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Building a Tower of Babel? Integrating Core Motivations and Features of Social Structure into the Political Psychology of Political Action

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The political psychology of political action provides the potential for building bridges between scholars from different fields. The main aim of this article is to set some baby steps toward building two conceptual bridges by bringing together a core motivation approach to political action with core features of the social structure that embeds those core motivations. The first conceptual bridge relies on considering a broader motivational model than provided by rational actor or social identity approaches, whereas the second bridge relies on considering core features of the social structure as potentiating these core motivations for political action. More specifically, I first discuss definitions of political action. Second, I identify four converging themes across different literatures on collective action, social movement participation, and voting turnout, resulting in a taxonomy of core motivations for political action (i.e., personal or group-based identity, efficacy, emotion, and moral motivations). Third, in a more explorative fashion I identify four core features of the social structure (ingroup, outgroup, interpersonal network, and institutional features), which I tentatively connect with the taxonomy of core motivations. Finally, I discuss the theoretical, empirical, and practical implications of this generalist, generative, and integrative perspective on political action.

KEY WORDS: political action, motivation, social structure, identity, efficacy, emotion, morality

As a scholar specialized in the social psychology of collective action (e.g., participation in mass protest, petitions, strikes or sit-ins; Klandermans, 1997), it is tempting to write almost exclusively about social-psychological motivations for this phenomenon (e.g., Van Zomeren, 2013). Such a specialist focus, however, often hinders the ability and motivation to look for overarching commonalities across different literatures in different fields, especially when the scientific language within such communities reflects different definitions and concepts (e.g., “collective action,” “social protest,” “contentious politics”). Indeed, too strong a specialist focus hinders the development of any “bigger picture” (e.g., Ellemers, 2013; Steel & Konig, 2006; Van Zomeren, in press).

Pessimists may view such a state of scientific self-segregation as the inevitable result of a destroyed “Tower of Babel”—a never-to-be-fulfilled promise of joint understanding. Optimists, however, may view the very same state of affairs as a temporary, and even a necessary, one in the development of the social sciences toward a more cumulative, integrated science with a common language (e.g., Ellemers, 2013; Steel & Konig, 2006; Van Zomeren, in press). In this domain of life at least, I must admit that I am an optimist. Progress in the social sciences will depend heavily on the “coming together” (Giddens, 1984; see also the notion of *consilience* used by Wilson, 1998) of core insights

from different fields such as (but not limited to) political science, sociology, and psychology. “Bigger pictures” are worth striving for because they mark progress (Van Zomeren, in press).

The political psychology of political action has a strong potential for theoretical integration across different fields (e.g., Klandermans, 1997; Kriesi, 2008; McAdam, 1996; Opp, 2009), yet the different tongues spoken in different fields seem to hinder it. The main aim of this article is to set some baby steps toward theoretical integration through identifying two conceptual bridges. The first conceptual bridge relies on considering a *broader motivational model* than provided by dominant approaches, whereas the second bridge relies on considering core features of the *social structure* as potentiating these core motivations for political action.

These two bridges allow me to identify *four converging themes* in different literatures about different forms of political action (i.e., collective action, social movement participation, and voting turnout; for meta-analyses and summaries, see Geys, 2006; Kinder & Sears, 1985; Klandermans, 1997; Smets & Van Hout, 2013; Stürmer & Simon, 2004; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). From these converging themes I derive a taxonomy of *core motivations* for political action (i.e., identity, efficacy, emotion, and moral motivation;¹ Van Zomeren, 2013, 2015). I then exploratively connect this taxonomy with four core features of the social structure² (e.g., Gerber, Green, & Latimer, 2008; Giddens, 1984; McAdam, 1982, 1996; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Tajfel, 1978). This approach reflects a generalist and generative approach to explaining political action that explicitly embeds individuals’ motivation in the social structure, reflecting some baby steps toward building a Tower of Babel.

The specific road map for this article is therefore as follows. First, I discuss different definitions of political action and argue for a broad definition that fits with a broader conceptualization of motivation for political action. Second, I identify four converging themes in the literatures of collective action, social movement participation, and voting turnout, from which I derive a *taxonomy* of core motivations for political action. Third, in a more explorative fashion, I identify four core features of the social structure which I connect with the proposed taxonomy of core motivations for political action. In the final section, I discuss key implications of this generalist, generative, and integrative line of thought for theory and research on, and the practice of, political action. The key message is that such an integrative understanding of political action cannot reliably depend on a single perspective, guided by “local” definitions and assumptions. Instead, we need “bigger pictures” that rely on a broader conceptualization of motivations for political action and a stronger connection between those motivations and social structure. This generalist, generative, and integrative approach is important to prevent Tower of Babel fiascos but also to encourage stronger theoretical integration across fields and to open up new avenues of research on the political psychology of political action.

Definitions and Assumptions

Different fields often bring along different definitions, assumptions, and concepts, which hinder attempts at theoretical integration. The different literatures on collective action, social movement participation, and voting turnout are no exception (for discussions, see Jasper, 2010; Kinder & Sears, 1985; McAdam, Tarrow & Tilly, 2001; Opp, 2009). Political scientists, for example, ask and test

¹ I define *motivation* as functional goal-directed processes (Van Zomeren, in press). Specifically, I assume individuals to engage in political action to achieve identity, instrumental, emotional, and moral goals (see Van Zomeren, 2013, 2015). As I will argue in the first part of this article, all of these goals can be personal or group-based goals.

² In line with Giddens’ (1984) notion of social structure as “rules and resources [...], organized as properties of social systems” (p. 25), I define *social structure* here broadly, potentially including political or societal system features, norms, and cultural frameworks of meaning and relationships between individuals and groups. As I will argue in the second part of this article, connecting core motivations for political action with core features of the social structure emphasizes how intertwined human agency and social structure are (e.g., Giddens, 1984; see also Markus & Kitayama, 2010; Porpora, 1989).

what brings people out to the vote (e.g., Gerber et al., 2008); social psychologists ask and test which motivational processes lead people to participate in demonstrations (Klandermans, 1997; Van Zomeren, 2013, 2015); and sociologists and political scientists ask and test how institutions and other aspects of social structure stimulate or limit participation in the political system (Giddens, 1984; Kriesi, 2008; McAdam, 1996; Opp, 2009).

Importantly, social psychologists' focus on motivational processes have led to a broader conceptualization of motivations for political action than are typically assumed in the studies of political scientists and sociologists about political processes and objective outcomes (e.g., voter turnout; e.g., Gerber et al., 2008). Indeed, analyses of political processes often assume a basic form of motivation, such as the pursuit of short-term self-interest (for an excellent overview, see Opp, 2009), which limits their scope. At the same time, social psychologists typically neglect social-structural factors, which also limits their scope. For this reason, I identify two conceptual bridges that should make theoretical integration much easier. These are to consider (1) a broader conceptualization of motivation for political action and (2) a stronger connection between motivations for political action with social-structural factors.

Before building those bridges, however, we must first explore whether there is sufficient common conceptual ground for understanding individuals' motivations for different types of political action, such as voting, protesting, and social movement participation. Such common conceptual ground requires a clear definition of political action (e.g., Barnes et al., 1979), yet because different fields use different terms and definitions (e.g., Olson, 1967; Ostrom, 1998; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990), it is easy to assume that the act of voting, for example, reflects a very different phenomenon than the act of participating in a mass demonstration. At the same time, however, both involve an individual acting on the basis of personal or group-based motivations which are embedded in a political context (and thus in a broader social structure). I therefore view individuals' participation in such different actions as different manifestations of the same underlying construct of political action.

Of course, this still leaves us with the issue of an exact definition. Sociologists and political scientists tend to conceptualize voting, protesting, and social movement participation as individual decisions to act in the context of a social dilemma (Green & Shapiro, 1994; Olson, 1967; Riker & Ordeshook, 1968). Ostrom (1998), for example, defines such dilemmas "whenever individuals in interdependent situations face choices in which the maximization of short-term self-interest yields outcomes leaving all participants worse off than feasible alternatives" (p. 1). Given that any individual rational actor in a social dilemma should make those choices catering for the maximization of short-term self-interest, definitions such as these typically lead to research on individual choices in economic games, with clear pay-off matrices provided for each choice to be made in the situation (e.g., Fehr & Fischbacher, 2003). Furthermore, if one defines political action as a decision made by a rational actor in the context of a social dilemma, then the motivation assumed is typically based in the maximalization of short-term self-interest (and thus with the notion of cost-benefit calculation; Opp, 2009).

A social-psychological definition of political action allows for a broader conceptualization of motivation. Wright et al. (1990), for example, offered an influential definition of collective action as any action undertaken by individuals from disadvantaged groups as psychological members of that group to improve the conditions of that group (Wright et al., 1990), although this definition has been broadened to include also advantaged group members' collective action (on behalf of the disadvantaged group) and to include other group goals than improving the conditions of the group (Becker, 2012; Van Zomeren, 2015; Van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009). Thus, one can define political action psychologically as *any action undertaken by individuals as psychological group members to achieve group goals in a political context*.

Indeed, the main distinction between these definitions of political action in different fields is therefore whether the underlying meta-theory assumes individuals to be careful calculators of individual self-interest (Green & Shapiro, 1994; Olson, 1967; Riker & Ordeshook, 1968) or to be group

members who try to achieve group goals through collective effort (Van Zomeren, 2014; Van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009; Wright et al., 1990). Because the latter definition allows for a broader conceptualization of motivations for political action (e.g., Van Zomeren, 2013, 2015), I will subscribe in this article to a psychological definition of political action. With this definition in mind, I will identify four converging themes across different literatures, from which I derive a taxonomy of core motivations to engage in political action. Importantly, this broader conceptualization of motivation for political action includes, but is not limited to, a rational-actor model approach.

Four Converging Themes and a Taxonomy of Core Motivations

The four converging themes across different literatures I identify in this section reflect the themes of identity, agency, emotion, and morality from which I will derive a taxonomy of core motivations for political action. This taxonomy offers a broader conceptualization of motivation than is typically employed in the different literatures on collective action, social movement participation, and voter turnout. This is important because a broader conceptualization of motivation allows for theoretical integration across different literatures and reflects the first conceptual bridge I propose.

The Identity Theme

In this first subsection, I will suggest that *identity* is a converging theme across different literatures. Specifically, I review support for the idea that political action can be motivated by both *group identity* and *personal identity* and that different literatures have focused on different forms of identity and political action (e.g., with group identity associated most with motivating collective action and social movement participation and personal identity with voter turnout).

The notion of group identity³ derives from *social identity theory*, which has been an influential approach toward understanding when and why individuals from disadvantaged groups accept or challenge their group's position in society (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The core transformative insight from a social identity perspective is that individuals are connected to the social structure *through their subjective self-understanding*. Depending on individual and situational factors (e.g., how accessible is one's group identity, how salient is the group in the situation; see Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; J. C. Turner, 1991; J. C. Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), individuals are able to see and understand themselves flexibly as either unique individuals within a given situation or as group members (at varying levels of abstraction, ranging from being part of a dyad to a team, a nation, or even humanity as a whole). This flexible level of *self-categorization* (i.e., as an individual or as a group member) is assumed to guide individuals' (personal or group-based) interpretations and emotional experience of the world (E. R. Smith, 1993; see also Goldenberg, Halperin, Van Zomeren, & Gross, in press; Mackie, Smith, & Ray, 2008), the (personal or group-based) goals they prioritize (Bandura, 1997; Drury & Reicher, 2009), and thus also their (personal or group-based) motivation to engage in individual or collective action (e.g., Ellemers, 1993; Wright et al., 1990).

This line of thought is clearly reflected in the social-psychological definition of collective action itself, which basically identifies action as "collective" whenever disadvantaged group members self-categorize as a member of that group and are motivated to achieve that group's goals (e.g., to improve the group's conditions or more generally to seek social change) through some form of action (i.e., signing a petition, attending a mass demonstration). In fact, this is why individuals' *identification* with

³ I consistently use the term *group identity*, which may seem inconsistent with the name of the theory from which it is derived (*social identity theory*). This is mainly because the notion of political action with respect to this theory implies a group with which individuals identify, and thus is a more precise term than "social."

their disadvantaged group is thought to be a core motivation for collective action in the first place. In support of this line of thought, many studies show a robust positive relationship between individuals' identification with their disadvantaged group and their actual or intended collective action (for a review, see Van Zomeren, 2015). Indeed, a meta-analysis of the group identification-collective action relationship found a medium-sized effect ($r = .38$) across a variety of groups, contexts, issues, samples, and methods (Van Zomeren et al., 2008). Such a meta-analytic effect size does not imply that group identification *always* predicts collective action, but that, across the board, stronger group identification is quite likely to increase motivation to engage in collective action.

To illustrate the diverse contexts used in this line of theory and research, Cakal, Hewstone, Schwär, and Heath (2011) found that Black South-Africans' identification with their racial group predicted their collective action intentions (see also Tabri & Conway, 2011). Furthermore, Thomas and McGarty (2009) had Australian students who cared about "making poverty history" interact with each other in small groups to talk about how they could act for this cause. Their identification with this "opinion-based" group predicted their willingness to act to "make poverty history." Indeed, individuals' ability to self-categorize extends even to groups that they are objectively *not* a part of (e.g., when members of the majority group act to improve the conditions of a minority group; Van Zomeren, 2013). Thus, identification with a group implies *subjective*, not objective, group membership.

Van Zomeren et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis further showed that not all group identities are alike when it comes to predicting collective action. Specifically, individuals' identification with *social movements or other action groups* (e.g., the gay movement) showed a considerably stronger overall effect size ($r = .43$, vs. $r = .34$) than their identification with the broader disadvantaged group (e.g., homosexuals). This is in line with other work in the broader social movement literature that individuals' identification with social movements is one of the strongest predictors of social movement participation (e.g., Simon et al., 1998; Stürmer & Simon, 2004; see also Blackwood & Louis, 2012; Cregan, Bartram, & Stanton, 2009; Giguère & Lalonde, 2010). The key explanation for this is that those who identify with action-oriented groups feel a stronger "inner obligation to participate" (Stürmer & Simon, 2004), which basically reflects an internalized group norm that one *ought to act* (Van Zomeren et al., 2008; see also Oliver, 1984). This suggests that not just the strength but also the *content* of the relevant group identity (i.e., what it means to be a group member; Turner-Zwinkels, Van Zomeren, & Postmes, 2015a,b) is important with respect to its predictive power. Indeed, the more individuals identify with a group associated with action-promoting norms, the more they are likely to participate in collective action.

Identity has also been a strong theme in the broader social movement literature, which is relatively unguided by the specific definitions and assumptions used in the collective action literature (e.g., Melucci, 1995; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Taylor & Whittier, 1992). The main difference lies in how strong one's assumptions are about how flexible individuals can be in subjectively joining or exiting objectively defined groups (e.g., gender, ethnicity). Nevertheless, in line with Van Zomeren et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis, Van Stekelenburg, Klandermans, and Van Dijk (2009) found that, among Dutch protesters, identification with either the more instrumental labor union or a more ideological movement predicted the intensity of their motivation to act (see also Klandermans, Van der Toorn, & Van Stekelenburg, 2008). Similarly, feminist identification has been found to be a strong predictor of feminist action (Duncan, 2012), just as identification with the Italian Water Movement has been found to be predictive of intentions toward future activism (Mazzoni, Van Zomeren, & Cicognani, in press).⁴

⁴ In much of the literature reviewed, participation in political action (be it in the form of collective action, social movement participation, or voting turnout) is often measured as intentions, rather than actual behavior. One can wonder whether intentions are a good proxy of actual behavior. My typical response to this concern is to point to two observations: First, psychological theorizing suggests a clear link between intentions and behavior, although obviously their correspondence will not be perfect (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Second, meta-analytic findings suggest that measures of intentions may inflate effect sizes, but the effect sizes are certainly not zero when looking at studies that measure actual behavior (Van Zomeren et al., 2008).

Intriguingly, the predictive effect of group identification on political action does not seem to be limited to collective action and social movement participation. A recent meta-analysis on voter turnout, which was not in any way guided by the specific assumptions and definitions used in the collective action literature, identifies party identification as a robust and positive predictor of (actual or intended) voter turnout (Smets & Van Ham, 2013). Furthermore, Van Zomeren, Saguy, Mazzoni, and Cicognani (2015) found that voter identification (conceptualized as identification with the group that feels one ought to vote to do one's democratic duty) predicted voting intentions in Dutch, Italian, and Israeli national election contexts. These authors suggested that this type of identification may also reflect, in this political context, an "inner obligation to participate" that is reminiscent of strong group norms about action in action-oriented groups and social movements (Stürmer & Simon, 2004).

Finally, individuals' *personal* identity (i.e., viewing oneself as a unique individual) may reflect a psychological basis on which to act collectively. For instance, Kelly and Breinlinger (1995) found that for those who identify weakly with the group (and by inference see themselves more in terms of their personal identity), instrumental considerations to participate in political action become important. More recently, Bryan, Walton, Rogers, and Dweck (2011) found that phrasing identity survey questions as the enactment of a personal identity (e.g., "being a voter" rather than the mere act of "voting") stimulated voter registration across different samples of American voters. Finally, Turner-Zwinkels et al. (2015a) found in a longitudinal study of the 2012 U.S. presidential elections that those who became the most active supporters of their political party were those with the strongest *overlap* between their personal and political identities. All of this points to a simple yet important observation: Political action can be motivated by both *group identity* and *personal identity*.

The Agency Theme

In this subsection, I will suggest that *agency*, much like identity, is a converging theme across different literatures. Specifically, I review support for the idea that political action can be motivated by both *group efficacy* beliefs and (personal) *outcome expectancy* beliefs and that different literatures have focused on different forms of agency and political action (e.g., with group efficacy associated most with motivating collective action and outcome expectancy with social movement participation and voter turnout).

The theme of agency is easily recognized in Wright et al.'s (1990) definition of collective action as a goal-directed form of action. That is, taking part in collective action is assumed to be driven by disadvantaged group members' motivation to achieve group goals (such as improving group conditions in society or achieving social change more generally; Wright et al., 1990). Indeed, Van Zomeren et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis on predictors of collective action found that individuals' group efficacy beliefs were robustly and positively predictive of (actual or intended) collective action ($r = .34$), across a wide variety of contexts, groups, issues, samples, and methods.

Indeed, many studies to date confirm that group efficacy beliefs reflect such a core motivation for collective action (for a review, see Van Zomeren, 2015). For instance, Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, and Mielke (1999) found that, in the context of the German unification process, East Germans were more likely to engage in collective action when they believed their group was more efficacious. Furthermore, Tausch and Becker (2013) found in the context of German student protests that group efficacy beliefs predicted future intentions to act collectively, whereas Cohen-Chen, Halperin, Saguy and Van Zomeren (2014) similarly found in the context of Israeli social protest that group efficacy predicted collective action intentions.⁵

⁵ Note that different individuals may have different group goals in mind, ranging from wanting to improve the conditions of the group, to taking a public stance to change public opinion, or to change the whole system (e.g., Hornsey et al., 2006).

It is useful to be precise about what is meant by the notion of “group efficacy” in this particular social-psychological literature. The notion derives from Bandura’s (1997) *self-efficacy* theory and is defined as the belief that an individual (or group in the case of group efficacy) is able to achieve a certain goal through a certain (collective) action. This theory has mainly focused on explaining individual behavior (e.g., health behavior) and emphasizes the uniquely human ability to exercise agency on the world around them through the faculty of forethought (i.e., being able to anticipate one’s ability to enact a certain behavior and to achieve a certain goal through this behavior). The concept has also been successfully adopted in collective action research (e.g., Mummendey et al., 1999; Van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004).

Importantly, the notion of *self-efficacy* is distinct from the notion of *outcome expectancy*, which reflects one’s belief that a certain action will lead to a certain outcome (Bandura, 1997). Whereas outcome expectancy thus merely concerns whether individuals believe a political action to be effective, group efficacy is defined as the belief that one’s group is able to achieve group goals through joint effort (Mummendey et al., 1999). Group efficacy thus requires an *agent*, a *goal*, and *action* to achieve the group goal, whereas outcome expectancy only requires assessing whether, for instance, a demonstration will achieve social change (i.e., whether the action will achieve the goal).

This is precisely where a core motivation approach includes, but also moves beyond, the rational actor approach. Indeed, the notion of outcome expectancy derives from approaches to decision-making that rely on cost-benefit calculation mechanisms to assess the option that maximizes short-term self-interest (or subjective utility, as noted by Tetlock, 2002; see also Van Zomeren & Spears, 2009). Research tends to find that outcome expectancy (at least when multiplied statistically with measures of perceived value) predicts social movement participation (Giguere & Lalonde, 2010; Klandermans, 1984; Opp, 2009; Simon et al., 1998; Sturmer & Simon, 2009). Furthermore, many studies suggest that (personal) outcome expectancy is part of the calculus of voting (e.g., Green & Shapiro, 1994; Riker & Ordeshook, 1968). The notion of outcome expectancy can thus be included in a core motivation approach to political action, but this approach offers a much broader conceptualization of agency (i.e., it also identifies group efficacy as a core motivation for political action), and motivation for political action in general (i.e., it also identifies identity, emotion, and moral motivations for political action), than a rational actor approach (see Louis, Taylor, & Neil, 2004).

However, the distinction between group efficacy and (personal) outcome expectancy is not always easy to identify in studies of political action. For instance, Klandermans and colleagues (2008) found, in the context of Dutch society, that individual efficacy beliefs predicted the political participation of Muslim immigrants in the Netherlands. These were captured by the items “people like me are generally well qualified to participate in the political activity and decision making” and “I feel like I could do as good a job in public office as most of the politicians we elect.” It is unclear how these items relate to notions about group efficacy or outcome expectancy.

Similarly, Rüdiger and Karyotis (2014) found in a representative survey of the general population in Greece that *political efficacy* did not predict engagement in antiausterity protest. However, a recent meta-analysis of (actual or intended) voter turnout points, for instance, to a positive relationship between this form of efficacy and voter turnout (Smets & Van Ham, 2013). Political efficacy is typically conceptualized as the combination of internal and external efficacy (e.g., Finkel, 1985, 1987), which refers, respectively, to one’s own perceived influence on politics and on the perceived responsiveness of the political system (Balch, 1974). Meta-analytic findings regarding political efficacy suggest that a stronger sense of internal efficacy (i.e., perceived influence on the system) in conjunction with a stronger sense of external efficacy (i.e., perceived system’s responsiveness) motivate voter turnout best.

However, scholars do not always seem to focus on both internal and external efficacy or combine them into one scale (e.g., their interaction). For instance, Finkel (1985) finds that only internal efficacy stimulates voting in a U.S. electoral context, yet Finkel (1987, p. 452) finds little evidence for a link between political efficacy and voting in (the former West) Germany, nor does he find a link between

political efficacy and protest. In fact, the only type of action this item predicts in Finkel (1987) is campaign activity, which comes closest to what this specific item measures (whether individuals feel able to influence the praxis of government). As such, the notion of political efficacy seems to be more akin to outcome expectancy than to group efficacy.

In sum, the agency theme reflects a second converging theme in the context of political action. Outcome expectancy beliefs reflect an individual calculus, associated with the rational actor model. Group efficacy beliefs, by contrast, require a group agent, goal, and action. Nevertheless, both notions should be considered as potential motivations for political action.

The Emotion Theme

In this subsection, I will suggest that *emotion* is a third converging theme across different literatures. Specifically, I review support for the idea that political action can be motivated by the experience of *group-based* and *personal anger*⁶ and that different literatures have focused on different forms of anger and political action (e.g., with group-based anger associated most with motivating collective action and social movement participation and personal anger with voter turnout).

Indeed, an emerging theme in the 1990s in social psychology concerned the motivational power of emotional states. In the collective action literature, there had been attempts at conceptualizing important notions such as relative deprivation as including an affective state (e.g., Guimond & Dubé-Simard, 1983; see also H. J. Smith, Pettigrew, Pippin, & Bialosiewicz, 2012; Walker & Smith, 2002), but the Zeitgeist seemed more favorable toward the theoretical consideration of emotions like anger in collective action in the decades to follow. For instance, E. R. Smith's (1993) intergroup emotion suggested that individuals who self-categorize as group members may also experience emotions on the basis of their group membership (e.g., "as a pacifist, I feel anger"). This implies that not only group identity and group efficacy are based in self-categorization (E. R. Smith, 1993) but also emotion (and emotion regulation; see Goldenberg, Halperin, Van Zomeren, & Gross, in press). This is important because approaches like relative deprivation theory (e.g., Runciman, 1966; H. J. Smith et al., 2012) suggest that felt *anger* toward a relevant outgroup about unfair ingroup deprivation should predict collective action (Van Zomeren et al., 2004).

The notion of (group-based) emotion does not feature in Wright et al.'s (1990) definition of collective action, presumably because this work preceded E. R. Smith's (1993) integrative theorizing. Empirical work on intergroup emotions only started to gather steam in the new millennium (e.g., Mackie, Devos, & Smith, 2000), after which emotions like group-based anger were included in integrative models of collective action (e.g., Van Zomeren et al., 2004). A modern conceptualization of emotion implies that the generation and regulation of emotion reflects a goal-directed process (just like identity and efficacy processes) that individuals have at least some control over (Frijda, 1986; Goldenberg et al., in press; Gross, 1998; Halperin, 2013; Lazarus, 1991; Scherer, Schorr, & Johnstone, 2001; Van Zomeren, Leach, & Spears, 2012). This is very different from (Freudian) notions of emotions as irrational intrapsychic forces that needed to be kept under wraps to maintain social harmony (e.g., Stürmer & Simon, 2009). This change in understanding emotion from an "irrational" force to a goal-directed process reflects a major development in social psychology (particularly when considering that recent approaches stress the functionality of the more intuitive aspect of emotion (i.e., Damasio, 1994; Haidt, 2012).

⁶ Although I focus mostly on anger, I do not rule out the possibility that other emotions (e.g., contempt, fear, hope) can also be powerful motivators for political action. Therefore, the converging theme is emotion, but the specific motivation I focus on here is anger. Indeed, unlike the case for such other emotions, the case for anger appears quite straightforward: It is an approach emotion that is based in notions of unfairness and/or other-blame (Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009; Lazarus, 1991; Van Zomeren, Leach, et al., 2012).

Van Zomeren et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis also points to the predictive power of "affective" measures of unfairness (with a meta-analytic effect size of $r = .49$ versus $r = .34$ for measures of perceived unfairness). More specifically, many studies on collective action over the last decade support the notion that particularly *group-based anger* (for a review, see Van Zomeren, 2015), which is the emotional experience of group-based unfairness, predicts collective action. To illustrate, Shi, Hao, Saeri, and Cui (2014) found in a replication of Van Zomeren et al. (2004) that denying Chinese students' voice in an important decision increased their group-based anger and willingness for collective action. Similarly, Miller, Cronin, Garcia, and Branscombe (2009) found that the experience of group-based anger predicted whether individuals signed an actual petition.

Interestingly, this renewed focus on emotions has followed roughly the same trajectory in the social movement literature (e.g., Jasper, 2010; Klandermans et al., 2008; Van Stekelenburg et al., 2009). Whereas theory and research on social movements at first lacked any mention of emotion as a contributing force to explaining social movement participation (e.g., McCarthy & Zald, 1977), by now this emphasis has shifted (Groves, 1995, 1996; Jasper, 2010). Although some reject any role for relative deprivation and anger for those in a social movement (Stürmer & Simon, 2004, 2009), others have been more accommodating. For instance, Van Stekelenburg et al. (2009) found that, in the context of union and ideological movement protests in the Netherlands, anger predicted the intensity of individuals' motivation to act among those who were present at a demonstration. Similarly, Klandermans et al. (2008) found that anger among Dutch immigrants was predictive of their political participation. However, it is unclear in those studies whether this anger was based in individuals' personal or group identity.

More broadly, sociologists' and political scientists' renewed interest in emotions (e.g., Brader, 2006; Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2000; Jasper, 1998, 2010; Marcus, 2002; Polletta, 2006) has been quite influential. Brader and Marcus (2013) suggested recently that three distinct emotions really matter in U.S. politics: Anger, anxiety, and enthusiasm (see also Marcus, 2002; Valentino, Brader, Groenendyk, Gregorowicz, & Hutchings, 2011). For example, Weber (2013) manipulated which personal emotion (e.g., anger, sadness) was evoked with respect to crime in the United States. Although this emotion manipulation was purposefully confounded to maximize systematic variance (that is, not completely standardized across conditions), Weber (2013) found that personal anger (in this specific condition about drugs-related crime) stimulated political action such as campaign volunteering. Similarly, Valentino et al. (2011) found that personal anger mobilized individuals to vote across experimental, survey, and ANES (American National Election Studies) data, and Groenendyk and Banks (2013) found that personal anger predicted political action in an experiment and two different parts of the ANES database. Finally, Van Zomeren et al. (2015) studied individuals' intention to vote in three national-election contexts (in the 2012–13 elections in the Netherlands, Israel, and Italy). They found that whereas anger about politics in general demotivated voting among Dutch and Israeli participants, it motivated voting among Italian participants. Their interpretation was that the Dutch and Israeli elections were more about *policy change*, whereas the Italian elections were really about *system change*, stimulated by a newcomer party (The Five Star Movement) that rallied against a system of "old politics." Taken together, personal and group-based anger seems to have important motivational power with respect to political action, independent of "local" assumptions and definitions.

Moreover, although a recent meta-analysis of the voting-turnout literature did not include any "emotional" predictors, scholars in this literature have studied or even tried to experimentally raise specific emotions among voters in field studies and experiments (De Rooij, Green, & Gerber, 2009; Lodge & Taber, 2013). For example, Gerber et al. (2008) found in large-scale field experiments that "shaming" (i.e., social pressure to make public, through mailings or newspaper ads, one's voting history to one's neighborhood) individuals into voting seemed quite effective. However, unfortunately such studies do not include measures of how participants in those conditions actually *felt* and thus the

motivational processes involved (i.e., did they actually feel shame?) remain unclear. It would thus be useful for such studies to also take into account which core motivations explain these outcomes.

In sum, emotion reflects a third converging theme in explaining political action. Conceptually, however, the view of emotions in sociology and political science seems based in a different, more individualistic, meta-theory than the group-based view of emotions in the social-psychological collective action literature. This implies that, once more, we need to consider *personal* as well as *group-based* emotions like anger as motivating participation in political action (see also Goldenberg, Saguy, & Halperin, 2014).

The Morality Theme

In this final subsection, I will suggest that *morality* is a converging theme across the different literatures. Specifically, I suggest that political action can be motivated by both *group-based* and *personal moral motivation* and that different literatures have focused on different forms of moral motivation and political action (e.g., with group-based moral motivation associated most with motivating social movement participation and personal moral motivation with collective action).

I define *moral motivation* as reflecting individuals' motivation to *protect* or *promote* core values (e.g., Kutlaca, Van Zomeren, & Epstude, 2015a; Mazzoni et al., in press). Value protection follows from perceived violation of core values and can take the form of moral outrage and social protest (but also of moral "cleansing" and reaffirmation of ingroup values; Tetlock, Kirstel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000). Value promotion refers to the enactment of what one believes to be "the right thing," thus promoting one's moral goals (e.g., Skitka & Bauman, 2008). This fits with a broader view on the motivational power of core values in social psychology (Haidt, 2012; Skitka, 2010; Tetlock et al., 2000), which I refer to here as "moral motivation."

Moral motivation thus includes the notion of core values that bring along a subjectively *absolutist* stance on an issue (see Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993), which makes it different from strong attitudes and also suggests a low threshold for their violation (labeled moral convictions by Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005; see also Skitka, 2010; Van Zomeren, 2013, 2015). For instance, one can think about abortion as something that is wrong for anyone, at any time, in any place. This is assumed to be a qualitatively different type of judgment than one deriving from "merely" a strong attitude. Moreover, this type of judgment makes it more likely that a situation will be perceived as violating its underlying principle (e.g., Turiel, 1983).

Recent work on collective action has used this definition to tap into core values as a core motivation for collective action (see Van Zomeren, 2013, 2015). To illustrate, Van Zomeren, Postmes, and Spears (2012) found that students who had stronger core values about higher education were more strongly motivated to take part in collective action against government budget cuts on higher education. Importantly, this stimulating effect was explained by individuals' identification with the student movement and the corresponding anger and efficacy they felt. Thus, moral motivation was *not necessary* for explaining collective action, but it served as a *amplifier* for the other core motivations for collective action.

The twin moral-motivational processes of promoting and protecting core values points to an interesting connection between individuals' *personal* core values and their identification with action groups, such as social movements. Van Zomeren (2013, 2015) suggested that there are potentially two different trajectories by which core values and action-oriented identities relate to one another. First, individuals with strong personal core values may *project* them onto any group that promotes or protects them when violated (e.g., a social movement), which facilitates their moral motivation in terms of increased identification with, and action on behalf of, that group. And second, individuals with a stronger movement identity may more easily *conform* to and internalize the values of the group (i.e., a felt inner obligation to act; Stürmer & Simon, 2004). This may be particularly important when

explaining why members of advantaged groups feel and enact solidarity with other groups in need: Their core values need to “normatively fit” a group identity that enables them to mobilize their efforts in concert with similar-minded and action-oriented others (Van Zomeren, 2013, 2015; see also Kutlaca et al., 2015a; Mazzoni et al., in press).

Different literatures, however, treat the notion of moral motivation quite differently. Schwartz, Caprara, and Vecchione (2010), for example, found that core personal values predicted which party Italians voted for, whereas Van Stekelenburg et al. (2009) focused on ideology⁷ as a predictor of movement participation. Furthermore, Stürmer and Simon (2004) reviewed their studies of different social movements in which they find that individuals’ “internal obligation to participate” explained the positive predictive effect of movement identification on movement participation. Thus, they suggest that activists’ moral motivation derives from an internalized group norm. Furthermore, Mazzoni et al. (in press) showed that Italians (either activists or nonactivists) were motivated for future activism by perceived right violations, suggesting that the violation aspect was the “active ingredient” in individuals’ moral motivation to engage in future activism (see also Klandermans [1997] for the notion of violated principles).

More recently, Kutlaca and colleagues (2015a) zoomed in on the relationship between perceived violations of core values and group identification. In a study of Dutch inhabitants of an area facing increased frequency and intensity of earthquakes (caused by gas extraction by the government), Kutlaca et al. (2015a) found that the perceived violation of core values (on domains such as safety and health) predicted their identification with the relevant group and their willingness to act. However, individuals’ perception of violated *group* values motivated those in the objectively *least* affected areas to engage in collective action, whereas perceived violation of *personal* values motivated those in the objectively *most* affected areas to act collectively. This suggests that a differentiation between *personal* and *group-based* moral motivation for collective action is, once more, analytically helpful.

The social movement literature has not yet zoomed in on the specific way by which I define moral motivation. Although the notion of ideology is often mentioned at an abstract conceptual level (e.g., Snow & Benford, 1988; R. H. Turner & Killian, 1972; for a critique see Oliver & Johnston, 2000), there has been little direct attention for its role as a core motivation for political action participation. In particular, theory and research on framing (e.g., Benford & Snow, 2000; see Entman, 1993) has examined the role of framing issues as unjust (see also Gamson, 1992; Klandermans, 1997). Kutlaca, Van Zomeren, and Epstude (2015b) focused on framing the issue of raising student fees as *immoral*, which led to an increased predictive power of anger in predicting intentions toward social protest among those with a left-wing ideology that presumably matched this framing. As such, the specific notion of “moral motivation,” including the promotion and protection of subjectively absolute stances on an issue, may be an important one for future theory and research in the social movement literature.

For voting turnout, Smets and Van Ham (2013) found surprisingly little evidence in their meta-analysis for the predictive power of “ideological self-placement,” suggesting that right-wing voters are, across the board, not more likely to turn up at the ballots than left-wing voters. There may be two reasons for this, at first glance, surprising null finding. The first reason is that the number of cases was low, which may be due to the fact that Smets and Van Ham (2013) sampled from research published in nonpsychological journals, thus omitting studies in the psychological literature about ideology and voter turnout. The second reason is that ideology, especially in terms of the left-right dimension, is too abstract a term to meaningfully predict voter turnout. Skitka and Bauman (2008) found in this respect that individuals’ specific issue-based moral convictions, rather than their broader ideologies,

⁷ This term does not refer to political (left-right-wing) ideology because collective action and social movements are typically studied among left-wing samples. However, in other types of political action, political ideology may be more relevant to consider.

Table 1. A Taxonomy of Core Motivations for Political Action

Focus	<i>Personal</i>	<i>Group</i>
Core motivation		
<i>Identity</i>	Personal identity motivation	Group identity motivation
<i>Efficacy</i>	Outcome expectancy motivation	Group efficacy motivation
<i>Emotion</i>	Personal anger motivation	Group-based anger motivation
<i>Moral Motivation</i>	Personal moral motivation	Group-based moral motivation

were predictive of voting behavior during the 2000 and 2004 U.S. presidential elections (see also Reifen-Tagar, Morgan, Halperin, & Skitka, 2014).

Taken together, morality reflects the fourth converging theme across the different forms of political action I reviewed. I conclude that it may be useful, once more, to differentiate *personal* from *group-based moral* motivation, which revolves around the promotion or protection of subjectively absolute stances on issues.

A Taxonomy of Four Core Motivations for Political Action

From the four converging themes I identified, I derive a taxonomy of core motivations for political action (see Table 1). This framework derives from social-psychological theory and research on collective action but also departs from it in an important way. It *derives* from it the group identity and group efficacy motivations, which are already implied by the Wright et al. (1990) definition. Furthermore, it derives from this literature the group-based emotion and moral motivations. However, it departs from this literature by identifying *personal* counterparts of the four core motivations. Importantly, the notion of outcome expectancy resonates well with the calculus approach favored by the rational actor model and thus is an integral part of the taxonomy. As such, the key aim of this taxonomy is to explicitly outline the *potential* core motivations for political action that move beyond any specific assumptions emphasized in different literatures.

This taxonomy obviously requires further development, for instance with respect to how those variables interrelate and possibly even overlap. Indeed, in the collective action literature at least, it seems that the four core motivations are not unrelated (see Van Zomeren, 2015), but they converge in predicting most variance in collective action together. For instance, Van Zomeren, Postmes, et al. (2012) found that students' personal core values, which were presumably violated by government cuts on higher education, predicted student movement identification, group-based anger, and group efficacy, all three of which predicted collective action intentions. The underlying theoretical rationale here is that emotion and efficacy require a self as either the subject of experience (e.g., who feels angry?) or the agent of change (e.g., who feels efficacious?). As such, individuals' personal or group identity is an important determinant of whether they feel angry alone or together and whether they feel personally weak or collectively strong. Moral motivation can amplify the other core motivations for political action, which suggests that individuals who feel morally motivated can become subjectively part of a group or movement even though they do not belong to it objectively, become emotionally involved in this group or movement, or feel empowered by believing in the group's efficacy, all of which should increase individuals' overall motivation to engage in political action.

However, this rationale applies, at present, only to collective action (Van Zomeren, 2013, 2015) and directly addresses only half of the potential motivations for political action as listed in Table 1. Indeed, the collective action literature predominantly focuses on group-based core motivations and thus is silent on the predictive power of individuals' personal core motivations. Similarly, in other literatures individuals are typically assumed to focus on outcome expectancy (Opp, 2009), which covers only one out of the potential eight core motivations for political action. The current taxonomy serves

to communicate and make explicit that there may be *other* motivations for political action than only those assumed to be relevant within a specific field or discipline. Considering such a broader conceptualization of motivation—the first conceptual bridge I identified—enables theoretical integration across different literatures but also opens up new avenues for future research.

In a more explorative fashion, in the next section I will also identify a second conceptual bridge across different literatures, which refers to the notion of social structure. Indeed, I am not proposing that all core motivations for political action will always predict any political action in each sample and study context. This is unrealistic to expect as the *realization* of the potential of the core motivations will heavily depend on core features of the social structure. Thus, in order to set some baby steps toward integrative theorizing, we need to *connect* a broader conceptualization of motivation for political action to core features of the social structure.

Four Core Features of the Social Structure

In this section, I suggest that looking beyond “local” assumptions and definitions (e.g., too strong a focus on outcome expectancy or group identity) is required for developing an integrative understanding of how motivation for political action is embedded in, and is potentiated by, core features of the social structure. In fact, this is the second conceptual bridge that I identify.

A key observation here is that many studies of collective action, for example, take place in contexts in which collective action is already ongoing or at least is perceived as quite likely and appropriate (Van Zomeren, 2013). As a consequence, we know little about how such contexts, in which political action seems abundant, actually come into being (McAdam & Boudet, 2012). As such, the core motivations are not “givens” because features of the social structure strengthen or inhibit their realization, for instance through rewarding or sanctioning collective action, or by making it easier or harder for social movements to influence political processes (e.g., McAdam, 1982, 1996; McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Tajfel, 1978; Tarrow, 1994).

To illustrate this line of thought, Corcoran, Pettinicchio, and Young (2011) showed that, across a variety of countries, the core efficacy motivation mediated the relationship between characteristics of the political system and individuals’ engagement in political action. Specifically, they found that “efficacy increases collective action, that certain political institutions increase efficacy, and that the effect of efficacy on collective action is partly conditional on the inclusiveness of a country’s political institutions” (p. 575). This not only supports the notion of efficacy as a distinct core motivation for participation in political action but also explicitly shows how this core motivation is embedded in features of the social structure (see also Lee, 2006).

A taxonomy of core motivations for political action will help in developing an explicit and systematic analysis of the interaction between individuals’ core motivations for political action and core features of the social structure (e.g., Giddens, 1984). Yet unsurprisingly, different fields hold and communicate different views on what social structure is and what features it has. In the first and second subsections, I will discuss different conceptualizations of social structure across different literatures. In the third subsection, I exploratively identify four core features of the social structure, which I connect with the taxonomy of core motivations in order to foster theoretical integration and open up new avenues for future research.

Social Structure and Collective Action

In this subsection, I will discuss how social structure has been treated in the social-psychological collective action literature. I suggest that this field’s emphasis on selecting structural conditions already favorable to collective action has led to a focus in research on group-based rather than personal core motivations, which limits its understanding of political action participation.

More broadly, social-psychological theories tend to avoid structural explanations of individuals' political action because of a core assumption in the field about the "power of the situation" (e.g., Benjamin & Simpson, 2009), which is continuously affirmed by a reliance on experimental methods that systematically vary situational, rather than structural, features. Thus, social-psychological theories often do not cover structural factors, even despite clear evidence that those matter enormously for understanding the dynamics of political action (e.g., McAdam & Boudet, 2012). For instance, Corcoran et al. (2011) found that democratic consolidation (i.e., how long a state has been a democracy) increased individuals' participation in collective action through increased efficacy beliefs, whereas Geys (2006) found in a meta-analysis that voter turnout was increased by institutional features such as proportional representation, compulsory voting, and automatic registration. Those aspects of the social structure refer to objective factors, and these often seem, for psychologists, as too "distant" factors to be studied within the confines of subjectivity.

The social identity perspective articulates three features of the social structure relevant to collective action (Tajfel, 1975, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; see also Ellemers, 1993; Mummendey et al., 1999; Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2006). First and second, individuals can perceive the status difference between the relevant advantaged and disadvantaged group as more *stable* or *unstable* and as more *legitimate* or *illegitimate*. For instance, gender inequality in a society may be perceived as unstable and illegitimate, which suggests that individuals see hope and scope for social change (see Cohen-Chen et al., 2014); alternatively, gender inequality may also be perceived as stable and legitimate, which would result in an acceptance and even internalization of the status quo (e.g., Becker & Wagner, 2009). Third, the social identity perspective suggests a key role for the (*im*)*permeability* of intergroup boundaries, which offers disadvantaged group members a potential way out of their low-status group through becoming a member of the higher-status group (Ellemers, 1993; Tajfel, 1975, 1978). Conversely, closed boundaries between the groups imply that social change will be needed in order to improve one's conditions (Wright et al., 1990). Taken together, the social-structural conditions under which collective action is most likely to occur is *closed* intergroup boundaries (i.e., no exit possibility), coupled with a relatively *illegitimate* and *unstable* intergroup status differential (i.e., suggesting hope and scope for change).

The underlying logic here is that individuals identify most with their disadvantaged group under these conditions because only these conditions provide individuals with self-evaluative reasons for identifying with a low-status group. As such, the social identity approach suggests that group identification is likely to motivate collective action when embedded in a social structure that offers groups hope and scope for changing the social structure to their benefit. However, although group identification is thought to be the core motivation that links social-structural conditions to collective action (e.g., Mummendey et al., 1999; Van Zomeren et al., 2008), it does not focus on any personal core motivations identified in the taxonomy.

Unfortunately, this analysis of structure and collective action has not received much systematic empirical attention (but see Ellemers, 1993; Scheepers et al., 2006; J. C. Turner & Brown, 1978). As such, we are left with many studies of collective action and social movement participation that are embedded in real-life contexts in which such action is already ongoing, or at least imaginable, normative, and potentially effective (Van Zomeren, 2013). This prevents an a priori consideration of systematic variance in structural factors (see also McAdam & Boudet, 2012). We thus know little about conditions that are less conducive to collective action and its core motivations.⁸

⁸ System justification theory (e.g., Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004) is another influential social-psychological theory that focuses on individuals' need to maintain and justify existing societal arrangements. Because I have focused here on factors that *motivate* (rather than *demotivate*) political action, I decided not to include discussion of this theory, but I certainly acknowledge its relevance to the core motivation approach (see Jost et al., 2012).

A recent set of studies (Van Zomeren, Susilani, & Berend, 2015) examined willingness for collective action in a context assumed to be one with closed intergroup boundaries and a stable and possibly even legitimate intergroup status differences, studying how Indonesian ethnic minority-group members dealt with their low-group status in society. They found and replicated a rare null relationship between ethnic-group identification and willingness to engage in collective action (Van Zomeren et al., 2015), suggesting that under different structural conditions, group identification does *not* motivate willingness to engage in collective action. This fits with the general notion that core motivations are not motivational “givens” but potentials to be realized within the social structure. Of course this is not to say that restrictive features of the social structure necessarily remove individuals’ *experience* of their core motivations altogether, but they certainly can remove individuals’ *expression* of underlying core motivations through political action (for discussions, see Opp, 2009; see also Klein, Spears, & Reicher, 2007).

In sum, the treatment of social structure in the collective action literature has unfortunately received little systematic empirical attention. Moreover, most research on collective action has actually been embedded in structural conditions that were already favorable to collective action, which has led to a focus in research on group-based rather than personal core motivations that limits our understanding of political action participation.

Social Structure and Social Movement Participation and Voter Turnout

In this subsection, I will suggest that conceptualizations of social structure in sociology and political science seem more developed than in social psychology. Nevertheless, these analyses typically assume a rational actor perspective on how individuals make choices, which leads to a focus on outcome expectancy, rather than on the other core motivations. This also limits its understanding of political-action participation.

Indeed, the notion of social structure seems quite clear in the social movement literature. As Meyer (2004) writes: “The wisdom, creativity, and outcomes of activists’ choices—their *agency*—can only be understood and evaluated by looking at the political context and the rules of the games in which those choices are made—that is, *structure*” (p. 128). Indeed, a core motivation approach suggests different reasons for the choice to engage in political action, but it says little about the political context and the rules of the game in which those decisions are made.

The influential *resource mobilization* perspective (e.g., McCarthy & Zald, 1977) explains how social movement organizations seek to achieve their goals through the mobilization of resources (defined as “goods [i.e., everything that has utility] which individual or collective actors can control” by Opp [2009, p. 139], who also strikingly notes that McCarthy and Zald did not explicitly define the term in their 1977 article). In doing so, the theory assumes that individuals make rational choices, although the unit of analysis in the theory is the organization, not the individual. Its general prediction is that the accumulation of resources helps movements to gain influence vis-à-vis the authorities or other contenders for power, for instance through staging social protests. The reason for why individuals are assumed to participate, according to this theory, is that they are able and motivated to accurately assess chances of success or failure of collective action. Thus, this perspective on social structure seems to come with an implicit or explicit reliance on the rational actor model, thus neglecting other core motivations.

Another prominent perspective in this field is the *political opportunity structure* perspective (POS; e.g., McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 1994; for reviews, see Kriesi, 2008; Meyer, 2004). Political opportunity structures are defined as “dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure” (e.g., Tarrow, 1994, p. 85; see also Klandermans, 1997; Opp, 2009). Thus, the POS perspective suggests that perceived changes in the political context change individuals’ expectations of success or failure

regarding collective action. This once more suggests an assumption about outcome expectancy as the core motivation to be linked to the social structure, thus neglecting the other core motivations. More specifically, Tarrow (1998) suggests that political groups find and use opportunities for political action when “institutional access opens, rifts appear within elites, allies become available, and state capacity for repression declines” (p. 71, as cited in Opp, 2009). Similarly, McAdam’s political process model (1982) predicts that “expanding political opportunities” and “indigenous organizational strength” predict social movement participation, mediated in part by “cognitive liberation” (see also Opp, 2009).

To prevent a Tower of Babel fiasco, let me try to translate. As Opp (2009) has noted, both the resource mobilization and political opportunity perspectives assume, at least at some level, what moves and motivates individuals to engage in collective action, social movement actions, or other political action such as voting (see McAdam et al., 2001). For example, “cognitive liberation” is about individuals’ perceived success of the group (Opp, 2009), which is in turn predicted by “expanding political opportunities,” which are perceived changes in the political context that make group success more or less likely. Therefore, “One of the central problematics of insurgency, then, is whether favorable shifts in political opportunities will be defined as such by large enough groups of people to facilitate collective protest.” (McAdam, 1982, p. 48). This links aspects of the social structure directly to outcome expectancy.

Similarly, the other predictor of cognitive liberation is “indigenous organizational strength,” which concerns the social rewards individuals receive for participation, which appears related to either personal identity or outcome expectancy (e.g., Klandermans, 1984; Van Zomeren et al., 2008). Indeed, McAdam (1982) suggests that such strength reflects different types of resources such as members, “solidary incentives,” communication networks, and leaders (see also Schussman & Soule, 2005; Sinclair, 2002). These are thought to reflect a social infrastructure that facilitates movement participation (Oberschall, 1973). As such, these variables already reflect two-out-of-eight core motivations for political action, as identified in the taxonomy.

Finally, Geys’ (2006) discussion of his meta-analysis of voting turnout also relies on rational-choice assumptions about motivation. For instance, for the system feature of compulsory voting, he notes that it “is often argued that compulsory voting is likely to increase the expected costs of not voting to the individual due to the possibility of getting caught. Such an argument is not only based on the pecuniary implications of getting caught (and fined). Indeed, getting caught and fined for disobeying the law might also reduce one’s social prestige” (pp. 651–652). Specifically, although this argument caters to both material and social “outcomes,” the underlying motivational logic seems to be about outcome expectancy, which reflects only one core motivation for political action. Indeed, more generally the effects of institutional features (e.g., campaign intensity, electoral accountability) are prominent in studies of voter turnout (Kriesi, 2008), yet seem mostly connected to assumptions about outcome expectancy.

In sum, conceptualizations of social structure in sociology and political science seem more developed than in social psychology. At the same time, they typically assume a rational actor perspective on how individuals make choices, which leads to focus on outcome expectancy rather than other core motivations. Put differently, whereas the social identity perspective on social structure may rely too much on assumptions about group-based motivations for political action, the social movement and voting turnout literature’s take on social structure may rely too much on assumptions about outcome expectancy.

Connecting the Dots?

Individuals’ core motivations for political action are embedded and potentiated in core features of the social structure and can therefore not be properly understood without taking them into account. A broader understanding of motivation therefore helps to understand what happens when aspects of

the social structure change, particularly when they are *perceived* to change (either through political action or some other source). It is these perceptions of change in the social structure that I will focus on in this subsection.

More specifically, I explore four core features of the social structure: *Ingroup* features, *outgroup* features, *interpersonal network* features, and *institutional* features. The first two features refer to subjective group membership (e.g., I am a psychologist, not a sociologist; I am a supporter of the Democrat party, but not of the Republican party), the third feature refers to embeddedness in interpersonal networks that afford social interaction (e.g., friends, colleagues, fellow activists), and the fourth feature refers to institutions that, through formal praxis, afford or hinder access to the political process in society (e.g., right to vote, unionization). *Ingroup* features enable the construction, maintenance, promotion and protection of subjective group identities, group efficacy beliefs, group-based emotions, and group-based morals. *Outgroup* features enable the same processes but do so through social-comparison processes (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). For instance, a perceived drop in power of the government may unify, empower, enrage, and moralize those fighting against it. Thus, ingroup and outgroup features most likely affect the *group-based* core motivations for political action.

Perceived changes in *ingroup* features of the social structure may reflect, for instance, “opening of institutional access” and “increased availability of allies.” Similarly, the notions of “splits in elites” and “decline in state capacity for repression” may refer to changes in *outgroup* features of the social structure. In line with McAdams’ (1982) notions of “indigenous organizational strength” and “expanding political opportunities,” such perceived changes most likely affect individuals’ core identity and efficacy motivations for political action. Note that because the emphasis here is on *perceived* changes, it becomes clear why the communication (and more specifically framing) of political claims and mobilization attempts is so important (e.g., Benford & Snow, 2001; see also De Rooij et al., 2009; Gerber et al., 2008; Gerber & Rogers, 2009).

Furthermore, Tarrow (1994) suggests that individuals are pressed into political action when the costs of inaction become unbearable or when individuals’ sense of injustice is outraged (see also Opp, 2009). The former notion of *unbearable costs* may appear to reflect some form of rational choice, but in fact it suggests there may also be an emotional and moral connotation to this notion, which is confirmed by the phrase that “individuals’ sense of injustice is outraged.” Thus, even in the POS models that are grounded on rational-choice-like assumptions, implicitly or explicitly there already appear to be links with other core motivations for political action, in this case the core personal emotion and moral motivations.

The third core feature of the social structure refers to *interpersonal networks* (Castells, 2012; Diani, 2000; Sinclair, 2012). One of the key predictors of movement participation is whether one is asked to participate by someone in one’s interpersonal network (i.e., a friend, a family member, a colleague; Klandermans, 1997; Schussman & Soule, 2005). It is important to single out this feature because, unlike ingroup and outgroup features of the social structure, interpersonal networks are based in social interaction and thus include one’s “inner circle” and “personal sphere.” For this reason, interpersonal network features may mostly enable *personal* core motivations for political action (although they may sometimes also enable group-based core motivations for political action, for instance when social interaction is the basis for the emergence of a group identity; e.g., Alberici & Milesi, 2012; Thomas & McGarty, 2009).

Interpersonal networks have attracted considerable attention in the social movement literature (e.g., Diani, 2000; McAdam, 1996; Passy, 2001; see also Emirbayer & Goldberg, 2005), including strong and weak ties, or formal and informal ties (Centola & Macy, 2007; Granovetter, 1973; see also Klandermans et al., 2008; Putnam, 2000). For instance, membership and participation in organizations can be seen as formal ties, whereas more loose connections with people in the movement can be seen as informal ties. Less is known, however, about whether and how embeddedness and social interaction in interpersonal networks affects individuals’ core motivations for political action (see Passy, 2001,

who singles out *personal* identity). Importantly, it is through social interaction that individuals connect their personal sphere with the world around them (Van Zomeren, 2014, in press) and thus the personal core motivations may be most relevant.

Fourth and finally, *institutional* features of the social structure refer to how political processes are formally organized (e.g., through the particular election system). As Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978) noted, institutions are an important aspect of the context in which political action takes place because they can *limit* individuals' access to the political system, but they also *increase* mobilization processes. For instance, social movements that are embedded in the political system can influence public opinion or government plans and decisions, whereas laws against unionization will hinder such influence. It is important to single out this feature because, unlike ingroup, outgroup, and interpersonal network features of the social structure, institutions are anchored in the *formal* dimension of the political arena (Kriesi, 2008). This implies that those features are not necessarily based in interpersonal interaction but in more abstract psychological processes within systems of cultural meaning and praxis.

One consequence of this line of thought is that institutional features will cater more to individuals' *strategic* concerns about expressing core motivations in ways that are perceived as normative within the system. This possibility fits nicely with models of strategic-identity expression (e.g., Klein et al., 2007; Reicher et al., 1995), which predict that individuals take into account the public dimension in expressing what they want and want to do. This notion fits with Simon and Klandermans' (2001) often-cited definition of the politicization of group identity as entailing, for an important part, targeting and involving society at large in the process of making political claims. Finally, this notion fits with recent examinations of the *content* of politicized identities, which seem mostly based on establishing (and possibly signaling to others) a moral high ground for the group (Turner-Zwinkels et al., 2015b). More generally, this feature of the social structure also involves a strategic approach to the communication of *other* core motivations for political action (e.g., group-based anger; De Vos, Van Zomeren, Gordijn, & Postmes, 2013; Kamans, Van Zomeren, Gordijn, & Postmes, 2014; Kutlaca et al., 2015b).

In sum, I have exploratively connected a taxonomy of core motivations for political action with four core features of the social structure, reflecting some baby steps toward theoretical integration across different literatures through linking different core features of the social structure to different (personal and group-based) core motivations for political action. The main conclusion is that moving beyond "local" assumptions and definitions (e.g., too strong a focus on outcome expectancy or group identity) enables a more integrative understanding of how core motivations for political action are embedded in, and potentiated by, core features of the social structure. This suggests that my inner optimist may be correct in suggesting that not all Towers of Babel may be doomed to be destroyed through mutual misunderstanding.

Implications

In this final section, I discuss the key implications of my integrative line of thought for future theory and research on, and for the practice of, political action. I further discuss how my line of thought illustrates that a focus on integrative theorizing beyond the typical boundaries of one's own field or discipline may lead to a broader and deeper understanding of the political psychology of political action; and that, by implication, scholars' efforts should focus more on theoretical integration and new avenues of research toward the same end.

Theoretical Implications

My line of thought has implications for how scholars from different fields think about social structure and motivations for political action. As for the *motivational* part, the taxonomy I propose

offers scholars of collective action, social movement participation, and voter turnout a broad conceptualization of different core motivations for political action. This enables moving beyond implicit or explicit “local” assumptions about motivation. For instance, some perspectives implicitly or explicitly assume a rational choice approach to motivation, whereas others assume a group-identity approach. This is potentially problematic because these approaches are guided by an overly individualistic or collectivistic meta-theory, respectively (for a synthesis, see Van Zomeren, in press, 2014). The taxonomy of core motivations for political action outlines possibilities that otherwise may not be considered within specific fields, which is useful for integrative theory development and for opening up new avenues for future research.

For instance, although outcome expectancy certainly reflects a relevant aspect of individuals’ motivation for political action, group efficacy beliefs are also relevant (e.g., Van Zomeren et al., 2008). And although group identification no doubt reflects a powerful motivation for political action (Van Zomeren et al., 2008), individuals’ personal identity is also important to consider (e.g., Bryan et al., 2011; Duncan, 2012; Turner-Zwinkels et al., 2015a, 2015b). Theory and research on political action should therefore consider and test which core motivations are most relevant in a particular political context and design studies accordingly.

Theory and research should also consider and test the predictive power of the other core motivations for political action, which revolve around *emotion* and *moral* motivation. In fact, although the outcome-expectancy motivation comes closest to a rational choice portrayal of motivation, all the other core motivations are equally goal-directed, including not only instrumental but also identity, moral, and emotional goals (Van Zomeren, 2013, 2015). Unlike the individualist and instrumental goals associated with outcome expectancy, however, these other goals are distinctly “social,” with which I mean based in the regulation of social relationships. This fits with a trend in psychology toward viewing human beings as social beings *by default* (e.g., Beckes & Coan, 2011; Fiske, 1991; Gergen, 2009; Van Zomeren, 2014, in press).

This does not imply that rational choice assumptions invalidate any theory or finding that makes use of them—some may even argue that the assumptions about self-interest in the rational actor model reflect a particularly individualistic way to *relate to others* (Fiske, 1991; Van Zomeren, 2014, in press). Thus, rational choice assumptions may be correct in some settings, but they are quite likely to be incorrect in most settings (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). In this way, this approach limits our understanding of political action participation. And precisely for this reason, it is particularly important that research on political action tests, rather than assumes, the presumed psychological processes involved. Especially when such tests of psychological processes (as in recent social-psychological work on collective action) are combined with tests of actual participation in political action (e.g., as in field experiments on voter turnout), this combination comes close to the proverbial “best of both worlds.”

Another important implication of the taxonomy I propose is that scholars should broaden their definition of political action. Although the Wright et al. (1990) definition has been admirably directive and generative within social psychology, scholars of collective action have already moved beyond this definition as to not a priori exclude individuals from advantaged groups from being able to engage in collective action. The next step is not to exclude *personal* motivations from the equation either, which suggests that the definition should be adapted to: “*any action undertaken by individuals or psychological group members to achieve personal or group goals in a political context.*” This definition does not exclude any perspective I discussed earlier and thus can be used in theoretically and empirically integrative work on political action.

As for the more explorative *social-structural* aspect of my line of thought, one implication is that scholars interested in political action will benefit from clearer conceptualizations of the social structure (e.g., Giddens, 1984; Meyer, 2004; Porpora, 1989). Although I indeed encountered quite different tongues in different literatures in terms of the jargon used and the assumptions that accompany it, my inner optimist was encouraged to see that it was possible to differentiate *ingroup*, *outgroup*,

interpersonal network, and *institutional* features of the social structure and connect them, tentatively, to different core motivations. In this way, it becomes possible to connect what we know about core motivations for political action to the “rules of the games” (Meyer, 2004, p. 128) of the political context in which those motivations are embedded and potentiated.

Empirical Implications

Some—or perhaps many—may feel that my inner optimist has pushed me too far toward a generalist framework, focusing too much on similarities where in fact there *also* exist many differences across different literatures. Although this is an understandable concern, my strategy is to look for similarities first and then, within that framework, explain the variance observed. For this reason, my aim was to identify two conceptual bridges across different fields and forms of political action, revolving around a broader conceptualization of motivation for political action and more exploratively around core features of the social structure. This generative and indeed generalist approach of course leaves considerable variance to be identified and explained within this framework, but this is precisely what future research can, should, and hopefully will do. This is precisely why and how taking some baby steps toward theoretical integration offers quite strong pointers toward opening up new avenues for empirical research.

For example, the proposed taxonomy suggests that both personal and group identity are potentially relevant to explaining political action. Although, as noted, the very definition of collective action in the social-psychological literature excludes personal identity from consideration, some recent evidence already backs up this possibility. Indeed, Turner-Zwinkels et al. (2015a) found that those in a longitudinal sample of politically interested Americans who politicized (i.e., self-categorized as an active party supporter) during the 2012 U.S. presidential election showed stronger overlap between their personal and relevant group identities. This overlap predicted their political action just as well as a measure of politicized identification, suggesting that for those who are most likely to act (i.e., activists, active party supporters) the political has literally become personal, at least at the level of their self-understandings. These findings only make sense when considering both personal and group identity as psychological bases for political action (see also Bryan et al., 2011). Thus, measures of both concepts should be included in future studies on political action.

One can easily extend this general line of thought to other forms of political action (i.e., collective action, social movement participation, and voting turnout). Movement activists, for instance, indeed are motivated by their politicized group identification but also by outcome expectancy (Simon et al., 1998; Stürmer & Simon, 2004). Similarly, voting turnout can be predicted by party identification but also by a sense of civic duty (Smets & Van Ham, 2013), which resonates with Van Zomeren et al.’s (2015) finding that, across three different national elections, voter identification and party efficacy beliefs predicted voting intentions. The key point here is that to restrict one’s analysis of motivation for political action to group identity seems as limiting as restricting it to outcome expectancy. A broader conceptualization of motivations for political action, however, also requires systematic tests of different core motivations, and this is another clear recommendation for future studies on political action.

Indeed, the challenge for political-action researchers is to make informed and explicit assumptions about which personal or group-based core motivations are likely to be relevant for individuals within the specific context under study. Specifically, researchers in the rational choice tradition may want to consider beforehand which forms of efficacy or expectancy are most likely to be most relevant *to participants* given the context at hand. Similarly, those in the social identity tradition may want to consider beforehand which forms of identity are most likely to be relevant *to participants* in the context under study. Also, the specific emotions and core values at stake may differ across different contexts and thus require informed and explicit assumptions about which ones are most relevant within a

particular context. And although making informed and explicit assumptions is better than making non-informed and implicit assumptions, it would be even better to systematically include *measures* of different personal and group-based identity, emotion, efficacy, and moral motivation in a study, such that they can be empirically compared and evaluated.

Finally, this empirical approach will ultimately help us to better understand the interaction between core motivations for political action and the core features of the social structure I exploratively identified. Because in many cases these are assumed to be *perceived* features of the social structure (see Opp, 2009), it should be possible to measure them and, within or across studies, to test their presumed effects on different core motivations for political action (see Corcoran et al., 2011; Kriesi, 2008). On a more general level, including explicit measures of core features of the social structure for each study further allows for meta-analytical studies to empirically evaluate this interaction between (different core) motivations and (different core features of the) social structure on (different forms of) political action participation, which is another important avenue of research.

Practical Implications

Different assumptions about what moves and motivates individuals to engage in political action have quite different implications for the practice of political action. Do we assume that individuals are rational actors, or do we allow for broader assumptions about what moves and motivates them? Indeed, assumptions about what moves and motivates individuals to protest, join a movement, and show up at the ballots (and under which social-structural conditions) are absolutely pivotal for putting it into actual action. This is one reason for why the political psychology of political action is such an important field—it reflects a unique crossroads, potentially bridging different fields, definitions, concepts, methods, and theories about agentic political action, social structure, and social change. As such, any movement toward a more cumulative and integrative science reflects a movement toward a deeper understanding of the real-world practice of political action. Any movement toward a “bigger picture” is better, in my view, than a Tower of Babel fiasco. From this view, three practical implications follow.

First, organizers of social protests, social movement activities, and election campaigns may not want to assume that (prospective) political actors are guided first and foremost by rational choice concerns or by group identity concerns. Organizers, too, would benefit from a broader conceptualization of motivation for political action. In fact, my line of thought implies that organizers need to view individuals as social beings who seek to achieve a variety of personal and group-based goals through entering the political arena. In particular, organizers may want to consider that, at least in terms of motivation, the human default may be more likely to reflect *homo socialis* than *homo economicus* (Henrich et al., 2010; Van Zomeren, in press).

Second, organizers and practitioners of political action may also want to explicitly communicate their perception of core features of the social structure that stimulate participation (e.g., perceived resources and political opportunities, acceptance in interpersonal networks and institutions). Indeed, a focus on specific core motivations should be most powerful when those are directly linked to core features of the social structure that potentiate them. For instance, in order for individuals’ relevant identity to motivate voting turnout, organizers and campaigners may need to make abundantly clear that the party provides not just instrumental benefits but also an identity that fits with their own personal or group identity (and contrasts with other parties), contains the social ties (i.e., interpersonal networks) that allow them to experience and express their identity together with others, and even in the public domain (i.e., institutions) as to influence or even challenge the powers that be. Thus, stronger integrative theorizing about the political psychology of political action will have potentially strong implications for its praxis.

Limitations

Let me stress four important limitations of the current analysis. First, although the broad literatures I have reviewed revolve around the notion of political action, there are clearly boundaries to this phenomenon that I have left implicit. For instance, whether studies concerned collective action, social movement participation, or voting, in all these cases the individuals, actions, and contexts studied are fairly “Westernized” contexts, by which I mean relatively individualist, industrialized, and democratic political contexts (Henrich et al., 2010). In this sense, my analysis itself is embedded in a Western view of political action, motivation, and social structure (Van Zomeren, in press). This is a clear boundary condition that I need to make explicit, as it invites thinking about the meaning and forms of political action outside of Western democratic political contexts, particularly with respect to the four core features of the social structure I identified. For this reason, comparative work in this field is clearly important (Klandermans, 1997; Kriesi, 2008).

The second limitation concerns any potential forms of political action I have not focused on. For instance, I have not focused on individuals’ participation in political violence or terrorism, on running for regional or national office, or on right-wing activism. Future theory and research can assess whether my integrative line of thought may also apply to those specific actions. However, if the broad definition of political action I developed is to be used, then it is quite possible that those actions fall within the purview of my analysis.

Third, it is clear that I have not been able to do justice to all relevant work on political action, and it is quite possible that, as a social psychologist, my review reveals somewhat of a bias against work in other fields (e.g., sociology and political science). Although I have exerted effort to avoid this, I believe this is also unavoidable to some degree—in fact, one can wonder about what it means to claim to provide a “complete” overview of different literatures with a long history. For present purposes, my goals have been to present a broad overview of core motivations of political action and push the limits of my social-psychological perspective on the topic through explicitly placing those motivations for political action in social-structural context, which requires moving beyond “local” definitions and assumptions. It is encouraging to see that there appears to be much conceptual and empirical overlap in this respect—the contours of a “bigger picture” that we need to develop through a broader conceptualization of motivation for political action and a stronger embedding of those motivations in the social structure.

A final limitation is that I have assumed causal (and linear) relationships between the core motivations on the one hand and political action on the other hand. This makes perfect sense when asking the question of how to explain political action participation, but admittedly most of the research reviewed is nonexperimental in nature and thus cannot determine causality. As such, it is possible that part of the relationships obtained are also due to any positive effects of political action participation on the core motivations (i.e., increasing a sense of identity, efficacy, emotion, and moral motivation). However, given that experimental studies have typically shown converging support for the causal effects of most of the core motivations on political action participation (for a discussion, see Van Zomeren, 2013, 2015), this at least seems to validate the causal direction typically assumed in the key question of what moves individuals to engage in political action.

Conclusion

According to Scripture, the Tower of Babel was destroyed because groups of people misunderstood each other along the fault lines of their different languages. Lost in translation, they destroyed what they had been building together—what could have been so beautiful and helpful to all involved. At times, it is easy to fear that any multidisciplinary social science appears almost necessarily doomed

to fail, with scholars failing to understand each other because they speak in different tongues. However, my inner optimist resists this conclusion in the context of explaining political action. This article testifies to this by setting some baby steps toward building a Tower of Babel on this topic. Indeed, by outlining a broader conceptualization of motivation for political action, and by seeking clearer links with core features of the social structure, I believe we will be in a better position to avoid a Tower of Babel fiasco. This generative and generalist line of thought, in my view at least, reflects a way forward to building the rest of the tower through integrative theorizing and systematic research to the same end. I hope that this approach will stimulate integrative theorizing and open up new avenues of research on political action and that this particular Tower of Babel story will end well, for a change.

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