hansen-Magnusson, Vetterlein and Wiener (2018: 11); Price (2019: 38).

in order to explain the anti-torture norm we cannot appeal to values or identity alone, ‘States engaged in pushback not only because of principled opposition to torture but also because they had an *expectation* that there could be legal and political accountability for torture, either in domestic or regional courts, or from domestic publics’ (2019: 116, emphasis in original). If accurate, this begs the questions, how many studies on the anti-torture norm have neglected expectations?

Against this backdrop, we believe that a broader conversation is needed over the concept of expectations in norm dynamics. As stated, important questions - where do expectations come from? Whose expectations are we talking about? What role or roles do expectations play in norm dynamics? Are these expectations fixed or fluid? How do we measure or interpret expectations? Are there different types of expectations at play? How do actor expectations interact with the expectations embodied within the norm? – have not been asked. Unable to answer all these within one article, the authors shift their focus to the question, what role or roles do expectations play in norm dynamics?

### **The Role[s] of Expectations in Norm Dynamics**

Understanding the role of expectations in norm dynamics is not about adding expectations in but instead about revealing the role that expectations already play. We uphold the view that norms are ‘processes’ (Krook and True, 2010) and ask academics to consider the multiple roles that expectations play within this process. To aid this objective, this section puts forward three roles.

#### ***Norms embody expectations***

To return to the understanding set out in the aforementioned earlier definitions, norm research needs to re-engage with the idea that norms embody expectations which will also help shed much needed light on the question, ‘where do expectations come from?’ which we feel is a critical area that needs further research.

Although no one explicitly argues against the inclusion of expectations, some definitions simply ignore them. For example, Winston’s increasingly influential work on ‘norm cluster’s rejects the inclusion of ‘identity’ and prioritises ‘values’ in the proposed tripartite structure of a ‘problem, value, and a behaviour’ (2018: 640-642). Whereas first generation norm scholars placed expectations at the heart of their tri-partite structure, here we see a different tripartite understanding put forth which notably omits the role of expectations. Although we agree with the broader argument regarding norm clusters and also accept that the examples put forward



evidence a problem, value, and behaviour; problematically, Winston justifies the exclusion of 'identity' but fails to mention 'expectations' or 'beliefs'. Simply speaking, we are of the view that expectations matter and that they need to be factored in to work on norm clusters. To consider this further, let us take one of the examples put forward,

Most of the time humans take reasoned action by trying to answer three elementary questions: What kind of a situation is this? What kind of a person am I? What does a person such as I do in a situation such as this?... Fitting a rule to a situation is an exercise in establishing appropriateness (March and Olsen, 2008: 690 cited in Winston, 2018: 641).

When March and Olsen ask 'what does a person such as I do in a situation such as this?', yes, values are important but so too are expectations. When establishing a sense of appropriateness, the human involved will consider how they are expected to behave in the given situation. For examples, the expectations surrounding what constitutes appropriate behaviour in one setting (attending a sports game) will differ from another (attending a job interview). We are of the view, therefore, that Winston's analysis is too reductionist as it puts forward 'value-behaviour combinations' (2018: 648) but the behaviour in question may be driven by more than just values. Going forward, we would like to see norm cluster research engages with *all* the component parts or at least explain why they are not doing so.

We are of the view that the creation of a norm will lead it to embodying the expectations of the 'norm entrepreneur' whether this is a non-state actor, a network, or members of the political elite. In turn, this will help us answer the question, 'where do expectations come from?' as the personal histories of the actor[s] involved may shed light on the expectations, beliefs, and values that underpin a norm's construction. This ties in with Acharya (2018: 21) who notes, 'we cannot think of the genesis of new ideas without taking into consideration the personal circumstances and early struggle of those who created them. Many such ideas come from places of economic hardship and social-political conflict'. For instance, Raphael Lemkin (the person who coined the term "genocide") has been described as 'an extraordinary example of a norm entrepreneur' (Jones, 2006: 8). Through the work of historians, we know more about Lemkin and how, '(1) his mother, (2) the Armenian genocide, (3) *Quo Vadis*, and (4) the pogroms and wars that ravaged his home and led to his brother's death' influenced his life's work on mass violence (Elder, 2009: 31). These shaped his expectations, ideas, and beliefs which underpinned his sense of appropriate behaviour as he

held a normative expectation that genocide should be recognised as a new international crime (Lemkin, 2005: [1944] 79-95). To understand the anti-genocide norm, therefore, it is important to factor in the personal history of Lemkin and how this shaped the creation and early evolution of the norm itself. The subsequent drafting of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1946-48) saw norm contestation shape the meaning of the norm (Lippman, 2002: 177 – 195). The fact that the meaning of genocide continues to be debated intensely further underlines why we view norms as a process and here we see the interplay between power and agency (Acharya 2009).

To return to the idea that norms embody expectations, it is important to consider that this is multi-dimensional. Whilst the personal histories of the norm entrepreneurs involved will provide some insight, these are not enough. To put this another way, this could be thought of as an internal dimension but in order to get more of a holistic understanding we need to consider how norms are shaped by external changes. To consider this further, we raise Clark's study on international legitimacy in which he uses the term 'constitutionality' to capture 'informal understandings and mutual expectations' in order to explain how changes in circumstance can alter shared understandings of 'rightful conduct' (2005: 220). He illustrates his thinking by noting, 'Russia found itself accepting things in the 1990s-such as a unified Germany within NATO-that would have been inconceivable a few years earlier' (2005: 221). By separating constitutionality from morality (he treats these as two separate norms), Clark implies that constitutionality embodies factual expectations but acknowledges that these shapes what constitutes rightful conduct. To link this back to norm studies, we are seeing evidence of how norm 'shaping processes' are 'contingent on circumstance' (Stefan, 2017: 88) but clearly, more work needs to be done in this area. Norm contestation will see factual and normative expectations shape the norm process.

### ***Norms generate expectations***

Katzenstein's suggests that norms 'generate' and 'establish' expectations (Jepperson et al, 1996: 54). From this perspective, it is not just that expectations exist in the norm's core but that norms create new expectations that in turn, shape behaviour. As it stands, there are fleeting references within the literature that uphold this sentiment. For example, Hoffman's overview (2010: 3) draw's on Klotz to show 'how the anti-apartheid norm shaped the expectations and actions of the US towards South Africa' and also, Yee to show how norms 'stabilize expectations' thus facilitating conformance. But this is about as far as it goes.

With so little written on this in norms studies, let us turn our attention to *Political Psychology*. In Fishbein's and Ajzen seminal *Theory of Reasoned Action*, they looked at how attitudes, subjective norms, and intentions can be used to predict human behaviour. Notably, they identify a small list of factors, the most important being 'behavioural intentions' which incorporates aspects such as 'willingness', 'behavioural expectations', and 'trying' into their understanding of intentions (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010: 43). This led them to argue that the intention to behave in a certain way precedes the behaviour taken and in so doing, placed the role of expectations at the heart of explaining human behaviour. Since then, there have been over 1,000 journal articles published which engaged with their initial *Theory of Reasoned Action* (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010: xvi). As part of which, revisionists have actually gone further to argue that expectations – rather than just forming a part of intent – are a better indicator than intent for predicting behaviour (Fishbein and Ajzen, 2010: 41). Consider someone walking into a business meeting; is it their intention to act professionally or a collective expectation that everyone in the room should act professional that is the primary driver of behaviour? To return to Katzenstein, if norms establish expectations that shape how actors behave in a given context, then it seems his definition is in line with the contemporary research in *Political Psychology*. In short, if, as psychologists claim, expectations play a key role in shaping attitudes and change, surely, they need to play a more prominent role in norm dynamics analysis. This was acknowledged by Finnemore and Sikkink: 'microfoundations for norm-based behavior might be improved by paying more attention to studies in psychology, particularly work on the roles of affect, empathy, conformity, and esteem' (1998: 916). Although there has been some recent work on this (Price and Sikkink, 2017), it seems that this baton was not taken forth.

Within the discipline of *Political Science*, we believe that scholars working in the field may be able to bring considerable insight into the expectations held by actors on the ground. In turn, we support Betts and Orchard's call for 'micro-foundational level analysis' that goes beyond 'armchair international relations' (2014: 63). For instance, in Autesserre's seminal *Peaceland*, she speaks of 'goals, beliefs, customs and attitudes' of the local actors when discussing 'adaptation, contestation, and resistance' (2014: 107). We would add that expectations need to be also factored in. Indeed, we see evidence of this in Autesserre's study. Drawing on Glick and Levy's study, she highlights that in the early 1990s, Slovaks reacted favourably to the arrival of international experts, receiving them "with open arms and unrealistically high expectations that would solve all of" their country's problems, but then started to reject foreign expertise as local expectations remain unfulfilled' (2014: 86). The example provides an insight into resistance toward implementation at the local

level. It may be the case that the local agents involved are not actually initially hostile to either the foreign norm or the foreign implementer, however, because the implementation fails to meet the pre-set expectations. To offer another example from a different study, Guéhenno explains that the arrival of Blue Helmets can create expectations amongst victims that the organisation finds it difficult to fulfil. Recalling events in the Democratic Republic of Congo, he notes that the killing of 150 Congolese as UN troops stood by ‘played an important role in delegitimizing the presence of foreign troops in Congo: the incident was the first of several in which MONUC failed to meet the expectations of the people it had come to help’ (2015: 120). This example provides insight into local level resistance. It may be that local actors were not initially hostile to either the foreign norm or implementer; however, because the implementation failed to meet local expectations, they rejected both. For Guéhenno this underlines the need for ‘matching capabilities with responsibilities’ (2015: 292-296). We do not dispute this, but we think this is just one part of the puzzle. To return to Hill’s seminal work on the ‘capability-expectations gap’ (1993) we argue that managing expectations is equally important. Hill was correct when he foresaw that unfulfilled expectations can fuel a sense of disillusionment, in his case, the EU and in Guéhenno’s case, the UN.

The idea that norms generate expectations also shines a light on the relationship between factual and normative expectations. To date, the lack of research on expectations in IR means that the discipline has failed to get to grips with the idea that factual expectations may influence normative expectations and vice versa. For instance, on 23 December 2016, the UN Security Council failed to adopt Draft Resolution S/2016/1085 imposing an arms embargo on South Sudan. The failure to secure nine votes in favour was met with media reports of international outrage. What is of interest here is the fact that Japan chose not to side with the USA, the UK, and France and instead abstained along with seven other countries including Russia and China. How do we make sense of this? Notably, Japan did not oppose the arms embargo in principle (it did not appeal to state sovereignty or non-interference) but instead, claimed that because they did not expect the sanctions to work in practice, they could not support them because they would be ‘counterproductive’ (United Nations, 2016: 7). In other words, Japan held a factual expectation that the arms embargo would not work which had implications for its normative expectation regarding how the UN Security Council should respond. We see this in the context of Libya, 2011, as Germany’s abstention on military intervention stemmed from its factual expectation that the use of force would not be successful which in turn influenced its normative expectation that the UN Security

Council should not pursue regime change (S/PV 6498, 2011: 5)<sup>6</sup>. In future, scholars need to consider how norms generate both factual and normative expectations and the implications that these can have for the norms themselves.

### ***Actor expectations influence how norms travel***

To illustrate the idea that actor expectations shape meaning and diffusion, let us turn our attention to the ‘localization-turn’ in norm studies<sup>7</sup>. In Acharya’s (2004) study on ‘how ideas spread?’ he puts forward ‘a dynamic explanation of norm diffusion that describes how local agents reconstruct foreign norms to ensure the norms fit with the agents’ cognitive priors and identities’ (2004: 239). He rejects the claim that ideas spread as though they are simply exported from the international to the local and asks us to consider how local agents’ shape norm institutionalization.<sup>8</sup> The seminal influence of his article cannot be overstated,<sup>9</sup> as essentially, academics have upheld the idea that ‘imported norms are almost never considered against a blank slate’ (Capie, 2008: 639) and that local agents play an active role in the norm diffusion process.

Linking the ‘local turn’ to the role of expectations, we argue that a key part of this dynamic is that the local agents’ willingness to accept, reject, or refine norms will stem from their expectation of how the ‘foreign norm’ will shape ‘the local’. If they expect that the norm will not in fact have much impact at the local level, then they may be less inclined to engage in norm contestation in the first place. To put this another way, why would local agents get involved in norm resistance if they do not expect the norm to have much, or any, influence at the local level? Alternatively, if they expect the norm to have a profound impact on the local, then there is an incentive to get more involved in norm contestation in an effort ensure that it is shaped in a way that benefits ‘the local’. We agree that prior beliefs and institutions at the local level are important, but we claim that other factors, such as the normative and factual expectations of actors (whoever they may be on a case-by-case basis) also need to be factored in.

To develop this thinking further we turn to Legro’s study on *The Transformation of Policy Ideas* which has largely been overlooked in norm studies. Our view is that Legro’s work opens the door for

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<sup>6</sup> See also Brockmeier (2013, 81)

<sup>7</sup> See Docherty et al (2020)

<sup>8</sup> Essentially, this underpins his later work on ‘norm circulation’ capturing ‘multiple-agency, two-way, multistep process of norm diffusion based on resistance, feedback and repatriation’ (2013: 471).

<sup>9</sup> At this time of writing (February 2021), it is the third most cited in *International Organization* (International Organization, 2020).

understanding how expectations help us make sense of norm adaptation, contestation, and resistance (there are twenty-five references to expectations). Notably, Legro draws on decades of psychological research which helps support our view that interdisciplinary research is needed in order to advance this research agenda. Identifying two forms of ideational change: ‘collapse’ and ‘consolidation’, he argues that ‘situations involving the combination of unmet expectations and undesired consequences are likely to facilitate collapse while those where expectations are fulfilled and/or desired consequences occur favor ideational reproduction’ (2000: 426). The statement places expectations at the very heart of explaining norm consolidation and collapse. This ties neatly to Acharya’s work on resistance, feedback and repatriation but emphasises the link between expectations and consequences within this process. Critically therefore, the role of expectations is identified as an integral part of the jigsaw that helps us make sense of norm dynamics. This influenced Bloomfield’s discussion of ‘norm antipreneurs’, who notably draws on Legro’s study, to argue ‘only when an idea or norm fails *catastrophically* – when it produces outcomes that vary *radically* and *damagingly* from expectations – is there typically much impetus for change’ (2016: 323). The statement implies that actors will have priori expectations of what a norm is, and how it will diffuse, and if, for whatever reason, the norm, or diffusion of it, does not match these expectations then this may create tension and resistance. We agree with this, but note that again, we see expectations being invoked as though they are very important and yet this is the only reference to expectations in the article.

To consider adaptation, contestation, and resistance further, we offer the following hypothetical. Actor[s] (x) tries implement norm (y) into societies (a), (b) and (c) with radically different consequences in each. Society (a) adopts norm (y) - society (b) rejects norm (y) - society (c) refines norm (y). This is despite actor[s] (x) expecting that the results would be the same in each society. How do we explain this? At least part of the explanation may be the expectations involved. Within a simple linear narrative, it may be that the individual elites within societies (a), (b), and (c) hold radically different expectations of how the norm will influence the local and/or their vested position within it. Within a more dynamic explanation, it could be that societies (a), (b) and (c) are made up of different actors - regional organisations, elites, NGOs, the media, civil society groups etc., and these hold different sets of expectations of how the norm will influence ‘the local’. In other words, each society may be structured through individual or multiple bodies of expectations. For example, a democratic state may have more voices and therefore expectations shaping the internalisation of a norm than an authoritarian regime. Of course, there are other factors such as interests, identity, context, circumstances to name just a few. All of these things will shape the

different actors' perception and attitude toward norm (y) thus influencing adaptation, contestation, and resistance. We would expect different societies to respond differently precisely because they will be, first, made up of different actors, and second, different norms will have their own relevant actors structured into their deliberation.

## Conclusion

In Finnemore and Sikkink's seminal study they claimed that 'the lack of attention' paid to the prescriptive value of norms was 'puzzling' (1998: 891). We would argue that over twenty years on, the lack of attention paid to the role of expectations is equally puzzling. In section one, we evidenced the lacuna by revisiting seminal definitions to show that *expectations are in fact the only element invoked in all three tripartite formulations*. Despite this, the authors involved did not engage with the concept in any substantive manner. To be clear, this is not to downplay the significance of the studies in question, they are accomplished works that have shaped norm-orientated research ever since. What we really find puzzling, is that second and third wave scholarship did not take the expectations baton forth. As section one also illustrates, academics invoke expectations in many different ways and place considerable value on them when they do, but again, these references are fleeting and do little to advance our understanding of expectations in norm dynamics. With this in mind, section two put forward three different roles that expectations play in norm dynamics, i) norms embody expectations, ii), norms generate expectations and, iii), different actor expectations have a direct bearing on how norms travel. In so doing, it evidences that this is not just about how norms are defined, expectations play a significant role in influencing how norms travel. We hope that the three roles will help academics think through the ways that they invoke expectations in their own work and engage more explicitly with the concept. To be clear, we are not saying expectations are all that matters. We focus on expectations because they have been neglected whilst accepting that aspects such as identity, beliefs, and values are just as important. We see this as a complementary research agenda. With this in mind, we suggest five ways in which norm orientated research can further engage with the concept of expectations.

First, the questions that need to be answered. To re-cap, if, as is often proclaimed, a norm reflects shared expectations of appropriate behaviour then where do these expectations come from? Whose expectations are we talking about? What role or roles do expectations play in norm dynamics? Are these expectations fixed or fluid? How do we measure or interpret expectations? Are there different types of expectations at play? What is the relationship between factual and normative expectations within the norm process? How do actor expectations interact with the

expectations embodied within the norm? This of course is not to suggest that all norm scholars have to engage with the concept but if they do, they should explain how they are utilising them and in so doing, begin to think through such questions. In time we hope new research will raise new questions, concerns, and observations as surely all norm scholars share a common agenda as they seek to better understand the role of norms in international relations.

Second, progress needs to be made in better understanding the relationship between different elements such as values, beliefs, principles, expectations, et. al. As discussed, first generation definitions invoked tripartite frameworks and whilst valid, they often failed to discuss the links between them within their own definitions or shed light on why each definition embodies different component parts. If it is the case that norms are structured through co-constitutive parts, then how do these interact in both theory and practice? Are any of these elements *priori* in that they shape the other? For instance, does one's beliefs shape one's expectations or vice versa? To date, scholars have discussed aspects such as beliefs and ideas but as more is done going forward, expectations need to be addressed more explicitly. Of course, the structure of norms is just one part and is also important to understand how these interact in the norm process. As discussed, we get fleeting references in the literature which imply expectations play a profound role in how norms travel - cultures shape expectations (Wiener, 2009; 2018), communities do not have the same moral and social expectations toward norms in different stages of a life cycle (Stimmer and Wisken, 2019) and that unmet expectations can fuel norm resistance and collapse (Bloomfield, 2016; Legro, 2000) – but clearly, if expectations are so important then more work needs to be done. By understanding that expectations play multiple roles in norm dynamics we hope that academics can begin to work through these intricacies in more detail.

Third, intra-debates within norm studies. The article spoke to the broader themes of norm-orientated research, yet we are acutely aware that over the past two decades debates within norm studies have become the norm. To give an example, on one hand there are debates over norm robustness and its relationship with contestation (Deitelhoff and Zimmerman, 2020) and on the other, we have studies on norm resilience and contestation (see Lantis and Wunderlich 2018). The culmination of which is a debate over robustness versus resilience. As explained at the outset, even for those that study norms, the ever-expanding list of categories is daunting. How can the concept of expectations be factored into these debates and more importantly, does it shine new light on existing approaches? We are of the view that precisely because many of these studies invoke



expectations, albeit fleetingly, they have to take the concept more seriously and one would expect that it will add value to the increasing number of theoretically informed empirical studies.

Fourth, methodological issues. Those that wish to invoke expectations need to explain how they measure or interpret (to use positivist and post-positivist terms) expectations. This is not unique to expectations as scholars address this through studies on related aspects such as beliefs, values, and cultures. If we are talking about the expectations of individuals then we are faced with ‘the problem of Other Minds’ (Hollis and Smith 1990: 171-176) which Hollis and Smith explain as the ‘private mind is furnished with beliefs, desires, emotions and experiences known only to its owner’ (1990: 172). We add expectations to this list. Although the problem cannot be solved as such, academics work to infer what is going on in the mind of others, ‘[a]ccess to other minds then has to be by inference’ which ‘are partly from behaviour...and partly from words’ (1990: 172, also Jackson 2009: 22). This is not to suggest such an approach does not have weaknesses, but it begins to illustrate how future studies can grapple with the concept. In Copeland’s study of trade expectations he sought to ‘explore the internal decision-making’ (1996: 26) and whilst he analyses non-normative expectations, it is evident that there are studies that can help provide the foundations needed for further research but a key part of this will be engaging with other disciplines which leads us onto the next point.

Fifth, interdisciplinary research. Disciplines such as *Economics*, *Political Psychology* and *Political Science* explicitly engaged with the concept of expectations. In *Economics*, there has been over 70 years of research dedicated to three alternative expectation models: ‘adaptive’, ‘rational’, and ‘implicit’ (Young and Darity Jr., 2001: 773-813). Essentially, we see scholars divided over the subjective nature of what would have initially been treated as a factual expectation (Shulman, 1997) which, from a norm studies perspective, could help us better understand the relationship between factual and normative expectations within the norm process. As aforementioned, *Political Psychologists* have been debating the role of expectations in human behaviour since the 1960s (Fishbein and Ajzen, [1967] 2010). Finally, over the past three decades in *Political Science* studies have identified different *types* of expectations: ‘expectations gaps’ (Hill, 1993; Toje, 2008) ‘expectation clouding’ and ‘vacuum’s (Flinders, 2009; Flinders and Kelso, 2011; Dommett and Flinders, 2014) and ‘inherited expectations’ (Gallagher, 2015). We uphold the view that these different types ‘provide a fresh and countervailing conceptual perspective through which to understand many contemporary events’ (Dommett and Flinders, 2014: 30) but of course, the studies of expectations in other disciplines reveal the challenges ahead as norm scholars grapple with the complexity of expectations.

Judging by the growing number of publications on norms it is evident that norms research is flourishing. We would simply ask all those that invoke expectations in their research to pause and reflect on why and how they are using the concept. When one considers that other disciplines have spent decades analysing the complexities of expectations, we should collectively acknowledge that we do not have the answers so that we can start asking and answering the necessary questions.

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