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Why Do People Engage In Collective Action?

Revisiting The Role Of Perceived Effectiveness

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Abstract

Research has shown only limited support for the notion that perceived effectiveness of collective action is a predictor of people's intentions to engage in collective action. One reason for this may be that effectiveness has been defined rather narrowly in terms of whether the action will influence key decision makers. In addition to influencing decision makers, we argue that the effectiveness of collective action might be judged by other criteria, such as whether it is effective in influencing third parties, building an oppositional movement, and expressing values. Two hundred and thirty one attendees at a rally filled out a questionnaire examining the perceived effectiveness of the rally across the four hypothesized dimensions and their intentions to engage in future collective action. For those participants who were not members of an organization, future intentions were linked to the perceived effectiveness of the rally in expressing values and influencing the general public. For those who were members of an organization, future intentions were linked only to the perceived effectiveness of the rally in building an oppositional movement. Perceptions of how effective the rally was in influencing decision makers were not related to intentions for either members or non-members. Implications for models of collective action are discussed.

Why Do People Engage In Collective Action?

Revisiting The Role Of Perceived Effectiveness

It is well documented that people's concerns about social and economic issues do not necessarily translate into collective action (Klandermans, 2002; Olson, 1968). For example, a 1983 Gallup poll (cited in Fox & Schofield, 1989) revealed that approximately 40% of people in the US believed it was likely that there would be nuclear war by 1998, and 70% believed that they would not survive a nuclear war. Despite this, surveys in the 1980s showed that only a very small minority of people engaged in collective action to try to prevent the proliferation of nuclear missiles (Hamilton, Knox, Keilin, & Chavez, 1987). This gulf between perceived threat and collective action is apparent also in laboratory studies in which participants are discriminated against (e.g., Lalonde & Cameron, 1994; Lalonde & Silverman, 1994; Wright & Taylor, 1998; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). An unexpected but common finding of these studies is that collective action is frequently nominated as a less attractive strategy than individual action or even acceptance. This is despite the fact that collective action is traditionally considered to be a prerequisite for social change (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Over the last 40 years, considerable attention has been paid to this apparent paradox: Why are concerned individuals so reluctant to engage in collective action? One intuitive position is that people avoid collective action because they see it to be ineffective. In the case of nuclear proliferation, for example, it could be that people feel as though they are powerless to stop the course of events, and so they learn to stop trying. This is not an irrational belief. In Australia in 2000, an estimated 1 million people (5% of the population) participated in marches requesting that the government apologize to indigenous Aborigines for aggressive assimilationist policies implemented between the 1930s and 1960s. At the time of writing, the Australian government has not apologized. In 2003, millions of people in the US, England, and Australia protested against the

declaration of war in Iraq, but these countries committed troops to the war regardless. When people make personal sacrifices to engage in collective action (in terms of time, money, and so forth) and then see an apparent indifference to this action on behalf of those in power, it is reasonable to expect that concerned individuals might eventually sink into a state of passivity and alienation (see Bynner & Ashford, 1994, for a broader discussion of political disaffection).

According to this argument, people should be more inclined to engage in collective action the more effective they feel this action would be in bringing about change (Abramson & Aldrich, 1982; Verba & Nie, 1972). Consistent with this notion, research has shown moderate but significant links between perceived effectiveness and intentions to engage in collective action. For example, an analysis of members of environmental organizations in the Netherlands revealed a positive relationship between perceptions of effectiveness and intentions to engage in collective action (Brunsting & Postmes, 2002). Similarly, moderate to high pairwise correlations have been found between measures of personal efficacy (i.e., judgements that one's personal actions can bring about desired change) and intentions to engage in collective action with regard to nuclear war (Tyler & McGraw, 1983; Wolf, Gregory, & Stephan, 1986). Smaller but significant relationships between efficacy and intentions have also emerged in research on willingness to attend union meetings (Flood, 1993) and willingness to engage in political action among African Americans (Berman & Wittig, 2004). Fox and Schofield (1989) found that those who scored highly on a measure of "nuclear efficacy" (e.g., "Nuclear war can be prevented through active citizen efforts to convince world powers to disarm") were more likely to sign a petition supporting bilateral disarmament than were those who scored low on this scale, although nuclear efficacy did not relate significantly to intentions to engage in collective action. Finally, Locatelli and Holt (1986) found that antinuclear activists who rated themselves as low on a global measure of "political powerlessness" (i.e., high on perceived efficacy) reported significantly stronger levels of antinuclear activism.

Despite these reasonably consistent results, other studies have shown that effectiveness perceptions tell only part of the story of why people engage in collective action. Klandermans and Oegema (1987), for example, interviewed 114 Dutch participants shortly before a major rally protesting against NATO's decision to deploy cruise missiles in Europe. Revealingly, the authors found that "None of the respondents was very optimistic about the effectiveness of the demonstration; those who intended to demonstrate were no exception. *None of them believed that the deployment of the cruise missiles could be stopped*" (p. 527, italics added). This disconnection between perceptions of effectiveness and intentions to engage in collective action was detected also by Schofield and Pavelchak (1989) who examined people's attitudes toward nuclear war before and after watching a movie depicting nuclear holocaust. After watching the movie, participants reported a decreased sense that they had the ability to prevent nuclear war, and at the same time an *increased* intention to engage in anti-nuclear activism.

More recent work on the role of identity in predicting intentions to engage in collective action has contributed to a de-emphasis on effectiveness considerations. In line with social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Simon and colleagues (1998) argued that a major contributor to whether people engage in collective action is the extent to which they internalize their identity as an activist. Simon and colleagues compared the predictive value of identity measures with cost-benefit analyses measured at the collective, social, and individual levels. The construct most relevant to the current analysis is the collective level, which was operationalized by identifying goals of the movement and measuring the extent to which participants (a) valued these goals and (b) expected that a sufficient number of people could be mobilized to achieve these goals. In line with Klanderman's (1984) expectancy-value approach, the "collective motive" was calculated as a multiplicative function of these two considerations. The authors found that identification as an activist significantly predicted intentions to engage in collective action among

members of the older people's movement in Germany (Study 1) and members of the gay movement in the US (Study 2). In contrast, the collective motive was a weaker predictor of intentions and was not significantly associated with past activist behaviours. The authors proposed that there are at least two independent pathways to willingness to engage in collective action; a pathway that involves the weighing up of costs and benefits associated with activism, and a second pathway derived from identity issues. According to the model, identification as an activist is associated directly with activism intentions independently of "rational" cost-benefit analyses considerations. Rather, high identifiers act out the behaviours associated with their activist identity without explicitly considering the costs and benefits of their actions (see also Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995a).

Subsequent research on the dual pathway model found robust support for the predictive value of activist identification, and weaker support for the role of effectiveness. Using a similar measure of the collective motive as Simon and colleagues (1998), Sturmer and Simon (2004) found that perceptions of collective effectiveness among members of the German gay movement did not predict participation in collective protest as measured 12 months later. Using a slightly different measure of the expectancy component of the collective motive (the extent to which the goals of the group could be achieved by participating in group activities), Sturmer, Simon, Loewy, and Jorger (2003) again found no relationship between expectancies and willingness to engage in future activities of the fat acceptance movement. In each case, identification with the social movement was a strong predictor, reinforcing the notion that collective action can be a direct expression of an identity rather than an outcome of cost-benefit analyses, including perceptions of effectiveness. This research broadly corresponds to earlier research by Kelly and Breinlinger (1995b), who showed that perceived group effectiveness positively predicted the extent to which women engaged in women's group activities in the ensuing 12 months. However, when identification as an activist was included as a predictor, effectiveness was not uniquely predictive of behaviors or

intentions to engage in collective action. The fact that the predictive power of effectiveness dropped out when activist identification was included suggests that the relationship between perceptions of effectiveness and collective action is an artefact of high inter-correlations between effectiveness and activist identity, and that it is the latter construct that has the true explanatory power. This suggests that one needs to look sceptically at previously established links between effectiveness and intentions in which identity measures were not included as predictors (e.g., Flood, 1993; Tyler & McGraw, 1983; Wolf et al., 1986).

*Reconceptualizing "Effectiveness"*

In summary, despite the intuitive appeal of the notion that perceptions of effectiveness would be crucial in determining whether or not people engage in collective action, the evidence for such a relationship is mixed, and there is recent research to suggest that perceptions of collective effectiveness might play no role in predicting intentions over and above ratings of activist identification (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995b; Sturmer et al., 2003; Sturmer & Simon, 2004). In this paper, we argue that the lack of support for the role of effectiveness might be partly a function of the fact that this construct has been defined in a relatively narrow manner, and that a more nuanced conceptualization of effectiveness might uncover relationships that have been obscured previously.

In the past literature on collective action, effectiveness has been operationalized in a number of different ways. Some researchers have measured it as a generalized sense that individuals can influence the political process (e.g., Locatelli & Holt, 1986), whereas others have measured it as a belief that the specific, material goals of the group can be achieved. Among those who operationalized it in terms of the specific goals of the group, effectiveness has been interpreted variously as the sense that the individual can contribute successfully to achieving the goals (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995b; Schofield & Pavelchak, 1989; Sturmer et al., 2003; Wolf et al., 1986), the sense that enough people can be mobilized to achieve the goals (Berman & Wittig, 2004; Simon et

al., 1998; Sturmer & Simon, 2004), or more directly as the sense that the group is capable of bringing about the desired change (Flood, 1993; Fox & Schofield, 1989; Tyler & McGraw, 1983). What unites all these conceptualizations is that they treat effectiveness strictly in terms of whether the collective action would influence decision makers and win the desired outcomes for the group. We argue, however, that people could use at least three other criteria for determining whether a particular piece of collective action might be perceived as effective. Specifically, we argue that in addition to conceptualizing effectiveness in terms of influencing key decision makers, collective actions may also vary in the extent to which they are seen to be effective in satisfying intragroup, broader societal, and individual motivations.[1] These criteria for effectiveness are discussed in more depth below.

In their analysis of politicized collective identity, Simon and Klandermans (2001) made the important point that much political activity involves an interaction between the ingroup (the protestors, or members of a social movement), the outgroup or opponent (e.g., government), and relevant third parties (e.g., the general public). In many cases, group members might seek to go beyond the power struggle between their group and the outgroup and to *convince third parties* that they are part of the broader societal power struggle (see Reicher & Hopkins, 1996, for a related argument). In this way, members of each group try to win support and alignments from the broader population. This, of course, has implications for what are considered to be effective strategies for collective action. If people stage a rally and march through the streets, it is likely that they do so with the hope that decision makers and policy makers will be either intimidated or persuaded by what the march represents. It is also possible, however, that the intended audience extends to third parties; those who are not engaged currently in collective action but are not aligned to the outgroup either, and who can be recruited to the cause. In this case, effectiveness might not be measured by how many concessions they obtain from the relevant outgroup (e.g., policy makers), but by the extent to which the rally shifts the sympathies and allegiances of neutral observers.

Alternatively, effectiveness may be judged not on the basis of perceived *influence* per se, but rather in terms of whether it is successful in strengthening solidarity and strategic connections within the group. Activists may be responding to the perception that increased cohesiveness and coordination is an ingredient in more effective social mobilization (Kinder, 1998). In other words, the intended audience might not be outsiders at all but rather the protestors themselves. This might particularly be the case when the movement is not defined by an organization but rather by a set of ideologies or principles. Protests against globalization or war, for example, can encompass a dizzyingly large number of individual organizations and entities who might normally have little to do with each other, but are bound together by a set of ideological perspectives and goals. A collective act such as a rally might be the only time that these groups are brought together. Fuelled by physical proximity and a shared voice, rallies can help knit splintered individuals and groups into a more coherent force, from which basis future collective action might be more influential. Rather than focusing on short-term influence, the aims of a piece of collective action might be to "rally the troops" in the hope of exerting change in the long-term. In these situations, effectiveness can be interpreted in terms of how successful the collective action is in *building an oppositional movement* (it should be noted that there are broad parallels between this process-oriented view of effectiveness and the tenets of resource mobilization theory; see Klandermans, 1984, for a review).

Finally, we argue that in some cases acts of collective action are not driven entirely by perceptions of influence or by the need to build an oppositional movement, but also by a simple need for *expression of values*. Expressing one's own values publicly might partially be motivated by the need to influence others, but public expression might also have a positive impact on the individual independent of instrumental considerations. Attitude theorists have long argued that attitudes have an expressive function in that they act as a marker of group membership and/or personal values (e.g., Anderson & Kristiansen, 1990; Herek, 1987; Katz, 1960). Furthermore, Tice (1992) argued

that public acts of defiance help nourish and define one's sense of self, a motive that is independent of whether the act of defiance succeeds in initiating change. Consistent with this, Hornsey, Majkut, Terry, and McKimmie (2003) found that people with a strong moral basis for their attitude on a social issue were keener to engage in public (but not private) collective action when they were led to believe they held a minority position than when they were led to believe that they held a majority position. This public act of counter-conformity was not driven by a desire to influence others or to recruit people to their position, suggesting that value expression was a valuable motive per se. Indeed, the mere expression of voice may be cathartic for people who feel they are subjected to unfair policies or procedures (Folger, 1977; Lind & Tyler, 1988; Lind, Kanfer, & Earley, 1990).

Collective actions are likely to vary considerably in the extent to which they are felt to be effective forums for expressing individual values. For example, people might feel that a rally misrepresents their values, whether because of the content of speeches, the content of placards, or the choice of protest strategy in which the group engages (e.g., peaceful protest as opposed to formal blockading; Polletta & Jasper, 2001). Indeed, if the attitudes and values expressed by a collective act misrepresent the attitudes and values of individual protestors, the level of frustration and threat could be considerable (Hornsey, Blackwood, & O'Brien, in press). It seems reasonable, then, that the likelihood of people engaging in collective action might vary as a function of the perceived effectiveness of the collective act in expressing their individual values.

In summary, we argue that there are at least four goals of collective action and, by extension, four criteria by which the effectiveness of collective action can be judged. These are (1) the extent to which the relevant outgroup (e.g., policy makers) would be influenced by the collective action (intergroup concerns), (2) the extent to which relevant third parties would be influenced by the collective action (broader societal concerns), (3) the extent to which the collective action would be

successful in building an oppositional movement (intragroup concerns), and (4) the extent to which the collective action would be successful in expressing one's values (individual concerns). We examined the links between each of these perceptions of effectiveness and future intentions to engage in collective action, using an anti-globalization rally as the context.

*The Current Study*

In 2001, Brisbane, Australia was to be the venue for a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), a reunion of heads of state of members of the Commonwealth (the former British Empire) with the goal of discussing cultural, economic, and political themes pertinent to member states. In the months leading up to the meeting, there was a well-publicized effort to organize blockades, sit-ins, and marches designed to disrupt CHOGM. Although there were a disparate number of groups planning to protest, and the content of people's concerns differed widely, the broad aims of the planned collective action was to protest against economic rationalism and globalization. This event was part of a series of high-profile anti-globalization protests that had taken place around the world since the late 1990s. With just weeks to go until the meeting was due to start, security fears regarding the planned protests increased to such a degree that CHOGM was cancelled. Regardless, on the date that the meeting was due to begin, a demonstration was organized around themes of global justice. A rally was held in the morning, consisting of an hour and a half of speeches and then an hour-long march through the city center. The march ended in a local park at which speeches, protest songs, and so forth continued for the afternoon. Approximately 2000 people attended the rally ("Protest March", 2001), and these people formed the population of interest for the current study.

A sample of protestors were given questionnaires in which we asked them the extent to which they identified as an activist, and the extent to which they felt the rally had been effective in achieving each of the goals described above. We then asked participants the extent to which they intended to

attend future, related protests over the next six months. On the basis of Simon and colleagues' work on the dual pathway model (Simon et al., 1998; Sturmer et al., 2003; Sturmer & Simon, 2004), we expected that participants would express stronger intentions to engage in future collective action the more they identified as an activist. We also predicted that there would be a positive relationship between the four ratings of effectiveness and intentions, independent of activist identification. Given a paucity of previous research on the topic, we were not in a position to make strong predictions about whether some conceptualizations of effectiveness would be more predictive of intentions than others.

We did, however, expect that the various measures of effectiveness might be more predictive for some protestors than for others. Specifically, we distinguish between protestors who attended the rally as members of an organized activist group and those who attended as unaligned individuals. One possible difference between these sub-samples of the population is that group members have presumably internalized a need for organized protest and consolidated social movements to a greater extent than have non-members. With their greater focus on group agency, it seems reasonable to expect that ratings of the effectiveness of the rally in terms of intergroup considerations (influencing opposition groups) and intragroup considerations (building an oppositional movement) might be more strongly linked to intentions for members than for non-members. In contrast, it could be that non-members will be more swayed by individual considerations (e.g., expressing values) than would members.

*Method*

*Recruitment of Participants*

Six recruiters identified by university name badges and clipboards approached protesters in the morning and afternoon during the speeches. Participants were given the questionnaire as they sat listening to the speeches. At the same time, participants were provided with an information sheet

describing the nature of the study and the research team, and providing contact information through which participants could be informed of future results. Two hundred and thirty-one protesters participated in the survey. Given the rally was estimated to be 2000 people strong, this represents approximately 12% of all the people who attended across the three events. Respondents had a median age of 26 years, ranging from 11 to 70 years. Nine individuals did not note their sex; of the remaining, 42% were men ($n$ = 94) and 58% women ($n$ = 128).

*Materials*

The questionnaire consisted of a single page labeled "School of Psychology, University of Queensland". Participants first indicated their sex and age, and then indicated whether or not they were attending the rally as a member of an organization/collective. Ninety participants (39% of the sample) answered yes and 141 (61%) answered no. Those who answered yes were asked to indicate of which organization or collective they were members. Over 40 organizations were nominated, and no single organization was mentioned by more than 11 participants. The ratio of males to females in each sub-sample was roughly equivalent (60% members female, 56% non-members female). Members ($M$ = 28.44) and non-members ($M$ = 29.88) were also similar in age, $t(222) = 0.90, p = .37$.

*Activist identification* was measured using four items: "I identify as an activist," "I feel similar to activists," "I am a typical activist", and "Being an activist is an important part of who I am" (-3 = strongly disagree, 3 = strongly agree; $\alpha$ = .89). To measure *effectiveness*, we asked participants to indicate the extent to which they thought the protests would be effective in "influencing government leaders and policy makers", "influencing public opinion", "building an oppositional movement", and "expressing certain values" that they hold. Participants responded on scales ranging from –3 ("counter productive") to 0 ("no impact") to +3 ("very effective"). These items were each designed to tap into the four dimensions of effectiveness defined earlier: influencing

outgroups, influencing third parties, building an oppositional movement, and expressing values, respectively. The four effectiveness measures inter-correlated moderately ($r$ ranging from .20 - .46; see Table 1 for a summary of inter-correlations among all measures). Finally, participants completed a three-item measure of *future protest intentions*. Participants indicated the likelihood that they would "attend next year's CHOGM protests", "attend protests on this theme in the next 6 months", and "attend protests in general in the next 6 months" (1 = very unlikely, 7 = very likely; $\alpha$ = .83).

*Results*

*Examination of Means*

The sample scored significantly above the mid-point of the scale in terms of activist identification, $M = 0.70$, $SD = 1.50$, $t(217) = 6.94$, $p < .001$, and future intentions, $M = 5.66$, $SD = 1.42$, $t(216) = 17.24$, $p < .001$. Participants were also relatively optimistic about the effectiveness of the rally in terms of influencing government leaders and policy makers ($M = 0.66$, $SD = 1.21$), influencing public opinion ($M = 1.36$, $SD = 0.99$), building an oppositional movement ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 1.04$), and expressing values ($M = 2.07$, $SD = 0.93$). In all cases, the ratings of effectiveness lay significantly above the mid-point of the scale ($t$s ranging from 8.28 to 33.56, $p$s < .001).

Before examining the relation between ratings of effectiveness and intentions, we first tested whether members and non-members differed on the key measures. Members and non-members did not differ in the extent to which they believed the rally would be effective in influencing government leaders and policy makers, $t(227) = -0.97$, $p = .34$, or the extent to which they believed it was effective in expressing values, $t(226) = -1.53$, $p = .13$. Significant differences did emerge, though, on ratings of activist identification, $t(216) = -4.78$, $p < .001$, perceived effectiveness in influencing public opinion, $t(227) = -3.96$, $p < .001$, perceived effectiveness in building an oppositional movement, $t(226) = -2.34$, $p = .020$, and future intentions, $t(215) = -5.02$, $p < .001$.

Members had stronger activist identities ($M = 1.28$), believed the rally would be more effective in influencing public opinion ($M = 1.67$), believed the rally would be more effective in building an oppositional movement ($M = 1.94$), and had stronger intentions to engage in collective action in the future ($M = 6.23$) than did non-members ($M = 0.33$, $1.16$, $1.62$, and $5.29$ respectively).

*Predicting Intentions*

Hierarchical multiple regression was performed using participants' future intentions to engage in collective action as the criterion (see Table 2). In the first step, group membership (dummy coded such that 0 = non-members, 1 = members), activist identification, and the four measures of effectiveness were entered as predictors. These predictors accounted for a significant amount of variance, but only three variables contributed uniquely to the prediction of future intentions: group membership, activist identification, and perceived effectiveness in building an oppositional movement. As described above, the effect of group membership reflects the fact that members had stronger intentions to engage in collective action in the future than did non-members. Participants also had stronger intentions to engage in collective action the stronger their activist identity and the more they felt the rally was effective in building an oppositional movement.

In the second step of the analysis, five product terms were entered representing the interaction between group membership and each of the predictors used in the first step (in line with recommendations by Aiken & West, 1991, continuous variables were centered). The inclusion of the interaction terms resulted in a significant increase in variance explained. Three of the interaction terms contributed uniquely to the model, representing the interaction between group membership and, respectively, effectiveness in influencing public opinion, effectiveness in building an oppositional movement, and effectiveness in expressing values.

We analyzed simple slopes by performing regressions separately at each level of group membership (see Table 3 for a summary of results). Non-members expressed stronger intentions to engage in collective action the more they thought the rally was effective in influencing public opinion and the more they thought it was effective in expressing their values. Beliefs about how effective the rally was in influencing government and building an oppositional movement were not unique predictors of intentions for non-members. For members, the only effectiveness measure to influence their future intentions was the perceived effectiveness of the rally in building an oppositional movement. The more effective the rally was in building an oppositional movement, the more they intended to engage in future collective action in the future. Both members and non-members expressed stronger future intentions the stronger their identification as activists.

*Discussion*

Both qualitative (e.g., Klandermans & Oegema, 1987) and quantitative research (e.g., Fox & Schofield, 1989) suggest that perceptions of effectiveness might play only a limited role in explaining why people are or are not willing to engage in collective action. Indeed, recent evidence suggests that perceptions of effectiveness have no predictive power with regard to intentions to engage in collective action over and above people's identification as an activist (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995b; Sturmer et al., 2003; Sturmer, & Simon, 2004). One possible reason for the limited support for the role of effectiveness is that effectiveness has been narrowly defined in terms of perceptions of influence over the relevant outgroups (e.g., government leaders, policy makers). We argue that a broader conceptualization of what an effective piece of collective action represents to people might help uncover relationships between collective action and willingness to engage in collective action. Specifically, we argue that there are at least four ways in which effectiveness can be conceptualized: in terms of influencing outgroups, influencing third parties, building an oppositional movement, and expressing values.

Data gathered among attendees at a rally lend support to the utility of a broad conceptualization of effectiveness. It is interesting to note that, if effectiveness had been measured in the spirit of the bulk of previous research – that is, in terms of whether the rally would be successful in influencing outgroups – no relationship would have emerged between effectiveness and intentions. On one hand, this result might seem surprising. The rally was organized in response to a planned meeting of heads of government, with the implicit (and at times explicit) agenda of pressuring heads of government to address social justice issues. One might think, then, that an important criterion for success might be the extent to which government leaders and policy makers would be influenced by the message and power that the collective action represented. However, the results suggest that this was not an important consideration when people were reporting whether they intended to engage in future collective action.

On the other hand, this result makes a degree of intuitive sense. When people rally against globalization, only the most optimistic of protestors would believe that their actions could reverse global macroeconomic policy, and to judge the success of a rally entirely on this basis would more often than not lead to disappointment. Similarly, when people protested against the impending war in Iraq, many would have done so with the knowledge that their actions would have very limited impact on whether or not the war commenced. Yet many people protested all the same, which suggests that the rallies were fulfilling functions other than influencing policy makers.

The current data suggest three alternative dimensions on which effectiveness might be judged, and provide evidence that each of these contributes in some way to influencing protestors' future intentions. For example, our sample expressed stronger intentions to participate in collective action the more they felt the current rally was effective in building an oppositional movement. Rather than focusing on whether the rally was effective in influencing outgroups, respondents seem to be focusing on the effectiveness of the rally in galvanizing a critical mass of opposition, a platform

from which future influence attempts can be launched. In other words, rather than focusing on the short-term effects of the rally on external parties, people are motivated by the perceived success of the rally in consolidating the movement, with a view to implementing change in the medium to long term. This suggests that protestors themselves should be seen as potential targets of the rally, alongside outgroups and third parties, a phenomenon that has been obscured in the past by overly narrow or abstract definitions of effectiveness.

It should be noted, though, that the focus on building an oppositional movement was only predictive of intentions for a subset of our sample. For people who were members of an organization, effectiveness in terms of building an oppositional movement was a powerful predictor of intentions. Indeed, this construct was the *only* index of effectiveness that seemed to matter to members when it came to predicting future intentions. The effectiveness of the rally in influencing the general public or expressing values played no role at all when other factors were taken into account.

For non-members, a quite different pattern emerged in terms of what dimensions of effectiveness encourage people to engage in collective action in the future. In terms of predicting intentions, non-members were not influenced by whether the rally was effective in influencing government or building an oppositional movement. They were, however, more likely to engage in future collective action the more they felt the rally was effective in influencing the general public. As pointed out by Simon and Klandermans (2001), a mark of a politicized intergroup struggle is that protagonists try to enlist the sympathies of, and the support of, third parties. On the surface, this might be why rallies are often preceded by marches. Although the end point of a march might involve rallying around a symbolic hub of power (e.g., a government building), the march is designed to attract attention to the cause among neutral bystanders. Again, operationalizations of

effectiveness that focus on influencing outgroups would not necessarily detect the importance of this process in predicting intentions.

Another factor that underpinned non-members' intentions was the extent to which the rally was effective in expressing their values. As has been pointed out by some attitude theorists (e.g., Anderson & Kristiansen, 1990; Herek, 1987; Katz, 1960), attitudes have an expressive function in that they act as a marker of group membership and/or personal values. When attitudes are expressed publicly, they might be especially nourishing in terms of defining who you are and what you stand for (Hornsey et al., 2003; Tice, 1992). Furthermore, when values are expressed en masse, it provides a voice for many people who otherwise might feel voiceless, and this might in itself be rewarding regardless of whether or not the voice influences others. To a degree, then, protestors are positioning themselves not just as *opponents* of the government, but also as *opposites*, providing a symbolic counterpoint to the status quo. Consistent with this notion, non-members reported stronger intentions to engage in future collective action the more effective the rally was seen to be in expressing their values, and this effect emerged over and above perceptions of influence.

One possible reason why our effects were moderated by group membership is that members and non-members have different psychological orientations when it comes to collective action. It could be that members are more focused on group agency than are non-members, and so judge effectiveness more in intragroup terms. Having already internalized the value of, and desire for, organized resistance, it is perhaps not surprising that members should view building an oppositional movement as a particularly powerful criterion for success. In contrast, it could be that non-members have less of a group orientation, leading them to focus more on broader societal concerns (e.g., influencing third parties) and individual concerns (e.g., value expression). It is important, however, not to automatically assume that this is explaining the observed pattern of

results. An alternative explanation is that members of organized groups expect to engage in collective action over multiple future events and accordingly may be more focused on the long term effectiveness of the rally in building an oppositional movement. In contrast, unaligned individuals drawn to the rally (non-members) might be less mindful of the long term nature of intergroup struggle and so might be drawn to more immediate considerations such as influencing third parties or expressing values as key criteria for effectiveness. Further research and theory building is required to uncover the psychological underpinnings of why members and non-members appear to focus on different dimensions of effectiveness when determining future intentions.

It should be noted that, consistent with previous work (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995b; Simon et al., 1998; Sturmer et al., 2003; Sturmer, & Simon, 2004), identification as an activist was by far the most powerful predictor of intentions. In line with the social identity perspective, this suggests that self-categorization processes and identity issues have a profound effect on people's behavioral expectations of themselves. But, unlike many previous studies (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995b; Sturmer et al., 2003; Sturmer, & Simon, 2004), the effects of activist identification did not erase other more instrumental concerns regarding effectiveness. There is no support, then, for the notion that activists respond automatically to a behavioural script without reference to "rational" considerations; rather, it seems that identity considerations and effectiveness considerations contribute independently and uniquely to people's willingness to engage in collective action. Although this project was not designed as an explicit test of Simon and colleagues' dual pathway model of collective action (Simon et al., 1998), it is clear that the results provide support for this model.

On an applied level, the current data have implications for those attempting to recruit participants in collective action. Specifically, it suggests that organizers of collective action might benefit from

tailoring their campaigns to suit their target audience. When recruiting from members of organized groups, organizers might be best advised to attend to the utility of the action in building an oppositional movement ("From little things big things grow"). When attempting to recruit from those who are not members of organized groups, organizers might attend to different outcomes such as influencing the general public ("send a message to all Australians") or expressing values ("have your say"). According to our data, attempts to recruit participants by focusing exclusively on influencing opposition groups ("Stop war"; "Ban nuclear weapons") might be less strategically effective in terms of attracting participants to collective action.

As in any study conducted in the field, however, a degree of common sense and caution should be exercised when attempting to generalize results from this study into other contexts. One notable feature of the rally in this study is that its themes – social justice and anti-globalization – were relatively diffuse and embraced a range of disparate issues. In these circumstances, it is possible that people would have been particularly attentive to whether the rally was effective in coalescing individual protestors into a coherent oppositional movement. If the collective action was engaged in by a group that already had well defined boundaries and was guided by a tight set of unifying principles, or was being conducted by a single organization, then the perceived utility of the action in terms of rallying internal support and building an oppositional movement might be less predictive of future intentions. Furthermore, the themes of the rally under investigation were so ambitious that it might not make much sense to think of effectiveness in terms of immediate influence over policy makers. In this case, we might see more of a focus on long-term goals (e.g., building an oppositional movement) or symbolic processes (e.g., expressing values) than if the goal of collective action was in immediate reach. If the collective action focused on a specific, concrete, and achievable aim (e.g., protesting against the building of a highway, or campaigning for a pay rise) then non-material benefits such as expression of values might become less

important – and less predictive of intentions – than more immediate considerations such as whether the collective action would be effective in influencing the relevant outgroup.

This study carries with it some methodological limitations necessitated by the field context in which the research was conducted. For example, although protestors in the rally were approached at random, we have no way of knowing whether the respondents were representative of the broader population of protestors. Another limitation is that the measures of effectiveness were obtained using single items. Although this is not ideal, it should be noted that this limitation should have the effect of providing weaker support for the role of effectiveness relative to the multi-item measure of activist identification than one might expect if more sophisticated measurements were used. We acknowledge, however, that the relationship between indices of effectiveness and protest intentions reported here might fluctuate depending on how the relevant perceptions are operationalized. It can be argued that this is particularly the case with the "expressing values" item. Although this item was designed to refer to the expression of personal values – and thus was assumed to be acting in the service of an individual, intrapsychic need for self-expression - it is possible that the item could have been interpreted by some as referring to collective values. In future, it would be beneficial to see if the current findings can be replicated with less ambiguous multi-item scales. Finally, we acknowledge that although one's intention to engage in collective action represents a predictor of behavior, it is not a proxy for behavior. Future research is required to demonstrate that the role of effectiveness in predicting intentions translates into concrete action.

We also acknowledge that the dimensions of effectiveness described above are not exhaustive of the needs or goals that might be fulfilled by political protest and/or social movement participation. There may be other motivations that have yet to be discussed, including gaining social support and developing a sense of meaning. Theorizing about the definition of effectiveness in collective

action is still in its infancy, and so we view this paper as a stimulus for further questioning and theorizing rather than a definitive summary.

Despite these limitations, the current data suggest that researchers can benefit from revisiting the role of effectiveness in explaining why people do or do not engage in collective action. With the literature increasingly emphasising the role of identity processes in collective action, the current data uncover rational bases for collective action that until now have been overlooked. By broadening our conceptualization of what criteria people use to judge effectiveness, it is hoped that fresh insights can be gained into what drives people to engage in collective action, even when the hopes of influencing key decision makers appear forlorn.

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Footnotes

1. Our argument here is analogous to work on the multiple functions of group membership (e.g.,

   Deaux, Reid, Mizrahi, & Cotting, 1999), which argues that identification with groups not

   only serves a self-esteem function via intergroup comparisons, but also fulfils a range of

   other motivations, some of which are intragroup in nature.

Table 1

*Intercorrelations Among Variables*

| | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Activist Identification | .11 | .34*** | .53*** | .29*** | .63*** |
| 2. Influencing Government | | .42*** | .32*** | .20** | .10 |
| 3. Influencing Public | | | .46*** | .44*** | .36*** |
| 4. Building Opposition | | | | .41*** | .48*** |
| 5. Expressing Values | | | | | .32*** |
| 6. Future Intentions | | | | | |

*Note.* ** *p* < .01; *** *p* < .001.

Table 2

*Hierarchical Regression of Group, Activist Identification, and Effectiveness on Future Intentions*

| | Variable | β | SE | $R^2$ch | Fch | df |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Step 1 | Group | .12* | .16 | .46 | 29.00*** | 6, 207 |
| | Activist Identification | .47*** | .06 | | | |
| | Influencing Government | -.06 | .07 | | | |
| | Influencing Public | .07 | .09 | | | |
| | Building Opposition | .16* | .09 | | | |
| | Expressing Values | .08 | .09 | | | |
| Step 2 | Group x Activist Identification | -.02 | .12 | .05 | 4.03** | 5, 202 |
| | Group x Influencing Government | .02 | .14 | | | |
| | Group x Influencing Public | -.22** | .19 | | | |
| | Group x Building Opposition | .19* | .19 | | | |
| | Group x Expressing Values | -.18* | .20 | | | |

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

Table 3

*Relationship Among Activist Identification, Effectiveness, and Future Intentions For Members and Non-Members*

|  | Group membership | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
|  | Members | | Non-Members | |
|  | β | SE | β | SE |
| Activist Identification | .52*** | .08 | .44*** | .08 |
| Influencing Government | -.12 | .09 | -.12 | .10 |
| Influencing Public | -.13 | .12 | .24* | .14 |
| Building Opposition | .43*** | .12 | .06 | .13 |
| Expressing Values | -.15 | .14 | .17* | .11 |

* *p* < .05, ***p* < .001