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The role of values and value-identity

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Chapter 1

General Introduction

“If you don’t stand for something you fall for anything¹.”
“Nobody can give you freedom. Nobody can give you equality
or justice or anything. If you’re a man you take it².”

Malcolm X

The quest for freedom and equality is characteristic of many civil protests, revolutions and wars (e.g., Civil Rights Movement, Occupy, Arab Spring, etc.). In recent history, ideals of freedom and equality have become buzzwords that are often used by politicians and activists as an argument for their cause and tool to mobilize wider societal support with an underlying assumption that values like equality and freedom are endorsed, shared and important to all of us. Even though these buzzwords have become clichés that can be attached to any cause, the underlying psychological values that these words refer to may continue to be an essential part of the psychology of collective action and social change, precisely because values can both *motivate* and *mobilize*. This thesis seeks to understand how values do that from a social-psychological perspective.

Theory and research throughout the last 60 years has largely confirmed that values like social justice and equality reflect desirable trans-situational goals which determine individuals’ attitudes across all cultures and serve as important behavioural guidelines in different contexts (Allport et al., 1960; Rokeach, 1973; Schwartz, 1992). More importantly, values have an important place in motivating protest and social change because they *define* what individuals deem to be unjust and what their relevant goals are (e.g. Skitka & Bauman, 2008; Tetlock, Kirstel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000; Van Zomeren, 2013), and *predict* whether individuals are prepared to sacrifice themselves for the group (Skitka, Bauman & Sargis, 2005; Tetlock, 2002). In other words, values tell us what is important to defend through our own actions.

This thesis examines the link between values on the one hand, and individuals’ *group identification* and *collective action* on the other hand. Collective action, defined as any action aimed at improving the group’s rather than the individual’s own position (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990), is typically predicted by individuals’ subjective identification with the relevant group (i.e., the strength of psychological ties with that group; e.g., Simon & Klandermans, 2001). This leads to questions such as whether and how values *motivate* group identification and collective

1 Anonymous quote attributed to Malcolm X and Pastor Peter Marshall.

2 In Breitman, G. (Ed.). (1989). *Malcolm X speaks: Selected speeches and statements*. Pathfinder Press.

action, and when and how does the communication of values and group identities by, for instance, social movements *mobilize* people to participate in collective action.

The first aim of this thesis is to propose that the motivational power of values often arises from their perceived violation by others. Even though values are defining components of individual and group identities, both research and lay perceptions suggest that people often *do not* act upon, and/or even act in ways that transgress their most important principles (i.e., the value-behaviour gap). The lack of correspondence between individuals' values and actual behaviours has been evidenced in research in different areas, such as moral licencing (Merritt, Effron, & Monin, 2010), human rights protection (Chors, Maes, Moschner, & Kielmann, 2007; Staerklé & Clémence, 2004), discrimination and conflict (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1998). One of the reasons for this inconsistency is that values operate as *abstract* principles, whereas behaviours are concrete and situation specific. This implies that a situation first has to be identified as a concrete instantiation of a particular value for it to guide one's actions (Maio, 2010; Maio, Hahn, Frost, & Cheung; 2009). In the context of social injustice, I suggest that people will be more likely to act upon their values if they *recognize* the disadvantaged situation as a *violation* of a specific value. For example, the recent introduction of austerity measures and public cuts on a variety of economic and social welfare programs in Europe and the United States were interpreted by some as a threat to equality, and by others as a necessary step when faced with an economic crisis. Consequently, I assume that those who perceive this situation as a violation of equality, will be most likely to go to streets to protest against such policies.

Furthermore, perceived value violations not only make the relevant value salient in a concrete context, but also provide clearer clues for action needed to protect what one deems to be sacred (Mazzoni, Van Zomeren, & Cicognani, 2015; Tetlock et al., 2000; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2012; Van Zomeren, Postmes, Spears & Betache, 2011). Previous research has only looked at the strength of value endorsement as a predictor of political behaviour (Skitka & Mullen, 2002; Tetlock et al., 2000). Although it has been *assumed* that it is the violation of values that drives the engagement, most research did not yet explicitly test this idea (for an exception in a single protest context, see Mazzoni et al., 2015). One contribution of this thesis is that it does precisely that across different contexts.

The second aim of this thesis is to examine whether *the fit* between violated values and group identities is important in motivating collective action. A crucial difference between value literature and collective action literature lies in the emphasis on individual (see Skitka, 2010) or group identity (Van Zomeren et al., 2012). As values reflect subjective, absolute principles, and thereby transcend any contextual or identity boundaries (Skitka, 2010; Van Zomeren et al., 2012), previous work suggests that the fit between values

(e.g. equality) and group identities geared towards the same issue (e.g. feminist identity), can transform an individually held value into a collectively moralized basis for collective action (Mazzoni et al., 2015; Van Zomeren et al., 2012; Van Zomeren, 2013). This thesis expands the idea of value-identity fit by looking at the relation between violated values and group identities varying in abstraction (social group vs. superordinate identities; see Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), clarity and strength of social interactions (group identities characterized by strong vs. weak social relationships; see Lickel et al., 2000), and by examining the consequences of value-identity fit on motivation, mobilization and perception of collective action and social change.

More specifically, **Chapter 2** investigates the *motivational* power of the fit between violated values and group identity in motivating collective action in the context of “human-caused” earthquakes in the northern province of Groningen in the Netherlands. The contexts involving technological disasters or incidental disadvantages often lack clear group identities and action norms in contrast to more often examined contexts of structural disadvantage (see Van Zomeren et al., 2008). However, perceived value violations can provide meaning to otherwise vague group identities and potentially fuel collective action in the contexts which lack clear solutions and common goals.

Chapter 3 investigates how value violations and different types of group identities (subordinate vs. superordinate group identities) can be used as *effective communication tools* in mobilizing members of disadvantaged groups with different ideological background to take action. Theory and research on politicization (Simon & Klandermans, 2001), and recategorization (e.g., Turner et al., 1987; see also Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993) suggest that communicating values and superordinate group identities may increase a movement’s mobilization potential. This chapter compares the effects of fitting values to a superordinate group identity (e.g. national identity in this particular context) or ingroup identity (e.g. students) to find out what is a more effective mobilization tool.

Finally, I examine how the communication of values and identities as motivation for action or inaction affects *subgroup* relations. Both research and lay perceptions suggest that the motivations of passive and active members of disadvantaged groups may be qualitatively different: whereas individual and instrumental motives characterize those who stay at home, collective and moral motives characterize those who go to the streets (Van Zomeren & Spears, 2009). As a consequence, there is a potential for misunderstanding between the two subgroups, which is unfortunate given that group goals will more likely be achieved when the groups act in unison. Therefore, an intriguing and important question for collective action is how passive and active members perceive

and evaluate each other. **Chapter 4** examines how these perceptions are affected when for example, members of active group are confronted with a member of a passive group who communicates motivations which contradict those typically associated with that subgroup.

As a whole, this thesis contributes to theory and research on the relation between values and collective action by explicitly testing the *motivational* power of value violations (Aim 1) and value-identity fit (Aim 2) in facilitating collective action among members of disadvantaged groups. This is important because the notion of value violations offers a strategy to circumvent the problem of value-behaviour gap. Furthermore, I broaden the idea of fit between violated values and different types of identities and examine the consequences of using values as *communication tools*. Additionally, the findings of each chapter are also discussed in light of their relevance for collective action practitioners, suggesting guidelines to practitioners in terms of how to effectively use value violations and identities to motivate members of the disadvantaged groups to join actions. Below, I briefly review the relevant literature that this thesis builds on, after which I preview in more detail the three empirical chapters to come, each of which is written as a stand-alone empirical chapter and thus may overlap to some extent with the others.

Theoretical Backdrop

Social psychologists have studied values in at least two different approaches. A first line of research following the Rokeach and Schwartz tradition defined and outlined a relatively small number of values that are universally held (see De Groot & Steg, 2008; Schwartz 1992). According to this approach, values are viewed as stable dispositions that influence people's goals in various interpersonal or intergroup contexts, and across different cultures. The key contribution of this approach is the establishment of a *content-based structure* of values. For instance, in Schwartz's model 56 different values are clustered around two dimensions (openness to change vs. conservatism and self-transcendence vs. self-enhancement) and this structure has been replicated in 44 different countries and with over 25,000 participants.

A second line of research, however, does not focus on the content and structure of values, but on the *process* by which values exert their influence on behaviour. For instance, the Value Protection Model (VPM) by Skitka (2002; Skitka & Mullen, 2002) and Tetlock's work on Sacred Value Protection Model (SVMP; Tetlock et al., 2000; Tetlock, 2002) examine the consequences of perceiving and endorsing particular issues as absolutely right or wrong (whatever the content of these issues is) for individuals' behaviour. Both models point out that violations of issues held with moral conviction or perceived as

sacred, are accompanied by stronger (both in terms of intensity and quality) emotional reactions in contrast to violations of individual preferences and social norms (see Skitka 2010; Tetlock et al., 2000). Moreover, Tetlock (2002) suggests that merely contemplating a value transgression is enough to induce strong emotional reactions and to propel people to protect their sacred values. For this reason, it is not surprising that values have been recently integrated in social-psychological models of collective action based on this perspective (Van Zomeren, 2013), as collective action offers a powerful venue for individuals to act against those who violate their sacred values.

Early research on collective action emphasized rational and individual motives for participation (Olson, 1968; Klandermans, 1984) and overlooked the importance of social, affective and ideological motives. This thesis builds on the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (Van Zomeren et al., 2008), which suggests that individuals are primarily driven by their identification with the relevant group (Simon et al., 1998), and especially by identification with social movement organizations (referred to as *politicized* identification; Van Zomeren et al., 2008). In both the sociological and social-psychological literature, politicized collective identity is considered as the key motivational basis for action because it entails group members' active and intentional participation in collective power struggle to address injustice (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Indeed, individuals' identification with a social category (e.g. women, black) is less predictive of participation in collective action in contrast to identification with for example feminist identity or social movement organization (e.g. Civil Rights movement), as politicized identities are geared towards actively fighting the injustice (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Turner-Zwinkels et al., 2015). Values have been found to represent an important basis of a politicized identity (Mazzoni et al., 2015; Van Zomeren et al., 2012), they differentiate between those who actively support their group vs. those who remain passive (Turner-Zwinkels, van Zomeren & Postmes, 2016), and facilitate engagement of both disadvantaged and advantaged group members in social change (Van Zomeren et al., 2012; Van Zomeren et al., 2011).

A common assumption in social-psychological models of collective action and value-protection models by Skitka and Tetlock is that perceiving a value violation should be a particularly motivating experience, since transgressions of important principles are experienced as exceptionally unpleasant and intolerable. This thesis is the first (except Mazzoni et al., 2015) to explicitly test this idea and also examine the fit between values and politicized identities by (a) comparing if the values stemming from both personal and group identity needs have similar motivational effects (see subheading **Motivation** below), (b) looking at the misfit between values and subordinate vs. superordinate identities in communication and mobilization of disadvantaged group members who have different ideological background (see subheading **Mobilization** below), and (c)

examining the fit between subgroup identities defined by action vs. inaction and expressed moral or non-moral motivations on intragroup relations and perceptions (see subheading **Misunderstandings** below). These three different ways in which value-identity fit has been tested are summarized below and reflect the essence of each empirical chapter.

Motivation (Chapter 2)

The majority of prior research on collective action typically focuses on contexts characterized by long-term structural inequalities and discrimination (e.g., Civil Rights Movement, LGBT or feminist movements), whereas less attention has been given to contexts characterized by human-caused technological and environmental catastrophes such as nuclear power accidents or gas extraction (see Walsh, 1981, 1987; Klandermans, 1997; Van Zomeren et al., 2008). What distinguishes contexts of incidental from structural disadvantage is precisely a lack of prior clear group identities (Van Zomeren et al., 2008): gender, race or ethnic identities are associated with clear norms and values in contrast to group identities based on locations and proximity to a nuclear plant or gas field. This means that instead of conforming top-down to an already existing identity, individuals need to develop a sense of group identity (Postmes, Spears, Lee, & Novak, 2005).

The key premise of this project was that value violations play an important role in transforming these vague group identities into a psychological basis for collective action. More precisely, I examined individuals' willingness to undertake collective action in the north of the Netherlands by surveying 351 inhabitants affected by gas-extraction induced earthquakes. In this study, I compared the motivating effects of violation of values that stem from individual's concrete experiences which are shared with few significant others (and are thus based in personal identity needs) vs. those that stem from individuals identification with the group that is being affected by the situation (group identity needs). By differentiating between perceived violations of personal/family and group-based rights I could test whether identification with the province stems out of two different value basis, and also whether these two types of rights violations are linked to different coping strategies (exit vs. collective action). Additionally, this particular context enabled the investigation of a rarely addressed question in collective action research, namely the relation between different levels of objective disadvantage (i.e. the proximity to the earthquake epicentre) and individuals' subjective motivations to act against further gas extraction. Thus, this chapter tests if the fit between violated values and identities bears important motivational consequences with respect to *different types of actions* (improving the collective situation vs. individual situation), but also for *different members* of a disadvantaged group.

These findings have important implications for practitioners. For example, a movement seeking to mobilize the individuals living in the *less* affected areas may be more successful if it emphasizes the violations of group rights in calls for action, as those who are objectively less affected may not perceive the situation as violating their personal/family rights. The following chapter deals specifically with the question of how movements can successfully communicate value violations and mobilize individuals to support and act for their cause. Importantly, this work examines if and how movements can motivate those who already share their values, but also mobilize those outside of their immediate support group.

Mobilization (Chapter 3)

This chapter tests the differential effects of *communicating* value violations and group identities to those who already share (“preaching to the choir”) vs. who do not share movements’ ideological backgrounds (“preaching beyond the choir”). A fair assumption is that members of the same group share similar norms and values. This implies that communicating group identity and group values should result in increased identification with the social movement and intentions to participate in collective action. By integrating the insights on the effects of value communication from political science and sociological work on framing (Nelson & Garst, 2005; Nelson, Oxley & Clawson 1997; Slothuus, 2008), I investigate two different pathways through which values may lead to politicization: by a) *directly* increasing motivations to participate in collective action or by b) *indirectly* changing the importance of affective or instrumental antecedents of politicized identities. Furthermore, this work examines if either one of these effects is more likely to take place depending on *the audience* one tries to reach (preaching to or beyond the choir) and on *the group identity* (subordinate vs. superordinate) emphasized in the communication.

Concretely, in the context of student protests in the Netherlands against budget cuts ($N=168$), I tested whether and how fitting a *value* (right to free education) to two relevant *group identities* (i.e., student vs. national identity) influenced politicized identification among individuals in ideologically different student subgroups. Before conducting the actual study, a pilot study revealed that the students of social and economic sciences differed greatly in their views on the budget cuts for higher education, i.e. the social sciences students perceived the situation as more unjust compared to the economics students. For the main study, I approached specifically these two groups and presented them with a hypothetical action call, which subtly communicated that the government failed to uphold the right to free education by introducing budget cuts (and hence transgressed an important societal value). The first goal of this project was to see whether

communicating that an important societal value is being transgressed can directly increase politicized identification among those who share a movement's ideological background (i.e. social sciences students). Although this may happen, it is more plausible that value communication will only have indirect politicizing effects, because those individuals will already perceive their values to be violated. On the other hand, when "preaching beyond the choir", communicating values is unlikely to have any politicizing effects and might even directly further decrease their motivation for collective action. Still, theory and research on politicization (Simon & Klandermans, 2001) and recategorization (e.g., Turner et al., 1987; see also Gaertner et al., 1993), suggest that aligning the disadvantaged group's identity to national identity may increase movement's mobilization potential (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Thus, I tested whether fitting value violation to national identity (in contrast to student identity) may also have positive effects among the economics students who do not share the movement's ideological background.

This chapter examines value-identity fit by looking at how mobilization context and individuals' ideological background determine whether one perceives a value violation and is motivated to do something about it. Negative effects of value communication have mostly been looked at in the context of interpersonal and intergroup relations (Kouzakova, Ellemers, Harinck, & Scheepers, 2012). **Chapter 3** highlights their significance for cohesive *intragroup* relations, as values may also drive apart the members of the same group and negatively affect movement's mobilization potential. In the following chapter, I investigate this idea further by looking into how value communication for action or inaction affects the relations between active and passive members of disadvantaged groups.

Misunderstandings (Chapter 4)

This final empirical chapter examines mutual perceptions and evaluations of those who act and those who do not act for the group. Previous research and lay perceptions suggest that those who act for the group are motivated by group concerns and act to protect important values from being transgressed (they are seen as "intuitive theologians"; see discussion of Tetlock's metaphors in Van Zomeren & Spears, 2009). By contrast, those who do not act for the group are concerned with securing individual interests (Olson, 1968; see also Klandermans, 1984) and they often doubt the group's effectiveness in reaching its goals (Hornsey et al., 2006; Stürmer & Simon, 2004). I argue that this has also consequences for what active or passive members expect the motivations of the other subgroup to be. In other words, the active members might not be very dismissive of those who doubt the movement's efficacy, but they might be rather angry at those questioning the ideological background of the movement. Similarly, the passive subgroup

may expect those who protest to be motivated by collective and/or moral concerns and not by individual and/or instrumental concerns. The goal of this chapter is to examine mutual perceptions and evaluations in a case where the aforementioned expectations are met or violated. In other words, when the member of an (in)active subgroup does vs. does not communicate motivations typically associated with her/his subgroup.

Hence, I conducted two field experiments examining how the protesters (Study 1, $N = 187$) perceived and evaluated the non-protesters, and how the non-protesters (Study 2, $N = 145$) perceived and evaluated the protesters. In Study 1, I approached students amidst the demonstration in The Hague and asked them to evaluate a fellow student who did not come to the demonstration and explained her/his reasons by emphasizing instrumental vs. moral and individual vs. collective motivations for inaction. Study 2 was the mirror image of Study 1 and took place two months later and using same design with slight adjustments to fit a profile of a student who attended the demonstration. Based on the idea of fit between motivations and one's identity, I hypothesized that the protesters would be particularly negative of the non-protester who denies moral motivation (i.e. disagrees with acting to protect an important human right) and thus violates the expectation of inaction being driven by instrumental concerns. More concretely, I expected that the non-protester who denies moral obligation will be perceived as more selfish and induce more anger. By contrast, I expected the non-protesters to view a protester who communicates individual motivation for action less positively, as (s)he violates the expectations of collective action being driven by collective concerns. Therefore, this final empirical chapter sheds light on the relations and (possible) misunderstandings and between active and passive members of disadvantaged groups.

As the opening quote suggests, values such as freedom and equality cannot be achieved without taking action. However, coming to an agreement on which values to fight for and communicating them successfully to others, is a great challenge for social movements. This thesis examines how values and their violations motivate collective action (Aim 1) and how value-identity fit can be used to increase movement's mobilization potential (Aim 2). By uncoupling the effects of fit between values, identities and actions on mutual perceptions and evaluations, this thesis provides further insight into the possibilities of achieving group cohesiveness and solidarity, which is important for both theory and practice of collective action.

