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From Moderate Action to Radical Protest Intentions

Disentangling Social-Identity-Based Models Predicting Political Violence

Hedy Greijdanus, Sara Panerati,
Tom Postmes, and Russell Spears

Abstract: We examine how anti-Trump democrats ($N = 460$), prior to the 2020 election, managed their options to protest, focusing on when moderate collective action predicts more radical intentions to protest. We investigate the relationship of moderate action involvement and effectiveness with radical action intentions and the effects of various other variables such as intergroup emotions, group identification, and political vs. participative efficacy. Although moderate action involvement is correlated with radical intentions, the *effectiveness* of moderate action is *negatively* related to radical intentions. Analogously, while *political* efficacy positively predicts radical action, *participative* efficacy *negatively* predicts radical action, both with increasing moderate action experience. Social-identity-based collective action models explain this radical use of political violence as protest (e.g., ESIM) and the counteracting effect of efficacy forms (SIDE, NTL).

Keywords: collective action, participative efficacy, political efficacy, political violence, radicalization, social identity

The prevalence of collective action has prompted increased interest among researchers in understanding this phenomenon and the forms it can take (Morgan and Chan 2016; Postmes and Brunsting 2002; Reicher et al. 1995; Wright et al. 1990; Zaal et al. 2011). Collective action can take a wide variety of forms, from street demonstrations and petitions to throwing food at art. However, research on collective action rarely

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investigates the exact personal experiences and perceptions that affect the choice for a particular means to achieve social change. Which social-psychological factors influence the decision to use more radical rather than moderate or conventional means? While an abundance of research focuses on predictors of (mainly moderate) collective action, the outcomes of action receive much less attention (Vestergren et al. 2017). Here, we focus on the relation between one's past moderate actions (i.e., past action outcomes) and future radical action intent (political violence by nonstate actors such as civil disobedience and illegal action). Specifically, we investigate the social-psychological factors that predict such political violence among a sample of anti-Trump supporters (Donald Trump opponents) in the United States before the 2020 election, a time when this group lacked power. We deploy various models developed from the social identity tradition that can shed light on predictors of the use of unlawful actions in protest, and in particular on the relation between individual and collective dimensions of efficacy and (radical) action. The aim is to bridge theoretical perspectives on moderate action experiences as a predictor of radical collective action.

Various researchers have drawn a distinction between collective action that is moderate vs. radical, violent vs. peaceful, legal vs. illegal, and normative vs. non-normative (Tausch et al. 2011; Wright et al. 1990). Most previous research, especially research conducted within the social identity framework, has focused on moderate forms of collective action (Van Zomeren et al. 2008). In the present research, we are concerned with how experiences with and perceptions of such action might motivate people to consider more radical or non-normative—even illegal—forms of collective action. Collective action is the result of a complex and dynamic system in which contextual, collective, and individual factors play a role. Perceptions of past actions can influence future collective action intentions. For instance, in a recent theoretical article on historical narratives around collective action Samuel Freel and Rezarta Bilali (2022) hypothesized that perceived lack of desired social change or perceived decline could fuel anger and, hence, collective action. Similarly, anger about a specific failed past action can motivate future action (Tausch and Becker 2013). Activism and action can thus be seen as belonging to an ongoing or stepwise process (Klandermans 1997), in which radical action (e.g., violence) typically occurs only after moderate action has been tried and found wanting (Thomas et al. 2014). Furthermore, even when nonviolent protest helps to achieve its goals, about 20 percent of these movements resort to violence at some point (Ryckman 2019). In sum, the relation between people's experiences of

past moderate action and their intentions for future radical collective action deserves more attention.

A Social Identity Perspective on Radical Action

Research on radicalization triggers is more common in sociology than in social psychology (Borum 2011; Sedgwick 2010), but interest in social psychology has started to grow (Jensen et al. 2020; Tausch et al. 2011; Van den Bos 2018). Most of this research has had an individualistic focus, such as studying factors that make individuals vulnerable to the influence of radicalization (e.g., L. G. E. Smith et al. 2020). However, some authors (e.g., Beard 2003; Ryckman 2019) have underlined the importance of considering group factors, such as socialization and interaction processes, in which the social norms are created and negotiated. Social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel and Turner 1979) is an obvious place to start the study of collective action as a dynamic and interactive process, because it is an intergroup theory of social change that focuses on the group strategies employed by disadvantaged and low-status groups. However, the social identity framework does not explicitly consider *radical* collective action, which it even seems to preclude. According to SIT (Tajfel and Turner 1979), perceived illegitimacy and the *instability* of the social hierarchy contribute to generating the "cognitive alternatives to the status quo" required to challenge the high-status or powerful group. A factor closely related to the instability of the social hierarchy is the perceived efficacy (or power) to change the status quo (which would also render the situation less stable).

Assuming that the group disadvantage is perceived as illegitimate, what happens when it is also perceived as stable or the efficacy to challenge it is lacking? According to SIT, the disadvantaged group should generally cease protesting and even accept the situation or await a more propitious moment when instability emerges (Ellemers 1993; Tajfel and Turner 1979). But then radical action should not be necessary, as more moderate or normative forms may then be sufficiently effective (illegitimate and unstable, with efficacy available). In short, classical SIT does not consider the emergence of radical action or the conditions under which moderate or normative action might take a radical turn (see Van Zomeren et al. 2008 for a meta-analysis and review). Nor is it clear that other theories of intergroup relations (e.g., relative deprivation theory, realistic conflict theory) are better placed to explain radical action or which moderate action experiences trigger radical action. Contextual

factors might go some way to explain more extreme forms of action (Chayinska and Minescu 2018; Priante et al. 2018; Thomas et al. 2012), especially if the outgroup constitutes a threat or itself uses violent acts that are considered unmotivated, illegitimate, or immoral (Adang and Van Ham 2015; Ferris et al. 2019; Reicher 1996). However, the theoretical problem arguably remains of explaining how and when moderate action can trigger more radical forms of action within the classical social identity framework.

Four more specific theoretical extensions of SIT are potentially able to shed light on the relation between past moderate and future radical action. These are (1) the elaborated social identity model (ESIM: Drury and Reicher 2009); (2) intergroup emotions theory (IET: Kuppens and Yzerbyt 2012; E. R. Smith 1993; Spears et al. 2018); (3) the nothing-to-lose framework (NTL: Saab et al. 2016; Scheepers et al. 2006; Spears et al. 2018; Tausch et al. 2011); and (4) the social identity model of deindividuation effects (SIDE: Klein et al. 2007; Postmes et al. 1999; Reicher et al. 1995; Spears and Lea 1994). We will consider these models briefly in turn and consider how they may help us to predict radical action from moderate action experiences.

The Elaborated Social Identity Model (ESIM)

The ESIM (Drury and Reicher 2000) as applied to activism and collective action could be relevant in predicting radical collective action from prior experiences with moderate action. This model pays attention to the temporal dimension of protest activity and how intergroup conflicts develop with consequences for consciousness-raising and radicalization. Basically, this model argues that people who are involved in protest activity can develop more radicalized forms of group identity through their engagement in the protest activity itself (e.g., intergroup conflict with authorities), especially when they experience illegitimate treatment (for reviews, see Drury 2020; Drury and Reicher 2018). Indeed, this change can endure over time (Vestergren et al. 2017). In short, extended engagement in moderate action might be a context in which protesters come to realize that moderate action is ineffective and radical action is justified and even proportionate. The ESIM is clearly particularly relevant to the question how radical action intentions might result from perceptions of moderate action.

Intergroup Emotions Theory (IET)

Radical action is likely to be a highly affectively charged phenomenon in which group-based emotions play a key role. Intergroup emotions theory (E. R. Smith 1993) was developed precisely to integrate the social identity approach with an analysis couched in terms of the emotions likely to arise in such intergroup situations. For example, research showed that group-based anger can predict collective action and that it is distinguishable from a more instrumental route based on efficacy (Van Zomeren et al. 2004; see also Goldenberg et al. 2016; Netzer et al. 2015; Porat et al. 2016). However, given its key appraisal of illegitimacy or injustice, anger is more compatible with *normative* or *moderate* forms of collective action justified by the situation. More extreme emotions such as contempt, disgust, and disdain are more compatible with extreme or radical forms of collective action. For example, contempt is associated with the dehumanization and moral exclusion of the “other” (Fischer and Roseman 2007). This translates into more extreme (i.e., non-normative) forms of collective action intentions (Becker and Tausch 2015; Tausch et al. 2011; see also Van Zomeren et al. 2012 for a review). Thus, divergent patterns of emotions seem associated with moderate compared to radical action.

The Nothing-To-Lose Model (NTL)

The nothing-to-lose model was developed to explain findings that low-status groups do not always accept their disadvantaged position when status relations are stable (as predicted by classical SIT) but can show evidence of extreme or antagonistic forms of social competition, arguably because they have “nothing to lose” (“desperate situations require desperate measures”; see Scheepers et al. 2006). Similar findings were obtained for groups with low group efficacy (Saab et al. 2016; Spears et al. 2018; Tausch et al. 2011), which are psychologically akin to groups with stable low status, as they are also disempowered with little hope of or scope for foreseeable change. In short, this NTL mindset might help to explain conditions under which anti-normative action (albeit normative for the ingroup) could be predicted, namely under conditions of stable status disadvantage or disempowerment.

The Social Identity Model of Deindividuation Effects (SIDE)

The SIDE model, another social-identity-based framework, makes slightly different predictions, however. The strategic dimension of the

SIDE model (see, e.g., Klein et al. 2007; Reicher et al. 1995; Spears and Lea 1994) is most relevant here and proposes that certain conditions, such as anonymity and the co-presence of fellow ingroup members (a situational form of group efficacy), can empower the ingroup to follow group norms, including radical ones that would otherwise antagonize the outgroup and be sanctioned by them. Clearly radical or anti-normative action against the powerful outgroup would fall into this category, and following the strategic side of SIDE requires efficacy to surmount such potential sanction and resistance from them. Recent research confirms that the willingness to consider radical action is strongly associated with the group members' beliefs that they have sufficient resources to act and to succeed in their actions (Shi et al. 2015).

Explaining the Opposing Effects of Efficacy in the NTL and SIDE Models

An intriguing conflict or even contradiction becomes apparent here. Whereas the NTL framework suggests that support for radical action might be stimulated by disempowerment, the strategic side of SIDE seems to predict the opposite, namely that efficacy (i.e., the co-presence of ingroup allies and anonymity) empowers the ingroup and is necessary to enable it to act against outgroup norms and interests. How can we resolve the (apparent) contradiction that derives from the NTL and SIDE models that efficacy appears to predict opposing orientations toward radical action (Spears 2016)?

First of all, we should accept that this contradiction is real rather than apparent, in that both predictions could represent parallel routes (and opposing processes) in the relation between efficacy and support for radical action that could also co-occur. And second, to help understand this contradiction it may also be useful and necessary to distinguish *different forms* of efficacy (see Spears 2016). At the global/societal level, we are talking about groups that necessarily clearly lack *some* power or efficacy, to the extent that they are disadvantaged by, and in dispute with, the powers that be. This lack of power/efficacy figures in both NTL and SIDE model accounts of the plight of the disadvantaged groups. However, in the SIDE model the social support necessary to resist the powerful group or authority (e.g., provided by co-present others) also affords a more strategic assessment of efficacy to realize group goals, in line with group norms, even when this could be challenged or punished by the outgroup. This strategic support has also been called "response efficacy" or "political efficacy" (Saab et al. 2015) and we label it so

here. Such political efficacy clearly reflects the collective strength of the group, in specific situations or circumstances (i.e., in contrast to its societal position of low status), and relates to the SIDE model predictions, with more efficacy positively predicting non-normative radical action.

By contrast, the most fertile conditions for the NTL mindset occur when group members feel most helpless and desperate, prompting desperate measures. The concept of *participative* efficacy (Van Zomeren et al. 2013) may be especially relevant here, namely the extent to which individuals feel that they can make a difference in the group's goals. If the answer is "no," then the feeling of desperation may be especially high and the inclination to resort to illegal or even criminal measures to challenge the status quo (i.e., political violence by nonstate actors) may become more attractive. Hence low political efficacy, but especially low participative efficacy, may be likely to evoke the NTL mindset predicting radical action.

Note that participative efficacy is an individual-level perception or appraisal, whereas political efficacy refers to a group-level appraisal of efficacy, although both are directed toward the group-level identity and its goals (e.g., social change). In this sense, the concept of participative efficacy is akin to perceptions of primary control that people exert through their personal deeds, whereas the concept of political efficacy is reminiscent of secondary or social control that is obtained by affiliating with an agentic ingroup (Fritsche et al. 2013; Stollberg et al. 2015). The current approach thus embeds the apparently opposing effects of efficacy in the NTL and SIDE models into a broader body of literature.

Past Experiences as Triggers for Future Radical Action

Putting these models and predictions together, it is relevant to consider how they may work in interaction with moderate collective action to trigger intentions to engage in (illegal) radical action. In particular, recalling past actions and the evaluation of their effectiveness may play an important role in influencing and shaping future action intentions (Chan 2016; Wilkins et al. 2019). Specifically, when past moderate actions are perceived to have failed, this can pave the way for other, more extreme types of actions (Bloom 2004). The perceived (in)effectiveness of moderate collective action is therefore likely to play an especially important role in predicting aggressive collective action as a means of protesting. Indeed Rim Saab et al. (2016) showed that the perceived ineffectiveness of moderate actions leads to aggressive acts depending on whether such acts are themselves perceived as efficacious. Moreover,

research by Morgana Lizzio-Wilson and colleagues (2021) indicates that general high group efficacy may strengthen this effect by inoculating group members against demotivating effects of the perceived ineffectiveness of past moderate action. However, these studies did not disentangle the effects of participative vs. the effects of political efficacy perceptions.

In sum, despite its limitations in explaining radical action, the classic social identity framework (Tajfel and Turner 1979) has inspired more specific models (ESIM, IET, NTL, SIDE) that are better placed to explain the conditions under which perceived past (failed) moderate action predicts future more radical action. A central question in the current research is the theoretical conflict between the NTL and SIDE models, suggesting that we need a more detailed understanding of processes around the effects of efficacy especially relating to their different forms (e.g., political vs. participative efficacy).

The Current Research

We examined these social-identity-based ideas on the role of moderate action experiences in radical action intentions using a sample of opponents of (at the time) President Trump in the United States. While not a disadvantaged or low-status group in the classic sense, this group was clearly out of power (hence then lacking in global/societal efficacy) and engaged in an emotional and ideologically charged intergroup conflict, allowing us to test our basic ideas on prior experiences with (failed) moderate action as an elicitor of radical action intentions. We investigate which factors predict future radical action intentions in this sample, with a particular focus on when moderate action experience may trigger the use of unlawful actions as a means of protesting.

Method

Participants and Design

To determine power, we focused on the minimum effect size of interest because *a prio*ri effect sizes are unknown (see also Lakens 2022). Our analysis involves 11 univariate predictors, one of which is past moderate action, which is expected to correlate substantially with future (radical) action intent. We assumed that past action would account for 50 percent of the variance, and we were interested in detecting any R^2 change of variables that explained more than 4 percent additional

variance (equating to a partial R^2 of .072). Accordingly, we are interested in predicting an R^2 change equating to a small-to-medium effect. With these parameters, G*Power suggests that to achieve 90 percent power, at $p = .05$, one requires an N of at least 284.

This study was conducted in the middle of Trump's presidency, before the impeachment procedure was started. As part of a larger project involving both sides of the political spectrum, we used Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to recruit US citizens with an approval rate in prior studies of at least 95 percent. For the current research, 434 US citizens who self-categorized as opponents of Trump and 26 who did not reveal their political orientation or were undecided (total $N = 460$; 207 men, 247 women, four transgender persons, two "other"; age $M = 39.25$, $SD = 14.56$) completed an online questionnaire for US$0.75. We employed a within-subjects design to investigate which experiences and perceptions around actually having participated in moderate collective action predict people's intentions to engage in future radical collective action.[1]

Materials and Procedure

The questionnaire was disseminated through a Qualtrics link that remained active for two days on MTurk—the length of data collection was determined before any data analysis. After providing their informed consent, participants answered a one-item measure of *social identification* with Trump opponents (Postmes et al. 2013). In the next phase, we presented a taxonomy of 12 collective actions (three moderate and three radical actions, both offline and online). Because the offline and online actions were highly correlated (cf. Greijdanus et al. 2020), we created the following scales only maintaining the distinction between moderate and radical actions. We measured the *frequency* of their past moderate collective action (CA) with six items (e.g., "I have demonstrated to support Donald Trump's opponents"; 1 = never, 5 = always; Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$) and the perceived *effectiveness* of each of these actions in achieving its intended goal (1 = not at all, to 5 = very strongly; Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$). Perceived *normativity* of moderate and radical actions among the ingroup [outgroup] was measured with "How many opponents [supporters] of Donald Trump would approve of this action?" (1 = none, 5 = all; Cronbach's α ingroup normativity moderate CA = .92, radical CA = .88; outgroup normativity moderate CA = .91, radical CA = .92). Normativity perceptions ended up not being included in the models because empirically they overlapped too much with the effectiveness variables. Subsequently, participants rated their *disillusion*

with their past actions (disillusioned, frustrated, discouraged; 1 = not at all, 5 = very much; Cronbach's α = .80) and to what extent they thought their past actions had the desired *impact* on the American people at large and/or the media (1 = not at all, 5 = very strongly; Cronbach's α = .91).

Political efficacy was measured with three items about the opponents of Trump (e.g., "I think that they can successfully defend their rights"; 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree; Cronbach's α = .77; cf. Tausch et al. 2011). *Participative efficacy* since Trump has been elected (five items, e.g. "I am motivated to make a difference," "I have been energized and empowered to take further action"; 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree; Cronbach's α = .90 ; cf. Wermser et al. 2018), *care* motives (four items, e.g. "I want to take care of my community and its achievements"; 1 = not at all, 5 = very strongly; Cronbach's α = .86), negative *intergroup emotions* ("Thinking of the supporters of Donald Trump and their actions, to what extent do you feel: Disgusted/Dismissive/Angry/Vengeful"; 1 = not at all, 5 = very strongly; Cronbach's α = .80), anticipated *outgroup hostility* toward the ingroup (six items, e.g. "Please indicate to what extent do you expect: The supporters of Donald Trump to abuse and insult you in public (face-to-face or in the street)?"; 1 = extremely unlikely, 5 = extremely likely; Cronbach's α = .91), and *self-categorization* ("Do you see yourself as an activist / a radical?"; 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree; Cronbach's α = .70) were also measured (see Appendix 1). Finally, participants indicated their future radical *CA intentions*, focusing on unlawful protest behaviors (six items, e.g., "I would engage in civil disobedience to resist the supporters of Donald Trump"; Cronbach's α = .89).[2] The study concluded with demographic questions (age, gender) and a debriefing.

Results

To identify factors concerned with individuals' past moderate actions (i.e., prior engagement in and effectiveness perceptions of moderate action) that predict their intentions to engage in future radical collective action, the analytic strategy was to predict radical collective action intentions from these factors while also including moderate collective action involvement in the past. We therefore analyzed the data in successive phases using three nested linear regression models. In the first phase, past moderate actions were included as a predictor of radical action intentions. The second phase included the main effects of the

most predictive variables. Finally, the third phase considers the most predictive interactions between the past (moderate) actions and the other predictors.[3]

Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary analyses included all predictors in the dataset (see Appendix 1). We then trained a reduced model by retaining the predictors that explain considerable variance (including the interactions) while reducing the total number of variables included. The choice of the best model was verified with the Leaps package in R (version 3.0), which showed that according to relevant fit criteria (BIC and R^2), all variables involving nonsignificant univariate and multivariate effects (e.g., hostility) could be dropped from the model. In addition, the univariate effects of disillusionment and impact, which were significant at $p < .05$, could also be dropped from the model without compromising R^2 and BIC. For full transparency, the best-fitting model contained all effects found in the full model in Appendix 2. As we can see below, the final model with seven predictors and four interactions explained almost exactly the same variance as the full model (12 predictors, 11 interactions).

Regression Models

Correlations among variables are shown in Table 1. The results of the hierarchical regression analyses are shown in Table 2. Model 2 (R^2 = 53 percent variance explained) fits significantly better than Model 1 (R^2 = 27 percent), $F(6,452) = 45.91$, $p < .001$. Model 3 (R^2 = 56 percent) was an improvement over Model 2, $F(4,448) = 6.27$, $p < .001$.

Table 1. Means, Standard Deviations (SD), and Correlations

	Mean	**SD**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
1. Radical action intent	1.75	0.87							
2. Past moderate action	2.04	1.06	.51***						
3. Self-categorization	3.57	1.54	.52***	.56***					
4. Effectiveness radical	2.71	1.19	.60***	.35***	.37***				
5. Effectiveness moderate	3.89	1.39	.18***	.38***	.27***	.40***			
6. Political efficacy	4.19	0.90	.29***	.31***	.40***	.31***	.48***		
7. Participative efficacy	3.46	0.96	.26***	.48***	.52***	.23***	.38***	.45***	
8. Care	3.82	0.91	.01	.24***	.24***	.05	.31***	.30***	.51

*** p < .001

Table 2. Hierarchical Multiple Regression: Variables Associated with Transitioning from Past Moderate Action to Future Radical Action Intentions

	Predictors of Future Radical Action		
	Base	*Main effects*	*Interactions*
Past moderate action	0.42***	0.24***	0.28***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)
Self-categorization		0.14***	0.14***
		(0.02)	(0.02)
Effectiveness radical actions		0.35***	0.32***
		(0.03)	(0.03)
Effectiveness moderate actions		−0.11***	−0.10***
		(0.03)	(0.03)
Political efficacy		0.04	0.05
		(0.03)	(0.03)
Participative efficacy		−0.03	−0.07
		(0.04)	(0.04)
Care		−0.09*	−0.09*
		(0.04)	(0.04)
Effectiveness rdcl*past action			0.07**
			(0.02)
Effectiveness mdrt*past action			−0.06**
			(0.02)
Political efficacy*past action			0.07**
			(0.03)
Participative efficacy*past action			−0.12***
			(0.03)
Constant	1.75***	1.75***	1.79***
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Observations	460	460	460
R^2	.27	.53	.56
Adjusted R^2	.26	.53	.55
Residual Std. Error	0.75 (df = 458)	0.60 (df = 452)	0.59 (df = 448)
F Statistic	165.19*** (df = 1; 458)	74.25*** (df = 7; 452)	51.71*** (df = 11; 448)

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

In Model 1, past moderate actions were a substantial predictor, with a semi-partial correlation of $r_{semi} = .51$. Those who have taken past moderate action are much more likely to have future radical intentions. But although the effect is moderately strong and very significant, it is also clear that there is plenty of scope for other variables to be included in the model, with 73 percent of variance remaining unexplained.

Model 2 shows that a number of other variables predict radical action intentions over and above past moderate actions. Indeed, including these variables also reduces the variance accounted for by past moderate actions considerably (to r_{semi} = .23). The perceived effectiveness of radical action (r_{semi} = .41, now a stronger effect than past moderate action) and self-categorization as a radical (r_{semi} = .18) were both sizable predictors. This shows that (perhaps not surprisingly) radical action is more likely to be taken by those who believe it is effective and who self-categorize as radical. Interestingly the effectiveness of moderate action has a *negative* effect (r_{semi} = −.14), meaning that those who believe moderate action is less effective are more likely to contemplate taking radical action, which supports the NTL rationale. The only other reliable univariate effect is that of care (r_{semi} = −.07): respondents who are motivated to care for their community and values are slightly less likely to take radical action.

The reason why the inclusion of these additional main effects reduced the effect of past action on radical intent is that categorization as a radical is strongly related to both kinds of action. These variables therefore "split" some of the variance between them when they are both included. It is worth noting that in this final model variables often associated with collective action intentions, such as negative intergroup emotions (e.g., anger or disgust) and ingroup identification, did not account for sufficient variance to be included. Although these variables were related to moderate past actions and although emotions were related to radical action, neither of them explained when moderate action is associated with future radical intentions.[4]

Model 3 in Table 1 shows that there are four interaction effects that are worth noting. Figure 1 shows that the effect of past moderate action on future radical intentions is moderated by effectiveness. Panel A shows the moderation by effectiveness of radical action (r_{semi} = .10). The relationship between past moderate action and radical future intentions is stronger among those who believe *radical* actions are more effective, b = 0.35 (95 percent CI = 0.27; 0.43; SE = 0.04) than among those who believe they are ineffective, b = 0.23 (0.13; 0.31). Interestingly panel B shows this effect is reversed for the perceived effectiveness of *moderate* action (r_{semi} = −.09). The relationship between past moderate action and radical future intentions is stronger among those who believe moderate actions were *not* effective, b = 0.40 (0.31; 0.49) compared with those who believe they were b = 0.18 (0.09; 0.27). Put differently, among those who have taken little past moderate action, effectiveness of moderate action is unrelated to intentions to take radical

action, $b = -0.02$ (-0.09; 0.04). But among those who did take moderate action previously, those who believe those past moderate actions were ineffective have considerably stronger intentions to take radical action, $b = -0.20$ (-0.26; -0.13).

Figure 2 shows that the effect of past moderate action on future radical intentions is also moderated by efficacy. Panel A shows the effect of political efficacy ($r_{semi} = .08$). The relationship between past actions and future radical intentions is considerably stronger among those who have a high sense of political efficacy, $b = 0.46$ (0.37; 0.56) compared with

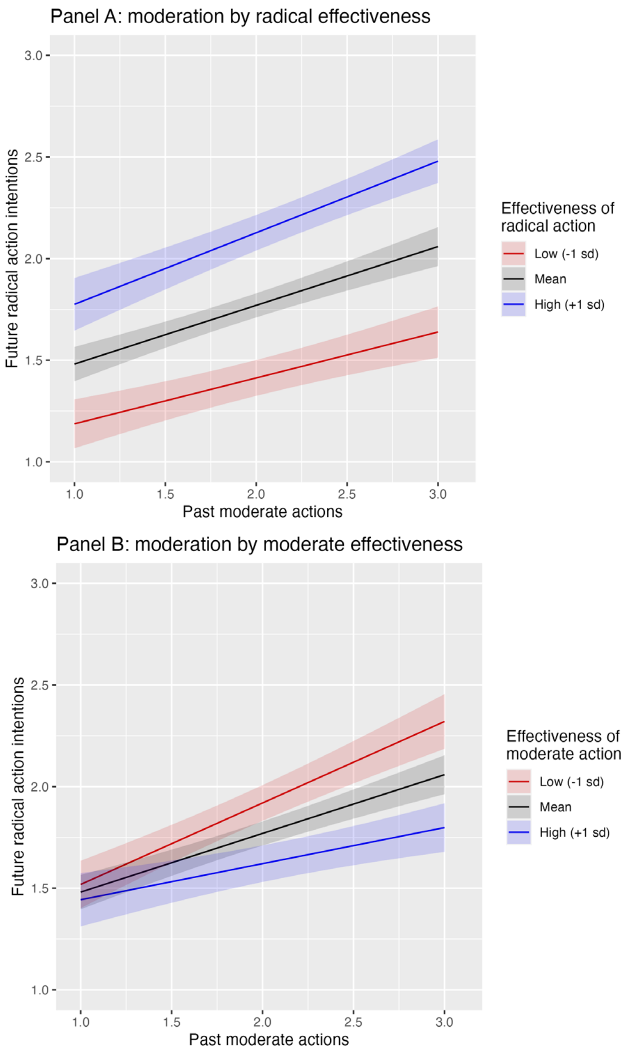

Figure 1. Interactive effects of past moderate action and effectiveness of radical (Panel A) and moderate (Panel B) actions on future radical intentions.

those with a low sense of efficacy, b = 0.12 (0.03; 0.20). Put differently, among those who have taken little past moderate action, political efficacy is unrelated to intentions to take radical action, b = −0.09 (−0.18; 0.004). But among those who did take moderate action previously, those who feel political efficacy have considerably stronger intentions to take radical action, b = 0.32 (0.21; 0.43).

Interestingly panel B shows this effect is reversed for participative efficacy (r_{semi} = −.11). The relationship between past moderate action and radical future intentions is stronger among those who feel their

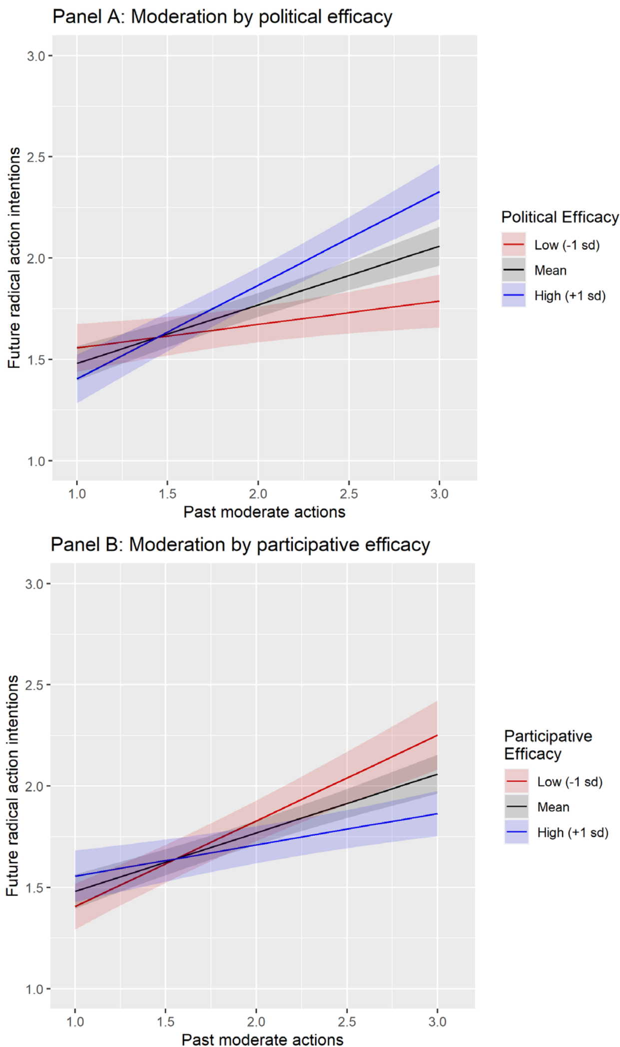

Figure 2. Interactive effects of past moderate action and political (Panel A) and participative (Panel B) efficacy on future radical intentions.

participative efficacy is *low*, $b = 0.42$ (0.32; 0.53) compared with those for whom it is high, $b = 0.16$ (0.08; 0.23). Put differently, among those who have taken little to limited past moderate action, participative efficacy (feeling part of a movement against Trump and feeling empowered and energized by it) is unrelated to intentions to take radical action, $b = 0.08$ (-0.01; 0.17). But those who have taken a lot of moderate action and who feel their participative efficacy is low have considerably stronger intentions to protest using illegal means in the future, $b = -0.22$ (-0.33; -0.10).

Discussion

When people feel that they are losing control over their environment, they tend to shift their focus to the groups they belong to (Fritsche et al. 2011). Although this ingroup focus may entail relatively harmless behaviors, supporting one's ingroup may also spiral into violent intergroup conflict and ultimately perhaps even war (Jonas and Fritsche 2013). We aimed to shed light on the individual and collective factors that motivate people who have been involved in moderate action to embrace more radical and illegal forms of protest. We investigated this issue among Trump opponents, a group that was not in power at the time of the data collection. Overall, the main effects indicated that people are more likely to intend taking radical and illegal collective action (a) the more strongly they self-categorize as radical; (b) the more effective they think radical action is; (c) the more they participated in past moderate action; (d) the less effective they think their past moderate actions have been; and (e) the less they are motivated to take care of their own community and its way of living.

Additionally, results show four interaction effects, which speak to the intricate interplay of perceived efficacy of the actions themselves, of the individual, and of the collective. The first two interactions show that past moderate action more strongly predicts future radical action intentions if people believe that moderate action is ineffective and radical action is effective. In other words, those who have participated in moderate actions are more inclined to take future radical action when they feel that their past mode of action (i.e., moderate) has not produced the social change envisioned and if they feel that radical action would bring change. People who have tried and failed to achieve change with moderate action subsequently expand their repertoire to include radical options ("if all else fails"). These results are in line with the rationale behind the NTL mindset and strategy.

More interesting, perhaps, are the remaining two interactions, which reveal opposing effects of political and participative efficacy. Regarding political efficacy, past involvement in moderate collective action increases future radical action intentions especially among those who feel that the ingroup is capable of achieving its goals (i.e., an appraisal of group-level efficacy). However, the interaction with participative efficacy shows the reverse pattern, namely that past involvement in moderate collective action increases radicalization, especially among those who feel that their own contribution was ineffective or futile (i.e., an appraisal of personal efficacy to the group cause). These effects, as well as the absence of other effects, have implications for several SIT-based models concerning collective action and radicalization.

Implications for ESIM, IET, NTL, and SIDE Approaches to Collective Action

The starting point for the current research was the observation that research on moderate collective action has experienced an exponential increase over the past few decades, whereas explanations of when and why moderate action may trigger radical action intentions have been lacking. We have highlighted the potential of four extensions of the classical social identity framework to address this lacuna: (1) the elaborated social identity model (ESIM: Drury and Reicher 2000, 2009); (2) intergroup emotions theory (IET: Kuppens and Yzerbyt 2012; Livingstone et al. 2011; E. R. Smith 1993; Spears et al. 2011); (3) the nothing-to-lose framework (NTL: Saab et al. 2016; Scheepers et al. 2006; Spears et al. 2018; Tausch et al. 2011); and (4) the social identity model of deindividuation effects (SIDE model: Klein et al. 2007; Postmes et al. 1999; Reicher et al. 1995; Spears and Lea 1994). We will now turn to a discussion of the implications of our current findings in light of these existing theoretical frameworks.

Most notably, we observed an apparent contradiction between effects of political and participative efficacy. Having engaged in moderate collective action motivates intentions to resort to illegal means of protest in the future among people who perceive that the ingroup can achieve its goals (high political efficacy) yet also among people who perceive their own contributions as ineffective (low participative efficacy). We argue that this pattern of findings is consistent with two different models in the SIT tradition with contrasting perspectives on the relation between group efficacy and radical (and potentially also illegal) action. More specifically, the interaction between past involvement in moderate

collective action and political efficacy fits with the SIDE model, whereas the interaction of past moderate action and participative efficacy follows the NTL perspective. On the one hand, the SIDE model (Klein et al. 2007; Postmes et al. 1999; Reicher et al. 1995; Spears and Lea 1994) proposes that group efficacy (*qua* social support) is necessary to embolden group members to take radical, punishable, and possibly illegal action for which they could be held to account and potentially prosecuted. Thus, assuming that radical action is deemed normative for this group, and that moderate action has been tried and found wanting, collective-level political efficacy should increase support for illegal means of protest, because it emboldens group members to ignore the power and sanctions of the outgroup or authorities.

On the other hand, the NTL model (Scheepers et al. 2006; Spears et al. 2018; Tausch et al. 2011) proposes that if people feel disempowered or helpless to effect change they will be shifted toward the "nothing-to-lose mindset." Perceptions of effectiveness of past moderate action and of participative efficacy ("Can I make a difference to the group's goal?") would seem to capture this sense of helplessness well when low ("I can't personally do anything to change things"). This sense of helplessness and frustration may then motivate support for radical behavior (again, especially when people feel that they have tried moderate action without sufficient success). Indeed, recent research relates the concept of anomia—that is, feeling that one is societally disconnected and that one's actions have no political consequences—to intentions to engage in political violence (Adam-Troian et al. 2020). Note that your concern about individual accountability and punishment may be less important when you feel personally impotent (and have nothing to lose). This explains the emergence of sometimes reckless behavior (heightened in front of an outgroup audience; see Scheepers et al. 2006; Spears et al. 2018) according to the NTL model.

Putting these two perspectives together, the SIDE model argument is that strength or support from the group as a whole emboldens radical action, whereas the NTL model shows that a sense of inefficacy or helplessness, here at the level of making a personal contribution to group goals and identity, also warrants an embrace of more radical means. The apparent contradiction between these two patterns of efficacy would be a problem if political and participative efficacy were the same or highly correlated. Theoretically these two forms of efficacy could be related but are in principle independent, which is important because this could help to explain the contrast between NTL and SIDE predictions. Indeed, there are logical grounds to suppose that in some

cases they could even be inversely related: the chances that I personally can make a difference to the group's standing (high participative efficacy) may be higher in a small, disempowered group (low political efficacy) and show diminishing returns in large powerful groups (with temptation to free ride). Because the NTL mindset is associated with a lack of hope we would not expect it to be associated with high efficacy of any form (global, political, participative). That being said, the radical forms of action motivated by the NTL mindset (*in extremis*, violent or terrorist-type actions) may capitalize on some level of opportunistic political efficacy in particular contexts (e.g., surprise guerrilla attacks, suicide bombings; see also Saab et al. 2016).

However, the moderate correlation between political and participative efficacy ($r = .45$) suggests that these two processes can, as would seem here, occur in parallel. Integrating these insights, it may be that the set of conditions most likely to trigger political violence is the combination of personal disempowerment with the group efficacy that fills this gap and affords the opportunity to act as a group when this would be ineffective alone. Indeed, much work on *radicalization* (e.g., Doosje et al. 2013; Doosje et al. 2016; Verkuyten 2018) fits this pattern: the efficacy of the group to support radical action (SIDE) empowers the otherwise disempowered and disaffected (NTL), providing a group means to address personal experience.

Of course, this analysis takes place against a background of people experiencing that moderate action may be insufficient or ineffective, as evidenced by trying such action first—hence our focus on experiences with past action (alluding to the dynamic, longitudinal approach of ESIM). In such a dynamic interplay of (different forms of) collective action, there are two main reasons why more radical—even violent—action may seem logical if moderate action fails. First, radical action may help to attract attention and convey the urgent need for change (cf. NTL). Second, radical action by individuals or fringe groups may make the majority's moderate action look much more reasonable in comparison and, hence, ultimately improve the group's bargaining position (cf. SIDE).

Interestingly, the final model did not include reliable impacts from some variables that are commonly considered predictors of collective action intentions. For instance, one might expect group-based emotions such as anger to play an important role. Although these emotions were indeed related to moderate past action and future radical action intentions, they did not explain when the former predicts the latter. Similarly, ingroup identification did not account for sufficient variance to be

included in the final model. This seems at odds with much literature highlighting the role of social identification in collective action (e.g., Thomas et al. 2009; Van Zomeren et al. 2008). Identification was related to past participation in moderate action but, once again, not to when these past moderate actions predict future radical action intentions.

This may be because the relation between group identification and support for radical action is complex. Although we might expect those most committed to their group to be most motivated to protest using illegal means, such behavior is risky and could tarnish the reputation of the group, explaining why it can also sometimes be more of an option for low identifiers and opportunists (see Jiménez-Moya et al. 2015). Indeed, self-categorization as radical was a significant predictor of intentions to violate the law in the current research and arguably sidesteps these counterposing concerns about radical action and group reputation.

Likewise, the anticipation of outgroup hostility did not predict when moderate action is associated with radical collective action in the current sample. This seems inconsistent with the ESIM framework, which postulates that (anticipated) indiscriminate negative treatment by a powerful outgroup can elicit radicalization (Drury and Reicher 2009).

The low diagnostic value of (some of) these variables that have played a core role in previous research on (escalation into) radical collective action may also be due to the nature of the sociopolitical context in which we conducted the current research. The opposition between Trump supporters and opponents may have become too entrenched to find effects of anticipated outgroup hostility, intergroup emotions, and identification. The current findings seem, rather, to point to a conception of radicalization in this context as instrumental, problem-focused coping. It is interesting that this seems to suggest quite a cognitive, cold, rational process, whereas the factors that do not figure in the radicalization process (hostility, identification, emotions) are more affective in nature. This seems to suggest that the *decisive* factor in the intention to use violence as a future means of protesting entails a deliberative *decision* that takes into account the group and individual resources (i.e., forms of efficacy) that inform it. Additional research is needed to explore this process.

Looking Ahead: Implications, Limitations, and Future Directions

In addition to these implications for SIT-related theorizing on collective action, the current findings also have broader implications. We investigated negative, radical behavior intentions among Trump opponents rather than Trump supporters. This choice was motivated by the power distributions at the time, with Trump opponents being the out-of-power group. Nonetheless, this methodological decision also provides some counterweight to studies on moral asymmetry that often portray Republicans/Conservatives (i.e., those on the right) as less tolerant, more prejudiced, more violent, less intellectually sophisticated, and more close-minded than democrats/Liberals (i.e., those on the left). That is, our study adds to a growing body of evidence contending that both sides of the political spectrum may react with intolerance to perceived threats (see Brandt and Crawford 2020; Brandt et al. 2014). Hence, the current findings thereby further strengthen the notion that threatened control induces societal polarization rather than a conservative shift (Stollberg et al. 2017).

The findings that people who have engaged in moderate collective action are more likely to embrace more radical action particularly if they perceive collective-level, political efficacy to be high and/or individual-level, participative efficacy to be low also has practical implications. These findings may be interesting to both sides of collective action. On the one hand, activists and social movements that are looking for ways to encourage more radical forms of action may appeal to those individuals who feel desperate and lost in their failing attempts to (peacefully) achieve social change. Such individuals may be prone to fall prey to radicalization, especially if they feel supported in their radical intentions by a strong and powerful ingroup (or subgroup or cell), albeit one that is disempowered in wider society. Parties that have an interest in extremism may use this knowledge (e.g., grooming, online radicalization). On the other hand, this knowledge is equally useful for those who aim to prevent radicalization. They may use these current insights to help identify individuals who are vulnerable to radicalization and the conditions that facilitate this. Moreover, the role of the ineffectiveness of past moderate actions to spur future radical action intentions also suggests that when advantaged groups abuse their power to maintain the status quo this can backfire; recognition of and appropriate reaction to the message that disadvantaged groups express through moderate action

may prevent the need to express this message through more radical or even violent means.

In the present research, we investigated the effects of (among others) actual participation in past moderate collective action on future radical action intentions. This enabled us to focus on the predictive value of what people have done thus far for what they intend to do next. However, in order to do full justice to the dynamic nature of this phenomenon it is important that future research employs longitudinal methods and examines the transition from moderate to radical actual collective action behavior rather than from past behaviors to future intentions.

We have indicated that the current context of Trump opponents vs. supporters may have become too entrenched already to find effects of some of the more common variables that are associated with collective action. Future research could investigate the current pattern of findings in other conditions in order to address this context-dependence explanation vs. the explanation that variables commonly associated with moderate or radical action may not play a role in the *predictive* value of the "one for the other" form of collective action.

Finally, the current findings on the influence of prior experiences with moderate action on the intentions for future radical action raise the question whether similar processes can play a role in de-escalation (reverse influence) from radical experiences to moderate collective action intentions. One could only investigate this in a sample with a sizable proportion of radicals, of course, which might limit the practical possibilities of examining this process.

Conclusion

To conclude, we found support for a "classic" association between past moderate and future radical action: When moderate action has been tried and found wanting, people expand their repertoire to countenance more radical forms of action, which include unlawful and even criminal protest actions. This also relates to existing findings that people out of power strive to regain control through various means (for an integrative overview of such threats and defense reactions, see Jonas et al. 2014). Perceptions of losing power and regaining control exist at different levels.

Importantly, our current findings show diverging effects of individual-level perceptions of participative efficacy vs. collective-level perceptions of political efficacy. We thus build on the existing distinction between

personal or primary control through one's own individual accomplishments and social or secondary control through affiliation with an agentic ingroup (Fritsche et al. 2013; Stollberg et al. 2015). More specifically, we tease apart political efficacy—i.e., what the ingroup can achieve—from participative efficacy—focusing on *my* role within the ingroup in achieving our goals (cf. Van Zomeren et al. 2013)—and show how these two forms of efficacy constitute two different yet intertwined pathways to radical collective action. If people feel that they have been unable to achieve the change they strive for by conventional means, they may gradually shift into a nothing-to-lose mindset, in which radical action becomes the rational option remaining. At the same time, they may feel emboldened to take radical action when they feel that the group as a whole can pull this off. Thus, the ideal breeding ground for political violence may emerge if an individual is desperate but finds courage in a supportive group.

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Notes

1. This research was approved by the Ethical Committee of Psychology of the University of Groningen (approval code: PSY-1819-S-0247). Materials and data are available via https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/38CQ5. We report all measures, manipulations, and exclusions.
2. We also measured past radical action frequency and future moderate action intentions. The current analyses focus, however, on past moderate and future radical action because we investigate when moderate action may trigger radical collective action.
3. Tests were conducted to verify that multicollinearity was not a concern. Additionally, we tested whether assumptions of a linear association between predictors and dependent variable were warranted. In the models, all predictors were mean-centered. Finally, if we exclude past action from the regression models, the results are essentially the same.
4. We ran several models to examine the joint relation of emotions, identification, and efficacy to both moderate and radical action (i.e., the traditional SIMCA model). The emotion scale statistically predicted both moderate past action and radical action intentions, as did the individual items anger, vengefulness, and disgust. Identification predicted past moderate action but not radical intentions (but of course self-categorization as radical did predict radical intentions). Crucially, in models that include past moderate action as a predictor of future radical intentions, the effects of the overall emotion scale as well as the individual emotion items (anger, vengefulness, dismissiveness, and disgust) are either severely attenuated or nonsignificant. This points to a suppression effect of past action and confirms the interpretation given above: Emotions predict both actions, and taking past action into account therefore suppresses the predictive effect of emotions on future radical intentions.

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Appendix 1: Measurement Scales and Reliability Coefficients

Scale	Instructions and Items	Cronbach's α
Past moderate CA	Please think of the offline and online actions that you have taken in the past and answer the following questions: "I have signed a petition against the supporters of Donald Trump"; "I have demonstrated to support Donald Trump's opponents"; "I have volunteered to support Donald Trump's opponents and their movement" (from 1 = never, to 5 = always)	.88
Effectiveness	Considering the provided list of actions, please answer the following questions: "How effective is this action in achieving its intended goal?" (from 1 = not at all, to 5 = very strongly)	Moderate: .92 Radical: .90
Identification	"I identify with Donald Trump opponents" (from 1 = not at all, to = very strongly)	N/A
Disillusion	Think back to the time since Donald Trump got elected to now. How do you feel in relation to your past offline (face-to-face or on the street) and online (on the Internet or via social media) activities? (from 1 = not at all, to 5 = very much) "Disillusioned"; "Frustrated"; "Discouraged"	.80
Impact	To what extent do you think that the offline/online activities you took in the past have had the desired impact on the American people at large? To what extent do you think that the offline/online (face-to-face or on the street) activities you took in the past have had the desired impact on the media? (from 1 = not at all, to 5 = very strongly)	.91
Political efficacy	Thinking of the opponents of Donald Trump, please answer the following questions: (from 1 = strongly disagree, to 7 = strongly agree) "I think that they can stop his supporters"; "I think that they can successfully defend their rights"; "They are strong and can achieve their goals"	.77
Participative efficacy	Since Donald Trump has been elected, I feel that: (from 1 = strongly disagree, to 5 = strongly agree) "I am motivated to make a difference"; "I now feel that I am an active participant in the movement that contrasts Donald Trump"; "I believe that doing something together is always better than doing nothing"; "I feel that I am part of a collective enterprise"; "I have been energized and empowered to take further action"	.90

Appendix 1 (cont.)

Scale	Instructions and Items	Cronbach's α
Care	Express your agreement with the following statements: "I want to take care of my community and its achievements"; "I would like to protect our rights"; "I want to preserve the way of life my kind of people lead"; "I would like to safeguard our values" (from 1 = not at all, to 5 = very strongly)	.86
Intergroup emotions	Thinking of the supporters of Donald Trump and their actions, to what extent do you feel: "Disgusted"; "Dismissive"; "Angry"; "Vengeful" (from 1 = not at all, to 5 = very strongly)	.80
Anticipated outgroup hostility	Please indicate to what extent do you expect: "The supporters of Donald Trump to use physical force against you and your kind of people in public (face-to-face or in the street)?"; "The supporters of Donald Trump to use force against you and your kind of people online (on the Internet or via social media)?"; "The supporters of Donald Trump to abuse and insult you in public (face-to-face or in the street)?"; "The supporters of Donald Trump to abuse and insult you online (on the Internet or via social media)?"; "The supporters of Donald Trump would use the force of the law to coerce you to change your way of life in public (face-to-face or in the street)?"; "The supporters of Donald Trump would use the force of the law online to coerce you to change your way of life online (on the Internet or via social media)?" (from 1 = extremely unlikely, to 5 = extremely likely)	.91
Self-categorization	"Do you see yourself as an activist?"; "Do you see yourself as a radical?" (from 1 = strongly disagree, to 5 = strongly agree)	.70
Radical CA intentions	"I would engage in civil disobedience to resist the supporters of Donald Trump"; "I would use force to defend the rights of Donald Trump's opponents"; "I would break the law to resist the supporters of Donald Trump" (from 1 = never, to 5 = always)	.89

Appendix 2: Full Regression Analysis including All Covariates in the Full Dataset

	Predictors of Future Radical Action		
	Base	*Main effects*	*Interactions*
Past moderate action	0.42*** (0.03)	0.22*** (0.04)	0.23*** (0.04)
Self-categorization as radical		0.12*** (0.02)	0.13*** (0.02)
Identification w/ opponents		−0.02 (0.02)	−0.03 (0.02)
Negative emotions OG		0.03 (0.04)	0.03 (0.03)
Effectiveness radical actions		0.34*** (0.03)	0.30*** (0.03)
Effectiveness moderate actions		−0.11*** (0.03)	−0.10*** (0.03)
Political efficacy		0.04 (0.03)	0.06* (0.03)
Participative efficacy		−0.04 (0.04)	−0.09* (0.04)
Disillusionment		0.06* (0.03)	0.07* (0.03)
Care		−0.09* (0.04)	−0.12** (0.04)
Expectations OG		−0.02 (0.03)	0.02 (0.03)
Impact		0.02* (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)
Self-cat*past action			0.02 (0.02)
Identification*past action			−0.03 (0.02)
Negative emos OG*past action			−0.01 (0.03)
Effectiveness rdcl*past action			0.08** (0.02)
Effectiveness mdrt*past action			−0.08** (0.02)
Political efficacy*past action			0.09** (0.03)
Participative efficacy*past action			−0.13** (0.04)
Disillusionment*past action			0.05 (0.03)
Care*past action			−0.06 (0.04)
Expectations OG*past action			0.06 (0.03)
Impact*past action			0.0001 (0.01)
Constant	1.75*** (0.03)	1.75*** (0.03)	1.76*** (0.03)
Observations	460	460	460
R^2	0.27	0.55	0.58
Adjusted R^2	0.26	0.53	0.56
Residual Std. Error	0.75 (df = 458)	0.59 (df = 447)	0.58 (df = 436)
F Statistic	165.19*** (df = 1; 458)	45.00*** (df = 12; 447)	26.65*** (df = 23; 436)

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