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By Any Means Necessary? When and Why Low Group Identification Paradoxically Predicts Radical Collective Action

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Radical action against social disadvantage is highly consequential but has been far less studied than moderate collective action. But who supports such extreme actions and why? In two studies, we examine the relation between group identification and support for radical action in disadvantaged groups. Paradoxically, low identifiers are more willing than high identifiers to endorse radical action. We argue that high identifiers are more concerned about how radical action could harm their social identity than low identifiers. By contrast, low identifiers are more willing to confront the disadvantage by radical means, adopting a nothing-to-lose mindset. Consistent with this, support for radical action was strongest among low identifiers, especially when the in-group accepted the disadvantage as legitimate (creating a more desperate situation: Studies 1 and 2) and when they were not dependent on the out-group (and thus had nothing-to-lose: Study 2).

Social inequalities seem to be ever present and, although such inequalities are often perpetuated, members of disadvantaged groups have also fought against

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them. For example, as a result of the feminist movement, the gender gap in salaries and job opportunities has narrowed, and the gay movement has made clear progress in legalizing same-sex marriage, among others (see Górska & Bilewicz, 2015). But how do discriminated groups contest such inequalities? Research shows many routes that members of discriminated groups can follow to deal with group disadvantage, ranging from individual mobility to group strategies (Ellemers, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; see also Becker, Barreto, Kahn, & de Oliveira Laux, 2015; Derks, van Laar, Ellemers, & Raghoe, 2015; Kulich, Lorenzi-Cioldi, & Iacovello, 2015). One of the most direct strategies is to engage in collective action (see Tausch, Saguy, & Bryson, 2015). Such actions are defined as acts aimed at improving the conditions of an entire group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1990) and can take diverse forms, varying from normative and peaceful acts which are in line with general social norms (e.g., signing petitions, peaceful demonstrations) to more radical and non-normative behaviors such as violence and terrorism (Wright, 1997). Radical forms of resistance have received far less attention (Tausch et al., 2011; Van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009), even though they constitute a high profile and consequential way of claiming social justice. In this article, we aim to shed light on the factors that facilitate such extreme action. Specifically, we examine the role of legitimacy and group identification on radical collective action and come to some apparently paradoxical conclusions in the process.

What Leads to (Radical) Collective Action?

Collective action can be seen as integral to social change, but members of disadvantaged groups are not always prepared to take such action as this involves risks and costs (Klandermans, Sabucedo, Rodríguez, & de Weerd, 2002; Olson, 1968; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Therefore, the factors that explain when people will engage in collective action have been a frequent research question (e.g., Blumer, 1939; Klandermans, 1997). Recent research emphasizes the role of legitimacy perceptions and group identification (Jiménez-Moya, Rodríguez-Bailón, Spears, & de Lemus, 2015; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008; Van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004; Tausch et al., 2011). First, social identity theory predicts that intergroup conflict is more likely if the disadvantaged group frames inequality as illegitimate (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Appraisals of illegitimacy also predict group-based anger, which leads to engagement in collective action (see the dual path model of Van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004). Importantly, previous literature has paid scant attention to the source of perceptions of (il)legitimacy, and the possibility that perceived legitimacy of the disadvantage actually may be more threatening, especially when it is accepted by the in-group (Spears, Greenwood, de Lemus, & Sweetman, 2010; see also Jiménez-Moya et al., 2015).

The positive effect of group identification on collective action has also been established (Stürmer & Simon, 2004; Van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008); those less committed to the group are less likely to undertake such action (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). However, most research that considers the role of identification to our knowledge has been focused on the prediction of *moderate* (e.g., non-violent) collective action. The key and novel focus of the current article is therefore to consider how group identification might predict radical collective action.

Extrapolating from previous research (e.g., Stürmer & Simon, 2004; Van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008), we could predict that high identifiers will be more prone than low identifiers to support radical action (as they do moderate action), as this is, after all, designed to advance group interests. In line with our previous work, the positive effect of group identification on collective action is especially strong when members of the in-group seem to accept the group disadvantage as legitimate: we have shown that high identifiers are particularly sensitive to this most threatening situation and do not accept it willingly (Jiménez-Moya et al., 2015; see also Packer, 2008). However, there are also reasons to expect that high identifiers will be less likely to endorse radical action than low identifiers. Assuming, in line with social identity theory, that high identifiers are motivated to protect the in-group's image (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), it may be particularly important for them to maintain a positive conception of the group. Supporting radical collective action might damage the in-group's image given that such behaviors typically transgress socially accepted rules and norms (hence often labeled "non-normative"). Indeed, we already found some preliminary evidence for this in an earlier paper (Spears, Scheepers, van Zomeren, Tausch, & Gooch, 2015, Study 2), in which women threatened with an unfair disadvantage were more likely to endorse moderate (thus normative) than radical (thus non-normative) action. Importantly feminist identification also led to more support for moderate action but not for radical action, providing some suggestive evidence for our rationale (although the role of identification was not the focus of that research).

This argument fits with the "nothing-to-lose" rationale whereby disempowered groups or those with a stable low status become more likely to endorse radical resistance strategies (Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2006; Spears et al., 2015; Tausch et al., 2011). Research on high status groups also showed that they avoided radical action because this could undermine their prestige (Kamans, Spears, Otten, Gordijn, & Livingstone, 2015). Similarly, high identifiers may well have *something to lose* by taking radical action. Because low identifiers are less invested in their group and its image (Leach et al., 2008), paradoxically perhaps they may have less to lose (but still something to gain) if radical resistance proves fruitful.

It may seem paradoxical that people less committed to their group might be more prepared than high identifiers to endorse action that seems so committed. A

first point about this argument is that, it is relative: we do not argue that support for radical behavior will be high (it is non-normative, after all), but simply that it could be higher for low identifiers. Second, we should note that commitment to the group is conceptually distinct from the need to escape a threatening situation, and low identifiers should be no less committed to achieve this (perhaps by any means necessary).

In this respect, we cannot assume people who identify strongly are necessarily more radical *per se*. For example, in political parties moderate and mainstream factions with the left or right wing parties can be embarrassed by what they conceive as extremist postures within their parties, postures that undermine their image to the broader electorate, and the prospects of electoral success. Similarly, we should not assume that people will be any less radical because they are less committed to their group. Indeed, precisely this lack of commitment might lead to the endorsement of more radical means that could harm the in-group standing. Importantly, we argue that in this case, the motivation should be only to escape from a desperate situation, but not to fight for the in-group. To sum up, we expect that, in general terms, high identifiers will be less willing than those who identify less with the in-group to support radical action.

The Current Research

In the present work, we test the effect of in-group legitimacy appraisals regarding the disadvantaged situation, and group identification on the endorsement of radical action against the inequality. We predict that the motivation to keep a positive in-group image will decrease high identifiers willingness to endorse and take radical action. By contrast, low identifiers, who are less concerned about in-group image, should have fewer qualms about endorsing radical action. In addition, we also test the effect of two different moderators designed to shed light on the deployment of a nothing-to-lose mindset among low identifiers. Thus, we measure group identification and manipulate the legitimacy of the group disadvantage as perceived by the in-group (both Study 1 and Study 2), the in-group sample size that support that perspective (Study 1) and the dependency on the out-group (Study 2). We explain the purpose of these manipulations in further detail below.

Study 1

In Study 1, we created a disadvantaged in-group situation for participants (Andalusian undergraduate students) in which the in-group region (Andalusia) received less economic subsidy than other Spanish regions. The aim of this study was to test the effect of legitimacy and group identification on the endorsement of radical action. Specifically, we manipulated in-group legitimacy appraisals regarding the disadvantage (legitimate vs. illegitimate according to the in-group itself)

and the in-group sample size that legitimized or rejected the disadvantage. The direction of such sample information (i.e., seeing the disadvantage as legitimate vs. illegitimate) and the reliability of this information (i.e., small and less reliable vs. large and thus more reliable) was designed to communicate the degree of implied support from the in-group that might be available for resistance, including radical action.

Assuming that the nothing-to-lose mindset most relevant to the low identifiers is not an identity based argument but a more instrumental strategy, this should be enhanced when the in-group accepts the disadvantage as legitimate, as derived from a large and reliable sample. The idea here is that if a large and reliable sample suggests that the in-group disadvantage is legitimate, this implies that there will be little social support for resistance, making clearer the desperate nature of the situation. Thus although low identifiers may care less about the in-group (and its image) than high identifiers, the nothing-to-lose mindset means they should be sensitive to any support (or lack of it) that they provide, for instrumental reasons. Under such hopeless circumstances, we expect low identifiers to try to salvage something from the situation, by whatever means necessary, including radical options (see Spears et al., 2015; see also Van Zomeren, Spears, & Leach, 2008, for a similar argument in relation to group identification and moderate collective action, in terms of instrumental reasoning). High identifiers by contrast should be more reluctant to support extreme action, especially when it is not supported by the group, because it is not normative (neither in general, nor according to the in-group) and could therefore damage the group's image, while providing no certain prospects. Although high identifiers are expected to be less open to radical action per se this concern could be softened if in-group support for resistance is high, making it more normative (i.e., illegitimate appraisals from a large sample; see Jiménez-Moya et al., 2015). In sum, we predict that low identifiers will be more willing than high identifiers to endorse radical action under the more desperate conditions.

Design and Procedure

Participants were 73 Andalusian undergraduates (50 women; mean age 22.92), who received course credit for their participation. They were randomly assigned to one of the experimental conditions in a 2 (Legitimacy: legitimate vs. illegitimate) \times 2 (Sample size: large vs. small) between participants factorial design with identification as an additional continuous factor. Specifically, participants read a bogus article about the opinion of other Andalusian citizens regarding the unequal economic allocation among regions, namely, whether the surveyed members of the in-group justified (legitimate condition) or not (illegitimate condition) its own disadvantage. The justifications were based on the well-known Andalusian stereotype of high warmth and low competence (e.g., Morales, García,

Rodríguez-Bailón, & Moya, 2004), given that a pilot study showed an effect of the in-group legitimacy appraisals of the disadvantage only when the justifications used by the in-group were related to the group stereotype but not when more objective reasons, namely, economic arguments, were used. In order to highlight the internal source of the legitimacy perspective, participants were also informed about the view of citizens' from the other region, which was constant across conditions. Furthermore, in the large sample condition, participants were told that the legitimacy appraisals came from a large and representative in-group sample (2,453 citizens from different counties of the region), while in the small sample size condition the in-group sample was smaller (67 citizens from two main cities of the region).

In order to test the effect of our manipulations, participants rated the extent to which the in-group sample perceived the situation as fair (1 = *very unfair*, 7 = *very fair*), and the sample size of the in-group members surveyed (1 = *very small*, 7 = *very large*). We measured group identification with six items ($\alpha = .92$; e.g., "I see myself as an Andalusian") adapted from Doosje, Ellemers, and Spears (1995). We used two measures to test participants endorsement of radical action: the intention to approve radical action (five items, $\alpha = .84$, e.g., "I would approve other Andalusians blackmailing member of the Government who endorses the current economic allocation"); and the intention to actually engage in such action (five items, $\alpha = .90$, e.g., "I would blackmail a member of the Government who endorses the current economic allocation"), adapted from Tausch et al. (2011). The identification measure used a seven-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much); the collective action measures used 11-point scales (11 = *very much*) in order to ensure response variability.

Results

Manipulation checks. To check the effects of our manipulations, we ran separate ANOVAs 2 (Legitimacy: legitimate vs. illegitimate) x 2 (Sample size: large vs. small) on the legitimacy checks. Results showed a main effect of legitimacy, $F(1, 69) = 238.63$, $p < .001$, indicating that participants in the legitimate conditions perceived that in-group members framed the situation described as fairer ($M = 6.03$, $SD = 1.46$) than participants in the illegitimate conditions ($M = 1.44$, $SD = 1.05$). The effect of the sample size and the two-way interaction between the two factors were not significant, $F_s < 1$, ns. Also, we found a main effect of the sample size, $F(1, 69) = 31.90$, $p < .01$, showing that participants in the large sample size conditions perceived the sample size as larger ($M = 4.05$, $SD = 2.28$) than participants in the small sample conditions ($M = 1.58$, $SD = 1.25$). We did not find any other significant effects, $F_s < 1$, ns.

Main results. In order to test our predictions regarding the effects of legitimacy, sample size, and group identification on the support for radical collective action, we ran separate ANOVAs with sample size and legitimacy as factors and group identification as a centered continuous predictor, on the two measures for radical collective action.

Regarding the willingness to approve radical action, results showed a three-way interaction Sample size \times Legitimacy \times Group identification, $F(1, 65) = 12.85, p = .001, \eta^2 = .16$. Further analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) showed a negative effect of group identification when a large in-group sample framed the disadvantage as legitimate (standardized coefficients are reported in all regression analyses), $\beta = -.70, t(65) = -3.17; p = .002$. However, in the illegitimate condition, the effect of identification turned positive, $\beta = .41, t(65) = 2.13; p = .04$. Therefore, when a reliable in-group sample accepted the disadvantage, low identifiers (vs. high) were more willing to approve radical action. However, high identifiers were more ready to support radical action if a large sample rejected the disadvantage, thus where they could rely on the in-group support. Furthermore, in the legitimate and small sample condition, we found no effect of identification, $\beta = .07, t(65) = .25; p = .80$. However identification negatively predicted the approval of radical collective action when a small in-group sample rejected the disadvantage, $\beta = -.46, t(65) = -2.40; p = .01$.

Regarding the willingness to participate in radical action, we found a similar three-way interaction Sample size \times Legitimacy \times Group Identification, $F(1, 65) = 7.10, p = .01, \eta^2 = .10$. As before, under large sample size conditions, group identification negatively predicted the willingness to participate in radical action, but only when the in-group legitimized the disadvantage, $\beta = -.70, t(65) = -3.02; p = .004$, not in the illegitimate condition, where the effect of identification showed a similar pattern as the previous variable, $\beta = .35, t(65) = 1.74; p = .08$ (see Figure 1). We did not find any significant effect of group identification under small sample conditions. Therefore, low identifiers seemed to support radical action to a greater extent than high identifiers when a large sample of the group showed its acceptance of the disadvantaged situation (see Table 1 for further details). Across measures there were no reliable two-way interactions for the small sample conditions, so the one significant slope found should be interpreted with caution.

Discussion

In line with our hypothesis, we found that low identifiers endorsed radical collective action to a greater extent than high identifiers, and particularly when a large in-group sample accepted and legitimized the disadvantage. We explain the negative relation between group identification and support for radical action in part by focusing on group image or positive social identity, in line with

Table 1. Means (*M*), Standard Deviations (*SD*), and Effect of Group Identification (Group Id.) per Condition in Studies 1 and 2

Study 1	Large sample		Small sample	
	Legitimacy	Illegitimacy	Legitimacy	Illegitimacy
Intention to approve radical CA				
<i>M</i>	2.06	2.29	1.85	2
<i>SD</i>	1.83	2.32	1.26	1.77
Group Id.	-.67**	.42 [†]	-.13	-.48*
Intention to take radical CA				
<i>M</i>	1.1	1.98	1.33	1.7
<i>SD</i>	1.69	2.26	.93	1.84
Group Id.	-.73***	.34	.01	-.15
Study 2	Dependency		Non-dependency	
	Legitimacy	Illegitimacy	Legitimacy	Illegitimacy
Intention to approve radical CA				
<i>M</i>	1.85	2.01	1.77	1.54
<i>SD</i>	1.15	1.26	.93	.76
Group Id.	.17	-.20	-.56*	-.43**
Intention to take radical CA				
<i>M</i>	1.22	1.52	1.27	1.13
<i>SD</i>	.67	.06	.71	.52
Group Id.	.20	-.31*	-.77**	-.46*

[†]*p* < .10, **p* < .05, ***p* < .01, ****p* < .001.

social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979): high identifiers are more concerned with their group reputation and image than low identifiers. The flipside of the coin is that low identifiers should be more willing to endorse radical action as they are less group-invested and have less to lose than high identifiers from compromising group identity. Thus, they follow a nothing-to-lose rationale, which is based around instrumental, cost-benefit reasoning (see Spears et al., 2015).

The fact that low identifiers are more committed to radical action might at first sight seem paradoxical. Note, however, that although low identifiers may be less committed to the group (by definition), this does not mean they are less motivated to get something out of the situation, and this does not preclude recourse to radical options. Note too that low (vs. high) identifiers showed higher support for radical action precisely when a large in-group sample framed the disadvantage as legitimate, thus under the most desperate conditions. Although group identification also had a negative effect under the illegitimate and small sample condition, this

effect was not replicated on the second, participation measure, so we should be cautious about interpreting this further. By contrast, high identifiers were most likely to support radical action when the in-group perceived the disadvantage as illegitimate, and forthcoming from a large and reliable sample: in this condition the relation between group identification and radical action reversed. This suggests that radical action could become acceptable, even for high identifiers, but only when there is clear in-group consensus about the perceived injustice (i.e., in line with classical social identity theory predictions). This is further evidence that the process is identity-driven for high identifiers: they respond to the call of their group rather than react against it. For low identifiers, by contrast, the aim is not to fight for the in-group, but to obtain something from a hopeless situation, perhaps by any means necessary.

In order to further develop this line of reasoning based on the nothing-to-lose rationale, the aim of Study 2 was to further examine the predictors of radical collective action by introducing a context in which the participants (and especially low identifiers) might have “something to lose.”

Study 2

In the second study, we decided to approach the nothing-to-lose versus social identity theory explanations for our effects, for low and high identifiers, respectively, from another angle. Whereas in the previous study we used a manipulation to convey lack of social support (relevant to appraisals of how desperate the situation was) in this study we manipulated a factor designed to affect appraisal of whether group members have something (vs. nothing) to lose (i.e., a second key ingredient of the nothing-to-lose mindset). Here, the relationship between the in-group and the out-group is particularly relevant. Specifically we employed a dependency or power manipulation, such that in one condition the in-group was to some extent dependent on the out-group for its outcomes and in another they were not. Having a degree of dependency on the out-group means that it may be important to take into account how you act in the eyes of the out-group because of their power of sanction: they could punish non-normative radical behavior for example (Klein, Spears, & Reicher, 2007; Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995; see also Ashburn-Nardo, Blanchard, & Petersson, 2014, for a gender-based disadvantaged this should be disadvantaged (ended with d), right perspective). This is similar to the reasoning about status stability in the nothing-to-lose effect (Scheepers et al., 2006; Spears et al., 2015): both instability and dependency give the group something to gain (e.g., by being nice to the out-group) and therefore also something to lose (if they are nasty and incur the out-group's wrath). Thus, this dependency should make group members more wary of endorsing radical action. However, there should be more scope for radical action under non-dependency conditions when the out-group has no power over the in-group, leaving the in-group to act in

line with its interests. Once again we expect that the predicted effect of dependency will be particularly relevant for low identifiers, given that they are most predicted to endorse the radical strategy (given their focus on interests rather than identity).

We also manipulated the perceived legitimacy of the disadvantaged among the in-group, shown to be a critical moderator in the previous study. Because legitimacy communicates the degree of support one might expect from the in-group it might operate in conjunction with dependency. Specifically, high dependency, combined with in-group perceptions of legitimate disadvantage, provided the least optimal conditions for radical action (i.e., something-to-lose and no expected support). Note that this prediction might be seen contradictory to results shown in the previous study, where we found higher radical action tendencies among low identifiers when a large in-group sample legitimized the disadvantage. The fundamental difference here is that in Study 1, endorsing radical action without relying on the in-group support did not imply further negative consequences from the out-group. In this case, however, the aftermath of radical action could have clear negative consequences under out-group dependency, as the out-group could punish the in-group (i.e., something-to-lose) and, in addition, in-group support would be missing. In this sense, we argue that dependency on the out-group might change the relevance of lacking in-group support when taking radical action, because out-group dependence means there is something to lose.

Once again these considerations should be most likely to affect low identifiers who are predicted to be most sensitive to the nothing-to-lose rationale. In addition, in line with previous results, we expect high identifiers to be more concerned about tarnishing the group image by supporting radical action; therefore their support for radical action should remain relatively low, irrespective of dependency on the out-group, which is largely irrelevant to the reputation of the in-group. Although out-group dependency could alert the in-group to how they are seen by the out-group, since high identifiers' concern is to protect the in-group image in general, this dependency should not add much further to this effect. In Study 2, we tested these general predictions.

Design and Procedure

Participants were 117 Psychology students (97 women; mean age 18.80) at the University of Granada (UGR), who received course credits for their participation. They were randomly assigned to one of the conditions in a 2 (Legitimacy: legitimate vs. illegitimate) \times 2 (Dependency: dependency vs. non-dependency) between participants factorial design with identification as an additional continuous factor.

We used a fictitious scenario regarding the university's annual investments for each faculty. As Study 1, we created a disadvantaged in-group situation, namely, that Psychology students had received a smaller investment quota than

Medicine students. As Study 1 we maintained the out-group legitimacy regarding the disadvantage (the Medicine students' perspective) as constant and manipulated whether Psychology also students' legitimized (legitimacy) or not (illegitimacy) the disadvantage using stereotypical reasons. This was based on the Psychology students stereotype (e.g., warmth, raver, sociable, etc.), which was pretested prior to running the study ($N = 23$). Furthermore, the text explained that, in order to get students involved in the running of the university, the university allowed them to choose how to invest a certain amount of the funding received. However, depending on condition, this decision varied in terms of the body responsible for it. In the dependency condition, both Psychology and Medicine students (i.e., together the health sciences) were in charge of deciding how to invest the money that was exclusively designated for Psychology students. This rendered Psychology dependent on the power of the Medical students (a larger faculty) who could outvote them in terms of how the money was allocated. Specifically, this went against the Psychology students' interest with regard to a conference on potential future careers for health science students that had traditionally been organized by Psychology students. The text stated that this year, Medicine students were also interested in hosting the conference, and moreover they could outvote the Psychology students to do so. By contrast, in the non-dependency conditions only Psychology students themselves decided how they would invest their quota. In this case, although Medicine students were interested in the conference, this decision only depended on Psychology students, who were free to decide how they would invest the funding.

To check our manipulations, participants rated the extent to which Psychology students accepted their disadvantaged situation as just, and whether they were independent from other students when deciding about their funding (two items, $r = .93$; 1 = totally disagree, 7 = totally agree). We used the same items as in Study 1 to measure group identification ($\alpha = .87$), and participants' readiness to approve and participate in radical action ($\alpha = .65$; $\alpha = .72$; respectively).

Results

Manipulation checks. To test the effect of our manipulations, we ran a 2 (Legitimacy: legitimate vs. illegitimate) \times 2 (Dependency: dependency vs. non-dependency) ANOVA, on the legitimacy check, finding a main effect of legitimacy, $F(1, 110) = 442.88$, $p < .001$. Participants in the legitimate condition reported that the in-group framed the disadvantage as "just" to a greater extent, ($M = 6.17$, $SD = 1.10$) than participants in the illegitimate condition ($M = 1.49$, $SD = 1.25$). The effect of dependency and the interaction of legitimacy and dependency were not significant, $F_s < 1$, ns. We ran similar analyses on the average of the two dependency checks as dependent variable, showing a main effect of dependency, $F(1, 109) = 321.35$, $p < .001$. Specifically, participants in the non-dependency

conditions perceived the in-group as more independent of the out-group ($M = 6.38$, $SD = .96$), than participants in the dependency conditions ($M = 2.11$, $SD = 1.55$). Analysis did not show other significant effects, $F_s < 1$, ns.

Main results. Furthermore, to test the effect of the manipulations on support for radical collective action, separate ANOVAs with legitimacy and dependency as factors and with group identification as a centered continuous predictor was conducted on the willingness to approve and to participate in radical action.

Regarding the approval of radical action, we only found a marginal main effect of identification, showing a negative effect on this variable, $F(1,105) = 3.31$, $p = .07$, $\eta^2 = .03$; $\beta = -.25$, $p < .01$ (standardized coefficients are reported in all regression analyses). That is, high identifiers tended to approve radical action less than low identifiers. Although analysis did not show any other significant result ($F_s < 1$, ns), note that the effect of group identification across conditions is similar to the results found for the willingness to participate in radical action described next (see Table 1, lower panel).

Regarding the willingness to participate in radical action, analysis again showed a main effect of group identification, $F(1,105) = 6.43$, $p = .01$, $\eta^2 = .06$, showing a negative effect, $\beta = -.33$, $p < .001$. We also found two marginal two-way interactions: first Dependency \times Legitimacy, $F(1,105) = 3.58$, $p = .06$, $\eta^2 = .03$, showing that, although there was no significant differences in the non-dependency condition, $F(1,105) = 1.51$, $p = .22$, participants in the dependency and illegitimate condition were more willing to engage in radical collective action ($M = 1.52$, $SD = 1.06$) than individuals in the legitimate condition ($M = 1.13$, $SD = .52$), $F(1,105) = 5.97$, $p = .02$. This might indicate that, under dependency conditions, appraisals of illegitimacy are needed in order to support radical action, whereas legitimacy perceptions seem to be less relevant under non-dependency conditions, where there should be more scope for radical action. Second, a marginal Dependency \times Group identification interaction, $F(1,105) = 3.64$, $p = .06$, $\eta^2 = .03$, showing a negative effect of identification in the non-dependency condition, which turned marginal in the dependency condition: $\beta = -.40$, $t(105) = -3.34$; $p = .001$; $\beta = -.26$, $t(105) = -1.90$; $p = .06$, respectively. In line with our hypothesis, this indicated that low identifiers (vs. high) were more willing to engage in radical action, especially under non-dependency conditions, when there is nothing-to-lose given that the in-group is independent from the out-group (see Table 1 for further details).

These interactions were further qualified by a three-way interaction: Legitimacy \times Dependency \times Group identification, $F(1,105) = 4.02$, $p = .05$, $\eta^2 = .04$. Further analyses (see Aiken & West, 1991) showed that, in the dependency conditions low identifiers were more willing than high identifiers to endorse radical action, but only under illegitimate conditions, $\beta = -.37$, $t(105) = -2.51$;

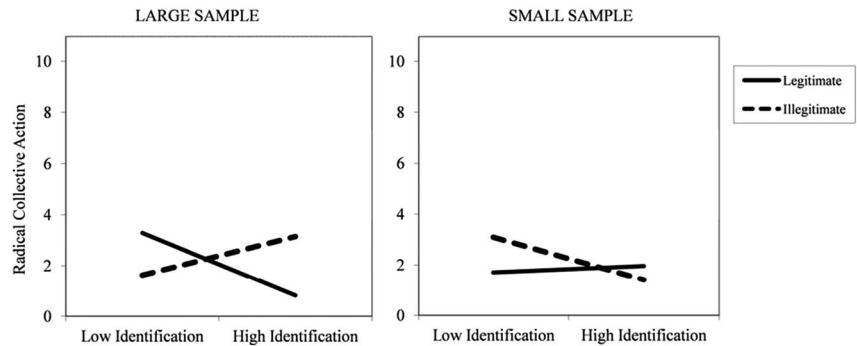


Fig. 1. Willingness to approve in radical action by high and low identifiers participants in the large and small sample conditions, as a function legitimacy.

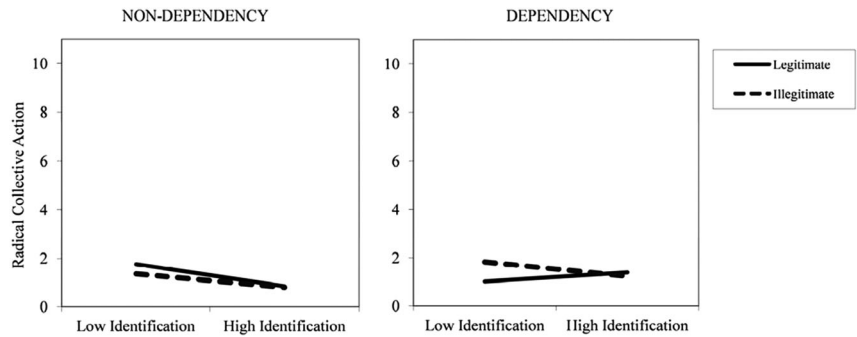


Fig. 2. Willingness to engage in radical action by high and low identifiers participants in the non-dependency and dependency conditions, as a function of legitimacy.

$p = .01$. There was no effect of identification in the legitimate dependent condition, $\beta = .24$, $t(105) = .84$; $p = .40$. Thus when the in-group depended on the privileged out-group, low identifiers only supported radical action to a greater extent than high identifiers when the in-group did not accept the disadvantage. Under non-dependency conditions, the level of group identification negatively predicted willingness to engage in radical action, albeit more strongly in the legitimate than in the illegitimate condition, ($\beta = -.59$, $t(105) = -2.45$; $p = .01$; $\beta = -.35$, $t(105) = -2.62$; $p = .01$). Therefore, in line with our hypothesis, in the non-dependency conditions low identifiers were always more willing to participate in radical action than high identifiers, especially when the in-group saw the disadvantage as legitimate (see Figure 2).

Discussion

In this study, we aimed to gain further evidence that endorsement of radical action to contest a group disadvantage was stronger among low than high group identifiers. This was confirmed for the readiness to participate measure (although the overall pattern was very similar on the approval measure). By manipulating the dependence of the in-group on the out-group for outcomes, we also attempted to test our interpretation that low identifiers would endorse radical action more because they have little to lose by doing so, whereas high identifiers, who are invested in the group, were more likely to reject radical action, presumably, because of the damage it could do to the in-group's image. The rationale here was that depending on the out-group means that in-group members could have "something to lose" given the power of the out-group to sanction or punish non-normative action. This is similar to the argument that status instability (Scheepers et al., 2006; Spears et al., 2015) undermines a nothing-to-lose mindset by giving low status groups the possibility of change (in line with social identity theory predictions); in the present case the potential for out-group punishment in the dependency condition provides the possibility of "something to lose." We argued that low identifiers are more susceptible to this effect because they are less concerned to protect the group image: the nothing-to-lose strategy reflects a cost-benefit analysis ("why not try this if all else fails?") that neglects any deleterious effects on group identity. This was supported by a near significant ($p = .06$) two-way interaction between dependency and identification, which showed a stronger negative effect of identification in the non-dependency condition (nothing-to-lose).

This interaction was further qualified by the three-way interaction with the legitimacy manipulation: we found that higher endorsement of radical action among low identifiers was relatively consistent across conditions with the exception of the dependency condition in which the in-group accepted their disadvantage as legitimate.

We expected the dependency to undermine the nothing-to-lose mindset and this indeed occurred for low identifiers when the in-group accepted the group disadvantage as legitimate. However, somewhat unexpectedly, the negative relation between identification and radical action was maintained in the dependent condition where the in-group did not accept the disadvantage. The reasons for this effect are not clear although, albeit post hoc, it could be that the implied support for resistance provides the efficacy to ignore the dependency on the out-group (cf. Reicher et al., 1995). That this effect is associated with low identifiers is also further evidence that high identifiers are more reluctant to consider radical behavior (presumably because of identity concerns). In summary, although this specific pattern was not predicted, high dependency was the only condition able to wipe out the generally greater support for radical action among low identifiers that we find otherwise, in line with the nothing-to-lose rationale.

General Discussion

In the current research, we tested the effect of group identification and legitimacy perceptions on radical action. We found that those members who identify with the in-group less strongly were, paradoxically perhaps, more willing to endorse radical action than high identifiers. We argue that one explanation for this difference is that extreme action could damage the in-group image, as it reflects less socially acceptable behavior. For this reason, high identifiers, who are more committed to the group, have something to lose when taking radical action. This is in line with Kamans et al. (2015) who showed that members of high status groups are concerned about the in-group high status and reputation, which leads to the inhibition of radical action tendencies.

The flipside of this effect for high identifiers is that low identifiers have less to lose by endorsing radical action, because they are less invested in their group identity. However, this does not mean that they are unwilling to derive some benefits from an otherwise disadvantageous situation. Radical action provides the possibility of doing this while the cost of tarnishing group identity simply does not weigh highly for them. For this reason, there are fewer impediments to low identifiers endorsing radical action: they have nothing-to-lose.

The idea that people less committed to their group should nevertheless become more committed to radical action seems paradoxical. What evidence is there to support this analysis? The first point to reiterate is that commitment to the group and commitment to radical action are two different things and, as we have argued, the former may actually hinder the latter for high identifiers. However, even here, there seem to be limits to this argument because, as Study 1 showed, when a large and reliable in-group sample disputed the legitimacy of their group disadvantage, high identifiers were more willing to countenance radical action. Presumably the in-group support for appraisals of injustice may make radical action somewhat more normative, and group image concerns less influential.

Our argument for low identifiers, by contrast, is that they are simply less concerned with their social identity and thus the image of their group. This makes them more amenable to the nothing-to-lose rationale that provides another explanation for the support for radical action. The key features of this rationale are twofold: (1) that the situation is perceived as quite desperate with few if any prospects for change, such as stable low status (Scheepers et al., 2006; Spears et al., 2015) or low power or group efficacy (Tausch et al., 2011); and related to this, (2) that the course of action is such that things could not get worse by trying it (in other words that there is nothing, rather than something, to lose by acting in this way).

In two studies, we provided manipulations that speak to these two features of the nothing-to-lose scenario that were expected to make this strategy especially appealing to low identifiers. In Study 1, feedback that a large and reliable sample accepted the group disadvantage as legitimate, should render the situation

as particularly desperate (i.e., the condition with least hope for group resistance) which indeed resulted in greater support for radical action among low identifiers compared to other conditions (feature 1 above). In Study 2, making the in-group dependent on the out-group, undermined the negative relation between identification and radical action (i.e., by providing “something to lose”; feature 2 above). Although this only occurred when the in-group accepted the disadvantage as legitimate, it could be that the social support implied by sense of illegitimacy provides some hope of resistance despite the dependence on the out-group.

Overall, these findings support our argument that low identifiers are more inclined to adopt a nothing-to-lose mindset than high identifiers. This analysis thus helps to explain the apparent paradox of why people less committed to the group, might be more prepared to commit it to a radical course of action.

Taking this pattern of results as a whole, we think that this research provides a relatively novel theoretical contribution to the literature and one that is not easily explained by the established approaches focused on collective action (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; see Van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). For instance, social identity theory focuses on appraisals of illegitimacy driving collective action, whereas we show that perceptions of legitimacy are more likely to predict it (see also Jiménez-Moya et al., 2015). The social identity approach also suggests identification to positively predict collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008) whereas we predict and find a negative relation. A crucial difference in both cases is that here we are concerned with radical or non-normative collective action, where (we argue) different arguments apply.

We should also acknowledge some limitations of our research. First of all, for practical and ethical reasons we did not measure real behavior regarding radical collective action. Even though behavioral intentions are a good proxy for action, measuring actual behavior would provide further evidence that low identifiers are actually willing to endorse such action. Second, we need to provide more direct evidence for some of the assumptions underlying the processes that we propose. For example, although it is well established in the social identity literature that high identifiers are more motivated to protect and maintain positive group image, the claim that such concerns prevented them endorsing radical action was not directly demonstrated in our research, nor was the assumption that low identifiers were less encumbered by such concerns. Future research might therefore delve deeper into these process aspects.

Social Implications

There is plenty of recent evidence for social groups taking radical action against social injustice and in-group disadvantage. For instance, some Greek and Spanish citizens who perceive the current economic and political system as corrupt have started participating in radical action against their governments. This

highlights the relevance of the study of radical collective action, in an attempt to better understand how disadvantaged groups fight for equality sometimes by extreme means. Our work has interesting implications for the understanding of the processes underlying extremism because it is often assumed that only those who are fanatically committed to the group would engage in such extreme action. This research is the first of which we are aware that suggests that low identifying group members may support radical action precisely because they lack a commitment to the group. Note that such people may be just as much affected by the disadvantageous social conditions (e.g., the economic crisis) but may not necessarily harbor any great attachment to some of the group identities operating in such crisis contexts (e.g., national identity, political parties, etc.). Indeed some social activists may have quite dilettantish relation to some of the groups within which they operate, seeing them in instrumental terms as vehicles for change, perhaps serving other group or political agendas, or even as a route to personal advancement or survival. Within this context it may seem acceptable to support or engage in extreme actions without concern for how this reflects on the reputation of the group in whose name it is conducted. Although Thomas and Louis (2014) showed, as many would have suspected, that violent actions were seen less effective and legitimate than non-violent actions, it has often been assumed that such actions derive (as they may often do) from a passionate commitment to one's group identities and their political agendas. What our research seems to suggest is that this assumption may often be mistaken, or at least partial. The motives behind radical actions may both be cooler, more calculating and perhaps rational on the one hand, but also less caring and committed to the groups in whose name they are advanced on the other. In short, the motives and indeed people that form the face of radical action may be more diverse than many academics and political commentators have often supposed.

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