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Collective resistance despite complicity: High identifiers rise above the legitimization of disadvantage by the in-group

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How do individuals deal with group disadvantage when their fellow in-group members conceive it as legitimate? Integrating research on the normative conflict model (Packer, 2008, *Pers. Soc. Psychol. Rev.*, 12, 50) and collective action, we expect high identifiers to reject the in-group norm of legitimacy that justifies the inequality, and to assert that the group is actually able and willing to contest the disadvantage by collective means. In Study 1 and Study 2, we tested this hypothesis in different intergroup contexts. The results confirmed our predictions and also showed one boundary condition for high identifiers, namely that the content of the social identity supports resistance. In Study 3, we found support for our hypothesis using artificial groups and manipulating identification experimentally. These results show that even when a disadvantaged group appears to accept its situation, high identified in-group members will still contest this and, moreover, expect other in-group members to support them in this endeavour.

Imagine a situation in which a feminist woman who feels that women deserve to have equal career opportunities to men, reads a survey showing that other women support traditional roles (e.g., to stay at home and do housework). How would she react to this threat to her goals? More generally, what happens when the in-group seems to espouse views that damage our group's interests? The main goal of this study was to examine how individuals deal with in-group disadvantage when other in-group members seem to accept the discrimination as legitimate.

Social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978) proposes that legitimacy shapes unequal status relationships: status differences between groups can foster intergroup conflict if the disadvantaged perceive the differences as illegitimate. However, if they are characterized as legitimate, such social competition will be less likely (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). But who defines legitimacy? For the feminists who perceive that men and women should have fair and similar career opportunities, a message that favours gender inequality will probably not have the same effect if it comes from men as when it is endorsed by other women. Given that most of the research on legitimacy has neglected the source of legitimacy (for exceptions see Hersby, Jetten, Ryan, & Schmitt, 2011; Jetten, Schmitt, Branscombe,

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Garza, & Mewse, 2011), in this work we distinguish external legitimacy (the opinion of an outgroup regarding an in-group disadvantage) and internal legitimacy (the in-group view towards its own disadvantage; Spears, Greenwood, de Lemus, & Sweetman, 2010). In-group members might expect a high-status outgroup to perceive the in-group's low status as legitimate, but arguably more threatening is the case where the *in-group* also shares this view. This forms our main focus: we examine the role of legitimacy appraisals coming from the in-group, conceiving legitimacy as an in-group norm.

Low-status groups do sometimes consent to the disadvantage and accept their inferiority (e.g., Crocker & Major, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). However, do *all* in-group members accept the in-group norm when it legitimizes their disadvantage? This question has important implications for major theories of intergroup relations. For example, system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994) suggests that the in-group acceptance of any inferiority should reinforce system justification and outgroup favouring tendencies. Although social identity theory suggests more resistance to such inferiority (Spears, Jetten, & Doosje, 2001), when it is legitimized by the in-group it may be difficult to deny (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and predictions from the closely related self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) make conformity to group norms even more explicit. A crucial moderator variable here is likely to be social identification.

Social identification and deviation

High identifiers typically listen to the in-group and are more influenced by its message than low identifiers (McAuliffe, Jetten, Hornsey, & Hogg, 2003; Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 2000; Turner, 1991). We could expect then, that they will accept the in-group norm that legitimizes the disadvantage. However, research shows that high identifiers can deviate from the group for strategic reasons, to protect or promote it (Morton, Postmes, & Jetten, 2007). More specifically, the normative conflict model (Packer, 2008) proposes that deviations by high identifiers might occur when they perceive a conflict between the group norm and their beliefs about how the group should behave; thus, they disagree with the in-group norm (i.e., normative conflict). From this perspective, high identifiers' deviation might occur when the motivation to conform is counteracted by a second motivation to enhance or protect the in-group (see Packer, Fujita, & Chasteen, 2014; Packer & Miners, 2014); that is, on the one hand high identifiers are motivated to conform in order to maintain harmony, group cohesion and a positive group image within the group (e.g., Turner, 1991) and challenging in-group norms would undermine such goals. On the other hand, where these norms are seen as counterproductive, challenging them might serve the group better in the long term (e.g., Johnson & Fujita, 2012). This way, high identifiers deal with a goal conflict in which present and future-oriented goals (i.e., to maintain group conformity and cohesion or to pursue change to enhance the in-group, respectively) oppose each other (Packer *et al.*, 2014).

So far, the normative conflict model has tested these hypotheses with regard to norms unrelated to the intergroup context. In our work, we extend this research to an intergroup context, in which the disadvantaged in-group norm relates to the perceived fairness of intergroup relations. We argue that when it comes to dissent from a norm that legitimizes the group's disadvantaged social position, for high identifiers at least, the future rewards (i.e., enhancing the group's position in the social hierarchy) should be more determining and valuable than the costs associated with challenging in-group norms and weakening group harmony. Thus, high identifiers should be more likely to endorse

collectively oriented dissent (Packer & Miners, 2014), in order to change the group norm for one they think is better in the longer term.

Building social change: From disagreement to action

In an intergroup context, just showing dissent from the in-group norm that legitimizes the disadvantage changes nothing regarding the situation ('talk is cheap'). However, we argue that, driven by the motivation to improve the in-group's position in the long term, the high identifiers' dissent may reflect intentions aimed at ending the disadvantage. Therefore, we test the idea that high identifiers not only show dissent from the in-group norm (Crane & Platow, 2010; Packer, 2008), but also actively dispute the norm through their own willingness to contest the situation (see Packer & Chasteen, 2010). Individual action is likely to be ineffective, but we predict that high identifiers will be motivated to believe that others agree with them (Marks & Miller, 1987; Spears & Manstead, 1990) and will be willing to join them in this endeavour. The most direct way to do this is by taking collective action against the disadvantage, that is, acts aimed at improving the conditions of the group (Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). Perceiving the in-group as willing and able to overcome the disadvantaged situation (i.e., social opinion and action support and group efficacy) are key antecedents of collective action (van Zomeren, Leach, & Spears, 2012; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008; van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004). Thus, we measure social support, group efficacy, and collective action tendencies, as related ways to deviate from in-group norm legitimizing the disadvantage. In addition, we consider social identification given that: (1) it has been shown that identification directly affects collective action (e.g., Stürmer & Simon, 2004), and group efficacy perceptions (e.g., van Zomeren *et al.*, 2008), and (2) the normative conflict model highlights its relevance when deviating from the in-group norm. This theoretical framework will allow us to examine whether any resistance to social disadvantage, particularly when faced with internal legitimacy, might occur.

The present research

In Study 1, we examine how individuals deal with group disadvantage when the in-group norm establishes it to be deserved and legitimate. We argue that high identifiers will show potential behaviours aimed at contesting the in-group disadvantage, presumably motivated by the goal of improving the in-group status in the longer term.

However, deviation by high identifiers might not always occur. According to the normative conflict model, high identifiers need to experience normative conflict in order to contest the in-group's disadvantage; that is, high identifiers need to be explicitly aware of the fact that the in-group norm of legitimacy is prejudicial for the in-group and perceive that other in-group responses would be more appropriate. This perception might be related to the content of group identity. If group identification is not only characterized by its strength, but also by its content (Becker & Wagner, 2009; van Breen, Spears, Kuppens, & de Lemus, 2016), then the ideological content of identity could be crucial in evoking normative conflict. Take the case of gender inequality and how feminists and traditional women frame this disadvantage. The content of group identification can relate to whether the group (i.e., women) is perceived as a victim of social inequality, and thus whether the goal is to challenge and change the status quo or to maintain it. We predict that high identifiers will only experience normative conflict (and, consequently show dissent), when the in-group legitimizes the disadvantage, if their identity content, or ideology,

questions this inequality, as in the case of feminists. However, strongly identified traditional women will likely not experience normative conflict when the in-group legitimizes its disadvantage, as this norm would be in line with what they think it is right. Therefore, in Study 2 we consider the impact of identity content (i.e., specifically women's vs. feminist identity) on women's willingness to show dissent (see van Breen *et al.*, 2016). Finally, in Study 3 we test our main hypothesis in a minimal group setting and show the causal role of identification on deviation by experimentally manipulating this factor.

STUDY 1

The purpose of Study 1 is to analyse the influence of internal (i.e., in-group) legitimacy on participants' willingness to contest an in-group disadvantage. We expect that high identifiers (vs. low) will reject an in-group norm that accepts the disadvantage, by showing higher levels of social support, group efficacy, and collective action intentions to contest the disadvantage. We do not expect an effect of identification under illegitimate conditions as in this case, the in-group norm is already against the disadvantage. Therefore, we expect a two-way interaction of legitimacy and identification, showing that high identifiers reject the in-group norm when it accepts the disadvantage. To test this hypothesis, we developed a fictitious scenario using a socially relevant issue: the allocation of economic resources among regions by the Spanish Government. Participants read an extract from an alleged report related to the planned regional economic resource distribution, which stated that the region where they lived (Andalusia) would receive less economic funding than others.¹

Design and procedure

Participants were 145 undergraduates at an Andalusian university (116 women; mean age 20.29), who received course credit for their participation. They were randomly assigned to one of the experimental conditions in a between-participants unifactorial design with two conditions (internal legitimacy: legitimate vs. illegitimate). Social identification was measured with seven items ($\alpha = .93$, adapted from Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1995; Leach *et al.*, 2008; e.g., *I see myself as an Andalusian*), and included as a centred continuous predictor in the regression analysis.

In the legitimate condition, participants read that Andalusians citizens, previously surveyed, legitimized the in-group disadvantage based on stereotypic reasons² related to the well-known Andalusian stereotype of high warmth and low competence (Morales, García, Rodríguez-Bailón, & Moya, 2004; e.g., *The budget cuts in Andalusia are understandable because Andalusian workers are less competent than those from other*

¹ Cover stories of Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3 available from <https://mfr.osf.io/render?url=https://osf.io/znu67/?action=download%26mode=render>

² A pilot study using the same scenario and methodology as Study 1 (Jiménez-Moya, de Lemus, Rodríguez-Bailón, & Spears, 2012) supported our hypothesis of high identifiers confronting internal legitimacy when it accepted the disadvantage, but only when the arguments used by the in-group to justify the situation were based on the group stereotype (e.g., *The budget cuts are understandable because Andalusian workers are less competent than those from other regions*). We found no effects when economic reasons were endorsed by the in-group (e.g., *The budget cuts are understandable because in recent years, Andalusia received more investment than other regions*). This could be due to the fact that: (1) high identifiers only reject the in-group norm when it implies a negative in-group image (e.g., a negative stereotype associated to the in-group), and (2) objective justifications of the disadvantage are more constraining; therefore, there is less scope for resistance.

regions). In the illegitimate condition, participants read that other Andalusians framed the situation as unfair, rejecting the stereotypic reasons (e.g., *Andalusians are as competent as other region's workers; thus, we deserve the same investment as they do*). Further, in order to make more salient the in-group character of the norm, the text stated that citizens from a different region justified Andalusia's disadvantage (external legitimacy), and this was constant across conditions.

After reading the text, participants spent approximately 15 min completing a questionnaire comprising the dependent variables. Upon completion the task, they were thanked and debriefed via email some days later.

Dependent variables

To check the effectiveness of the manipulation, participants rated the extent to which the in-group thought the situation was just (1 = *very unfair*, 7 = *very fair*). Social opinion support was measured with three items referred to the perceived in-group appraisals of the shared disadvantaged situation ($\alpha = .80$, e.g., *I think other Andalusians disagree with this economic resource allocation*). Social action support was measured with three items, related to the perceived other in-group members' willingness to contest the disadvantage ($\alpha = .91$, e.g., *I think other Andalusians are willing to do something against the current situation*), and we measured group efficacy perceptions with five items adapted from van Zomeren *et al.* (2008) ($\alpha = .90$, e.g., *I think together we are able to change this situation*). Finally, we measured to what extent participants would approve and would take part in collective action to change the economic allocation with eight items ($\alpha = .86$; $\alpha = .88$, respectively, e.g., *I would sign a petition to establish an equal allocation*). Participants used a scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*) to answer the items, except for collective action items in which they used an 1–11 scale.

Results

Manipulation checks

We ran an ANOVA on the legitimacy check with legitimacy as a factor, confirming that participants in the legitimate condition reported the in-group perceived the situation as fairer ($M = 5.75$) than individuals in the illegitimate condition, $M = 1.39$, $F(1, 142) = 481.15$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .77$.

Main results

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics and correlations among variables. In regression analyses, we entered legitimacy as dummy coded (0 = *legitimate*, 1 = *illegitimate*) and social identification as a continuous predictor. Collinearity statistics for all regression analyses were within acceptable ranges (tolerance > 0.10 and variance inflation factors < 10; Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003). Table 2 shows the full pattern of results, and significant interactions are reported below.³

³ Figures of the significant interactions of Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3 available from <https://mfr.osf.io/render?url=https://osf.io/znu67/?action=download%26mode=render>

Table 1. Correlations among and descriptive statistics for Study 1 variables

	Scale	M (SD)	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Social opinion support	1–7	5.49 (1.49)		.69**	.27**	.22**	.21*
2. Social action support	1–7	5.18 (1.43)			.36**	.29**	.26**
3. Group efficacy	1–7	5.84 (.99)				.44**	.46**
4. Approval of coll. action	1–11	8.93 (1.48)					.69**
5. Inten. to participate in coll. action	1–11	7.81 (2.04)					

Note. N = 145.

Approval of coll. action = approve of collective action; Inten. to participate in coll. action = intention to participate in collective action.

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

Table 2. Main effects and interactions in Study 1

	Social opinion support	Social action support	Group efficacy	Approval of coll. action	Inten. to participate in coll. action
Internal legitimacy	.48***	.40***	.12	.13	.12
Social identification	.12	.11	.23**	.11	.27**
Internal leg. $\times$ Social id.	-.52*	-.22	-.61*	-.01	.27

Note. Approval of coll. action = approve of collective action; Inten. to participate in coll. action = intention to participate in collective action; Internal leg. = Internal legitimacy; Social id. = Social identification.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Social opinion support

Analyses showed the expected interaction between legitimacy and social identification ($\beta = -.52$, $p = .05$). This result shows that in the legitimate condition those who highly identify with the group perceived higher levels of social opinion support than low identifiers ($\beta = .25$, $p = .04$). This effect was not significant in the illegitimate condition ($\beta = -.01$, $p = .90$).

Group efficacy

In terms of group efficacy, we found the predicted interaction of legitimacy and social identification ($\beta = -.61$, $p = .04$), showing that, compared to low identifiers, high identifiers reported higher levels of group efficacy in the legitimate condition ($\beta = .41$, $p < .001$), but not in the illegitimate condition ($\beta = .08$, $p = .49$, see Figure 1).

To sum up, results confirm our hypothesis in terms of social support and group efficacy. However, we did not find the expected results for the more action-related tendencies (social action support and collective action).

Discussion

Results showed that high identifiers perceived more scope for change (i.e., higher levels of social support and group efficacy) than low identifiers when the norm implied in-group

Figure 1. Group efficacy levels by high and low identifiers participants in the legitimate and illegitimate conditions.

legitimacy. However, when the in-group norm was aligned with opposing the disadvantage, we did not find differences between low and high identifiers. This result confirms our hypothesis and shows that highly identified individuals are willing to show dissent when the in-group norm is harmful for their own group (Packer, 2008). Thus, when it comes to norms that relate to the in-group position in an intergroup context, we could say that high identifiers are prepared to undermine in-group cohesion by challenging the norm, in favour of enhancing the in-group in the longer term (see Packer *et al.*, 2014). Further, high identifiers in the legitimate condition not only report that the in-group is able to overcome the disadvantage (i.e., group efficacy) but also that other in-group members support the need for change (i.e., social opinion support). Thus, high identifiers might reason that the in-group norm of legitimacy is not a fixed fact ('being') but can be changed ('becoming'; Spears *et al.*, 2001) in an effort to improve the in-group status.

We did not find the expected results on action tendencies. However, previous research using the same cover story and manipulation *did* show significant results on collective action tendencies (see Jiménez-Moya, Spears, Rodríguez-Bailón, & de Lemus, 2015). We argue that this might be related to the sociopolitical context of the region and the country at this time, which is currently much more complex and alarming than it was in previous years. Currently, Andalusian society is dealing with more urgent issues (such as the lack of a national government for the previous 9 months). Therefore within the cover story, the issue raised about the Andalusian situation might have been seen as not important enough to justify collective action compared to other issues in the region.

In sum, Study 1 shows that high identifiers challenge the in-group norm of legitimacy when it justifies the disadvantage. In Study 2, we test a boundary condition that addresses awareness of the disadvantage and commitment to contest it. Specifically, we argue that the content of the group identity will matter: when the content of social identity

unambiguously promotes in-group improvement, deviation makes sense if it helps these group goals. However, when the in-group values do not clearly support social change there is no need to deviate from the legitimacy norm that justifies the in-group disadvantage. In addition, a second aim of Study 2 was to explore the effects of manipulated external legitimacy in combination with internal legitimacy.

STUDY 2

In this study, we measure two kinds of social identities related to the in-group of women: identification with women and with feminists. Whereas feminists are by definition unambiguously oriented towards equality, and the idea of challenging the status quo is built into the group identity content (Becker & Wagner, 2009; Condor, 1984), the content of women's identity is heterogeneous, containing different subtypes that might support the current social hierarchy (e.g., traditional women). Thus, at least some women will not experience normative conflict when the in-group legitimizes the disadvantage. Therefore, we predict that the high identifiers' resistance to the disadvantage's justification will occur primarily for high feminist identifiers, as they will experience normative conflict, in line with their identity goals (Becker & Wagner, 2009; van Breen *et al.*, 2016). As a complementary goal, we also manipulated external legitimacy (cf., Spears *et al.*, 2010), to explore its effects in the process of deviance. We expect that internal (vs. external) legitimacy would have stronger effects as individuals are most influenced by in-group members (Turner, 1991; Turner *et al.*, 1987; Wright, 1997), and outgroup justifications of in-group disadvantage will be more expected and less threatening than in-group justification. However, we also expect external legitimacy to have an effect, namely that support from the outgroup (i.e., as allies against the discrimination) could encourage high identifiers to show dissent to the harmful in-group norm. As in Study 1, we presented a fictitious story in which the in-group was in a disadvantaged situation. Specifically, we told participants about The Big Lottery Fund (BIG, a grant-making body in the United Kingdom created to administer the funding of 'good causes'), and specified that there was an imbalance in the allocation of the BIG lottery funding between institutions, such that women's causes received less funding compared to men's.

Design and procedure

Participants were 117 women undergraduates from a British university (mean age: 19.26), who received course credits for their participation. Participants read an excerpt from a report related to the current economic resource distribution of the BIG fund and other women's and men's opinion about the issue. They were randomly assigned to one of the experimental conditions in a 2 (External legitimacy: legitimate vs. illegitimate) $\times$ 2 (Internal legitimacy: legitimate vs. illegitimate) between-participants factorial design. We adapted the items from Study 1 to measure women's ($\alpha = .83$) and feminist identification ($\alpha = .95$) and were included in the regression analysis as centred continuous predictors. These were not related ($r = .13$, *ns*) in line with previous research (van Breen *et al.*, 2016).

We manipulated both external and internal legitimacy based on the traditional female stereotype of lower competence (vs. men). In the external legitimate condition,

participants read that *men* surveyed justified their discriminatory situation (e.g., *Women are less efficient and experienced in managing financial responsibilities than men; therefore, they receive less economic investment*). In the external illegitimate condition, men rejected the discrimination (*Women would be able to manage the financial resources just as well as men; therefore, they deserve equal economic investment*). We followed the same procedure as Study 1 to manipulate internal legitimacy, based in the traditional female stereotype previously described. Participants were thanked and debriefed upon completion the task.

Dependent variables

Participants rated the extent to which both the in-group and the outgroup justified the disadvantage (1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*). We used the same items and scales as in Study 1, but adapted to women as a group, to measure opinion and social action support ($\alpha = .72$; $\alpha = .86$, respectively), group efficacy ($\alpha = .92$), and the approval and willingness to engage in collective action ($\alpha = .90$; $\alpha = .92$, respectively).

Results

Manipulation checks

We removed one participant from the analysis who reported her view was biased because she had actually worked for BIG. Separate ANOVAs with external and internal legitimacy as factors were conducted on the external and internal legitimacy checks. Participants in the external legitimate condition perceived the outgroup agreed more with the BIG economic distribution ($M = 6.21$) than participants in the external illegitimate condition, $M = 2.27$, $F(1, 107) = 365.11$, $p < .001$. Participants in the internal legitimate condition perceived that the in-group agreed more with the BIG allocation ($M = 5.89$) than participants in the internal illegitimate condition ($M = 2.12$), $F(1, 107) = 262.29$, $p < .001$. We did not find any other significant effect ($F_s < 1$, ns).

Main results

Table 3 shows descriptive statistics and correlations among variables. In regression analyses, we entered internal and external legitimacy, as dummy coded (0 = *legitimate*,

Table 3. Correlations among and descriptive statistics for Study 2 variables

	Scale	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Social opinion support	1–7	5.01 (1.08)		.52**	.15	.27**	.32**
2. Social action support	1–7	4.56 (1.08)			.40**	.26*	.28*
3. Group efficacy	1–7	4.98 (1.01)				.29**	.18*
4. Approval of coll. action	1–11	7.76 (1.93)					.74**
5. Inten. to participate in coll. action	1–11	5.80 (2.40)					

Note. $N = 117$.

Approval of coll. action = approve of collective action; Inten. to participate in coll. action = intention to participate in collective action.

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

Table 4. Main effects and interactions in Study 2

	Social opinion support	Social action support	Group efficacy	Approval of coll. action	Inten. to participate in coll. action
Internal legitimacy	.42***	.10	-.01	.02	.01
External legitimacy	-.04	.01	-.05	-.04	-.14
Feminist identification	.12	.10	.21*	.24*	.35***
Women identification	.01	-.05	-.02	-.14	.00
Internal leg. × External leg.	-.13	.6	.29 [†]	-.10	-.27
Internal leg. × Feminist id.	-.45 [†]	-.39	-.71**	-.62*	-.22
Internal leg. × Women id.	-.20	1.6 [†]	2.5**	.64	.67
External leg. × Feminist id.	.08	-.20	-.32	-.58*	-.33
External leg. × Women id.	-.38	.19	1.12	.35	.37
Internal leg. × External leg. × Feminist id.	-.47	-1.09*	-.26	-.17	-.18
Internal leg. × External leg. × Women id.	32 [†]	-1.39	2.52	1.4	2

Note. Approval of coll. action = approve of collective action; Inten. to participate in coll. action = intention to participate in collective action; Internal leg. = Internal legitimacy; External leg. = External legitimacy; Feminist id. = Feminist identification; Women id. = Women identification.

[†] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

1 = *illegitimate*) and feminist and women's identification as centred continuous predictors. Collinearity statistics for all regression analyses were within acceptable ranges (tolerance > 0.10 and variance inflation factors <10; Cohen *et al.*, 2003). Table 4 shows the full pattern of results, and we report below significant interactions.

Social action support

We found a significant three-way interaction: External legitimacy × Internal legitimacy × Feminist identification ($\beta = -1.09$, $p = .02$, see Figure 2). We decomposed this interaction by external legitimacy, showing a significant interaction of internal legitimacy and feminist identification under external illegitimate conditions ($\beta = -.42$, $p = .03$), that was non-significant in the external legitimate conditions ($\beta = .15$, $p = .40$). Specifically, in the external legitimate conditions, we did not find any significant effect of feminist identification ($\beta = .03$, $p = .88$ for internal legitimacy; $\beta = .26$, $p = .18$ for internal illegitimacy). However, under external illegitimate conditions, we found a marginal effect of feminist identification in the internal legitimate conditions ($\beta = .31$, $p = .07$). That is, the higher the feminist identification, the more social support participants showed when the out-group rejected the in-group disadvantage but the in-group legitimized it. The effect was non-significant when both the out-group and in-group perceived the discrimination as illegitimate (i.e., external and internal illegitimacy, $\beta = -.27$, $p = .16$).

Group efficacy

In line with the results of Study 1, we found an interaction between internal legitimacy and feminist identification ($\beta = -.71$, $p < .01$), showing that participants in the internal

Figure 2. Perceptions of social action support by high and low identifiers participants in the external legitimate and illegitimate conditions, as a function internal legitimacy.

legitimate condition who highly identified with feminists (vs. low identifiers), perceived higher levels of group efficacy ($\beta = .38, p < .01$). This effect was non-significant in the internal illegitimate condition ($\beta = .01, p = .96$). Interestingly, we found a similar Internal legitimacy $\times$ Women identification interaction ($\beta = 2.5, p < .01$), showing a marginal effect of women's identification in both conditions. However, the effect of identification was negative in the legitimate condition ($\beta = -.23, p = .09$), and positive under illegitimate circumstances ($\beta = .21, p = .09$). Therefore, for women's identification, high identifiers (vs. low) tended to accept the disadvantage when the in-group did, but in the illegitimate conditions, they tended to perceive the in-group as more able to fight the situation than those who identified less.

Approval of collective action

We found an interaction Internal legitimacy $\times$ Feminist identification ($\beta = -.62, p = .02$). As expected, identification had a positive effect under legitimate conditions ($\beta = .38, p < .01$), that was non-significant when the in-group framed the disadvantage as illegitimate ($\beta = .02, p = .87$). Results also showed an External legitimacy $\times$ Feminist identification interaction ($\beta = -.58, p = .04$). Identification positively predicted participants' approval of collective action in the external legitimate condition, when men perceived the discrimination against women as deserved ($\beta = .42, p < .01$). This effect was not significant under illegitimate conditions ($\beta = .04, p = .77$).

To sum up, results confirmed our hypotheses showing a positive effect of feminist identification under internal legitimate conditions for social action support (in a three-way interaction), group efficacy, and support for collective action. Furthermore, non-

significant results showed the same trend.⁴ Interestingly and in line with our identity content rationale, we found the opposite pattern for women identification in terms of group efficacy (see Table 4).

Discussion

To our knowledge, this is the first time that the effects of internal and external legitimacy have been distinguished and manipulated orthogonally. As predicted, whereas external legitimacy had less effect on participants, an in-group norm of legitimacy elicited the predicted resistance to in-group opinion among high feminist identifiers. This could be interpreted as evidence that confirms individuals are most influenced by in-group members (Turner *et al.*, 1987; Wright, 1997), but also more threatened when they seem to go against in-group interests.

As in Study 1, high feminist identifiers did not accept the in-group legitimacy norm when it justified the disadvantage. According to our hypothesis, under internal legitimacy conditions high feminist identifiers (vs. low) perceived more group efficacy and social support and they were more willing to approve collective action to contest the disadvantage. Interestingly, they were more ready to deviate from the legitimating norm when the outgroup framed the disadvantage as unfair, and thus was some external validity for their perceived injustice; but they also showed support for collective action when the outgroup saw their disadvantaged situation as deserved. By contrast, high women identifiers tended to show the opposite pattern: they saw more scope for change when the in-group framed the disadvantage as unfair, but accepted the disadvantage when the rest of the in-group did so. We argue that identity content shaped deviance tendencies: when the group ideology is in line with social change (i.e., the feminist politicized identity), deviance to alter the status quo is expected. However, when the group standards are more conservative (i.e., traditional women) high identifiers might not experience normative conflict.

Although we confirmed our predictions in terms of social support, group efficacy, and collective action approval, we did not find significant results on the intentions to participate in collective action. This might be related to the personal costs and commitment of collective action and, consequently, just a small percentage of individuals truly engage in this kind of action (see Klandermans, Sabucedo, Rodríguez, & De Weerd, 2002; Rucht, 1994).

⁴ We also found some marginal results that are in line with our hypothesis and worth to mention. First, in terms of social opinion support and confirming our main prediction, a marginal interaction between internal legitimacy and feminist identification ($\beta = -.45$, $p = .08$) showed that when the group legitimated the disadvantaged, identification had a positive effect on the support perceived ($\beta = .26$, $p = .05$) that was non-significant under illegitimate conditions ($\beta = -.05$, $p = .70$). Further, a marginal three-way interaction External legitimacy $\times$ Internal legitimacy $\times$ Women identification on the same variable ($\beta = .32$, $p = .07$) showed a positive trend of identification only when the in-group framed the disadvantage as illegitimate (for external legitimacy, $\beta = .19$, $p = .15$; for external illegitimacy, $\beta = .15$, $p = .26$). Regarding social action support, a two-way marginal interaction Internal Legitimacy $\times$ Women identification ($\beta = 1.6$, $p = .08$) showed a negative trend of identification under legitimate conditions ($\beta = -.20$, $p = .14$; under illegitimate conditions $\beta = .11$, $p = .37$). Note that these two marginal results involving women identification are in line with the idea that high women identifiers reject the in-group disadvantage only when the in-group (and also the outgroup) frames it as illegitimate; thus, they do not challenge the in-group norm of legitimacy as high feminist identifiers; instead, they seem to accept it. Finally, we found a marginal interaction of external and internal legitimacy on group efficacy ($\beta = .29$, $p = .07$) showing that participants tended to perceive higher levels of group efficacy when both the in-group and the outgroup framed the disadvantage as illegitimate.

STUDY 3

So far we have measured group identification as a moderator, which means that our research retains a correlational character, preventing confirm causal conclusions about the effects of this factor. In Study 3, we aimed to experimentally manipulate identification, which also entailed creating groups in the laboratory (i.e., quasi-minimal groups). Specifically, participants were categorized as inductive (vs. deductive) thinkers (Doosje, Spears, & Koomen, 1995), and we manipulated the level of identification using a variant of the bogus pipeline procedure, and the internal legitimacy norm towards an in-group disadvantage. In line with previous results, we predict that high identifiers participants should deviate from the in-group norm when it legitimizes the in-group disadvantage by showing higher levels of social support, group efficacy, and willingness to take part in collective action than low identifiers.

Design and procedure

Participants were 78 psychology students (51 women; mean age 18.29) at a European university, who received course credit for their participation. Participants were received at the laboratory individually, and randomly assigned to one of the experimental conditions in a 2 (Identification: low vs. high) $\times$ 2 (Legitimacy: legitimate vs. illegitimate) between-participants factorial design. They were told the study required that their style of thinking, as inductive versus deductive thinkers, would be assessed. With this aim, they completed a bogus test composed by 13 items, but all participants were assigned to the inductive thinkers group (see Doosje, Spears *et al.*, 1995).

To manipulate social identification, participants were asked to answer a bogus personality inventory composed by 10 items designed for this study. To reinforce this manipulation, using a bogus pipeline procedure (cf. Doosje, Ellemers *et al.*, 1995), participants were told that high levels of a certain hormone, cortisol, reflected high levels of identification with social groups. After answering the inventory, the experimenter took a saliva sample from each participant, ostensibly to check the levels of cortisol. Some minutes later, participants saw how their saliva sample turned pink when in contact with a reagent. Under high identification conditions, participants were informed that the staining showed their levels of cortisol were relatively high. Participants in the low identification condition were told that this colour change indicated the absence of cortisol.

The experimenter fed this result into the computer, to combine this feedback with participants' responses to the personality inventory. After some seconds, the screen showed to participants whether their level of identification was high or low. Then, participants read about the existence of unequal relations between the members of both groups of thinkers in which, according to supposed empirical studies, inductive thinkers (the in-group) were treated in a discriminatory way by deductive thinkers (see Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998). It was specified that this negative treatment had subtle but adverse consequences for inductive thinkers in their everyday life, albeit the general population was not aware of these inequitable interactions. Although we created a plausible scenario, we acknowledge that participants might not feel the intergroup issue as genuinely discriminating, as it refers to somewhat artificial groups. To take this into account, we included a measure of the perception of discrimination relating to the situation described (see next section).

External (deductive thinkers' justification of the disadvantage) and internal legitimacy were based on a bogus in-group stereotype of low competence and high warmth. External legitimacy was constant across conditions (e.g., *It is understandable that inductive thinkers are being discriminated in some situations, if they are not competent and efficient enough*), and internal legitimacy was manipulated as previous studies (e.g., illegitimacy: *It is unfair that we are being discriminated by deductive thinkers, we are as competent and efficient as they are thus we deserve equal treatment*). After reading the text, participants answered some questions on the computer comprising the dependent variables. Upon completion the task, they were thanked and debriefed.

Dependent variables

As manipulation checks, participants rated their level of identification according to the inventory and the cortisol measures (1 = *low*, 7 = *high*), and the extent to which inductive thinkers perceived the situation described as legitimate (1 = *totally disagree*, 7 = *totally agree*). We used the same items and scales as previous studies to measure social opinion and action support ($\alpha = .54$; $\alpha = .84$, respectively), group efficacy ($\alpha = .89$), and the approval and willingness to engage in collective action ($\alpha = .86$; $\alpha = .91$, respectively). We also included a measure of participants' perception of discrimination (1 = *not discriminatory at all*, 7 = *very discriminatory*) regarding the inductive thinkers' situation (i.e., *To what extent could the situation described be seen as a discriminatory situation?*). We argue that by introducing a quasi-minimal intergroup distinction, the situation could be perceived as less discriminatory than those presented in previous studies with natural groups, about which participants had prior contextual knowledge and commitment that would cause them to more clearly perceive the situation as discriminatory. Therefore, only participants who framed the scenario as discriminatory were expected to experience normative conflict under legitimate conditions, that is, only when they perceived the situation as truly discriminating should they disagree with the norm that legitimizes it.

Results

Manipulation checks

We removed one participant from the analysis who suspected the cortisol measure was faked. An ANOVA with identification and legitimacy as factors on the identification check showed that participants in the high identification condition reported higher levels of identification than participants in the low identification condition, $M = 6.35$ vs. 2.57 ; $F(1, 73) = 150.17, p < .001, \eta^2 = .67$. The same analysis on the legitimacy check showed that participants in the legitimate conditions reported that their in-group framed the situation as fairer ($M = 5.20$), than participants in the illegitimate condition, $M = 1.60$; $F(1, 73) = 84.42, p < .001, \eta^2 = .54$. Analysis did not show other significant result ($F_s < 1$, ns).

Main results

The requirement that participants viewed the situation as discriminatory was addressed in two ways for each variable/analysis: (1) using perceived discrimination as a continuous predictor/moderator in the regression analysis (the manipulations had no effect on this

variable), and (2) by determining a cut-off (i.e., a minimum thereof), in order to further analyse the three-way interactions found, focusing on those participants who perceived the in-group situation as genuinely discriminatory.

Table 5 shows descriptive statistics and correlations. In regression analyses, we entered legitimacy and identification, as dummy coded (0 = *legitimate*, 1 = *illegitimate*; 0 = *low identification*, 1 = *high identification*) and perception of discrimination as a continuous variable. Collinearity statistics for all regression analyses were within acceptable ranges (tolerance > 0.10 and variance inflation factors <10; Cohen *et al.*, 2003). Table 6 shows the full pattern of results, and below, we described the significant interactions.

Group efficacy

We found a three-way interaction of identification, legitimacy, and discrimination perceptions ($\beta = -1.57$, $p < .01$). In order to decompose this interaction according to our hypothesis, we focused on participants who framed the scenario as discriminating at least to some extent. As stated earlier, the perception of in-group discrimination or

Table 5. Correlations among and descriptive statistics for Study 3 variables

	Scale	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Social opinion support	1–7	5.21 (1.26)		.26*	.11	.07	.01
2. Social action support	1–7	4.80 (1.09)			.63***	.47**	.36**
3. Group efficacy	1–7	5.41 (1.15)				.36**	.33**
4. Approval of coll. action	1–11	5.62 (2.01)					.89**
5. Inten. to participate in coll. action	1–11	5.11 (2.30)					

Note. *N* = 77.

Approval of coll. action = approve of collective action; Inten. to participate in coll. action = intention to participate in collective action.

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

Table 6. Main effects and interactions in Study 3

	Social opinion support	Social action support	Group efficacy	Approval of coll. action	Inten. to participate in coll. action
Internal legitimacy	.45***	.18 [†]	.10	.06	.02
Social identification	.07	.20*	.04	.04	.06
Discrimination	.27**	.51***	.45***	.53***	.51***
Internal leg. × Social id.	-.01	-.02	-.04	.16	.15
Internal leg. × Discrimination	-.07	-.41	-.51 [†]	-.44	-.46
Social id. × Discrimination	-.18	.14	-.03	.65*	.44
Internal leg. × Social id. × Discrimination	.75	-.72	-1.57**	-.84 [†]	-1.10*

Note. Approval of coll. action = approve of collective action; Inten. to participate in coll. action = intention to participate in collective action.

[†] $p < .10$; * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

disadvantage is proposed to be a prerequisite for the effects of identification observed in Study 1 and Study 2. Given that in this third study the artificial manipulation of identification might make this perception of discrimination weaker, it makes sense to consider participants who perceived the events described as in-group discrimination, as they will be the ones who actually experience normative conflict. Thus, in order to disentangle the three-way interactions found, we ran the regression analysis for participants who scored 5 or more (i.e., above the scale mid-point in a scale ranged from 1 to 7, $N = 45$) in the perception of discrimination scale. Results showed a two-way interaction Identification $\times$ Legitimacy ($\beta = -.53, p = .04$), showing a positive trend of identification on group efficacy perceptions in the legitimate conditions ($\beta = .36, p = .10$), that was negative under illegitimate conditions ($\beta = -.25, p = .23$).

Approval of collective action

We found an interaction Identification $\times$ Discrimination perceptions ($\beta = .65, p = .03$). Specifically, we found a positive effect of discrimination for participants categorized as high identifiers ($\beta = .68, p < .001$) that was non-significant for low identifiers ($\beta = .23, p = .16$). Therefore, high identifiers who perceived the situation as more discriminatory were more willing to approve collective action.

Intention to participate in collective action

As predicted, analyses showed a three-way interaction Identification $\times$ Legitimacy $\times$ Discrimination perceptions ($\beta = -1.10, p = .03$). As before, we ran the analysis just for those who perceived the situation described as discriminatory, finding a marginal interaction between legitimacy and identification ($\beta = -.44, p = .09$). Following the tendencies found for group efficacy, under legitimate conditions, we found an effect of identification ($\beta = .47, p = .03$), that was not significant in the illegitimate conditions ($\beta = .04, p = .84$, see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Intention to participate in collective action by high and low identifiers participants in the legitimate and illegitimate conditions. Note. Participants who scored five or more in the discrimination perception scale.

Summing up, results showed the expected effect of identification under legitimate conditions for group efficacy and collective action tendencies (see Table 6). Results for the rest of the measures showed in general the same pattern.⁵ Importantly, high identifiers' resistance emerged only when high identifiers frame the in-group disadvantaged as discriminatory.

Discussion

In Study 3, we created an artificial group in a controlled setting and succeeded in manipulating participant's level of identification with this group. Results replicated previous findings: those who strongly identified with the in-group perceived that the group disadvantage could be contested, even though other members supported the in-group norm of legitimization. Participants categorized as high identifiers (vs. low) showed dissent from the in-group norm by showing higher intentions to participate in collective action and by perceiving the group as relatively able to overcome the disadvantage. Thus, deviation emerged even with an artificial and experimentally manipulated new identity, suggesting that individuals dynamically adopt new social identities (see Packer & Van Bavel, 2015) and that high identifiers are naturally oriented to show dissent when the norm is harmful for the in-group. In this study, we showed the causal role of social identification on resistance to discrimination when the disadvantaged group itself perceives it as legitimate, supporting the results of Study 1 and Study 2. These results are in line with the idea that high identifiers perceive that showing dissent in some situations where the in-group experiences a disadvantage might be helpful in the long term, as predicted by the normative conflict model (Packer & Miners, 2014). Importantly, the results of the present study reveal that, in order to show dissent, it is necessary to perceive that the intergroup context is clearly discriminatory. If individuals do not perceive the situation as prejudicial, the urge to enhancing the in-group is not needed.

Although the legitimacy and identification factor had an effect on most of our dependent variables, we did not find the expected interactions for the social support measures. These items are aimed at measuring what participants think regarding how the rest of the in-group members frame the situation, in terms of opinion and action support. Given that this was an artificial group and participants did not have any information about it or its members before participating in the study, they might find difficult to predict how other in-group members framed the situation or whether they would be willing to act against the disadvantage. However, the dependent variables related to participants' own perceptions did work in the predicted fashion.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Across three studies in different social contexts, we showed that when the in-group frames the disadvantage as legitimate, high identifiers not only show dissent from in-group view but are also willing to challenge the social hierarchy, with the help (perhaps paradoxically) of other in-group members. We have demonstrated this with two types of

⁵ In line with our hypothesis, regression analysis also showed a marginal three-way interaction Identification $\times$ Legitimacy $\times$ Discrimination perceptions on the approval of collective action ($\beta = -.84$, $p = .08$). We focused on participants who framed the in-group situation as discriminatory to disentangle this interaction, and we found a positive effect of identification under legitimate conditions ($\beta = .47$, $p = .03$), confirming our predictions. This effect was not significant under illegitimate conditions ($\beta = .04$, $p = .83$).

variables. First, variables related to the perception of the in-group view, where we systematically found the interaction between legitimacy and identification. Specifically, we found that in a context of in-group discrimination, high identifiers perceived higher levels of social support (Study 1 and Study 2), and group efficacy (Study 1, Study 2, and Study 3) when the in-group justified the disadvantage. Note that these results reflect more than personal deviation. Further, it seems that high identifiers do not *believe* or *heed* the in-group norm: although they are told the in-group legitimizes the disadvantage, they still think the group is willing to fight and overcome the situation. This hints that high identifiers do not take the norm at face value or maybe they devalue it in some way, presumably to facilitate a more optimistic future for the group. Further research is needed to answer this question.

Second, we tested our hypothesis with variables related to the willingness to stop the in-group disadvantage. High identifiers supported collective action (Study 2 and Study 3) to a greater extent than low identifiers, under internal legitimate conditions, where action tendencies represent dissent. However, note that under illegitimate conditions collective action does not represent dissent, as the in-group norm is in line with contesting the disadvantage. Collective action tendencies were in general less affected by the norm of legitimacy than the measures related to the perception of the in-group view. This might be related to the fact that high identifiers are overall more willing to take collective action for the benefit of the group (e.g., Stürmer & Simon, 2004); therefore, internal legitimacy affected them less.

In sum, when a group seems to accept its own disadvantage, this does not mean that *all* in-group members are necessarily ready to submit passively to the situation. This finding is consistent with the normative conflict model (Packer, 2008), which establishes that high identifiers dissent from the in-group norm when it harms the group and when they hold a future-oriented mindset. This, we argue, should be the case for those high identifiers from disadvantaged groups whose aim of enhancing the in-group status might be more determining than the need to maintain in-group harmony through conformity (see Packer & Miners, 2014; Packer *et al.*, 2014).

Importantly, our results were obtained across three social contexts in two different countries, which confer consistency and validity to these findings. Moreover, they go beyond research related to the high identifiers' non-conformity (e.g., Crane & Platow, 2010), as they imply consequences at an intergroup level. High identifiers directly challenge the in-group norm by being more willing than low identifiers to fight for a better in-group position in the social arena, apparently spurred on by the in-group itself (in terms of group efficacy and action support).

Interestingly, we also show a boundary condition for dissent. Specifically, identity content qualifies the process of dissent in the case of identity configurations that imply a certain degree of approval of the situation (i.e., women) compared to others who are explicitly committed to social change (i.e., feminists). In these cases, only when in-group values and beliefs are clearly oriented towards the in-group improvement and social change, do individuals experience normative conflict.

Further, in conditions in which the content of the in-group identity is undefined, we managed to experimentally manipulate participants' level of identification, and even here high identifiers were inclined to contest the in-group norm if this implied a legitimization of a disadvantaged position, provided that they framed the situation as really discriminatory. Therefore, awareness of the importance of the group for one individual (i.e., high identification) clearly leads to the motivation to contest potentially threatening situations for the in-group identity despite the in-group legitimization of it.

Limitations and future directions

We should also acknowledge some limitations of our research. First, although behavioural intentions are good predictors of behaviour (e.g., Moskalenko & McCauley, 2009), future research should strengthen our findings by measuring current behaviour as well as the extent to which high identifiers would actively deviate from the in-group norm. Our measures only allow us to show the different attitudes between high and low identifiers in this matter, and although intentions are reliable predictors of behaviour (Webb & Sheeran, 2006), we cannot be sure whether they would also show differences in terms of real behaviour. In addition, given the variety of factors that seem to affect deviance tendencies, future research should include larger samples, in order to obtain the recommended power in these effects. This would be specially required in the case of Study 3 where, although we planned to recruit 25 participants per cell we were not able to achieve this aim. In addition, just a small sample among participants framed the disadvantage described as discriminatory, what makes even more important to include larger samples to have higher powered studies in future research.

In this paper, we focus on disadvantaged groups that possess a specific stereotype, namely high warmth but lower competence. It could be that confrontation of the in-group disadvantage shown by high identifiers is confined to groups associated with this stereotype. Although such groups may be more likely to be disadvantaged (this is the typical stereotype of low-status groups, after all), the remaining question for future research would be what would happen for disadvantaged groups with a different stereotype (e.g., high competence, low warmth; see Jiménez-Moya, Spears, & Rodríguez-Bailón, 2016). Finally, future research could also explore the role of superordinate identities regarding dissent. Although this might imply some methodological difficulties (for instance, in Study 2, high feminist identifiers might not frame the norm of internal legitimacy as an in-group norm, if they consider it as message coming from other 'women' vs. feminist), it would shed light on the interactive effects of different social identities on dissent.

Conclusion

We have shown that individuals do not always accept the in-group norm when judging the legitimacy of their own discrimination. On the contrary, when the in-group legitimizes its disadvantage, high identifiers are more willing than low identifiers to contest this. Furthermore, going well beyond mere dissent, high identifiers show intentions to turn dissent into collective action, not just despite but *because* of the apparent in-group acceptance of the disadvantage. It is tough that the in-group should accept this disadvantage but this provides support for the old adage that 'when the going gets tough the tough get going'. This phenomenon is observed in reality, when resistance movements start with a few activists who oppose the disadvantaged position, even if this implies contesting the in-group norm, until they win over the overwhelming support of their group.

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