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Published in:
Restoring Civil Societies

DOI:
[10.1002/9781118347683.ch7](https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118347683.ch7)

IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Publication date:
2012

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Van Zomeren, M., Postmes, T., & Spears, R. (2012). Collective Action as Civic Engagement: Toward an Encompassing Psychological Perspective . In K. J. Jonas, & T. Morton (Eds.), *Restoring Civil Societies: The Psychology of Intervention and Engagement Following Crisis* (pp. 119-134). Wiley.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118347683.ch7>

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Collective Action as Civic Engagement

Toward an Encompassing Psychological Perspective

Martijn van Zomeren, Tom Postmes, and Russell Spears

Consider the following list of events: *Mass protests in France against the planned raising of the retirement age* (October 2010); *Large protest against Berlusconi* (October 2010); *Greeks protest against government cuts* (December 2010); *Europe awaits day of protest against financial cuts* (December 2010). These events, among many others, were retrieved from a simple search engine query at the Dutch news website www.nu.nl. This easily generated list of international protests in a brief period of time suggests at least two things. First, collective protests seem to be all around us. This contradicts the often-heard idea that protest is exceptional or extraordinary – in most democratic societies, protest is a relatively normal occurrence. Second, this selection of protests can all be traced to the 2008 financial meltdown. Indeed, the financial cuts that are being made in many countries today could have a strong influence on the living conditions of individuals. Thus, there would appear to be a direct incentive for *civic engagement*, defined as individuals' behavior addressing problems of society or fostering a particular cause.

But in the very same time period there was a range of protests that appeared to have nothing to do with the economic crisis: *Two Afghans died while protesting against the planned burning of the Quran* (September 2010); *Germans protest against plan that allows the state to access private citizens' information* (September 2010); *Demonstration against gay bashing in Amsterdam* (September 2010); *Thousands at Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear* (October 2010). This suggests that *different* types of issues can instigate civic engagement just as much as economic self-interest. Indeed, a violation of rights or moral standards can induce collective protest as easily, it seems, as economic deprivation.

In this chapter we consider collective action as a form of civic engagement, and more specifically focus on the psychology of collective action in response to a crisis (defined here as any societal situation that involves an impending change of a status quo). Crises often have an objective basis, but we view the subjective perception of them as key in gearing individuals up for collective action. The psychology of collective action, then, refers to individuals' psychological responses to this situation that lead them to act on behalf of their group to improve its position in society. This is in line with common definitions of collective action (e.g., any action undertaken as a representative of the group and aimed to improve the conditions of the group as a whole; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). Thus, there is a close fit between civic engagement in response to crisis and undertaking collective action against collective disadvantage.

As we shall see, the collective action literature has studied the influence of several motivations. We first provide a brief overview of the four prominent psychological factors that predict collective action and may help us understand its psychology. Moreover, we outline psychological theorizing that organizes these empirical findings, and highlights their relevance to civic engagement. We focus in particular on the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA: van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, 2012), which seeks to integrate these different elements into an encompassing psychological approach to collective action. Finally, we identify directions for theory, research, and practice of collective action in times of crisis.

A Multitude of Motives for Collective Action

Theoretical analyses of collective action have explored various impulses and motives that propel collective action participants, ranging from the emotional gullibility of crowds (LeBon, 1896) to their objective

rationality (Olson, 1968). Particularly since the 1980s, a broad range of psychological factors that are plausible predictors of collective action have been investigated (Klandermans, 1984; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, 2012). By now, there is an emerging consensus that a proper psychological analysis of collective action includes a variety of motivations (Klandermans, van der Toorn, & van Stekelenburg, 2008; van Stekelenburg, Klandermans, & van Dijk, 2009; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, 2012; van Zomeren & Spears, 2009). In addition to the “rationality” of *homo economicus* these also include group-based motivations (e.g., based in group identity), emotional motivations, or *emotivations* (e.g., anger), and moral motivations (e.g., moral standards anchored in personal belief systems or in group ideology). We discuss each factor in turn by portraying its respective facet of psychology.

Homo Economicus

Collective action scholars have often assumed that “rational” cost-benefit calculations play a major part in deciding whether someone engages in collective action (Olson, 1968; Klandermans, 1984; Simon et al., 1998). The typical calculus that individuals are assumed to make is that the value of the desired outcome of collective action is assessed in conjunction with the expectation that it can be achieved through collective action (Olson, 1968). In this view, undertaking collective action constitutes a social dilemma. It can only achieve success if a sufficient number of individuals participate in it, but the optimal rational outcome for an individual would be to stay at home while others do the successful protesting. Olson thus suggested that collective action often does not occur because of individuals’ instrumental cost-benefit calculations.

This approach to understanding collective action has been challenged (e.g., Ellemers, 1993; Simon et al., 1998; van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004), although none have suggested it should be abandoned altogether. Studies on social movement participation show indeed that the value of outcomes and the expectancy of success through collective action are important determinants of participation (Klandermans, 1984; Simon et al., 1998; for a review see Stürmer & Simon, 2004). This does not necessarily mean, however, that cost-benefit calculations of the form proposed by Olson (1968) are involved, nor that the value and expectancy constructs are the primary psychological mechanisms behind it. Indeed, individuals often are unwilling or unable to make cost-benefit calculations (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979).

This is particularly true in situations where subjective uncertainty is high, as is likely to be the case in situations of crisis that precede widespread collective action.

It is worth reiterating this point. The classic view of individual cost-benefit calculations as the rationalistic basis for decisions to participate in collective action is incomplete and quite likely flawed. It is incomplete because it ignores important factors that are key motives underpinning participation. It is flawed because it misrepresents the psychological processes that lead to action and because it ignores the process by which value is socially determined. Of course, this does not mean that value and expectancies are unimportant per se. But, as we shall see, these factors are predictive of collective action in conjunction with other factors, and in a manner inconsistent with the meta-theoretical assumptions of a *homo economicus* perspective on what should constitute psychological “rationality.”

Homo Collectivus

Humans often are members of many different, intersecting groups. And just as individuals can be motivated to protect, maintain, and enhance their personal interests, they can also be motivated to protect, maintain, and enhance their group’s interests. As a result, a powerful motivator of human behavior is individuals’ desire to achieve positive outcomes or justice for their ingroup (or even for society at large). Particularly when group norms associated with a particular social identity prescribe collective action, the strong adherence to this group should lead to a higher likelihood of engaging in collective action. For these and other reasons, group identification is an important variable in the psychology of collective action (Ellemers, 1993; Simon et al., 1998; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). In fact, identification with a disadvantaged social group is a powerful predictor of collective action, and identification with a (more specific) social movement that aims to address it is (on aggregate) the strongest predictor of collective action in psychological research (Simon et al., 1998; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008).

Furthermore, *homo collectivus* sometimes trumps *homo economicus* when it comes to predicting collective action. This is not just because of the raw strength of the link between identification and collective action. It is also because identification with a group transforms the self-interest that drives the *homo economicus*. Self-interest can reside in the individual aspects of one’s self-concept (i.e., who I am as a unique individual, or personal identity), but it can also reside in aspects of the self-concept

that are derived from particular groups to which one belongs (i.e., who I am as a group member, or social identity). Cost-benefit calculation therefore does not have to be restricted to individuals' *personal* value of and expectancy about the group goals that collective action seeks to achieve (Kramer & Brewer, 1984). Louis, Taylor, and Neil (2004), for example, found that individuals who identified strongly with their group based their calculation in group-level costs and benefits, whereas lower identifiers focused on individual-level costs and benefits. Cost-benefit calculation, then, is just one of several possible mechanisms involved in making the decision to act collectively. Indeed, whereas *homo economicus* carefully calculates, *homo collectivus* carefully conforms. Of course, these two do not have to be mutually exclusive, but can be viewed as representing different mechanisms. We now consider two other such mechanisms.

Homo Emotionalis

The concept of emotion led a tainted life in the collective action literature for most of the twentieth century because it was associated with psychological irrationality. Le Bon (1896) charged the crowd with being emotionally volatile, which he interpreted as being irrational. As a result, many classic analyses of collective action have assumed that primitive impulses, acute frustrations, and discontent propel it. This analysis long dominated the field, until systematic research revealed that there was little evidence to sustain Le Bon's analysis (McPhail, 1971).

This insight paved the way for a return to a more careful consideration of the role that emotion plays in the psychology of collective action (e.g., Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996; Klandermans et al., 2008; van Zomeren et al., 2004). Current psychological theory and research in fact suggest that emotions perform a key role in human functioning (Lazarus, 1991). The current understanding in those theories is that emotion reflects a psychological mechanism that guides individuals' efforts to deal with their environment (Lazarus, 1991). The subjective cognitive appraisal of their environment, both conscious and unconscious, leads to discrete emotions, such as anger, fear, joy, or sadness. These discrete emotions, in turn, are associated with a distinct state of action readiness that prepares individuals for adaptive action. In this sense the emotion process is as rational as the cost-benefit calculation process (Frank, 1988). We note that just as the latter process can be biased (because of individuals' inability or unwillingness to calculate), the emotion process can be biased too (because individuals' cognitive

appraisal is subjective, and thus not necessarily accurate). Nevertheless, the key point here is that decisions based on emotion are not irrational by definition (Frank, 1988; Lazarus, 1991).

A series of recent studies demonstrate the importance of emotion in the psychology of collective action. Anger has received much support in predicting individuals' willingness to engage in collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008), and in predicting actual collective action (Miller, Cronin, Garcia, & Branscombe, 2009). This is not surprising because anger is typically evoked by the appraisal of external blame for unfairness (Lazarus, 1991). Perceptions of unfairness in general, and those of relative deprivation in particular, have often been found to predict collective action (e.g., Walker & Smith, 2002). Thus, the role of emotion in the psychology of collective action has been touched upon by theory and research focusing on its appraisal antecedents (van Zomeren et al., 2004), and has been put to a more stringent series of tests in recent empirical work (Miller et al., 2009). Across the board, this work suggests that, just like cost-benefit calculation, emotion motivates collective action. However, the nuance to this argument is that there is a strong difference between experiencing individual-based and group-based anger (i.e., anger on behalf of the group). Individual-based anger has been linked with dysfunctional outcomes including poor health, whereas group-based anger has been consistently linked with collective action (Walker & Smith, 2002). Thus, in the context of collective action, *homo emotionalis* requires identification with a group.

Homo Moralis

The final psychological mechanism may be (loosely) referred to as *homo moralis*. Issues of legitimacy and injustice have played a central role in the dynamics of collective action (for a review see Drury & Reicher, 2009). However, moral motives are often not treated as an independent predictor of collective action. And yet, as the examples in the introduction of this chapter illustrate, it would appear that collective protest against violations of moral standards or ideology can be an end in itself. Although such motivations, too, might be dismissed by some as "irrational," theory and research on morality shows that moral motivations derive from standards that carry a strong self-relevance and are often viewed as subjectively absolute (i.e., no violations can be tolerated). Thus, whereas *homo economicus* carefully calculates, *homo collectivus* carefully conforms, and *homo emotionalis* angrily adapts, *homo moralis* powerfully protects its moral boundaries.

We conceptualize moral motivation in a somewhat different way than the other three motivations because we believe it has the power to “energize” or act as a catalyst for all three of the other motivations. This is because it is the perceived violation of moral standards that uniquely sets in motion a multi-motivational process. We build in this respect on the Sacred Value Protection Model by Tetlock, Kirstel, Elson, Green, and Lerner (2000) that predicts that individuals often respond to perceived violations of moral standards with anger and a desire to vilify the violators (which together is called a “moral outrage” response). The key reason for this type of response is that moral standards refer to “sacred values” that require protection above all else (see also Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005). For this reason, there may be a natural fit between individuals’ moral and emotional motivation for collective action. However, the two are still analytically distinct because individuals’ group-based anger can also have a non-moral basis (i.e., unfairness is not necessarily the same as immoral).

Research has only turned recently to exploring the power of morality to predict collective action (van Stekelenburg et al., 2009; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2012). For example, van Stekelenburg et al. (2009) showed that ideology (presumably based in group norms) plays a larger role in morally framed protests than in instrumentally framed protests. Similarly, van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears (2012) found in two studies that perceived violations of individuals’ (personal) moral convictions, defined as strong and absolute stances on a moral issue, predict both individuals’ willingness to undertake collective action and their actual participation. The distinction between the individual and group level is important when thinking about morality in the psychology of collective action. Ideology is often an important part of a group’s norms, and thus one would expect higher identifiers with that group to have stronger ideological motives. At the same time, individuals can also have strong personal norms, such as implied by moral convictions, that they seek to match with the group’s norms. Thus, the moral boundaries of the *homo moralis* can be collectively deduced, or they can be individually induced. The latter process may lead to the formation of new groups who are united by their individual adherence to a common standard that may transcend prior intergroup fault lines.

There are interesting interconnections between this line of thought and McGarty and colleagues’ work on opinion-based groups (e.g., McGarty, Bliuc, Thomas, & Bongiorno, 2009). This approach suggests that individuals can come to form a new group identity on the basis of a shared opinion (e.g., anti-war). Although McGarty et al. (2009) referred to attitude certainty as an important basis of such a new

identity, our view of *homo moralis* is more specific to the extent that we focus on perceived violations of moral convictions (i.e., strong and absolute attitudes, which are conceptually different from attitudes held with strong certainty; Skitka et al., 2005). Indeed, the motivation of *homo moralis* to engage in collective action is unleashed by perceived violations of such convictions, which in turn energizes other motivations for collective action.

An Integration of Multiple Psychological Approaches

For a long time, various perspectives on collective action existed side by side, as if they were mutually exclusive or independent. This is an undesirable state of affairs for at least two reasons. First, an overly narrow focus on the psychology of collective action is likely to be flawed or at least incomplete. Second, treating the elements described above as if they were isolated factors in the psychology of collective action is misguided. We thus need a theoretical framework that integrates all four perspectives.

The road to the development of such an encompassing psychological model was paved by attempts to integrate Klandermans' (1984) analysis of social movement participation with social identity perspectives on collective action (e.g., Simon et al., 1998; Stürmer & Simon, 2004). Where Klandermans' *homo economicus* approach to social movement participation as a cost-benefit calculation was highly individualistic, social identity approaches tended to focus almost exclusively on collective determinants of action. By way of integrating the two, scholars proposed an individualistic and collective route to collective action (e.g., Simon et al., 1998). Follow-up studies largely supported this model to the extent that these two general motives predicted social movement participation in different social movements, and suggested they did so independently (Stürmer & Simon, 2004). Although this approach considered *homo economicus* and *homo collectivus*, it did not also consider emotion and morality as important precursors to collective action. Moreover, this model does not acknowledge that levels of group identification may influence such calculations (Kramer & Brewer, 1984; Louis et al., 2004).

The recently extended Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) seeks to integrate all four *homo* metaphors (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, 2012). The heart of the model is reserved for individuals' sense of their group identity (which represents *homo collectivus*). This sense of "us" predicts collective action directly because

it translates the group's norms about collective action into actual behavior. Moreover, it is at least partly through this sense of "us" that the three other factors predict collective action. For example, individuals' perception of group-based injustice and in particular the experience of group-based anger about such injustice predicts collective action, and this is based in a sense of group identity (that makes the perception and emotion group-based). This reflects *homo emotionalis*. Furthermore, a stronger sense of group identity also fosters group efficacy beliefs – the expectancy aspect of cost-benefit calculation, and thus of *homo economicus*. Thus, group efficacy beliefs predict collective action, but these beliefs are, again, to some extent based in a sense of "us." Indeed, for lower identifiers, group efficacy beliefs may represent an individualistic calculus, but for higher identifiers they represent a group-based calculus. In sum, group identity predicts collective action directly, but also indirectly (through group-based anger and group efficacy). However, SIMCA also includes *homo moralis* in the specific form of (perceived violations of) moral convictions. It predicts that when absolute moral standards are violated, individuals will identify more strongly with the group identity that normatively fits their convictions. As a consequence, the model predicts that moral convictions act as catalysts for group-based anger and group efficacy as well. Put differently, *homo moralis* is uniquely capable of mobilizing the other three motivations to help protect one's moral boundaries from perceived violation. Note, however, that the three other motivations can also do without *homo moralis* in predicting collective action.

In sum, the last decade has witnessed efforts to integrate the different perspectives on collective action into one psychology. The most complete attempt is arguably represented by SIMCA, which integrates four prominent motivations for collective action. In the next section, we discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this general model of civic engagement as collective action, and look forward to the challenges that lie ahead in terms of future research, theorizing, and the practice of collective action.

Theoretical Gaps

SIMCA is based on a meta-analysis of primary research (van Zomeren et al., 2008), and on follow-up studies with respect to moral conviction (e.g., van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2012). Experimental research has supported many of the causal links that the model assumes. For example, Simon et al. (1998, Study 2) found evidence for the effect

of group identification on collective action, Miller et al. (2009) for the effect of group-based anger on collective action, and van Zomeren, Leach, and Spears (2010) for the effect of group efficacy on collective action. The internal validity of the model as a whole therefore seems good.

The external validity also seems quite good. Exactly because SIMCA was synthesized from the literature that employed many studies with different populations, groups, and contexts, the model should be applicable across a broad range of contexts. For instance, van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears (2008) found that SIMCA explained collective action against both structural (i.e., structural discrimination based on gender or ethnicity) and incidental forms of collective disadvantage (e.g., suddenly imposed grievances such as protesting against plans to build a factory in one's neighborhood). The inclusion of moral conviction in the model ensures that examples of collective protests that are fueled by violations of moral convictions also fall within the purview of the model. Indeed, SIMCA encompasses the different motivations as portrayed by the four metaphors we use.

One may wonder at this point where the "value" has gone from the value-expectancy approach as advocated by Klandermans (1984) and Simon et al. (1998). We believe that value is still of critical importance, but it has migrated away from the cost-benefit equation side because value, in our view, relates to psychological self-relevance, and thus likely resides in the identity, emotion, and morality variables. Hence, in SIMCA, value is apparent in various guises almost everywhere in the model. It is also for this reason that the expectancy part of the equation (i.e., group efficacy beliefs) has a distinct place in the model. This makes the original idea of value-expectancy more *specific* because value has a different meaning for each of the four *homo* metaphors, as well as more *transparent* because by separating value and expectancy it becomes more clear how both aspects of the calculus relate differently to other motivations.

Despite its strengths, SIMCA has some weak spots. The causal effect of moral conviction on collective action and the other SIMCA variables is theorized but has not been empirically tested. Indeed, our line of thought is that the violation of moral conviction energizes the other variables in the model, and as such has to causally precede these variables.

But empirically, one is challenged to manipulate individuals' moral convictions that are assumed to be fairly stable (van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2012). It thus seems unrealistic that experimental manipulations are able to change these convictions. However, circumstantial evidence comes from an experiment in our lab in which we manipulated

morally absolutist versus *relativist* mindsets. This research sought to manipulate one aspect that is central to moral convictions – the degree to which moral standards are held with absolute conviction (or not). Preliminary results suggested that participants in an absolutist mindset indeed evinced stronger group identification, compared with those in a relativist mindset. In our future research we will apply this manipulation to a collective action setting.

Another weakness of SIMCA is that, although it encompasses many psychological *antecedents* of collective action, it says little about the psychological *consequences* of collective action. The little we know from this neglected part of the psychology of collective action comes mainly from the Elaborated Social Identity Model (ESIM: for a review see Drury & Reicher, 2009). ESIM suggests, on the basis of social identity theory and an analysis of crowd dynamics, that undertaking collective action can *empower* disadvantaged group members. This means that, independent of the objective success of collective action, individuals will still feel confident about achieving group goals. Indeed, van Zomeren, Drury, and van der Staaij (2011) found in multiple experiments that individuals who signed a petition reported stronger group efficacy beliefs than individuals who did not have the opportunity to do so. SIMCA can therefore be taken to the next level where it includes predictions about how collective action, once undertaken, reflects on the processes that gave rise to it.

A more general issue refers to the *objective* consequences of collective action. Although one can argue that the psychology of collective action is more proximal than for instance the sociology of collective action in predicting human behavior, at the end of the day we need to know whether collective action actually achieves social change. As Louis (2009) observed, this is often assumed but there is hardly any evidence to support this assumption. Of course, psychological perspectives may argue that the *psychological* consequences of undertaking collective action might be valuable in their own right (independent of any objective change). But still, it is quite ironic that psychological theory and research on collective action have not yet addressed the question whether collective action actually has an objective impact.

A final weak spot in SIMCA concerns the lack of specification of the (socio-structural) conditions that give prominence to, for example, one motivation over the other(s). Some evidence suggests, for example, that group efficacy beliefs become less important in predicting collective action the more strongly individuals identify with the group (van Zomeren, Spears, & Leach, 2008). Although this concerns the moderating influence of one psychological motivation with respect to

others, it is also possible to think about *socio-structural* moderators such as the type of organization (instrumentally or ideologically focused) that coordinates collective action (van Stekelenburg et al., 2009). Indeed, a key challenge for the field of collective action is to start integrating models of objective conditions for collective action and match them with the psychological process models that explain how objective conditions translate into subjective motivation and collective action.

Future Directions for Theory, Research, and Practice

The psychology of collective action has gone through an “age of integration” in the last decade (van Zomeren & Spears, 2009). The new decade will likely see more integrative efforts, but what is also needed is *innovation*. This means that although work is needed that further integrates the different metaphors and the motives they imply, we also need to look for psychological factors not yet addressed in the literature. For example, we know little about how self-regulatory processes affect individuals’ motivations for collective action. Zaal, van Laar, Ståhl, Ellemers, and Derks (2012) have moved in this direction by examining how regulatory focus relates to individuals’ cost-benefit calculation. However, because it is unclear how regulatory focus relates to the other motivations for collective action, what is needed is theoretical integration of self-regulatory principles with psychological models of cost-benefit calculation, identity, emotion, and morality.

Similarly, we need to know more about the psychological process of *identity transformation* (see Drury & Reicher, 2009). Indeed, there is little empirical evidence for how group identities *politicize* – that is, how “ordinary people” become activists. Indeed, some have interpreted the finding that identification with a social movement is more predictive of collective action than identification with the larger group (Simon et al., 1998; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008) in terms of the politicization of identity. However, we think we should be careful in interpreting this finding thus. An alternative and in our view more plausible interpretation rests on the fit between the group one identifies with and the group that performs the collective action (e.g., social movement participation is most likely predicted by social movement identification). In any event, we need theorizing and research that identifies the precise psychological processes by which group identities politicize.

What does SIMCA suggest with respect to the practical question of enhancing civic engagement? The model suggests at least four factors

will enhance civic engagement (at least those addressing group issues) either structurally or (at least) short-term: (1) make salient individuals' relevant group identity, and try to develop and sustain individuals' identification with the group; (2) evoke the emotion of anger on behalf of the group with respect to the cause that people should become engaged with; (3) assuage any doubts about the group's efficacy to achieve the group's goals; and (4) frame the situation, if possible, as a violation of moral standards that necessitates an active response. SIMCA suggests that adhering to these recommendations will activate individuals' motivation to undertake collective action most strongly, and thus lead to the highest likelihood that individuals will actually decide to engage in collective action. Although it is possible that some contexts will lean more heavily on one of these recommendations, we believe that it certainly does not hurt to follow all four. After all, the practice of collective action does not have to care deeply for the *minimal* conditions under which a mobilization attempt becomes effective – it needs to mobilize everything in the psychology of collective action it can muster. Moreover, although less is known about what happens after collective action has occurred, SIMCA suggests that developing a stronger sense of group identity over time will ensure that individuals' motivation for it is maintained. After all, SIMCA portrays a sense of “us” as the beating heart of the psychology of collective action.

A more general recommendation that flows from SIMCA is that civic engagement in response to crisis is a *psychological* enterprise. There does not need to be an objective crisis to prompt a psychological one, and in fact an objective crisis does not have to give rise to a subjective one. For this reason, communicating the objective problem is insufficient to incite collective action. In contrast, practitioners of collective action need to rely on mobilization attempts that focus on the multitude of motivations that individuals may have: maximizing their self- or group interest; protecting their group identity; protecting their violated moral standards; and following their *emotivations*. All these motivations reflect a more accurate portrayal of individuals in society than either one on its own. Practitioners of collective action should thus view individuals as rational in the broad psychological sense of the word.

We end with a word of caution with regard to interpreting the psychology of collective action in too normative a way. Independent of whether collective action and social change may or may not be considered “good” things, it might be good to consider that the same psychological processes that *foster* collective action for progressive change are of course also those that foster non-progressive change, and also those that *hinder* change. Indeed, the literature on collective

action suggests that authorities that seek to avoid the occurrence of it should prevent the formation of group identities (e.g., individuate group members), raise the costs of collective action (e.g., suggest that the efficacy of protest is low), lower the self-relevance of the situation, and portray the situation in non-moral terms.

Conclusion

The psychology of civic engagement as collective action is complex and multifaceted. However, there is little need for pessimism with respect to our emerging understanding of the phenomenon. In this chapter we have reviewed how moving away from a narrow view of human rationality facilitates an encompassing psychology of collective action. This psychology features cost-benefit calculation, group identity, emotion, and morality as important and interrelated facets. These different psychological mechanisms can all be marshalled when crisis calls for civic engagement. This may certainly be the case when individuals collectively protest against financial cuts or the raising of the national retirement age, but this is certainly no less the case when individuals protest at the burning of holy books or gay bashing.

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