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A unique motivational profile for activists? Towards a more comprehensive social identity model of collective action

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Chapter 6: A Unique Motivational Profile for Activists?

Towards a More Comprehensive *Social Identity Model of Collective Action*

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Abstract

Social protest is often enacted by both activists and sympathizers of political causes, but are both groups motivated by the same psychological factors? The extended *Social Identity Model of Collective Action* (SIMCA) entails that group identification, anger and efficacy uniquely predict individuals' collective action, with moral conviction amplifying these other motivations. We propose that SIMCA may work well for non-activist sympathizers of political causes, but lacks two key predictors that rely on previous participation, which should hence be relatively unique to activists. We therefore developed a more comprehensive SIMCA that adds *empowerment* and *embeddedness* for activists. To evaluate this model across different political and cultural contexts, we report three studies in two contexts (among American social justice activists at different stages of the Black Lives Matter movement, and among Jewish-Israeli anti-occupation activists). Our findings confirmed the extended SIMCA for sympathizers, and largely supported the need for extending it for activists, demonstrating the added predictive value of embeddedness and empowerment. We discuss implications of our findings about activists and non-activists for theory, research, and the practice of social protest in and across different political and cultural contexts.

Word count: 186

Key words: protest, collective action, activism, empowerment, embeddedness

A Unique Motivational Profile for Activists?

Towards a More Comprehensive *Social Identity Model of Collective Action*

History as well as research suggest that those who take action for social change need endurance and that their success is anything but certain (Cohen-Eick et al., 2023; Davenport, 2007; Louis et al., 2022). The recurring protests against racist police violence and institutional racism in the United States demonstrate this well. All of the protest waves as part of the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement were sparked by killings of African Americans at the hand of police, with both the 2015 and 2020 waves turning into nationwide protests against institutional racism. The resurgence of the protests in 2020 may indicate that the efforts of activists in 2015 were rather fruitless, with institutional racism still ubiquitous. Other examples from different political and cultural contexts are abundant. For example, Kashmiri activists protested for years for independence, yet the region ended up losing its autonomy and protestors suppressed violently, most notably during the so-called “stone-pelting demonstrations in 2017 (Cakal et al., 2020). The anti-occupation efforts in Israel/Palestine also demonstrate this, with activists having been protesting Israeli rule over Palestinians and their land for decades, with few achievements to show for it and with frequent severe setbacks.

Considering the slow and elusive nature of social change in such contexts, what drives activists to persistently take action for their cause? And is their motivational profile similar to or different from non-active sympathizers with the same cause (Klandermans, 1997; Klandermans & Oegema, 1987)? More specifically, do they have unique motivations that allow them to persevere in action, despite past failures? We suggest they do have unique motivations that develop through previous participation (i.e., empowerment and embeddedness). We thus seek to examine and acknowledge these unique motivations by extending the *Social Identity Model of Collective Action* (SIMCA; Van Zomeren et al., 2008),

which provides a theoretically grounded analysis of why individuals engage in collective action¹ (Becker et al., 2011; Cakal et al., 2011; Klandermans et al., 2008; Tabri & Conway, 2011; Tausch et al., 2011; Thomas et al., 2012; Van Zomeren et al., 2011, 2012, 2018). We specifically aim to move from the four unique predictors of social protest identified (*group identification, moral conviction, anger, and efficacy*; Agostini & Van Zomeren, 2021; Van Zomeren et al., 2008, 2018) toward a more comprehensive SIMCA that also includes two unique motivations of activists (i.e., empowerment and embeddedness). This is needed because the extended SIMCA implicitly assumes that activists and sympathizers of political causes have similar motivational profiles. Not only is this assumption implicit and untested, it is also questionable, as engaging in collective action itself can trigger transformational psychological processes that qualitatively change people's motivation (Drury & Reicher, 2005, 2009; Klandermans, 2014; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Stürmer & Simon, 2004; Vestergren et al., 2019).

Specifically, we assume that transformational processes that are triggered following repeated participation in collective action include changes in one's identity and social networks that uniquely enable the experience of, respectively, *empowerment* and *embeddedness* (to be defined below). These variables should therefore be relevant for activists' motivation to engage in collective action, but irrelevant for sympathizers. We thus contend that the *extended SIMCA captures the motivation for collective action of sympathizers, but does not capture the full motivational profile of activists*, because it lacks two unique predictors that rely on activists' previous participation and the transformational processes that this presumably triggers. This is quite likely because, unlike sympathizers' participation in collective action, activists' participation in collective action is typically more

¹ We use the terms collective action and social protest interchangeably in this chapter.

structural and thus also demands more sustained efforts from these individuals, even when achieving the goals of their collective action seems against all odds (Drury & Reicher, 2005, 2009; Klandermans et al., 2008; Schussman & Soule, 2005).

To evaluate this, we report the findings of three survey studies with different samples (i.e., sympathizers and activists) and with different cultural and political contexts in which social protest was occurring (i.e., U.S. BLM protests; Israeli anti-occupation protests). Study 1 surveyed both social justice activists and sympathizers in the context of 2015 protests against racist police violence and institutional racism in the U.S., an emerging political context that would later transform into BLM. To further illuminate the motivational profile of activists and assess whether there is a need for a more comprehensive SIMCA, Studies 2-3 looked specifically at activist populations, focusing on a unique sample of Israeli anti-occupation activists (Study 2) and experienced BLM activists in the more recent wave of racial justice protests in the U.S. (Study 3).

The SIMCA for sympathizers

The original SIMCA, derived from a meta-analysis of the extant literature (Van Zomeren et al., 2008), identified three unique psychological predictors of collective action (i.e. group identification, group-based anger, group efficacy; see also Hamann et al., this volume; Pauls et al., this volume). The extended SIMCA elaborated on the original SIMCA by adding moral conviction (see Dono et al., this volume) as a fourth, but more distal, predictor of collective action. Both the original and extended SIMCA assume similar motivational profiles for activists and sympathizers, based on four core motivations.

First, *group identification* relates to individuals' ability and motivation to perceive, feel and act as psychological group members rather than isolated individuals (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Identifying with a group thus entails that individuals perceive themselves in group terms (e.g., "we" and "us") as well as others in their social world (e.g., "them"). For

this reason, the original SIMCA contends that group identification directly predicts collective action, as higher identifiers with the group are more likely to think, feel, and act for the group. Specifically, identification with a *politicized group* (e.g., a social movement or activist group) is a particularly strong predictor of collective action. That is because politicized identity, unlike broader and vaguer identities, includes a clear normative and action-oriented meaning (Agostini & Van Zomeren, 2021; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Stürmer & Simon, 2004).

The original SIMCA further assumes that group identification facilitates individuals' group-based emotional experience of injustice (i.e., anger) and their beliefs in the group's efficacy to achieve group goals, both of which uniquely predict collective action (Agostini & Van Zomeren, 2021). *Group-based anger* is based in the group-based perception of injustice, but its emotional experience adds unique motivational power to do something about the injustice (e.g., Van Zomeren et al., 2004). In a similar vein, *group efficacy* motivates collective action because it reflects individuals' belief that their group is able to achieve its goals through collective action (Bandura, 1997; Hornsey et al., 2006; Mummendey et al., 1999). Group efficacy beliefs reflect a perception of the group as the agent of social change (see also Cakal et al., this volume), and those who hold them subscribe to the idea that, through joint effort and as a group, they can achieve relevant goals (e.g., "yes we can!"; Van Zomeren et al., 2010).

The extended SIMCA differentiated a moral motivational dimension through considering a fourth predictor of collective action that reflects whether individuals moralize the issue at hand (i.e., *moral conviction*; Skitka, 2010). Moral conviction reflects individuals' strong and absolute belief about what is right and wrong (Skitka & Bauman, 2008), and this belief is experienced as a non-negotiable, self-evident fact about the world (Skitka, 2010). Moral conviction provides a firm basis on which individuals can identify with politicized groups, experience anger, and believe in the efficacy of achieving group goals through joint

efforts (Van Zomeren et al., 2011, 2012, 2018; Van Zomeren, 2013). Accordingly, the extended SIMCA adds moral conviction to the original SIMCA as an *antecedent* of the three original predictors (Van Zomeren, 2013). Thus, moral conviction predicts politicized group identification, anger, and efficacy beliefs, which in turn uniquely predict collective action (e.g., Mazzoni et al., 2015; Kutlaca et al., 2016).

A more comprehensive SIMCA for activists

The original and extended SIMCA may apply well to sympathizers, but might not fully capture activists' unique motivations. Indeed, becoming an activist may include qualitative psychological changes that entail potentially new motivations related to their experience of participating in social protest (e.g., Van Zomeren, 2015; Vestergren et al., 2019; see also Hamann et al., this volume). This is why we focus on two potentially unique predictors that may stem from transformational processes triggered by past participation, namely *empowerment* and *embeddedness* (e.g., Cohen-Eick et al., 2023; Drury & Reicher, 2005, 2009; Duncan, 2012; Schussman & Soule, 2005; Simon et al., 1998; Van Zomeren, 2015; see also Becker et al., 2011).

First, Drury and Reicher (2005), for example, found in their qualitative studies of anti-road protesters that participants' feeling of *empowerment* did not stem from the perceived success of the protest, but from the shared experience of participation itself. Such a psychological consequence of collective action is important because, "[i]f the feeling of empowerment endures beyond the collective action itself, it could affect participants' personal lives and motivate involvement in further collective action" (p. 35). Empowerment refers in this context to the process of a social-psychological transformation that takes place for group members who challenge existing relations of dominance (Drury & Reicher, 2005, 2009). Thus, empowerment is a positive experience that one can only have access to if one is participating, or already has participated, in collective action. It is important to note that

empowerment relates to the *process* (i.e., participation) and shared group experience, and is thus different from efficacy, which relates to the outcomes of collective action (i.e., social change) and is grounded in individual beliefs about the likelihood that an action will achieve its goals. In other words, empowerment can occur even when participating individuals do not strongly believe in an action's efficacy.

Second, participating in collective action can change individuals' personal lives by leading them to become *embedded* in activist networks—a chance not afforded to occasional activists or sympathizers considering collective action. Schussman and Soule (2005) found in this respect that a key predictor of collective action is whether individuals were simply *asked* to participate by those in one's network (Schussman & Soule, 2005; see also Klandermans et al., 2008). Embeddedness thus refers to individuals' inclusion in an activist network in which requests for participation in collective action are structural (Schussman & Soule, 2005; see also Klandermans et al., 2008). In this sense, embeddedness goes beyond politicized group identification, which is a psychological self-categorization, by capturing actual social ties and interactions between group members.

This structural aspect of embeddedness and activists' collective action is, compared to empowerment, what makes them relevant *only* to activists. Indeed, because sympathizers have no access to these networks, they will not be structurally asked to participate (Klandermans, 2014). Furthermore, activists' embeddedness implies the structural availability of emotional and instrumental support to cope with setbacks, the absence of which may demotivate sympathizers to participate in collective action (Van Zomeren et al., 2004). Thus, embeddedness is a unique structural and motivational resource for activists. In fact, beyond the opportunities and coping resources it provides, embeddedness likely comes with normative expectations. Activist networks are commonly linked to the prescriptive norm that members actively participate in collective actions, and active participation of other members

with whom one has social ties will reinforce this expectation as a descriptive norm (Stürmer & Simon, 2004; Thomas & McGarty, 2009; Thomas et al., 2009). As such, although we expect both empowerment and embeddedness to be unique predictors of collective action for activists (but not necessarily for sympathizers), embeddedness may constitute the clearest difference between the motivational profiles of activists and sympathizers. Together, these may explain why activists and sympathizers differ in perceptions of collective action (Cohen-Eick et al., 2023; Vestergren et al., 2019).

Examining the extended SIMCA in different political and cultural contexts

Below, we report on three studies in the contexts of social justice activism in the U.S., and anti-occupation activism in Israel. Study 1 employed activist and sympathizer samples. We expected that the extended SIMCA would apply well to sympathizers, but that, for activists, embeddedness and empowerment would uniquely predict collective action. Studies 2-3 zoom in on the unique motivational profile of activists by surveying Israeli anti-occupation activists and experienced BLM activists.

Participants

In total, 1,343 participants took part in our studies. Study 1 included equivalent samples from two populations of interest: activists (Study 1a; $n = 407$, 52% women, 0.7% non-binary; mean age = 34.68, $SD = 12.59$) and sympathizers (Study 1b; $n = 398$, 61% women, 0.3% non-binary; mean age = 35.77, $SD = 12.27$) in the context of the 2015 U.S. protests in Ferguson and Baltimore against what was perceived by many as racist police violence (i.e., what later evolved into the BLM movement). On average, individuals in the activist sample had been politically active for 7.83 years ($SD = 9.34$) and considered their engagement highly important ($M = 5.44$, $SD = 1.48$, on a 1-7 scale). While 72% of these participants had taken part in demonstrations against institutional discrimination within the

preceding 12 months, only 10.1% of participants in the sympathizer sample had taken part in demonstrations against institutional discrimination in the preceding year.²

For Study 2, we recruited a hard-to-reach sample of Jewish Israeli anti-occupation activists ($n = 99$; 52% women, 0.9% non-binary; mean age = 37.64, $SD = 11.40$) using a snowball sampling, guaranteeing their anonymity to protect them from any negative consequences in the context of state repression of dissent. As intended, the sample consisted of highly engaged individuals, with 75% having joined demonstrations against the 2014 Gaza War, and generally having been active for multiple years ($M = 11.34$, $SD = 8.96$) and considering their engagement highly important ($M = 5.74$, $SD = 1.37$).

To secure a larger sample of activists for Study 3, we recruited social justice activists in the U.S. ($n = 439$; 47.4% women, 1.1% non-binary; mean age = 35.35, $SD = 10.75$) who had participated in protests in the context of the 2020 BLM protests that followed the killing of George Floyd. Again, the sample consisted of highly engaged individuals, with 84.7% having already attended protests before the killing of George Floyd, and generally having been politically active for years ($M = 9$, $SD = 6.33$) and considering their engagement highly important ($M = 5.79$, $SD = 1.21$).

Methods

Across studies, we used established measures of the four SIMCA predictors: politicized group identification (Doosje et al., 1995), group efficacy (Tausch et al., 2011), group-based anger (Halperin & Gross, 2011), and moral conviction (Reifen-Tagar et al., 2014). We additionally measured empowerment (e.g., “I feel that as politically concerned

² We are aware that a strict definition of sympathizers (Klandermans, 1997; Klandermans & Oegema, 1987) might require the exclusion of individuals who already participated in protests. Therefore, we also conducted the analyses without participants who already had participated in protests. This does not change the overall pattern of result.

person/activist I am part of a collective enterprise,” Van Zomeren et al., 2015). Embeddedness used a more descriptive measure (Schussman & Soule, 2005), with one item asking about the number of friends who are also activists (1 = *none*; 7 = *all of them*) and another asking how often these friends invite them to join collective actions (1 = *never*; 7 = *very often*). The outcome variable was participants’ willingness to participate in future collective actions (CA, Tausch et al., 2011). In Study 3, we also developed and included a measure of social support (e.g., “I trust that other social justice activists will be there for me if anything happens to me during a protest”), allowing us to explore it as a potential mechanism through which embeddedness and empowerment predict CA. If not stated otherwise, measures employed a Likert-scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*). The number of items, means, standard deviations, and reliabilities for all scales across studies are summarized in Table 6.1, and the correlations among the variables for all samples can be found in Tables 6.2-5. The items and anchors of all scales can be found in the Appendix.

Results Study 1

Table 6.1 shows that the *activist* sample scored, on average, relatively high on all the SIMCA variables as well as on empowerment and embeddedness. Table 6.2 shows that collective action intentions were positively correlated with politicized identification, group-based anger, group efficacy beliefs, and moral conviction. Furthermore, these intentions were also positively correlated with empowerment and embeddedness. This pattern is encouraging as it suggests that there may be potential in adding the latter two variables to the SIMCA, at least for activists. To answer our research question, namely whether activists have additional, unique motivations for collective action beyond those included in the extended SIMCA, we first analyzed the data with the extended SIMCA, and then with the more comprehensive SIMCA.

Table 6.1: The number of items, means, standard deviations, and reliabilities for all scales across studies

Measure	Study 1a (activists)				Study 1b (sympathizers)				Study 2				Study 3			
	# <i>items</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Cro- α</i>	# <i>items</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Cro- α</i>	# <i>items</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Cro- α</i>	# <i>items</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Cro- α</i>
<i>Motivations:</i>																
1. Politicized identification	4	4.72	1.34	.91	4	3.08	1.56	.91	4	5.05	1.13	.80	4	5.18	1.08	.86
2. Moral conviction	4	5.51	1.30	.94	4	4.68	1.63	.95	4	6.48	0.73	.47	4	5.81	1.04	.84
3. Group-based anger	8	5.66	1.37	.94	8	4.71	1.86	.96	4	5.85	1.24	.91	3	6.03	1.10	.88
4. Group efficacy	3	5.26	1.17	.90	3	4.22	1.50	.93	3	3.43	1.44	.92	3	5.54	1.09	.81
5. Empowerment	4	5.27	1.23	.86	4	3.40	1.29	.78	4	5.28	1.09	.61	4	5.70	1.00	.81
6. Embeddedness	2	3.56	1.40	<i>r</i> =.61**	2	1.88	1.06	<i>r</i> =.73**	2	4.03	1.36	<i>r</i> =.44*	2	4.57	1.18	<i>r</i> =.47*
7. Social Support													4	5.36	1.26	.90
<i>Outcome variables:</i>																
7. Collective action	10	4.17	1.42	.90	10	2.60	1.36	.92	10	5.26	1.15	.85	5	5.01	1.17	.87

** *p* < .01

Table 6.2: Bivariate correlations between variables in Study 1a (activists)

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Motivations:</i>						
1. Politicized identification						
2. Moral conviction	.68**					
3. Group-based anger	.66**	.73**				
4. Group efficacy	.68**	.61**	.61**			
5. Empowerment	.72**	.60**	.54**	.66**		
6. Embeddedness	.45**	.20**	.19**	.24**	.38**	
<i>Outcome variables:</i>						
7. Collective action	.71**	.53**	.53**	.55**	.58**	.45**

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 6.1 further shows that our *sympathizer* sample scored, on average, lower than the activist sample on all the SIMCA variables as well as on empowerment and embeddedness.

As can be seen in Table 6.3, collective action intentions were positively correlated with politicized identification, group-based anger, group efficacy beliefs, and moral conviction.

Furthermore, these intentions were unexpectedly positively correlated with empowerment and embeddedness.

Table 6.3: Bivariate correlations between variables in Study 1b (sympathizers)

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Motivations:</i>						
1. Politicized identification						
2. Moral conviction	.66**					
3. Group-based anger	.71**	.77**				
4. Group efficacy	.72**	.68**	.73**			
5. Empowerment	.74**	.59**	.59**	.67**		
6. Embeddedness	.41**	.18**	.25**	.29**	.38**	
<i>Outcome variables:</i>						
7. Collective action	.70**	.54**	.59**	.63**	.62**	.35**

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

For the activists, we first tested the extended SIMCA in a multivariate regression model in which moral conviction predicts politicized identification (i.e., with social justice activists), group-based anger and group efficacy, which in turn directly predicted CA. The extended SIMCA explained a large and significant amount of variance in CA ($F = 82.35, p < .001; R^2 = .44$), in line with the extended SIMCA: the direct effect of moral conviction on CA was not significant ($\beta = .10, p = .10$), while politicized identification ($\beta = .36, p < .001$), group-based anger ($\beta = .15, p < .01$) and group efficacy ($\beta = .19, p < .001$) all predicted CA, and moral conviction positively predicted group-based anger ($\beta = .73, p < .001$), politicized identification ($\beta = .57, p < .001$) and group efficacy ($\beta = .61, p < .001$). Thus, the extended SIMCA was fully confirmed for this activist sample.

Testing the more comprehensive SIMCA entailed adding empowerment and embeddedness to the equation. This model (see Figure 6.1a) explained a larger and significant amount of variance in CA ($F = 66.33, p < .001; R^2 = .49$). Findings showed that, alongside these two variables, politicized identification ($\beta = .18, p = .001$), group-based anger ($\beta = .16, p = .004$), and group efficacy ($\beta = .15, p = .004$) remained significant and unique predictors, whereas moral conviction remained non-significant ($\beta = .10, p = .08$). Crucially, both embeddedness ($\beta = .23, p < .001$) and empowerment ($\beta = .12, p = .043$) positively and uniquely predicted activists' CA above and beyond the other predictors, with embeddedness being the stronger predictor of the two. This supports the notion that that we might need a more comprehensive SIMCA for activists.

[INSERT FIGURE 6.1 HERE]

Figure 6.1: The extended SIMCA and the more Comprehensive SIMCA in Study 1a (Panel a) and Study 1b (Panel b), with figures in parentheses relating to changes in the extended SIMCA variables in the context of the more comprehensive SIMCA.

For the sympathizers, we found that the extended SIMCA explained a large and significant amount of variance in CA ($F = 106.74, p < .001; R^2 = .52$). Findings showed that the direct effect of moral conviction on CA was not significant ($\beta = .02, p = .75$), but that politicized identification ($\beta = .47, p < .001$) and group efficacy positively predicted CA ($\beta = .21, p < .001$); group-based anger, however, did not predict CA ($\beta = .09, p < .16$). Further confirming the extended SIMCA, moral conviction positively predicted group-based anger ($\beta = .77, p < .001$), politicized identification ($\beta = .66, p < .001$) and group efficacy ($\beta = .68, p < .001$). Thus, for sympathizers, the extended SIMCA was largely supported.

Testing the more comprehensive SIMCA entails adding empowerment and embeddedness to the equation. This model (see Figure 6.1b) explained a meager 1% more variance in CA among sympathizers ($F = 75.35, p < .001; R^2 = .53$). Findings showed that including these two predictors did not change the findings for politicized identification ($\beta = .35, p = .001$), group efficacy ($\beta = .17, p = .003$), group-based anger ($\beta = .10, p < .12$), and moral conviction ($\beta = .01, p = .82$). Embeddedness did not significantly predict CA for these non-activists ($\beta = .07, p = .068$), although, interestingly, empowerment did ($\beta = .15, p = .006$). This confirms the idea that embeddedness is a more structural difference between activists and sympathizers, while empowerment may be more in sympathizers' psychological reach than we had originally assumed.

Results Study 2

Table 6.2 shows that our unique sample of Israeli anti-occupation activists scored highly, on average, on almost all the SIMCA variables (moral conviction, politicized identification, group-based anger, and CA) and the two suggested additions (empowerment and embeddedness). Consistent with a perception of this context as demanding and challenging due to a lack of support and success, the mean level of group efficacy was lower

than that observed among activists in Study 1a. Conversely, mean levels of moral conviction were higher than in Study 1a. As can be seen in Table 6.4, CA was positively correlated with politicized identification and group-based anger, but not with group efficacy beliefs and moral conviction. This already suggests that the extended SIMCA may not be adequate to describe the motivational profiles of the activists sampled in Study 2. This is confirmed by the finding that CA was positively correlated with empowerment and embeddedness.

Against this backdrop, we first tested the extended and the more comprehensive SIMCA, using the same procedure as in Study 1. The extended SIMCA explained a low yet significant amount of variance in CA ($F = 4.20, p < .01; R^2 = .12$). Mostly in line with Study 1a, findings showed that the direct effect of moral conviction on CA was not significant ($\beta = .12, p = .24$), while politicized identification ($\beta = .26, p = .01$) and group-based anger ($\beta = .21, p < .05$) predicted CA, and group efficacy did not ($\beta = .06, p = .56$). As expected, moral conviction positively predicted group-based anger ($\beta = .29, p = .003$), but, interestingly, did not predict politicized identification ($\beta = .08, p = .42$) or group efficacy ($\beta = -.03, p = .80$). Thus, the extended SIMCA was not convincingly supported for the sample of activists in this context.

Testing the more comprehensive SIMCA entails adding empowerment and embeddedness to the equation. As expected, this model (see Figure 6.2) explained a significant and somewhat larger amount of variance in CA ($F = 4.46, p < .01; R^2 = .18$). Including these two variables left group-based anger a significant predictor ($\beta = .21, p = .04$), while group efficacy ($\beta < .001, p = .98$) and moral conviction ($\beta = .02, p = .85$) still did not predict CA. By including the two “uniquely activist” variables, however, the predictive power of politicized identification was strongly reduced and actually became non-significant ($\beta = .12, p = .27$). Crucially, embeddedness ($\beta = .25, p = .013$) but not empowerment ($\beta = .12, p =$

.26) positively predicted CA among the activists we sampled. Taken together with Study 1, the Study 2 findings suggested a clear need for a comprehensive SIMCA for activists, but pointed again to embeddedness, rather than empowerment, as a key differentiating factor.

[INSERT FIGURE 6.2 HERE]

Figure 6.2: The extended SIMCA and the more Comprehensive SIMCA in Study 2, with figures in parentheses relating to changes in the extended SIMCA variables in the context of the more comprehensive SIMCA.

Results Study 3

Table 6.1 shows that our BLM activist sample scored highly, on average, on all the SIMCA variables (moral conviction, politicized identification, group-based anger, and CA) and the two suggested additions (but more so on empowerment than on embeddedness). Table 6.5 shows that CA was positively correlated with all of the other predictors, including empowerment and embeddedness.

Table 6.5: Bivariate correlations between variables in Study 3

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Motivations:</i>							
1. Politicized identification							
2. Moral conviction	.49**						
3. Group-based anger	.49**	.70**					
4. Group efficacy	.60**	.54**	.54**				
5. Empowerment	.67**	.67**	.65**	.72**			
6. Embeddedness	.47**	.14**	.11*	.36**	.27**		
7. Social Support	.64**	.43**	.44**	.56**	.58**	.40**	
<i>Outcome variables:</i>							
8. Collective action	.57**	.29**	.31**	.46**	.51**	.51**	.57**

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

We tested the extended SIMCA and the more comprehensive SIMCA, repeating the same procedure as above. The extended SIMCA explained a significant amount of variance in CA ($F = 57.28, p < .001; R^2 = .348$), with the direct effect of moral conviction on CA again

not significant ($\beta = -.05, p = .35$), as expected. Politicized identification ($\beta = .48, p < .001$) and group efficacy ($\beta = .20, p < .001$) predicted CA, but group-based anger did not ($\beta = .002, p = .973$). As expected, moral conviction positively predicted politicized identification ($\beta = .49, p < .001$), group-based anger ($\beta = .70, p < .001$), and group efficacy ($\beta = .54, p < .001$).

We then tested the more comprehensive SIMCA by adding empowerment and embeddedness to the equation (see Figure 6.3). This model explained a significant and larger amount of variance in CA ($F = 56.97, p < .001; R^2 = .44$). Including these two predictors also substantially impacted the predictive power of other variables in the model. Specifically, only politicized identity remained significant ($\beta = .25, p < .001$) among the extended SIMCA variables, moral conviction was still not significant, strictly speaking (and also trending in the opposite direction, $\beta = -.10, p = .07$), nor was group-based anger ($\beta = -.004, p = .94$), and group efficacy ($\beta = .04, p = .51$) now no longer predicted CA. Crucially, both embeddedness ($\beta = .31, p < .001$) and empowerment ($\beta = .31, p < .001$) positively predicted CA. Taken together, the Study 3 findings provided the strongest support in our examination for the need for a comprehensive SIMCA for activists, pointing to both embeddedness and empowerment as key motivations.

[INSERT FIGURE 6.3 HERE]

Figure 6.3: The extended SIMCA and the more Comprehensive SIMCA in Study 3, with figures in parentheses relating to changes in the extended SIMCA variables in the context of the more comprehensive SIMCA.

To better understand why embeddedness and empowerment are such important predictors of activists' CA, Study 3 explored the role of social support — a structural resource more likely to be available to activists than to sympathizers. Using the Process bootstrapping macro (Model 4, Hayes, 2022) with 5000 iterations, we ran two mediation analyses, each focusing on one of the two new predictors. The model examining the mediating role of social support in the relationship between *embeddedness* and CA was significant ($F = 80.45, p < .001; R^2 = .16$) and yielded a significant indirect effect ($a*b = .17, SE = .02, CI: .13; .22$), with

embeddedness significantly predicting social support ($B = .43, SE = .05, t = 8.97, p < .001$) and social support significantly predicting CA ($B = .41, SE = .04, t = 10.93, p < .001$).

Interestingly, social support seemed to only partially explain this relationship, with embeddedness still predicting CA when controlling for social support ($B = .33, SE = .04, t = 8.31, p < .001$), but less strongly than without controlling for it ($B = .5, SE = .04, t = 12.2, p < .001$).

Likewise, the model examining the mediating role of social support in the relationship between *empowerment* and CA was significant ($F = 217.27, p < .001; R^2 = .33$) and yielded a significant indirect effect ($a*b = .28, SE = .04, CI: .21; .35$), with empowerment significantly predicting social support ($B = .73, SE = .05, t = 14.74, p < .001$) and social support significantly predicting CA ($B = .38, SE = .04, t = 8.82, p < .001$). As with embeddedness, social support seems to only partially explain this relationship, with empowerment still predicting CA when controlling for social support ($B = .32, SE = .05, t = 5.82, p < .001$), but less strongly than without controlling for it ($B = .6, SE = .05, t = 12.34, p < .001$). As such, it seems that activists' unique motivations offer more readily available access, compared to sympathizers, to social support—and that this access partially explains the power of the unique motivations we examined.

Implications, Limitations and Conclusion

Above, we reported the findings of three studies across different countries and political contexts, confirming a need for a more comprehensive SIMCA among activists and specifically suggesting two additional motivations, namely empowerment and embeddedness. This is because these factors rely on transformational processes triggered by previous participation in collective action, and hence are more relevant and available to activists than to sympathizers. This more comprehensive SIMCA effectively integrates theory and research on empowerment and embeddedness with the extended SIMCA. Study 3 also provided a clue as

to *why* these variables are such important predictors of sustained action among activists: feeling both embedded in a community and empowered by that community makes people feel supported in their collective action efforts, which may be a crucial factor in sustaining these efforts.

Such integration is important and fitting because the literature typically assumes that this change is identity-based (i.e., from non-politicized to politicized; Klandermans, 2014; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Turner-Zwinkels et al., 2015, 2017). The current findings suggest that activists typically enjoy the benefits of an activist network that is inaccessible to sympathizers (Studies 1-3), and that may also produce social benefits and resources to cope with setbacks (Study 3), but also normative pressure to act from within the network and thus motivate sustained collective action (Van Zomeren, 2015). This calls for a better understanding of not only why activists act on the basis of a politicized identity (see Leal et al., this volume), but also why they keep acting (Cohen-Eick et al., 2023).

The proposed model and the findings we reviewed have a number of important implications. First, we contribute to theory development in the field of collective action, which is an active and productive one (Agostini & Van Zomeren, 2021). Although the main aim was to test a more comprehensive SIMCA, we should note that the broader pattern we observed across the studies also generally confirmed the extended SIMCA (in line with Agostini & Van Zomeren, 2021; see also Cakal et al., this volume; Hamann et al., this volume; Pauls et al., this volume). In Study 1, activists' collective action intentions were predicted by identification, group-based anger, and group efficacy (and sympathizers' intentions by politicized identity and efficacy); in Study 2 by politicized identity and anger; and in Study 3 by politicized identity and efficacy. Across the studies, moral conviction was the more distal predictor of these proximal predictors. As such, our claim is not that the SIMCA is invalid, but that it is incomplete, at least for activists.

This is not to say, of course, that such models should remain static. The SIMCA, for instance, was based on a meta-analysis of quantitative psychological studies on collective action that was organized around three core predictors (group identification, injustice, and efficacy; Van Zomeren et al., 2008). But almost two decades later, it may be time to realize that this model is too simplistic and requires further refinement and specification, as suggested by other theory and research from psychology (e.g., with respect to empowerment) and sociology (e.g., with an eye to embeddedness). The current data, in this respect, show clearly that the notions of embeddedness and empowerment are relevant additions to the motivational profile of activists, but not (necessarily) for sympathizers. As such, the refinement and specification in the more comprehensive SIMCA lies in acknowledging and further testing and exploring the differences between these motivational profiles (Van Zomeren, 2015), especially in political and cultural contexts where sustaining one's motivation to act might be challenging (Cohen-Eick et al., 2023).

The studies also tell an important tale about the importance of studying different political and cultural contexts (see De Cristofaro & Pellegrini, this volume; Hasan-Aslih & Penic, this volume; Lasticova et al., this volume). For example, it struck us that the amount of variance explained by our models in Study 2 among Israeli anti-occupation activists was much lower than in Studies 1 and 3 among U.S. social justice activists. Furthermore, Study 2 participants reported lower group efficacy beliefs and very strong moral conviction. Such a pattern of observations suggests that social-psychological models of collective action are missing a focus on social structure (Van Zomeren, 2016) that may leave a lot of unexplained variation about why individuals participate in collective action. For Study 2, we believe that the specific and demanding context in which Israeli anti-occupation activists find themselves (see Nasie et al., 2014) fits well with these observations, but such features of the context are typically not included in social-psychological models of collective action. Acknowledging

and making use of unique features of the context may help to develop new hypotheses. For example, we believe that when focusing on explaining sustained motivation to participating in collective action in such contexts, emotions like hope may be vital to study, for both their motivating and demotivating properties (Cohen-Chen & Pliskin, 2024).

Similarly, the findings of Studies 1 and 3 largely confirm the extended SIMCA, except for not finding the predicted relationship between group-based anger and collective action intentions among sympathizers (Study 1b) or activists (Study 3). We again believe that this tells us something about the emerging and hopeful context in which we conducted the studies, although none of the models we applied actually predict such specific contextual effects. This seems particularly important for anger, as its predictive value has, according to some at least, received mixed support (e.g., Stürmer & Simon, 2009). Across many studies in psychology and political science, however, one can observe evidence for anger's motivating potential (Van Zomeren, 2016), which suggests that we should start examining more closely in which contexts anger does or does not predict collective action, and why. Indeed, the field needs to pay more attention to cultural and political contextual variance, as to better tailor and fine-tune theoretical predictions.

In terms of practical implications, a more comprehensive SIMCA offers a structure for *different mobilization strategies* when targeting activists or sympathizers. For sympathizers, trying to increase their politicized identification, anger, and efficacy (or even empowerment) should be fruitful, whereas moralizing the issue at hand can strengthen these motivational effects. But for mobilizing activists to persist in their activism, our findings suggest that particularly embeddedness and to a lesser extent empowerment may be uniquely relevant and powerful in this respect. This would translate into mobilization messages that encourage activists to act for their network (Van Zomeren, 2015) and, for example, to believe that “doing something is always better than doing nothing” (Van Zomeren et al., 2013). Thus,

developing the SIMCA from its original and extended form into its comprehensive form implies different mobilization strategies for motivating activists and sympathizers for collective action.

This set of studies also has a number of limitations. First, the studies are correlational and thus cannot determine causality. Establishing causality, however, was certainly not the aim of the current set of studies. Indeed, we based our expectations about which motivations predict collective action on a large and broad literature and a specific model of collective action. Furthermore, experimental studies in this literature have found support for the presumed causal assumptions in the original and extended SIMCA, which suggests that the current findings, although not proving this assumption, can at least be interpreted as being in line with the causal direction assumed.

The current findings largely provide support for the more comprehensive SIMCA, but we would be the first to acknowledge the need for further refinement and specification. For instance, we did not succeed in fully understanding the motivational role played by empowerment in the current studies, with mixed findings between Study 2 as compared to Studies 1 and 3 among activists, and with a surprising positive predictive relationship between empowerment and collective action for sympathizers in Study 1b. Our current line of thought is that we need to better understand the transformational process that is assumed to occur when sympathizers become activists. This requires a longitudinal design (e.g., Shuman et al., 2021; Turner-Zwinkels et al., 2015, 2017), in which we believe that initial participation leads to empowerment and the development of a politicized identity, after which repeated participation leads to embeddedness in an activist network. Future research can study this transformational process over time and in more detail, thus testing the hypothesis that acting for social change leads to psychological change (e.g., Becker et al., 2011; Vestergren et al., 2017).

A complementary approach to the one we present here could be to focus on the impact of how successful previous collective efforts by a given activist have been for social change, with success defined broadly (e.g., Carvacho et al., 2023). To this end, future research could structurally test the comprehensive SIMCA in different social change contexts and iterations. For example, more findings like those from Study 1 in this paper, collected in an emerging context that led to the birth of a wider movement, can be contrasted with data collected during protests organized and backed by more established activist networks, with more experienced participating activists, similar to the context we employed in Study 3. Such a contextually-sensitive approach could help to illuminate the role empowerment plays in the motivation for collective action of activists and potentially sympathizers.

Another important direction for future research is to better understand the psychological underpinnings and dynamics of embeddedness in activist networks. In fact, we find, across studies, that embeddedness is uniquely related to collective action intentions. Unlike identification, anger, efficacy and empowerment, however, the structural aspect of being embedded (and being asked) does not readily indicate a clear psychological mechanism behind this relationship. Study 3 provides some initial, exploratory evidence that perceived social support partially explains this relationship, but it cannot explain it in full. Van Zomeren (2015) suggested in this respect that activists' motivation to *regulate relationships within the activist network* may explain the role of embeddedness in collective action intentions. Future research can test this hypothesis in more detail.

In conclusion, theory and research on the social psychology of collective action has laid the groundwork for a better and more complete understanding of why people protest. We have taken contemporary efforts toward theoretical integration a step further by developing the extended SIMCA into a more comprehensive version that predicts different motivational profiles of activists and sympathizers. Such refinement and specification is important, because

it opens up new avenues for future research on why activists and sympathizers engage in collective action, and also offers practical suggestions for how each group can be mobilized.

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