Right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance orientation predict outsiders’ responses to an external group conflict: Implications for identification, anger, and collective action

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Little is known about how uninvolved outsiders respond to an external intergroup conflict. We investigate the role of Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) and Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) as distal antecedents of outsiders' willingness to take collective action in support of groups engaged in an external conflict. In an initial cross-sectional study, US residents read about conflicts between disadvantaged citizens and an advantaged government in Greece and Russia. In a second, longitudinal study, US residents read about a similar conflict in a fictional country, Silaria. Path analyses revealed that SDO and RWA shaped interpretations of the conflict, including group identification with and anger at either party to the conflict. Identification and anger predicted collective action intentions on behalf of either party. Results demonstrate that outsiders may align themselves with either party in an external intergroup conflict, and that ideological orientations such as SDO and RWA help shape their specific responses.

Keywords: social dominance orientation, right-wing authoritarianism, collective action, social identity

Group conflict and inequality remain widespread throughout the world, despite extraordinary improvements in the rights, status, and access to resources for many historically disadvantaged groups. Within a context of intergroup inequality or conflict, individuals may take collective action in order to improve conditions for their group as a whole (Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). The collective action literature has traditionally conceptualized actors as members of disadvantaged groups taking action against advantaged groups (e.g., van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). More recent work has investigated how advantaged group members may act in solidarity with the disadvantaged group or to defend their own group’s high-status position (Leach, Snider, & Iyer, 2002; Subašić, Reynolds, & Turner, 2008; Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2009).

Social psychological research primarily investigates collective action as occurring in an intergroup context that is defined by the parties involved: a relatively disadvantaged or victim group, and a relatively advantaged or perpetrator group. However, group conflicts are increasingly visible beyond the specific context in which they occur. Social and broadcast media can now reach a global audience, presenting the opportunity for outsiders to encounter information about a group conflict and the opportunity to take action. For example, the US was a bystander to the Arab Spring conflicts, which involved citizens of specific nations (disadvantaged groups) engaging in collective action against oppressive authorities (advantaged groups), yet US citizens (outsiders) publicly advocated on behalf of change. Individuals who are structurally and psychologically positioned outside the context of an inequality could potentially become involved as active agents of change. Some frameworks of collective action note that outsiders have great potential power in determining the outcome of a conflict, and thus are likely to be targets of persuasion attempts by the involved parties (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Wright, 2009; Subašić et al., 2008). Despite this acknowledgement of outsiders’ potentially important role, no work (to our knowledge) has directly examined outsiders’ motivations for becoming involved in an external conflict.

In this paper we investigate how outsiders respond when they first encounter an external intergroup conflict. By definition, outsiders lack pre-existing information about, or con-
connection with, either party that is involved in the conflict. As such, outsiders may choose to take collective action in support of either the disadvantaged group or the advantaged group. We propose that outsiders’ ideological orientations will shape their interpretations of a particular intergroup conflict, which in turn will predict their willingness to take collective action on behalf of one party or the other in the conflict. This point may seem intuitive. Yet little scholarly research has examined reactions of third parties or outsiders to conflict (Wright, 2009). As we elaborate below, such research helps to illuminate the psychological antecedents of group formation, offering a new perspective on the interaction of individual differences and group processes.

The role of outsiders

As noted above, most conceptual models have focused on identifying the predictors of collective action among members of the disadvantaged group, including the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA; van Zomeren et al., 2008), the Encapsulated Model of Social Identity in Collective Action (EMSICA; Thomas et al., 2009), and the dynamic dual pathway model of collective action (van Zomeren, Leach, & Spears, 2012). In addition, some frameworks have considered collective action participation by members of the advantaged group, including a group-based emotions approach (e.g., Leach, Snider, & Iyer, 2002).

Across these various approaches, three independent predictors of collective action have been established: perceived injustice, perceived group efficacy, and group identification. When group members perceive that the inequality or conflict is unjust, they are more likely to take collective action. The affective component of perceived injustice (e.g., anger) is especially mobilizing for members of both the disadvantaged and the advantaged group (Iyer, Schmader, & Lickel, 2007; Mallett, Huntsinger, Sinclair & Swim, 2008). Second, when individuals believe that their group has the power to achieve its goals, they are more likely to take collective action (Stürmer & Simon, 2004). Third, when individuals share a psychological connection with a group (i.e., identify with that group; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), they are more likely to take collective action to support the group (van Zomeren et al., 2008). The mobilizing role of social identification persists even for an advantaged group member acting on behalf of the disadvantaged group (e.g., Berndsen & McGarty, 2012) and has been theorized to act for members of third-party groups that are audiences to a conflict (e.g., Subašić et al., 2008).

Individuals who are external to a conflict have been rarely mentioned in the collective action literature. Where such individuals or groups are discussed, they are different from our conceptualization of outsiders. For instance, some models conceptualize collective action as taking place in a three-party context, which includes the advantaged group, the disadvantaged group, and a numerically larger and uninvolved audience that is still part of the context. Such audiences—variably referred to as the “majority” (Subašić et al., 2008), “silent majority” (Simon & Klandermans, 2001), or the “population” (Passini & Morselli, 2013)—are proposed to potentially influence the conflict by endorsing one of the two conflicting groups, typically by categorizing themselves with one of the groups and thus identifying with them. However, this audience is already part of the intergroup context and thus has at least a minimal connection to, and understanding of, the groups involved in the conflict. As such, their psychological experiences of, and responses to, the conflict may be quite different from those outsiders who in our model are truly external to the conflict—not part of the nation, political entity or society in which the conflict is occurring.

Another important line of research has focused on opinion-based groups, whereby individuals feel psychologically connected by a shared attitude or ideology, rather than a demographic or social characteristic, and engage in collective action accordingly (Bluč, McGarty, Reynolds, & Muntele, 2007). For example, otherwise heterogeneous individuals who agree on some issue, such as poverty, may come together to promote change (Thomas, McGarty, & Mayer, 2010). However opinion-based groups are, by definition, constructed from individual who have pre-existing opinions (e.g., against poverty, against war, for environmental conservation) and these opinions shape their evaluations of novel conflicts.

The present research seeks to broaden the literature on collective action by focusing on outsiders: people who are geographically or psychologically separate from the conflict, without pre-existing opinions about or goals for that conflict. Inherently, outsiders may align themselves with either of the two groups that are party to the conflict, but this possibility has not yet been investigated in the literature. In the present studies, we consider whether outsiders’ willingness to intervene in an external conflict can be predicted by the established antecedents of collective action. Specifically, we examine if outsiders’ levels of group identification, perceived injustice, and perceived group efficacy will predict their willingness to take action in support of each group in a conflict.

In contrast to a “[silent] majority,” outsiders typically have little information about the conflict—including the parties involved and the nature of the clash—until they first encounter information about the conflict. Thus, our second goal is to understand the antecedents of outsiders’ interpretations of external conflicts: how do they come to identify with or feel anger at the disadvantaged or advantaged group, or perceive one group to be more efficacious? Precisely because of outsiders’ structural and psychological separation from the conflict context, their specific judgments about the conflict (e.g., the injustice suffered by each group) are likely to be influenced by their pre-existing personal ideological orienta-
tions.

Personal ideologies and outsiders’ responses to intergroup conflict

Personal ideology provides individuals with structure and meaning to help organize the social world. Ideologies affect how individuals perceive the world both “as it is” as well as “how it should be”, and are thus well placed to shape how outsiders perceive a group conflict when they first encounter it (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). Social Dominance Orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) and Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA; Altemeyer, 1981, 1996) are ideological orientations that characterize people’s general views about status hierarchies and intergroup relations. SDO describes individuals’ acceptance of group-based status hierarchy, where some groups are more advantaged than others. RWA characterizes individuals’ beliefs about the need for submission and obedience to authority, conformity to traditional norms and values, and aggression towards those who fail or refuse to submit or conform to that authority. A great deal of work has shown that SDO and RWA predict attitudes that are relevant to intergroup conflict and injustice, such as prejudice towards outgroups (Duckitt & Sibley, 2007), willingness to discriminate against outgroups (Sibley, Wilson, & Duckitt, 2007), and opposition to policies that seek to create social equality (Federico & Sidanius, 2002). However, little research has yet examined whether SDO and RWA can mobilize individuals to take collective action.

We choose to investigate both SDO and RWA in the present research in order to gain a more complete understanding of how ideology can shape outsiders’ responses to intergroup conflict. Despite each being labelled as elements of a conservative ideology (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010a) and showing moderate intercorrelations (e.g., Duriez, Van Hiel, & Kossowska, 2005), SDO and RWA have been proposed as distinct constructs that capture different dimensions of ideology. SDO is aligned with economic conservatism, which encompasses belief in the intrinsic correctness of inequality, hierarchy and power (Duckitt, 2006). In contrast, RWA is aligned with social conservatism, which encompasses traditionalism, the devaluing of autonomy, and the minimizing of personal freedom (Duckitt, 2006). Further, the two constructs have been shown to predict prejudice and discrimination independently towards a wide range of minorities (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010b; Thomsen, Green, & Sidanius, 2008).

Our focus on personal ideological orientations may appear to represent a radical departure from the extant literature on collective action, which has focused on group-focused predictors such as group identification, group efficacy, and group-directed anger (van Zomeren et al., 2008). However we are not the first to propose an individual-focused predictor of collective action. The dynamic dual-pathway model (van Zomeren et al., 2012) provides conceptual space for individual beliefs and ideals—to which ideology is related—to help shape individuals’ decisions to participate in collective action. Other research has also considered how willingness to take collective action may be shaped by personal moral convictions, which are defined as strong and inviolable attitudes about specific moral issues, such as discrimination against Dutch Muslims (van Zomeren, Postmes, Spears, & Bettache, 2011). Because moral convictions are held about specific issues, however, their predictive utility in shaping collective action is likely to be limited to contexts that focus on that particular issue. In contrast, general ideological orientations such as SDO and RWA are more likely to shape interpretations of a wide range of group conflicts.

The role of SDO and RWA in shaping interpretations of conflict

We examine how outsiders’ levels of SDO and RWA might influence their responses to a specific external conflict between an advantaged group (e.g., the government) and a disadvantaged group (e.g., citizen protesters who are demanding higher wages). More specifically, we propose that SDO and RWA will shape the proximal interpretations of the conflict that are relevant to predicting collective action: felt anger (about injustice), perceived efficacy of each group to create change, and level of identification with each group.

The impact of high SDO and RWA. In a context where members of a disadvantaged group are taking political action against an advantaged group (e.g., citizen protestors demanding the government increase minimum wages), an outsider who strongly endorses (i.e., scores highly on) SDO and RWA is more likely to see the disadvantaged group as attempting to usurp the hierarchy and threatening the legitimate authority of an advantaged group. This outsider would therefore be likely to perceive that the actions of the disadvantaged group towards the advantaged group are unjust, and to thus feel increased anger at the disadvantaged group. Those with high SDO and RWA would also be more likely to view the advantaged group as sharing their beliefs and attitudes about the importance of authority. These shared beliefs and attitudes may develop into a shared social identity, and thus lead to increased identification with the advantaged group (Bliege et al., 2007; Thomas et al., 2009). By virtue of endorsing SDO and RWA, the outsider may also be motivated to perceive the authority or dominant advantaged group as having the power to achieve its goals, leading to increased perceived efficacy of the advantaged group. These perceptions, in turn, would lead this outsider to be more likely to take collective action in support of the advantaged group.

The impact of low SDO and RWA. In contrast, an outsider who rejects (i.e., scores low on) SDO and RWA is more likely to see an advantaged group as attempting to exert
dominance over and restrict the autonomy of a less powerful disadvantaged group. Such an outsider would therefore be likely to perceive that the actions of such an advantaged group towards a disadvantaged group to be unjust, and thus feel increased anger at the advantaged group. An outsider with low SDO and RWA is likely to judge a disadvantaged group that rejects the advantaged group’s dominance and restrictiveness as sharing the outsider’s beliefs and attitudes, develop a shared social identity, and thus lead to increased identification with the disadvantaged group. An outsider who identifies with the disadvantaged group is more likely to perceive instrumental social support for the goals of that group’s action (van Zomeren et al., 2012), increasing perceptions of disadvantaged group efficacy. These variables would then, in turn, lead this outsider to be more likely to take collective action in support of the disadvantaged group.

The present research

This paper provides the first investigation of outsiders’ willingness to take collective action to support either party in an external conflict. We consider whether outsiders’ collective action is predicted by established variables in the literature (i.e., group identification, felt anger, and perceived group efficacy). In addition, we examine whether outsiders’ ideological orientations of SDO and RWA can shape these specific interpretations, and thus serve as distal predictors of willingness to take collective action on behalf of either party. Existing theoretical models focus on the range of intentions—from weak to strong—to engage in collective action for a particular group: they do not consider individuals’ opportunities to support either side of an existing conflict. Accordingly, the present research adds a new perspective on individuals’ possible responses to conflict.

In two studies, participants read a description of real (Study 1) or fictional (Study 2) group conflicts to which they were clearly outsiders. Study 1 examines the relationships between ideological orientations, group identification, perceived efficacy, felt anger, and collective action intentions in a cross-sectional design. Study 2 uses a longitudinal design to test the causal role of ideological orientations as pre-existing antecedents of outsiders’ responses to external group conflict.

Study 1

Method

Participants and Procedure. We sought to recruit 200 US residents to complete this study using Amazon Mechanical Turk. Participants received USD$0.50 as compensation. One hundred and eighty one Mechanical Turk users initially accessed the online questionnaire, of which 170 completed the questionnaire. Eight participants were then excluded: seven who had more than 50% missing data, and one who failed to follow instructions. The final sample of 162 participants ranged in age from 18 to 73 years (M = 35.55, SD = 13.03), and included 93 (57%) females and 122 (75%) White / European Americans. Participants read about two external group conflicts occurring in other countries. After reading about each group conflict, participants completed a series of measures assessing their responses to the conflict and their ideological orientation.

Materials. Participants read two descriptions of external group conflict, one occurring in Greece and one occurring in Russia. In both contexts, the actors in the conflict were the government (advantaged group) and citizen protestors (disadvantaged group). The Greek conflict focused on the government’s introduction of strict austerity measures that would cut minimum wages and public services. Greek citizens were described as opposing the unpopular measures by engaging in protests that included throwing rocks at police and setting fire to buildings, and the government sought to break up these protests using police action and tear gas.

The Russian conflict was described as sparked by recent government elections that were perceived to be fraudulent. Citizens participated in unsanctioned demonstrations to protest the elections and demand the resignation of the President, while the government responded with heavy fines and arrests to punish the protesters.

Measures. All responses, except where indicated, were provided on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Social dominance orientation (SDO). The 16-item SDO scale (Pratto et al., 1994) was used to assess participants’ social dominance orientation. The 16 items were averaged such that higher scores indicated higher levels of support for intergroup status hierarchies (α = .93).

Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA). Drawing on a recent factor analytic study (Mavor, Louis, & Sibley, 2010), a sub-set of the original 30-item RWA measure were selected for inclusion in the present study. Three items measured aggression (e.g., “What our country really needs is a strong, determined leader who will crush evil, and take us back to our true path”); three items assessed conformity (e.g., “There is no ‘ONE right way’ to live life; everybody has to create their own way”, reversed); and three items assessed submission (e.g., “Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn”). The nine items were averaged such that higher scores indicated higher levels of support for authoritarianism (α = .86).

Collective action intentions. One item (adapted from van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004) assessed intentions to take collective action to support each party (government or protesters) in each context. For example, in the Greek context, participants indicated their willingness to “take action to support the Greek government,” and their willingness to “take action to support the Greek protestors.”
(1 = not willing at all, 7 = extremely willing). These items were then reworded for the Russian context.

**Group identification.** Two items (adapted from Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995) assessed group identification with the government and protestors in each context, for instance: “I identify with the Greek government,” and “I feel strong ties with the Russian protestors.” The relevant items were averaged to form reliable measures of identification with the Greek government ($r = .87$), Greek protestors ($r = .81$), Russian government ($r = .84$), and Russian protestors ($r = .92$; all $rs < .001$).

**Anger towards different groups.** Two items assessed the extent to which participants felt anger and outrage (Iyer et al., 2007) towards the government and protestors in each context ($0 = not at all, 5 = extremely$). The two items were averaged to form a reliable measure of anger towards the Greek government ($r = .75$), Greek protestors ($r = .82$), Russian government ($r = .86$), and Russian protestors ($r = .84$; all $rs < .001$).

**Perceived efficacy.** One item (adapted from van Zomeren et al., 2004) assessed the degree to which participants believed each target group in each context had the power to achieve its goals, e.g., “The Greek government is able to achieve its goals without help from outside Greece.” The item was reworded for each target group and context.

### Results

**Preliminary Analyses.** Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for all variables are presented in Table 1. Overall, participants’ mean scores fell significantly below the mid-point on SDO ($t[162] = -17.08, p < .001$) and RWA ($t[161] = -8.07, p < .001$). Univariate tests of skew and kurtosis suggest that the data sufficiently meet assumptions of normality, with a skew ranging from [0.03] to [1.87], and kurtosis ranging from [0.02] to [2.60] (Curran, West, & Finch, 1996).

**Path analysis.** To investigate the hypothesized relationships between ideology, identification, anger, perceived efficacy, and collective action intentions, we conducted separate path analyses for each context and each target group using AMOS 21.0 (Arbuckle, 2012). We chose to test the structural model in path analysis with Structural Equation Modeling software rather than multiple regression for three reasons. First, path analysis allows for simultaneous parameter estimation in a model that contains multiple predictors and mediators. Second, this method allows us to assess whether the relationships in the hypothesized model are similar across conflict contexts and across groups. Third, path analysis in SEM allows us to compare the fit of the hypothesized model to plausible alternatives.

Separate models were tested to predict collective action intentions in support of each target group (i.e., the government or protestors). The hypothesized model specified SDO and RWA as exogenous predictors of identification with the target group (i.e., government or protestors), anger at the opposition group (i.e., protestors or government), and perceived efficacy of target group. Group identification, anger, and perceived efficacy were specified as predictors of collective action intentions to support the target group. Current theoretical frameworks of collective action suggest that group identification is associated with both anger and perceived group efficacy (Thomas et al., 2009; van Zomeren et al., 2008). Thus, group identification and anger were allowed to covary, as were group identification and group efficacy. The exogenous predictors were allowed to covary, but were not expected to directly predict the outcome variable. Thus, the relationships between ideological orientations (SDO and RWA) and collective action intentions were constrained to be zero.

**Multiple group comparisons across contexts.** We used a multiple group comparisons approach to assess whether the relationships in the hypothesized model were equivalent in the two conflict contexts. The multiple group comparisons included fully saturated models (i.e., where every direct effect and correlation was allowed to be estimated), so that every estimated parameter could be compared across contexts. Separate analyses were conducted for the two hypothesized models, which predicted collective action intentions in support of each target group (i.e., government or protestors).

**Predicting collective action to support the government.** A fully unconstrained model, where all direct effects and correlations were estimated independently in the two contexts, had perfect fit: $\chi^2 = 0.00$ ($0, N = 162$), $p < .001$, CFI = 1.00, AGFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.00, SRMR = 0.00. A model where all direct effects and correlations were constrained to be equal in the two contexts met thresholds for good fit: $\chi^2 = 18.93$ (df = 14), $p = .168$, CFI = 0.99, AGFI = 0.94, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.04. There was no significant loss of fit in the constrained model compared to the unconstrained model, $\Delta \chi^2 = 18.93$ (df = 14), $p = .168$. The pattern of relationships in predicting collective action supporting the government was thus equivalent across the Russian and Greek contexts.

**Predicting collective action to support the protesters.** As with the government multiple group comparison, the unconstrained model necessarily had perfect fit: $\chi^2 = 0.00$ ($0, N = 162$), $p < .001$, CFI = 1.00, AGFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.00, SRMR = 0.00. The model constraining the direct effects and correlations to be equal across contexts met thresholds for excellent fit: $\chi^2 = 5.74$ (14, $N = 162$), $p = .973$, CFI = 1.00, AGFI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.00, SRMR = 0.03. Again, there was no significant loss of fit when comparing the unconstrained and constrained models, $\Delta \chi^2 = 5.74$ (df = 14), $p = .973$. This indicates that the pattern of relationships in predicting collective action supporting the protesters was
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**Russian context**

*Government*

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*Protestors*

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**Greek context**

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*Protestors*

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Table 1

Study 1 descriptive statistics and intercorrelations.

Note: † p < .10. * p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.
equivalent across the Russian and Greek contexts.

**Test of hypothesized models.** Multiple group comparisons indicated that the pattern of relationships was similar in the Russian and Greek contexts. Thus, participants’ responses across the two contexts were averaged for each measure, and two hypothesized models were tested: one predicting collective action to support the government, and one predicting collective action to support protesters.

**Predicting collective action to support the government.** The hypothesised model met thresholds for mediocre fit (Byrne, 2010): χ² = 8.44 (3, N = 162), p = .038, CFI = 0.97, AGFI = 0.88, RMSEA = 0.11, SRMR = 0.04, and explained 53% of the variance in collective action intentions to support the government. Parameter estimates for this model are presented in Figure 1. Both SDO and RW A were associated with higher identification with the government and anger towards the protestors, but not perceived efficacy of government. Identification and anger, in turn, each positively predicted collective action intentions to support the government. Perceived efficacy of government marginally positively predicted intentions to support the government.

We tested an alternative model that allowed a direct path between ideology and collective action intentions. This model met thresholds for mediocre fit: χ² = 4.62 (1, N = 162), p = .032, CFI = 0.98, AGFI = 0.80, RMSEA = 0.15, SRMR = 0.04, but did not improve fit over the more parsimonious hypothesised model: Δχ² = 3.82 (2, N = 162), p = .148. This indicates that the specification of additional direct paths did not improve the explanatory power of the hypothesised model, which was thus retained.

**Predicting collective action to support the protestors.** The hypothesized model met thresholds for good fit: χ² = 5.82 (3, N = 162), p = .121, CFI = 0.98, AGFI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.03, and explained 40% of the variance in collective action intentions to support a protestor group. Parameter estimates for the hypothesised model are presented in Figure 2. Only SDO negatively predicted group identification with protestors and felt anger towards the government. SDO and RW A each predicted perceived efficacy of protestors, however their effects were in opposite directions: SDO negatively predicted efficacy, whereas RW A positively predicted efficacy. Group identification with protestors significantly and positively predicted intentions to take collective action in support of the protestors. Anger towards the government marginally and positively predicted collective action intentions. Perceived efficacy of the protestors did not significantly predict collective action intentions.

Once again, an alternative model allowing direct paths between ideology and collective action intentions was tested. This model met thresholds for good fit: χ² = 2.05 (1, N = 162), p = .152, CFI = 0.99, AGFI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.08, SRMR = 0.03. However, it did not provide a significant improvement in fit over the more parsimonious hypothesized model: Δχ² = 3.77 (2, N = 162), p = .152. This provides additional support for the hypothesized model, which was retained.

**Discussion**

Across contexts and across targets, collective action to support a target group was predicted by identification with this group and anger towards the opposing group, but not perceived efficacy of the target group. Thus, established antecedents of collective action can explain outsiders’ willingness to take action in response to an external conflict. Furthermore, we show that outsiders may choose to support either party to a conflict. The more outsiders identified with the advantaged group, and felt anger towards the disadvantaged group, the stronger their intentions to support the advantaged group. Conversely, the more outsiders identified with the disadvantaged group, and felt anger towards the advantaged group, the stronger their intentions to support the disadvantaged group.

Surprisingly, perceived group efficacy did not predict collective action, even though this effect has been demonstrated in previous research (van Zomeren et al., 2008). At face value, outsiders would plausibly take a more objective cost-benefit approach when deciding to engage in collective action compared with individuals who are part of a conflict. The conflict is appraised as less self-relevant for outsiders and so we might expect that the decision to take action would rely on the individual’s expectation of positive outcomes (van Zomeren et al., 2012). However, the data suggest that the role of efficacy is less motivating in this context, perhaps because outsiders are not invested in concrete outcomes of the conflict. Instead, outsiders were motivated to act by injustice and identity concerns, possibly to achieve symbolic outcomes (Hornsey et al., 2006).

We also found that personal ideological orientations of SDO and RW A shaped outsiders’ interpretations of the conflict. The more participants endorsed SDO and RW A, the more they identified with the advantaged (government) group and the less they identified with the disadvantaged (protestor) group. Similarly, the more participants endorsed SDO and RW A, the more anger they felt towards the disadvantaged group, and the less anger they felt towards the advantaged group. Importantly, this pattern of relationships was consistent across the two contexts of Greece and Russia. This result extends previous work on specific moral convictions (e.g., van Zomeren et al., 2011) by showing that pre-existing and stable personal ideological orientations of SDO and RW A can shape outsiders’ responses to different contexts of conflict.

This study is an important empirical demonstration of outsiders’ responses to group conflict and inequality and antecedents of their collective action. However, we note two limitations. First, the cross-sectional design does not allow
us to infer that SDO and RWA causally shape outsiders’ responses to an external conflict. Second, ideology’s role in shaping action intentions was not consistent: while both SDO and RWA played a distal role in predicting intentions to support advantaged groups, only SDO was a distal predictor in shaping action intentions on behalf of disadvantaged groups.

We conducted a second study to replicate the general pattern of results found in Study 1, to further clarify the role of RWA for action in support of disadvantaged groups, and to further investigate the role of perceived group efficacy. Study 2 used a longitudinal design in order to investigate the causal role of ideology in shaping outsiders’ responses to a novel group conflict. At Time 1, we measured participants’ personal ideological orientations (SDO and RWA). At Time 2 participants read about a fictional group conflict and completed the dependent measures used in Study 1. The fictional conflict reflects a truly novel context about which participants have no existing knowledge. As such, Study 2 provides a higher level of ecological validity: it captures outsiders’ experiences as they first encounter information about a novel external conflict.

**Study 2**

**Method**

**Participants.** We sought to recruit 200 US residents to complete a two-part study through Amazon Mechanical Turk. Participants were offered USD$1.00 as compensation. One participant failed to follow instructions; 199 participants completed Time 1. After two days, participants were invited to participate in Part 2 of the study. A non-identifying code was used to match participants’ responses from Part 1 and Part 2. In total, 154 participants were successfully matched. This final sample ranged in age from 18 to 65 years (M = 29.17, SD = 9.61), included 92 (60%) males, and 107 (70%) White / European Americans.
Materials and Measures. All responses, except where indicated, were provided on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Time 1. As in Study 1, participants completed an adapted version of the 16-item SDO6 scale (Ho et al., 2012; α = .91). Due to the inconsistent findings for authoritarianism in Study 1, we elected to use the full 30-item scale to measure RWA in this study (Altemeyer, 1996; α = .95).

Time 2. Participants read about a group conflict between the government and citizens of a fictional country, Silaria. Participants were instructed to imagine how they would think and feel if the conflict were real when completing measures about the conflict.

Fictional conflict scenario. The fictional Silarian conflict was sparked by unsafe working conditions for citizens, and unequal pay for citizens and government officials. Citizens were described as protesting in the capital city by marching on the government parliament and stopping business from taking place in the capital. The government was described as considering a law that would allow for indefinite detention of citizens it deemed to be threatening the peace, and having used the military and police to arrest citizen protestor “ringleaders.”

Group identification. Three items (adapted from Leach et al., 2008) measured group identification with the government, and separately, the citizens. For example, “I identify with the Silarian government.” The three items were averaged to form a reliable scale of group identification with the government (α = .91) and citizens (α = .89).

Anger towards different groups. Three items measured anger (adapted from Iyer et al., 2007) towards each group in the conflict. As in Study 1, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt angered and outraged towards the government and, separately, the citizens. In the current study we also asked participants the degree to which they felt furious towards each group. The three items were averaged to form a reliable scale for government (α = .87) and citizens (α = .87).

Perceived efficacy. Three items (adapted from van Zomeren et al., 2004) measured the degree to which participants believed each group had the ability to achieve its goals in the conflict. For example, participants indicated their agreement with “I think that the Silarian citizens have the power to achieve their goals,” and “if they work together, the Silarian government can achieve its goals.” The three items were averaged to form a reliable scale of perceived efficacy for government (α = .86) and citizens (α = .92).

Collective action intentions. Three items (adapted from van Zomeren et al., 2004) assessed intentions to take collective action in support of the government, and separately, the citizens. Participants indicated their agreement with items such as “I am willing to take action on behalf of the Silarian government,” “I believe I would take action on behalf of the Silarian government,” and “I intend to take action on behalf of the Silarian citizens.” The three items were averaged to form a reliable scale for intentions to support the government (α = .94) and citizens (α = .95).

Results

Preliminary analyses. Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for all variables are presented in Table 2. As
in Study 1, participants’ mean scores fell significantly below the mid-point (4) on SDO, t(153) = -12.43, p < .001, and RWA, t(153) = -15.00, p < .001. Univariate tests of skew and kurtosis revealed that two variables were significantly (positively) skewed: anger at citizens (Skew = 2.43) and intentions to support the government (Skew = 2.35). Non-linear transformations to reduce skew are explicitly recommended against when using path analysis (N. Loxton, personal communication, August 23 2012). All other variables fell within acceptable ranges with skew of [0.28] to [1.87]. The skewed variables also displayed some kurtosis, but all variables fell within acceptable ranges with kurtosis of [0.25] to [5.27].

Path analysis. As in Study 1, we assessed the hypothesized relationships between ideology and collective action variables using path analysis conducted in AMOS 21.0. Separate models were specified to predict collective action supporting the government, and collective action supporting citizens. The hypothesized models from Study 1 were adapted for this purpose. SDO and RWA were specified as exogenous predictors. Group identification, anger towards opposing group, and perceived efficacy of group were specified as endogenous predictors. Intentions to take collective action in support of the target group were specified as the outcome variable.

We hypothesized that the exogenous predictors would each uniquely and directly predict the endogenous predictors, which in turn would each uniquely and directly predict the outcome variable. We further hypothesized that the exogenous predictors would covary, and that they would not directly predict the outcome variable. Building on the results of Study 1, we finally predicted that group identification and anger would covary, and that group identification and efficacy would covary.

Predicting collective action to support the government. The hypothesised model showed met thresholds for excellent fit, \( \chi^2 = 2.73 \) (3, N = 154), p = .436, CFI = 1.00, AGFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.00, SRMR = 0.01, and accounted for 71% of the variance in participants’ intentions to take collective action in support of the Silarian government. SDO and RWA each uniquely and significantly positively predicted group identification with the government, and anger at citizens. In turn, group identification and anger each uniquely and significantly positively predicted collective action intentions in support of citizens. A marginal negative effect of social dominance on the perceived efficacy of citizens was also found, though efficacy itself did not predict intentions. Parameter estimates for this model are presented in Figure 4.

As with government, an alternative model that included the direct effects of ideology on collective action intentions was tested. This model did not meet thresholds for good fit, \( \chi^2 = 4.81 \) (2, N = 154), p = .003, CFI = 0.98, AGFI = 0.79, RMSEA = 0.16, SRMR = 0.05, and did not fit the data significantly better than the hypothesized model, \( \Delta \chi^2 = 3.81 \) (2, N = 154), p = .149. As such, the more parsimonious hypothesized model was retained.

Discussion

Study 2 replicated the major findings of the first study. Once again, established antecedents of collective action predicted outsiders’ willingness to take collective action on behalf of either group involved in an entirely novel external conflict. The more outsiders identified with a target group and felt anger at the opposing group, the stronger their intentions to take action to support the target group.

Consistent with Study 1, results also demonstrated that outsiders’ ideological orientations influence their judgements about a specific context, which in turn predict collective action. SDO and RWA positively predicted identification with the government, and anger at citizens, which in turn predicted increased collective action intentions in support of the government. In contrast, SDO and RWA negatively predicted identification with citizens and anger at government, which in turn predicted increased collective action intentions in support of citizens.

In Study 1, only the SDO pathway for collective action on behalf of citizens was significant. The results of Study 2 suggest that both SDO and RWA can shape outsiders’ collective action in support of both the advantaged and disadvantaged group. The Study 2 results are more consistent with our a priori expectations regarding the independent roles of SDO and RWA in predicting outsider appraisals about each group involved in conflict. One possibility is that because RWA includes an element of valuing conformity, the association between RWA and collective action in novel contexts will be more unstable, as individuals attempt to discern what other
group members and group authorities feel about the novel context. Future work should seek to determine more conclusively whether RWA plays a differential effect in predicting outsider appraisals of disadvantaged groups in conflict.

As in Study 1, we found no significant effect of ideological orientation on perceived efficacy for either target group, and perceived efficacy did not predict collective action intentions. We return to this issue in some detail in the General Discussion. Despite these limitations, the longitudinal design of Study 2 provides strong evidence that personal ideological orientations play a causal role in shaping outsiders’ responses to group conflict.

**General Discussion**

The present paper had three aims: to investigate the role of ideological orientations in shaping outsiders’ responses to an external intergroup conflict, including identification, anger, and efficacy; to examine outsiders’ potential to support the multiple groups that are involved in conflict; and to provide the first evidence of uninvolved outsiders’ potential for collective action in response to an external conflict.

**Understanding outsiders’ responses to external conflict**

Extant frameworks of collective action have theorized about the potential role of third parties in group conflict, typically conceptualizing these groups as audiences to a context of conflict (e.g., Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Subašić et al., 2008). To our knowledge, however, no published work has directly investigated how outsiders respond when encountering external conflicts to which they are not already party.

In this paper we sought to expand on established group-focused predictors of collective action by examining the novel individual-focused predictors of SDO and RWA. We hypothesized that these pre-existing personal ideological orientations could help shape outsiders’ perceptions when they encounter novel group conflicts. Outsiders’ ideological orientations of SDO and RWA acted as positive distal predictors of support for a dominant and authoritarian advantaged group, where identification with the advantaged group and...
anger at opposition played more proximal roles. Outsiders’ SDO and RWA also acted as negative distal predictors of support for a subordinate disadvantaged group, where identification with the disadvantaged group and anger at opposition also acted as proximal predictors. The finding that outsiders used SDO and RWA to appraise disparate and even fictional conflict contexts is compelling evidence for their power and flexibility in predicting collective action intentions for outsiders.

Empirical demonstration of novel predictors of collective action in a novel group is an important first step in understanding how and when outsiders may choose to intervene in others’ conflicts. But it is also important that we understand how these predictors link with current models and predictors of collective action. Specifically, why do personal ideological orientations such as SDO and RWA shape outsiders’ collective action intentions by affecting their group identification and felt anger? Understanding more about the psychological process by which outsiders appraise and engage with external conflicts may suggest other individual-focused predictors, and clarify how outsiders fit theoretically compared with other third parties discussed in the literature. Recent work on opinion-based groups and collective action (e.g., Subašić et al., 2011; Thomas et al., 2009) is part of a new wave of social identity work that explores how social identities can emerge from shared beliefs and attitudes, rather than being bound to social categories. Our own work here supports this line of thinking: outsiders with a particular ideological orientation may perceive that a particular group in an external conflict holds similar beliefs and values, which may then serve as a basis for an emergent psychological shared group membership (see also, Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). For instance, an outsider with high SDO and RWA who encounters group conflict may identify with a dominant and authoritarian group because he recognizes that such a group likely shares his beliefs that subordinate groups should be dominated and force is necessary and appropriate to keep deviants in line and thus be mobilized to take action in support of that dominant group.

Outsiders with a particular ideological orientation may experience also anger when they perceive that one of the groups in an external conflict is acting in a way that contravenes that ideology. For example, an outsider with high SDO and RWA may perceive disadvantaged groups who struggle and strive for equality to be trying to secure resources or status that they do not properly deserve, or threatening the authority of the dominant and advantaged group, evoking anger. In sum, the current work examining how SDO and RWA can shape outsider collective action in response to group-based conflict is an example of how the mature frameworks of collective action can be effectively extended to consider new groups, new contexts, and new predictors.

Implications for current theories of collective action

In the present work, we found that outsiders may be actively motivated to take action on behalf of disadvantaged and advantaged groups. This finding has substantive implications for theoretical frameworks of collective action. Given that such frameworks play a central role in predicting collective action by individuals external from and naïve to a context of group conflict, we must recognize that they are more flexible than initially conceptualized. Future development of theory for collective action must not neglect the potential role of outsiders in taking collective action.

We simultaneously assessed individuals’ collective action antecedents and intentions for both advantaged and disadvantaged groups. To our knowledge, this is the first investigation of the possibility that individuals may support either the advantaged or disadvantaged group in a given context. Previous work has instead focused on disadvantaged group members’ collective action to assist their own group (van Zomeren et al., 2008), advantaged group members’ collective action in support of the disadvantaged group (Iyer et al., 2007) or advantaged members’ collective action to assist their own group (Ellemers, Doosje, Van Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1992). We suggest that future collective action work investigates these predictors for each group that is party to conflict or inequality. By measuring responses only in support of the hypothesized group, researchers risk failing to capture participants’ ambivalence about taking action, or participants’ support for other groups.

Limitations and Future Directions

In both studies, we did not find that outsiders’ perceptions of a group’s efficacy in achieving its goals predicted their subsequent intentions to take collective action on behalf of that group. Although perceived group efficacy is one of the oldest predictors of collective action and is included as a robust independent predictor of collective action in a recent meta-analysis (van Zomeren et al., 2008), this same work has indicated that the type of intergroup conflict can moderate the effect of efficacy on intentions. Others have argued that efficacy does not predict collective action independently of group identification (Stürmer & Simon, 2004), or that efficacy (as well as perceived injustice) is not separate to group identification but “encapsulated” within the social identity of a group member (Thomas et al., 2009). Before conducting this research, it appeared plausible that outsiders would take a predominantly instrumental (i.e., cost-benefit) approach when deciding whether to intervene in external conflicts. We presumed that the conflict would be appraised as lacking in self-relevance for outsiders, and thus outsiders would take action only when they believed that doing so would result in a desired outcome. But it now seems apparent that outsiders can indeed feel that the conflict is
self-relevant, as evidenced by their identification with parties to the conflict. As such, perceived group efficacy may not be a key or even salient determinant of outsiders’ collective action. Instead, outsiders who appraise the conflict as self-relevant are mobilized to take action via identification and emotion pathways (van Zomeren et al., 2012).

We must acknowledge that personal ideological orientations are more complex than the straightforward unidimensional conceptualisation we have used here. For instance, SDO has been shown to have two distinct factors: dominance and (anti-)egalitarianism (Ho et al., 2012). Similarly, recent factor analytic work has revealed three distinct components to RWA: aggression towards deviants, conformity to conventional norms, and submission to authority (Mavor et al., 2010). The individual factors of SDO and RWA may play differing roles in shaping outsiders’ responses to group conflict. Further exploration of these factors within each ideological orientation may give a more complete picture of how and why SDO and RWA shape outsiders’ responses to group conflict and clarify the inconsistent role of RWA in shaping collective action to support a disadvantaged group across our two studies.

In this work we defined outsiders as individuals who are entirely separate from a group conflict before they encounter it. However, this physical and psychological boundary is not always so clear-cut. For instance, extant work has conceptualized “audiences” as those who are not directly involved in a group conflict, but who still physically exist within the context of the conflict (e.g., Subašić et al., 2008). In such cases of physical proximity, additional factors such as interpersonal ties may also shape responses. Outsiders may also vary in the amount of psychological distance they have from the conflict. For instance, some may have previous (direct or indirect) experience with this specific conflict (particularly if it is intractable or chronic), or a similar conflict in another context. Future work should explore how complexities of (physical or psychological) distance may moderate outsiders’ experiences of, and responses to, group conflicts in which they are not directly involved.

Finally, future work should also examine how the specific characteristics of a conflict may affect outsiders’ responses. Such characteristics include the domain of the conflict (e.g., economic inequality vs. social inequality), the actions taken by each party (e.g., moderate protests vs. radical action such as terrorism), and events leading up to the conflict (e.g., arising incidentally or historic and structural). Such factors are likely to influence which group outsiders choose to support, the ease with which outsiders can take action to support this group, and thus their actual collective action behaviour.

Conclusion

We extend current frameworks of collective action by introducing a novel set of actors (i.e., outsiders who are physically and psychologically separate from a group conflict) and a novel set of predictors (i.e., personal ideological orientations). We show that outsiders are willing to respond with collective action when they encounter group conflict, and that they are capable of supporting either the advantaged group or the disadvantaged group. The ideological orientations of SDO and RWA influence outsiders’ interpretations of a group conflict, including their identification with, and anger towards, the parties involved. It is clear, then, that outsiders are not passive observers to external conflict, but in fact ideologically motivated actors who can mobilize to take collective action.

Footnotes

1These data were part of a larger study that included measures of beliefs about society and identification as an American. We also measured perceptions of the conflict for each context. Details are available from the corresponding author on request.

2We conducted a path analysis of the hypothesized model after reducing the skew of anger at citizens and intentions to take action in support of the government variables using a non-linear log transformation. This model with transformed variables, χ² = 3.89 (3, N = 154), p = .273, CFI = 0.99, AGFI = 1.00, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.02, did not differ substantively in fit from the model with untransformed variables. As such and as recommended, we report the results of path analyses using untransformed variables in the main text.

3Although the RMSEA value here does not meet the criteria for good (< 0.05) or even mediocre (< 0.08) fit, it has been argued that for samples smaller than 250, RMSEA tends to be inflated (Hu & Bentler, 1999).

References


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