COURAGE IN THE CIVIL SOCIETY
HISTORICAL, CULTURAL, AND CONCEPTUAL DIFFERENCES OF MORAL COURAGE AND ZIVILCOURAGE

by

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Abstract

Zivilcourage, as it is known in Germany, is the courage of citizens to stand up to defend democratic norms. Recent attacks on democratic institutions all over the world, e.g., the January 6th Capitol insurrection in the US, rising popularity of a right-wing party in Germany, or the election of a neo-fascist government in Italy, highlight the need to study such concepts that can strengthen social institutions and safeguard democracy. Zivilcourage is often translated to English as *moral courage* and given a slightly different connotation: the courage to stand up to defend personal (moral) values. Building on this my research explored (1) the current state of research on Zivilcourage and moral courage, (2) the development of the terms moral courage and Zivilcourage over time and across three societies, and (3) the evaluation of situations as representing moral courage/Zivilcourage across cultures.

In the first study of my thesis, I provide a review of the literature in the field of *moral courage* and *civil courage*, the literal translation of Zivilcourage, using bibliometric analyses supplemented with traditional literature review methods. My results show that the term moral courage is more common among US based researchers and civil courage is more common among German based researchers. Research on moral courage is divided into research on ethics in nursing, ethics in organizations, and bystander intervention, while research on civil courage is focused only on bystander intervention. I further found definitions for moral courage emphasised acting based on personal principles, while civil courage definitions emphasised intervening when social and democratic norms were violated.

In the second part of my thesis, I traced the development of the public discourse around the terms moral courage and Zivilcourage over two centuries. In Study 2, I used recent advances in natural language processing and topic modelling to analyse newspaper articles across 75 years in newspapers-of-record in three major democracies (USA, UK, Germany). I found that in relation to Zivilcourage the German newspaper emphasised acts by ordinary citizens that safeguard cooperation in society by confronting illiberal and anti-democratic behaviour. In contrast, in the English language newspapers the focus in relation to moral

courage was on politicians and personal values. Behaviour based on one's moral convictions and fundamental values, such as publicly standing up for them, may be considered moral courage, even when those values are anti-democratic. Temporal changes were linked to localised events, with relatively few persistent longer-term shifts.

In Study 3, I went further back in time and tracked the development of discourse around moral courage across 240 years in the UK. The UK is especially interesting as it is the longest standing democracy in the world and thus offers a unique view into the long-term developments of democratic concepts and values. In addition, with the Times the UK has one of the longest running national newspapers in the world providing uninterrupted access to 240 years of public discourse. Using the same methodology as in Study 2, I found that the public discourse around moral courage in the Times changed slowly over time, with an apparent consolidation of the discourse shortly after WWII, after which it became more similar between decades. The topic modelling indicated multiple topics specific to certain historical events, that could be further narrowed down to 5 broader topics, most of which capture some form of politics. These findings further highlight the apparent differences in understandings of moral courage between academia and the public.

In my next study, based on the findings of the previous studies, I focused on the usage of moral courage within foreign policy thought and debate and conducted a qualitative analysis of all articles that were published over the last 100 years in the magazine Foreign Affairs that mention moral courage. I found three main themes around moral courage: politics, military politics, and society. My results supported the existence of two different understandings of moral courage as relating to politicians versus regular citizens and suggested systematic differences between these two understandings based on the articles being related to Germany or not.

In the third part of the thesis, I moved from archival data analysis to research involving human participants and investigated the contemporary understanding of Zivilcourage and moral courage among ordinary citizens. In my last study, I used vignettes of situations that possibly describe moral courage or Zivilcourage and asked participants in Germany and the

UK to evaluate the presence of certain features in these situations. Both the vignettes and the defining features used for rating the vignettes were based on the results of the previous studies, bringing together the usage of moral courage in the academic literature with the use of moral courage in newspapers and foreign policy. Using multidimensional scaling and mixed-effects modelling I found that participants in both countries were more likely to act if the behaviour was beneficial for society, considered the right thing, and was desirable in society. Participants from both countries were also more like to categorize a behaviour as moral courage if the behaviour was beneficial for society, was not beneficial for the actor themself, and was considered the right thing. Despite these cross-cultural similarities, participants from Germany tended to include societal values in their definitions of Zivilcourage, whereas participants from the UK tended to include personal (moral) values.

In the general discussion, I explored the role of moral courage in sustaining peaceful coexistence within society and discussed potential implications of cross-cultural differences in the understanding of the concept. Concerning theoretical implications, I outlined suggestions for future research on this topic and suggested the differential investigation of Zivilcourage or civil courage as the courage of ordinary citizens as a self-regulation process for small scale societal crises, and of moral courage as the courage of to stand for one's values and make difficult decisions.

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General Introduction

> *„Our democracy [...] does not need heroes. It needs something different. It needs self-assured citizens, who have confidence and drive, common sense and decency, and who show solidarity with others.”*
>
> *— Frank-Walter Steinmeier (2019, p. 3)*

In this quote from a public address, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Federal President of Germany, described some of the qualities that can help cultivate and preserve social cohesion and liberal democracy. He made clear that he does not expect ordinary citizens[1] to become heroes, that he does not believe society needed some kind of leader, but that citizens hold democracy in their own hands. To keep democracy intact, he said, we need confident, decent, and solidary citizens. How can citizens with these qualities safe-guard liberal democracies?

> *"The more citizens with Zivilcourage a country has, the fewer heroes it will need one day."*
>
> *— Franca Magnani (Böll, 1987, p. 87)*

Zivilcourage is a German term that can be roughly defined as the everyday courage of citizens to stand up and intervene when others are harassed or assaulted; it is most commonly translated to English as moral courage. To show Zivilcourage, you need to be confident, decent, and solidary with other members of society. And the more people show Zivilcourage in everyday life, as they witness racism, homophobia, and other forms of incivility, and the more citizens stand up to make clear such sentiments have no place in a liberal democratic society, the fewer extraordinary people — heroes — a country will need in the future. Based on these ideas, Zivilcourage can be one important element for societies to overcome societal crises such as violence and xenophobia, and to sustain a peaceful, cooperative, and democratic society (Brandstätter & Jonas, 2012; Meyer, 2014; Ostermann, 2004).

Today, as democracies are facing increasing threats, citizens championing democratic norms and values become ever more crucial. Openly anti-democratic movements can be observed all over the world: the January 6th Capitol insurrection in the US, the rise of a far-right extremist party in Germany to the second most popular party in polls in 2023, the neo-

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[1] In this thesis *citizen* is used to refer to any member of society, regardless of citizenship status

fascist government in Italy, or the 2023 attacks on the Brazilian Congress buildings. More and more countries are reverting from democracies to more authoritarian forms of government (Hellmeier et al., 2021) and right-wing parties routinely run on an anti-minority platform, marginalizing minorities, and undermining social cohesion. Especially in cases where this process is mainly driven by citizens' actions and not ruling politicians, society can play an important role in maintaining social cohesion and safe-guarding democratic values through Zivilcourage.

However, in the academic literature on moral courage no clear definition of the term exists. The definitions that are used are varied and emphasise different details such as the defence of social norms (Baumert et al., 2013; Greitemeyer et al., 2007) or of personal values (Lachman, 2007a; Skitka, 2012). This thesis focuses on examining different uses and understandings of moral courage and Zivilcourage with the aim of providing a sharper definition and differentiation of these terms. I conducted a series of studies that examine moral courage and Zivilcourage from a lay people perspective and follow a bottom-up approach to define these terms and tease apart the factors that may influence peoples' intentions to act with moral courage or Zivilcourage. In this section I give a summary of the uses of Zivilcourage and of moral courage and lay out why a clearer understanding of moral courage and Zivilcourage is needed for future research as well as for contributing to solving real-world problems.

Zivilcourage in Germany

The German term Zivilcourage derives from two French terms which were first recorded in 1835 (Domin, 1983): *courage civil*, describing an individual's courage to have their own judgement, and *courage civique*, describing generally the courage as a citizen. It found its way into German as Zivilcourage with the first documented use in 1847 by Otto von Bismarck. He contrasted Zivilcourage with the plenty of courage soldiers showed on the battlefield and remarked that Zivilcourage was lacking, even in noble men, when other politicians would not stand with him in a debate in the Prussian parliament (von Keudell, 1901).

Zivilcourage became an important term later in German history and is connected to several resistance movements. During the National Socialist dictatorship, members of the

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White Rose, Oskar Schindler, and other Righteous of the Nations are often used as exemplars of Zivilcourage and concerning the general population, the resistance member Dietrich Bonhoeffer (2011) spoke of much bravery and sacrifice but attested to a lack of Zivilcourage. Similarly, in the German Democratic Republic citizens refusing collaboration with the Stasi and those practicing resistance have been connected to Zivilcourage (Schwan, 2004). In reference to these times, Zivilcourage thus means to show resistance to a non-democratic regime and oppose the violation of peoples civil and human rights, including human dignity. However, Zivilcourage is also important in a democratic political system. As in the case of a democratic constitution the state will protect human dignity and other rights, instead of opposing the political system Zivilcourage means to oppose individuals that violate someone's human dignity. Such violations of human dignity can include, for example, racism or homophobia.

In more recent times, this understanding of Zivilcourage has become predominant in German society. Not only President Steinmeier but many others across a broad spectrum of society refer regularly to Zivilcourage. Mainstream politicians declared Zivilcourage an important learning from the Nazi past ("Zero Tolerance for Hate", 2019), the police encouraged greater engagement of citizens through campaigns for Zivilcourage (Polizeiliche Kriminalprävention der Länder und des Bundes, n.d.) and programs teaching Zivilcourage were developed for schools (Gugel, 2004). Citizens who have shown Zivilcourage were awarded prizes by the state or NGOs and especially in cases with severe consequences for the person showing Zivilcourage, such as serious injury or death, media widely reports on it (Goebel, 2010; Krause, 2022). Thus, in Germany, Zivilcourage appears to be firmly embedded within the German discourse and understanding of democracy and is widely known in society.

Zivilcourage in the English Language

In the literature, Zivilcourage is translated into English either as moral courage (Brandstätter & Jonas, 2012; Halmburger et al., 2017; Osswald et al., 2010b) or as civil courage (P. Fischer et al., 2004; Labuhn et al., 2004; Osswald et al., 2010b). A search on the Web of Science for either term showed that moral courage is much more common compared to civil

courage in the academic literature. Similarly, a search on google Ngram suggested that this is also the case in the non-academic world. Yet, in contrast to the German term, neither of the English translations is firmly established in the language with a clear definition similar to that of the German term. This becomes especially clear in the contrasting views of classifying terrorism as moral courage or Zivilcourage. Whereas among German scholars it appears definitive that terrorism cannot be classified as Zivilcourage (Meyer, 2014; Schwan, 2004), non-German scholars may argue that terrorism can be morally courageous as it is based on fundamental moral beliefs about right and wrong (Skitka, 2012). Considering the widespread use of Zivilcourage in German discourse presenting Zivilcourage as something desirable and important for a democratic society (Gugel, 2004; "Zero Tolerance for Hate", 2019; "Trial for a Heroine", 2015; Ostermann, 2004; Polizeiliche Kriminalprävention der Länder und des Bundes, n.d.) an understanding of it as encompassing violent behaviour — like terrorism — could have negative outcomes for a democratic society. In trying to equip citizens with tools to maintain and protect democratic values we must thus be clear in the terminology used and ensure violence is not permissible under that terminology.

Yet another use of moral courage in the English language pertains to the behaviour of politicians. John F. Kennedy's famous *Profiles in Courage* presents several politicians that acted with principle and integrity and withstood partisan pressures to advocate for a position they deemed right. It has often been described as a study in moral courage but important differences to the previously presented understandings of moral courage exist. Here it is not an ordinary citizen that acts to right some real or perceived norm violation, but it is an official public figure that acts with integrity and stands for their values and principles. Assuming that this type of behaviour is desirable and important for democracy — like Zivilcourage — it would not act as a self-regulation tool for society to maintain peaceful cooperation but rather allow parliamentary politics to maybe become less partisan. Such efforts for more bi-partisan politics appear much needed, especially in the United States where the polarization between the two major parties has been increasing over the past 50 years (Lewis, 2022). However, these efforts informed by a political understanding of moral courage would be decidedly different from

efforts to engage ordinary citizens in the safeguarding of democratic and humane values based on the German concept of Zivilcourage.

Clarifying the Concepts of Moral Courage and Zivilcourage

The fuzziness of the construct of moral courage, resulting from the multitude of definitions, has two distinct main drawbacks. The first is related to theory and research and the problems of unspecific definitions, and the second drawback concerns the application of findings and science communication.

Concerning the first point, theoretically, moral courage appears to be part of the range of prosocial behaviours (Osswald et al., 2010b). Prosocial behaviour includes a wide range of behaviours that benefit others (Dovidio et al., 2006; Schroeder & Graziano, 2014). Under this umbrella term we find more specific subcategories like helping or altruism, and even more specific behaviours in those subcategories such as emergency helping as part of helping behaviour (Latané & Darley, 1970; Latané & Nida, 1981). Breaking down such broad ideas like prosocial behaviour into smaller, more specific instances allows us to scientifically study these behaviours. Moral courage, however, has been broken down into seemingly different specific instances that all share the same name. I argue that the dimensions along which definitions and uses differ have important influences on the psychological mechanisms involved. If acting with moral courage means to have the courage to act on one's personal values research should focus on the value-behaviour link (Bardi & Schwartz, 2003; Milfont et al., 2010; Schwartz, 2010), whereas if moral courage is based on personal morals research in this area needs to focus on theories of morality (Curry, 2016; Curry, Mullins, et al., 2019; Graham et al., 2011; Van Den Berg et al., 2022) and for example moral convictions (Skitka, 2010) to explain and analyse moral courage. If showing moral courage means to redress societal norm violations research into this topic may be based on research into the effects of social norms on intervention behaviours (Banyard, 2011; Deitch-Stackhouse et al., 2015). Even definitions that attach the seemingly normative judgement to moral courage and Zivilcourage that only behaviour defending democratic values can be considered moral courage/Zivilcourage, do not include outcomes in said definition, e.g., the strengthening of liberal democracy, but indicate

that psychological processes and mechanisms underlying democracy and democratic values should be examined in the investigations of moral courage and Zivilcourage (Miklikowska, 2012; Sullivan & Transue, 1999). In each of these fields the behaviour link was established through different psychological processes and mechanisms, meaning that throwing them all together into one construct will lead to results that are difficult to synthesise to get a complete picture of moral courage behaviours. A widely accepted definition of each of the mentioned behaviours with associated terms for each definition would simplify collaboration and reviews, and help the respective constructs gain recognition. Additionally, investigating if the behaviours described by the different definitions do have common bases in psychological processes is important to establish, but the current approach of mainly ignoring the differences in definitions does not help with the task of providing a more complete psychological understanding of moral courage.

Concerning the second point, an unclear conceptualization of a psychological construct or behaviour also provides challenges for the practical application of the research findings, especially when the term used for the psychological construct is used in the public arena as well. This is the case for Zivilcourage that is widely used in German discourse, but also for moral courage in English discourse, while not as widely understood and used as Zivilcourage. When using a term in science communication that people have heard of before they are likely to use their own understanding of it instead of looking up the definition the researchers used. To provide an extreme example of what this mismatch of definitions between academia and the public can lead to, let us assume that a non-governmental organization starts a campaign for more moral courage based on the result of a study that deems it a desirable public behaviour. A person notices this campaign for more moral courage, which to them means to publicly defend and fight for your personal values. They may act on this by organizing a group of people to storm a government building as the politics of the democratically elected government are contrary to their values, and they even use violence against people who protest their behaviour to defend their personal values. Encouraging such behaviour can of course not be the goal of psychologists. We must thus use unambiguous definitions of terms and

additionally pay attention to how lay people understand the terms we use.

Thesis Structure

In this thesis I will present a series of studies that will explore public understandings of moral courage and Zivilcourage. I aim to contribute to psychological research by reporting findings on bottom-up approaches to defining moral courage. This will give insights into which definitions of moral courage/Zivilcourage align with public understandings and what the potential of moral courage and Zivilcourage is for being a tool for societies to encourage peaceful cooperation and the defence of liberal democracy.

The following thesis is structured in three chapters. The first chapter consist of a review of the current state of research on moral courage (Study 1). Using bibliometric approaches, I examine the entire field of research on moral courage, supplemented by a detailed look at the definitions that were used. This review will provide the starting point of this thesis by identifying research topics in the literature on moral courage and differences between these.

The second chapter examines the use of moral courage in public discourse and its development over time. In three studies I use archival data to reconstruct the usage and understanding of moral courage where conventional psychological measurement is not possible — e.g., in the past and without having to directly ask people what moral courage means to them when not all may have heard of the term. Studies 2 and 3 use state-of-the-art advancements in natural language processing. In Study 2 I compare the usage of moral courage in the US, the UK, and Germany over 75 yeas. In Study 3, I use archival data reaching back even further to detail the public discourse around moral courage in the UK over the past 240 years. In Studies 2 and 3 I found moral courage in the English discourse to be associated with politics. Based on this, in Study 4 I provide a qualitative analysis of the use of moral courage in political thought and debate. With these three studies I give insights on how moral courage has been used in public and which topics it is associated with in the non-academic world.

The third chapter moves away from archival data and focuses on people's perceptions of behaviours that I have identified as connected to moral courage in the previous four studies. In Study 5, I use multidimensional scaling techniques and mixed-effects modelling to analyse:

(1) how people from the UK and Germany perceive these behaviours, (2) how they understand moral courage, and (3) which factors that the literature and previous studies in this thesis indicated as potentially defining of moral courage are indeed defining factors for lay people. Finally, I provide a general discussion to bring together the results of the five studies, relate them to the aims of my thesis, and lay out paths for future research on moral courage.

Chapter 1

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The Status-Quo of Research on Moral

Courage

Study 1: Moral Courage and Civil Courage: The Same Side of Two Coins? — A

Bibliometric Review

In Munich, Germany in 2009, two young men tried to steal money from several high-school students. A bystander intervened and tried to protect the students while others ignored the situation and stood aside. The attackers escalated the situation and beat up the bystander so badly he later died in the hospital. Dominik Brunner, the man who intervened, had shown what in Germany is called *Zivilcourage*.

In Germany, the term Zivilcourage is part of the general discourse within society and describes the courage of people to help others while sacrificing their own — physical or emotional — safety. German politicians, including Federal President Steinmeier, repeatedly call for citizens to show more moral courage in the wake of hate (campaigns), threats, and attacks against (local) politicians and disadvantaged people, emphasizing the importance of moral courage for a solidarity-based society. The word comes from the French *courage civique* and its use can be traced back to the 19th Century (Domin, 1983). Originally it was used to describe the courage of politicians to stand up for their principles (von Keudell, 1901) and decades later Zivilcourage was applied to people who hid and helped Jews and other persecuted communities during the Nazi regime (Fagin-Jones & Midlarsky, 2007). Today, Zivilcourage is mainly used in relation to people who intervene when others are assaulted or harassed (Krause, 2022). Furthermore, it is usually connected to the defence of liberal democratic values, e.g., intervening when someone is harassed with racial slurs (Meyer, 2014). Having as many citizens as possible intervene as they witness such events may help to resist the beginnings and curb the existence of anti-democratic sentiments. As such, Zivilcourage can play an important role in allowing citizens to overcome societal crises such as interpersonal violence and xenophobia and to sustain a peaceful, solidary, and democratic society (Brandstätter & Jonas, 2012; Ostermann, 2004; Schwan, 2004).

In the scientific literature, Zivilcourage is translated to English as *moral courage* (Baumert et al., 2013; Brandstätter & Jonas, 2012) or more literally as *civil courage* (Greitemeyer et al., 2007; Schwan, 2004). The translation as moral courage is more common — however, it is often used in different contexts compared to Zivilcourage. John F. Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage* (1955) describes the moral courage of US senators to stand up for and

argue positions they thought were right. In the academic literature, US based researchers have similarly used moral courage to describe standing up for personal principles (Skitka, 2012). Among the literature on moral courage are also articles that research ethical business practices (Sekerka & Bagozzi, 2007) as well as patient-care in nursing (Numminen et al., 2017). Overall, the use of moral courage appears more varied compared to Zivilcourage. Civil courage is used more rarely than moral courage but captures behaviour more similar to that of Zivilcourage and its use is more focused.

These differences in the use of the terms make the research field of, especially, moral courage fuzzy. Most studies agree that moral courage is a form of prosocial behaviour but the role of personal principles and societal and democratic norms, as well as the situations it applies to remain unclear. One review of moral courage focused on the differences between moral courage and other prosocial behaviours but failed to address the ambiguity within the research on moral courage (Osswald et al., 2010b). More recent reviews focused exclusively on moral courage in nursing practice and education (Bickhoff et al., 2017; Pajakoski et al., 2021). An extensive review of the entire field is yet missing, making it difficult to distinguish different research streams and track developments within the specific research streams. This is especially important given the differing applications resulting from these streams such as improved patient care, more ethical business practices, or increased solidarity within society.

In this review we provide the first systematic analysis of the entire research field of moral and civil courage using a combination of bibliometric and traditional literature review methods. A literature review allows us to take a deep, detailed, dive into the content of the research field. We combine this more classical literature review aspect with a bibliometric review. In contrast to a classical literature review, bibliometrics takes an empirical, quantitative approach. As a branch of information science, bibliometrics can be used to analyse bibliographic data (e.g., journal articles, books) quantitatively, and allows us to process corpora much larger than typically possible in a close-reading literature review. As the research output in a field grows, researchers must narrow the scope of their reviews to be able to handle the number of available publications. However, in doing so, valuable information concerning

the interconnectedness of specific topics within the broader research area may get lost. Bibliometric analyses are also less dependent on the researcher's selection of (specific) keywords, as all documents that are associated with the general research area are part of the corpus for analysis. Classically, bibliometric approaches focused on descriptives such as citations, authors, and country of origin. These also provide insight into, for example, collaborations between researchers and across countries, and the importance of individual articles and researchers within a research field. In addition, advances in text-classification and language modelling now allow us to identify clusters within large research corpora. We complement this bibliometrics approach with a more qualitative, classical review of papers identified as important through bibliometric analyses. We thus combine the best of two worlds: (1) a high-level meta review of the field through bibliometrics methods to understand the entire field, and (2) a detailed review of the most important documents in the field to get insights into the content of the field.

In the present study we have three main goals. First, we lay out the general research area of moral and civil courage and track its development over time. We give a general overview of the documents in our corpus, present common publication outlets, and situate our corpus within the wider scientific literature. This information is currently missing from the field.

Second, we examine what differences and commonalities exist between the literature on moral courage and the literature on civil courage. Does the global distribution of research on moral courage and civil courage differ? Considering that both moral courage and civil courage have been used as a translation for the same German word and concept, investigating if either term is predominant in a certain region and the geographic spread of each translation is important to establish a possible synonymity of moral and civil courage. We further asked if the same documents are of importance for each term. Do researchers rely on the same background literature or do moral and civil courage, in fact, present rather separate areas of inquiry? Which documents are especially important for which research strand and what topics does each corpus research? We examine the representation of the different uses of moral courage we described above in the literature and seek to illustrate possible systematic

differences between these two fields of research.

Finally, we go into more detail than the broad topic descriptions bibliometrics can provide us with. Regardless of the wider topic of any document, how did the authors define moral courage and civil courage? Which characteristics of moral courage and civil courage are shared and which, if any, distinguish these two concepts? These points are important to clarify the theoretical breadth and focus of each term. Given the potential for real world applications of research on moral and civil courage and the relevance of these applications, it is essential to be aware of different directions the literature may take and how researchers use these terms.

Methods

Data

We based our study on data from the Web of Science (WoS). We queried the database on the 23rd of June 2023 with three different search strings: "moral courage", "civil courage", " 'civil courage' OR 'moral courage' ". This allowed us to have a separate corpus for each search term as well as a full combined corpus. We searched across all available years, and even with few publications before 2000 we decided to not restrict the time span to get as complete a picture as possible. We downloaded all results as bibtex files with all available information about the documents included. We used the bibliometrix package (v4.3.1; Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017) in R (R Core Team, 2021) to process the bibtex files and conduct the analyses. All data and code are available on the OSF (https://osf.io/ytbqm/).

Results

Descriptives

We found 410 documents for the search term *moral courage* (267 articles, 13 early access articles, 34 book chapters, 2 books, 30 book reviews, 25 editorials, 16 proceedings papers, 15 reviews, 4 meeting abstracts, 2 biographical items, 1 letter, 1 correction) in 277 unique sources (journals, books, etc.). Over time research output on moral courage has increased with an annual growth rate of 2.97% and a substantial jump in the number of publications from an average of 3.33 publications per year until 2010 to an average of 26.08 publications per year after 2010 (Figure 1.1).
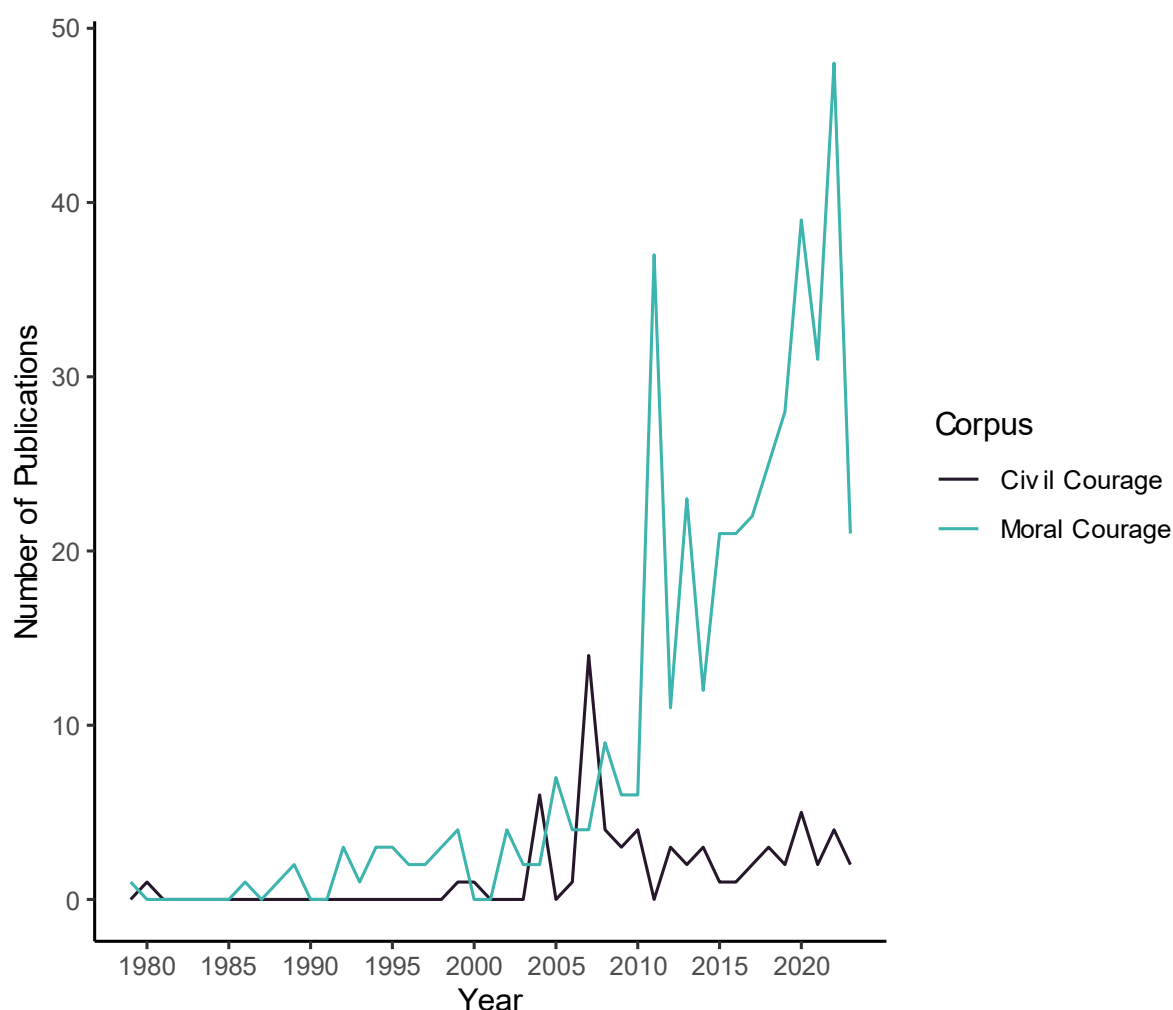
Figure 1.1 Documents published per year by corpus
Plotted are the publications per year for each corpus from 1979 until 23rd of June 2023. For improved visualization, one publication in the moral courage corpus in 1919, and one publication in the civil courage corpus in 1961 are omitted.

In contrast, for the search term *civil courage*, we found 66 documents (35 articles, 2 early access articles, 14 book chapters, 1 book, 3 book reviews, 2 editorials, 2 proceedings papers, 1 review, 3 meeting abstracts, 1 biographical item, 1 letter, 1 music performance review) in 50 unique sources. Research output on civil courage has barely grown with an annual growth rate of 1.12% (Figure 1.1). Twelve documents were part of both corpora. The most relevant sources for articles related to moral courage that are journals were mostly concerned with nursing and business ethics. For articles related to civil courage the most relevant publication outlets were more general social psychology journals (Table 1.1).

To situate our documents within the overall citation network of all documents available

on the WoS we calculated correlations between the local citation score of each document — i.e., how often each document in our corpus was cited by other documents in our corpus — and their global citation score — i.e., the total number of citations of each document within the WoS database. We found substantial correlations for the documents for both search terms (moral courage: $r(408) = .63$, 95% CI [.57, .68] — civil courage: $r(64) = .66$, 95% CI [.50, .78]) which shows that our citation network approximates the global network. However, after rank transforming the local and global citation scores, the rank correlations revealed a weaker correlation among the moral courage documents, $r(408) = .45$, 95% CI [.37, .53], and no correlation among the civil courage documents, $r(64) = .12$, 95% CI [-.13, .35], indicating that different papers are important in our network versus the global network, especially for the documents related to civil courage.

Table 1.1 Top research outlets for articles in each corpus

Journal	n
Moral Courage	
Nursing Ethics	24
Journal of Business Ethics	16
Nursing Forum	9
Journal of Experimental Social Psychology	6
Academic Medicine	5
BMC Nursing	5
Business Ethics Quarterly	3
Ethics & Behaviour	3
European Journal of Social Psychology	3
Frontiers in Psychology	3
International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	3
Journal of Clinical Nursing	3
Journal of Jewish Ethics	3
Library Journal	3
Nursing Open	3
Nursing Science Quarterly	3
Science and Engineering Ethics	3
Civil Courage	
International Journal of Psychology	3
Zeitschrift für Sozialpsychologie (Social Psychology)	3
Journal of Experimental Social Psychology	2

Note. Shown are the top 10 most frequent research outlets for each corpus that are journals and are the source of at least two documents. In case of ties all journals were retained.

Moral Courage and Civil Courage Research Around the Globe

Analysing the geographic distribution of research on moral courage and civil courage based on the country of the corresponding authors affiliation, we found stark differences between the two areas (Table 1.2). Research on moral courage was mainly located in the United States (46.92% of all documents), followed by the United Kingdom (6.17%) and Germany (5.63%). Additionally, the US had a very small number of studies with authors from multiple countries (5.14%) in contrast to both the UK (34.78%) and Germany (33.33%). The majority of research on moral courage thus appears to be focused in the US and on the US context with some research happening in Europe where cross-country collaborations are more frequent.

Table 1.2 Documents per country in each corpus

Country	Documents	% of Total	Single Country	Multi Country	Multi Country %
Moral Courage					
USA	175	46.92	166	9	5.14
United Kingdom	23	6.17	15	8	34.78
Germany	21	5.63	14	7	33.33
Canada	19	5.09	17	2	10.53
Iran	16	4.29	14	2	12.50
Australia	13	3.49	10	3	23.08
Finland	12	3.22	9	3	25.00
China	11	2.95	10	1	9.09
Spain	7	1.88	4	3	42.86
India	6	1.61	6	0	0
Israel	6	1.61	5	1	16.67
Civil Courage					
Germany	18	39.13	15	3	16.70
USA	7	15.22	4	3	42.90
Netherlands	2	4.35	1	1	50.00
Switzerland	2	4.35	1	1	50.00
United Kingdom	2	4.35	2	0	0

Note. Top 10 countries for each corpus with at least 2 publications. Frequency ties were all retained. Single country publications have all co-authors affiliated to institutions in the same country. Multi country publications have at least one author affiliated with an institution in a country different from that of the co-authors.

Looking at the research on civil courage a different picture emerged. The most productive country was Germany (39.13%) followed by the US (15.22%) and several other, mainly European, countries with one or two publications. Similar to moral courage, we found

the country with the most publications, Germany, to have a rather low rate of multi-country publications (16.67%) compared to the US (42.86%). This indicates that research on civil courage is mainly carried out in Germany with little international collaboration.

Commonalities and Differences Between Corpora

To identify potential differences and commonalities within research on moral and civil courage we first extracted the 20 most common publisher keywords for all documents together, and separately for the documents for the search terms moral courage and civil courage (Table 1.3). While the keywords in the general corpus and the moral courage corpus were nearly identical, the civil courage corpus had several unique keywords. Among the moral courage keywords, we found references to the workplace (leadership, work, performance) and nursing (health, care, nurses) that were notably absent from the civil courage corpus. Here the keywords focused on bystander intervention, which in turn was absent from the moral courage corpus.

Table 1.3 Top 20 keywords in the general corpus, the moral courage corpus, and the civil courage corpus

General Corpus		Moral Courage		Civil Courage	
Keyword	n	Keyword	n	Keyword	n
moral courage	30	moral courage	30	civil courage	7
ethics	23	ethics	23	behaviour	7
organizations	23	organizations	23	helping-behaviour	6
behaviour	21	leadership	20	personality	5
leadership	20	perceptions	20	aggression	4
perceptions	20	distress	19	courage	4
distress	19	behaviour	18	bystander	3
care	18	care	18	civil	3
courage	17	courage	17	group-size	3
personality	16	personality	15	social-control	3
students	14	students	14	activation	2
education	13	education	13	bystander intervention	2
impact	13	impact	13	consequences	2
performance	13	performance	13	determinants	2
decision-making	12	decision-making	12	emotions	2
nurses	12	nurses	12	ethical decision-making	2
values	12	values	12	help	2
health	11	health	11	moral courage	2
identity	11	identity	11	norms	2
scale	11	work	11	organizations	2

Using only the keywords common to both the moral courage and civil courage corpora we compared their frequency. Of the keywords in the moral courage corpus 13.5% were also present in the civil courage corpus, and 80.0% of the civil courage keywords were common with the moral courage keywords (Figure 1.2). This large difference in overlap indicates that while many of the topics researched in studies in the civil courage corpus are also present in the moral courage corpus, there is a large share of topics only studied in relation to moral courage. A moderate correlation of the frequency of the common keywords in each corpus, $r(86) = .47$, 95% CI [.29, .62], $p < .001$, indicates that different keywords are of importance for each research area.
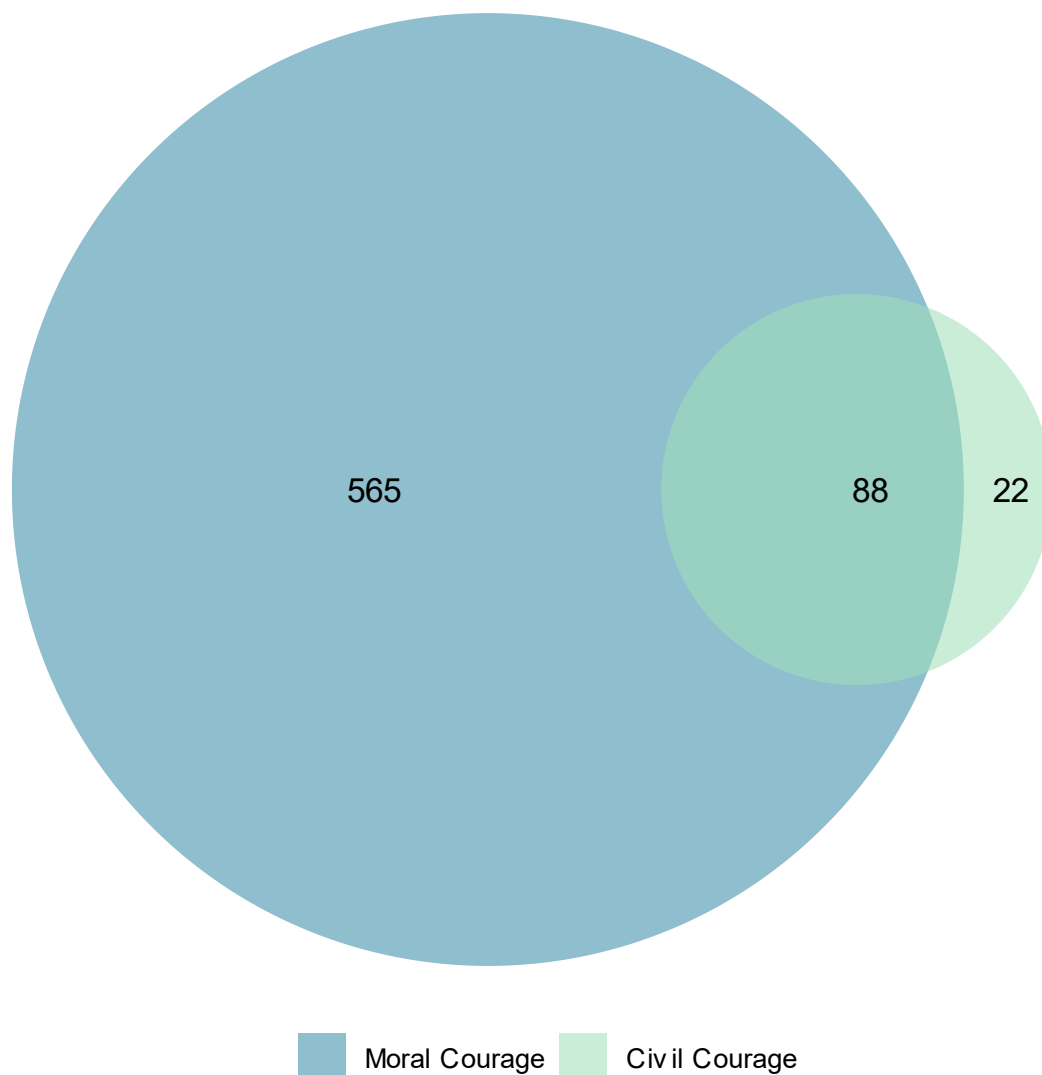
Figure 1.2 Euler diagram of the publisher keywords
Indicated are the number of unique keywords per corpus and the number of keywords that overlap.

We also examined the relative importance of the keywords within each corpus by rank ordering the frequency of the keywords. As ties were broken at random, we bootstrapped the analysis 1000 times to increase the robustness. We found a lower correlation between the keyword ranks across the two corpora, $r(86) = .38$, 95% CI [.37, .38], $p = .003$; 95% CI [.002, .004]. This suggests that keywords might be of differing importance within each corpus. Overall, this shows that while overlaps in the keyword sets exist the two research areas have different foci. In addition, as the keywords for research on civil courage largely overlap with keywords for research on moral courage, civil courage may be a specific form of moral courage.

Moving on from keywords, we looked at the 15 papers that were most often cited by documents in the respective corpus (Table 1.4). This gave further insights into the literature authors in the two research areas relied on to establish and advance their research. We found an overlap of only 26.7% of the most cited papers, indicating that, overall, authors of articles on moral courage base their research on different papers versus authors of articles on civil courage. Among the works that uniquely influenced research on moral courage, two different foci emerged. Led by the most cited article, research on moral courage in the workplace was a dominant influence and the papers covered moral courage as a managerial skill for leadership and decision-making (Hannah, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2011; Sekerka et al., 2009), and as part of education (May et al., 2014). A second unique influence was research on moral courage in nursing and care (Lachman, 2007a; Numminen et al., 2017). The documents with a high importance only for research on civil courage focused on norm violations and bystander intervention. Documents that were important for both research areas had the same focus. Interestingly, some authors that focus on norm violations and bystander intervention use the term moral courage (Baumert et al., 2013; Jonas & Brandstätter, 2004), while others use the term civil courage (P. Fischer et al., 2004; Greitemeyer et al., 2006). A research group around Greitemeyer, Fischer, and Frey even used both versions in different articles (Greitemeyer et al., 2006; Niesta Kayser et al., 2010). In summary, it appears that the literature on moral courage draws on different thematic fields such as health care, leadership, and bystander behaviour, whereas civil courage is more focused on the latter field of bystander behaviour.

Table 1.4 Top 15 cited papers in the moral courage corpus and the civil courage corpus

Author	Year	DOI	*n*
Moral Courage			
SEKERKA LE	2009	10.1007/S10551-008-0017-5	65
SEKERKA LE	2007	10.1111/J.1467-8608.2007.00484.X	60
HANNAH ST	2011	10.5840/BEQ201121436	50
NUMMINEN O	2017	10.1177/0969733016634155	37
KIDDER RM	2005		36
BAUMERT A	2013	10.1177/0146167213490032	29
MAY DR	2014	10.1007/S10551-013-1860-6	29
LACHMAN VD	2007		25
PETERSON C	2004		25
GREITEMEYER T	2006	10.1027/1016-9040.11.2.90	24
KAYSER DN	2010	10.1002/EJSP.717	24
OSSWALD S	2010	10.1037/12168-008	24
HANNAH ST	2011	10.5465/AMR.2010.0128	23
LOPEZ SJ	2003		23
NUMMINEN O	2019	10.1177/0969733018791325	23
Civil Courage			
GREITEMEYER T	2006	10.1027/1016-9040.11.2.90	17
LATANE B	1970		12
GREITEMEYER T	2007	10.1080/17439760701228789	10
BATSON CD	2003	10.1002/0471264385.WEI0519	9
LABUHN AS	2004	10.1024/0044-3514.35.2.93	9
JONAS KJ	2004	10.1024/0044-3514.35.4.185	8
KAYSER DN	2010	10.1002/EJSP.717	8
FISCHER P	2006	10.1002/EJSP.297	7
KUHL U	1986		7
LOPEZ SJ	2003		7
BAUMERT A	2013	10.1177/0146167213490032	6
FISCHER P	2004	10.1024/0044-3514.35.2.61	6
LATANE B	1981	10.1037/0033-2909.89.2.308	6
FREY D	2001		5
NEAR JP	1985	10.1007/BF00382668	5

Note. Bolded documents only appear in the respective corpus. Frequency ties were all retained. Documents with anonymous authorship were discarded.

Research Themes

To further explore the themes present in the research on moral courage and civil courage in our corpus, we ran a multiple-correspondence analysis based on the co-occurrence of publisher keywords on the combined corpus. This allowed us to identify clusters of keywords that tend to co-occur within an article. These clusters represent different research themes within the literature on moral and civil courage as identified by the keywords. As we clustered keywords and not documents, a document can have keywords from several clusters. We used different cut-offs for the minimum degree for a keyword to be included in the analysis to capture more fine-grained details as well as broader topics. With the minimum degree of keywords set to two (Figure 1.3), and thus including more detailed keywords that do not occur as frequently, we found four different clusters. A general cluster included more broad topics such as ethics (Numminen et al., 2017), but also references to specific topics such as patient safety (Martinez et al., 2016). Two clusters focused on ethics in the workplace and included topics such as communication (Voegtlin, 2016) and authentic leadership (Ogunfowora et al., 2021). A fourth cluster was focused on norm violations (Halmburger et al., 2015). Setting the minimum degree to ten and including only more frequent keywords resulted in a three-way split (Figure A1 in the Appendix). We found a cluster that is focused on ethics in health care (Turale et al., 2020), a cluster that is focused on education (May & Luth, 2013) and leadership (Hannah, Avolio, & May, 2011a), and a cluster that included topics related to determinants of moral and civil courage (Niesta Kayser et al., 2010). Cutting at fifteen minimum degrees and only including the most frequent keywords, we found three clusters that were similar to the previous cut at ten minimum occurrences (Figure A2 in the Appendix). One cluster focuses on the topic of nursing and perceptions of behaviour within that context (Black et al., 2014). A second cluster is focused on leadership in organizations just as the leadership cluster above. The third cluster deals with personality (Baumert et al., 2013) and courage (Franco et al., 2011).

Overall, this suggests three themes within the research on civil and moral courage: (1) moral courage in nursing, (2) moral courage in organizations, (3) and moral courage as a response to norm violations and the determinants of bystanders intervening in such situations.
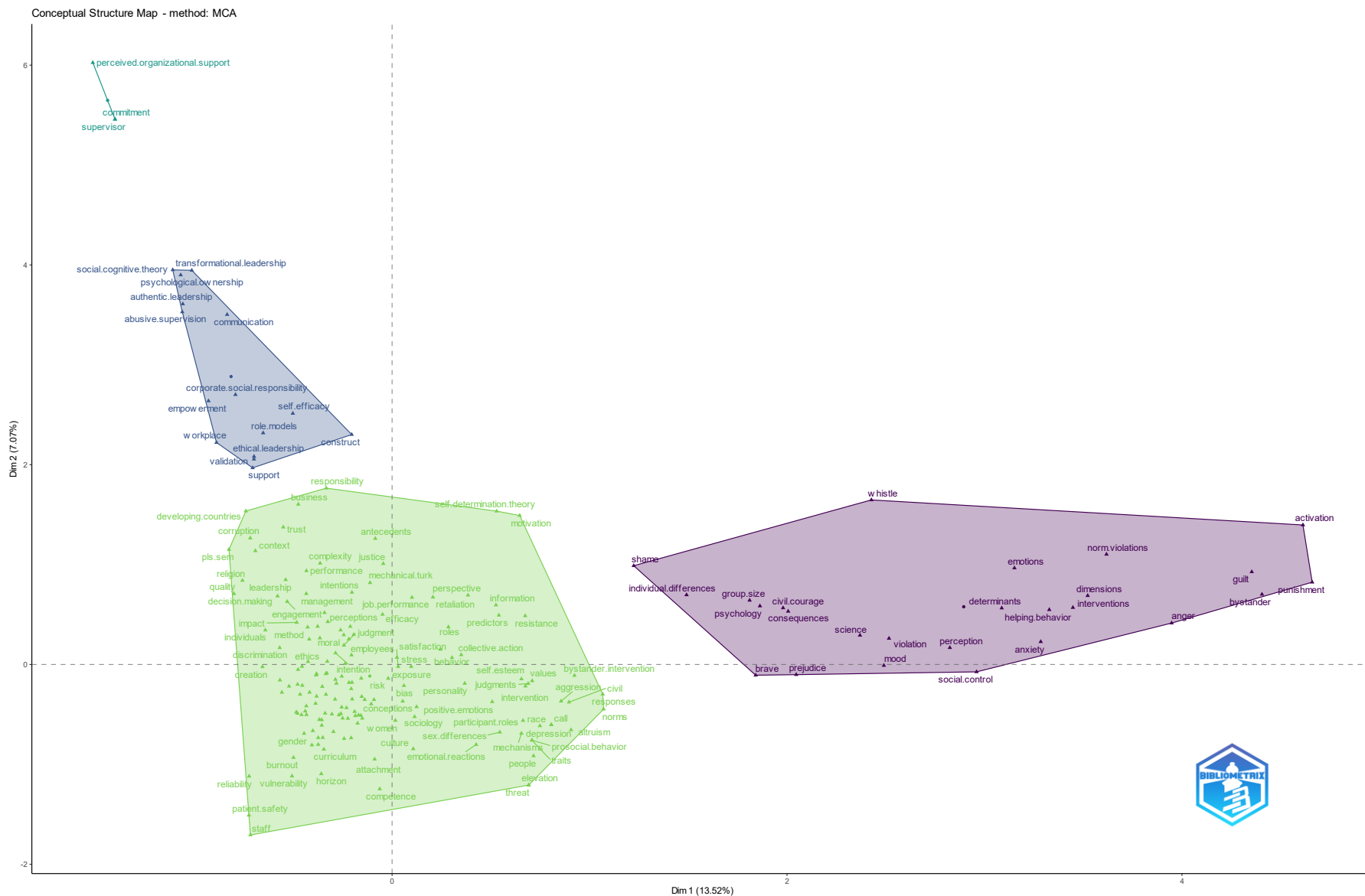
Figure 1.3 Multiple-correspondence analysis clustering of publisher keywords cut at 2 minimum degrees

These findings were further supplemented by a co-citation network analysis. A co-citation network captures how often two documents were cited together in a third document. In the combined corpus we found three clusters of documents that tended to get cited together (Figure 1.4). One cluster focused on bystander intervention and norm violations (Baumert et al., 2013; Halmburger et al., 2015; Niesta Kayser et al., 2010), similar to the cluster from the keyword analysis. The other two clusters focused roughly on moral courage in organizations. Of these, one included documents on moral courage in the workplace (Harbour & Kisfalvi, 2014; Sekerka & Bagozzi, 2007), including moral courage in nursing (Lachman, 2007a; Numminen et al., 2017), as well as more general documents on courage (Pury et al., 2007; Rate et al., 2007). The last cluster appeared to specifically encapsulate research on the relationship between moral courage and leadership (Brown & Treviño, 2006; Hannah, Avolio, & May, 2011b) and additionally included documents on morality more broadly (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Haidt, 2001). The co-citation network of the moral courage corpus resulted in very much the same clusters as the combined corpus (Figure A3 in the Appendix). The co-citation network of the civil courage corpus only resulted in two clusters which are rather similar to each other (Figure A4 in the Appendix). One cluster is focused on bystander behaviour (P. Fischer et al., 2006; Latané & Darley, 1970), and a second cluster includes documents on more specific cases of civil courage (Oliner & Oliner, 1988; Swedberg, 1999).

Overall, the co-citation network results mirror the previous results. While the co-citation network analysis does not clearly delineate the distinction between research on moral courage in organizations and leadership, and research on moral courage in nursing, it nevertheless suggests a clear differentiation of these two research themes from that on bystander behaviour and norm violations. This further supports that civil courage exclusively relates to bystander behaviour and norm violations.

Qualitative Review

In the qualitative review of documents, we focused on the definitions authors gave for moral and civil courage. We looked at the documents in Table 1.4 and the ten articles in each corpus that had the most citations, complemented by articles found through a manual search.

Table 1.5 shows all documents included in the qualitative review.

Unsurprisingly, in the articles in the moral courage corpus and the articles cited by documents in the moral courage corpus, almost all authors used the term *moral courage* in the document itself. Only one article mentioned both moral courage and civil courage, and made the distinction that moral courage involves possible negative social consequences for the person showing moral courage — e.g., ostracism — whereas civil courage involves negative physical consequences — e.g., bodily harm (Franco et al., 2011). This article was the only one to make this distinction. Other definitions of moral courage referenced ethical challenges, ethical deliberation, or ethical principles (Numminen et al., 2017, 2019; Sekerka et al., 2009). These reference to ethics were mainly found in articles referring to nursing and health care, or to moral courage in business contexts. Further definitions emphasised moral principles and intentions (Hernandez, 2008; May et al., 2014).
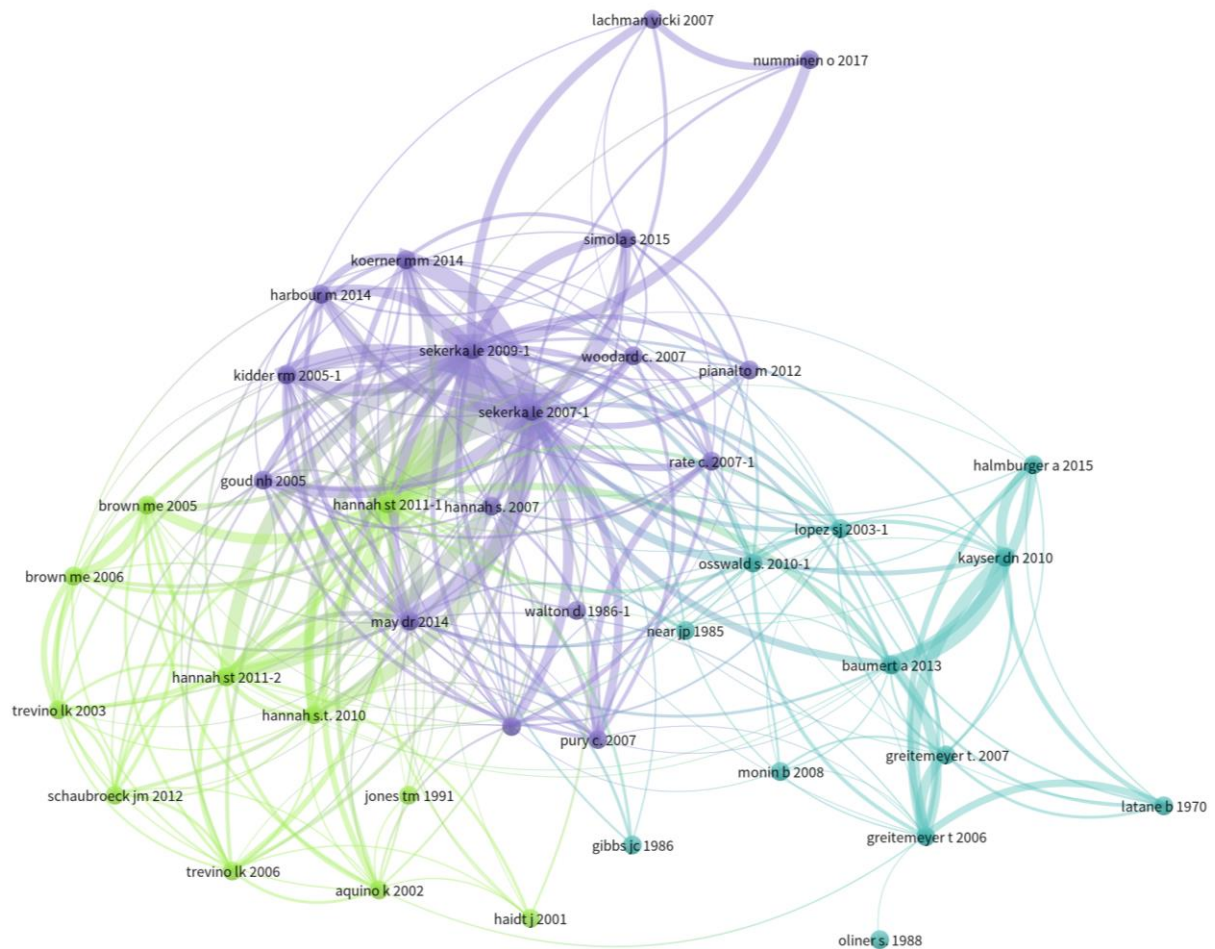
Figure 1.4 Co-citation network of the combined corpus

In the articles in the civil courage corpus and cited by documents in the civil courage corpus, authors used both terms moral courage ($n = 3$) and civil courage ($n = 5$), with one German article providing no English translation for Zivilcourage and seven documents not using either term. In contrast, all documents from the moral courage corpus we looked at did use either term, suggesting that several documents in the civil courage corpus provide background information, for example on unresponsive bystanders (P. Fischer et al., 2006; Latané & Darley, 1970; Latané & Nida, 1981). Among those that did use moral courage or civil courage and provided a definition, we found similar emphases in the definitions regardless of which term was used. In contrast to the definitions from the moral courage corpus, many authors did not reference personal ethical/moral principles but defined civil/moral courage as a behaviour against (physical) harassment of marginalised groups, human rights violations, or racism (Labuhn et al., 2004; Osswald et al., 2012; Pouwels et al., 2019). In only two studies, societal and moral norms were mentioned in the definition of civil courage (Greitemeyer et al., 2007; Schmitt et al., 2009). In a further definition, the authors suggest that an action must be pro-democratic to be considered moral/civil courage (Jonas & Brandstätter, 2004).

Among the documents included from either corpus four overlapped. Of these, three articles used moral courage and one article used civil courage. The definitions for these terms focus on moral norms and the greater good, as well as standing up to more powerful individuals (Baumert et al., 2013; Greitemeyer et al., 2006; Lopez et al., 2003). Interestingly, Niesta Kayser et al. (2010) made the point that the mention of moral, in moral courage or moral norms, indicates that an action must not involve any harm doing to another person, if it is to be morally courageous.

Table 1.5 Documents included in the qualitative review

Author	Year	DOI	Term	Definition
		Documents from Moral Courage Corpus		
SEKERKA LE	2009	10.1007/S10551-008-0017-5	moral	face ethical challenges; confront barriers toward right action
SEKERKA LE	2007	10/fjm8tq	moral	decisions in the light of what is good for others, despite personal risk
HANNAH ST	2011	10.5840/BEQ201121436	moral	commit to personal moral and ethical principles aware of the danger involved
NUMMINEN O	2017	10.1177/0969733016634155	moral	acting according to one's convictions despite criticism in moral contexts
KIDDER RM	2005		moral	readiness to endure danger for the sake of principle
MAY DR	2014	10.1007/S10551-013-1860-6	moral	moral actions despite pressures from either inside or outside of the organization
LACHMAN VD	2007		moral	individual's capacity to overcome fear and stand up for his or her core values
PETERSON C	2004		moral	ethical integrity/authenticity at the risk of losing friends, employment, prestige
OSSWALD S	2010	10.1037/12168-008	moral	prosocial behaviour with high social costs and no (or rare) direct rewards
HANNAH ST	2011	10.5465/AMR.2010.0128	moral	definition from Hannah et al. (2011)
NUMMINEN O	2019	10.1177/0969733018791325	moral	rationally defend professional ethical principles despite adverse consequences
HERNANDEZ M	2008	10.1007/s10551-007-9440-2	moral	risky action in service of upholding individual moral principles and standards
FRANCO ZE	2011	10.1037/a0022672	both	preservation of a community-sanctioned value that is under threat
TURALE S	2020	10.1111/inr.12598	moral	none provided
HANNAH ST	2013	10.1037/a0032809	moral	confront wrongdoers or refrain from supporting unethical behaviours
CALDICOTT CV	2005	10/d79hwx	moral	none provided
LIAO Z	2018	10.1037/apl0000319	moral	willpower to uphold moral principles under risk of negative consequences
		Documents from Civil Courage Corpus		
LATANE B	1970		none	
GREITEMEYER T	2007	10.1080/17439760701228789	civil	enforce societal and ethical norms without considering one's own social costs
BATSON CD	2003	10.1002/0471264385.WEI0519	none	
LABUHN AS	2004	10.1024/0044-3514.35.2.93	civil	giving help to a victim of a physical or psychological attack from an aggressor
JONAS KJ	2004	10.1024/0044-3514.35.4.185	moral	pro democratic prosocial behaviour with potential risks for the helper
FISCHER P	2006	10.1002/EJSP.297	none	
KUHL U	1986		none	
FISCHER P	2004	10.1024/0044-3514.35.2.61	civil	acting with displeasure towards authorities and risking negative consequences
LATANE B	1981	10.1037/0033-2909.89.2.308	none	
FREY D	2001	10.1007/978-3-322-97521-8_5	none[1]	

NEAR JP	1985	10.1007/BF00382668	none	
PETZEN J	2012	10/kngh	civil	
SCHMITT M	2009	10.1026/0033-3042.60.1.8	civil	intervening against the violation of a moral norm risking negative consequences
MOISUC A	2018	10.1111/bjso.12246	none	
OSSWALD S	2012	10/dk6wvf	moral	intervene in instances of injustice, human rights violations, discrimination, etc.
POUWELS JL	2019	10.1016/j.jesp.2019.103831	moral	intervene when someone harms others or discriminates; comes with social costs
Documents Common to Both Corpora				
BAUMERT A	2013	10.1177/0146167213490032	moral	stop perpetrator from violating a social norm; has negative social consequences
GREITEMEYER T	2006	10.1027/1016-9040.11.2.90	civil	express displeasure toward authorities without weighing possible disadvantages
KAYSER DN	2010	10.1002/EJSP.717	moral	costly type of prosocial behaviour that stems from an individual's moral stands
LOPEZ SJ	2003		moral	stand up to someone with power over him or her (e.g., boss) for the greater good
Documents from Manual Search				
GALDI S	2017	10.1177/0361684317709770	civil	support victim of unethical behaviour despite negative social consequences
PUTMAN D	1997		moral	defending a deeply held greater moral good against society
MILLER R	2005		moral	take moral stands
SKITKA LJ	2012	10.1037/13091-019	moral	willingness to stand up and out in defense of a principle when others stand aside
SIDGWICK H	1913		moral	willingness to face dangers of social disapproval in the performance of duty
PRESS E	2018	10.1007/s12115-018-0231-4	moral	social action based on personal conviction in the face of high social costs
KASTENMÜLLER A	2007		civil	always seeks to uphold democratic and humane values
SCHWAN G	2004		civil	motivated by human dignity for whose protection one takes a personal risk

Note. Inclusion based on ten documents with most citations in each corpus, fifteen documents most often cited by documents in each corpus, and documents from a manual search. Documents in table sorted by source corpus. Term refers to whether a document uses moral courage, civil courage, or none of the two (in this last case, it appears here as it was, for example, frequently cited by articles in the corpus). Definitions are summaries by the authors of those used in the respective document. Some are translated from German by the authors.

[1]In the document the term Zivilcourage was used, and no translation was provided.

The eight articles found through a manual search and through the reference lists of the other articles used both terms. Those referring to moral courage tended to emphasise the influence of personal ethical and moral convictions (Press, 2018; Putman, 1997), whereas those referring to civil courage defined it as motivated by concerns for human dignity (Schwan, 2004), and for marginalised or less powerful others (Galdi et al., 2017). One definition even explicitly states that actions that are not based in democratic and humane values cannot be considered civil courage (Kastenmüller et al., 2007).

Across all definitions, three main points stood out. First, every author mentioned possible negative consequences for the actor as a characteristic of moral/civil courage. The possible consequences ranged from broad personal risks (Sekerka et al., 2009), to social disapproval (Sidgwick, 1913), unemployment (Lachman, 2007a), and physical harm (Greitemeyer et al., 2007). The centrality of negative consequences for the definition of moral/civil courage was further highlighted by a study examining lay peoples theories of civil courage and helping behaviour, that showed that negative social consequences are a main point of distinction (Greitemeyer et al., 2006). Merely Franco et al. (2011) made a clear distinction between the types of consequences, but still agree that consequences are a defining characteristic of moral courage. The second point that stands out is that authors using the term moral courage tended to mention personal moral and ethical norms, whereas authors using civil courage defined it as relating to pro-democratic actions against discrimination, racism, and human rights violations. Third, we also found — again — that part of the moral courage literature is similar to the civil courage literature. The definitions for moral courage in articles that were cited frequently in both corpora primarily reference actions for the greater good of society and the involvement of at least one other person. In addition, according to one definition, a morally courageous actions must not be harmful to others itself, disqualifying for example acts of terrorism from being understood as moral courage, even if these acts were motivated by beliefs of right and wrong and believed to be for the greater good (Skitka, 2012).

Discussion

In this study we analysed the literature on moral courage and civil courage with the aim of providing a high-level overview of these research areas as well as a more detailed investigation of the definitions of the core concepts. Our two main findings were that moral courage includes several distinct research streams, whereas civil courage is a more internally cohesive research area, and that the definitions of moral courage and civil courage differ systematically.

Themes in Research on Moral Courage and Civil Courage

Overall, we found different research themes. Among the most cited papers we found some focusing on ethics in nursing, some on ethical business practices, and others on bystander intervention. Both, the keyword cluster as well as the co-citation networks support this finding. Different themes within a research area are by themselves nothing extraordinary nor bad. Given, however, that we started this review from the single concept of Zivilcourage finding relatively distinct themes warrants closer attention.

To recap, Zivilcourage means the intervention of a bystander when they witness someone being harassed or assaulted. It has been translated to English as both moral courage and civil courage. In this review, we showed that the literature on moral courage does not only include bystander intervention but more general occasions in which people act according to moral values. In the nursing theme, bystanders, perpetrators, or concrete actions that violate ethics or morals can but do not have to be present to prompt someone to act with moral courage. Authors present a nurse caring for their patients with compassion as showing moral courage (Numminen et al., 2019), just as a nurse does who speaks up to a doctor about wrongdoing (Lachman, 2007a). Similar patterns are present in the business/workplace theme. An employee (or manager) can show moral courage by considering their own values as well as care ethics in decision making (Sekerka et al., 2009) or alternatively by standing up to and reporting on an abusive supervisor (Hannah et al., 2013). The third theme we found — bystander intervention — by its very nature requires a bystander and someone perpetrating a norm violation, be it social/ethical/moral. In addition, in most cases the norm violation of the

perpetrator is directed towards an immediate victim (Goodwin et al., 2020).

Interestingly, we did not find any evidence of publications that followed Kennedy's and Bismarck's examples for moral courage and understood moral courage as the behaviour of politicians who advocate for what they think is right. Though some notion of this is present in the themes of nursing and organizations, where part of the concept of moral courage is to adhere to and advocate for certain (ethical) values. Yet, this is quite different from politics. A politician's moral courage would be to put aside personal or party convictions and argue and support positions that serve the greater good of the country and its citizens, and not just the good of a company.

The civil courage literature is situated wholly within the theme of bystander intervention. We did not find any evidence of nursing or business ethics studies under the term civil courage. The closest research to these themes included studies on whistleblowing (Dungan et al., 2019; Near & Miceli, 1985), which can fall within the theme of business/workplace moral courage. Yet, like the theme on bystander intervention, whistleblowing requires a perpetrator that is breaking a norm, and a bystander, who then acts with moral courage. Considering the large overlap of civil courage keywords with moral courage, as well as the theme of civil courage being present within moral courage, it appears that the bystander intervention theme within the moral courage literature is very similar to the overall literature on civil courage.

The country distribution highlights another noteworthy differentiation between moral courage and civil courage. In contrast to studies on moral courage which have been mostly conducted in the United States, most studies of civil courage have been conducted by first authors affiliated with a German university. This might explain why the topics of documents in the civil courage corpus align more closely with the contemporary understanding of Zivilcourage in Germany. Civil courage is, after all, also the literal translation of Zivilcourage. It emphasises the civil part of courage, that it is the courage of citizens for society, and that it is what makes a good citizen. Moral courage in contrast, by name, emphasises morality, which is much more personal and can be understood as standing up for moral values without their

being clear norm violations, for example a nurse advocating for a dying persons wishes (Lachman, 2007b).

Definitions of Moral Courage and Civil Courage

To explore in more detail the way authors understand moral courage and civil courage, respectively, we reviewed the definitions researchers used in the documents. Continuing the discussion from above, the definitions showed a divide between moral and civil courage, with moral courage definitions emphasizing personal ethical and moral norms, whereas civil courage definitions focused on democratic norms and human rights.

The variation in the definitions between the two corpora suggests that the differences between moral courage and civil courage may be more than those of two research foci within the same field. While all definitions include negative consequences for the actor as a characteristic of moral/civil courage, further characteristics are quite varied. The more personal values and moral norms that are followed or defended in several definitions in the moral courage corpus can be contradictory to the more societal and democratic norms emphasised in definitions from the civil courage corpus. What one person perceives as moral could be against the values of a liberal democracy. Personal values could even more deviate and not have any greater good as an outcome. Furthermore, some definitions in the moral courage corpus do not require someone to stand up to a norm or value violation for said behaviour to be morally courageous. In nursing, for example, moral courage has been defined as doing the right thing despite possible negative consequences, but no mentions were made of the morally courageous behaviour redressing some norm violating behaviour (Numminen et al., 2019). This clear difference to the notion of civil courage and the understanding of moral courage in the bystander theme — which were defined as confronting a perpetrator (Baumert et al., 2013; Halmburger et al., 2015) — gives rise to the question whether bystander intervention in reaction to norm violations is really just a different focus of the other research themes in the moral courage literature. It is also noteworthy, that many of the authors of documents in the civil courage corpus, as well as several authors of documents in the moral courage corpus that emphasise liberal-democratic values, were affiliated with German

institutions. This suggests that the idea of redressing violations of democratic norms from within civil society might be closely linked to German society.

Limitations

The main limitation of this study is the database we used (WoS). Not all documents ever published are indexed in the WoS and some might thus be missed. However, the WoS is especially useful as it allows access to publications far into the past and provides many attributes for bibliometric analysis other databases do not. Additionally, not officially published documents, grey literature, could also have been missed. For the qualitative analysis we remedied this to a certain degree by including documents from a manual search. Another limitation is the use of only English language search terms. This might have led to the exclusion of documents on moral and civil courage in other languages. However, in this meta-review we were interested in the main themes that are present in the research domain in general and less in more local or regional niches. Nevertheless, we did find some German language articles included in our corpora.

Conclusion and Outlook

In summary, our review indicates that part of the literature on moral courage as well as the literature on civil courage examine the same phenomenon (bystander intervention), while the rest of the moral courage literature examines a slightly different phenomenon (ethics in nursing and business). As mentioned before, different themes within one research area are common, but the themes we found differ even in their definitions of the main phenomenon that is investigated. Furthermore, researching the same phenomenon under different names should usually be avoided to increase collaboration and synthesis within the research on that topic as well to avoid confusion in applying the research findings to real world problems.

The bystander intervention part of the literature on moral and civil courage is dominated by authors affiliated to German institutions suggesting a potentially culturally specific behaviour. Only few studies included non-German speaking participants and investigated bystander intervention when facing consequences as the intervening person (Brandstätter et al., 2016). Future research should investigate this notion of the German

concept of moral/civil courage across different cultures. Zivilcourage as a mechanism to fortify liberal democracies against threats from within could be equally helpful in countries other than Germany. But considering the differences among and between terms, future research should aim at understanding the use of the term moral courage in other societies if it shall become part of those societies too, and investigate alternative terms that may be used in other societies and have not found their way into academic research yet. If interpretations of moral courage in other countries focus more on generally ethical behaviours, such as in the nursing and business themes we found in this review, future research could also consider making a collective effort for a more widely accepted definition of the type of bystander intervention that may help societies self-regulate. This behaviour may also be clearly distinguished from other types of behaviour currently subsumed under the umbrella of moral courage, for example by terming it civil courage, a translation many authors of articles on moral courage have acknowledged as an alternative already.

Chapter 2

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Moral Courage in Public Discourse

Study 2: What Holds Society Together? Tracking Moral Courage Across 75 Years

and Three Democratic Societies[2]

CHAPTER 2: MORAL COURAGE ACROSS TIME AND CULTURES

Major liberal democracies have come under attack in recent years, most visibly in events such as US Capitol insurrection and rising right-wing extremism. In response to these developments US President Biden and German President Steinmeier both emphasised the importance of solidarity and of actions by ordinary people in protecting democratic society (Biden, 2022; Steinmeier, 2019). In this study we explore one way ordinary people can safeguard democratic values — *moral courage*.

One of the fundamental issues all societies have to resolve is ensuring social cohesion (Schwartz, 1999). Societies need to facilitate cooperation and coordination of all members of society. Echoing debates from Plato to Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau, coordination may be achieved via enforcing social hierarchies, or, alternatively, via social contracts among equals that ensure freedom, equality, and social justice. Within these debates, *courage* is a crucial virtue that is valid and valued across time and cultures and entails more than just physical courage (Curry, Jones Chesters, et al., 2019; Dahlsgaard et al., 2005; Lopez et al., 2003; Plato, 1996). Moral courage, the courage of individual members of society to act upon and discourage behaviours that are detrimental to cooperation, can be central for maintaining a cohesive social order and the societal functioning of modern democracies (Brandstätter & Jonas, 2012; Polizeiliche Kriminalprävention der Länder und des Bundes, n.d.). With the renewed rise of right-wing antidemocratic sentiments in several established democracies, a strong civil society with the moral courage to defend liberal democracy is crucial. It encompasses a diverse set of behaviours including the courage to stay true to what one believes is right despite risking (public) disapproval (*Moral, Adj.*, n.d.) and the courage to stop a person violating a social or moral norm that build the basis of human coexistence in large scale societies (Baumert et al., 2013).

The virtue of the broad applicability of a common sense understanding of the term provides challenges for behavioural science research, because of the diversity of behaviours associated with moral courage (Meyer, 2014; Skitka, 2012). Moral courage may carry specific connotations, depending on the historical and social conditions. For example, German notions of Zivilcourage (a literal translation would be *civil courage*) have been subsumed within the

broader moral courage literature with several authors offering moral courage as the translation of Zivilcourage (Halmburger et al., 2017; Osswald et al., 2010b). This German understanding emphasised the role of citizens in combating and preventing harassment and crime. Yet, are these German notions of Zivilcourage versus moral courage interchangeable in public discourse? Our main question is whether there are differences in the understanding and usage of the concept within and across different societies, given the broad understanding in both research and public discourse. Such insights are fundamental for clarifying the conceptual breadth, understanding public discourse, and creating policy interventions. Moral courage has been researched from diverse social scientific perspectives with contributions to the literature from sociology (Press, 2018), political science (Meyer, 2014), and psychology (Baumert et al., 2020). Considering moral courage as an intentional action arising from the experience of obligation towards an objective ideal, we argue that psychological contributions to moral courage should go beyond identifying moral values in general as a motivator for morally courageous behaviour and analyse what these moral values are (Blasi, 1990). Following this approach, instead of using a top-down process to investigate what these moral obligations and ideals may be by starting from what we as researchers think they may be, we should focus on a bottom-up process focusing on understanding what ideals can be found in natural language that may motivate morally courageous behaviour. Whether these ideals connected to moral courage and Zivilcourage are, for example, related to personal moral ideals versus societal democratic ideals can in turn have important implications for the determinants of and barriers to moral courage (Stimmer & Gliserman, 2022).

A second important issue is the possibility of temporal change. The importance and the specific nuances of what counts as moral courage may also shift over time and contexts, e.g., Oskar Schindler protecting Jews during WWII represents a person behaving in different ways compared to a Black Lives Matter demonstrator confronting systemic racism today. Tracing the first recorded use of Zivilcourage in German in 1847, Otto von Bismarck coined the term to differentiate and compare the courage of soldiers versus citizens, especially of citizens in political office (von Keudell, 1901). John F. Kennedy's book on politicians and bi-partisan

politics picks up on that same idea (Kennedy, 1955). Yet, such parochial and potentially even patriarchal notions seem qualitatively different from more recent uses of Zivilcourage as defending democratic values and human rights (Jonas & Brandstätter, 2004; Osswald et al., 2010b). We examine how the concept of moral courage may have changed in public discourse over the past 75 years. This allows us to trace potential connections of moral courage and Zivilcourage to real-world applications like the engagement for a peaceful society and identify important events that may have changed the trajectory of societal development and thus affected the discourse around moral courage and Zivilcourage.

We employed recent advances in natural language processing (NLP) together with qualitative insights from psychology to focus on both continuity and shifts in popular discourse around moral courage within and across societies. Systematic text-analysis of newspapers that provide a rich historical record allowed us to move beyond anecdotal observations and to detect a "cognitive footprint" (Waller & Zimbelman, 2003) and a "cardiogram of an age" (Ricci, 2003). Analysing articles published in major newspapers enables us to reconstruct underlying psychological constructs across time and space where other psychological measures are not available (Jackson et al., 2022). Newspapers are particularly important because they are crucial in informing the public on recent events that are of public interest and cover a wide range of topics, allowing us to uncover core themes around the concept of moral courage. Our innovative mixed methods approach (Figure 2.1) allowed us to examine both the communalities and differences across different newspapers and societies. We choose one newspaper of record from three major political powers: (1) the New York Times (NYT) from the USA as the major democratic political and economic civilization during the last 75 years, (2) The Times from the UK as the longest standing Western society with a parliamentary democracy, and (3) Die Zeit from Germany, the largest European democracy with a complex political history. All three societies are parliamentary democracies, but each with peculiarities which may influence the public understanding of moral courage in its role to uphold and maintain social cooperation. The relationship of the individual to the larger polity and the role of civil society differ depending on how political participation is organised, and how much

power individual citizens have within the realm of politics (Bernhard & Karakoç, 2007; Kohler-Koch, 2009). Specifically, the complex history of German politics marked by a relatively late adoption of parliamentary politics followed by totalitarian regimes may have led to the emergence of a more complex notion of moral courage compared to long-standing democracies in the UK and the USA that did not suffer from totalitarian regimes.
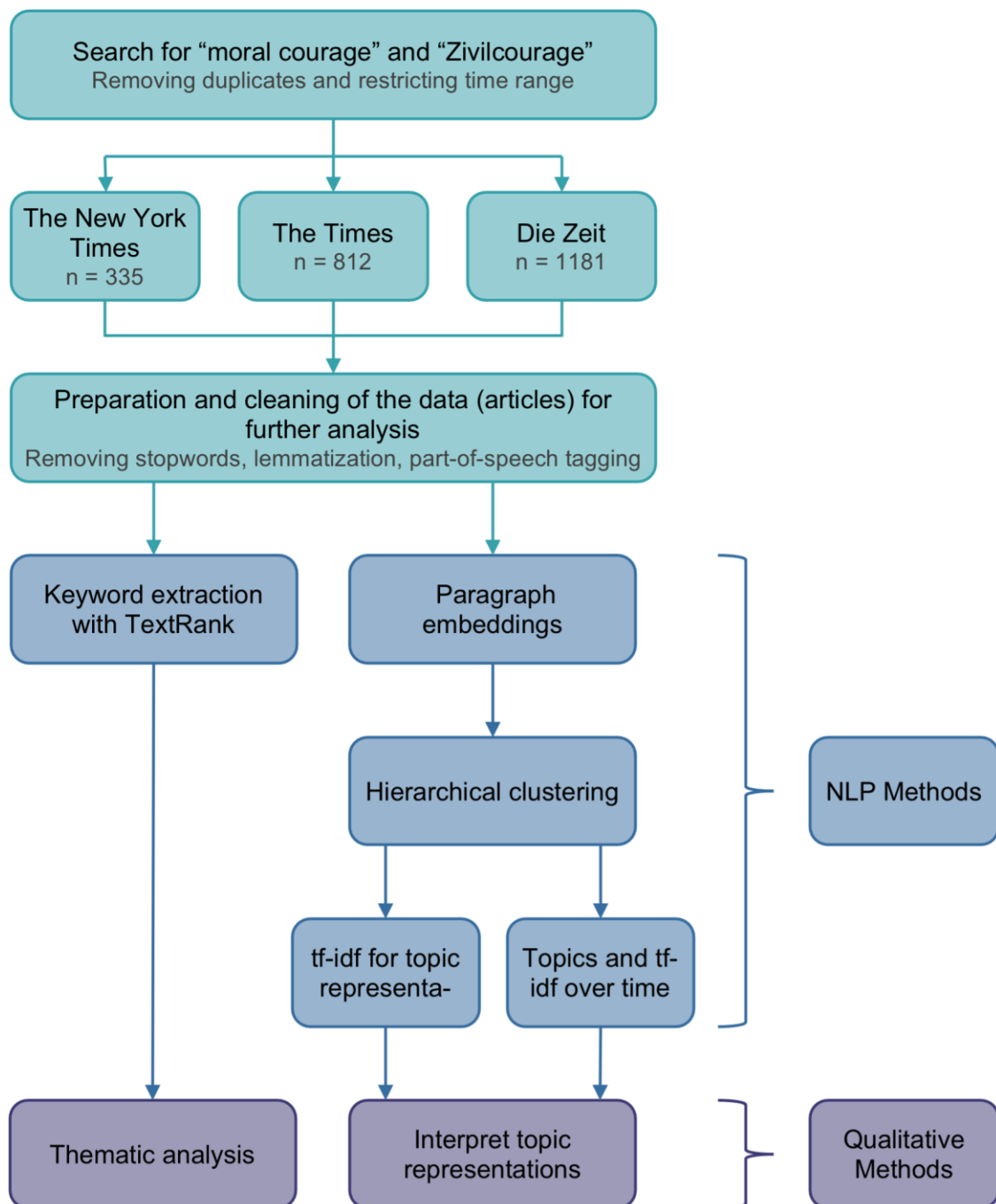
Figure 2.1 Overview of the analysis strategy
Flowchart presenting our analysis workflow. tf-idf = term frequency-inverse document-frequency.

Methods

Data

We searched the archives of the NYT, the Times, and Die Zeit using the search term *moral courage* for the two English language newspapers and *Zivilcourage* for the German language newspaper and downloaded all articles published between 1946 and 2020, inclusive. Our search returned 422 results in the NYT, 839 results for the Times, and 1224 results for Die Zeit. We choose the timeframe 1946 to 2020 to maintain comparability across the newspapers and because 1946 marks the end of the last major war in Europe and a new beginning for German civil society. Access to the NYT archive was restricted to the years 1985 – 2020 but we kept 1946 as the start date for our analysis as data was available for two of the newspapers, allowing us to have more data and still make comparisons across languages. We removed 87 articles from the NYT, 27 from the Times, and 42 from the Zeit that either did not include the search term or were duplicates. The final data set includes 335 articles from the NYT, 812 articles from the Times, and 1182 articles from the Zeit. For more information on data collection, cleaning, and preparation see Appendix B.

Analysis Strategy

We used two different NLP methods: (1) With TextRank (Mihalcea & Tarau, 2004), we extracted keywords that best summarize a document. This method has previously been used to study social relations showing that keywords capture more than just superficial topics in a text corpus (Hauffa et al., 2012). (2) We used state-of-the-art NLP methods for topic modelling (Grootendorst, 2022). Neural network based transformers provided numeric paragraph representations that retain semantic meaning (Reimers & Gurevych, 2019). These pre-trained language models do not only contain linguistic knowledge but also relational and factual knowledge (Petroni et al., 2019). That means the numeric representations of text can be compared to each other so that those that are close are not only linguistically similar but have a similar meaning.

Keyword Analysis

TextRank is a network-based keyword extraction method in which nodes represent

words and links represent the co-occurrence between two words. The links in the network are then weighted based on the Google PageRank algorithm (Brin & Page, 1998) and the words with the highest PageRank scores are extracted as keywords. We used the *TextRank* package (v0.3.1; Wijffels, 2020) and as suggested by the original authors of the TextRank algorithm we only included nouns and adjectives as identified by part of speech tagging (Mihalcea & Tarau, 2004). We considered two words to co-occur if they directly followed each other, as this small two-word window for co-occurrences produces the highest quality keywords. Within keywords we also included n-grams (contiguous sequences of words) of up to five words and calculated their page rank as the mean of each single word the n-gram is comprised of. After reviewing n-grams, we only retained those with an established or recognizable meaning. We normalised the page rank scores of all keywords within a newspaper to make them comparable and extracted the top 50 keywords in each decade. Subsequently, we conducted a thematic analysis of these keywords to describe similarity and dissimilarity patterns across time and newspapers, and to provide a thematic summary of the corpus of articles per newspaper.

Topic Modelling

We used sentence embeddings with Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (sentence-BERT) (Reimers & Gurevych, 2019) paired with Hierarchical Density-Based Spatial Clustering for Applications with Noise (HDBSCAN) (Campello et al., 2013; McInnes & Healy, 2017) for topic modelling. We split each article into paragraphs of about 300 words, keeping sentences intact, as the pre-trained sentence-BERT models only analyse chunks of up to 384 words. The English language model mapped the paragraphs into a 786-dimensional dense vector space, the German language model into a 512-dimensional dense vector space. For clustering we reduced the paragraph vectors to 10 dimensions (and to two dimensions for visualization) (Konopka, 2022; McInnes et al., 2020), keeping the minimum distance between vectors close to zero to allow for clusters to form more easily and setting the size of the local neighbourhood to 30 which retains some of the overall available information but keeps enough fine-grained detail for topic modelling. For each newspaper we clustered the paragraphs in the 10-dimensional vector space using HDBSCAN (McInnes et al., 2017). The

minimum size a cluster must have to be recognised as such was initially set to about 5% of the total paragraphs. We finetuned the clustering by changing the minimum cluster size as well as the proportion of data points classified as noise until the plot showed visual cluster separation. As we are interested specifically in the general topic of an article, we joined the paragraphs back into articles and assigned each article one single topic. If all paragraphs had the same topic, this became the topic of the article; the first tie breaker if paragraphs from several topics made up an article was the most common topic, and as a last tie breaker the topic with the highest average probability that a paragraph belongs to that topic was assigned to an article. Paragraphs that were not assigned any topic did not weigh into this and articles would only be not assigned a topic if all paragraphs had no topic.

We interpreted the topics by calculating the term frequency-inverse document frequency (tf-idf) of all words and considering the words with the highest scores (see Tables A1-A3 in Appendix B). The tf-idf is a measure of importance of a word in a collection of documents (we treat each topic as one document). It weighs the frequency of a term within a topic, the number of topics a term appears in, and the total number of topics. In contrast to the TextRank method, topic modelling does not rely on human input to cluster words into topics or themes but does so computationally.

Data and Code Availability

Our raw data are newspaper articles that are under copyright by the respective newspaper and as such our dataset is not publicly available. We provide a version of the data set that includes the links to the individual articles instead of the article content. Data collection, cleaning, and analysis was done in R (R Core Team, 2021). All code and the data sets with the links are available on the Open Science Framework (https://osf.io/efamz/).

Results

Keyword Analysis

Our first analysis addresses the question of temporal change by comparing the similarity of keywords over time, and the question of cross-lingual differences using a thematic analysis. Figure 2.2 presents an overview of the similarity of keywords across time and

newspapers. Keywords were more similar the closer they were temporally and did not show a cut-off where the discourse around the target terms suddenly shifted. Whereas the keywords from the British and American newspapers were comparable in their similarity to the similarity of neighbouring decades within the respective newspaper, keywords were less similar across languages. For the cross-newspaper comparison we translated the keywords of the German newspaper into English with a group translation approach (all authors are bilingual in German and English).
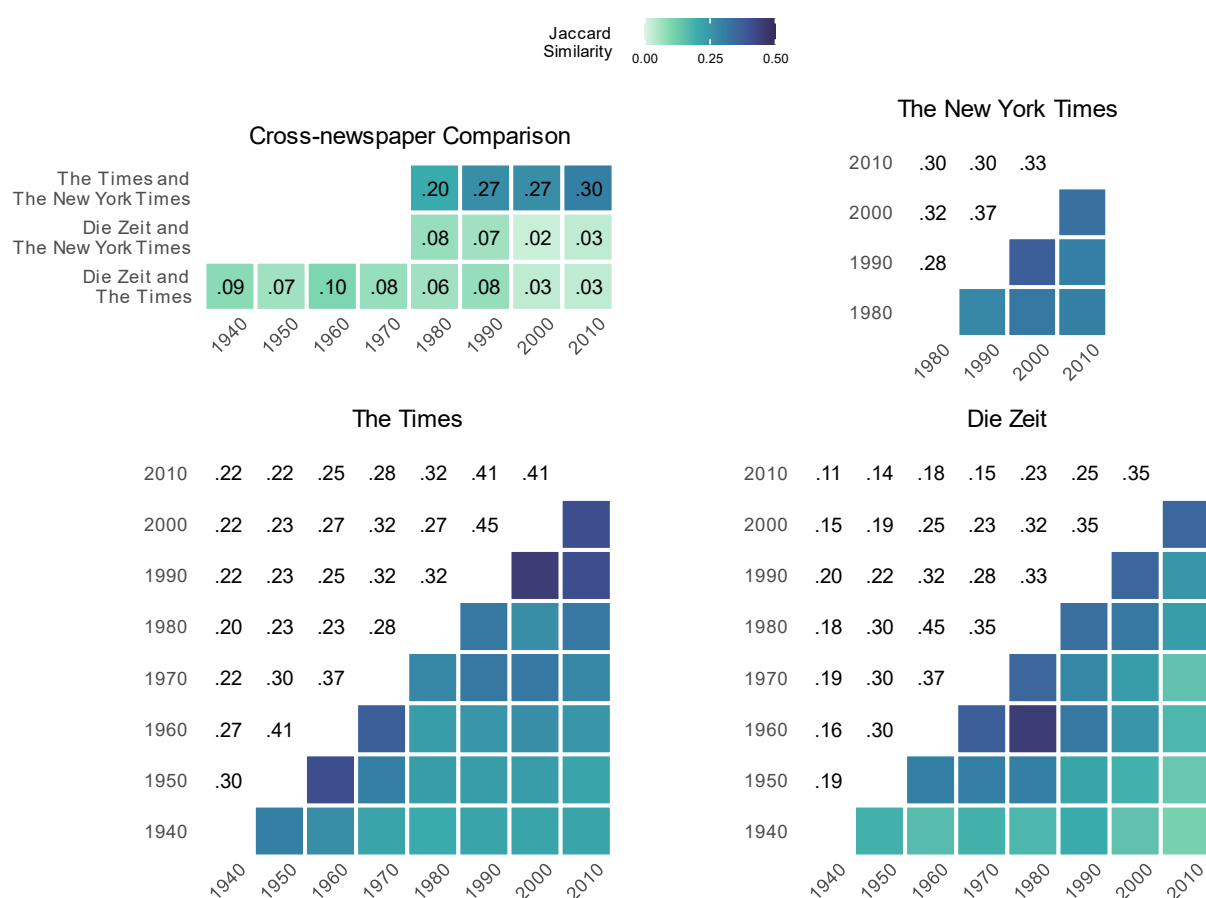
Figure 2.2 Keyword similarities across newspapers and over time
Jaccard similarities of the top 50 keywords within each decade for cross-newspaper comparison, and across all decades for the within newspaper comparisons.

Overall, the German keywords were less similar across decades than the English keywords. This is also evident in the percentage of the top 50 keywords that are common to all

decades with about 16% in the NYT, about 6% in the Times and about 3% in the Zeit. This suggests greater temporal instability or change in German versus English. Additionally, the Jaccard values (Figure 2.2) highlight that — compared to previous work (Smith et al., 2021) — there is substantial overlap across time and languages in the keyword sets. Jaccard values are a measure of similarity based on the proportion of shared and unique elements and in two sets of elements, and thus range from 0 to 1. They represent the proportion of keywords that appear in two decades and the number of unique keywords in those two decades. For example, a Jaccard similarity of .5 means that of the 50 keywords in each decade 25 also appear in the other decade. Considering the constant evolution of language, the public discourse about moral courage and Zivilcourage appears temporally and linguistically coherent.

Using thematic analysis without pre-defined themes we described the different topics of articles in each decade. We read through the keywords of the first decade and grouped those together that we determined describe a common topic. We then moved on to the next decade and put fitting keywords into the already identified themes and created new themes as they emerged. Table 2.1 gives an overview over all themes that we identified. We present the most important findings in detail below.

The theme of politics was shared between all newspapers and keywords were shared across newspapers. 7 of the 17 keywords for the NYT in this theme were shared with the keywords for the Times and 3 with the keywords for the Zeit; the Times shared 7 of its 30 keywords with the NYT and 6 with the Zeit; the Zeit had 39 keywords and shared 3 with the NYT and 6 with the Times. Shared keywords were, for example, the government, the parliament, or parties. However, some keywords were unique to a newspaper and coincide with historical events. One New York Times keyword in the 1980s for example is "governor" which coincides with the rise of Mario Cuomo, who held several political views that were controversial at that time. Another example are the mentions of foreign governments by the Times. For example, in the 1950s with the heating up of the Cold War the "Soviet government" appears as a keyword. In the Zeit we found "German unification" and "GDR" (German Democratic Republic) as keywords first appearing in the 1990s as a unique feature that also

reflects on historical events. Thus, politics is connected to moral courage/Zivilcourage likewise in English and German. In addition, while the articles' content is connected to general political topics, events throughout history play an important role for specific contents of the articles at the time of those events.

Table 2.1 Overview of the Results of the Thematic Analysis of the Key Words

Theme	Keywords	Description	Newspapers	Decades
Politics	political, government, president	political positions, institutions, and actions	New York Times The Times Die Zeit	1980 – 2010 1940 – 2010 1940 – 2010
Military	war, soldier, army	Topics and actors related to the military	New York Times The Times Die Zeit	1980 – 2010 1940 – 1950, 1970 – 2010 1940 – 1960, 1980
Society	public, democracy, citizens	Issues connected to civil society	Die Zeit	1940 – 2010
Education	school, university, student	people and institutions involved in education	New York Times The Times Die Zeit	1980 – 2010 1970 1950 – 1980
Rights	civil rights, human rights, King	rights and justice related issues	New York Times The Times	1980, 2000 – 2010 2010
Crime	right-wing violence, Jews, victim	(right-wing) crimes and violence	Die Zeit	2000 – 2010
Art	film, modern art	different art forms	New York Times	1990 – 2000
Sports	player, football, game	sports and athletes	The Times	1980 – 1990, 2010
Historikerstreit / History	German history, fatherland history	history and specifically the Historikerstreit	Die Zeit	1980

An important difference is the military theme. It appeared in all decades in the English language newspapers but only in four decades in the Zeit. In the English newspapers it was again connected to events of that time. The keywords in the theme were very similar, with several being identical, across time and newspapers. The NYT shared 5 of its 15 keywords in the military theme with the Times and 3 with the Zeit; the Times military theme also comprised 15 keywords of which 5 were shared with the NYT and 4 with the Zeit; the Zeit had 12 military

keywords, sharing 3 with the NYT and 4 with the Times. These keywords referred mainly to soldiers, the army, and wars, and "terror" appeared in the NYT once the USA called for the war on terror. In the English newspapers it thus seems that moral courage is often used in relation to military acts, war, or the conduct of soldiers whereas this plays a much smaller role in German newspaper articles that mention moral courage. This means that in contrast to the English language in German there might be a division between the courage of soldiers and Zivilcourage just as Bismarck remarked when he first used the term (von Keudell, 1901).

A theme unique to the German newspaper and central to the understanding of Zivilcourage is that of society. It describes society in general and signals that in German Zivilcourage is used in connection to a free, democratic society, that it is related to people as citizens, and that it is something in the public. The theme is present in every decade showing the importance of the civil society in understanding Zivilcourage and provides a contrast to the focus on the military theme in the English language newspapers. When Bismarck talked about how it is the duty of a soldier to show courage on the battlefield, but a citizen's courage is different and often lacking (von Keudell, 1901), this distinction seems to have been taken up by German language and society and Zivilcourage is mainly used to describe civilians or their actions.

Another theme unique to the Zeit and connected to the theme of society is crime. We first identified it in the 2000s and it describes a quite specific use of Zivilcourage. The keywords indicate that here Zivilcourage is used in the context of right-wing crimes, i.e., crimes based on racism or antisemitism, and that violence is involved in those crimes. This relates closely to the theme of society as right-wing ideology it not only based on racism but is fundamentally anti-democratic and against a free and liberal society. Together with the theme of society this gives support to the idea that in Germany Zivilcourage is closely related to the civil society's courage to take action in the face of right-wing (antidemocratic) violence and crimes. This finding also supports the idea that Zivilcourage is important for liberal societies. In the English language this strong connection of moral courage being important to defend a free and democratic society did not emerge, and a similar use of moral courage might only be hinted at by the

civil/human rights theme we identified in the English language newspapers. However, it seems the focus of the rights theme is more on the side of political protests than on crimes or more day-to-day events.

These themes were subsequently used to construct co-occurrence networks allowing us to understand which themes are more stable or central over the period of our study (Figure 2.3). These networks show that the themes of politics and military are most central in the discourse on moral courage in the English-language newspapers, and that society and politics are most central to the discourse on Zivilcourage in the German-language newspaper.
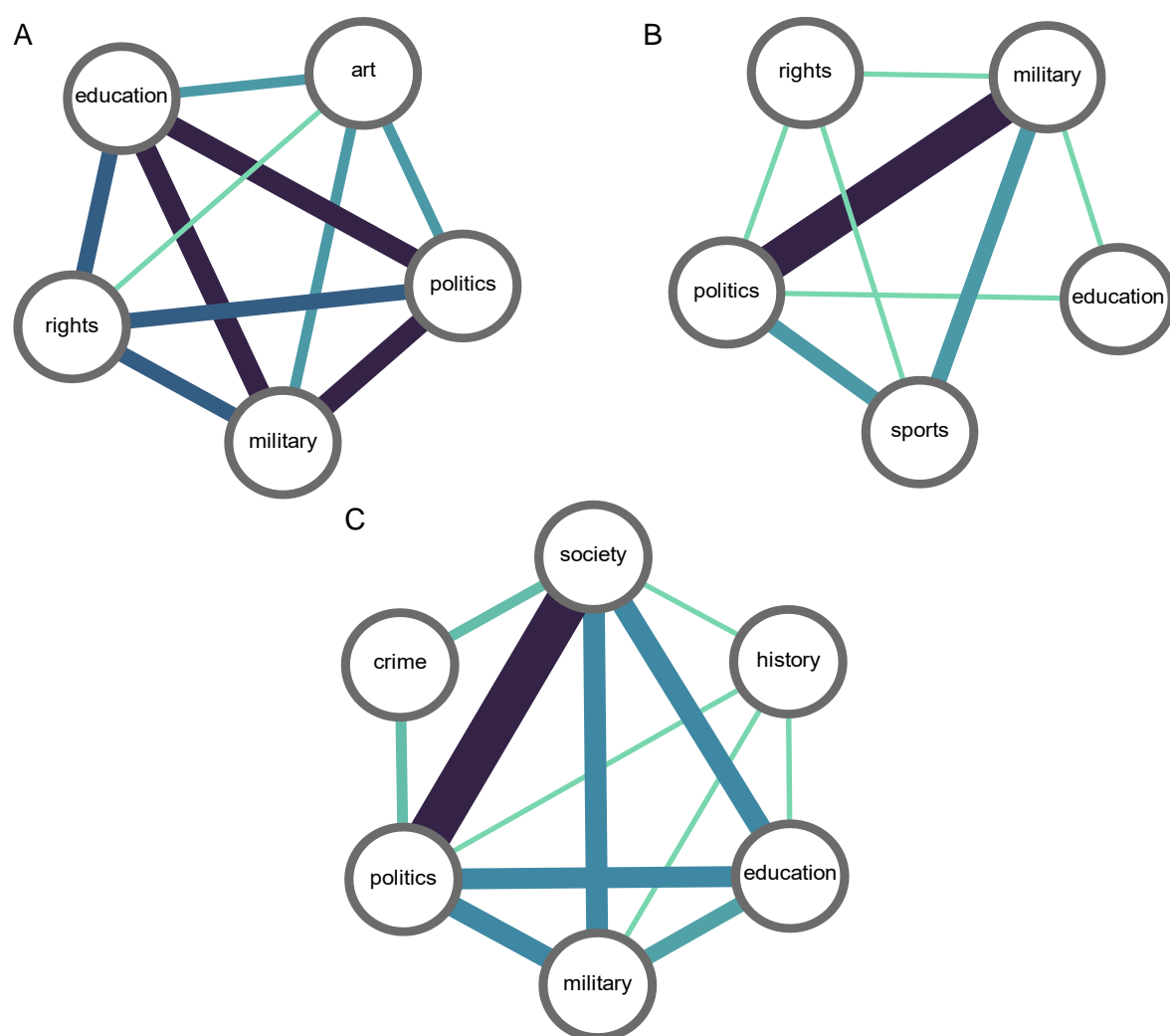
Figure 2.3 Co-occurrence networks per newspaper of themes resulting from thematic analysis of the keywords
(A) The New York Times; (B) The Times; (C) Die Zeit. The edge strength (thickness and darker color) reflects the number of decades in which the two themes connected by that edge were present together. We considered a theme to be present in any given decade if more than two of the keywords we assigned to that theme appear in that decade.

Topic Modelling

In Figure 2.4 we provide a visualization of the topics by mapping each article into a reduced vector space. Topic modelling identified six topics in the NYT, fifteen topics in the Times and four topics in the Zeit. As several of the topics in the Times included few articles, we further reduced the number of topics by merging the topic with the smallest number articles with the topic it was most similar to. The similarity scores were based on the cosine similarity of the terms' tf-idf scores in each topic. We repeated this until no topic had less than 5% of all articles assigned to it, which resulted in six topics. Visual separation between topics was good for the NYT. For the Times, due to the merging of small topics, articles within topics were more dispersed. Separation between topics was still present. For the Zeit separation between the topics was smaller, yet clusters are still visible. The inspection of a random sample of 20 articles revealed that the Zeit includes many long-read articles, interviews, and biographies that provide background information on the actual story, resulting in paragraphs that are not part of a topic.

One central finding is that politics and education stand out as being common across all newspapers, although with distinct nuances across languages. Politics as a common base of moral courage across languages and newspapers covers general issues such as political institutions and offices but also locally and historically specific events such as the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in the German newspaper and specific parties and politicians in the Times and NYT. In the NYT, politics as a topic is focused on politicians, while in the Times politics is further separated into domestic versus international politics. This emphasises both the importance and nuances of politics in understanding moral courage in the English language. In contrast, in the Zeit politics is not its own topic, but instead a combination of politics and society, suggesting a more limited role of politics in relation to Zivilcourage in the German language. A society related topic was not identified in either English language newspaper.
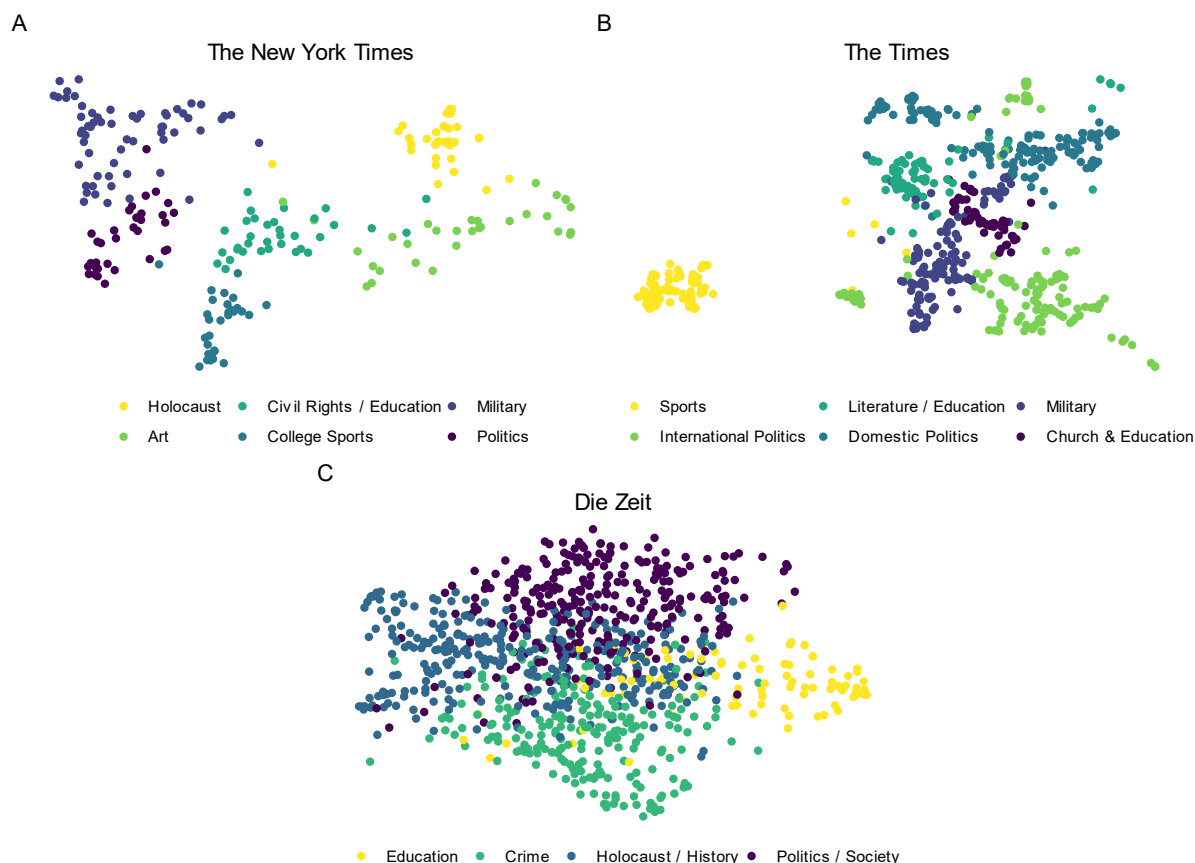
Figure 2.4 Articles mapped into a two-dimensional space
Visualization of the paragraph embedding of each article mapped into a reduced vector space colored by topics per newspaper. Topics are derived through hierarchical clustering. The high-dimensional paragraph embedding vectors were reduced for plotting (Konopka, 2022; McInnes et al., 2020).

The topic of education is present in every newspaper but also takes quite different forms. In the Times it does not constitute its own topic but features as part of two topics, one covering stories and literature and a second covering religion and science. In the Zeit the topic of education focuses on educational institutions, educators, and learners, as well as again the role of society. Finally, in the NYT the topic covers education mainly in relation to civil rights issues with mentions of Dr. King and black students.

Focusing on unique topics, military topics are unique to the English language newspapers. In the NYT, articles cover wars from mainly a political perspective with mentions of politicians but also focusing on issues with countries where the USA fought wars. In the Times the military topic focused on soldiers as those fighting the war instead of politicians as

those ordering the war. Hence, the two newspapers feature distinct perspectives within a hierarchical system, either ordering and managing war versus fighting and the lived experiences of war. This topic is notably absent in the German newspaper.

In the German newspaper, crime emerged as a distinct topic. It mentioned perpetrators, victims, and violence, and emphasised the relevance of Zivilcourage in the everyday experiences of citizens. This topic, together with the society part of the politics topic, highlights the importance of the role of common people in the German discourse on Zivilcourage. Finally, the Holocaust stands out as one singular event that appears as its own topic in the NYT. In this context ordinary citizens who helped Jews during the Nazi-Regime have been said to have shown moral courage (Block & Drucker, 1992; Fagin-Jones & Midlarsky, 2007; Paldiel, 1993). In the German newspaper Holocaust is part of a more general history topic and in the Times it is not present.

In summary, in the German context, we found a focus on common citizens and few mentions of non-ordinary events, like the collapse of the GDR. In contrast, in the English-language newspapers, a tendency to focus on public figures and extraordinary events was particularly noteworthy.

Topics Over Time

Based on the topic models we created time series to analyse temporal changes (Figure 2.5). In the NYT, the military topic and the politics topic are the only ones with a significant trend. Military shows an upwards trajectory over time as the USA became involved in more wars under the umbrella of the war on terror, increasing controversies over military involvement and war crimes, as well as a decline in public support (Eichenberg, 2005). The other significant trend is a decline in the proportion of politics articles. All other topics showed no long-term trends and stayed constant in their relative frequency, with very few short-term trends.
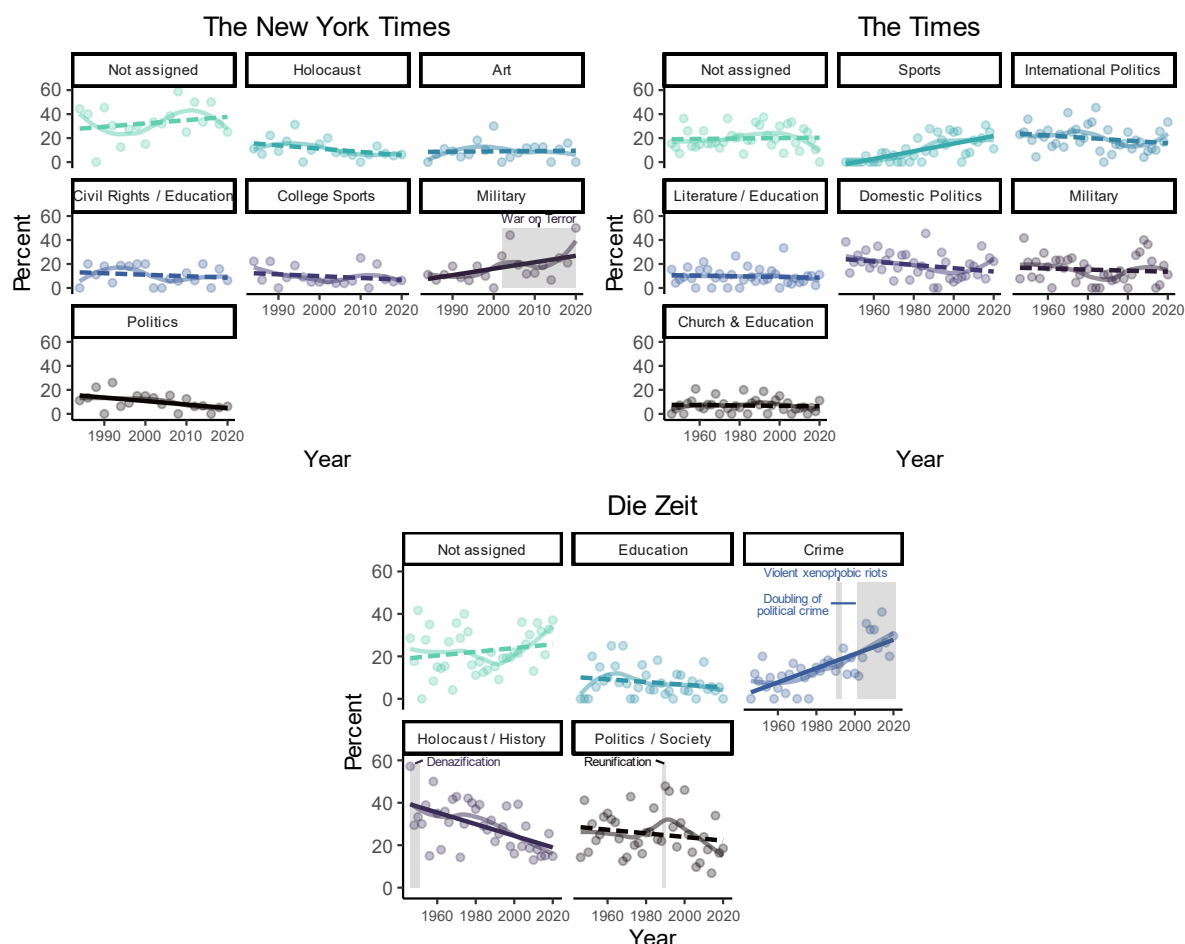
Figure 2.5 Proportion of articles in each topic over time per newspaper
Percentage of articles within a topic per two-year time spans. Articles are grouped into two-year spans, with each even years including the following odd year. The percentage of articles in every topic is based on the total number of articles published in that timespan; this includes articles that were not assigned to any topic. The thicker line is a linear trend fitted to the data, with a solid line reflecting significance and a dashed line reflecting no significant trend (regression tables including CI estimates are provided in Appendix B). A localised regression line (Loess-curve) is shown as a faded curve. For topics with a significant trend, some important events around the time the topic was or became prominent are highlighted.

In the Times only the sports topic showed a significant upward trend, all other topics showed no overall changes in the relative number of articles. However, local regressions suggested some short-term trends, which tend to accompany specific historical events. For example, domestic politics features an upward tendency in the 2010's which coincided with the Scottish independence referendum and the referendum to leave the European Union.

Two rather clear trends are present in the Zeit with the crime topic increasing, and the history topic decreasing over time. History started out as one of the most prominent topics

after WWII during the denazification process (e.g., the Nuremberg Trials). In this process Germans had to recognize that ordinary people were responsible for and participated in the crimes of the Nazis. This topic decreased in prominence as the denazification process became less salient in German politics and society. In contrast, the crime topic increased in relative frequency as Germany saw several violent xenophobic riots in the early 1990s (e.g., Hoyerswerda, Rostock-Lichtenhagen), and politically motivated crime more than doubled between 2001 and 2021. Today, the crime topic has the highest percentage of articles of all topics in the Zeit, suggesting that Zivilcourage in response to crime is the most important contemporary context of the term in Germany. Additionally, notable short-term trends can be identified, most prominently the increase of the politics/society topic around 1990 following the fall of the GDR and during the German reunification process.

Discussion

Previous studies have used the terms Zivilcourage and moral courage interchangeably at a conceptual level. In this study, we analysed newspaper articles over the last 75 years and showed that while broad topical overlaps exist, Zivilcourage and moral courage show important nuances and conceptual distinctions.

Convergence of Results Across Methods

Focusing on communalities across methodological approaches, across the human-driven thematic analysis and unsupervised topic modelling, our results converge around common themes, giving us a high confidence in the reliability of our findings. Keyword themes are very similar to the topics from topic modelling and add additional information on the interpretation of the topics. The keyword theme on crime, for example, highlights the importance of anti-fascism, and combating anti-democratic sentiment in the German discourse on Zivilcourage. The one major difference in the keyword analysis was the emergence of a military theme in the Zeit, which did not manifest in the topic modelling. However, even in the military keyword theme the distinction to the English-language newspapers remained: the keywords in the Zeit relate to soldiers and occupation forces, without any mention of public figures or politicians. These results were further reinforced by an additional analysis reported

in Appendix B. This contrast between the focus on society versus public figures is supported throughout the topics and themes, regardless of the analysis method.

Commonalities and Differences Across Societies

Taking a more detailed look, civil society and the role of citizens is a main component in the German discourse around Zivilcourage across all topics. Zivilcourage links individuals and society. Society emerged as its own topic (shared with politics) and the importance of this topic tracked important historical trends such as the fall of the Berlin Wall and the reunification of Germany, which could not have happened without the engagement of the civil society. Furthermore, the crime topic with its focus on anti-democratic crime and the actions of ordinary citizens to stop such crimes highlights the role of Zivilcourage for society in the German context: Zivilcourage is seen as an important mechanism through which ordinary people can help safeguard democracy and democratic values and ensure social cohesion.

In contrast, in the American and British context, elected individuals in office as well as the role of institutions are the main component in the discourse on moral courage. For example, the politics topics in the NYT and the Times describe the role of politicians akin to Kennedy's (1955) understanding of courage in the context of bipartisan politics. Mentions of society, ordinary citizens, or the concept of democracy are scarce and only appear if a political topic involves societal concerns — e.g., the civil rights movement. Even the military topics in the English-language newspapers are dominated by politicians, after all "war is a mere continuation of politics by others means" (von Clausewitz, 1832, p. 15). Thus, in the English language context moral courage implicitly and explicitly invokes the moral courage of elected individuals.

Why this divergence? German history might provide an answer and explain the importance of a democratic civil society to champion free and peaceful coexistence of individuals. The subversion of civil society during the Weimar Republic paved the way for the totalitarian Nazi regime. The national socialists started out as civil associations whose goal, however, was not to participate in the democratic system but rather to overthrow it (Berman, 1997). Most people and the remnants of a civil society in Nazi-Germany remained silent or

became collaborators as the national-socialists implemented the Holocaust. Taking lessons from these events and drawing upon successes of civil society in enabling the reunification of Germany, a civil society promoting democratic values and the concept of Zivilcourage have become vital components of German democracy. With other countries not having experienced such events firsthand, these concepts might be less salient. As democratic values and institutions are coming under stress in the contemporary environment, further analyses are needed to see whether current political trends may change the conceptualization of these terms in public discourse.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The specific understanding of Zivilcourage in Germany carries implications for policy making more broadly. The concept has been used in campaigns by the police to encourage greater engagement of citizens (Polizeiliche Kriminalprävention der Länder und des Bundes, n.d.), in school programs teaching Zivilcourage (Gugel, 2004), and in speeches by mainstream politicians ("Zero Tolerance for Hate", 2019). These diverse initiatives emphasise the role of individuals for upholding the foundations of society and that individuals within a society cannot live together if they indifferently stand on the sidelines as violence and prejudice prevail (Gugel, 2004). But to be effective in keeping citizens involved as active agents of democracy, said initiatives need to involve a unified public discourse.

In the English-language context, moral courage has no such unified public discourse. The term moral courage is more commonly applied to public (political) figures who stand by their values, even if they jeopardize their political career. While an important virtue, such acts operate at a different level than Zivilcourage. Rather than ordinary citizens safeguarding an open and democratic society in everyday life, it is the public figure who is tasked with showing integrity and strength of character. Moreover, the underlying connotations may even imply that someone undermining democratic institutions can be understood to show moral courage if their actions show adherence to deeply held personal beliefs. Moral courage is decoupled from concerns with upholding democratic ideals, institutions, or social cohesion, which could encourage people like the prolife activist who murdered George Tiller, a doctor offering late-

term abortion services in the USA. This murder is consistent with some interpretations of moral courage in English-language use, but obviously would undermine peaceful co-existence in a pluralistic society. This highlights the caution needed when considering campaigns promoting moral courage in English-speaking countries to strengthen democracy and civil society.

While public calls for Zivilcourage in Germany are very likely to be understood as an appeal to ordinary citizens to safeguard the foundations of liberal society, similar calls for moral courage in the UK and USA might carry the risk of validating and justifying potentially violent actions. Public campaigns for moral courage, akin to those in Germany for Zivilcourage, may therefore not only be ineffective but might even encourage people to stand up for ideas that undermine democratic society. With connotations of the importance of democratic and peaceful conflict resolution missing, individuals could be encouraged to defend their values even with violent means and even if the values are illiberal and anti-democratic.

Our analysis does not allow us to determine if Zivilcourage in the German understanding exists in the UK and USA. Both countries might have a different terminology for this concept or developed other complementary mechanisms that help in maintaining a liberal democracy, which were not directly detectable in our analyses of discourse focusing on the term moral courage. Yet, we believe our results merit close attention in analysing the applications of moral courage and Zivilcourage.

Implications of Theory and Research

Conceptually, most important for researchers is that moral courage and Zivilcourage are used differently in the public discourse. Academic researchers have treated them as somewhat interchangeable, except for some German authors who used civil courage, the literal translation of Zivilcourage (Greitemeyer et al., 2006, 2007; Schwan, 2004). For example, Skitka (2012) understands moral courage as defending a personal principle, while Osswald and colleagues (2010b) focus on enforcing democratic norms in dangerous situations. These different understandings of moral courage map onto those found between the newspapers we analysed and suggest a more nuanced view on these concepts is at least implicit in the current

literature. This needs further conceptual elaboration, and we strongly encourage consideration of these nuances in using the term and designing future studies to avoid jingle-jangle fallacies. Research on the predictors of moral courage, for example, would make different assumptions based on moral courage being defined as motivated by individual convictions versus democratic values.

Concerning temporal change, we strongly encourage more attention to both the stable and dynamic aspects of the term. Current experimental research has assumed a relative time- and context-invariance of the concept. However, we did find temporal trends that may show shifts at least in the importance but possibly even in the salient features of the different nuances, e.g., the politics topic declining and military increasing in the NYT. With the context of the concept (and possibly associated behaviours) evolving over time, such shifts need careful attention when designing experimental studies.

Limitations

We used convenience sampling for the selection of newspapers to include in our study and included those newspapers that are national newspapers, that are considered newspapers-of-record, and that had a machine-readable archive that we could access. This resulted in one newspaper per country that we analysed. While we cannot statistically separate country and newspaper differences in this way, we believe our interpretation of country-level differences was still merited. Newspapers may have a political leaning and editorial freedoms on how to report about events, however, newspapers broadly report about the same events. Newspapers may also use a term with a certain bias and while one newspaper describes a politician as morally courageous that speaks up about growing racism in their own party, another newspaper describes a politician as morally courageous that makes accusations of voter fraud. In both cases, however, the topic of articles mentioning these events would be politics. The methods we used in this study are thus robust against potential political bias in the data.

Another limitation is that we searched for moral courage in the English-language newspapers and for Zivilcourage in the German-language newspaper, even though the literal translation of Zivilcourage is civil courage. However, in the academic literature the

predominant translation of Zivilcourage is moral courage, hence our choice to investigate these two terms with the aim to establish if it is indeed a good choice to refer to Zivilcourage as moral courage in English.

Conclusion

In summary, we found commonalties across three different national contexts and two languages, but also important nuances in the application of the terms moral courage and Zivilcourage. Most importantly, the roles of ordinary citizens versus politicians and of democratic values versus personally held beliefs require careful attention. The German use of Zivilcourage is focused on safeguarding the foundations of society and ensuring social cohesion through civil actions by all, whereas in English speaking contexts a highly individualistic perspective focusing on public figures without regarding the larger society appears salient. These patterns point to systematic differences in the use of the terms which should be considered in practice and policy making as well as in future research. Our results underscore the importance of considering emic understandings of concepts and to not rely on what, through the widespread use of the English language in academia and the prevalence of US influences, may seem to be universal.

Study 3: 240 Years of Public Discourse on Moral Courage in the London Times

CHAPTER 2: MORAL COURAGE OVER THE PAST 240 YEARS

Moral courage can play a central role in maintaining social cohesion and allowing society to ensure peaceful coexistence of all its members from within (Jonas & Brandstätter, 2004). Considering the increasing polarisation in politics and especially society (Duff et al., 2019; Koch et al., 2021), social cohesion is essential for democracies to defend its liberal ideals. Recent political trends, in particular rising right-wing influences and hate crimes have the potential to threaten the livelihoods of significant segments of a multicultural society. Moral courage and its variations (e.g., in German *Zivilcourage*, in French *courage civique*), refer to a set of behaviours aimed at stopping a perpetrator from violating a social or moral norm. This can include, for example, crimes, racism, or sexism, and can contribute to stopping such developments in its tracks and keep society peaceful and cohesive. A second interpretation of the term tends to be more common in English speaking countries and refers to people standing up for their personal moral beliefs. This interpretation is often applied to politicians and other public figures in contrast to Zivilcourage which ordinary citizens show in their everyday lives (Chapter 2: Study 2). Current studies have focused on the understanding and, for example, determinants of these concepts in today's societies (Baumert et al., 2023; Greitemeyer et al., 2007; Halmburger et al., 2017). Yet, there is little research that traces the evolution of the term and associated discourses over longer periods. Given the possible role of moral courage in upholding democratic norms and institutions, it is informative to examine whether and how this term may have played a role in public discourse during past crises. In this study we trace the evolution of the term moral courage over a period of more than two hundred years in the United Kingdom, the longest standing democracy in the world.

A recent review of the literature on moral courage showed researchers use definitions that differ in important details (Chapter 1). On the one hand, definitions include references to personal values and principles (Skitka, 2012), and on the other hand to actions upholding and defending democratic and human rights (Osswald et al., 2010b). This difference in definitions can lead to quite opposing actions being classified as moral courage. Following the former definition, acts of terrorism could be understood as morally courageous when the perpetrators acted based on deeply held personal beliefs. In contrast, following the latter definition, such

acts could not be considered morally courageous as violence and terrorism do not reflect democratic values and violate human rights. The German concept of Zivilcourage is clearly situated within the latter definitions. Many German researchers emphasise the connection to democratic values and societal norms (Greitemeyer et al., 2006; Schwan, 2004), and sometimes use the English term civil courage instead of moral courage. Zivilcourage has been directly linked to non-violence and described as rooted within a liberal democratic framework, explicitly excluding behaviours that are racist, xenophobic, homophobic, sexist, or restrict others peoples civil and human rights (Meyer, 2014). In attempts to encourage behaviours that increase the capabilities of societies to be resilient to threats to democracy, any interpretations of such encouragement as condoning violence to defend personal moral values and to defend principles that do not adhere to human rights must be pre-empted. Two points are essential to achieve this. A clear understanding and differentiation of these behaviours within research must be established, including an accurate terminology, to be able to provide effective recommendations to, for example, policy makers. Further, it needs to be ensured that the public understands the terminology as referring to the very concept, researchers and policy makers intended to evoke.

In our study, we explore the meanings that have been associated with moral courage in public discourse within the United Kingdom, using the Times newspaper as a window into the past to explore the evolution of the term moral courage. This will give insights to how the public understood moral courage and how this understanding may have evolved over time. Importantly, by focusing on a newspaper that is widely circulated, it becomes possible to identify divergence in the understanding of moral courage between academia and lay people. By focusing on the general usage of the term in public discourse, blind spots and unexplored areas of the concepts can be highlighted and can lead to novel recommendations for future research on moral courage and Zivilcourage as well as applications of moral courage in relation to the challenges democratic societies today are facing.

The United Kingdom is an excellent case study for the public's understanding of moral courage for several reasons. The UK is the longest standing democracy in the world, and thus,

offers a unique view into the long-term developments of democratic concepts and values. In addition, it did not suffer any democratic caesura or dramatic changes — like the changes in the political systems in France or Germany. With the Times the UK also has one of the longest running national newspapers in the world, providing uninterrupted access to 240 years of public discourse. Newspapers provide important insights into the topics that were salient for the public at any given time and reflect the language and Zeitgeist of its time. As such they allow us to reconstruct knowledge and psychological constructs from a time not accessible through standard survey methods (Jackson et al., 2022; Waller & Zimbelman, 2003). A previous newspaper study showed that when analysing articles related to a specific topic — i.e., moral courage — these articles also reflect broad discussions and discourse on societal and political issues at the respective time and thus capture notions and understandings of concepts relevant at specific time points but also relevant to the respective country the newspaper is published in (Chapter 2: Study 2). Our analysis can shed further light on the previously noted divergence in the understanding of moral courage — is it focused on citizens and their actions to uphold democratic principles and institutions or is it focused more on politicians and their personal moral standards? Similarly, in the current academic literature moral courage is often discussed as a relatively abstract principle, but the application and focus of the term to different areas of public life have been rather underexplored. By studying how the term has been used in public discourse over an extended period of time, we can start to get a better understanding of the relevant topics and areas of application of the term.

We use state-of-the-art natural language processing (NLP) methods that allow us to analyse a large number of newspaper articles. Traditional qualitative methods like discourse analysis become unfeasible when the data include several thousand articles. NLP can help us make sense of such large text corpora and detect general and specific topics in the data. Recent advances in large language models allow us to move away from methods such as word counts and capture meaning in sentences and articles to build, for example, topic models that reflect meaning in text and not merely words that appear close together many times. We used two different NLP methods: (1) With TextRank (Mihalcea & Tarau, 2004), we extracted keywords

that best summarize a document. This method has previously been used to study social relations showing that keywords capture more than just superficial topics in a text corpus (Hauffa et al., 2012). Subsequently, we describe similarity and dissimilarity patterns of the extracted keywords across time to gain broad insights into possible temporal developments of topics within articles. (2) We used state-of-the-art NLP methods for topic modelling to identify clusters of articles that are related to the same topic. In a last step we analysed the relative frequency of articles within a respective topic over time.

Methods

Data

Our corpus includes all articles from the newspaper The Times that included the term moral courage in their headline or text. We choose The Times as the oldest newspaper of record within the realms of the UK, which is the longest standing Western society with a parliamentary democracy. Without major interruption in the political set up of the country the analysis of over 240 years of data allows us to reconstruct the understanding and usage of moral courage as it developed over time.

We searched archive of The Times using the search term *moral courage* and downloaded all articles published until 2020, inclusive. Our search for *moral courage* returned 2856 results. The Times archive is available as images of the original newspapers for all articles that were not also published online on their website. The archive site provided an inbuild optical character recognition (OCR) tool that we used to transform the images into text; this tool also calculated a confidence score for the OCR process. The average confidence for the articles was 81.3%. We subsequently scraped the html of the websites using the *rvest* package (v1.0.2; Wickham, 2020) and extracted the headline, sub-headline (if available), publication date, as well as the full text from the html.

Data Preparation

Title, subtitle, and full text of the scraped articles were collapsed to create individual documents. We also created a lemmatised version of the complete articles using the *cleanNLP* package (v3.0.3; Arnold, 2017). For the keyword analysis, which only looked at two words at a

time, we used the lemmatised version, for topic modelling, which takes sentence structure into account, we used the original version. We aggregated publication dates, first to years, and then further to decades. In an additional step, we merged articles from the year 2020 with the 2010-2019 decade as a single year does not provide enough information for a whole decade.

Data Cleaning

We checked for all articles whether the search term "moral courage" occurred and removed articles in which it was not found. Furthermore, we checked for duplicate articles by calculating the cosine similarity, a common measure of similarity in NLP, of each possible combination of two articles within our corpus. We set the threshold for considering two or more articles to be duplicates at a similarity of .75. There is no hard cut-off point; we ran the duplicates analysis several times with different thresholds and selected the final cut-off by weighing the removal of non-duplicates and retention of duplicates in a subset of the data. Duplicates were often corrections of an article or advertisement articles that appeared in several issues. We removed 210 articles that turned out to either not include the search term or to be duplicates. The final corpus includes 2646 articles.

TextRank Analysis

TextRank is a network-based keyword extraction method in which nodes represent words and links represent the co-occurrence between two words. The links in the network are then weighted based on the Google PageRank algorithm (Brin & Page, 1998) and the words with the highest PageRank scores are extracted as keywords. We used the *TextRank* package (v0.3.1; Wijffels, 2020) and as suggested by the original authors of the TextRank algorithm we only included nouns and adjectives as identified by part of speech tagging (Mihalcea & Tarau, 2004). We considered two words to co-occur if they directly followed each other, as this small two-word window for co-occurrences produces the highest quality keywords. Within keywords we also included n-grams (contiguous sequences of words) of up to five words that appeared at least eight times in our corpus and calculated their page rank as the mean of each single word the n-gram is comprised of. We extracted the top 50 keywords in each decade.

Topic Modelling

We used sentence embeddings with Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers (sentence-BERT) (Reimers & Gurevych, 2019) paired with Hierarchical Density-Based Spatial Clustering for Applications with Noise (HDBSCAN) (Campello et al., 2013; McInnes & Healy, 2017) for topic modelling. Neural network based transformers provided numeric paragraph representations that retain semantic meaning (Reimers & Gurevych, 2019). These pre-trained language models do not only contain linguistic knowledge but also relational and factual knowledge (Petroni et al., 2019). That means the numeric representations of text can be compared to each other so that those that are close are not only linguistically similar but have a similar meaning. We leverage this and use hierarchical clustering to find clusters of articles that have similar meaning (Grootendorst, 2022). We split each article into paragraphs of about 300 words, keeping sentences intact, as the pre-trained sentence-BERT models only analyse chunks of up to 384 words. The language model mapped the paragraphs into a 786-dimensional dense vector space. For clustering we reduced the paragraph vectors to 10 dimensions (and to two dimensions for visualization) (v0.2.9; Konopka, 2022; McInnes et al., 2018), keeping the minimum distance between vectors close to zero to allow for clusters to form more easily and setting the size of the local neighbourhood to 30 which retains some of the overall available information but keeps enough fine-grained detail for topic modelling. We clustered the paragraphs in the 10-dimensional vector space using HDBSCAN (McInnes et al., 2017). The minimum size a cluster must have to be recognised as such was initially set to about 5% of the total paragraphs. We finetuned the clustering by changing the minimum cluster size as well as the proportion of data points classified as noise until the plot showed visual cluster separation. As we are interested specifically in the general topic of an article, we joined the paragraphs back into articles and assigned each article one single topic. If all paragraphs had the same topic, this became the topic of the article; the first tie breaker if paragraphs from several topics made up an article was the most common topic, and as a last tie breaker the topic with the highest average probability that a paragraph belongs to that topic was assigned to an article. Paragraphs that

were not assigned any topic did not weigh into this and articles would only be not assigned a topic if all paragraphs had no topic.

We interpreted the topics by calculating the term frequency-inverse document frequency (tf-idf) of all words and considering the words with the highest scores. The tf-idf is a measure of importance of a word in a collection of documents (we treat each topic as one document). It weighs the frequency of a term within a topic, the number of topics a term appears in, and the total number of topics, so that words that have a high frequency but appear in all topics are less important than words that appear fewer total times but only in one topic.

Data and Code Availability

Our raw data are newspaper articles that are under copyright by The Times and as such our full dataset is available via subscription only. All code used in this study is available on the OSF (https://osf.io/yk6wt/?view_only=53e31da47b9d4301b8a73387d659cc37).

Data collection, cleaning, and analysis was done in R (R Core Team, 2021).

Results

TextRank Analysis

Our first analysis addressed the question of general temporal developments in the articles on moral courage by exploring the similarity of keywords across decades. This comparison across decades is based on Jaccard similarity scores, a measure of similarity based on the proportion of shared and unique elements in two sets of elements, which can range from 0 to 1. In our case, this represents the proportion of keywords that appear in two decades and the number of unique keywords in those two decades. For example, a Jaccard similarity of .5 means that of the 50 keywords in each of two decades 25 also appear in the other decade.

We found that keywords were more similar to decades closer in time than to those further removed (Figure 3.1). There was no apparent sudden shift at any time point. One emerging trend was an increasing similarity of the keyword sets, especially over the last eight decades, suggesting that the keywords have become slightly more similar than before. An overall significant regression model of the similarities of neighbouring decades (R^2 = .64, $F(1,16)$ = 28.19, p < .001) confirmed this trend (B = 0.014, 95% CI [0.009, 0.020]). This

indicates that over time the discourse around moral courage has become more coherent, and this trend may have accelerated somewhat since the 1980s and 1990s. Overall, 0.78% of the keywords were shared across all decades and the similarity between two decades ranged from .03 between 1870 and 2000 to .45 between 1990 and 2000. Although the percent of keywords shared across all decades is rather low, this is unsurprising given the relatively large number of keyword sets we compared and the constant evolution of language over time. In combination, these patterns suggest that public discourse around moral courage is gradually developing and became relatively more coherent in recent decades.

	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
2010	.11	.06	.04	.10	.05	.04	.10	.10	.15	.16	.15	.22	.22	.25	.28	.32	.41	.41
2000	.08	.05	.04	.08	.03	.04	.08	.09	.14	.14	.15	.25	.23	.27	.32	.27	.45	
1990	.09	.05	.04	.09	.04	.04	.09	.08	.15	.14	.15	.23	.23	.25	.32	.32		
1980	.12	.08	.04	.11	.06	.05	.14	.10	.15	.22	.18	.20	.23	.23	.28			
1970	.09	.06	.04	.08	.04	.04	.10	.09	.14	.19	.19	.23	.30	.37				
1960	.11	.08	.05	.12	.08	.06	.14	.11	.18	.27	.27	.30	.41					
1950	.14	.09	.05	.15	.08	.08	.16	.12	.23	.27	.33	.30						
1940	.15	.09	.04	.15	.06	.05	.12	.11	.33	.22	.25							
1930	.16	.12	.10	.20	.15	.16	.22	.18	.25	.41								
1920	.19	.15	.11	.22	.18	.18	.27	.22	.27									
1910	.20	.12	.08	.20	.11	.09	.18	.22										
1900	.11	.15	.19	.22	.28	.27	.22											
1890	.18	.11	.11	.23	.20	.18												
1880	.09	.15	.19	.16	.27													
1870	.12	.16	.30	.30														
1860	.28	.22	.14															
1850	.08	.15																
1840	.16																	
1830																		

Jaccard Similarity 0.00 0.25 0.50

Figure 3.1 Keyword similarities over time
Jaccard similarities of the top 50 keywords within each decade. Jaccard similarity is the proportion of keywords that appear in two decades and the number of unique keywords in those two decades

Topic Modelling

We followed up on this general finding by delving into the content topics of the articles to explore in which contexts articles mention moral courage and investigated changes in the

content of the articles over time. Topic modelling identified twenty topics (Figure 3.2A). However, several topics included only few articles which may indicate the presence of many topics that are either relatively specific or that were only relevant for a very short amount of time. To also allow for a more general overview of the topics around moral courage we reduced the number of topics by merging the topic with the smallest number articles with the topic it was most similar to. The similarity scores were based on the cosine similarity of the terms' tf-idf scores in each topic. We repeated this until no topic had less than 5% of all articles assigned to it, which resulted in a list of five topics. Despite this merging of smaller topics, in the topic visualization separate clusters are clearly visible (Figure 3.2B), suggesting that the many topics were very specific instances of the more general topics included in the final list of merged topics. Table 3.1 shows which topics were merged. Topics related to other countries merged into one Foreign Affairs topic, those related to England/Great Britain merged into a Domestic Affairs topic, the two topics concerning Ireland merged, and the Literature and Sports topics merged, military remained as its own topic.

Table 3.1 Overview of which original topics merged to form which broader topics

Original	Broad
Foreign Affairs	Foreign Affairs
Spain	Foreign Affairs
France/Italy	Foreign Affairs
Russo-Japanese War	Foreign Affairs
South Africa	Foreign Affairs
Military	Military
Sports	Entertainment
Literature	Entertainment
Party Politics	Domestic Affairs
British Raj	Domestic Affairs
Education	Domestic Affairs
Colonies	Domestic Affairs
Church	Domestic Affairs
Alcohol Policy	Domestic Affairs
Unions	Domestic Affairs
Business	Domestic Affairs
Trade Politics	Domestic Affairs
Court Proceedings	Domestic Affairs
Great Famine/Land Acts	Irish Affairs
Ireland	Irish Affairs

A

B

● Spain	● Russo-Japanese War	● Education	● Alcohol Policy	● Trade Politics	
● Sports	● Foreign Affairs	● Colonies	● Party Politics	● Great Famine/Land Acts	
● France/Italy	● South Africa	● Literature	● Unions	● Court Proceedings	
● British Raj	● Military	● Church	● Business	● Ireland	

● Foreign Affairs	● Military	● Entertainment
● Domestic Affairs	● Irish Affairs	
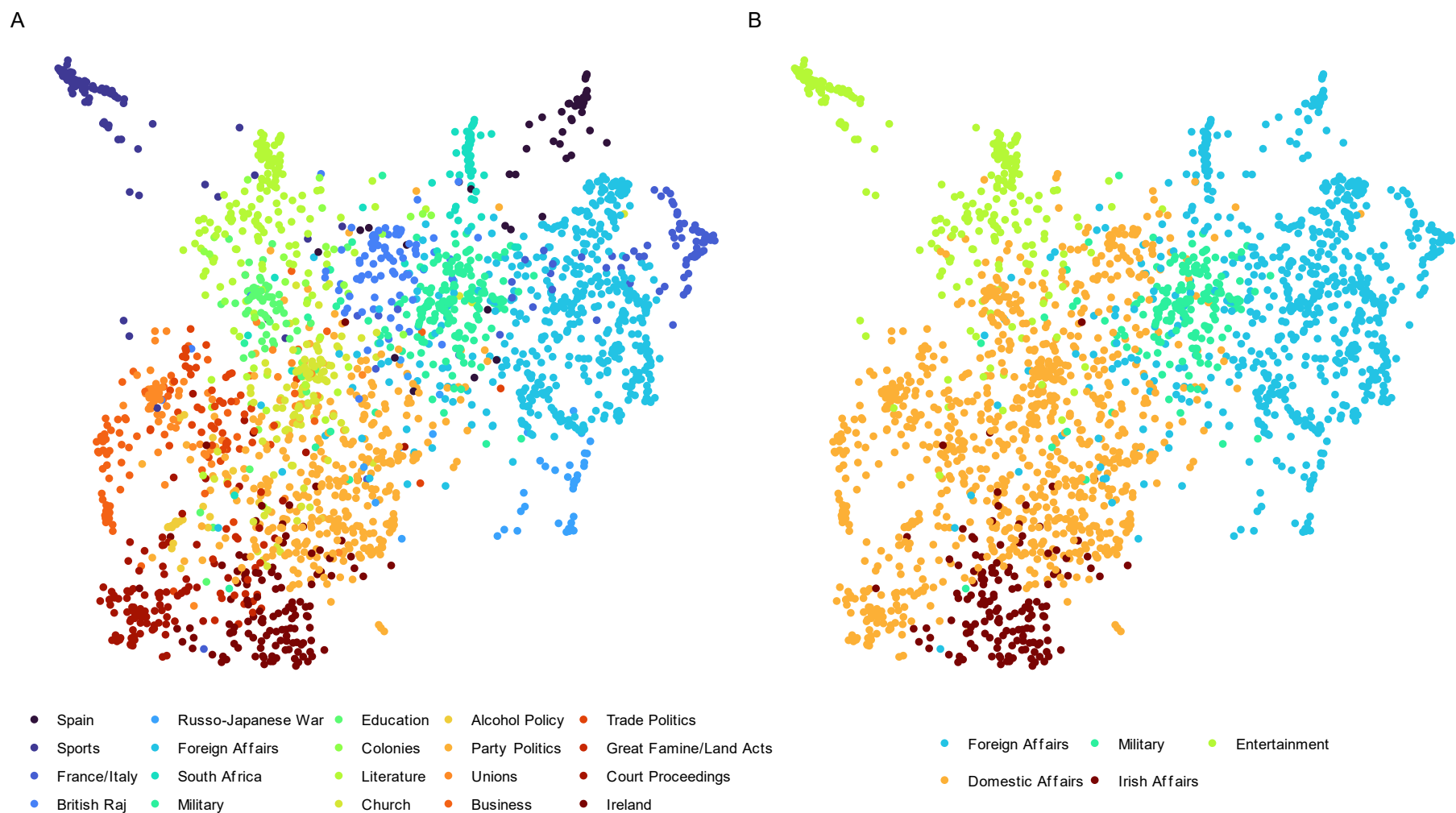
Figure 3.2 Articles mapped into a two-dimensional space

Visualization of the paragraph embedding of each article mapped into a reduced vector space. Topics are derived through hierarchical clustering. The high-dimensional paragraph embedding vectors were reduced for plotting (Konopka, 2022; McInnes et al., 2020). **A** All topics detected through topic modelling. **B** Topics after merging until topics included at least 5% of all articles

When examining the content of the identified topics, we found a majority of topics were related to both general politics, as well as specific parts of politics. Among the original 20 topics, fourteen were related to politics by themselves and eighteen topics were merged into the Domestic Affairs, Foreign Affairs, Irish Affairs, and military topics, making up 4 of the five merged topics. These four encompass the two main dimension of politics, foreign and domestic politics, the specific topic of UK-Ireland political relations, and the military.

The Foreign Affairs related topics usually included references to other countries, to politicians, government, but also to the army or troops. The Spain topic for example referred to Spain, government, and president, but also to America, war, and troops, suggesting the Spanish-American War played an important role in this topic. The Italy/France topic was mainly concerned with the two countries, cities in these countries, and the government, and the South Africa topic related particularly to the Boer Wars.

Within the Domestic Affairs related topics references were similarly made to parts of government, people, and political issues, but in relation to events and matters that directly affected England and the UK. For example, the Party Politics topic covered aspects of the workings of the political system in the UK with references to parliament, elections, or committees. The Education topic was less political in nature but with mentions of, e.g., the government, it was also related to educational policies. The British Raj topic covered the relations of Britain with India, but India was formally part of the British Empire making it fit within the Domestic Affairs topic.

The military topic is concerned with war, army, and soldiers but unlike the Foreign Affairs topics put no emphasis on specific conflicts or countries. In addition, it referenced the government and other political entities situating it clearly as a topic not just about war and soldiers but about the politics of war and military.

The two topics concerning Irish Affairs combine the Irish political struggle for independence with internal political problems Ireland was facing over time. The Ireland topic appears to have simply made references to politics and political actors relating to British rule over Ireland. The Great Famine/Land Acts topic specifically addressed events caused or started

by the Great Famine including the issues around land ownership and evictions, and later the land acts.

Lastly, the two topics that merged to create the Entertainment topic were quite different. The Sports topic mentioned, for example, sports, people involved in sports, and competitions. The second topic was less clear in its content. It made references to books, stories, reading, and writing, but also to further seemingly unrelated things such as cloth and royal.

The merged topics were narrower in the contents with articles in the domestic affairs topic concerned with politics as they relate to the normal workings of government and the legislature. In contrast, articles within the Foreign Affairs topic were concerned with the relations to other countries. Articles in the Irish Affairs topic specifically focused on the political relations between the United Kingdom and Ireland. The Military topic included political aspects of the military as well as issues concerning soldiers. Only the Entertainment topic was unrelated to politics and includes references to books and sports.

Time Series Analysis

We created a time series to analyse temporal changes based on the original and the merged topics (Figure 3.3). Most of the original topics that had relatively few articles were only present during specific time frames when they were relevant. During other times they had an even lower relative frequency and were not at all present during many years. Figure 3.3A shows a timeline with points removed for the years the topic was not present. For example, the British Raj topic emerged with the beginning of direct British rule in India in the 1850s and disappeared with Indian and Pakistani independence after WWII. Similarly, the Russo-Japanese War topic was present mainly around the time the war was fought, and the Ireland topic was present throughout Irish struggles for independence. As most of the topics follow these quite specific historical events long-term trends are not especially helpful and we only found four. Foreign Affairs and Party Politics were both declining over time, and sports and literature were growing in relative frequency over time.
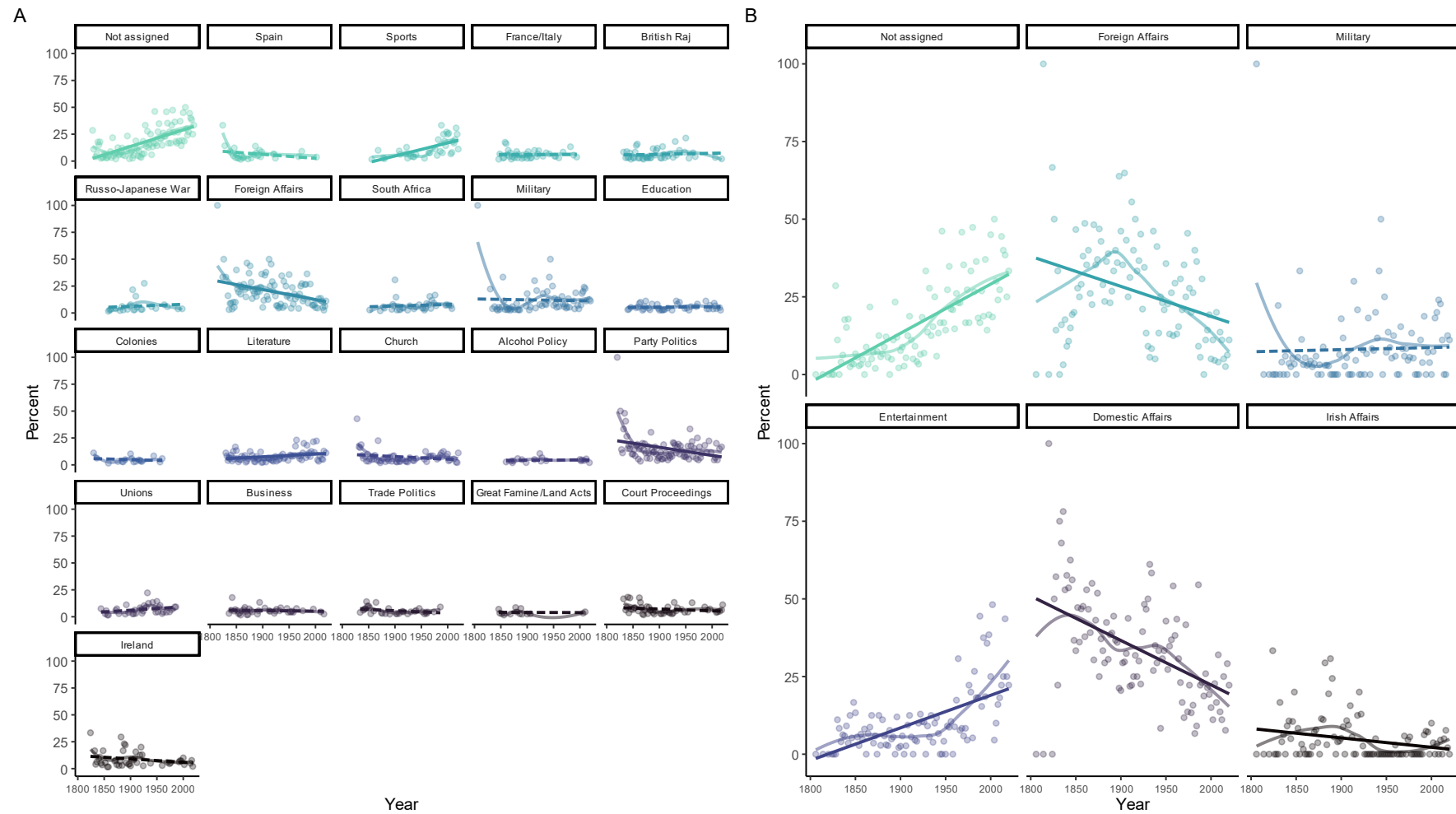
Figure 3.3 Proportion of articles in each topic over time
Percentage of articles within a topic per two-year time spans (even years include the following odd year) based on the total number of articles published in that timespan; this includes articles that were not assigned to any topic. The thicker line is a linear trend fitted to the data, with a solid line indicating a significant and a dashed line reflecting no significant trend. A localised regression line (Loess-curve) is shown as a faded curve. **A** All 20 topics. Years with no articles removed. **B** Five merged topics

Among the broader, merged topics, however, we find long-term trends indicating a change for all but one topic (Figure 3.3B). Foreign Affairs had an overall downward trend, but local regressions showed a clear short-term upwards trend with a peak around the end of the 19th century. This coincided with rising political tensions in Europe in the leadup to WWI with the great powers of that time striving for hegemony and alliances. Irish Affairs had an overall slight downward trend with a short-term increase during the 19th century and a subsequent decrease in the first years of the 20th century as the Irish question was resolved and Ireland gained independence from the UK. The Domestic Affairs topic showed a clear long-term decrease in relative frequency. This trend was only interrupted by a short-term hold towards the end of WWII when Britain had to reorganize their internal affairs after the war and created the welfare state. The Entertainment topic shows an overall increasing trend that is mainly carried by a relatively sharp increase after WWII and continuing till today. Based on the timeline of the original topics this appears to be due to, in particular, the sports topic. The military topic was the only topic that in the long-term stayed constant in its relative frequency. We found two short-term trends with a generally low percent of articles in the military topic during the Pax Britannica and an increase in frequency starting with WWI and peaking during WWII. Lastly, the relative frequency of articles that are not assigned to any topic has been steadily increasing over time.

Discussion

We found the public discourse around moral courage in the Times changed slowly over time, with an apparent consolidation of the discourse after WWII when it became more similar between decades. Though there was no clear and obvious change in the similarity, articles that mention moral courage appear to have used more similar words over time. Through topic modelling we found 20 topics, with many topics specific to certain historical events, that could be further narrowed down to 5 broader topics, most of which capture some form of politics. These findings support the idea of differing understandings of moral courage between academia and the public and present important challenges for the future research of moral courage.

Our first finding suggests an increasing trend in the similarity of keywords of articles mentioning moral courage. This is based on the keywords that overall describe the articles in each decade best. It does not necessarily mean that in more recent times the content of these articles was more similar but can also indicate that the content was more balanced with fewer specifics present in one versus the next decade or that the general language in these articles became more similar. Overall, today's discourse in the Times around moral courage is more coherent or more balanced compared to the early 19th century.

Over time we found a clear decline of the Domestic and Foreign Affairs topics and a growth in the Entertainment topic. The new emerging topic of Entertainment, which appears to be strongly influenced by discourse around sports people and events, caught up over time with the other topics in relative frequency. This increase may be due to newspapers starting to move from mere match reports and news towards feature length articles in their sports sections, suggesting the general topic of sports gained more attention rather than moral courage entering the discourse around sports (Newman, 2016). With newspapers moving from reporting in depth on few issues to more rapid transmission of breaking news and generally reporting on issues of interest to more than one specific group of readers, the diversification of topic frequency we found appears fitting (Conboy & Steel, 2008).

Considering the twenty original topics that emerged through the topic modelling, most of these are related to specific historical events. But viewed more broadly they fall into overarching categories as shown with the merged topics. While following major historical events, moral courage is used in relation to five patterns. Four of which are concerned with politics and one with entertainment. The Foreign Affairs, Domestic Affairs, and Irish Affairs topics were clearly about politics and even the military topic can be considered political as von Clausewitz already said, war is the mere continuation of politics with different means (1832). This highlights the centrality of politics in the public discourse around moral courage in the UK. Many of the topics and the words describing the topics appear to reference larger political issues with politicians and government officials at the core, rather than everyday issues and ordinary citizens. Exceptions here are the Education, Great Famine/Land Acts, and Union

topics, albeit the Union topic is described by mentions of employers and boards but not by employees. This focus on larger issues and public personas suggests that moral courage is used to describe someone standing firm in their opinion which is in contrast to many studies on moral courage that define moral courage as being aimed at stopping the violation of a moral or social norm (e.g. Baumert et al., 2013; Goodwin et al., 2020). This pattern is supported by previous findings (Chapter 2: Study 2) and points at a divide between the usage of moral courage in academia and in public discourse, here represented by Times articles.

None of the topics we found suggested that moral courage in public discourse is a term that is used to describe actions that would uphold social or democratic norms, that is related to society and ordinary members of society, or that is applied to different areas of public life. A look at a random sample of the articles that were not clustered into any topic, however, did suggest that there were articles that used moral courage more in relation to individual actions rather than larger issues, and in relation to more regular people. As these articles did not form their own topic, though, it appears they are not homogenous enough in their general content topic. At the same time, they still were different enough from the topics we found to not be clustered with them. Usage of moral courage in relation to issues and people in everyday life may thus be part of the discourse but only played a diminutive role.

In contrast, the topics we did find show that moral courage was used in the context of politics as well as entertainment, and here mainly sports. These areas are widely dominated by prominent (public) figures instead of regular people and moral courage was discussed predominantly in this context. This real-life usage of the term is qualitatively different from the use of moral courage in academia where the focus has not been on public figures and larger issues such as foreign policy. Not all definitions in the literature have focused on social or democratic norms, for example, Skitka (2012) referenced individual moral convictions that may lead to moral courage but applied this to individuals and not to public personas. Kennedy (1955) discussed morally courageous acts of senators but this would rather fall into public discourse than academic writing. Other research has indirectly connected moral courage to the realm of politics, but as something that is shown in opposition to someone with authority and

power and not linked with actual politics (Greitemeyer et al., 2006; Lopez et al., 2003; White, 2015). Earlier, more philosophical, works have conceptualised moral courage as "the pain and dangers of social disapproval in the performance of what they believe to be duty" (Sidgwick, 1913, p. 333). This comes much closer to how we found moral courage was used in the Times, yet still is applied generally to all people.

Practical Implications

Narrowing definitions for psychological or sociological research can be necessary and helpful in clarifying the exact construct under scrutiny but using definitions that do not reflect the public understanding of a term bears two major concerns. Firstly, once participants are involved in a study researchers should be aware of how the participants understand the constructs used in the study, especially should the term be used. If a construct is not readily available or may have different connotations for participants, this is important to consider in the design of a study and in the interpretation of results. Secondly, if researchers use terms that they defined differently compared to how the public understands them, communicating results to a wider audience becomes difficult. Especially results concerning constructs that can have a real impact on people's lives, like moral courage, should be disseminated to the general public. The academic definitions of moral courage suggest that by stopping other people from violating social and democratic norms we may be able to fight discrimination and harassment and increase social cohesion and peaceful life in society (Brandstätter & Jonas, 2012; Goodwin et al., 2020; Osswald et al., 2010b). Interventions or campaigns to strengthen moral courage in society might, however, fall short of their promise if the public understands moral courage as something a politician might show when making a difficult decision. Clarity in the usage and understanding of the term moral courage would thus help the research on moral courage to be more accessible to the public and have a larger impact.

Limitations

In our analysis we only included one newspaper as the Times archive is the only archive that goes back over 200 years. Yet we believe, we still captured the general public discourse around moral courage. For our analysis it was not important, e.g., if moral courage was used

to describe a politician's decision to go to war or decision not to go to war, just that a decision in relation to war was made. Thus, a political leaning of the newspaper should not have a large influence on our results. We are also aware that newspapers and especially a newspaper such as the Times do not necessarily use the same language as the average citizen and possibly not even the same language as the average reader. Nevertheless, newspapers can give an indication of how a term was understood. If moral courage was not associated with politics and rather with (civil) society, we would not expect to find the articles that use moral courage to mainly be about politics. Meaning that while the language of newspapers might not be the same as the language of discourse the overall connection of a term with certain topics still indicates the context in which such term was typically understood. Furthermore, by consistently using moral courage in connection with specific topics, e.g., politics, the Times may have not only reflected the discourse around moral courage but also influenced it.

Conclusion

In summary, over 240 years the term moral courage in the Times has appeared mostly connected to political topics, such as the military, domestic affairs, and foreign affairs. This focus on politicians and political decisions is in contrast to most definitions of moral courage in psychological and sociological studies that refer to moral courage as aimed at stopping the violation of societal norms or personal moral principles. This divide between the public understanding of moral courage and the academic definitions can lead to flawed studies when not considering participant's understanding of the concept and presents problems in communicating results that may help to counter discrimination and increase cooperation in society. Future research should investigate if our findings from this study align with how people today understand and use moral courage without newspapers as a discourse proxy. While setting the stage with our analysis of the past, in the next step research should focus on the present and examine which behaviours that have been termed morally courageous in the literature are perceived as such by ordinary people and which factors of the behaviour influence this perception.

Study 4: Moral Courage in Foreign Affairs: Analysing 100 Years of Political Thought and Debate

CHAPTER 2: MORAL COURAGE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Societal norms of peacefulness, plurality, tolerance, and cooperation are central to maintaining social cohesion and a liberal democratic society. Ordinary citizens can play an important role in this by actively defending these norms in everyday interactions. Complementary, politicians are public actors who can encourage social cohesion, for example, by emphasising the importance of bipartisan politics and working to reduce extreme polarisation. Both, the actions of ordinary citizens and elected politicians are important and have been termed *moral courage* (Chapter 1; Chapter 2: Study 2; Chapter 2: Study 3; Baumert et al., 2013; Kennedy, 1955). When considering what counts as moral courage, previous research has suggested that individuals in different cultures may give more weight either to the actions of ordinary citizens or politicians. For example, the usage and understanding of moral courage in English speaking countries is focused on politicians, whereas the German translation as *Zivilcourage* emphasises actions by citizens (Chapter 2: Study 2). These two notions are not necessarily exclusive. One area where the two may connect in interesting ways is the area of foreign policy. In foreign policy, on the one hand, individual actors (who may be politicians) are talking about or taking actions on a systemic policy level. On the other hand, such actions are often geared at promoting democracy or reducing (intergroup) conflict and violence and as such affect and involve ordinary citizens. Hence, foreign policy has to account for the behaviour, attitudes, and values of the societies of other countries as well as their own. We believe that a focused study on the usage of moral courage in a foreign policy context is of particular theoretical interest to further clarify the roles of politicians and ordinary citizens in regard to moral courage. Considering the intersection of the different notions of moral courage within foreign policy, studying moral courage in this specific domain of politics can provide new insights for understanding moral courage and its nuances.

Previous academic work on moral courage has focused on three main areas: Moral courage at the workplace in the context of ethical decision making (Sekerka & Bagozzi, 2007), moral courage among nurses to provide ethical care to patients (Numminen et al., 2017), and moral courage in everyday life as a reaction to norm violations (Osswald et al., 2010b). However, recent work on public discourse in newspapers revealed that over the last 75 years

only one of these three areas was represented: moral courage in everyday life (Chapter 2: Study 2). In addition, we found another, previously much less attended to, area of interest, with a large share of discourse focusing on politicians and public figures. In Germany, moral courage in post-WWII discussions has focused on the everyday lives of ordinary citizens, and encouragement of moral courage as part of public policy is widespread in politics, schools, and police campaigns (Gugel, 2004; "Zero Tolerance for Hate," 2019; Polizeiliche Kriminalprävention der Länder und des Bundes, n.d.; Steinmeier, 2019). With the German understanding of moral courage linked to democratic values (Meyer, 2014), this has appeared as a promising tool to allow society to peacefully self-regulate and maintain social cohesion (Brandstätter & Jonas, 2012). In contrast, in English speaking countries, moral courage in public discourse appears to be neither used for actions of ordinary citizens, nor tied to upholding democratic values. Instead, moral courage was mainly related to politicians and other public figures (Chapter 2: Study 2, Chapter 2: Study 3). This focus on public figures may make the term moral courage less useful in encouraging everyday behaviours of people that could strengthen social cohesion. Moreover, with moral courage in the English language emphasising personal values that one should stand up for, more widespread moral courage could not only mean engagement for democracy and human rights, but also more violent and extreme ways of defending and introducing illiberal ideas, to the extent that politicians endorse anti-democratic values (Skitka, 2012).

These nuances raise interesting questions within the context of foreign policy as a specific domain of politics and public discourse. Foreign policy generally is concerned with the relationships of a nation with other nations and international organizations. It describes concrete political policies and laws that govern, for example, trade and foreign aid as well as the interactions government officials and diplomats have with other nations. Diplomacy, trade, and military actions are all manifestations of foreign policy. It can be used as tool to advance geopolitical interests and the influence of a nation, to form military and trade alliances, and to ultimately ensure the safety of the nation against threats from other nations. While the focus of foreign policy is on nations, the actors are the government officials and the diplomats of a

nation. Of particular relevance in the post-WWII political order, the spread of democratic values has been a major motivation in the foreign policy of Western countries for decades. After the fall of the iron curtain, in an increasingly multipolar world, questions of democracy and individual rights have become ever more important in foreign policy, as shown by an increase in the usage of the term democracy in the magazine Foreign Affairs especially after 1990. As such, politicians or countries may often claim some higher moral goal for their foreign policy and tap further into the concept of moral courage (Goldsmith & Posner, 2002; Homolar-Riechmann, 2009). These questions are also central to the definitions of moral courage and have influenced conversations about the relations of the USA, and other Western countries, with, for example, Russia and China. Public opinion, societal values, and morals can influence foreign policy, and the topic of moral courage has therefore been of at least implicit relevance for politicians and political analysts in foreign policy (Kertzer et al., 2014; Knecht & Weatherford, 2006; Risse-Kappen, 1991). Returning to the previously established different usages of moral courage focusing on either citizens or politicians, within a foreign policy context these discourses, if both are present, would work on two different levels: Politicians showing moral courage in official capacity, versus an encouragement of moral courage shown by ordinary citizens as either facilitating or encouraging a democratic norm within society. Consequently, foreign policy lies on the intersection between the two differing understandings of moral courage by encompassing both interpretations.

Foreign policy is an ever-evolving field that needs to adapt to the realities of the world. Thus, it is imperative to consider temporal developments in the understanding and usage of moral courage. The (political) world went through a highly transformative phase in the last 100 years with the emergence and fall of major political systems, former colonised states gaining independence, two world wars followed by the cold-war, and finally the fall of the iron curtain leading to a general restructuring of world politics through international institutions and increasing interdependence between states. Similarly, the contexts in which moral courage has been used and the interpretations of these actions may have changed as the political order and with it societies transformed. We can trace such changes and thinking through archival

research that allows us to reconstruct psychological concepts such as moral courage where it is not possible to access them through interviews or questionnaires (Jackson et al., 2022).

In this study we focus on one specific outlet which has been one of the key sources for discussing foreign policy from a US perspective. Foreign Affairs is an influential magazine on international relations and foreign policy founded in 1922 in New York, USA. Publications span 100 years since its inaugural issue in September 1922. This magazine is also of particular real-world significance, because the authors of Foreign Affairs include not only academics, thinkers, and journalists but also important politicians and diplomats like Presidents, Secretaries of State, and Ambassadors from all over the world. The archive of Foreign Affairs thus allows a deep dive into thoughts on politics and international affairs and can reveal greater insights into the understanding of moral courage in foreign policy over the last 100 years. These insights mainly apply to politics as they concern the United States, yet to the extent that the US has become the most powerful international player in international politics, this focus only strengthens the relevance of any insights gained.

We used a thematic analysis approach to explore the usage of moral courage specifically in an international politics context and tease apart the broader context as well as more detailed features of moral courage. We expect the usage of moral courage to mainly refer to politics, but as mentioned above we also expect to find some references to moral courage among ordinary citizens.

Methods

Data

The foreign policy magazine "Foreign Affairs" publishes analysis and commentary on foreign affairs since 1922. Among the authors are politicians, political leaders, journalists, political scientists, historians, and military leaders. We downloaded the entire archive of Foreign Affairs from the first publication in September 1922 until August 2022, resulting in 51,197 articles. To narrow down the articles to those that would allow us to explore the understanding of moral courage, we searched headlines and full texts of the articles for three terms of interest. We searched for "moral courage" as the main term, for "civil courage" as the

literal translation of the German concept of Zivilcourage, and for "moral cowardice" as the antonym of moral courage. The search resulted in 32 articles for moral courage, 2 articles for civil courage, and 1 article for moral cowardice. However, in one of the moral courage articles the term is only used in a quote from another article that is included here, hence this article is excluded from our analysis. Searches for different grammatical variants, such as morally courageous, returned no results. In total, our corpus for the analysis included 34 articles.

As the articles are under copyright by Foreign Affairs we provide our dataset without the full text articles, but these can be retrieved from Foreign Affairs following the links in the data set. (https://osf.io/mnshg/?view_only=e679908ad99a4dedaf5e04038b2b8154)

Analysis

We used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyse the articles for common themes in their use of the respective terms of interest. As these articles usually cover big ideas and events and the use of moral courage, civil courage, and moral cowardice is limited to a single idea or point within the article, codes for the thematic analysis were only created for the parts of the articles that provided direct context for the use of the target terms.

In the first step the first author familiarised themselves with the data by reading the articles. The first author used the paragraphs around the target terms to create codes for how they were used. These codes were subsequently sorted into themes that capture the main ideas. Themes were created as the first author looked through the codes and the themes were refined throughout the analysis. While we did not use a list of pre-defined themes and worked inductively, we were aware of possible topics that were found in previous studies (Chapter 2: Study 2; Chapter 2: Study 3). The final codes and themes were reviewed and discussed by all authors and changes were made to capture as much detail as possible concerning the context and features of moral courage in Foreign Affairs.

Results

Descriptive Analysis

A first observation and important result is the relative frequency of the term. Previous work suggested that politics and military are the most common topics for the use of moral

courage in newspapers in general, yet, in the foreign politics magazine Foreign Affairs only about 0.07% of articles mention moral courage or the closely related terms civil courage and moral cowardice. To provide some background, articles that mention generic politics or potentially related terms are more frequent, e.g., war (31.65%), society (11.32%), democracy (10.87%), citizen/citizens (10.78%), moral/morality (6.49%), courage (1.58%), collective action (0.52%), social cohesion (0.24%), civil disobedience (0.17%). This indicates that moral courage is not a very common term in this context. Considering the frequency in comparison with other potentially relevant but infrequent terms like social cohesion or civil disobedience, moral courage is still less common. This is of some theoretical interest because, for example, civil disobedience is conceptually related to moral courage (Schwan, 2004), yet the focus on the social element appears overall more frequent than individual actions like moral courage.

Concerning the keywords that Foreign Affairs assigned to each article, among the 34 articles we found 66 different keywords with the most common ones being "United States" (n = 11), "U.S. Foreign Policy" (n = 7), "War & Military Strategy" (n = 5), and "Europe" (n = 5).

Focusing on the usage of the terms over time (Figure 4.1), the absolute number of articles per decade follows no linear trend (B = 0.48, 95% CI [-2.23, 3.18], p = .695) but regression analysis revealed a quadratic trend for articles mentioning a term related to moral courage (B = 2.90, 95% CI [0.20, 5.60], p = .038). In the overall regression model of time on the total number of articles, the decade explained about 44% of the total variance in the number of articles (R^2 = .44, $F(2,8)$ = 3.15, p = .098) but the overall model was not statistically significant, likely due to the low sample size and coarse temporal resolution. We found neither a linear nor a quadratic trend in the regression of time on the percent of articles published each decade that include either of the target terms (R^2 = .15, $F(2,8)$ = 0.72, p = .517). The absolute number of articles decreased until about the 1970s and then increased again until today. This might suggest that moral courage lost in importance over time and had a resurgence more recently. On the other hand, considering the percentage of all articles in a given decade we find no such trend, suggesting that the absolute number may increase or decrease depending on the general number of articles Foreign Affairs publishes.
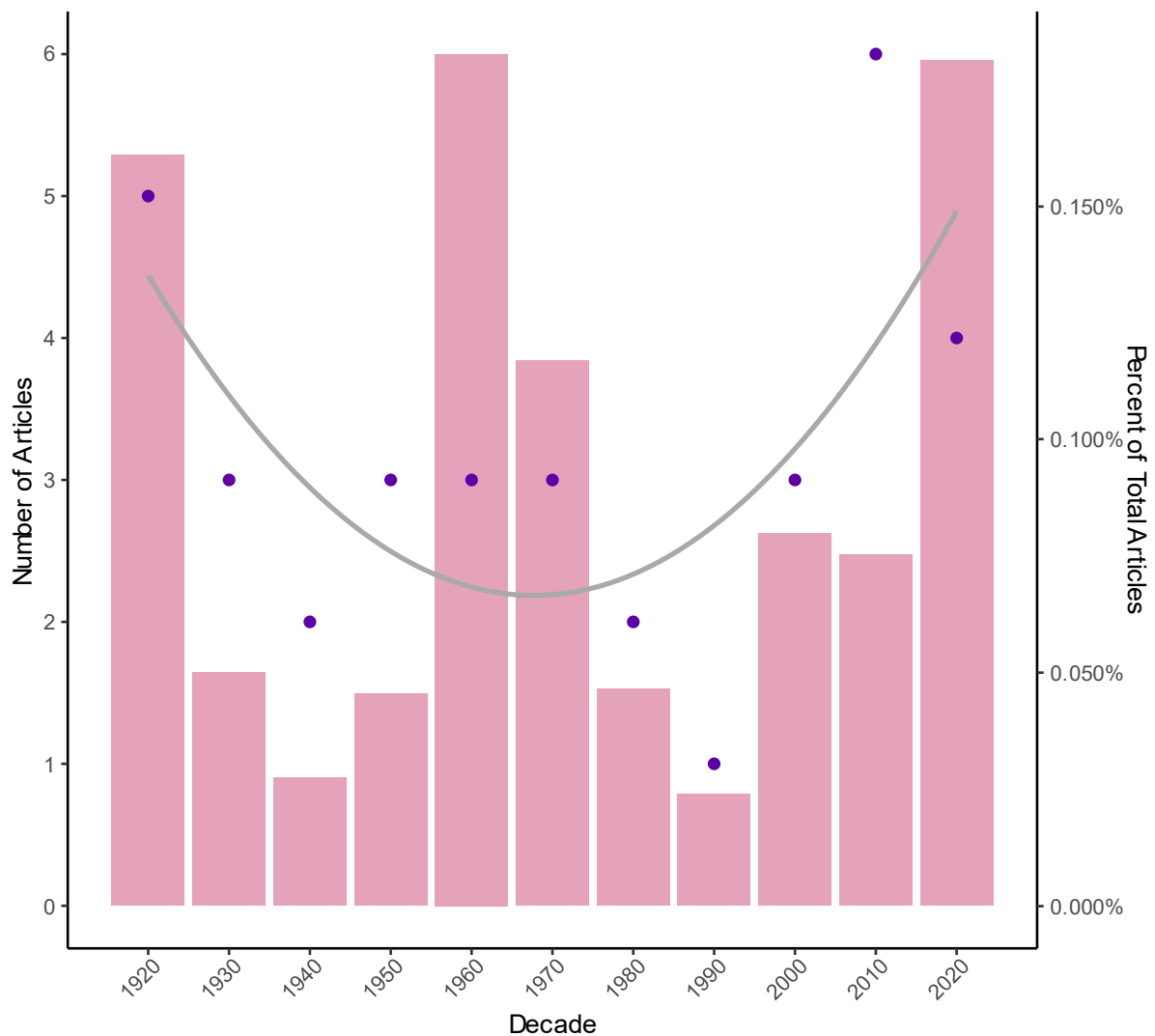
Figure 4.1 Frequency of articles mentioning moral courage, civil courage, or moral cowardice across decades
Decades include the year indicated plus the following nine years. Points represent the absolute frequency over time; bars represent the percent of the total articles published during that decade; the quadratic regression line is the trend for absolute number of articles.

The authors of the articles came from 8 different countries: 23 from the USA, 3 from the UK, 2 from France and Germany, respectively, and 1 each from Canada, Ireland, South Africa, and Sweden. Each contributor was an author of a single article, suggesting that there were no author-specific preferences. The authors' backgrounds included political scientists, journalists, politicians and diplomats, and military officers.

Thematic Analysis

We identified nine themes in our corpus that described the context in which moral courage, civil courage, and moral cowardice were used. Three of these (politics, military politics, society) comprised the main themes and described the broad topic in which they were used, and each article can be categorised in either of these three themes. Six sub-themes described more detailed topical features. Not all articles were categorised into the sub-themes. Table 4.1 shows an overview of all themes. We further categorised the articles based on features relating to whom or what moral courage was ascribed to, and the type of action related to moral courage. Figure 4.2 visualizes the relations between these specific features and the main themes. Lastly, we examined whether articles described moral courage as something that is present or that is needed or desired.

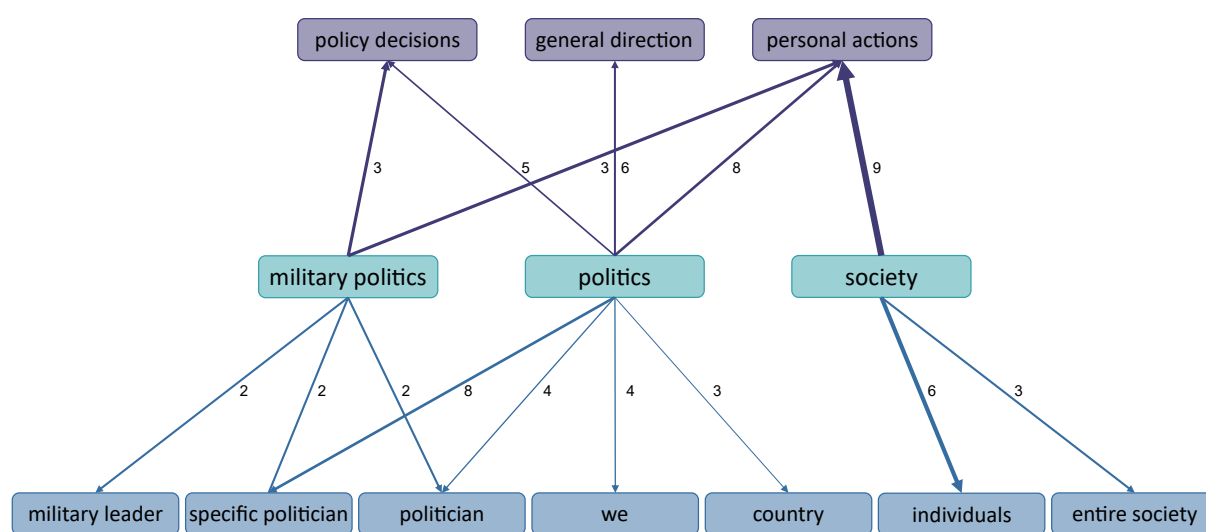*Figure 4.2* Main themes and associations with specific features
Main themes in the center, detailed actions related to moral courage at the top, actors related to moral courage at the bottom. Arrow thickness is based on percentage of articles of the respective main theme in the sub-category. Numbers to the right of the respective line represent the absolute number of articles from that main theme in the sub-category.

Table 4.1 Overview over all themes and subthemes with examples from the data

Theme	Description	Example	*n*
Main Themes			
politics	articles referenced political actors	Meanwhile, we think that if the statesmen of the world had the moral courage to tackle in a realistic way the "few fundamental problems" mentioned by Signor Grandi, an obstruction like that of the intergovernmental debts could be removed presently from the path to world recovery.	19
society	articles referenced actors from the society	[Apocalyptic rhetoric in the United States] has sought to remind [citizens] of their founding values and to give them the moral courage to act on those ideals together.	9
military politics	articles referenced political actors in the military context	Our naval and military establishments are maintained on a wasteful scale, largely because we do not distinguish between the effective and the ineffective. The vice of the circle is explained by ignorance or lack of moral courage being its centre.	6
Sub-Themes			
characterization	articles referenced character traits	There must be more persons equipped by mentality, civic conscience and moral courage […]	5
consequences	articles referenced the consequences of behaviour	[…] a partner who shared the same opinion and who had the moral courage to face unpopularity at home […]	3
World War II rescuers	articles referenced the actions of people who rescued persecuted people during WWII	Most people, for example, would distinguish between a Nazi officer in a concentration camp and a shopkeeper who displayed moral cowardice by pretending not to see what was happening.	3
mistakes	articles referenced admittance of past mistakes	If wisdom in government eludes us, perhaps courage could substitute - the moral courage to terminate mistakes.	2
personal values	articles referenced acting on personal values	With extraordinary moral courage generals Botha and Smuts took the field, in honorable fulfilment of their promises of allegiance […]	2
uncompromising	articles referenced being uncompromising	Today's nationalists hail U.S. President Ronald Reagan's "moral courage" in confronting the Soviet Union, cast him as the epitome of U.S. resolve […]	2

Main Themes

The most common theme was politics and included articles that used moral courage in the context of politics, be it people involved in politics or political decision making. Four articles applied moral courage to politicians in general, and eight articles to specific, individually named, politicians. Further three articles referred to moral courage in relation to a country, e.g., one article (ID 5) suggested that "she [the UK] is no longer trying — as was the watchword on the eve of the war — to revive the old order of things in its entirety. Let us unreservedly admire this realism, this suppleness, this moral courage." Four articles simply spoke of *we*, seemingly referring to the whole country and all its people as an entity that together needed to take a certain path. However, it is politicians or other people in a position of power that ultimately would have had to make a decision or act in a certain way. In one article (ID 2), for example, it said "But it is even more difficult to absorb the enormous debt of the state, for in addition to the moral courage we [the French] must have the indispensable resources and practice a policy of methodical repayments". While referring to all French it is clear that the decision about repayments was one for politicians to make.

The more specific actions that these articles related to moral courage were split into three broad categories. Eight articles described personal actions or decisions that are related to political points, e.g., "We can have the moral courage, this time, to remind ourselves that major international violence is, in terms of the values of our civilization, a form of bankruptcy for us all" (ID 11). In six articles moral courage was used to describe a general political direction that was or should be taken, for example, one article (ID 17) stated "If wisdom in government eludes us, perhaps courage could substitute—the moral courage to terminate mistakes". Lastly, five articles described concrete policy decisions, e.g., "renunciation of intelligence gathering would be an act of moral courage with untold beneficial international consequences" (ID 19). Regarding the presence for and need of moral courage the politics theme was very balanced with ten articles referring to moral courage as something that was present and nine as something that was needed or should have been shown.

The second most common main theme was society with nine articles. Moral courage in

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the articles was applied to both individual citizens ($n = 6$) and society as a whole ($n = 3$). For example, one article described the actions of individuals who had saved Jews and other persecuted groups during WWII. Another article (ID 30) referred to the whole society, stating "[Apocalyptic rhetoric] has sought to remind [citizens] of their founding values and to give them the moral courage to act on those ideals together". More concretely, all nine articles described personal actions and decisions within society. In comparison to the articles in the politics themes, these were not directly related to political points but to a more societal point. For example, one article (ID 18) stated "In the Soviet Union, the very fact that dissenters and human rights groups [...] are at all able to express their views and to pursue their activities [...] is in itself a sign of the changes that have occurred in Soviet society during the last two decades. While these signs of resilience, alertness, and moral courage may engender hope for a long-term evolutionary process implying some measure of democratization [...]". However, these personal actions and decision were not for personal gain, but for the greater good of society and against autocratic regimes as described in the aforementioned excerpt, or for the help of other members of society, exemplified by the articles about Jew rescuers. Needing versus having or showing moral courage was balanced in the society theme with five articles describing moral courage as something that someone had or had shown and four articles describing moral courage as something that someone ought to have.

The third main theme, politics of military, featured moral courage in relation to the military. However, moral courage was never used to describe any kind of combat action or to refer to ordinary soldiers. Rather, in two articles moral courage was used in relation to politicians in general, in two articles in relation to a specific politician, and in two further articles in relation to military leaders. Although related to the military, the relative emphasis on politicians over military leaders is noteworthy. The actions described in the articles in this theme were split equally with three articles each referring to personal actions and policy decisions, respectively. One example for a personal action was that "generals sometimes display leadership and moral courage by refraining from firing a subordinate" (ID 28). In relation to a policy decision in the context of the military, one article discussed the "moral

courage President Joe Biden exercised in [rejecting the advice of his generals on military interventions]" (ID 32). References in the articles to needing or having/displaying moral courage were split equally with three articles mentioning each.

Sub-Themes

Figure 4.3 shows the relations between the main themes and sub-themes. The politics theme was connected to the most subthemes, covering all but WWII rescuers. The military politics theme was focused on the characterization of people and on dealing with mistakes, while the society theme only included the sub-themes of consequences and WWII rescuers. The overlap between military politics and military was larger compared to that between politics and society, indicating that society stands apart from the other two main themes. This is no surprise given that military politics focused on one particular subject of politics, the military, whereas the politics theme combined all other topics in politics.
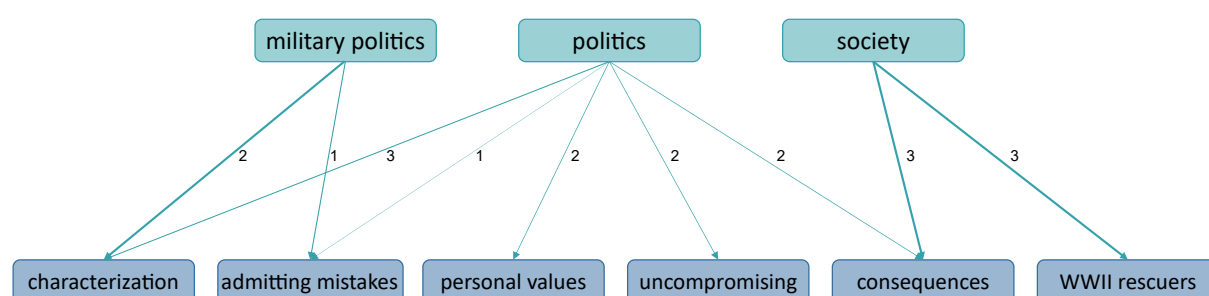
Figure 4.3 Overview of main themes and sub-themes
Main themes at the top, sub-themes at the bottom; not all articles were categorised into sub-themes. Arrow thickness is based on percentage of articles of the respective main theme in the sub-theme. Numbers are absolute articles of the respective main theme in the sub-theme.

Discussion

Our results illustrated the expected distinctive uses of moral courage within foreign policy. We found that moral courage is systematically thought of on two different levels, within politics and within societies. This is evident in the main themes, but also in the specific features of the usage of moral courage.

CHAPTER 2: MORAL COURAGE IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Of particular interest for theoretical discussions of moral courage is the distinction between the military and politics versus the society themes. In the majority of articles in the politics and military politics themes, the focal point of moral courage was either a specific (named) person or a distinct group like politicians. The sub-themes common to these main themes further emphasised the importance of a (public) individual in relation to moral courage. In contrast, the focus of the society theme was less on specific individuals or political actors, but on the society as a whole or on individuals in general without reference to them being, for example, politicians. On a political level it may help to build a well-functioning government and parliament that can safeguard human rights and democratic institutions. If anti-democratic sentiments are especially growing within society, though, any measures that politicians can take may fail to reach those having such sentiments. In this case it is important that society itself may counteract such efforts and confront those that disseminate hate and discrimination. This second level was reflected in the society theme in our corpus.

Cross-Cultural Differences

The distinction between the political and societal levels is mirrored in a study analysing newspaper articles (Chapter 2: Study 2). In that study we showed this distinction to be especially noteworthy across different cultures, with the societal level being salient in a German newspaper, and the political level salient in UK and US newspapers. It is important to highlight that the term commonly used in German may imply different characteristics, even though the academic literature tends to use the German and English terms somewhat interchangeably (Chapter 1). The background of the articles and authors in the present study indicate a similar distinction between the German understanding of moral courage and the English understanding. Noteworthy in this regard is that six out of nine articles in the society theme had some relationship to Germany. The author of one article was born in Germany, the authors of three other articles had worked and lived for extended periods of time in Germany, and two further articles from US authors concerned Germany during WWII. These articles used the target terms in a way that more closely reflects the German concept of Zivilcourage, which is often translated as moral courage. Moreover, when specifically focusing on the term

civil courage as the literal translation of the German term, in our corpus it has only been used in the context of society and by authors who have worked and lived in Germany for many years. Overall, articles in the society theme reflected the German understanding of the concept and the articles in the politics and military politics theme reflected the American and British understanding.

In addition, in the politics and military politics theme, no comments were made on whether everything that is part of someone's personal convictions qualifies as moral courage or if there are actions and causes that should not be considered as moral courage. Some researchers on moral courage in English-speaking contexts have argued that actions based on deeply held personal beliefs qualify as moral courage, even suggesting that terrorists may be showing moral courage with their actions (Press, 2018; Skitka, 2012). In contrast, in the society theme we found notions that reflected definitions of the concept of Zivilcourage, common in Germany, emphasising that Zivilcourage is non-violent and follows democratic principles (Meyer, 2014). In the society theme, moral courage was described as something inherent to a free, liberal society (ID 16), something that should not be applied to those who were part of the Nazi-Regime (ID 9), or that "does not come from penning angry polemics without regard for real-world consequences" (ID 26).

Implications for Theory and Practice

Our findings have implications for research and theory of moral courage. We studied one particular context that bridges both individual and collective interests and actions. Previous research in psychology has focused on actions by individuals. Most experimental studies have employed vignettes or behavioural experiments that included situations such as theft (Baumert et al., 2013), harassment (Brandstätter et al., 2016) or racism (Goodwin et al., 2020). These experiments are reflected in the society theme we found in our data. However, the majority of articles in our corpus are concerned with standing up for your own opinions within politics. This raises two issues. One, it is not clear to what degree the behaviour studied in those previous experiments is cross-culturally applicable. Factors such as cultural values or historic experiences may affect to what degree bystanders intervene in different scenarios. Few

studies have included non-German speaking participants. Brandstätter and colleagues (2016) used a German and a Dutch sample, and Goodwin et al. (2020) and Kutlaca et al. (2020) used American participants but did not investigate bystander intervention in the face of consequences for the intervening person, which is a distinguishing factor of the German connotation of Zivilcourage (Greitemeyer et al., 2006). Our findings suggest more research is needed specifically to evaluate the cross-cultural applicability of moral courage given that there appears to be no universal understanding of the term.

The second issue is directly connected to this and concerns the connection between research and the real world. If our research shall have an impact in real life, it is important to consider lay peoples understanding of the world. Lay people in Germany can distinguish Zivilcourage from helping behaviour (Greitemeyer et al., 2006) and generally Zivilcourage is an accessible concept in the German society. Moral courage, however, is used differently in the English language and as such may not be an appropriate term to communicate knowledge about this type of helping behaviour or enact policies aimed at increasing societal self-regulation related to small-scale violence or discrimination. Some German authors have instead used the term civil courage for this type of behaviour, a literal translation of the German term, and much closer in meaning to the type of behaviour Zivilcourage describes (Greitemeyer et al., 2007; Schwan, 2004). It emphasises the role of civil institutions and civilians, providing a clear distinction to courage shown for personal reasons and by people in a specific role, e.g., politicians.

Such a distinction can also be useful in discussions on foreign policy to meaningfully separate the actions of politician and diplomats and those of citizens. As an example, if a foreign policy aim is to encourage politicians in a foreign country to show more courage and not vote with an autocrat but advocate for democratic values, this would be quite differently achieved than trying to encourage citizens to develop the courage to stand up for democratic principles and human rights.

Limitations

Our analysis is limited by analysing one specific publication. It is, however, the most influential and widely read magazine on foreign policy and thus provides a good indication of the general themes and thought in foreign policy over the last 100 years. It is also noteworthy that this is the preferred outlet for foreign heads of state and politicians to discuss and broadcast major foreign policy events or changes (e.g., Scholz, 2022). We considered the location and life circumstances of authors in our analysis, where necessary and appropriate. Future studies should look at foreign policy publications from other countries, especially Germany given the central status that the concept may have played in German politics and discourse, e.g. around the Nazi-Regime and the GDR (Schwan, 2004), to confirm the reliability of some of our findings.

Conclusion

In summary, we found three main themes in articles in Foreign Affairs connected to moral courage: (1) politics, (2) military politics, and (3) society. These themes show two main applications of the term moral courage, the courage of politicians in executing their office, and the courage of citizens as part of the society. These differences run along a divide of authors being connected to Germany to some degree and authors having no connection to Germany, with those with a connection mainly using moral courage to describe the actions of citizens in society. This mirrors previous findings (Chapter 2: Study 2) and suggests a meaningful differentiation of the usage of moral courage with implications for theory and research, as well as practice. These systematic differences could be made visible by conceptually separating the two constructs moral courage and Zivilcourage and, for example, using the term civil courage where the courage of citizens to defend democratic values is discussed, and the term moral courage when we speak about leadership and the defence of personal values. Next steps in this line of research should focus on the distinctions people make in regard to the different types of behaviour that have been associated with moral courage, as well as potential ways to encourage and train moral courage in these different domains, including foreign policy.

Chapter 3

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Moral Courage in Action

Study 5: What are Moral Courage and Zivilcourage? Using lay person's understandings of psychological phenomena to inform academic definitions

Tuğçe Albayrak witnessed a man harass two girls on the 15th of November 2014. She intervened and helped those girls. Later, that man confronted Tuğçe and beat her so hard she fell to the ground and sustained brain injuries that would lead to her death thirteen days later.

Dr. George Tiller was a doctor who provided late-term abortion services in the United States. On the 31st of May 2009 he was fatally shot. The murderer later defended his actions saying he was saving the lives of unborn children and that he acted based on his fundamental beliefs about the sanctity of human life.

Miriam Block is a member of the Parliament of the German state of Hamburg for the Greens. In April 2023 she was the only one from her party to vote with The Left party to establish a select committee to investigate a neo-Nazi terror network in Germany. In response, her party voted to relieve her of all her committee duties in the parliament as well as her position as party spokesperson for science and university politics.

Three stories about three seemingly quite different people and their seemingly quite different behaviours. Yet, all these types of behaviour have previously been termed *moral courage*. Roughly, moral courage means to act based on beliefs about right and wrong. Which all those behaviours were. But the first one is a behaviour conducive to a peaceful and solidary society, whereas the second example runs counter this. The third example might also be conducive to democracy but operated on a political level compared to the other two situations on the civil society level. Thus, moral courage can be crucial for societies to ensure peaceful cooperation and coexistence of its citizens, especially the moral courage of ordinary citizens to stand up to violations of democratic rights and norms (Brandstätter & Jonas, 2012; Kastenmüller et al., 2007; Meyer, 2014; Schwan, 2004).

Clearly defining moral courage is important to be able to scientifically research it but also to apply findings, for example, to establish moral courage as a tool for societies to self-regulate and curb anti-democratic behaviour. So far no widely accepted definition of moral courage exists, and neither does a clear distinction between intervention based on democratic versus personal values. An important issue beyond academic definitions is how laypeople understand these terms. Moral courage clearly matters in the general public given the

importance of the described actions. Journalists use the term (Chapter 2) yet do not provide definitions, relying on the definition and understanding lay people have for the term. Investigations of folk conceptualisations of psychological constructs are not new and have in the past offered important insights into the respective research fields (Hall et al., 2019; Lopez et al., 2010). If laypeople conceptually distinguish the terms or the behaviour based on democratic and societal versus personal values, this supports the need for distinctive definitions in academia to ensure clarity about which concept is being investigated. Furthermore, such a distinction by laypeople would also indicate that different psychological mechanisms could be at play in determining the respective behaviour. Therefore, in this study we investigate what lay people understand as moral courage as well as which situational factors make a behaviour morally courageous and which factors predict intervention by a bystander.

Definitions of Moral Courage

The literature on moral courage comprises a broad range of behaviours that go beyond the abovementioned examples. In a comprehensive review of the field reported in Chapter 1, we found three main themes in the research on moral courage each with different foci in how they defined moral courage. First, moral courage as the courage of nurses to provide the best care for their patients has often been defined as facing ethical challenges and confronting barriers towards the right action (Sekerka et al., 2009). Second, moral courage within organizations relating to ethical decision making and ethical leadership has been defined with emphasis on personal moral and ethical principles (Hannah, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2011). Last, moral courage as the intervention of bystanders to norm violations has been defined with either personal principles (Press, 2018) or societal and democratic norms (Jonas & Brandstätter, 2004) at its core. Given that only the last research theme was directly related to moral courage as a behaviour by ordinary citizens to redress norm violations we focused on this line of previous research as a basis for this study. Additionally, in Chapter 2 of this thesis, politics played a prominent role with a focus on politicians, similar to the courage of senators John F. Kennedy wrote about (1955). This idea of moral courage among politicians did not appear in the previous literature, but as it was important for how moral courage is used in

public discourse, we also considered this understanding of moral courage as a basis for our study.

Importantly, definitions did not only differ across the various research fields and contexts, but also across cultures. Distinctions in the definition of moral courage emerged between research from German and non-German authors. German authors tended to draw on the German term Zivilcourage as equivalent to moral courage and focused on actions that further democratic societies (Brandstätter & Jonas, 2012; Osswald et al., 2012), while non-German authors tended to emphasise personal values and principles (Hernandez, 2008; Skitka, 2012). This pattern of differences between German and non-German contexts was also found in the analysis of the societal discourse, indicating a possibly meaningful differentiation of moral courage and Zivilcourage. In this respect it is important to mention that there has also been research on civil courage, a literal translation of the German term Zivilcourage, which uses definitions akin to those German authors used in research on moral courage (Greitemeyer et al., 2007; Labuhn et al., 2004; Schwan, 2004). Similarly, in news reporting on Tuğçe Albayrak German newspaper attested her Zivilcourage ("Trial for a Heroine," 2015), whereas English language newspapers used the term civil courage (Mayer, 2014). Overall, however, civil courage is rarely used in both newspapers and academia, with moral courage being the predominant term.

Research on Moral Courage and Zivilcourage

Previous research has investigated different features related to moral courage and Zivilcourage. Several studies established that laypeople can distinguish Zivilcourage and helping behaviour (Greitemeyer et al., 2006; Osswald et al., 2010a) and a review focused on the distinction of moral courage from other forms of pro-social behaviour (Osswald et al., 2010b). Both studies point out that the main difference between helping behaviour and moral courage is in the risk associated with the behaviour. While those people engaging in helping behaviour — e.g., donating money and labour to victims of natural disasters — incur no personal risk, those people showing moral courage — e.g., confronting a person assaulting a third person — can expect the high risk of getting assaulted themselves. Another distinction is

the increased salience of social norms and decreased importance of empathy in moral courage behaviour versus helping behaviour (Greitemeyer et al., 2006). Lay people also differentiate moral courage from heroism. Whereas they associate heroism with high danger, e.g., dying while trying to save someone from a frozen lake, lay people associate moral courage specifically with high social costs, i.e., retribution or negative reactions from other people (Osswald et al., 2010a).

One major limitation of these studies and the research field on moral courage in general is the reliance on participants from Germany. Most studies that investigated moral courage/Zivilcourage as a bystander intervention behaviour were conducted with German speaking participants, the exception being two samples from the Netherlands (Brandstätter et al., 2016; Pouwels et al., 2019) and two from the United States (Gibbs et al., 1986; Goodwin et al., 2020). Participants in studies that examined the differentiation of moral courage from other pro-social behaviours were exclusively German speaking thus only establishing such a differentiation among German people. We therefore need to extend the research on lay peoples understanding of these behaviours to other cultures to get a more accurate idea of the representation of moral courage within societies.

The Present Study

Previous studies assumed that what they presented to their participants as a situation requiring moral courage would also be perceived as such by the participants. Which factors of a behaviour make it morally courageous in the eyes of laypeople, however, has not been investigated bar the presence of risk for the intervening person. Furthermore, previous studies have not considered differences in what participants might consider moral courage/ Zivilcourage and that these differences could lead to different situational factors contributing to peoples' intentions to intervene as well as actual intervention behaviours.

Given that definitions of moral courage differed between authors with a German affiliation and those with a non-German affiliation (see Chapter 1) as well the clear distinction in the public use of moral courage and Zivilcourage between Germany and the UK (Chapter 2: Study 2) our first aim was to explore if people from different cultures would

perceive situations that may require moral courage similarly. Previous studies have explicitly investigated risk as a distinguishing factor between helping behaviour and moral courage by manipulating the expected negative consequences of a situation (Greitemeyer et al., 2006, 2007). Instead of taking a similar, narrow, top-down approach, we explored how situations that were broadly based on previous definitions and examples of moral courage are perceived by lay people. Our first research question was:

RQ1a: How similar or different do people from Germany and the UK perceive and evaluate situations that describe potentially morally courageous behaviour?

RQ1b: Which situations are perceived to be similar or different – in other words, is there a unitary moral courage/Zivilcourage clustering of situations or are there empirically distinct subgroups?

RQ1c: Which factors for evaluating situations are related to each other? In other words, what are the main distinguishing features that individuals evaluate situations on that have been characterised as involving moral courage/Zivilcourage?

Further, it is unclear what circumstances of a situation may influence intervention behaviours. Previously, researchers have investigated the role of personality factors, emotions, mood, and attitudes in showing moral courage (Baumert et al., 2013, 2023; Halmburger et al., 2015; Labuhn et al., 2004; Niesta Kayser et al., 2010). While acting for a greater good and not for personal gains has been part of definitions of moral courage, no studies have examined the role of these concerns in intentions to show moral courage (Halmburger et al., 2015; Lopez et al., 2003). Societal ideas and norms about showing such behaviour — e.g., the presence and positive connotation in Germany versus the absence of a common public understanding in the UK — may impact the readiness of citizens to intervene and redress norm violations. Therefore, a key question is whether personal motivations versus perceived social norms may motivate intentions to act with moral courage. Thus, our second research question was:

RQ2a: Which factors for evaluating situations that describe potentially morally courageous behaviour are most closely related to personal intentions to intervene in the respective situation, and are there cross-cultural differences?

RQ2b: Which factors for evaluating situations that describe potentially morally courageous behaviour are most closely related to the perceived likelihood of someone in society to intervene in the respective situation, and are there cross-cultural differences?

Lastly, we aim to contribute to the field by exploring how people think about the term moral courage in the UK and the term Zivilcourage in Germany. With the multitude of academic definitions of these terms and the fact that they are used mostly interchangeably in the academic literature, exploring the actual understanding among people can help bring clarity to the research field. We selected the UK and Germany as they are both democracies but with very different histories. The UK is the longest continuously standing democracy in Europe, whereas as Germany and its predecessor states adopted democracy much later which was then replaced by the totalitarian regimes of the National-Socialists and the German Democratic Republic. This turbulent political and democratic history makes Germany quite unique, and we might therefore find that German society developed specific tools to protect democratic values, like Zivilcourage. Additionally, previously we have identified distinct conceptualizations of moral courage in German-speaking countries and English-speaking countries in Chapter 1, Chapter 2: Study 2, and Chapter 2: Study 4 of this thesis. Our third and last research question was:

RQ3a: Which factors for evaluating situations that describe potentially morally courageous behaviour are most closely related to classifying the respective behaviour as moral courage for people in the UK and as Zivilcourage for people in Germany?

RQ3b: What do participants from the UK and from Germany subjectively understand as moral courage and Zivilcourage, respectively?

Methods

Participants

We recruited 155 participants from a German university and 299 from an English university. Of the participants from Germany 148 (95%) did complete the full questionnaire and of the participants from England 278 (93%) did. Only complete responses were included in the analysis. The mean age of the participants in the German sample was 22.13 (SD = 3.42),

with a slightly lower mean in the UK sample (M = 19.55, SD = 1.41). 109 participants from the German university were female (male = 34, other = 5) and 234 participants from the UK university were female (male = 37, other = 7). Among the participants from the German university 132 grew up in Germany, and among the UK sample 182 grew up in the UK.

Material

Based on the definitions for moral courage and Zivilcourage in the literature as well as the usage of these terms in the general public we developed a set of twelve vignettes that cover the broad range of behaviours that have been associated with moral courage. In Table 5.1 we present the vignettes and the sources they were based on. Vignette 1 was based on the real-life examples several studies gave for moral courage. Vignette 2 reflected the discussion whether violent behaviour can be considered moral courage and Vignette 3 was informed by the connection of moral courage with holocaust rescuers. Vignettes 4 and 5 were adapted from Vignette 1 with the difference that no victim was present in Vignette 4, and Vignette 5 involved a private interaction. Vignette 6 is based on an understanding of moral courage as challenging authorities and Vignette 7 describes whistleblowing behaviour. Vignettes 8, 9, and 10 are based on the politics and military themes of moral courage in newspaper articles. They describe a politician taking a difficult decision, a citizen becoming a soldier, and a politician acting against their own party, respectively. Vignette 11 represents behaviour against bullying and the last vignette concerns another private interaction like Vignette 5, but this time it takes place in public.

The vignettes always included a Person A that would display a behaviour that might be moral courage/Zivilcourage; Person B appeared in some vignettes and was the person that broke a norm. Person C also appeared in some vignettes and was the victim of the actions of Person B. We kept the persons involved abstract and made no reference to ethnicity, gender, or any other characteristic to exclude such considerations from the participants evaluation of the situation.

Table 5.1 Vignettes and references used to construct the vignettes

No	Vignette	References
1	Person A witnesses a group of young people acting aggressively and using racial slurs to harass person B. Person A tells the group to stop.	Goebel, 2010; Greitemeyer et al., 2006; Halmburger et al., 2017; "Trial for a Heroine", 2015
2	Person A witnesses Person B verbally insulting Person C. Person A tells Person B to stop and slaps B.	Meyer, 2014; Schwan, 2004; Skitka, 2012
3	Person A decides to hide Person B in their home. Person B is part of a minority that is persecuted by a totalitarian regime.	Chapter 2: Study 2 of this thesis; Block & Drucker, 1992; Fagin-Jones & Midlarsky, 2007; Ostermann, 2004
4	In a bar Person A hears a group of people making xenophobic jokes and most people in the bar laugh or chuckle. Person A says loudly that such jokes are wrong and not funny, and that the group should stop making those jokes.	Brandstätter et al., 2016; Goodwin et al., 2020; Kutlaca et al., 2020
5	Person A hears a neighbor (Person B) threatening to beat up their partner. Person A approaches their neighbor saying that such a behaviour is not ok and advises Person B that they will call the police if they notice anything like this again.	Jonas & Brandstätter, 2004; Press, 2018
6	Person A witnesses the police conducting traffic checks and letting through everyone until person B, an individual from a minority group, shows up. The police conduct an especially thorough check and appear to search for reasons to arrest person B. Person A walks up to the police and asks why they are arresting person B without obvious reasons. Person A is filming the interaction with the police.	Greitemeyer et al., 2006; Kastenmüller et al., 2007; Putman, 1997; White, 2015
7	Person A leaks classified documents to a group of journalists. These documents expose war crimes committed by Person A's country.	Dungan et al., 2019; Press, 2018
8	Person A is president of a country and makes the decision to enter into war against another country. That other country has already occupied several countries and is said to have committed war crimes.	Chapter 2: Study 2 of this thesis; von Keudell, 1901
9	A country is attacked by a more powerful country. Most people flee the advance of the invading troops. In contrast to most other people, Person A enlists voluntarily in the army to defend their country.	Chapter 2: Study 2 of this thesis;
10	Person A is a newly elected politician in parliament. Person A advocates for a position that is favorable for the voters that got A elected, but this position is against the official party doctrine.	Chapter 2: Study 2 of this thesis; Kennedy, 1955
11	Person A witnesses their manager (Person B) demeaning and belittling a colleague (Person C) for their work. Person A tells their manager to stop this behaviour and threatens to involve HR.	Allison & Bussey, 2016; Dal Cason et al., 2020; Pouwels et al., 2019; Priesemuth, 2013
12	In a park, Person A witnesses Person B slapping their child (Person C) hard in the face. Person A approaches Person B and tells them they must not hit their child.	Brandstätter et al., 2016; Broz, 2003; Jonas & Brandstätter, 2004

For each vignette participants were asked to answer seven questions that assessed dimensions we identified as potentially important to the concepts of moral courage and Zivilcourage in previous studies (evaluation items). Item 1 asked about the benefit of the behaviour for society while Item 2 asks about the benefits for the victim or affected group, reflecting the idea that moral courage is aimed at redressing a norm violation for the greater good and not directly at helping a victim (Halmburger et al., 2015; Lopez et al., 2003). The third item asked about a possible personal interest in the behaviour that is usually assumed to not be present in morally courageous behaviour (Baumert et al., 2020; Osswald et al., 2010b). Item 4 asked if the behaviour in the vignette was the right thing to do and Item 5 assessed perceptions of societal desirability of the behaviour. Items 6 and 7 recorded presence and importance of risk for the actor in the vignette, respectively, as risk was a common factor in definitions in the literature that distinguished moral courage from other pro-social behaviours (Chapter 1). Two more items captured the likelihood the participant or someone in society would act like the person in the vignette (intervention items). The responses to the evaluation items were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 *strongly disagree* to 7 *strongly agree*, and the responses to the intervention items were recorded on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 *extremely unlikely* to 7 *extremely likely*.

Additionally, participants were asked for their understanding of the term moral courage in the English version of the questionnaire, and their understanding of the term Zivilcourage in the German version, as well as whether their understanding of the respective term applied to the behaviour in each vignette. Finally, we included demographic questions in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was available in English and German, the authors are all bilingual in German and English and translated the questionnaire to German with a group translation approach. Participants from the German university were presented with the questionnaire in German but could switch the language to English (5% did so).

Procedure

Students in introductory psychology courses at two universities were offered course credit for their participation. Participants completed the questionnaire online. In the pilot

phase of the questionnaire, participants indicated that it required a substantial amount of concentration and deep thinking to complete the questionnaire and advised against providing each participant with all vignettes. Based on this feedback we decided to provide each participant with four vignettes. The choice and order of vignettes was randomised but a quota was applied to provide each vignette to a similar number of participants. We obtained ethics approval from the ethics review board of the Victoria University of Wellington (ID 29050).

Data and Code Availability

All materials, our data, and the analysis code are available on the OSF (https://osf.io/pmn4c/). All analyses were conducted in R (R Core Team, 2021).

Results

RQ1: Comparing Situations and Items Across Cultures

The first question we posed was how similar or different people from Germany and the UK perceive and evaluate situations that describe potentially morally courageous behaviour. Our analysis proceeded in two complementary steps. First, it is possible to examine the overall similarity of the scenarios between the two samples, using the relative rating of the scenarios across the seven evaluation items. Second, we can also focus on the relative clustering of the evaluation items averaged across scenarios. These analyses allowed us to check the structural similarity of the evaluation items and possible common perceptions of the vignettes. The results provided insights on the comparability of the evaluations across cultures. For the following analyses, we used multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) as it is very flexible and provides easily interpretable solutions (R. Fischer & Fontaine, 2010; Kruskal & Wish, 1978). Multidimensional scaling solutions from different samples are not directly comparable because of sample specific solutions and differences due to rotation, dilution, or shrinkage. Therefore, we conducted Procrustes rotation of MDS configurations to examine the overall commonalities and differences in how the vignettes were evaluated relative to one another in each sample and investigated the same for the evaluation items.

We calculated a correlation matrix of the vignettes based on the respective mean scores of all evaluation items. The mean score for each evaluation item per situation was based on the

responses from those participants that were shown the respective vignette. With the smacof package (v2.1-3; Leeuw & Mair, 2009; Mair et al., 2022) we transformed this correlation matrix into a dissimilarity matrix and calculated an MDS configuration for each sample. Subsequently, we performed a Procrustes rotation fitting the MDS configuration from one country to the configuration of the other. The structural similarity across countries was investigated using Tuckers Φ with values over .9 indicating substantial congruence (Van De Vijver & Leung, 1997). Figure 5.1A shows the rotated configurations mapped over each other. Tucker's Φ for the rotated solution was .96 indicating a high congruence of the dissimilarity structures of the vignettes across the two countries. We used the same methodology to examine the evaluation items across cultures. Instead of the correlation of item scores per situation we calculated the correlation of the scores of each individual item across all situations. This allowed us to explore the associations between the items across the two countries. Figure 5.1B shows the rotated configurations of the evaluation items mapped over each other. Tucker's Φ for the rotated solution was .99 indicating a high congruence of the dissimilarity structures of the evaluation items across the two countries.

Overall, the congruence of the MDS solutions indicates that participants in both samples understood the vignettes and items similarly, relative to each other. There was a high commonality in how the situations were evaluated relative to each other across the two cultures, as well as evidence for structural similarity of the items across cultures. The high congruence of the relationships of the items and vignettes across the two countries give us confidence that we can compare the associations in our two countries.

Following from this, we joined the data from the two samples to answer research questions 1b and 1c and investigated which situations were perceived similarly and which evaluation items were endorsed to similar degrees across situations. We employed Hierarchical Density-Based Spatial Clustering for Applications with Noise (Campello et al., 2013; McInnes et al., 2017; McInnes & Healy, 2017) to find clusters among the situations and evaluation items. This clustering method is useful as it makes no assumptions about the data, inductively finds the optimal number of clusters, and works well with differently sized clusters.
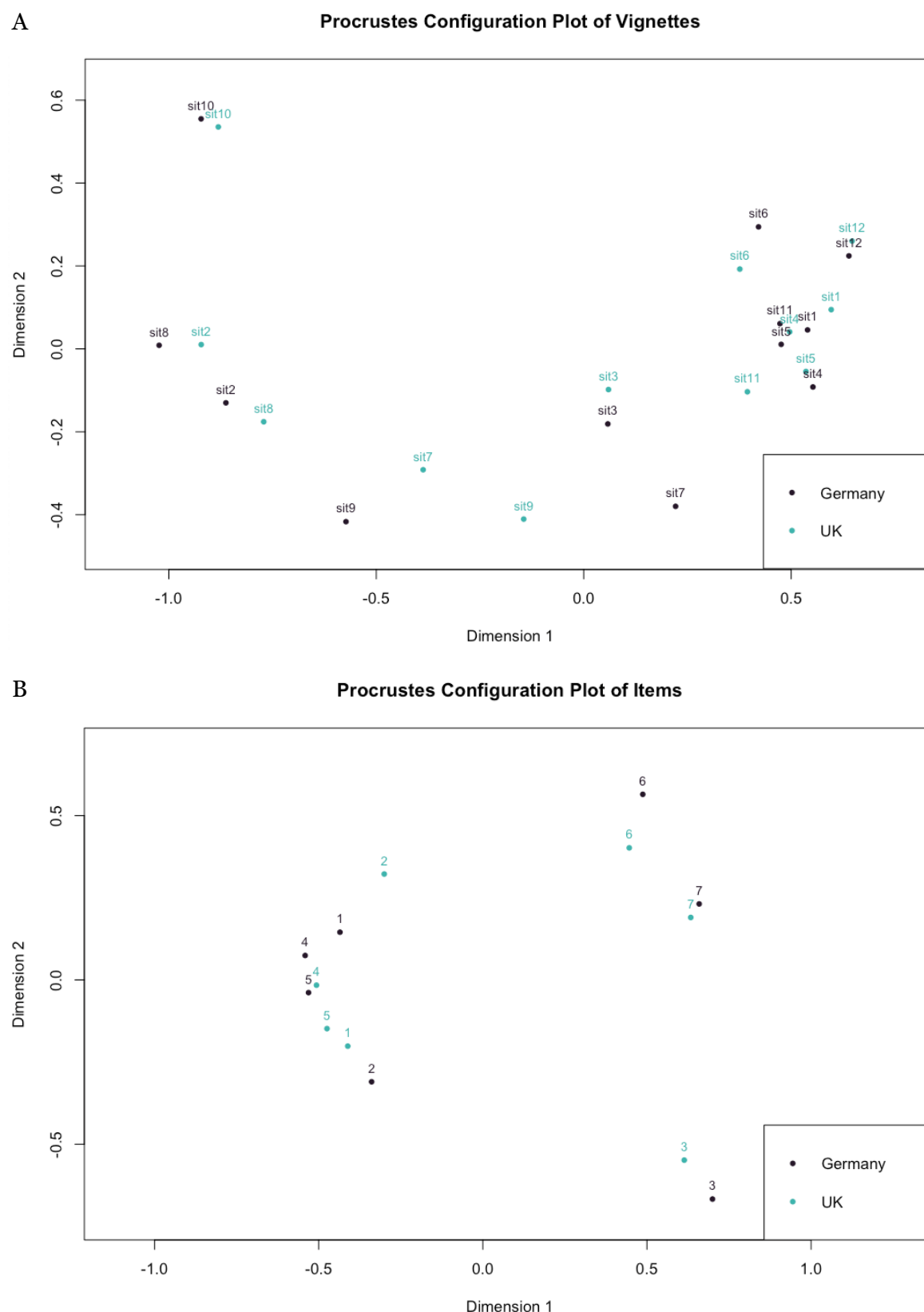
A

B

Figure 5.1 Rotated MDS plots
A Plot of the Procrustes rotation solution of the MDS configuration of the vignettes across each sample. **B** Plot of the Procrustes rotation solution of the MDS configuration of the evaluation items across each sample.

Among the items we found two clusters (Table 5.2). One cluster included items that relate to perceptions about society and people other than the one acting in the vignette, e.g., "The behaviour of Person A benefits society". The second cluster focused on features related to the person acting in the vignette themselves, e.g., "Person A acted out of their own interest". The vignettes were split into three clusters. The first cluster included Vignettes 2, 8, and 10 and described situations which are rather far from most definitions of Zivilcourage or moral courage in the literature. Vignette 2 describes a person slapping another person and only one study actually considered violent behaviour as moral courage (Skitka, 2012). Vignettes 8 and 10 both deal with political decisions of politicians, an application of the term moral courage that was only found in public discourse but not in the academic literature (see Chapter 1 and Chapter 2). Vignettes 1, 4, 5, 6, 11, and 12 were part of cluster two, which was focused on events that required the intervening person to confront a perpetrator and where the action of the perpetrator had a clear victim. Lastly, cluster three included the remaining Vignettes 3, 7, and 9, which covered situations that did not include a specific perpetrator to confront and no concrete action against a clearly defined victim.

Table 5.2 Clusters of Items

Cluster	Items
Other-oriented	The behaviour of Person A benefits society
	The behaviour of Person A benefits Person B/affected group
	Person A is doing the right thing
	The behaviour of Person A is generally desirable in my society
Self-oriented	Person A acted out of their own interest
	The behaviour of Person A carries a personal risk (e.g., to their physical or psychological health and security, their reputation or social status, employment, etc.)
	If I was in the same situation as Person A, I would consider possible personal risks before deciding whether to act or not

RQ2: Intervention in Moral Courage Situations

In our second set of research questions, we asked which factors among the evaluation items contributed towards participants' own intentions to act in the situations as well as towards their perception of the likelihood of someone in society to act. Furthermore, we explored possible cross-cultural differences. As we included different vignettes and participants responded to several vignettes, we used the lme4 (v1.1-27.1; Bates et al., 2015) and lmerTest (v3.1-3; Kuznetsova et al., 2017) packages to take this nested data structure into account. We ran a linear mixed-effects regression model with participant and vignette as random effects and the evaluation items as fixed effects. Additionally, we included interactions of country, coded as 1 = Germany and 0 = UK, with each evaluation item. Possible interactions were examined with the interactions (v1.1.5; Long, 2019) and sjPlot (v2.8.9; Lüdecke, 2021) packages. The outcome variable was the self-reported likelihood the participant would act like the person in the vignette. The results are shown in Table 5.3. We found four of the evaluation items were associated with self-reported likelihood to act. The more a behaviour in a vignette was perceived to be beneficial for society, to be the right thing, and to be desirable in society, the higher participants tended to rate the likelihood they would engage in the behaviour in a similar situation. Participants considering potential risks from the behaviour was associated with reporting a lower likelihood to engage in that behaviour. In addition, we found two interactions with the country of the participants (Figure 5.2). Simple slopes analysis showed that the effect of considering a behaviour the right thing on intervention intentions was higher for participants from Germany (B = 0.55, SE = 0.05, 95% CI [0.44, 0.65]) compared to participants from the UK (B = 0.39, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [0.31, 0.47]). Furthermore, for German participants a behaviour being perceived as risky was associated with lower intention to intervene (B = -0.11, SE = 0.04, 95% CI [-0.19, -0.03]), while no association was found for UK participants (B = 0.00, SE = 0.03, 95% CI [-0.06, 0.07]). This indicates that, in addition to the four main effects, a behaviour being the right thing to do was more strongly associated with intervention intentions in Germany versus the UK and the perceived risk of a behaviour was associated with decreased intervention intentions only in Germany.

Table 5.3 Mixed-Effects Linear Regression of Evaluation Items on Intentions to Intervene

	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
(Intercept)	1.987	0.308	1.383	2.592	< .001
benefit_society	0.086	0.035	0.018	0.154	.014
benefit_target	0.039	0.034	-0.028	0.105	.255
benefit_self	0.019	0.025	-0.030	0.067	.449
right_thing	0.388	0.041	0.308	0.468	< .001
desirable_society	0.197	0.035	0.128	0.265	< .001
carries_risk	0.003	0.032	-0.059	0.065	.913
consider_risk	-0.327	0.030	-0.385	-0.269	< .001
country	-0.481	0.457	-1.378	0.416	.293
country x benefit_society	-0.074	0.054	-0.180	0.032	.171
country × benefit_target	0.064	0.054	-0.042	0.169	.239
country × benefit_self	0.027	0.038	-0.048	0.103	.477
country × right_thing	0.159	0.064	0.034	0.285	.013
country × desirable_society	-0.047	0.057	-0.158	0.065	.412
country × carries_risk	-0.116	0.049	-0.213	-0.019	.019
country × consider_risk	0.070	0.049	-0.026	0.167	.152
Variance (Intercept Participant)	0.251				
Variance (Intercept Vignette)	0.163				
Variance (Residual)	1.109				
R² Marginal	.485				
R² Conditional	.625				

Note. N = 426; Observations = 1704. Country coded as 1 = Germany, 0 = UK. CI = Confidence Interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit. *p* values are two-sided.
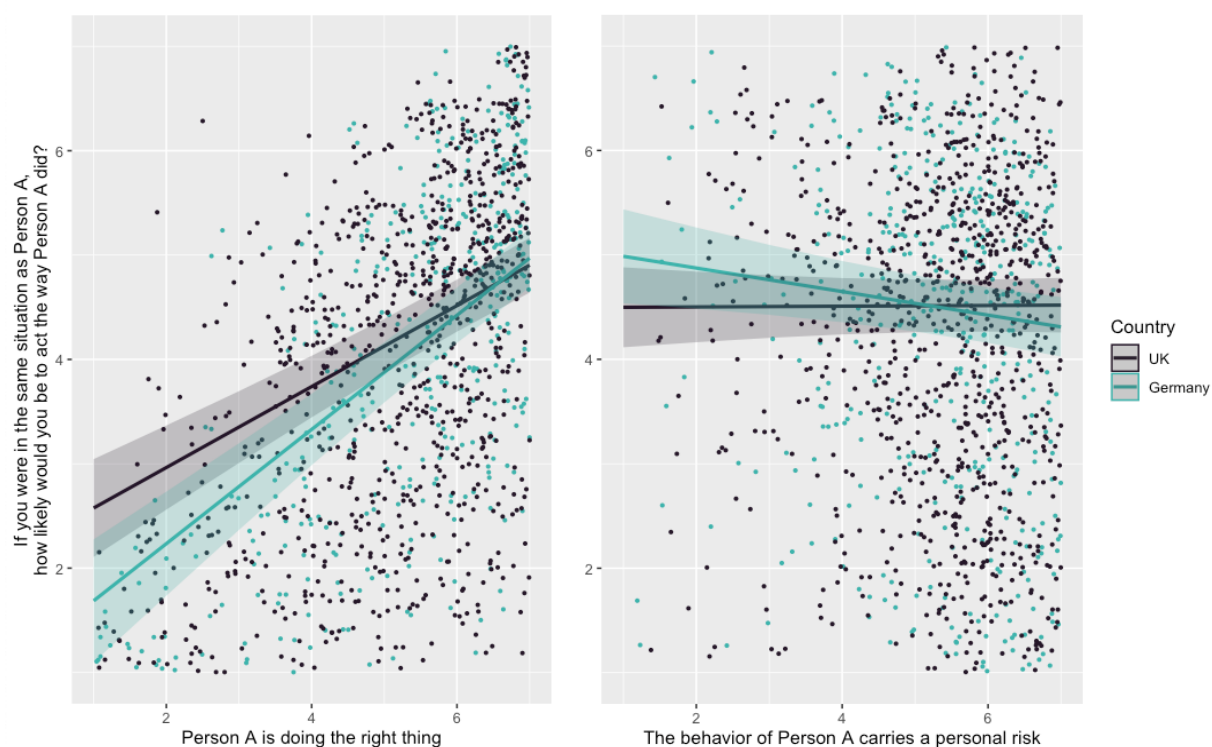
Figure 5.2 Marginal effects of considering a behaviour the right thing (A) and that it carries a risk (B) on self-reported likelihood to engage in the behaviour.
Shaded areas represents 95% confidence intervals for the simple slopes.

We ran the same analysis with the outcome variable that asked how likely participants thought another person in society would generally be to display the behaviour described in the vignettes. The results are presented in Table 5.4. Reported likelihood of someone else intervening was positively associated with the behaviour being desirable in society and negatively associated with whether participant reported they would consider the risks of the behaviour before deciding to act. We found no interactions with the country of participants. In contrast to their own intervention intentions, country of the participants had no effect on the association of any evaluation item with the reported general intention of others in society to act.

Table 5.4 Mixed-Effects Linear Regression of Evaluation Items on Reported Likelihood Someone in Society would intervene

	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
(Intercept)	2.845	0.323	2.212	3.478	< .001
benefit_society	0.044	0.038	-0.030	0.118	.242
benefit_target	-0.036	0.037	-0.107	0.036	.332
benefit_self	0.049	0.027	-0.004	0.102	.070
right_thing	0.070	0.044	-0.017	0.156	.115
desirable_society	0.292	0.038	0.217	0.367	< .001
carries_risk	-0.031	0.034	-0.099	0.037	.368
consider_risk	-0.136	0.033	-0.200	-0.072	< .001
country	0.468	0.507	-0.525	1.462	.356
country x benefit_society	-0.110	0.059	-0.225	0.005	.061
country × benefit_target	0.047	0.059	-0.068	0.163	.420
country × benefit_self	-0.026	0.042	-0.110	0.057	.535
country × right_thing	0.005	0.069	-0.130	0.141	.937
country × desirable_society	-0.041	0.062	-0.163	0.080	.503
country × carries_risk	-0.091	0.054	-0.197	0.014	.090
country × consider_risk	0.035	0.054	-0.071	0.141	.522
Variance (Intercept Participant)	0.432				
Variance (Intercept Vignette)	0.069				
Variance (Residual)	1.263				
R^2 Marginal	.180				
R^2 Conditional	.413				

Note. N = 426; Observations = 1704. Country coded as 1 = Germany, 0 = UK. CI = Confidence Interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit. p values are two-sided.

RQ3: What are Moral Courage and Zivilcourage?

Our last research question asked which of the evaluation items was associated with participants classification of a vignette as constituting moral courage/Zivilcourage. We ran the same mixed-effects model as for RQ2 but as a logistic regression with the rating of a situations as moral courage/Zivilcourage as the outcome variable (coded as 1 for moral courage and 0 for not moral courage). Results are shown in Table 5.5. A behaviour being perceived as more beneficial to society, more the right thing, carrying more risk, and being less beneficial for the actor themself was associated with increased odds of the behaviour being classified as moral courage. Additionally, we found an interaction of the evaluation of a behaviour as carrying a risk with the country of the participant (Figure 5.3). For participants from Germany, a behaviour being risky did not affect the odds of categorizing a behaviour as Zivilcourage (*OR* = 0.84, 95% CI [0.65, 1.08]). Participants from the UK who evaluated a behaviour as more risky had increased odds of classifying the respective behaviour as moral courage (*OR* = 1.40, 95% CI [1.18, 1.68]).
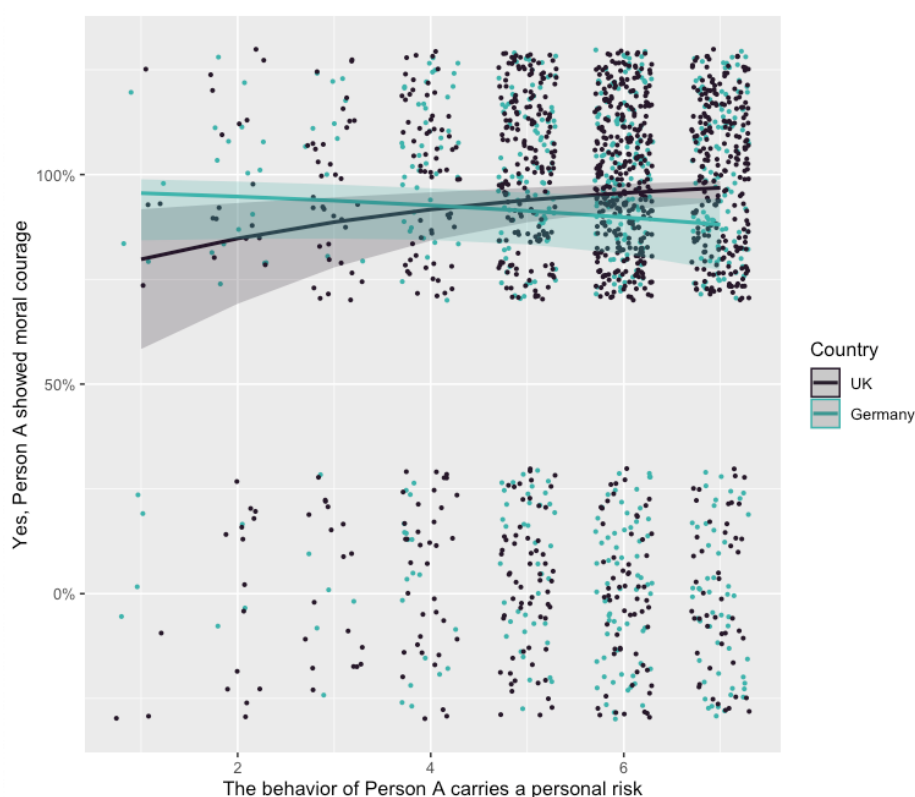

Figure 5.3 Marginal effects of the perception that a behaviour carries a risk on the odds of classifying the respective behaviour as moral courage.
Shaded areas represent 95% confidence intervals for the simple slopes. For participants from Germany the term *moral courage* was replaced with *Zivilcourage*.

Table 5.5 Mixed-Effects Logistic Regression of Evaluation Items on Moral Courage Judgement

	OR	95% CI		p
		LL	UL	
benefit_society	1.364	1.124	1.655	.002
benefit_target	1.003	0.834	1.206	.978
benefit_self	0.785	0.679	0.908	.001
right_thing	1.521	1.217	1.901	< .001
desirable_society	1.094	0.898	1.333	.373
carries_risk	1.408	1.173	1.689	< .001
consider_risk	1.057	0.884	1.262	.544
country	7.766	0.561	107.523	.126
country x benefit_society	1.120	0.833	1.506	.453
country × benefit_target	0.786	0.564	1.093	.153
country × benefit_self	1.001	0.799	1.253	.996
country × right_thing	1.000	0.702	1.425	.998
country × desirable_society	1.241	0.903	1.704	.183
country × carries_risk	0.594	0.442	0.799	< .001
country × consider_risk	0.937	0.693	1.266	.670
Variance (Intercept Participant)	0.877			
Variance (Intercept Vignette)	0.932			
Variance (Residual)				
R^2 Marginal	.353			
R^2 Conditional	.583			

Note. N = 426; Observations = 1704. Country coded as 1 = Germany, 0 = UK. OR = Odds Ratio; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit. *p* values are two-sided.

Lastly, we asked the participants what they think moral courage (UK participants) and Zivilcourage (German participants) mean. Participants gave free text answers. We used the cleanNLP package (v3.0.3; Arnold, 2017) to lemmatize the answers. Lemmatization is similar to stemming and reduces words to a common form. We then removed stopwords and based on this total number of words we calculated the relative frequency of each word (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6 20 Most Frequent Words in Definitions of Moral Courage and Zivilcourage

UK Sample			German Sample		
Word	*n*	%	Word	*n*	%
courage	211	9.54	einsetzen (stand up for sb.)	53	6.13
moral	178	8.05	helfen (to help)	35	4.05
morally	112	5.07	person (person)	30	3.47
stand	84	3.80	situation (situation)	26	3.01
risk	66	2.99	einstehen (stand up for sb.)	22	2.54
brave	58	2.62	gesellschaft (society)	20	2.31
action	53	2.40	mut (courage)	20	2.31
morals	48	2.17	hilfe (help)	12	1.39
personal	48	2.17	gefahr (danger)	11	1.27
bravery	45	2.04	mitmensch (fellow human)	10	1.16
situation	43	1.94	öffentlichkeit (public)	10	1.16
correct	41	1.85	aktiv (active)	9	1.04
morality	28	1.27	öffentlich (puplic)	9	1.04
ability	26	1.18	risiko (risk)	9	1.04
strength	24	1.09	fremd (foreign)	8	0.92
people	22	1.00	selber (self)	8	0.92
consequence	21	0.95	ungerechtigkeit (injustice)	8	0.92
consequences	21	0.95	benötigen (need)	7	0.81
risks	20	0.90	einschreiten (intervene)	7	0.81
wrong	19	0.86	handeln (act)	7	0.81
			persönlich (personal)	7	0.81
			unfair (unfair)	7	0.81

Note. In case of a tie in frequency all words were included. Translations by authors.

The most frequently occurring words in the definition of Zivilcourage by German participants suggest a strong association of Zivilcourage with society, fellow citizens, and standing up for other people. In contrast, the most frequent words in the definitions of moral courage by UK participants are related to virtues, morals, taking a personal stand, and consequences.

Discussion

Differentiation of Vignettes

In our first set of research questions, we asked about the structure of the items and vignettes. We found that the structure of the relationships of the vignettes and items was congruent across countries. This indicates that there are no situations that have been evaluated vastly differently in one culture compared to the other. In the combined data set we found clusters that provide important insights into which situations are perceived similarly by participants. We found that through their evaluation of situations along factors that were associated with moral courage in the literature, three clusters emerged that clearly delineate different types of situations. Cluster 1 included vignettes that described different types of behaviours that have in the academic literature not been closely linked to moral courage. One situation includes a violent behaviour and several authors have discussed the role of violence in moral courage. Most researchers came to the conclusion that a violent behaviour cannot constitute moral courage which is inherently a behaviour for the greater good of society (Frey et al., 2001; Halmburger et al., 2015; Lopez et al., 2003; Meyer, 2014; Ostermann, 2004; Schwan, 2004). The other two vignettes in the first cluster included behaviour by politicians in their capacity as politicians, which have not been discussed in the scientific literature as being related to moral courage. These findings do not mean these situations cannot be described as including morally courageous behaviour, in fact a studies on news reporting showed that politics is a dominant topic in the reporting on moral (Chapter 2). But what this does mean is that these situations, in the eyes of lay people, are different from situations that were more closely aligned with the academic uses of moral courage.

The two other clusters include behaviours that have been related in the literature to the terms moral courage and Zivilcourage. These separated into one cluster of situations that included the confrontation of a perpetrator that was present and a clear victim of the behaviour that was intervened against (Cluster 2). The other cluster included situations where no perpetrator and no clear victim of the behaviour that was intervened against were present (Cluster 3). Interestingly, this mirrors a debate in the literature on the relationship of moral

courage with the presence of a victim. Some studies showed or argued that moral courage is directed at redressing the norm violation of a perpetrator and not aimed at helping a victim, thus the presence of a victim would not be required (Baumert et al., 2013; Halmburger et al., 2015; Kutlaca et al., 2020). In other studies, the authors emphasised that moral courage is a behaviour in a constellation with a perpetrator, a victim, and a witness (Brandstätter et al., 2016; Greitemeyer et al., 2006; Jonas & Brandstätter, 2004). In relation to the presence of a perpetrator of a norm violations the literature is relatively clear that a perpetrator is usually present (Baumert et al., 2013; Brandstätter et al., 2016; Goodwin et al., 2020; Greitemeyer et al., 2007; Halmburger et al., 2015). However, in studies that examine moral courage in areas less related to bystander intervention like nursing ethics and business ethics (Chapter 1), the absence of a perpetrator is more common (Hannah, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2011; Numminen et al., 2017; Sekerka & Bagozzi, 2007).

Returning to the present study, we showed that lay people differentiate between situations that the literature does not consider moral courage, situations that include a specific perpetrator and victim, and situations that do not include a specific perpetrator and victim. The differentiation was based on the evaluation of several factors that we found related to moral courage and Zivilcourage in the literature. This suggests that these differentiations are not just related to different terms associated with a behaviour or to the behaviour being objectively different, but that they are differentiations of the association of the behaviours with moral courage.

Associations with Intervening in Moral Courage Situations

Despite the discussed clustering of the vignettes and associated differentiation, the random effect of the vignettes did not explain a substantial part of the variance in the regression models. Rather the within-person variables explained the largest part of the variance in the self-reported likelihood that the participant would intervene and that someone in society would intervene. Actions that were rated as beneficial for society, as the right thing to do, and as generally desirable in society were associated with a more intentions to engage in the respective action themselves. While that is maybe not surprising, it is interesting that the

degree to which the action would benefit a victim or affected group is not associated with intervention intentions. This is consistent with those definitions of moral courage in the literature that include the focus on redressing a norm instead of helping another person (Baumert et al., 2013; Kutlaca et al., 2020; Osswald et al., 2007). Not only may the focus on stopping and redressing a norm violation be a feature that distinguishes Zivilcourage from helping behaviour and other prosocial behaviours, but it may also be more important for people's decision to intervene than helping another person. Furthermore, the associations of the benefit for society and the behaviour being desirable in society with intervention intentions hint at societal factors and considerations being a motivating factor for intervening in the various situation related to moral courage and Zivilcourage. However, that a behaviour is the right thing to do can also be a very personal (moral) evaluation, indicating that both societal values as well as personal values may play a role in intentions to intervene.

We found two cross-cultural differences. The association of a behaviour as the right thing with intervention intentions was more pronounced in the German sample versus the UK sample, and the reported presence of risk in a situation was only in Germany negatively associated with intervention intentions, and no association was found in the UK sample. That UK participant's intentions to intervene were not affected by the risk of a situation may seem counterintuitive. However, we did find that across both samples participants tended to report a lower likelihood that they would intervene if they reported they would consider the risks of a situation before deciding to intervene. It appears that regarding the relationship of risks with intervention intentions, for UK participants it was important if they would think about the risks whereas for German participants the perception of a situation as risky as well as the consideration of the risk before acting were both important. This lends support for process models of moral courage that have been adapted from the model of helping (Latané & Darley, 1970) and include the step of deliberating costs and risks (Banyard, 2011; Baumert et al., 2023; Halmburger et al., 2017).

Categorizing a Situation as Moral Courage / Zivilcourage

Similar to the associations with intervention intentions, we found that the odds

participants would categorize a behaviour as moral courage / Zivilcourage increased if the participants rated that behaviour as more beneficial for society and as more the right thing to do. Furthermore, consistent with the literature, if a behaviour was rated as having a benefit for the actor themself, the odds of participants categorizing that behaviour as moral courage / Zivilcourage decreased (Baumert et al., 2020; Osswald et al., 2010b).

Interestingly, the presence of risk was related to increased odds of categorizing the situation as moral courage / Zivilcourage only for UK participants. For German participants the risk involved in an action had no influence on the odds of categorizing the behaviour as Zivilcourage. This finding is in stark contrast with the literature. The one widely agreed upon aspect of moral courage and Zivilcourage is the presence of risk or personal negative consequences for the person showing moral courage / Zivilcourage (Baumert et al., 2013, 2020, 2023; Greitemeyer et al., 2006; Press, 2018; Skitka, 2012; White, 2015) and one study in particular found that risk is the factor by which lay people differentiate Zivilcourage from helping behaviour (Greitemeyer et al., 2006). In this study, however, it appears this is not the case for German participants. In contrast to the mentioned studies on the differences between Zivilcourage and helping behaviour we only included situations that, based on the literature, could be considered moral courage/Zivilcourage and as such for most of them it was objectively conceivable to rate them as risky situations even if they might not be closely aligned with the usual understanding of moral courage / Zivilcourage. For example, in one vignette a person enlists in the army to fight for their country that is being attacked. While not commonly mentioned as a moral courage situation in the literature this clearly includes a substantial risk. Considering this, it becomes all the more interesting that for the UK participants risk did play a role in increasing the odds of categorizing a behaviour as morally courageous. This could indicate that while for German participants risk is a necessary but not sufficient condition for Zivilcourage, for UK participants risk plays a more major role in categorizing a behaviour as moral courage.

UK participants used different words in defining moral courage compared to German participants defining Zivilcourage. German participants' definitions of Zivilcourage focused on

society and standing up for others. This is in line with definitions of civil courage and some definitions of moral courage by German authors who emphasise the importance of societal and democratic values (Brandstätter & Jonas, 2012; Jonas & Brandstätter, 2004; Kastenmüller et al., 2007; Meyer, 2014; Osswald et al., 2012; Schwan, 2004). UK participants tended to use words that were more closely related to personal (moral) values, in line with the majority of studies on moral courage by non-German authors (Lachman, 2007a; Putman, 1997; Skitka, 2012; White, 2015). This supports the idea that Zivilcourage is more focused on society and solidarity, while moral courage is more closely connected to personal values and standing up for one's own values.

Defining Moral Courage

Our findings make important contributions to psychological research on moral courage. Based on the definitions provided by lay people, it appears flawed to translate Zivilcourage as moral courage and use these terms interchangeably. Zivilcourage appears to be motivated by a primary concern for other people or society in general, whereas moral courage is understood as being motivated by personal morals. Subsuming these different behaviours under one umbrella term might lead research to miss important unique qualities of each. Zivilcourage with its focus on society and solidarity could be an important tool to strengthen civil society and liberal democratic values within civil society. Moral courage on the other hand could be examined in view of political polarization as a way to decrease partisanship by encouraging people and politicians to voice opinions that may not adhere strictly to their ideology.

We also found some evidence in this study that while Zivilcourage — related to solidarity and society — is more commonly invoked by German researchers and in German discourse (Chapter 1; Chapter 2), the underlying psychological processes and resulting behaviour may also be present in other cultures, in this case in the UK. Situations were, relative to each other, evaluated similarly by participants from both cultures, and similar evaluation items were associated with more or less intervention intentions across cultures. Standing up for others, being solidary, and redressing societal norm violations are accepted in Germany as

part of the defensive democracy and a basic competence in a democratic society (Brandstätter & Jonas, 2012; Gugel, 2004; Meyer, 2014; Ostermann, 2004). These ideas are not as prominent in public discourse in the UK and non-existent in relation to moral courage — the associated behaviours, however, appear to still be related to similar concerns. With a clear terminology and good science communication a more prominent establishment of Zivilcourage as a tool for societies to maintain peaceful cooperation and liberal democracy in other societies may be possible and useful.

Conclusion

In this study, we found that moral courage in the UK and Zivilcourage in Germany appear to describe somewhat different constructs when asking lay people. Yet, we found that people from both cultures relate similar factors to their intentions to intervene as bystanders. We should thus sharpen our definition of moral courage to reflect how lay people understand the construct and use for example the term civil courage to reflect and define the type of behaviour that is associated with Zivilcourage in Germany. As this behaviour may still already be present in other countries, we need this clear terminology in research to encourage collaboration on and proliferation of this specific psychological phenomenon, and for science communication to strengthen democratic civil society against the increasing anti-democratic sentiments.

General Discussion

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Set against the backdrop of increasing anti-democratic sentiments and developments in the world, this thesis aimed to clarify the conceptual breadth of two psychological constructs — moral courage and Zivilcourage — that may contribute to societies' capabilities to defend their liberal democratic values. This conceptual clarification is important to further the development of these constructs into tools that can help strengthen civil societies. In the literature moral courage and Zivilcourage have often been used interchangeably (Baumert et al., 2013; Brandstätter & Jonas, 2012; Niesta Kayser et al., 2010; Sasse et al., 2022), yet it appears that the constructs are defined either as behaviour that redresses societal (democratic) norm violations (Greitemeyer et al., 2007; Osswald et al., 2010b) or alternatively as defending personal (moral) values (Lachman, 2007a; Skitka, 2012). The two behaviours described by these definitions may relate to different underlying psychological mechanisms and would thus benefit from separate research agendas (Deitch-Stackhouse et al., 2015; Miklikowska, 2012; Schwartz, 2010; Skitka et al., 2017; Skitka & Mullen, 2002; Van Den Berg et al., 2022). However, the mechanisms were outside the scope of this thesis and remained untested.

In Chapter 1, I provided a high-level overview of the research on moral courage and civil courage, the literal translation of the German term Zivilcourage. I found three distinct research areas of which only one is concerned with intervention against norm violations or more generally with bystander behaviour. The other two research areas were highly specific to a business context and a nursing context, with emphasis on surmounting obstacles to ethical decision making. This raises further concerns about clearly defining the constructs of moral courage and Zivilcourage. I showed that researchers in each of these three areas mostly draw on background literature from that respective area. Such disconnection between research areas on the same term puts into question the conceptual overlap of the constructs and thus the practice of labelling these constructs all as moral courage. Furthermore, this disconnect discourages collaboration across the different fields, evident, for example, in the lack of comprehensive reviews, with previous reviews having focused only on one specific research area (Bickhoff et al., 2017; Osswald et al., 2010b; Pajakoski et al., 2021).

All three research areas I identified are very applied, have direct relevance in the real

world outside academia, and findings can be readily applied by ordinary people. Thus, researchers should endeavour to use terms that are understandable to lay people to refer to the specific constructs in their studies. In the least, researchers should avoid terms that already have a specific connotation to the public that is different from the definition used by the researchers. Otherwise, results can be easily misinterpreted by the public.

In Chapter 1, I also found that authors with an affiliation to a university in a German speaking country tended to define moral courage with an emphasis on redressing societal norm violations. In addition, the term civil courage was almost exclusively used by German authors. This suggested a distinctive understanding of moral courage versus Zivilcourage among German researchers compared to non-German researchers. Furthermore, notions of moral courage in relation to business decisions or nursing were not present in work published by German scholars. Apart from questions about the conceptual breadth of the term moral courage this also raised the issue of cross-cultural differences. For the German civil society, redressing societal norm violations and defending democratic values may be the result of lessons learned from the National Socialist rule of terror. Without this historical experience societies in other countries may have developed different mechanisms to maintaining peaceful cooperation in society.

Chapter 1 revealed two clear gaps in the literature. First, the literature on moral courage is missing clear terminology and definitions for the different phenomena that are currently investigated under the term moral courage. Second, no studies so far have explicitly investigated culture specific understandings of Zivilcourage and moral courage and associated behaviours. Furthermore, non-German samples are scarce. I addressed these gaps in this thesis.

In Chapter 2, I employed a bottom-up approach to uncovering understandings of moral courage and Zivilcourage in public discourse. The use of archival data and state-of-the-art natural language processing (NLP) methods allowed me to not only explore the contemporary understanding of moral courage among the public but reconstruct past understandings and discourse (Jackson et al., 2022; Ricci, 2003; Waller & Zimbelman, 2003). Given that civil

society develops differently across countries and can take different roles within the political system, it is important to also understand how psychological phenomena — and the public discourse around them — that may pertain to civil society developed over time.

In Study 2, I addressed the broad gaps in the literature by exploring the meaning of moral courage in public discourse across cultures and over time. Discourse on moral courage in newspapers did not reflect the academic research areas of nursing and business ethics I found in Study 1 — instead politics emerged as a topic in which moral courage was frequently used. This is in line with the conception of Kennedy's *Profiles in Courage* (1955) as a study in moral courage. What is interesting is that this relatively widespread popular use has had relatively little impact on scientific research. This finding highlights the importance of bottom-up approaches in defining and naming phenomena. It cannot be the goal of psychologists (or other scientist) that the public discourse about a term they research is so far disconnected from their research that it does not appear in academic discourse.

I also found a cross-cultural distinction in Study 2 that paralleled the picture that emerged in the review in Study 1. In the English-language newspapers moral courage was mainly related to politics and individuals, whereas in the German-language newspaper Zivilcourage was mainly related to society and interventions against (anti-democratic) crimes. This suggests that not only do researchers differentiate behaviours that are based on personal versus societal values, but that in public discourse moral courage is more strongly associated with personal values and Zivilcourage with societal (democratic) values. This important distinction has not been sufficiently reflected on in the literature. Some authors have translated Zivilcourage as civil courage instead of moral courage, but if any study noted such terminological discrepancies they were resolved by arguing that moral courage, civil courage, and Zivilcourage all refer to the same phenomenon (Brandstätter et al., 2016; Halmburger et al., 2015; Osswald et al., 2010b; Sasse et al., 2022). However, if a focus on redressing violations of societal, democratic norms is somewhat unique to a culture this warrants further investigation and explication.

Furthermore, Study 2 showed that the term Zivilcourage has evolved since WWII to be

associated with intervention against assault. Yet, when first used in German, Zivilcourage was associated with politics similar to the understanding of moral courage in English discourse today (von Keudell, 1901). Later it was used to describe rescuers of Jews during the Third Reich (Bonhoeffer, 2011) and nowadays mainly refers to those who intervene when others are assaulted or discriminated against (Goebel, 2010; "Trial for a Heroine", 2015). We also found evidence in Studies 2 and 3 that specific historical events may momentarily affect the salience of topics that are associated with moral courage. These findings further emphasise the importance of examining public discourse around psychological phenomena to be aware of changing connotations of these phenomena to people. If a phenomenon, in this case Zivilcourage or moral courage, is especially salient in a specific context at some point of time, researchers may want to be aware of this and consider such examples for their research design or counteract potential biases. This also means that moral courage and Zivilcourage are not fixed or unchanging constructs. Especially Zivilcourage, with the connotation to societal values, developed together with society, and formative events and changes in society.

In Studies 2 and 3 I found that moral courage in the discourse in the UK and US underwent little long-term change. Politics remained the most prominent topic in which moral courage was used over the span of more than 200 years. Thus, for Study 4 I decided to delve deeper into the politics discourse at a macro-level and found, again, a differentiation between moral courage in politics and moral courage in society, with the latter connected to Germany. This mirrors both the academic divide between moral courage and Zivilcourage as well as the divide in general public discourse. Finding this difference between the focus on society versus individuals (in politics) also in discourse on a specific macro-political topic highlights the importance each of these phenomena separately have. I also found moral courage to be characterised as something that politicians and political leaders show which is similar to how moral courage is used in the research field on business ethics and ethical leadership (Hannah, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2011; Hernandez, 2008). In contrast, Zivilcourage as well as mentions of civil courage or moral courage by German authors, were usually related to the behaviour of ordinary citizens (Baumert et al., 2023; Brandstätter & Jonas, 2012). This relates back to the

two quotes in the introduction of this thesis by German President Steinmeier (Steinmeier, 2019) and Franca Magnani (Böll, 1987) who both emphasised the crucial role of ordinary citizens for championing peaceful coexistence in society.

Taken together, the studies in Chapter 2 show that public discourse on moral courage is not equivalent to that of Zivilcourage, and the differentiation between the German and English understanding appeared repeatedly in different contexts. Furthermore, moral courage emerged as an important concept in the arena of politics which is not reflected in the scientific literature. Analysing past and present public discourse through archival data thus proves helpful to conceptualize psychological phenomena by including the people we conduct research with in the conceptualization process.

Archival data research can be helpful especially as a window into the past. However, how people today understand moral courage and Zivilcourage apart from how newspapers use these terms, is a question that still remains open. In the third and last chapter of this thesis, I aimed to answer this question and extended my investigations to human participants. I found that overall behaviours associated with moral courage and Zivilcourage were perceived similarly by participants from the UK and Germany and the factors associated with intentions to engage in such behaviours did not differ much between cultures. This shows that despite the different understandings in different cultures that I found in the previous studies, on the behavioural side there appear to be few cross-cultural differences in immediate perceptions of these events, or mechanisms that motivate these actions. However, when asking UK participants how they would define moral courage and German participants how they would define Zivilcourage, I — once again — found cultural differences. UK participants tended to consider personal values and virtues in their definitions, while German participants emphasised standing up for other people and society. This further supports the argument that the terms moral courage in English and Zivilcourage in Germany are not equivalent for lay people and each is characterised by important aspects absent from the other. The interesting distinction is that the behavioural intentions seem to be driven by similar psychological mechanisms but that the explicit conceptualization of the larger conceptual space that is used

for justifying or discussing actions seems qualitatively distinct, based on the terminology that is commonly used.

Reflections on the Methodology

In this thesis, I used multi-method approaches to explore historical, cultural, and conceptual differences between moral courage and Zivilcourage. Most of those methods are aimed at coming to a bottom-up understanding of these terms driven by the realities of lay people. Nevertheless, to provide a baseline of where research on moral courage is today, the first study explored researchers' understandings of moral courage. The bottom-up approach started with Studies 2 and 3 for which I sampled national newspapers-of-record over several decades. The articles in those newspapers that mentioned moral courage or Zivilcourage were then analysed with state-of-the-art NLP methods that provided high level topic representations of these articles and allowed a broad overview of the contexts in which the terms moral courage and Zivilcourage were used in those newspapers. For Study 4 I continued the analysis of archival data but sampled from a specialist foreign policy magazine. For these articles I used thematic analysis to get a more detailed qualitative overview of the use of moral courage within the most prominent of the broad topics identified in the previous two studies. Finally, in Study 5, I used a human subject sample to analyse cotemporary understandings of moral courage and Zivilcourage.

These methods and samples complement each other well. In this thesis I set out to provide findings on the real-world uses and understandings of moral courage and challenge the lack of clear definitions for moral courage and its interchangeable use with Zivilcourage in the academic literature. The use of NLP methods allowed me to analyse a large corpus of text data for which a thematic analysis would not have been feasible. Thus, I was able to explore not just the contemporary discourse but also the historical discourse and track developments and changes in the public discourse over time. These computational methods were supplemented by human qualitative analysis of a more specialised sample of newspaper archival data. This allowed me to dive deeper into the content within the broader topics the NLP analyses identified. Lastly, the addition of a human sample allowed me to cross-validate

the archival data results with more conventional psychological methods. Using actual peoples' responses also adds another dimension: I can directly capture lay peoples understanding of moral courage and Zivilcourage and do not have to rely on newspapers as proxies for the public discourse.

Taken together, the different methods allowed me to explore the understanding of moral courage and Zivilcourage from several important perspectives. First, the academic perspective through the bibliometric analysis. Second, a broad long-term perspective based on newspapers as a proxy for public discourse. Third, a more focused and detailed long-term perspective based on public discourse. And fourth, a direct perspective on the contemporary meaning of moral courage and Zivilcourage among lay people. Importantly, the results based on these different methods and perspectives all converged on one main point: Moral courage in the UK (and US) and Zivilcourage in Germany do not describe the same behaviour with each having specific and unique characteristics.

My thesis also makes an important contribution to the usage of NLP methods and archival data in psychological research. My studies provide further validation that these methodological approaches provide reliable results as they converged with the results from human coding. With the last study I also showed that these text-analysis based methods provide accurate representations of societal level discourses and understandings of terms as we found similar results by asking human participants. In comparison to human participant-based studies, text based studies have two distinct advantages: (1) often they are more easily scalable to include a large number of data points; and (2) it is possible to go back in time and track developments over time.

Contributions to the Literature and Future Research

My thesis makes two important contributions to the literature on moral courage and Zivilcourage. First, the pervasive idea in the scientific literature that moral courage and Zivilcourage describe equivalent behaviours is challenged by my results. Across all studies, I found understandings of moral courage to be more closely connected to personal values and specific individuals like politicians and leaders, whereas Zivilcourage tends to be connected to

societal values and ordinary citizens. In a liberal democracy, one societal norm may be to not discriminate against foreigners. Showing Zivilcourage and defending this norm would clearly require, for example, the acceptance of such democratic values (Miklikowska, 2012; Sullivan & Transue, 1999), or on the level of values the strong endorsement of universalism values (Schwartz et al., 2012). In contrast, someone standing up for their own personal (moral) values does not need to accept democratic values and may endorse other types of values or have strong moral convictions (Skitka, 2012; Skitka & Morgan, 2014; Skitka & Mullen, 2002). By subsuming moral courage and Zivilcourage under one term these important distinctions may not receive the appropriate attention. The construct might not be broken down enough to allow the systematic, scientific study of this behaviour that captures all important characteristics. As an example, take two different prosocial behaviours: altruism and helping behaviour. Altruism may be a specific form of helping behaviour that imposes the additional requirement that help was given without any benefit for oneself. Yet, these concepts are different enough to have different terms and are often researched separately. My thesis shows that moral courage and Zivilcourage are similarly related but that differences are important and pervasive enough to warrant separate terminology and investigation.

Second, my results suggest that even though the societal and democratic connotations of the term Zivilcourage are not shared with the term moral courage, study participants from the UK still intended to intervene in situations with a risk to them for the greater good of society. In Germany, Zivilcourage, as this behaviour is known, is an important part of the defensive democracy that can safeguard peaceful coexistence in society (Brandstätter & Jonas, 2012; Jonas & Brandstätter, 2004; Kutlaca et al., 2020; Meyer, 2014; Ostermann, 2004; Schwan, 2004). My results showed that people appear to be willing to take on personal risks to benefit society in general. This willingness is demonstrated even when there is no benefit to themselves or another specific person, indicating that Zivilcourage may prove promising to provide a similar function in other societies.

These two contributions advance the literature and light a path forward for future research to explore ways in which civil society can contribute to mitigating the dangers of

increasing anti-democratic and right-wing sentiments. In this sense, this thesis provides a basis on which future studies on Zivilcourage and moral courage can be grounded, but no definitive empirical answers on which psychological mechanisms each construct is based upon. Future studies should investigate if intervention based on democratic values and ideals is grounded in different mechanisms compared to intervention based on moral principles. One avenue of research is to explore if Zivilcourage is psychologically motivated by concerns for maintaining an open society and democracy on an abstract conceptual level or if peoples' individual universalism values are motivation enough. Importantly, we need more knowledge on unique determinants and characteristics of Zivilcourage and moral courage to be able to clearly define and distinguish them not just from each other but also from, for example, third-party punishments (Fehr & Fischbacher, 2004) that follow a similar idea of redressing norm violations. It is also important to mention that I do not advocate for research on moral courage and Zivilcourage to be kept strictly separate. I concur with Baumert et al. (2020) that insights on a diverse range of behaviours that broadly fit the idea of defending principles and norms – e.g., whistleblowing, confronting discrimination, intervening against bullying, violent protest — should be brought together so we can learn from what is known about these behaviours. I disagree, however, that we should subsume all of them under a single umbrella term and neglect the prominent and clear articulation of unique features like those of Zivilcourage which I found in this thesis.

Practical Implications and Future Research

This thesis aimed to clarify the understandings of moral courage and Zivilcourage with the goal of providing a road to strengthening civil society in maintaining peaceful cooperation between all members. Zivilcourage has previously been identified as a tool to achieve this and combat anti-democratic sentiments (Baumert et al., 2020; Brandstätter & Jonas, 2012; Jonas & Brandstätter, 2004; Schwan, 2004). My thesis confirms that Zivilcourage is indeed associated with behaviours that can be understood as supportive of the ideals of liberal democracy, whether it is protestors in undemocratic regimes like Nazi Germany or the GDR, or citizens in democracies intervening against harassment and discrimination and standing up

for other people. Hence, finding ways to encourage and promote Zivilcourage can contribute to a more stable democracy. My results show that people in Germany are likely to connect campaigns and calls for more Zivilcourage to democratic duties and the importance of defending democratic values. On the other hand, people in the UK might not be able to make such connections if the term moral courage is used as it is missing the link to democratic ideals. In fact, with its connection to personal values it might even backfire as the expression of personal anti-democratic values could be encouraged (Skitka, 2012). Thus, when communicating findings to the public we must be careful in our terminology if lay people already have preconceptions about a term's meaning — as I have shown is the case with moral courage. Using the term civil courage instead, the literal translation of Zivilcourage, may be helpful as it comes without pre-existing connotations beyond what the individual words mean to people, and it is thus easier to communicate the definition of the term the way it is used in academic research.

Future research should attempt to connect the psychological phenomenon of Zivilcourage with sociological outcomes like increased social cohesion, and with political science outcomes like a more stable democracy. Understanding these associations better is essential to the success of applying knowledge about the psychological mechanisms. With knowledge on how these outcomes are achieved, Zivilcourage trainings can be more effectively designed and tailored to not just enable citizens to intervene but also to maximize the benefits of intervention behaviours for society by taking the appropriate action.

Limitations

Notwithstanding the important contributions of this thesis in terms of advancing text-analysis methods in psychology, the text corpus it was based on presents a main limitation. I used a convenience sampling approach for national newspapers and included those for which I could access data over the respective time span. This resulted in me sampling only a single newspaper from each country for Study 2 and only a single newspaper in total for Study 3. Yet, given that I analysed broad topics I do not think concerns about political leanings in newspaper reporting invalidate my results. I think it is unlikely that the bias of a newspaper of record is

so strong that it would use terms in the context of different topics and not just in the context of different events. As an example, assuming that moral courage was actually connected to society and anti-racism, for this to not appear in the NLP analyses as a topic, the newspaper would have to not use moral courage in a societal context at all and not just not use it for anti-racism activism. Thus, while country and newspaper are confounded in this thesis, a single newspaper can allow insights into the general language use of a country.

A second limitation is the exploratory nature of this thesis. This approach is valuable in uncovering new ideas and setting the stage for future confirmatory studies. These confirmatory studies will ultimately be needed to clarify for example causal links of psychological processes and behaviours. It is important to note that some of the results obtained in Study 5 need to be treated with caution until confirmatory studies have successfully replicated the findings. Despite this shortcoming, the inductive bottom-up approach employed in this thesis holds immense value in uncovering nuanced differences between moral courage and Zivilcourage. This approach not only generated important insights but also stimulates a more evidence-based discussion on how to proceed from this point onward.

Last, a noteworthy limitation in this study pertains to the reliance on participants' self-reported intentions to intervene. The translation from intention to actual behaviour poses a complex challenge. As acknowledged by numerous studies in this research field, individuals might express a willingness to intervene in hypothetical scenarios, but real-world contexts often introduce a range of psychological, social, and situational factors that can hinder actual intervention. Real behaviour is notoriously difficult and cumbersome to study in the area of bystander intervention, especially when attempting to ethically induce a genuine threat of consequences for intervention. As this study's primary focus lies in examining the distinctions between moral courage and Zivilcourage, along with the cross-cultural variations in the conceptualization of these terms, the distinction between participants' reported intentions and their actual behaviours becomes of secondary importance. The study's intention was not to forecast or dictate real-world actions but rather to gain insight into the perceptions and nuances associated with these constructs across cultural contexts. Thus, this limitation does

not undermine the study's valuable contributions in terms of advancing the understanding of moral courage and Zivilcourage from a cross-cultural perspective.

Key Take-Aways

I want to conclude my thesis with a summary of the main insights and contributions it provides to the advancement of the study on bystander intervention. First, I showed that moral courage and Zivilcourage are perceived differently by lay people. The association of moral courage with personal values and of Zivilcourage with societal (democratic) values is only reflected in small parts of the literature and my thesis provides validation for the argument that these concepts should indeed be considered separate phenomena.

Second, I provided first evidence that Zivilcourage is not a behaviour specific to German society but may be present in other societies as well. Despite other cultures potentially lacking a term for the behaviour and exposure to it through public discourse, further investigation of Zivilcourage as a tool to strengthen civil societies capacity to maintain liberal democratic values is a promising line for future research.

Last, I further validated the usefulness of NLP methods for studying psychological constructs. Replicating distinctions between moral courage and Zivilcourage found in newspaper analysis within a human sample affirms NLP's validity and accuracy. This thesis bridged computational and human-centered research and showed its potential for the inductive definition and analysis of psychological phenomena.

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project.org/package=textrank

Appendix

Appendix A

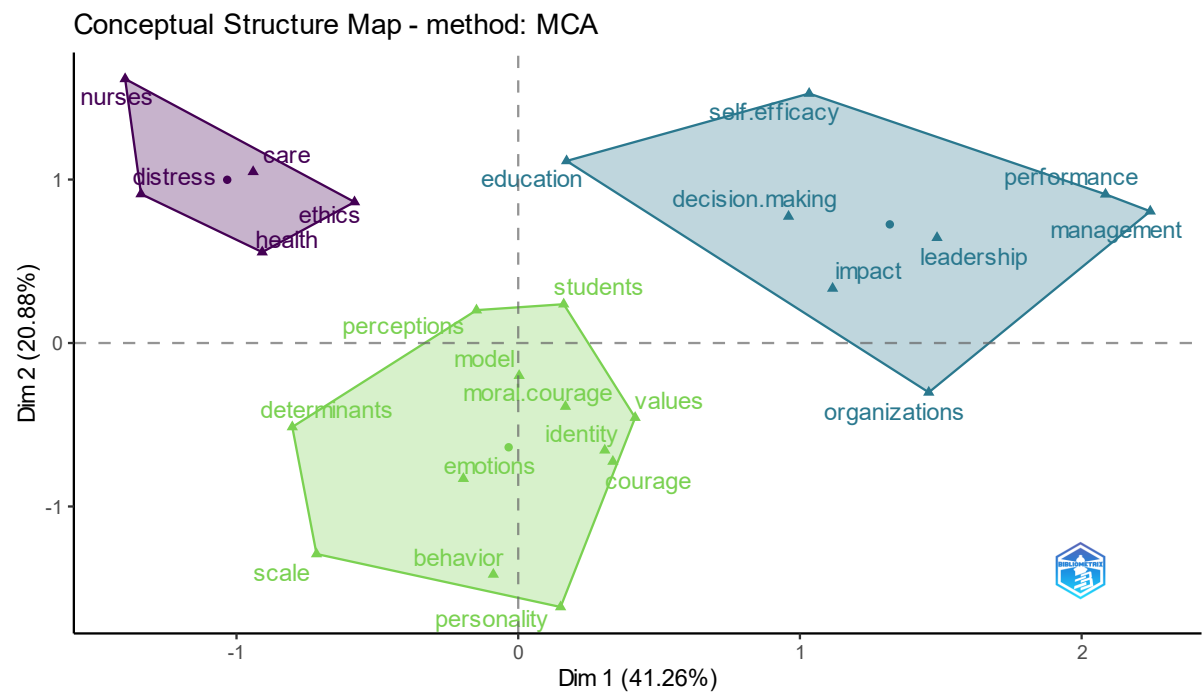Conceptual Structure Map - method: MCA

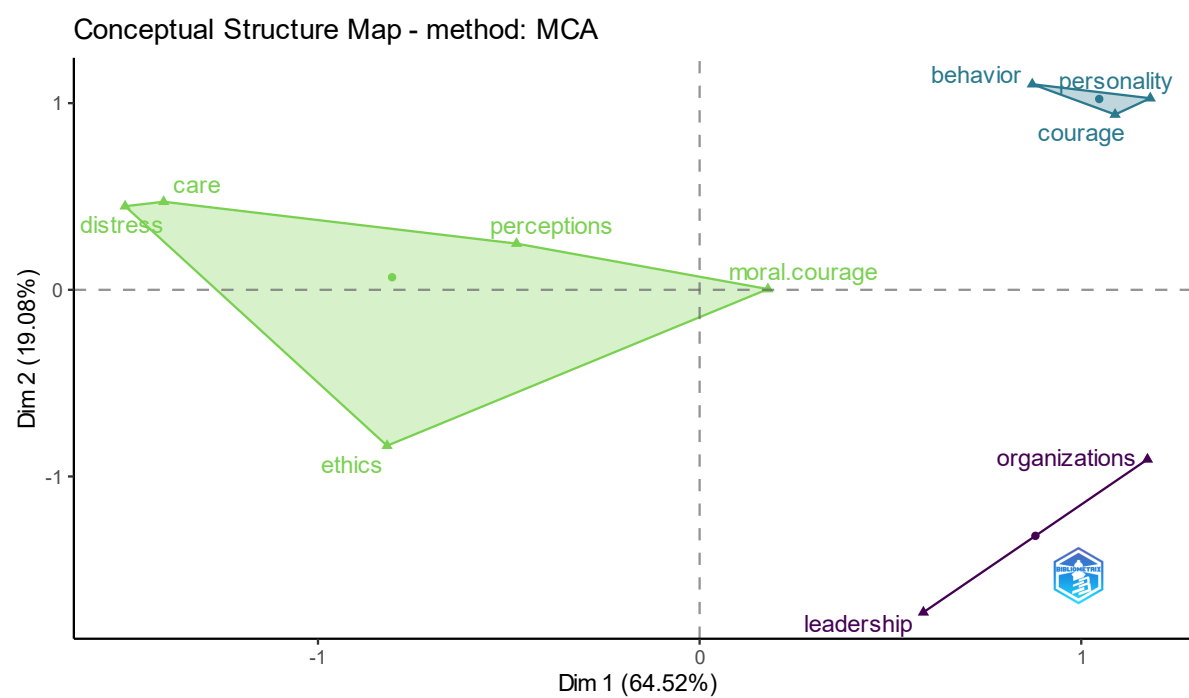*Figure A1* Multiple-correspondence analysis clustering of publisher keywords cut at 10 minimum degrees

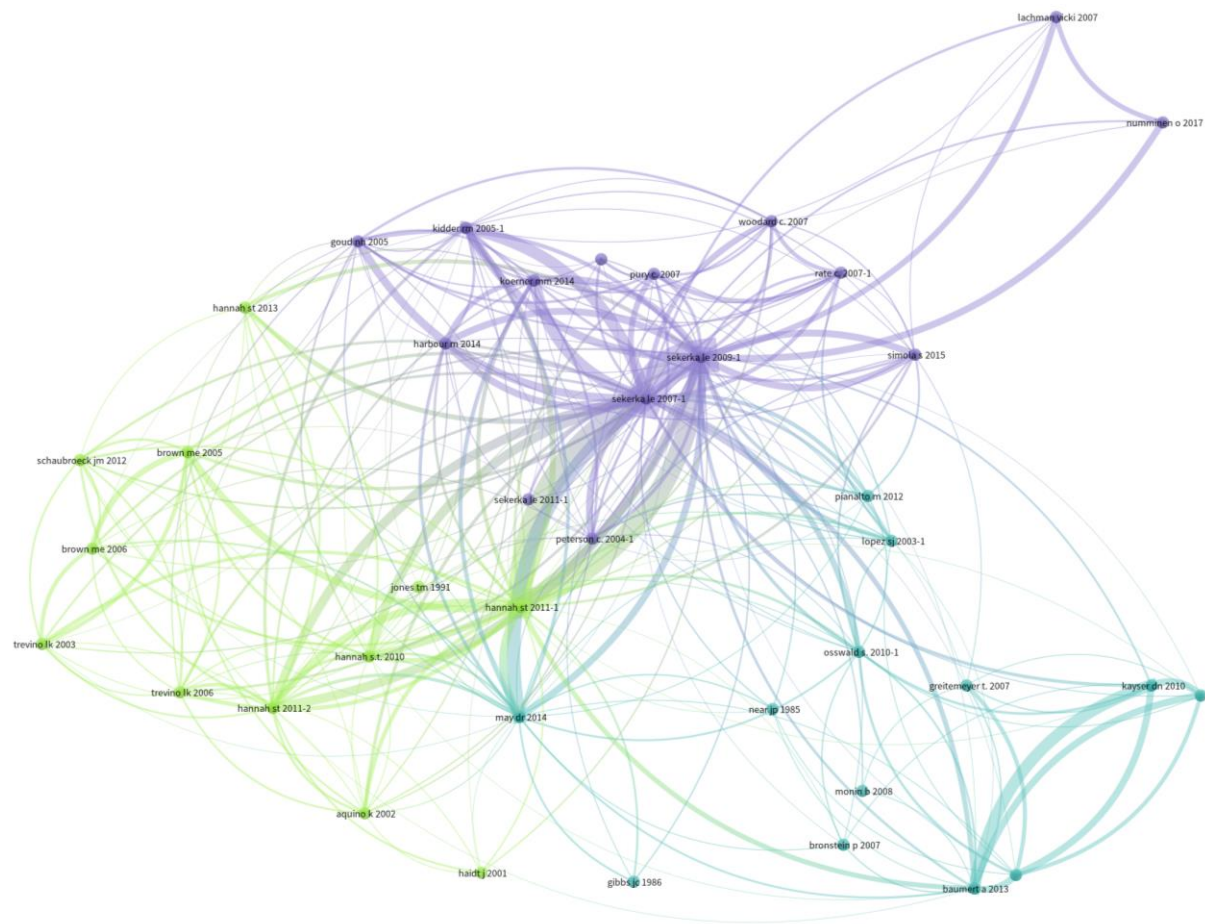*Figure A2* Multiple-correspondence analysis clustering of publisher keywords cut at 15 minimum degrees

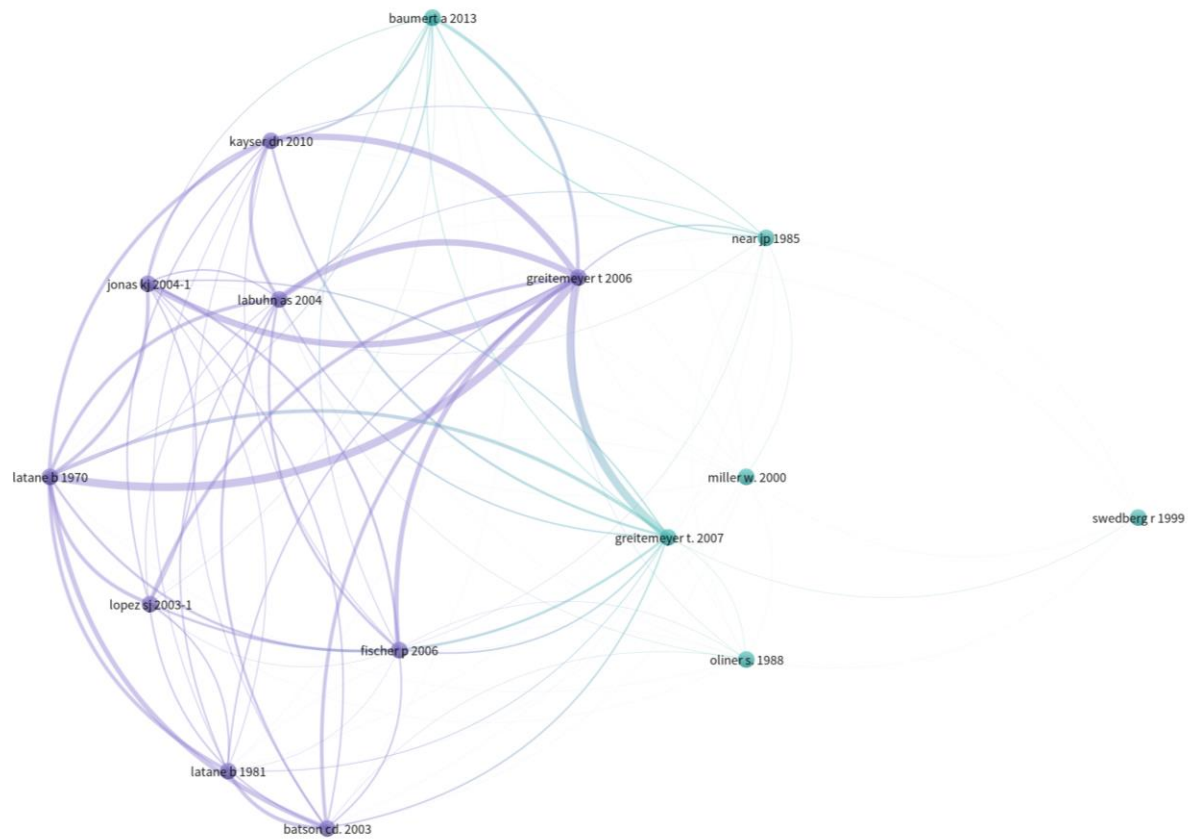*Figure A3* Co-citation network of the moral courage corpus

Figure A4 Co-citation network of the civil courage corpus

Appendix B

Data Processing

Data

We searched the archives of newspapers of record in the USA, the UK, and Germany, and included those, that had a searchable and machine-readable archive. We found only three such newspapers that allowed us access, The New York Times (USA), The Times (UK), and Die Zeit (Germany). We searched each newspaper's archive using the search term *moral courage* for the two English language newspapers and *Zivilcourage* for the German language newspaper and downloaded all articles published until 2020, inclusive. Access to the NYT archive was provided through Gale Academic OneFile and included all articles from the years 1985 – 2020. Our search for *moral courage* returned 422 results. We had access to the complete archive for The Times. Gale Primary Sources provided access from 1946 – 2014, and Factiva provided access for the years 2015 – 2020; our search for *moral courage* had in total 839 results. We also had access to the complete archive of Die Zeit via their own archive page, stretching from 1946 to today and our search for *Zivilcourage* returned 1224 results.

Die Zeit is the youngest of these newspapers, dating back to 1946 and we thus restricted the articles from each newspaper to the timeframe 1946 to 2020 to maintain comparability across the newspapers. We chose 1946 as the earliest year as it marks the end of the last major war in Europe and a new beginning for German civil society, and because no national newspaper in Germany goes back to pre-WWII times as the allied powers disbanded all newspapers during denazification. Access to the NYT archive was restricted to the years 1985 – 2020 but we kept 1946 as the start date for our timeframe as data was available for two of the newspaper, allowing us to have more data and still make comparisons across languages.

The NYT and Die Zeit archives are available as digitised versions and we scraped the html of the websites using the *rvest* package (v1.0.2; Wickham, 2020). The Times archive is available as images of the original newspapers for all articles that were not also published online on their website. The archive site provided an inbuild optical character recognition (OCR) tool that we used to transform the images into text; this tool also calculated a confidence

score for the OCR process. The average confidence for the articles was 85.2%. We subsequently scraped the information as we did for the other newspapers. For each article we collected the headline, sub-headline (if available), publication date, as well as the full text.

Data Preparation

Title, subtitle, and full text of the scraped articles were collapsed to create individual documents. We also created a lemmatised version of the complete articles using the *cleanNLP* package (v3.0.3; Arnold, 2017). For the keyword analysis, which only looked at two words at a time, we used the lemmatised version, for topic modelling, which takes sentence structure into account, we used the original version. We aggregated publication dates, first to years, and then further to decades. In an additional step, we merged articles from the year 2020 with the 2010-2019 decade for all newspapers as a single year does not provide enough information for a whole decade.

Data Cleaning

We checked for all articles whether the respective search term (i.e., "moral courage" for English newspaper articles and "Zivilcourage" for German newspaper articles) occurred and removed articles in which it was not found. Furthermore, we checked for duplicate articles by calculating the cosine similarity, a common measure of similarity in NLP, of each possible combination of two articles within each newspaper. We set the threshold for considering two or more articles to be duplicates at a similarity of .75. There is no hard cutoff point; we ran the duplicates analysis several times with different thresholds and selected the final cutoff by weighing the removal of non-duplicates and retention of duplicates in a subset of the data. In the English language newspapers, duplicates were often corrections of an article or advertisement articles that appeared in several issues, in the Zeit, it was mainly articles that were republished. The final data set includes 335 articles with 363,358 words published in the NYT, 812 articles with 695,224 words published in the Times, and 1181 articles with 1,716,780 words published in the Zeit.

APPENDIX

Table A1 Ten words with highest tf-idf per topic for the New York Times

Holocaust	Art	Civil Rights/Education	College (Sports)	Military	Politics
rescuers	p.m	black	university	war	people
jews	art	king	school	president	political
people	brando	school	students	kerry	bush
jewish	street	people	silber	military	campaign
drucker	film	rights	schools	trump	president
holocaust	a.m	civil	people	vietnam	york
war	saturdays	law	players	people	american
book	hours	white	college	american	mayor
german	york	dr	program	bush	party
rabbi	theater	professor	president	iraq	time

APPENDIX

Table A2 Ten words with highest tf-idf per topic for the Times

Sports	International Politics	Literature/Education	Domestic Politics	Military	Church & Education
players	president	london	party	war	church
england	people	life	government	army	life
game	united	salary	time	british	bishop
team	government	experience	people	lord	time
football	war	time	public	military	college
sport	time	book	labour	time	people
time	political	school	lord	service	university
player	nations	street	policy	soldiers	dr
people	american	company	minister	life	archbishop
ball	soviet	university	country	staff	christian

Table A3 Ten words with highest tf-idf per topic for the Zeit

Education	Crime	History	Politics/Society
pupil (schüler)	police (polizei)	german (deutschen)	german (deutschen)
school (schule)	life (leben)	germany (deutschland)	gdr (ddr)
students (studenten)	case (fall)	life (leben)	politics (politik)
teachers (lehrer)	woman (frau)	history (geschichte)	germany (deutschland)
university (universität)	germany (deutschland)	german (deutsche)	society (gesellschaft)
children (kinder)	city (stadt)	world (welt)	party (partei)
parents (eltern)	victim (opfer)	book (buch)	question (frage)
german (deutschen)	say (sagen)	jews (juden)	democracy (demokratie)
society (gesellschaft)	german (deutschen)	question (frage)	political (politischen)
schools (schulen)	children (kinder)	hitler	life (leben)

Note. Translations by the authors, original German word in parenthesis.

Table A4 Regressions of Percentage of Articles and Year for the New York Times

Topic	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Not assigned	0.27	0.30	-0.36	0.90	.373
Holocaust	-0.27	0.15	-0.60	0.05	.095
Art	0.03	0.16	-0.31	0.37	.865
Civil Rights/Education	-0.12	0.17	-0.48	0.23	.469
College Sports	-0.15	0.17	-0.50	0.20	.373
Military	0.54	0.24	0.03	1.04	.038
Politics	-0.29	0.13	-0.58	-0.01	.046

Note. Each row is a separate regression, run with only the data for the respective topic. The estimate indicates by how much the percentage of articles in the respective topic increases or decreases per year. Intercept omitted. $N = 19$. CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit. *p* values are two sided.

Table A5 Regressions of Percentage of Articles and Year for the Times

Topic	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Not assigned	0.02	0.07	-0.13	0.16	.812
Sports	0.32	0.06	0.20	0.43	< .001
International Politics	-0.11	0.08	-0.26	0.04	.160
Literature/Education	-0.03	0.06	-0.14	0.08	.605
Domestic Politics	-0.14	0.08	-0.30	0.02	.083
Military	-0.04	0.09	-0.22	0.13	.608
Church & Education	-0.01	0.04	-0.10	0.07	.733

Note. Each row is a separate regression, run with only the data for the respective topic. The estimate indicates by how much the percentage of articles in the respective topic increases or decreases per year. Intercept omitted. $N = 38$. CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit. *p* values are two sided.

Table A6 Regressions of Percentage of Articles and Year for the Zeit

Topic	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Not assigned	0.09	0.08	-0.07	0.24	.258
Education	-0.06	0.05	-0.17	0.04	.224
Crime	0.33	0.05	0.23	0.44	< .001
History	-0.27	0.07	-0.41	-0.13	< .001
Politics/Society	-0.09	0.08	-0.24	0.07	.282

Note. Each row is a separate regression, run with only the data for the respective topic. The estimate indicates by how much the percentage of articles in the respective topic increases or decreases per year. Intercept omitted. *N* = 38. CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit. *p* values are two sided.

APPENDIX

Additional Data Analysis

We used another combination of NLP methods to further test the stability of our results. With this combination of word embeddings and k-means clustering we focus on the ways in which the key terms "moral courage" and "Zivilcourage" are used. Instead of calculating embeddings for paragraphs we calculate embeddings for individual words. This puts the focus less on the overall content topic of the articles and more on the specific uses of the terms in the articles. We clustered individual words by their similarity over time to moral courage in the English language newspapers and to Zivilcourage in the German language newspaper. Based on the results of the clustering, we sampled articles that are representative of the ways in which the key terms are used and then qualitatively evaluated the usage of the key terms.

We calculated word embedding models for each newspaper in which each word is turned into a vector in a 300-dimensional space based on word co-occurrences within a 10-word window around each word. Each word has a window and co-occurrences with the other words in this window are counted and weighted based on their distance to the target word. We used the lemmatised version of the articles with stopwords removed and included individual words as well as bi-grams and tri-grams. We used the GloVe algorithm (Pennington et al., 2014) with ten iterations implemented in the *text2vec* package (Selivanov et al., 2020). The resulting vectors represent the semantic relations between the words so that vectors that are closer together or point towards a similar direction have a similar or common meaning or usage. As we are interested in temporal developments of the discourse around moral courage and Zivilcourage we created word embeddings for each decade separately and then calculated the cosine similarity of the vector of each word with the vector for moral courage in the English-language newspapers and with the vector for Zivilcourage for the German language newspaper. To narrow down the words to cluster, we included only those words that appeared in every decade and that were among the ten most similar words to moral courage/Zivilcourage in any decade. We then clustered the words based on their cosine similarity with moral courage / Zivilcourage across each decade. We used k-means clustering in R. The *NbClust* package

(Charrad et al., 2014) provides an indication of the number of relevant clusters that are present in the data by comparing several metrics and giving a recommendation based on these. Following these metrics we clustered the New York Times data into four clusters, the Times data into two clusters, and the Zeit data into two clusters. The resulting clusters are a representation of words that were similar or dissimilar to moral courage/Zivilcourage during the same decades. In the last step we assigned each article to the cluster from which the highest number of words appear in that article and then randomly selected ten articles from each cluster (or as many articles as a cluster entails, whichever number is smaller). We read these articles in depth and analysed their use of moral courage/Zivilcourage.

The results show differences that align with the findings from the keyword analysis and topic modelling in suggesting that in the English language moral courage is used more often to describe a person whereas in the German language it is more commonly used to describe an action.

In the English-language articles moral courage is used in two main ways: as a character trait of a person or to describe the (in)action of public figures. Of the articles sampled from the English-language newspaper, 7% simply stated that a person has moral courage or was known for their moral courage without further explanations of the context or the specific behaviour or situations in which that moral courage was evident. Concerning the actions of public figures one article in the New York Times even goes so far to define moral courage as "the courage of the life of the mind or of public figures" and contrasts it with physical bravery. In line with this understanding of moral courage (as something based on status), mentions of moral courage in 53% of the sampled English-language newspaper articles describe a politician or other public or official figure who has failed to stand up to someone or to stand up for something that they believe in or had to make a decision that might be contrary to public opinion or the official party doctrine. Overall, these articles suggest that moral courage is something politicians need to be effective. What these uses of moral courage have in common is that they imply or outright state that these figures need moral courage as their actions could result in some kind of backlash or ostracism or go against a majority or more powerful entity. These actions include

commuting death sentences or not bow to powerful lobbying groups.

We also found 20% of the sampled articles mentioning moral courage by ordinary people. In these articles moral courage was used to describe those who helped Jews during the Holocaust, as well as in the context of reporting illegal activities that were observed or suspected (e.g., whistleblowing), and creating art to challenge the powerful.

In two thirds of articles sampled from the German newspaper we found Zivilcourage used to describe actions — e.g., the fight of society against right-wing extremism, the fight for more democracy exemplified by the Euromaidan revolution, or to speak up against xenophobic behaviour. Zivilcourage was also used in the context of awards for engagement against right wing ideologies that were given to ordinary citizens by foundations or municipalities. Overall, Zivilcourage was used to describe the actions of people. It is applied to a range of different people from politicians to activists and ordinary people. However, the focus is usually on the person as an ordinary citizen rather than on them as, for example, a politician.

Comparing the German and English contexts in which moral courage/Zivilcourage was used, a clear distinction is that moral courage is mainly used to describe a person or a character trait whereas Zivilcourage mainly refers to an action. Even in those cases where Zivilcourage is applied to a person it is less about an inborn characteristic and more about the person in a specific moment. In the German newspaper, the people mentioned in the context of Zivilcourage were identified as just normal people in 60% of the sampled articles and only 40% of the articles even mentioned their profession or position. In contrast, in the English language context it was even made explicit that moral courage is the courage of politicians and other public figures. These are two crucial distinctions between moral courage and Zivilcourage. Moral courage seems to focus on a public personas traits whereas Zivilcourage focuses on the actions of ordinary citizens.

These results further support our findings from the keyword analysis and topic modelling. All three methods provide evidence for the same systematic differences between moral courage and Zivilcourage: Zivilcourage is focused on society and ordinary citizens and moral courage is related to public figures. With several different methods arriving at similar

results, we are confident that our results are not just artifacts of natural language processing algorithms or human bias but that the nuances and distinctions in the use and understanding of moral courage and Zivilcourage are real.