

# Can moral convictions motivate the advantaged to challenge social inequality? Extending the social identity model of collective action

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Martijn van Zomeren,<sup>1</sup> Tom Postmes,<sup>1</sup> Russell Spears<sup>1</sup>  
and Karim Bettache<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

This article examines whether and how moral convictions, defined as strong and absolute stances on moralized issues, motivate advantaged group members to challenge social inequality. Specifically, we propose that violations of moral convictions against social inequality motivate collective action against it by increasing identification with the victims of social inequality. Such identification links the current work with the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, in press), which predicts that individuals' motivation to challenge social inequality requires a relevant social identity in which group-based anger and group efficacy beliefs motivate collective action. For the advantaged, moral convictions are therefore powerful motivators of collective action against social inequality. Two studies, conducted in the Netherlands and Hong Kong, replicated empirical support for this line of thought. We discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our findings for collective action among the advantaged.

## Keywords

collective action, moral convictions, social inequality

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The literature on collective action mainly focuses on the protests, demonstrations and petitions of *disadvantaged* groups (Klandermans, 1997; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, in press). However, disadvantaged groups often attract considerable support from members of the *advantaged* group as well—a phenomenon that has only recently become the subject of systematic empirical research (e.g., Iyer & Ryan, 2009; Sweetman, Spears, & Livingstone, 2010; Thomas & McGarty, 2009). Examples of such support may include

protests against poverty in Third World countries, against a military invasion by one's country that is perceived as illegitimate, and against violations

<sup>1</sup>University of Groningen, the Netherlands

## Corresponding author:

Martijn van Zomeren, Department of Social Psychology,  
University of Groningen, Grote Kruisstraat 2/1, 9712 TS,  
Groningen, The Netherlands  
Email: m.van.zomeren@rug.nl

of due process in one's country with regard to suspected terrorists (Van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009). The present research examines this phenomenon, and asks whether insights from work on collective action among the disadvantaged (for reviews, see Klandermans, 1997; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008) can be generalized to collective action among the advantaged.

This is an important question because any action among the advantaged on behalf of the disadvantaged would appear to go against the advantaged group's objective self-interest to maintain the status quo. Indeed, such actions challenge the very social inequality that provides the basis for their beneficial position in society (Jost & Major, 2001; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Tajfel, 1978). This does not imply, however, that the advantaged never act against social inequality (Subasic, Reynolds, & Turner, 2008). In this article we explore a novel psychological mechanism that helps to explain how the advantaged come to challenge social inequality. Specifically, we propose that *moral convictions* against social inequality motivate the advantaged to challenge social inequality. Because moral convictions are experienced as strong and absolute stances that do not tolerate exceptions to the higher-order principle (Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005; Tetlock, 2002; Tetlock, Kristel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000; Turiel, 1983), any violation motivates individuals to actively change that situation (Skitka et al., 2005; Van Zomeren & Lodewijx, 2005, 2009; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, in press).

Importantly, we propose that seemingly individualistic moral convictions can have collective consequences because any violation increases identification with the victims of social inequality (Tetlock et al., 2000; Van Zomeren & Lodewijx, 2005, 2009). Specifically, it is the absolute condemnation of social inequality that propels further actions on their behalf (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, in press). Such identification with the disadvantaged group is the psychological basis for collective action, thus providing a conceptual bridge between seemingly individualistic moral convictions and group-based predictors of collective action identified by the Social Identity

Model of Collective Action (SIMCA; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, in press). According to this model, identification with a relevant group provides the psychological basis for the experience of group-based anger and group efficacy beliefs that motivate collective action. As such, violated moral convictions can powerfully motivate collective action among the advantaged. We tested this novel and integrative line of thought in two empirical studies.

### *Motivations for collective action among the disadvantaged generalize to the advantaged*

Although theory and research on collective action are a multi-disciplinary enterprise (e.g., in sociology, political science, history, and psychology; e.g., Gurr, 1970; Klandermans, 1997; Olson, 1968; Tilly, Tilly, & Tilly, 1975; Turner & Killian, 1972), the past decades of research have converged on the conclusion that the psychology of collective action is crucial to its understanding. In fact, objective economic circumstances and societal events appear to be pretty poor predictors of collective action—such objective conditions are only one of several factors that determine how individuals become motivated to actually engage in such action (Klandermans, 1997; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). This implies that the study of social influences that propel individuals toward collective action is both important and consequential.

In the psychological literature, collective action is typically defined as any action enacted as a representative of the group, aimed at improving the group's conditions (Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990; for discussions, see Van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009; Wright, 2009). In keeping with this definition, very different types of action can be classified as collective action, ranging from participation in protest demonstrations and strikes to seemingly individualistic acts such as signing a petition (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, in press). The definition also accommodates the possibility that advantaged group

members may engage in collective action, as long as these individuals perceive themselves to be a representative of a particular group, and perceive collective action as aimed at improving that group's conditions (Iyer & Ryan, 2009; Van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009). Further in line with the definition, theory and research suggest that identification with a group facilitates individuals' self-categorization as a group member (e.g., Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999).

For these reasons, the key variable in the psychology of collective action among the disadvantaged is the relevant group that individuals identify with (Ellemers, 1993; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; see also Drury & Reicher, 2005, 2009; Klandermans, 1997; Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, & Mielke, 1999). However, the "relevant group" here is not necessarily the in-group. For example, for disadvantaged group members, relevant groups may include the disadvantaged group but also more specific organizations that fight on their behalf (e.g., unions; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, in press). In the present article, we propose that, among the advantaged, identification may even be felt with an (objective) out-group, which enables collective action on their behalf. Indeed, SIMCA (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, in press) suggests a central role for group identification in the psychology of collective action. SIMCA predicts that such identification increases collective action *directly*, but also *indirectly*. It increases collective action directly because higher identifiers with the group are generally more committed than lower identifiers to achieve group goals, and conform more strongly to group norms about shared action to achieve them (Doosje, Spears, & Ellemers, 2002; Ellemers, 1993; Ellemers et al., 1999; Van Zomeren, Spears, & Leach, 2008). Moreover, group identification predicts collective action indirectly because a shared identity validates and thus increases feelings of group-based anger (as the emotional experience of injustice about collective disadvantage; Van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004; Van Zomeren, Spears, & Leach, 2008) and increases a sense of group efficacy (i.e., the belief in the group's

ability to achieve group goals through collective effort; Bandura, 2000; Hornsey et al., 2006; Mummendey et al., 1999; Van Zomeren et al., 2004).

Can SIMCA be generalized to the advantaged? Some theory and research suggest that this might be problematic because members of advantaged groups tend to protect their objective group interests through their subjective motivation to maintain social inequality (Jost & Major, 2001; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). However, theory and research in the social identity tradition suggest that the relationship between in-group identification and out-group discrimination is highly context-dependent, and thus one cannot speak of generic motivations to maintain or challenge the status quo (e.g., Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002; Turner & Reynolds, 2003). Either way, we propose that moral convictions against social inequality have the psychological power to motivate the advantaged to challenge social inequality. The key reason for this is that moral convictions are experienced as strong and absolute stances on moralized issues that tolerate no exceptions to the higher-order principle. As a consequence, any violation of a moral conviction motivates individuals to actively change that situation, which effectively overrides other concerns or motivations. It is for this reason that moral convictions can be extremely influential in motivating advantaged group members to challenge social inequality.

### *Moral convictions motivate the advantaged to challenge social inequality*

Moral convictions are defined as strong attitudes that are experienced as *absolute* stances on moralized issues. Indeed, the aspect of moral absolutism has sometimes been referred to as one of the "hallmarks" of morality (Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993; Skitka et al., 2005; Tetlock et al., 2000; Turiel, 1983). Consistent with this line of thought, any violation of moral convictions leads individuals to experience strong feelings of anger towards

the transgressors, seeking to punish and exclude them in order to defend one's conviction (Tetlock et al., 2000; Van Zomeren & Lodewijx, 2005). Moreover, individuals may feel the need to reaffirm their moral stance by acting on it (Tetlock et al., 2000; Van Zomeren & Lodewijx, 2005). This increased tendency to act is amplified because individuals' moral convictions legitimize and even necessitate action (Skitka et al., 2005; Skitka & Bauman, 2008). However, this line of work has focused exclusively on individual behavior, and thus neglects how individuals come to act as group members on the basis of their group identities. This is precisely what we examine in this article.

One of the reasons why the moral conviction and collective action literatures have largely remained disconnected from each other is that they differ in their conceptualization of identity (i.e., with an emphasis on personal or social identity, respectively; Van Zomeren & Spears, 2009; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, in press). We believe that the two literatures can be integrated by considering that although moral convictions might develop on the basis of group identities and group norms, their acceptance as subjectively universal and thus as absolute standards transcends group boundaries (and thus the group identities they originated from; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, in press). In this sense, moral convictions are extrapolated from the normative systems and codes of conduct within groups. They may arise out of, or are imbued with social meaning through, a process of consensualization (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). But the subject of these moral concerns is unique: They may develop within specific groups, but once they acquire a moral status, they become subjectively universal and thus transcend group boundaries. Similarly, the tendency to accept moral judgments as absolute is subject to the same social construction processes. However, once an individual has developed moral convictions, their violation overrides any "lower-order" concerns or motivations: Moral convictions demand adherence irrespective of the actor or subject

that concerns them (Baray, Postmes, & Jetten, 2009). The intriguing paradox here is that although moral judgments are no doubt constructed much like other norms, they carry the seeds of social change by virtue of being placed on a higher level of importance than personal identity, social identities, and any other relational process that may account for social order (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, in press).

Moral convictions against social inequality thus demand absolute adherence to this principle of equality. When advantaged group members who have such convictions are confronted with a disadvantaged group, this constitutes a violation of their moral conviction, which motivates them to change the situation. Indeed, because of their absolute condemnation of social inequality, individuals will increase their identification with that group, which enables collective action (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, in press). According to SIMCA, identification with the relevant group increases group-based anger and group efficacy, and all three variables predict collective action (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Thus, the advantaged can become motivated to challenge social inequality on the basis of their violated moral convictions against social inequality because they identify with its victims (Tetlock, 2002; Tetlock et al., 2000; Van Zomeren & Lodewijx, 2005, 2009).

### *Hypotheses*

Our line of thought can be summarized in three hypotheses. First, we predict that moral convictions against social inequality, at least when violated, increase the motivation to challenge social inequality (as evinced by a positive relationship between moral conviction, group-based anger, group efficacy beliefs, and collective action tendencies), effectively overriding any other concerns or motivations (for instance, based on individuals' identification with the advantaged group). We refer to this hypothesis as the *Moral Motivation Hypothesis*, which we test in both studies. Second, we predict that the violation of moral convictions against social inequality leads to

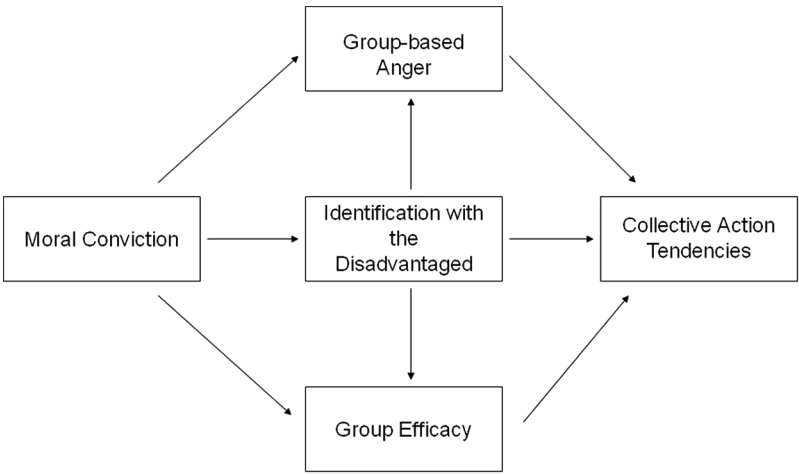


Figure 1. Integrative model.

Table 1. Correlations between key measures, Study 1

		2	3	4	5
1 Moral conviction		.02	.45*	.30*	.62*
<i>M</i>	5.09				
<i>SD</i>	1.27				
2 Identification with the advantaged group			.05	−.06	−.01
<i>M</i>	4.35				
<i>SD</i>	1.14				
3 Group-based anger				.32*	.64*
<i>M</i>	4.10				
<i>SD</i>	1.63				
4 Group efficacy					.56*
<i>M</i>	4.31				
<i>SD</i>	1.25				
5 Collective action tendencies					
<i>M</i>	3.83				
<i>SD</i>	1.32				

Note: \* =  $p < .05$ .

increased identification with the disadvantaged group (as evinced by a positive relationship between moral conviction and identification with the disadvantaged group). We refer to this hypothesis as the *Identification Hypothesis*, which we test in Study 2. Third, we predict that the same psychological processes that SIMCA predicts to explain collective action tendencies among the disadvantaged are also in play among the

advantaged. Thus, on the basis of a relevant social identity, group identification, group-based anger and group efficacy predict collective action tendencies, while group identification also predicts group-based anger and efficacy. We refer to this pattern of predictions as the *SIMCA Hypothesis*, which we also test in Study 2. Together, these three hypotheses represent our predictive model (see Figure 1).

We tested our hypotheses and predictive model in two relatively similar studies that employed different contexts and populations from the Netherlands (Study 1) and Hong Kong (Study 2). Both studies focused on advantaged group members' moral conviction against social inequality, their group identification, group-based anger, group efficacy beliefs, and their willingness to engage in collective action against social inequality. Because only Study 2 included identification with the disadvantaged group, Studies 1 and 2 test the *Moral Motivation Hypothesis*, whereas Study 2 tests the *Identification Hypothesis* and the *SIMCA Hypothesis*. In the Netherlands, we focused on how the non-Muslim Dutch (advantaged group) responded to a situation about discrimination towards Dutch Muslims in the Netherlands (disadvantaged group). In Hong Kong, we focused on the salient intergroup relation between the Hong Kong Chinese (the advantaged group) and the Mainland Chinese (the disadvantaged group). Finding support for our hypotheses across these quite different contexts would generalize support for our model, and for the general point that moral convictions motivate the advantaged to challenge social inequality because a violation thereof increases identification with the disadvantaged group.

## Study 1

### Method

**Participants and procedure** Eighty-one non-Muslim Dutch participants of non-immigrant descent (40 men, 41 women; mean age 30.2 years) were recruited from a university campus to participate in exchange for a chocolate bar. Participants were informed that the research was carried out by a Dutch university. The study began by asking participants to indicate their moral stance on the issue of discrimination against Dutch Muslims. Participants then read a newspaper article describing an instance of discrimination against Dutch Muslims. After reading the article, participants responded to a set of questions that included our dependent measures.

All measures employed 7-point scales with two anchors (1 = not at all, 7 = very much).

The newspaper article focused on an instance of discrimination against Dutch Muslims that occurred in 2007. The source was a respected Dutch newspaper, which reported that a Muslim woman who did cleaning work on a high school applied for a job at the same school as a canteen worker. She was not hired. The dean of the high school was quoted as saying that he was fine with the Muslim woman working at the school after hours (as was the case in the cleaning job), but that he was not fine with her working at times when students were present as this would lead to too much contact and "exposure" to her religion. The article reported that the woman had filed a discrimination complaint, and was awaiting the outcome.

### Measures

**Moral conviction** All participants first indicated whether they were in favor of social inequality or against it; all participants were against it. Moral conviction was measured with three items ( $\alpha = .87$ ; with the items: "My opinion about discrimination of Dutch Muslims is an important part of my moral norms and values", "My opinion about discrimination of Dutch Muslims is a universal moral value that should apply everywhere in the world" and "My opinion about discrimination of Dutch Muslims is a universal moral value that should apply at all times").<sup>1</sup> These items reflect what we view as the essence of moral convictions, namely the combination of a strong and absolute stance on an issue (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, in press). Principal axis factoring with oblique rotation extracted, as expected, one factor that explained 63.84% of the variance, with factor loadings  $> .74$ .

### Predictors of collective action tendencies

Derived from previous work (e.g., Van Zomeren et al., 2004; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, in press), we measured group-based anger with three items ( $\alpha = .94$ ; "When I read the newspaper article, I felt *angry/furious/irritated* because of



what happened to the Dutch Muslim woman”), and group efficacy beliefs with two items ( $r = .42$ ,  $p < .001$ ; “I think together individuals can reduce discrimination against Dutch Muslims”, “I think together we can successfully fight against discrimination of Dutch Muslims”). We measured identification with the advantaged group with two items ( $r = .42$ ,  $p < .001$ ; “I feel strong ties with other Dutchmen”, “In many ways I feel similar to other Dutchmen”—note that it was explained in the instructions that this referred to “non-Muslim Dutch”, which we felt was a somewhat strange label to use for the advantaged group). Principal axis factoring with oblique rotation extracted, as expected, three factors that explained 62.68% of the variance, with factor loadings  $> .58$ .

**Collective action tendencies** Derived from previous work (e.g., Van Zomeren et al., 2004; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, in press), we measured collective action tendencies with seven items ( $\alpha = .92$ ; e.g., “I would like to participate in a demonstration against discrimination towards Dutch Muslims”, “I would like to sign a petition against discrimination towards Dutch Muslims”, “I would like to engage in actions against discrimination towards Dutch Muslims”). Principal axis factoring with oblique rotation extracted, as expected, one factor that explained 63.68% of the variance, with factor loadings  $> .66$ . Thus, across the board the construct validity of our measures was adequate.

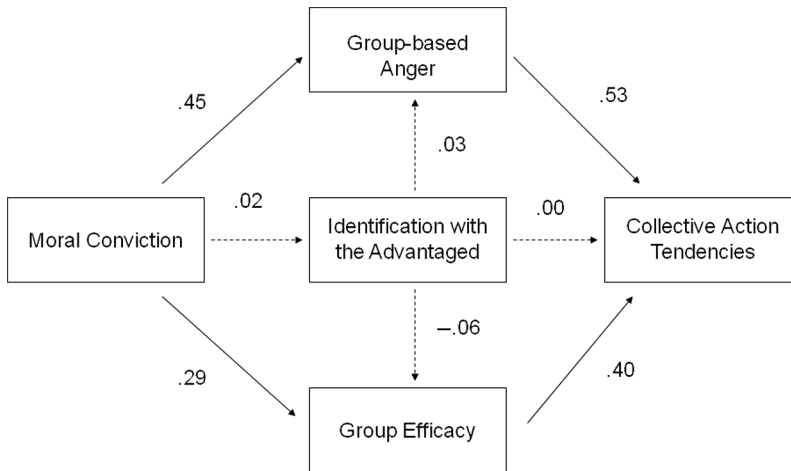
## Results

We tested the *Moral Motivation Hypothesis* with a series of multiple regression analyses. In line with predictions, results showed that moral conviction strongly predicted collective action tendencies ( $\beta = .62$ ,  $p < .001$ ), group-based anger ( $\beta = .45$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and group efficacy ( $\beta = .30$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Also as expected, moral conviction did not predict identification with the advantaged group ( $\beta = .02$ ,  $p > .87$ ). In the next step, we regressed collective action tendencies onto moral conviction, group-based anger, group efficacy, and

identification with the advantaged group ( $F = 33.45$ ,  $p < .01$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .65$ ). Results showed that although the effect of moral conviction was now considerably weaker (though still significant;  $\beta = .32$ ,  $p < .001$ ), as expected group-based anger ( $\beta = .37$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and group efficacy ( $\beta = .34$ ,  $p < .001$ ) predicted collective action tendencies. Further in line with predictions, identification with the advantaged group did not predict collective action tendencies ( $\beta = -.01$ ,  $p > .93$ ). Thus, individuals’ identification with the advantaged group was completely unrelated to their moral conviction against social inequality and their collective action tendencies. Taken together, we found support for the *Moral Motivation Hypothesis*.

We performed bootstrapping analyses to test for the simultaneous mediating roles of group-based anger and group efficacy between moral conviction and collective action tendencies (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Results showed that the total indirect effect was statistically significant (bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval .13 to .41), and that the unique contributions of group-based anger (bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval .06 to .31) and group efficacy (bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval .02 to .23) were statistically significant. Thus, both indirect paths (as well as the direct path) were statistically significant.

Because the above analysis does not explicitly test the relationships *between* identification with the advantaged group, group-based anger, and group efficacy, we tested two models through structural equation modelling (using EQS 6.1). The first model represents a model that should *not* fit the data because it assumes that identification with the advantaged group is the psychological basis for the effects of moral conviction on group-based anger, group efficacy, and collective action tendencies. This model (see Figure 2 for the parameter estimates) in fact did not fit the data well ( $\chi^2 = 23.19$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .001$ , which indicates that the hypothesized covariance matrix differed strongly from the actual covariance matrix). Other fit indices corroborated this evaluation of the model: CFI = .79, GFI = .90, SRMR = .10, RMSEA = .37 (see Kline, 1998). This evaluation

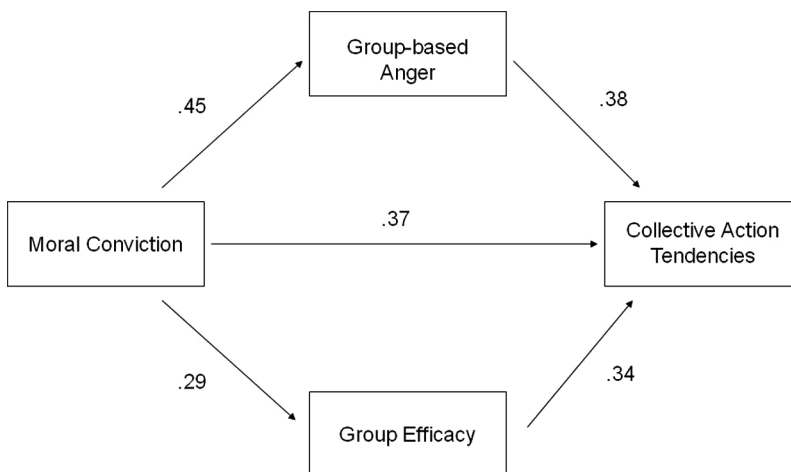


**Figure 2.** Integrative model with identification with the advantaged group as the central variable, Study 1.

was further supported by the fact that both the LaGrange Multiplier and Wald-tests for model modification suggested that paths could be added or removed to improve model fit. However, even adding the direct effect of moral conviction on collective action tendencies did not result in a fitting model, ( $\chi^2 = 4.16$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .04$ , CFI = .97, GFI = .98, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .20).

The second model we tested represents a model that should fit the data because it assumes that identification with the advantaged group is

completely unrelated to moral conviction, group-based anger, group efficacy, and collective action tendencies, and that moral conviction predicts collective action tendencies directly. This model (see Figure 3 for the parameter estimates) fits the data well ( $\chi^2 = 4.67$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p > .45$ , which indicates that the hypothesized covariance matrix did not differ from the actual covariance matrix). Other fit indices corroborated this evaluation of the model: CFI = 1.00, GFI = .98, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .01. This evaluation was further



**Figure 3.** Integrative model without identification with the advantaged group as the central variable, Study 1.



**Table 2.** Correlations between key measures, Study 2

		2	3	4	5	6
1 Moral conviction		.10	.25*	.20 <sup>+</sup>	.39*	.41*
<i>M</i>	4.74					
<i>SD</i>	1.23					
2 Identification with the advantaged group			.23*	.13	.06	.04
<i>M</i>	5.51					
<i>SD</i>	1.09					
3 Identification with the disadvantaged group				.31*	.16	.51*
<i>M</i>	3.95					
<i>SD</i>	1.34					
4 Group-based anger					.10	.61*
<i>M</i>	3.55					
<i>SD</i>	1.29					
5 Group efficacy						.42*
<i>M</i>	4.32					
<i>SD</i>	1.32					
6 Collective action tendencies						
<i>M</i>	3.47					
<i>SD</i>	1.22					

Note. \* =  $p < .05$ ; <sup>+</sup> =  $p < .06$ .

supported by the fact that both the LaGrange Multiplier and Wald-tests for model modification suggested that no paths could be added or removed to improve model fit. This model thus shows that the relationships between identification with the advantaged group, on the one hand, and group-based anger and group efficacy, on the other, could be set to zero.

# Discussion

The Study 1 results supported the *Moral Motivation Hypothesis*. Among the advantaged in Dutch society, moral convictions against social inequality predicted collective action tendencies through group-based anger and group efficacy. Importantly, moral conviction did not predict identification with the advantaged group, and this identification in turn predicted neither collective action tendencies, nor group-based anger, nor group efficacy. This is consistent with the idea that identification with the advantaged group is not the relevant group identity on which to challenge social inequality. This might also be indicative of the power of violated moral convictions to override other concerns or motivations.

However, our results show a striking gap between identification with the advantaged group and the other SIMCA variables (that represent motivations to challenge social inequality). It is also striking that moral conviction seems to easily fill this gap, and in fact shows the very same relationships with the SIMCA variables as a relevant social identity would (e.g., Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, in press). Yet, this is fully in line with our argument that moral convictions against social inequality, at least when violated, breach existing group boundaries and increase individuals' identification with the disadvantaged group (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, in press; see also Tetlock et al., 2000; Van Zomeren & Lodewijx, 2005, 2009). Study 1, however, did not include a measure of identification with the disadvantaged group.

In Study 2, we therefore included such a measure, which enabled a test of the *Identification Hypothesis* and the *SIMCA Hypothesis*. These suggest that violated moral convictions increase identification with the disadvantaged group, and that such identification is the psychological basis for group-based anger, group efficacy beliefs, and collective action tendencies. Study 2 further

aimed to replicate the Study 1 results in a different cultural context. Study 2 was conducted in Hong Kong among Hong Kong Chinese participants (who represent an advantaged group in Hong Kong as compared to the Mainland Chinese) for two reasons. First, one potential limitation of Study 1 was that the intergroup relationship between Muslim Dutch and non-Muslim Dutch was quite asymmetric in the sense that one group is defined by what the other is not (i.e., *not* being Muslim). The intergroup relationship between the Hong Kong and Mainland Chinese, however, is much more symmetric, and we reasoned that replicating the Study 1 results across these samples should assuage concerns about the potential influence of this asymmetry. Second, because Hong Kong culture reflects considerable differences with the Dutch culture (e.g., on Hofstede's [2001] cultural dimensions), replicating the Study 1 results across these samples would allow for a fair amount of confidence in the generalizability of our model.

## Study 2

### Method

**Participants and procedure** Ninety-three Hong Kong Chinese participants (32 men, 59 women, two unrecorded; mean age 21.49 years) were recruited from a university campus in Hong Kong to participate voluntarily. Participants read that the research was carried out by a Dutch university. The study began by asking participants to indicate their moral stance on the issue of discrimination against Mainland Chinese. Participants then read a newspaper article on an instance of discrimination against Mainland Chinese, and were asked for their opinion. After reading the article, participants responded to a set of questions that included measures of group-based anger, group efficacy, identification with the advantaged group, identification with the disadvantaged group (new in Study 2), and collective action tendencies. All measures employed 7-point scales with two anchors (1 = not at all, 7 = very much).

As in Study 1, the newspaper article focused on a report about structural discrimination in society. In the Study 2 context, this represented discrimination against Mainland Chinese in Hong Kong society. The source of the article was a respected Hong Kong newspaper, which highlighted the case of a Mainland Chinese woman who was not hired for a job because of her Mainland Chinese background. Furthermore, the article reported an increasing number of such incidents and asked the Hong Kong government to intervene.

### Measures

**Moral conviction** All participants first indicated whether they were in favor of or against social inequality (all participants were against social inequality). As in Study 1, moral conviction was measured with three items reflecting the strong and absolute stance that it represents ( $\alpha = .88$ ; with the items: "My opinion about discrimination of Mainland Chinese is an important part of my moral norms and values", "My opinion about discrimination of Mainland Chinese is a universal moral value that should apply everywhere in the world" and "My opinion about discrimination of Mainland Chinese is a universal moral value that should apply at all times"). Principal axis factoring with oblique rotation extracted, as expected, one factor that explained 72.66% of the variance, with factor loadings  $> .74$ .

### Predictors of collective action tendencies

As in Study 1, we measured group-based anger with three items ( $\alpha = .93$ ; "When I read the newspaper article, I felt *angry/furious/irritated* because of what happened"), and group efficacy beliefs with two items ( $r = .75, p < .01$ ; "I think together individuals can reduce discrimination against Mainland Chinese", "I think together we can successfully fight against discrimination of Mainland Chinese").<sup>2</sup> We also measured identification with the advantaged group with four items ( $\alpha = .88$ ; "I identify with the Hong Kong Chinese", "I feel strong ties with the Hong Kong

Chinese”, “I see myself as part of the Hong Kong Chinese”, “I am proud to be a part of the Hong Kong Chinese”), and, new as compared to Study 1, identification with the disadvantaged group with four items ( $\alpha = .88$ ; “I identify with the Mainland Chinese”, “I feel strong ties with the Mainland Chinese”, “I see myself as part of the Mainland Chinese”, “I am proud to be part of the Mainland Chinese”). Principal axis factoring with oblique rotation extracted, as expected, four factors that explained 73.63% of the variance, with factor loadings  $> .67$ .

**Collective action tendencies** Finally, we measured collective action tendencies with seven items ( $\alpha = .93$ ; e.g., “I would like to participate in a demonstration against discrimination of Mainland Chinese”, “I would like to sign a petition against discrimination of Mainland Chinese”). Principal axis factoring with oblique rotation extracted, as expected, one factor that explained 64.95% of the variance, with factor loadings  $> .75$ . Thus, across the board the construct validity of our measures was again adequate.

## Results

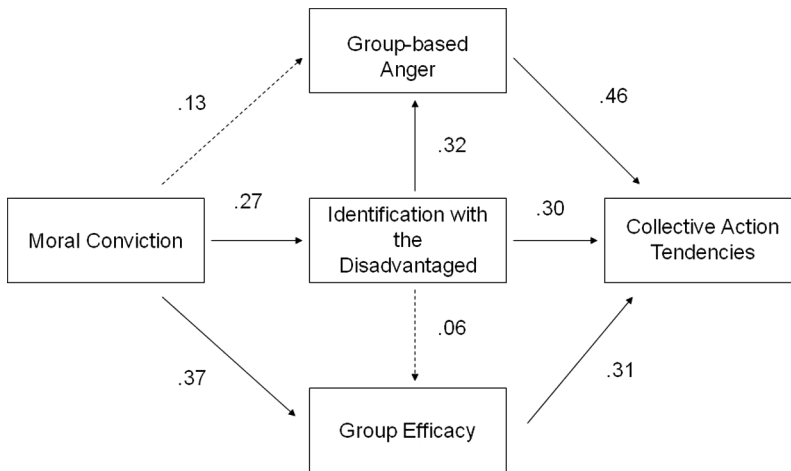
As in Study 1, we tested our predictions with a series of multiple regression analyses. In line with the *Moral Motivation Hypothesis*, results showed that moral conviction predicted collective action tendencies ( $\beta = .42, p < .001$ ), group-based anger ( $\beta = .21, p < .05$ ), and group efficacy ( $\beta = .38, p < .001$ ). As in Study 1, moral conviction did not predict identification with the advantaged group ( $\beta = .14, p > .18$ ). Moving beyond Study 1, and in line with the *Identification Hypothesis*, moral conviction predicted identification with the disadvantaged group ( $\beta = .34, p < .001$ ).

In the next step, we regressed collective action tendencies onto moral conviction, group-based anger, group efficacy, identification with the advantaged group, and identification with the disadvantaged group ( $F = 24.31, p < .01$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .56$ ). In line with the *SIMCA Hypothesis*,

results showed that the effect of moral conviction became non-significant ( $\beta = .14, p > .07$ ), and that group-based anger ( $\beta = .45, p < .001$ ), group efficacy ( $\beta = .27, p < .01$ ), and identification with the disadvantaged group ( $\beta = .30, p < .01$ ) predicted collective action tendencies positively. By contrast, identification with the advantaged group did not predict collective action tendencies ( $\beta = -.11, p > .11$ ).

We then performed bootstrapping analyses (Preacher & Hayes, 2008) to test for the simultaneous influence of the three possible mediators of the link between moral conviction and collective action tendencies (identification with the disadvantaged group, group-based anger, and group efficacy). Results showed that the total indirect effect was statistically significant (bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval .13 to .44), and that the unique contributions of identification with the disadvantaged group (bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval .02 to .18), group-based anger (bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval .02 to .21) and group efficacy (bias corrected and accelerated confidence interval .04 to .18) were all statistically significant. These results replicate Study 1 and provide more support for our hypotheses.

In a final step, we used EQS 6.1 to test the fit of our integrative model (see Figure 4). This model represents the most comprehensive test of our set of hypotheses by specifying that moral conviction predicts collective action tendencies through identification with the disadvantaged group, group-based anger, and group efficacy beliefs, whereas identification with the disadvantaged group, reflecting the relevant social identity, also predicts group-based anger and group efficacy. The model fit the data well, with a non-significant chi-squared statistic ( $\chi^2 = 3.20, df = 2, p > .20$ ). Other fit indices corroborated the evaluation of the model as quite good: CFI = .99, GFI = .99, SRMR = .03, RMSEA = .08. This evaluation was also supported by the fact that the LaGrange Multiplier and Wald-tests for model modification suggested that no paths could be added or removed to improve model fit.



**Figure 4.** Integrative model with identification with the disadvantaged group as the central variable, Study 2.

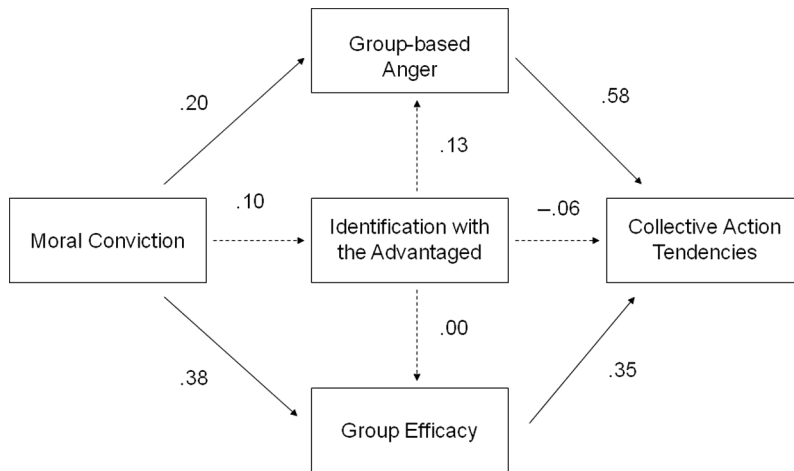
All parameter estimates were significantly different from zero except for two (see Figure 4). The first was the parameter estimating the predictive effect of moral conviction on group-based anger. This is consistent with our integrative analysis and more specifically with the idea that the predictive effect of moral conviction on group-based anger is fully explained by identification with the disadvantaged group. This provides evidence for the idea that identification with the disadvantaged group is the psychological basis for group-based anger among the advantaged. The second non-significant parameter estimate in the model is the predictive effect of identification with the disadvantaged group on group efficacy. This finding is inconsistent with predictions and more specifically with the idea that a stronger group identification raises the efficacy of the group to achieve social change. We will return to this unexpected finding in the general discussion.

To enable a comparison with Study 1, we tested a model with identification with the advantaged group at its heart (see Figure 5). As expected, this model fit the data less well than our hypothesized model, with a marginally significant chi-squared statistic ( $\chi^2 = 5.74$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .06$ ), indicating that the hypothesized covariance matrix differed somewhat from the actual covariance matrix. Other fit indices corroborated this

evaluation of the model: CFI = .95, GFI = .98, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .15. Both the LaGrange Multiplier and Wald-tests for model modification suggested that paths could be added or removed to improve model fit, which also suggests that this model is not the best fit to the data. Thus, a model with identification with the disadvantaged group (rather than with the advantaged group) at its core fit the data best.

## Discussion

The results of Study 2 replicated support for the *Moral Motivation Hypothesis*, provided novel support for the *Identification Hypothesis*, and showed (partial) support for the *SIMCA Hypothesis*. Results suggest that, among advantaged group members in a different (cultural) context than in Study 1, moral convictions against social inequality again predicted collective action tendencies through group-based anger and group efficacy. Study 2 also replicated Study 1 by showing that moral conviction was unrelated to identification with the advantaged group, and moved beyond Study 1 by showing that moral conviction was positively related to identification with the disadvantaged group. Indeed, together with group-based anger and group efficacy, identification with the disadvantaged group fully explained the



**Figure 5.** Integrative model with identification with the advantaged group as the central variable, Study 2.

link between moral conviction and collective action tendencies. Structural equation modeling showed that, as predicted by SIMCA, group-based anger was based in identification with the disadvantaged group, but, against predictions, group efficacy beliefs were not based in this group identity. The integrative model also showed a good fit to the data. Both Studies 1 and 2 thus show that the same psychological variables and processes that SIMCA identifies as key to collective action among the disadvantaged are also important in explaining the motivation to challenge social inequality among the advantaged. Moreover, Study 2 suggests that identification with the disadvantaged (rather than with the advantaged) group is the relevant group identity on which to challenge social inequality in this context.

## General discussion

Two studies supported SIMCA's extension to collective action against social inequality among the advantaged, and its integration with the power of moral convictions to motivate the advantaged to challenge social inequality. Both studies showed that moral convictions against social inequality, at least when violated, predict group-based anger, group efficacy beliefs and

collective action tendencies on the basis of a relevant social identity. Results further showed that this relevant social identity was individuals' identification with the disadvantaged group (i.e., the victims of social inequality). Our findings thus offer a strong pointer toward the importance of seemingly individualistic moral convictions in explaining collective action among the advantaged. Importantly, our results imply that individuals' moral convictions should be taken into account when thinking about social influence attempts to mobilize the advantaged to challenge social inequality. Below we discuss these and other implications of our findings, as well as limitations of the studies and directions for future research.

## *Theoretical and practical implications*

Our findings support the general idea that there are no necessary *qualitative* differences between the disadvantaged and the advantaged in terms of the psychological variables and processes that predict their collective action against social inequality (see also Sweetman et al., 2010). Indeed, group-based anger, group efficacy beliefs, and identification with the relevant group all predicted collective action against social inequality (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, in

press). These results fit with an accumulating body of work on collective action among the disadvantaged (for a meta-analysis, see Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008), and suggests that integrative models such as SIMCA are appropriate frameworks to compare collective action against social inequality among the disadvantaged (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, in press) and the advantaged (current data).

However, one apparent difference concerns which social identity is the relevant psychological basis for challenging social inequality through collective action. For the disadvantaged group, the relevant social identity is the disadvantaged in-group identity, or the more specific social movement organization that fights for the group's interests (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, in press). By contrast, for the advantaged group, the results of both studies show that it is not identification with the advantaged in-group, but with the disadvantaged out-group that is most relevant for predicting collective action. In this sense, the apparent difference between the advantaged and disadvantaged is overpowered by a strong commonality: For members of both groups, collective action against social inequality is predicted by their identification with the disadvantaged group. This is consistent with our argument that moral convictions transcend existing group boundaries to the extent that their violation increases identification with the disadvantaged group, which, according to SIMCA, enables collective action against it through group-based anger and group efficacy.

It should be noted that our studies did not aim to uncover the exact psychological process that underpins advantaged group members' identification with the disadvantaged, and hence it is important to compare our line of thought on violated moral convictions with at least three other lines of work.<sup>3</sup> First, some may wonder how moral convictions are different from injunctive group norms (i.e., what group members ought to do; Smith & Louis, 2008; Spears, Lea, & Lee, 1990). Although there are certainly commonalities between the constructs, the key difference in our view is that moral convictions proscribe

standards for *anyone*, whereas injunctive group norms proscribe standards for in-group members in particular (e.g., the black sheep effect; Marques & Páez, 1994). In this sense we agree with and apply Turiel's (1983) distinction between moral judgments (which apply universally) and social conventions (which reflect group norms that do not apply universally). In sum, the element of moral absolutism is much more essential to the concept of moral conviction than to the concept of injunctive group norms. But despite this difference, it is also clear that the two are related: We believe that injunctive group norms may be an important step toward developing moral convictions. Such oughts may develop within specific groups, but as soon as they acquire the status of moral convictions, they transcend group boundaries. One of the major questions for future research therefore is when and how this transformation from injunctive group norm to moral conviction takes place in the context of collective action against collective disadvantage.

Second, recent work on opinion-based groups, which are defined as groups that revolve around a shared opinion and develop through interaction and normative alignment (Thomas & McGarty, 2009; Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2009), would suggest that the reason why the advantaged identify with the disadvantaged is that their moral convictions represent a "community of believers", or a moral community, that sympathizes with the victims of social inequality. In our view, the key question here is whether such a moral community is necessary to explain our current results. Our explanation that violated moral convictions increase identification with the relevant group (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, in press, current data) does not require such a moral community and thus represents a more parsimonious account of our findings. The question of how moral convictions relate to opinion-based groups and moral communities is nevertheless an intriguing question for future research.

Finally, recent work by Subasic and colleagues on *political solidarity* (Subasic et al., 2008; Subasic & Reynolds, 2009) may suggest that the reason why the advantaged identify with the disadvantaged is



that their moral convictions derive from the values and standards of a superordinate social category. In line with common in-group and dual identity approaches (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), Subasic and colleagues argue that the advantaged are more likely to display political solidarity with the disadvantaged when they categorize the out-group as part of a superordinate category that also includes their own group. Admittedly, we did not measure identification with the superordinate category in either study (i.e., identification with the Netherlands, and Hong Kong, respectively), and we thus do not have the data to test the validity of these ideas. But *a priori*, moral convictions would not need to be embedded in a hypothetical superordinate category to enhance identification with the disadvantaged. Our explanation therefore again seems to be more parsimonious. Of course, future research is necessary to provide more conclusive evidence for these interesting ideas.

Across the two studies, we encountered only one unpredicted finding. That is, Study 2 showed that identification with the disadvantaged was unrelated to group efficacy beliefs. In the light of the large number of correct predictions, we do not want to attach too much value to this finding. We note in this respect that recent research among the disadvantaged shows that the relationship between group identification and group efficacy may be more complicated than previously thought (Van Zomeren, Leach, & Spears, in press; Van Zomeren, Spears, & Leach, 2008). This work shows that the relationship between these variables is likely due to the causal effect of group efficacy on group identification (rather than vice versa; Van Zomeren, Leach, & Spears, in press). This implies that this aspect of SIMCA might be in need of some revision, although we do not know at present whether these recent results generalize to the advantaged. Another possibility, however, is that the meaning of group efficacy beliefs in the context of collective action is even more complicated among the advantaged than among the disadvantaged. For the disadvantaged, group efficacy beliefs typically refer to the disadvantaged group. The advantaged, however, may

be motivated to challenge social equality in part because they believe that the disadvantaged group's efficacy is too low to achieve social change on their own. Thus, the group's efficacy for them might represent the joint forces of the advantaged *and* the disadvantaged. Future research can explore this interesting suggestion.

**Practical implications** Practitioners of collective action against social inequality might find SIMCA a useful overarching structure that identifies the key psychological predictors of individuals' motivation to challenge social inequality. Indeed, the model suggests that they should try to socially influence individuals' sense of group identity, group-based anger, and group efficacy. This claim is validated by the accumulating evidence for its generalizability across different contexts as well as across disadvantaged and advantaged groups (Iyer & Ryan, 2009; Klandermans, 1997; Mummendey et al., 1999; Sweetman et al., 2010; Thomas & McGarty, 2009; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008, in press, current data). SIMCA's first key recommendation to practitioners is that one needs to focus on individuals *as group members*. Indeed, increasing the self-relevance and salience of a social identity is a crucial start to any mobilization campaign, on which basis one can try to further increase individuals' group-based emotions and group efficacy beliefs. Moreover, previous and current findings suggest that it is very important to target the relevant group identity. As the current work shows, the relevant group is not necessarily the in-group. Van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears (in press) proposed in this respect that a strong normative fit (Turner et al., 1987) between the moral conviction in question and the normative content of a social identity is what makes the identity become self-relevant and thus a basis for collective action.

The second key recommendation to practitioners is that one should try to unleash the psychological power of moral convictions against social inequality by communicating the absolute immorality and thus the moral condemnation of their violation. Indeed, those who seek social

change should target existing moral convictions about social inequality among the disadvantaged as well as the advantaged (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, in press, current data). This implies that making reference to the absolute nature of their moral convictions about social inequality and the zero-tolerance for violations thereof motivates both advantaged and disadvantaged group members to challenge social inequality. This might even lead to a *coalition* of members from both disadvantaged and advantaged groups that unite around a moral conviction against social inequality that increases identification with the disadvantaged group (e.g., the civil rights movement, see McAdam, 1982).

### *Limitations and directions for future research*

One limitation of the current research is its relatively low internal validity due to the correlational nature of the two studies. Our theoretical rationale for the hypotheses and the model is based, however, on a synthesis of many primary studies (among which are experiments) that view social identity, group-based anger, and group efficacy as predictors of collective action. This is in part because there is very little evidence available on the consequences of collective action (Louis, 2009). Moreover, given that moral conviction is treated by definition as an individual difference measure (Skitka et al., 2005), the specific limitation of the current studies is that we cannot be certain that moral conviction feeds into the identity, emotion, and efficacy variables, or vice versa, or both. This once more calls for future research on the question of how moral convictions develop (for example, as a function of injunctive group norms; Smith & Louis, 2008).

A second limitation of the current set of studies is that we did not measure actual behavior (e.g., signing a petition). However, there are two reasons to expect that this is not problematic for the interpretation of the results. First, Van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears (in press, Study 2) employed such a measure and found that the SIMCA variables explained collective action

*through* individuals' collective action tendencies (which is in line with theories of emotions as well as the attitude-behavior link; e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Frijda, 1986). Second, Van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears's (2008) meta-analysis suggested that although the predictive effects of the SIMCA variables on collective action were smaller than on positive attitudes or intentions toward such behavior, these effects were still positive and significant (i.e., they were not zero). This suggests that using proxy measures such as action tendencies to some extent overestimates the size of the obtained effects, but does not invalidate their interpretation.

We have already noted a number of interesting directions for future research that flow from our current work. Another promising avenue of research lies in experimentally manipulating moral conviction itself. Although one might believe that individual difference measures such as moral conviction are hard to manipulate in the laboratory, we see great promise in manipulating the absolutist mindset that is so central to the experience of moral conviction. Preliminary results from our lab suggest that inducing an absolutist mindset indeed increases identification with a relevant group (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Turner, 2010). As far as we know, this constitutes the first experimental evidence that moral absolutism is directly related to group processes such as identification. As such, we believe that a more comprehensive and integrative understanding of how seemingly individualistic moral convictions can have collective consequences is within reach.

In conclusion, we proposed in this article that moral convictions against social inequality motivate the advantaged to challenge social inequality because their violation increases identification with the disadvantaged group. As a consequence, and in line with SIMCA, such identification enables individuals from the advantaged group to engage in collective action against social inequality through group-based anger and group efficacy. Moral convictions against social inequality are therefore key to predicting and explaining collective action among the advantaged against social inequality.

## Notes

1. In both studies, we specified the relevant group in the items tapping moral convictions. This may constrain our claims about whether individuals' moral convictions tap universal beliefs. Nevertheless, at least two of the items focus on whether individuals believe that their opinion should apply anywhere, or at all times, which in our view is strongly suggestive of the moral absolutism so central to the concept of moral conviction.
2. In both studies, we decided not to operationalize group-based anger and group efficacy by referring to a particular group. We reasoned that if our argument about moral conviction's special link with individuals' identification with the disadvantaged group was correct, our measure of identification with the disadvantaged group would show a positive relationship with our measures of group-based anger, efficacy, and action tendencies. Results largely supported this line of thought.
3. We thank three anonymous reviewers and the guest editor for raising this important point.

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### Biographical notes

MARTIJN VAN ZOMEREN is Associate Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. His research interests revolve around the psychology of collective action, including issues of morality, social identity, injustice, emotions, and efficacy.

TOM POSTMES is Professor of Social Psychology at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. His research interests include intra- and intergroup processes, such as the formation of social identities.

RUSSELL SPEARS is Professor of Social Psychology at Groningen University, the Netherlands. His research interests fall broadly in the field of social identity and intergroup relations.

KARIM BETTACHE collected part of the data reported in this article in completing his Master's degree. His research interests include morality, intergroup relations, and cross-cultural psychology.