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Published in:
Contemporary social science

DOI:
10.1080/21582041.2011.619876

Contemporary Social Science
Vol. 6, No. 3, 325–341, November 2011

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

The crowd as a psychological cue to in-group support for collective action against collective disadvantage

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Collective action against collective disadvantage is an important socio-psychological phenomenon that represents a powerful pathway to social change. One key conclusion from the psychological literature on collective action is that a strong subjective sense of *social identity* is almost a necessity for disadvantaged group members to become motivated to undertake collective action against collective disadvantage. We propose, however, that even those individuals who may not identify strongly with their group might engage in collective action when they are in a crowd. This is because one core feature of the crowd, the *physical co-presence of in-group members*, conveys a psychological cue to in-group support for collective action against collective disadvantage. This is particularly relevant for lower identifiers, because, unlike higher identifiers, they do not view themselves as similar to other group members and thus do not *expect* in-group support. As a consequence, expectations of in-group support and therefore interest in collective action should increase for lower identifiers when they are in a crowd. We tested this idea in a psychological experiment in which higher and lower identifiers with a disadvantaged group were randomly assigned to a physical co-presence or control condition. Results showed indeed that the physical co-presence of in-group members increased only lower identifiers' expectations of in-group support and their interest in collective action against collective disadvantage. We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of these results.

Collective disadvantage refers to any disadvantage that is structurally or incidentally imposed on a group, and thus typically includes low-status and/or low-power groups. It includes ethnic and gender discrimination, but also arises in contexts of increases in national or local taxes, increased tuition fees for students, and national or local government decisions to build a factory in one's neighbourhood (van Zomeren *et al.*, 2008a, 2011a). Collective action, defined as any action that individuals undertake to improve the group's position (van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009), is an

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2158-2041 (print) 2158-205X (online)/11/030325–17
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/21582041.2011.619876

important and agentic potential response to collective disadvantage because it can foster or enforce social change (e.g. demonstrations, strikes, riots; Klandermans, 1997). Over the last decades psychological theorising and research has converged on at least one important conclusion. *Social identity*, defined as that part of the self that is derived from one's membership in social groups together with the emotional and value significance thereof (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), is almost a precondition for collective action against collective disadvantage (for reviews, see Drury & Reicher, 2009; Haslam, 2004; Klandermans, 1997; and Van Zomeren *et al.*, 2008a). Indeed, psychological research demonstrates that individuals' motivation to undertake collective action strongly depends on whether they subjectively identify with their group and thus see themselves as similar to fellow group members on identity-relevant dimensions.

Important though this insight may be, many individuals within a disadvantaged group are likely to be *lower identifiers* who, most of the time at least, see themselves as unique individuals who do not perceive fellow group members as similar to themselves. This may explain why demonstrations typically attract only a small percentage of the full mobilisation potential (Klandermans, 1997), and why it is so notoriously difficult to convert passive sympathisers, never mind other group members into active protesters (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; Oegema & Klandermans, 1994). One important theoretical question is therefore how lower identifiers become motivated to undertake collective action. Whereas previous work has focused on lower identifiers' personal instrumental motivations (e.g. Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995; van Zomeren *et al.*, 2008b), in this article we focus on the potency of the crowd to convey, through *the physical presence of in-group members*, psychological cues to in-group support to those who are in most need of them: lower identifiers with the group. We tested this idea in a laboratory experiment.

The psychology of social identity and collective action

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) provides a strong social–psychological explanation of collective action. It posits that under particular socio-structural conditions (i.e. when there is hope and scope for social change, and group boundaries are closed; Tajfel, 1978), individuals' social identity becomes a psychological platform on which motivations to achieve social change through collective action can emerge. The more strongly individuals identify with their disadvantaged group, the stronger their motivation to undertake collective action (e.g. Ellemers, 1993). Self-categorisation theory (Turner *et al.*, 1987; Turner, 1991, 1999), which developed out of social identity theory, complements this view by detailing the psychological process through which individuals self-categorise (i.e. come to view themselves as group members). In this tradition, self-categories are viewed as social, historical, and ideological constructs (Reicher, 1987). These categories can become salient through chronic accessibility (e.g. gender among highly identified women), but also in response to group-related events (e.g. women confronted with gender discrimination). Thus, a social identity perspective conceptualises the self as a subjective

and dynamic process that explains how individuals view themselves and their social world (i.e. as a group member or as a unique individual).

With this theoretical background in place, we note that psychological research has tended to operationalise these different levels of self by focusing on those who identify more weakly or strongly with a group (Ellemers *et al.*, 1999; Leach *et al.*, 2008; Turner, 1999; Veenstra & Haslam, 2000). Indeed, the well-established link between group identification and participation in collective action against collective disadvantage implies that higher identifiers are more likely to participate in collective action than lower identifiers. Meta-analytic evidence derived from psychological studies of collective action indeed supports the idea that weaker identification with a disadvantaged group decreases individuals' support for collective action, their willingness to act, and their actual engagement in it (Van Zomeren *et al.*, 2008a).

A key reason for this is that group identification facilitates adherence to the perceived group norms about collective action against collective disadvantage (e.g. Postmes & Spears, 1998; Reicher *et al.*, 1995; van Zomeren *et al.*, 2008a). This implies that lower identifiers are less likely to value and pursue collective action against collective disadvantage as a group goal than higher identifiers (Ellemers *et al.*, 1997), especially when there is little hope and scope for achieving this goal (Doosje *et al.*, 2002; Ellemers *et al.*, 1999; Ouwerkerk *et al.*, 2000; van Zomeren *et al.*, 2008b). Lower identifiers with a disadvantaged group are thus portrayed as individuals who seek maximal subjective utility, defined in this case as narrow, individual self-interest (van Zomeren & Spears, 2009). As a consequence, they typically take a pragmatic and instrumental approach to their disadvantaged group membership; they resemble the classic free-riders described by Olson (1968), who prefer to do nothing while hoping to reap the collective benefits of collective action (Klandermans, 2002).

But this picture is incomplete. Another important difference between higher or lower identifiers is that higher identifiers typically view themselves as *interchangeable* group members, which allows the subjective inference that others will think, feel, and act just as they themselves do on identity-relevant dimensions. Lower identifiers, however, typically view themselves as *different* from their fellow group members, which effectively prevents such an inference. All else being equal, higher identifiers therefore tend to expect stronger in-group support than lower identifiers (or, put differently, they expect stronger consensus within the group). This is important because in-group support validates the group's norms about shared opinions and actions (i.e. about collective action against collective disadvantage), both of which make collective action more likely (van Zomeren *et al.*, 2004). Indeed, van Zomeren *et al.* (2004) found across three experiments that both emotional in-group support (i.e. group norms about opposing their collective disadvantage), and instrumental in-group support (i.e. group norms about undertaking collective action against collective disadvantage) predicted individuals' willingness to participate in collective action.

However, these and other differences between higher and lower identifiers are not set in stone—it is possible that there are conditions under which lower identifiers can modify their assessment of in-group support. As we will outline below in more detail,

one core feature of crowds should be very relevant for lower identifiers in particular, namely the *physical co-presence of in-group members*. Building on a rich tradition in social psychology to study the effects of mere co-presence (e.g. Steiner, 1972; Triplett, 1898; Zajonc, 1965; for a review, see Haslam, 2004), we propose that crowds convey a psychological cue to in-group support through the physical co-presence of its members. Importantly, this cue confirms higher identifiers' high expectations of in-group support, but disconfirms lower identifiers' low expectations of in-group support (Reicher *et al.*, 1995, 1998; Spears *et al.*, 2002). As a consequence, *higher identifiers* do not necessarily require this cue to infer the availability of in-group support because they already expect it to be available. However, the physical co-presence of in-group members should be an especially relevant cue to in-group support for *lower identifiers*. Thus, because the physical co-presence of group members is a key aspect of crowds, even lower identifiers with a disadvantaged group can become motivated to infer in-group support and to engage in collective action against collective disadvantage when they are in a crowd.

The crowd as a psychological cue to in-group support

Early theorising on crowds (e.g. LeBon, 1896) focused mainly on the dangers of being immersed in a group rather than on what they can (more positively) achieve. To use the language developed later individuals were believed, for example, to become *deindividuated* in the crowd (for a review, see Postmes & Spears, 1998). The claim was that individuals entered a regressive mode of primitive responding to the environment based on their animal instincts (Zimbardo, 1969). As a consequence, violence was never thought to be far away from crowds. However, many scholars have questioned this view of the crowd as a generically irrational entity that robbed individuals of what makes them supposedly human: their individuality and their reason (Drury & Reicher, 2009; Reicher, 2001). In fact, the social identity perspective has been quite clear and convincing in arguing that group behavior is *as rational and reasonable* as individual behavior. According to this approach, individuals do not lose themselves in a crowd, but shift their self-categorisation from the individual ('I') to the group level ('we'). Indeed, individuals who self-categorise as a group member (rather than as an individual) define and perceive themselves and their social world more in group (rather than individual) terms. As a consequence, their behavior is guided more by the group's norms (rather than one's personal norms), and one acts to achieve the group's goals (rather than individual goals). In this analysis, group behavior is as rational as individual behavior, but the particular self-underlying and motivating behavior is different (Postmes & Spears, 1998; Reicher, 2001; Spears, 2010).

With this recognition of the rationality of the group, it becomes possible to understand the crowd as a specific case of a psychological group in which in-group members are also *physically co-present*. Violence in crowds is therefore just one potential outcome of the collective action that individuals in crowds undertake, but solidarity and prosocial behavior are at least as likely (e.g. Drury *et al.*, 2009). Based on these insights into the crowd, theory and research has moved in different ways. For instance, the

Elaborated Social Identity Model (ESIM) of Drury, Stott, Reicher, and colleagues analyses the intergroup dynamics that govern crowd behavior (e.g. Drury & Reicher, 2009; Stott *et al.*, 2001). These depend on, for example, the group norms that develop over time as a function of how a crowd and the police (or more generally the out-group) respond to each other. Rather than focusing on such intergroup dynamics, however, we focus on the intra-group process of whether individuals in a crowd can use the physical co-presence of in-group members as a psychological cue to in-group support.

However, even when focusing on intra-group processes, important aspects of the inter-group situation remain important. For instance, we share the ESIM's assumption that the intergroup power differential (i.e. the collectively disadvantaged versus the powerful group responsible for it) is an important factor in explaining how individuals from low-power groups become empowered through the process of undertaking collective action. Drury & Reicher (2005, 2009) suggest in this respect that self-categorisation as a group member is an important basis for feelings of empowerment because of increased expectations of (instrumental) in-group support. Complementing this point, we follow the Social Identity model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE) that suggests that the physical co-presence of in-group members stimulates individuals to participate in collective action because it provides them with emotional as well as instrumental in-group support (Reicher *et al.*, 1995; Spears & Lea, 1994; Spears *et al.*, 2002). Specifically, the physical co-presence of in-group members validates and thus reassures individuals that they are not alone. This leads to a perceptual *shift* of self from the individual to the group level (e.g. Klein *et al.*, 2007; Reicher *et al.*, 1995). As a consequence, individuals adhere more strongly to group norms, and hence the SIDE model predicts that the physical co-presence of in-group members typically facilitates collective action that is *normative* from the perspective of the in-group (Reicher *et al.*, 1995; Spears *et al.*, 2002; for a meta-analysis, see Postmes & Spears, 1998). For instance, Reicher *et al.* (1998) found that the physical co-presence of in-group members helped individuals in a disadvantaged group to resist powerful out-group expectations of them (which can be interpreted as a form of collective resistance). However, no research of which we are aware has specifically tested whether the physical co-presence of in-group members is a contextual cue to lower identifiers' in-group support for and interest in undertaking collective action against collective disadvantage.

We therefore designed a psychological experiment to test our two hypotheses. First, we predicted that the physical co-presence of in-group members would increase lower identifiers' expectations of emotional and instrumental in-group support. Second, we predicted that as a consequence of this expectation, the physical co-presence of in-group members would increase lower identifiers' interest in collective action against collective disadvantage.

Empirical evidence

Fifty-four first-year students from the University of Amsterdam (mean age = 20.76 years, gender unrecorded) were randomly assigned to two experimental conditions:

physical co-presence versus physical absence of in-group members. Group identification was measured approximately 30 minutes before the experiment started (thus outside the context of collective disadvantage that we imposed at the start of the experiment). The experimental manipulation consisted simply of participants being seated in separate cubicles, or together in one room (per session three to eight people were present). The remainder of the experimental procedure was modelled after the procedure employed by van Zomeren *et al.* (2004). When the experiment started, all participants read that, ostensibly, an independent research body wanted to investigate first-year students' opinion on an issue by means of a survey study by an independent research body. This issue referred to a proposal of a University Committee to increase the amount of lab testing time, obliging first-year students of the University to fulfil 40 hours of testing in their first year, but now also 20 hours in their second year (i.e. a 50% increase). Participants were asked for their opinion about this proposal of the Committee before they were thanked and debriefed.

Before the experiment commenced, we measured group identification with three items (Cronbach's $a = 0.91$), tapping three important dimensions of the construct (self-categorisation, ties to the group and group evaluation; for a comprehensive review of more specific components of group identification, see Leach *et al.*, 2008). The items were: 'In general, I see myself as a first-year student/I feel a bond with other first-year students/I am glad to be a first-year student of the University of Amsterdam'. The response scales were seven-point scales (with anchors 1 = not at all, and 7 = very much). Conceptually, this measure reflects a general sense of identification with the group, but it should not be viewed as a personality-like measure because group identification is thought to vary by context, and over time (Turner *et al.*, 1987; also Leach *et al.*, 2008). In fact, this was the reason for taking this measure approximately 30 minutes before the start of this study and thus outside of the collective disadvantage context that we employed in the experiment. In the time between filling out this measure and starting the experiment, participants engaged in unrelated tasks. As intended through the procedure of random assignment, mean levels of group identification did not differ between the experimental and control condition, $t(52) = 0.64$, $p = 0.52$ (overall mean = 4.07, standard deviation (SD) = 1.75).

The bogus survey study included single-item measures of *emotional* in-group support (i.e. 'I think that other first-year students of the University of Amsterdam disagree with this proposal') and *instrumental* in-group support (i.e. 'I think that other first-year students of the University of Amsterdam are willing to do something against this proposal'). Both items were derived from van Zomeren *et al.* (2004) (with anchors 1 = not at all, and 7 = very much). As a proxy measure of participants' interest in collective action against collective disadvantage, we asked them to provide their personal email address that would be used to send them a digital petition against the proposed raise in required testing time. Participants who provided their email address were coded as 1 on collective action, whereas participants who refused were coded as 0 on this variable (Table 1 summarise relevant statistics).

We first tested the hypothesis that physical co-presence affected only lower identifiers' interest in collective action. We used two different statistical methods to test this

hypothesis—the first examined frequencies (i.e. how many people provided their email address as a function of experimental condition and group identification), and the second used multiple regression analysis to regress interest in collective action onto experimental condition, group identification, and their two-way interaction (Aiken & West, 1991). The results of both analyses showed converging support for our hypothesis. First, results of a chi-square test with physical co-presence, group identification (which was, necessarily for this analysis, median split) and interest in collective action showed significant deviations for low identifiers from the expected frequencies in the physical co-presence versus control condition, $\chi^2(1) = 4.73$, $p = 0.03$. For high identifiers, frequencies were exactly the same in both conditions because all individuals provided their email address to receive the petition (26 out of 26 across the two conditions, i.e. 100%). In line with our first hypothesis, low identifiers in the physical co-presence condition were more likely to provide their email address (14 out of 16, equalling 87.5%) than low identifiers in the control (i.e. the no co-presence) condition (six out of 12, equalling 50%). Second, a multiple regression analysis confirmed this effect. For interest in collective action, we obtained the predicted two-way interaction between the experimental manipulation and group identification, $b = -0.05$, standard error (SE) = 0.02, $p < 0.04$. Simple slopes analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) revealed that for lower identifiers (tested at −1 SD from the mean of the group identification scale), physical co-presence significantly increased interest in collective action, $b = 0.16$, SE = 0.06, $p < 0.01$. However, this was not the case for higher identifiers (tested at +1 SD of the mean of the group identification scale), $b = -0.02$, SE = 0.06, $p > 0.79$. Thus, both statistical methods revealed support for our hypothesis that lower identifiers become more interested in collective action when in-group members are physically co-present.

We then tested whether we would find a similar pattern of results on our measures of emotional and instrumental in-group support. First, we indeed obtained the predicted two-way interaction for *emotional* in-group support, $b = -0.25$, SE = 0.08, $p < 0.01$. Simple slopes analysis revealed that for lower identifiers, physical co-presence significantly increased emotional in-group support, $b = 0.67$, SE = 0.20, $p < 0.01$. As expected, this was not the case for higher identifiers, $b = -0.19$, SE = 0.21, $p > 0.36$. Thus, the physical co-presence of in-group members indeed raised only lower identifiers' expectations of emotional in-group support (Figure 1). Second, we also obtained the predicted two-way interaction for *instrumental* in-group support, $b = -0.32$, SE = 0.12, $p < 0.01$. Simple slopes analysis revealed that for lower identifiers, physical co-presence significantly increased instrumental in-group support, $b = 0.73$, SE = 0.28, $p < 0.02$. Again, this was not the case for higher identifiers, $b = -0.40$, SE = 0.29, $p > 0.17$. Thus, the physical co-presence of in-group members also raised only lower identifiers' expectations of instrumental in-group support (Figure 2). These results confirm our hypothesis that lower identifiers perceive stronger emotional and instrumental in-group support when in-group members are physically co-present.

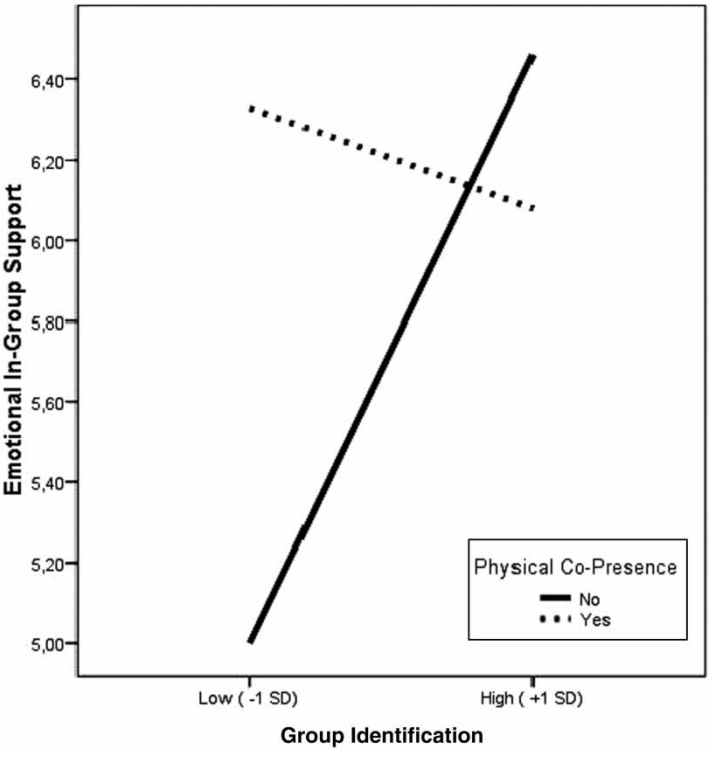

Figure 1. Two-way interaction effect between physical co-presence (manipulated) and group identification (measured) on emotional in-group support.

We proceeded with a test of the presumed mediation (i.e. explanation) of expectations of in-group support between the interaction between co-presence and group identification and interest in collective action (following the guidelines by Baron & Kenny, 1986). Initial tests suggested that emotional rather than instrumental in-group support was more relevant in predicting interest in collective action. We thus conducted another regression analysis in which we regressed behavior onto co-presence, group identification, their two-way interaction, and emotional in-group support. Statistical mediation is indicated by a reduced effect of the two-way interaction, and a positive effect of emotional support, on interest in collective action. Results confirmed the expected mediation in part: although the predictive effect of the two-way interaction was indeed reduced to non-significance (from $b = -0.25$, SE $= 0.08$, $p < 0.01$ to $b = -0.03$, SE $= 0.02$, $p > 0.17$), the predictive effect of emotional support was only marginally significant ($b = 0.06$, SE $= 0.04$, $p < 0.10$). Although the latter result is weaker than is ideally the case, the results as a whole nevertheless are consistent with our predictions.

In sum, the results of this experiment supported our two hypotheses about the potency of the crowd to cue in-group support for collective action against collective disadvantage. Specifically, the results show that lower identifiers with a disadvantaged

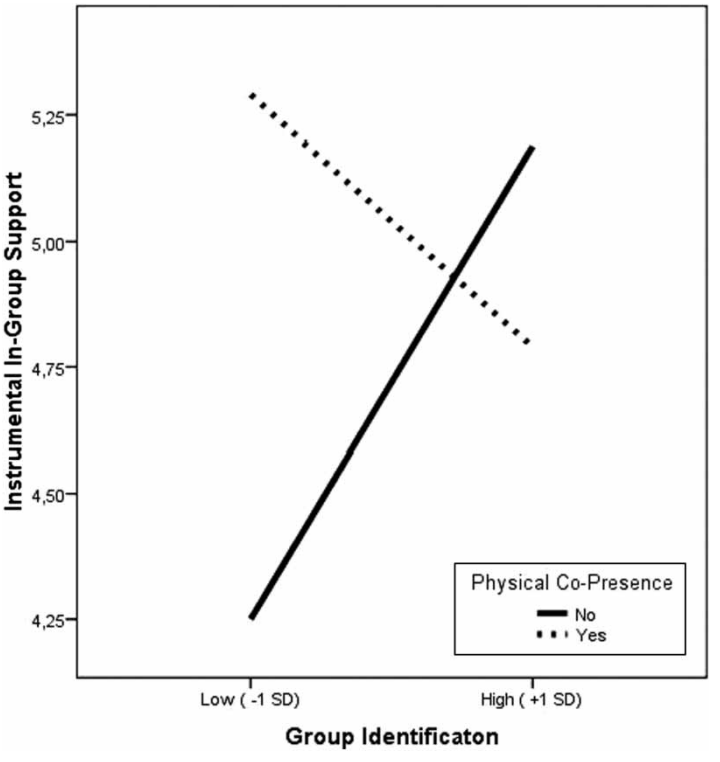

Figure 2. Two-way interaction effect between physical co-presence (manipulated) and group identification (measured) on instrumental in-group support.

group perceived more emotional and instrumental in-group support when in-group members were physically co-present (compared with the control condition). Moreover, lower identifiers became more interested in undertaking collective action against collective disadvantage in the presence of in-group members (compared with the control condition), and this was due in part to their expectations of emotional in-group support. Further, as expected, higher identifiers already expected in-group support and were already interested in undertaking collective action against collective disadvantage and thus the physical co-presence of in-group members did not affect them in this respect.

General discussion

The results of this psychological laboratory experiment supported our argument that the physical co-presence of in-group members is a relevant psychological cue for lower identifiers because it allows the subjective inference of the availability of emotional and instrumental in-group support (Reicher *et al.*, 1995, 1998; Spears *et al.*, 2002; also van Zomeren *et al.*, 2004). In further support of the social identity perspective in general and the SIDE model in particular, results showed that lower identifiers

also became more interested in collective action against collective disadvantage in the same condition, and this appeared to be explained by their expectations of emotional in-group support. Further as expected, higher identifiers were unaffected by the physical co-presence of in-group members because they already unequivocally expected emotional and instrumental in-group support and were already interested in collective action against collective disadvantage. These findings illustrate that the physical co-presence of in-group members that the crowd presents is an important psychological cue to lower identifiers' expectations of emotional and instrumental in-group support. Hence, these findings offer an important pointer toward studying the psychological implications of the crowd in order to understand better whether and why individuals engage in collective action against collective disadvantage. Aside from the strong value of studying inter-group crowd *dynamics* with an eye to, for instance, crowd control (as in ESIM, e.g. Drury & Reicher, 2009; Stott *et al.*, 2001), studying key intra-group features of crowds such as the physical co-presence of in-group members in the laboratory may reveal important insights in the psychology of collective action against collective disadvantage. Below we discuss the theoretical, practical, and political implications of these findings.

Theoretical, practical and political implications

At a general level, our results tell us something new and important about a key feature of crowds—the physical co-presence of in-group members. In line with accounts of the crowd as an important case of inter-group dynamics and collective action (e.g. Drury & Reicher, 2009), one can view our experimental manipulation of putting individuals together in a room (versus in isolated cubicles) as a 'minimal crowd' (or at least as a rudimentary form of a crowd). The experimental method, as we used in the study we reported, has the strong advantage of isolating such subtle factors that are often interwoven with other factors in real life. Crowds, for example, are often also characterised by the possibility to communicate within the group (which is something that our participants could not do, verbally at least). Indeed, we do not believe that our groups reflect crowds in their fullest sense—crowds are obviously much more than group members being together in the same space. The SIDE model suggests in this respect that the possibility to *communicate* within the group or between groups (in the case of when the crowd meets the police) is an additional factor that is important in understanding intergroup dynamics. Most of the research on the SIDE model tended to focus on the availability of communication channels with the in-group (e.g. Spears *et al.*, 2002; also Scheepers *et al.*, 2006; van Zomeren *et al.*, 2010). The current experiment is therefore one of the first experimental studies to isolate the physical co-presence of in-group members as a key factor in the study of crowds and collective action. Future research should investigate the interplay between these two important aspects of crowds in motivating individuals for collective action against collective disadvantage.

Furthermore, our analysis builds on but also extends the social identity approach more generally (e.g. Drury & Reicher, 2009; Ellemers *et al.*, 1999; Klein *et al.*, 2007; Reicher *et al.*, 1995; Subasic *et al.*, 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner,

1991, 1999; Turner *et al.*, 1987; Van Zomeren *et al.*, 2008a) by showing that the physical co-presence of in-group members is an important cue to in-group support for lower (but not higher) identifiers (Spears & Lea, 1994). In crowds, the social identity approach predicts a perceptual shift from personal identity to social identity. As a consequence, people are more likely to adhere to group norms (Postmes & Spears, 1998), which can be negative or positive (e.g. rioting or cheering one's football team). Although this shift (called depersonalisation in self-categorisation theory) is generally more likely for higher identifiers, our analysis and findings suggest that the physical co-presence of in-group members might also (temporarily) depersonalise lower identifiers because it signals in-group support for collective action against collective disadvantage. Thus, the contextual cue to in-group support might be a cue to the salience of their social rather than their personal identity. This fits with the larger idea that, generally speaking, higher and lower identifiers psychologically live in very different social worlds (e.g. Van Zomeren *et al.*, 2008b); Veenstra & Haslam, 2000), but that situational cues can 'turn' lower identifiers into higher identifiers and vice versa (Drury & Reicher, 2009; Subasic *et al.*, 2008; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner *et al.*, 1987). Future research can explore which other contextual cues are 'hidden' in the crowd.

Our experiment fits in a rich tradition in social psychology to study the effects of the physical co-presence of others on individuals' perception, experience, and behavior. For instance, Triplett (1898) found in a pioneering psychological experiment that racing cyclists performed better when another cyclist was co-present, even in the absence of explicit competition. Zajonc (1965) pinpointed this 'social facilitation' effect to a basic physiological process. According to him, the physical co-presence of others increases arousal, which makes individuals rely more on 'dominant responses' (i.e. responses already engrained in the organism). As a consequence, individuals' performance on tasks that require such a dominant response would be facilitated by the arousing presence of others (whereas tasks that require a non-dominant response would make individuals vulnerable to *social inhibition*—the opposite of social facilitation). The social identity explanation of social facilitation effects has focused more on the influence that the co-presence of *in-group members* have (Haslam, 2004), and, in line with our argument, on the importance of adherence of group norms as a function of viewing oneself as a group member rather than a unique individual. Nevertheless, it is important to recognise the rich tradition in social psychology to focus on how the mere presence of others can influence individuals.

We further note two alternative explanations of our findings. First, we have thus far conceptualised the effects of physical co-presence as providing a contextual cue to in-group support for lower identifiers. However, in line with the SIDE model the physical co-presence of in-group members might also provide a form of *surveillance* (Reicher *et al.*, 1995; Spears & Lea, 1994) such that lower identifiers conform more strongly to group norms, either because of group pressure (e.g. Deutsch & Gerard, 1955), or out of a sense of moral duty (e.g. 'to do the right thing'; McGarty *et al.*, 2000). This explanation is not a likely one for the current results because participants could not in any way be influenced by their in-group members

(e.g. they could not communicate with each other, and their responses were anonymous and not visible to other group members). Theoretically, however, this effect of physical co-presence of in-group members is quite likely and thus important to research in the future.

Second, according to the ESIM the physical co-presence of in-group members might provide low identifiers with a stronger sense of social identity that *empowers* them because of the support they now expect from fellow group members. Although we believe there is generally strong merit in this explanation, results would have been more in line with it if we had found that *instrumental* in-group support explained the effects of co-presence among lower identifiers on their interest in collective action. Experimental research has shown that instrumental rather than emotional support is uniquely related to issues of subjective power, control, and efficacy (van Zomeren *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, this type of support should have been particularly important for disadvantaged group members to feel empowered in standing up against the powerful out-group. However, it was not. Admittedly, our results regarding mediation were not ideal, but they nevertheless seem to be more in line with SIDE's cue explanation than with ESIM's empowerment explanation. Future research can explore the empowering effects of the physical co-presence of in-group members.

We further note that subtle aspects of a situation such as the physical co-presence of in-group members are rarely acknowledged and examined in explanations of collective action against collective disadvantage (e.g. Klandermans, 1997; van Zomeren *et al.*, 2008). Yet, our results indicate that such subtle variables are consequential, at least in the current case for lower identifiers. Given that it is often hard to convert sympathisers of a group's cause into collective action participants (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; Oegema & Klandermans, 1994; also Klandermans, 1997), the current results suggest a practical strategy for mobilising lower identifiers for collective action. Although we certainly do not claim that this is the 'magic bullet' for organisers of collective action, we do believe that organisations can become more effective in mobilising lower identifiers in the presence of in-group members (i.e. in teams). Indeed, according to our analysis and results, particularly the emotional in-group support provided by the physical co-presence of in-group members can motivate lower identifiers for collective action, or at least increase their interest in it. For instance, contacting individuals together with fellow group members (rather than one-on-one) might already lead to expectations of a sense of emotional and instrumental in-group support. Future research can test whether such a practical strategy is effective.

Finally, our findings can also have political implications. Indeed, the very same knowledge about which factors afford collective action among the disadvantaged also offer insights into how to *prevent* collective action from occurring. Our findings imply that the *possibility* for the physical co-presence of in-group members is very important for collective action to occur in the first place. However, this also means that prohibiting this possibility (e.g. by imposing sanctions on crowding) might be effective, according to our results, in preventing the psychological cues to in-group support that crowds can convey. As a consequence, lower identifiers would be likely

to be confirmed in their expectation of low in-group support, and thus less interested in collective action. This reminds us that the psychological processes we examine operate independently of tyrannical or democratic ends.

Limitations and directions for future research

One limitation of the reported study is that it provides only a single source of empirical evidence and hence it would be good to replicate these results using a different population, group, and collective disadvantage. Nevertheless, a meta-analysis by van Zomeren *et al.* (2008) showed that key predictors of collective action against collective disadvantage such as group identification, perceptions and feelings of group-based injustice, and beliefs about the group's efficacy, are valid predictors of collective action across a wide range of populations, groups, and collective disadvantages. The literature therefore suggests that there is no *a priori* reason to assume that the current results would not generalise to other populations, groups, and collective disadvantages. Having said that, we do think it is possible that lower identifiers' interpretation of the cues conveyed by the crowd can differ as a function of different (cultural) contexts. For instance, in countries with a long history of surveillance, the physical co-presence of in-group members might be interpreted as 'being watched' by one's group rather than as being supported by them. Similarly, it is possible that (from the point of view from the in-group) crowds do not convey in-group support for non-normative collective action.

One further objection to the present research is that lower identifiers might not be expected to be in a crowd in the first place, and thus that it lacks ecological validity. While this observation may often be true, it is also true that there is always likely to be variation in the commitment of those present in the crowd (Van Zomeren *et al.*, 2008b) and a range of different initial motives for going on marches, rallies and demonstrations (including simply being coincidentally present). Moreover, as noted we believe that the key principles that we derive from our results move beyond the crowd itself. For instance, organisers of collective action can try to mobilise individuals in 'teams of organisers' that, through the co-presence of in-group members, convey high expectations of in-group support. Finally, our results suggest that the mere co-presence of others can be one factor in explaining a radicalising experience of being in the crowd (for further factors involved, see also Drury & Reicher, 2000). This points to the important transformational potential of the crowd to the extent that it can gear individuals up for collective action who, prior to the crowd context, were quite likely not to be interested in it.

Empirically, we note that we obtained the weakest support for the mediation hypothesis despite the significant predicted two-way interaction effects on in-group support and interest in collective action. Nevertheless, there are good theoretical and empirical reasons to interpret these findings as being in line with our analysis. Theoretically, alternative explanations seem either unlikely or less in line with the data than our theoretical account. Empirically, our measure of interest in collective action was a dichotomous measure that necessarily obscures more fine-grained patterns of variance

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations

	2. Emotional in-group support	3. Instrumental in-group support
1. Interest in collective action	0.53*	0.46*
2. Emotional in-group support		0.30*
Mean	5.94	
SD	1.20	
3. Instrumental in-group support		
Mean	5.84	
SD	1.55	

Note: An asterisk (*) means that correlations differ significantly from zero at $p < 0.05$.

obtained with a continuous measure (e.g. seven-point scales), and thus also obscures the true relationship between the constructs involved. This is unavoidable, however, if psychologists want to predict action vs. inaction. Moreover, although we had a sufficient number of participants to test our hypotheses, it should be noted that our predicted interaction effects were based on a significant difference for half of the sample (i.e. for lower identifiers), and a lack of difference for the other half of the sample (i.e. for higher identifiers). This makes our statistical tests quite conservative tests of our hypothesis. Given the statistical significance of most of our findings we are therefore confident that our interpretation of the data is valid.

Our analysis and results offer important directions for future research in psychology and beyond. As noted, psychological research can test whether lower identifiers' sensitivity to contextual cues also occurs when the physical co-presence of in-group members reflects surveillance rather than in-group support. Moreover, it is important to study the potentially empowering consequences of the physical co-presence of in-group members. Applied research can also test whether a mobilisation campaign that targets individuals in the physical co-presence of in-group members may be more effective than campaigns that target individuals in isolation. Moreover, social scientists more generally can study whether the physical co-presence of in-group members and the possibility to communicate with in-group members (and perhaps out-group members) can be viewed as the essence of a crowd. Finally, it would be interesting to study whether the physical co-presence of in-group members cues in-group support for (from the point of view of the in-group) *anti-normative* action (e.g. extreme violent actions like terrorist acts). Thus, the current findings at the micro-level might inspire thinking about crowds at this level, but also at the meso- and macro-levels.

Conclusion

Collective action and crowds are important and partly overlapping social and psychological phenomena that offer a rich understanding of intra- and inter-group processes

more generally. This is true in particular because theory and research on collective action and crowds bring together a plethora of socio-psychological factors that produce rational collective behavior by psychological group members. In this article we focused on one core feature of crowds, namely the physical co-presence of in-group members, to suggest that this feature of the crowd can be a psychological cue to in-group support for lower identifiers with the disadvantaged group. Indeed, the results of an experiment that carefully manipulated the physical co-presence of in-group members showed that lower identifiers perceived more in-group support and were more interested in collective action when in-group members were physically co-present than in a control condition. We therefore believe it is quite clear from our research that studying the crowd is essential in advancing our understanding of collective action against collective disadvantage, and beyond.

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