



## On conviction's collective consequences: Integrating moral conviction with the social identity model of collective action

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This article examines whether and how *moral convictions* predict collective action to achieve social change. Because moral convictions – defined as strong and absolute stances on moral issues – tolerate no exceptions, any violation motivates individuals to actively change that situation. We propose that moral convictions have a special relationship with *politicized identities* and collective action because of the potentially strong normative fit between moral convictions and the action-oriented content of politicized identities. This effectively integrates moral conviction with the *Social Identity Model of Collective Action* (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008), which predicts that, on the basis of a relevant social identity, group-based anger and efficacy predict collective action. Results from two studies indeed showed that moral convictions predicted collective action intentions (Study 1–2) and collective action (Study 2) through politicized identification, group-based anger, and group efficacy. We discuss theoretical and practical implications of our integrative model.

Collective action against collective disadvantage (e.g., a protest demonstration or petition signing) is one of the major pathways to social change. Although theory and research about collective action comes from multiple disciplines (including sociology, political science, history, and psychology; e.g., Gurr, 1970; Klandermans, 1997; Olson, 1968; Tilly, Tilly, & Tilly, 1975; Turner & Killian, 1972), it has been suggested that the *psychology* of collective action is the most proximal explanation of collective action – that is, even when economic and societal forces provide the ideal conditions for collective action to emerge, the question remains how individuals become motivated to engage in such action (Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). The present article examines the role of *moral convictions*, defined as strong and absolute stances on moral issues (e.g., Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005; Tetlock, 2002; Turiel, 1983), as important energisers of collective action.

This is a new and exciting direction because the literatures on moral conviction and collective action have been largely disconnected (e.g., Van Zomeren & Spears, 2009).

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One possible reason for the gap is that theory and research on the nature and effects of moral convictions typically utilizes an individualistic conceptualization of identity (e.g., Skitka *et al.*, 2005; but see Tetlock, 2002), whereas theory and research on collective action typically emphasizes the importance of social identity (e.g., Drury & Reicher, 2009; Ellemers, 1993; Klandermans, 1997; Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, & Mielke, 1999; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; for a meta-analysis, see Van Zomeren, Postmes, *et al.*, 2008). Any integrative analysis of the role of moral conviction in collective action therefore needs to explain how seemingly individualistic moral convictions can have collective consequences.

We propose that moral convictions can play an important and powerful role in predicting collective action because of their special relationship with *politicized identities* (i.e., identification with a social movement organization such as a union or Greenpeace) and collective action. Because moral convictions are defined as strong and absolute stances on moral issues, they do not tolerate any exceptions to the general 'higher-order' principle (Tetlock, 2002). Any violation of a moral conviction therefore motivates individuals who hold them to actively change that situation (Skitka *et al.*, 2005; Van Zomeren & Lodewijckx, 2005). Innovatively, we propose that violated moral convictions can fuel collective action against collective disadvantage because of their potentially strong normative fit with the content of a relevant social identity. This is more likely to be a politicized than a non-politicized identity because the former typically has a stronger normative content and is more strongly geared toward collective action than the latter (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Van Zomeren, Postmes, *et al.*, 2008).

This line of thought effectively integrates moral conviction with the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (or SIMCA for short), which represents a broad theoretical and empirical integration of the psychological literature on collective action (Van Zomeren, Postmes, *et al.*, 2008). It proposes that, on the basis of a relevant social identity, collective action is predicted by individuals' (politicized) identification, their group-based anger, and their group efficacy beliefs. We integrate moral conviction in SIMCA as an important energiser of collective action and the psychological processes that lead to it (i.e., politicized identification, group-based anger, group efficacy), and predict that moral conviction has a particularly strong relationship with *politicized identities* and collective action. We test this integrative line of thought in two empirical studies that employ different moral issues, contexts, and populations.

### **The social identity model of collective action**

Collective action is typically defined as any action that is enacted as a representative of the group, and which is aimed at improving the group's conditions (Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). 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, *et al.*, 2008). Moreover, this definition already makes clear that collective action requires that individuals self-categorize as a group member, which makes their social identity rather than their personal identity salient (Van Zomeren & Spears, 2009). Indeed, the importance of social identity as a psychological basis for collective action is well-established (e.g., Drury & Reicher, 2009; Ellemers, 1993; Klandermans, 1997; Mummendey *et al.*, 1999; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; for a meta-analysis, see Van Zomeren, Postmes, *et al.*, 2008).

Van Zomeren, Postmes, *et al.*'s (2008) Social Identity Model of Collective Action represents an empirically comprehensive attempt to integrate the psychological literature on collective action. It suggests four things. First, in line with social identity accounts of collective action (e.g., Drury & Reicher, 2009; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), SIMCA suggests that individuals' identification with the relevant group predicts collective action. This is particularly the case when the group's identity is *politicized* because politicized identities are normatively geared toward collective action (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Van Zomeren, Postmes, *et al.*, 2008). Second, in line with relative deprivation explanations (e.g., Walker & Smith, 2002), SIMCA suggests that the perception of *group-based injustice* predicts collective action. More specifically, it is its emotional experience (i.e., group-based anger; Van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004; Walker & Smith, 2002; Yzerbyt, Dumont, Wigboldus, & Gordijn, 2003; see also Miller, Cronin, Garcia, & Branscombe, 2009) that is particularly predictive of collective action (for meta-analytic evidence, see Smith & Ortiz, 2002; Van Zomeren, Postmes, *et al.*, 2008). Third, in line with subjective resource mobilization approaches (e.g., Klandermans, 1984; Louis, Taylor, & Douglas, 2005), SIMCA suggests that individuals' *group efficacy beliefs* predict collective action (Mummendey *et al.*, 1999; Van Zomeren, Postmes, *et al.*, 2008). Individuals become more strongly motivated to undertake collective action the more they believe in the efficacy of the group to achieve group goals such as social change (Van Zomeren *et al.*, 2004). SIMCA thus incorporates different fundamental aspects of psychology: Identity, injustice and emotion, and efficacy.

Finally, SIMCA suggests that social identity, as the psychological basis for collective action, *bridges* the injustice and efficacy explanations of collective action. For example, social identification fuels the emotional experience of collective disadvantage because it makes group events and situations more relevant to the self (e.g., Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007; see also Iyer & Leach, 2008; Van Zomeren, Spears, & Leach, 2008), which includes the motivation to protect, maintain, or restore a positive social identity (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Collective disadvantage thus elicits stronger group-based anger when individuals are more strongly identified with the relevant group (e.g., Van Zomeren *et al.*, 2008; Yzerbyt *et al.*, 2003). Stronger social identification further increases individuals' group efficacy beliefs because individuals perceive stronger social support from the in-group (Van Zomeren *et al.*, 2004), and sometimes feel empowered even when collective action might not achieve its goal in the short run (Drury & Reicher, 2009). In sum, SIMCA suggests that social identification predicts collective action *directly* through the politicization of that identity, and *indirectly* through group-based anger and group efficacy.

We seek to integrate this model of collective action with a neglected yet fundamental aspect of psychology: Morality. More specifically, we focus on moral convictions in the context of collective action because these reflect strong and absolute stances on moral issues that allow very little tolerance of exceptions to a 'higher-order' principle. Hence, any violation of the principle should lead to a motivation to actively change the situation (Skitka & Bauman, 2008; Van Zomeren & Lodewijkx, 2005). However, SIMCA is silent about how seemingly individualistic moral convictions relate to potential collective consequences, such as (politicized) identification, group-based anger, group efficacy, and collective action.

There are at least two reasons for this silence. First, as noted earlier the moral conviction and collective action literatures differ in their conceptualization of identity (i.e., with an emphasis on personal or social identity, respectively), and have, likely for this reason, largely remained disconnected from each other (e.g., Van Zomeren & Spears, 2009). Second, the collective action literature has not been very specific

about the nature of any 'moral' factors predicting collective action. Work in the relative deprivation tradition explored moral antecedents of relative deprivation (e.g., comparing the current situation to an utopian one; Folger, 1986, 1987), whereas work in the social identity tradition extensively investigated the perceived illegitimacy of inter-group status differences as important precursors to social competition (e.g., Ellemers, 1993; Mummendey *et al.*, 1999; Tajfel, 1978). In both these cases, a sense of injustice and illegitimacy is intimately bound up with one's group's social outcomes (derived from social comparison processes). But even in the original work on social identity theory, it was noted that value systems and socio-political morality can, in some cases, exist independently of inter-group differences and cross-sect group boundaries (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, p. 45). However, this work has neither theorized nor measured the impact that these moral convictions might have for collective action. This is precisely what we explore in this article.

### ***Integrating moral conviction with SIMCA***

Psychological theorizing and research on morality suggests that perceiving one's attitudes as subjectively universal (i.e., as 'absolute truths') is an important aspect of subjective morality, sometimes referring to this aspect as one of its hallmarks (e.g., Haidt, Koller, & Dias, 1993; Skitka *et al.*, 2005; Turiel, 1983). At least for the purpose of our research, we follow this work and thus subscribe to a deontological definition of morality (for an extensive review, see Haidt & Kesebir, 2010). This line of research shows that violations of absolute stances demand strong and motivated responses (e.g., Mullen & Skitka, 2006; Tetlock, 2002; Tetlock, Kirstel, Elson, Green, & Lerner, 2000; Van Zomeren & Lodewijckx, 2005). In line with this conceptualization, we define moral convictions as strong and absolute stances on moral issues, which, as a consequence, do not tolerate any exception to the 'higher-order' principle. When moral convictions are violated, individuals therefore experience strong feelings of anger towards moral transgressors, seeking to punish and exclude them in order to defend their conviction (e.g., Skitka, Bauman, & Mullen, 2004; Tetlock *et al.*, 2000; Van Zomeren & Lodewijckx, 2005). Research also shows that individuals may feel the need to reaffirm their moral stance by acting on it (Tetlock *et al.*, 2000; Van Zomeren & Lodewijckx, 2005). Indeed, moral conviction holders should be quite likely to act on their convictions because their convictions legitimise and even necessitate action (Skitka *et al.*, 2005; Skitka & Bauman, 2008).<sup>1</sup>

We believe that the acceptance of moral concerns as subjectively universal and thus as absolute standards has important consequences for the psychology of collective action and social change. Of course, moral convictions tend to be extrapolated from the normative systems and codes of conduct within groups – they may arise out of, or are imbued with social meaning within, a process of consensualization (e.g., Haslam *et al.*, 1998; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). But the *subject* of these moral concerns is special: They may develop within specific groups, but as soon as they acquire the status of moral convictions, almost by definition, they transcend group boundaries. The tendency to accept moral judgments as absolute is undoubtedly subject to the same processes of social construction. However, once a person has acquired a set of moral concerns and holds them as convictions, they override any 'lower-order'

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<sup>1</sup> According to Haidt (2007), political liberals moralize values such as equality and individual rights (which often relate to seeking social change), but conservatives also moralize loyalty to one's group, and respect for authority (which often relate to preventing social change; e.g., good patriots should stand by our government). We focus on liberal values because we are interested in predicting collective action to achieve social change.

concerns: Moral convictions demand adherence *irrespective* of the actor or subject that concerns them (cf. Baray, Postmes, & Jetten, 2009). In a sense, therefore, moral convictions have the psychological consequence of *depersonalizing* the person who holds them. Thus, paradoxically, 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.

Moral convictions thus directly connect the individual to higher-order principles, and they demand adherence to these principles. This may involve a particular form of depersonalization of the individual in relation to an *ideal* or principle (rather than to a particular group or social stratum). However, if a social identity is geared towards the realization of an ideal or principle, moral convictions may thereby strongly increase the adherence to that social identity. In self-categorization language, this constitutes a *normative fit* between the content of the social identity and moral conviction in question (Turner *et al.*, 1987). For example, a moral conviction against social inequality might provide a strong normative fit with a social identity that represents fighting a particular social inequality (e.g., Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2010). This is not just a definitional issue – because politicized identities are more strongly geared toward collective action than non-politicized identities (because group norms toward action are often more vague for non-politicized identities; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Van Zomeren, Postmes, *et al.*, 2008), politicized identities represent a conceptual bridge between seemingly individualistic moral convictions and the social identities that form the psychological basis for collective action. The link between moral convictions and politicized identities can therefore explain how seemingly individualistic moral convictions can have collective consequences.

This line of thought effectively integrates moral conviction with SIMCA. Because violated moral convictions can potentially show a strong normative fit with the content of social identities themselves, they should energise collective action on the basis of a relevant social identity, which also forms the psychological basis for group-based anger and group efficacy beliefs as predictors of collective action. We thus predict that violated moral convictions amplify not only politicized identification, but also group-based anger, group efficacy beliefs, and collective action. In turn, politicized identification, group-based anger, and group efficacy should predict collective action. Together, these predictions represent our integrative model (depicted in Figure 1).<sup>2</sup> We tested these predictions in two empirical studies with different moral issues, contexts, and populations.

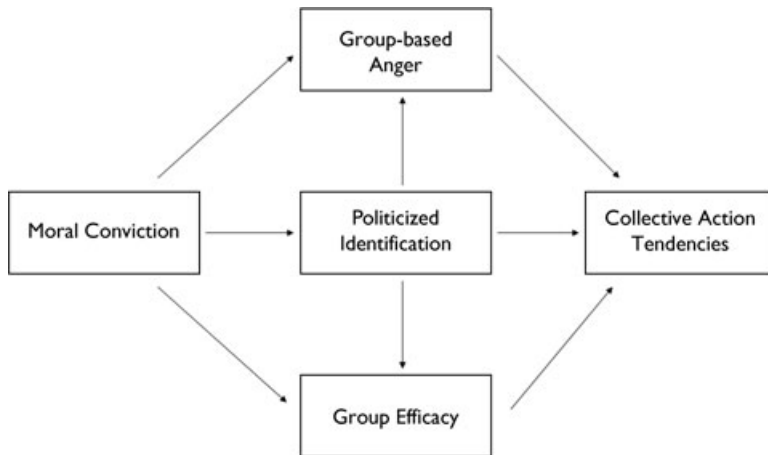
## STUDY I

### Method

#### *Participants and procedure*

Ninety Dutch participants (19 men, 71 women; mean age = 20.51 years) participated voluntarily by completing a questionnaire in the context of a student union protest

<sup>2</sup> Our model allows for the possibility that politicized identification does not fully explain the relationships between moral conviction, group-based anger, and group efficacy. Because anger is a common response to norm violations, moral convictions may increase anger independent of a relevant social identity. Moreover, the absolute stance so central to moral convictions implies that others must also be ready to act to defend one's convictions – a factor that increases group efficacy independent of increases in social identification (Van Zomeren *et al.*, 2004). We discuss this possibility in the General Discussion.



**Figure 1.** Integrative model.

against a proposed increase in tuition fees in the Netherlands. The questionnaire was introduced as a joint study of the student union and a Dutch university that contained a questionnaire section with measures of moral conviction, group-based anger, group efficacy, politicized and non-politicized identification, and collective action tendencies. Participants received a booklet that introduced the collective disadvantage. This introduction stated that the university and the student union had decided to join forces in order to examine how students think about an increase of tuition fees. The following page introduced the questions that comprised our measures. All measures employed seven-point response scales (ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*). Table 1 provides the correlations between the key measures.

## Measures

### *Moral conviction*

Moral conviction was measured with six items that tap the strong and absolute stance on a moral issue that moral conviction represents ( $M = 3.30$ ;  $SD = 1.17$ ;  $\alpha = .88$ : 'My opinion about increased tuition fees is important to me', 'My opinion about increased tuition fees is an important part of my moral norms and values', 'I believe that my opinion about increased tuition fees has a moral character', 'My opinion about increased tuition

**Table 1.** Correlations between key measures, Study I

	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Moral conviction	.45*	.53*	.35*	.05	.52*
2. Politicized identification		.45*	.61*	.50*	.73*
3. Group-based anger			.33*	.26*	.65*
4. Group efficacy				.48*	.63*
5. Non-politicized identification					.54*
6. Collective action tendencies					

\* $p < .05$ .

fees is a universal moral value that should apply everywhere in the world', 'There is only one true stance on this issue, and that is my stance', and 'My opinion about increased tuition fees reflects an important part of who I am'). In line with our definition of moral conviction, these items reflect the strength or importance of one's opinion as well the absolute stance on a moral issue. We included the last item because moral convictions reflect important domains of the self. A principal axis factoring analysis with oblique rotation extracted one factor that predicted 55.63% of the variance, with factor loadings ranging from .61 to .90.

#### *Predictors of collective action*

We measured group efficacy with four items ( $M = 4.72$ ;  $SD = 1.01$ ;  $\alpha = .88$ : 'As students, I think we can change these plans to increase tuition fees', 'As students, I think we can influence this situation', 'I think that, as students, we can successfully defend our interests together', and 'I think that, as students, we can change this situation together'). We also measured group-based anger with three items ( $M = 4.54$ ;  $SD = 1.67$ ;  $\alpha = .95$ ; i.e., 'As a student, I feel *angry/furious/outraged* because of this plan'). A principal axis factoring analysis with oblique rotation extracted two factors that predicted 74.73% of the variance, and with the four group efficacy items loading on one factor, and the three group-based anger items loading on the other factor, with factor loadings ranging from .64 to .97.

We further measured politicized identification with four items ( $M = 4.34$ ;  $SD = 1.21$ ;  $\alpha = .90$ ; i.e., 'I see myself as a member of the student union', 'I identify with members of the student union', 'I feel strong ties with the student union', and 'I am proud of the student union'), and non-politicized identification with four items ( $M = 5.76$ ;  $SD = 1.08$ ;  $\alpha = .91$ ; 'I see myself as a student', 'I identify with students', 'I feel strong ties with the group of students', and 'I am proud of students as a group'). A principal axis factoring analysis with oblique rotation extracted two factors that predicted 73.59% of the variance, with the four non-politicized identification items loading on one factor, and the four politicized identification items loading on the other factor, with factor loadings ranging from .73 to .91.

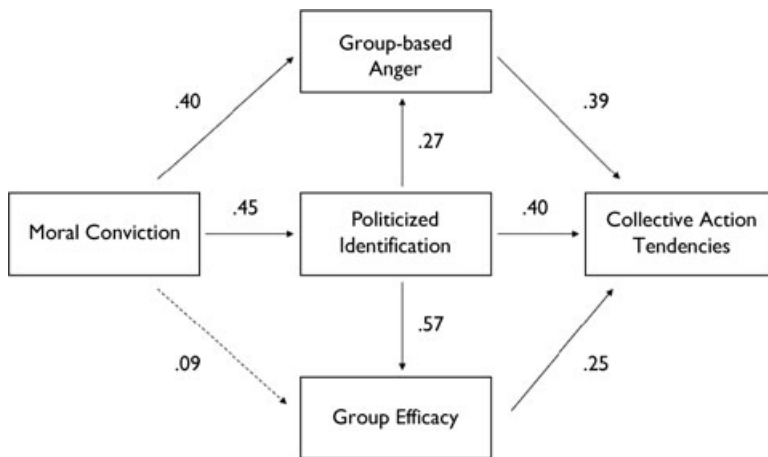
Finally, we measured collective action tendencies with four items ( $M = 4.96$ ;  $SD = 1.40$ ;  $\alpha = .92$ ; 'I would participate in a demonstration against an increase in tuition fees', 'I would like to sign a petition against this issue', 'I would like to do something together against this issue', and 'I would like to do something against this plan'). A principal axis factoring analysis with oblique rotation extracted one factor that predicted 75.65% of the variance, with factor loadings ranging from .74 to .96.

## **Results**

Gender and age did not influence the results. The results later report the findings uncontrolled for gender and age.

#### ***Predicting collective action tendencies***

Predictions were first tested with a series of multiple regression analyses. Results showed that, as expected, moral conviction predicted collective action tendencies ( $\beta = .52$ ,  $p < .01$ ), group-based anger ( $\beta = .53$ ,  $p < .01$ ), group efficacy ( $\beta = .35$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and politicized identification ( $\beta = .45$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In contrast, and in line with our integrative



**Figure 2.** Integrative model, Study 1.

analysis, moral conviction did not predict non-politicized identification ( $\beta = .05$ ,  $p > .61$ ).<sup>3</sup>

In the next step, we regressed collective action tendencies onto moral conviction, politicized identification, group-based anger, and group efficacy. Results showed that, as predicted, the effect of moral conviction was no longer significant ( $\beta = .07$ ,  $p > .34$ ), and that politicized identification ( $\beta = .39$ ,  $p < .01$ ), group-based anger ( $\beta = .36$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and group efficacy ( $\beta = .25$ ,  $p < .01$ ) predicted collective action tendencies. To make sure that these results cannot be explained by non-politicized identification, we added this variable as another predictor in the analysis. Results were similar and additionally showed an independent effect of non-politicized identification on collective action tendencies ( $\beta = .21$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Thus, moral conviction had a special link with politicized identification and collective action.

### Structural equation modelling

We then tested our integrative model through structural equation modelling (which has, compared to multiple regression analysis, the benefit of simultaneous parameter estimation; Kline, 1998). This also allows for an assessment of, and comparison with, alternative models. We used EQS 6.1 to test the fit of our integrative model. The model fit the data well, with a non-significant chi-square statistic,  $\chi^2(2) = 1.14$ ,  $p > .56$ , indicating that the hypothesized covariance matrix did not differ from the actual covariance matrix. Other fit indices corroborated this evaluation of the model as very good: CFI = 1.00, GFI = 1.00, SRMR = .02, RMSEA = .00. The model explained 69% of the variance in collective action tendencies.

Inspection of the parameter estimates (see Figure 2) showed that all were positive and significant, with the exception of the parameter estimating the relationship between

<sup>3</sup> Both studies included two-item measures of perceived unfairness of collective disadvantage ( $r = .65$ , and  $r = .55$ , both  $ps < .001$ , respectively [i.e., to what extent do you think that ... is unfair/illegitimate?]). Above and beyond the perception of group-based unfairness, moral conviction predicted politicized identification (Study 1,  $\beta = .37$ ,  $p < .01$ ; Study 2,  $\beta = .31$ ,  $p < .01$ ), group-based anger (Study 1,  $\beta = .34$ ,  $p < .01$ ; Study 2,  $\beta = .28$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and group efficacy (Study 1,  $\beta = .29$ ,  $p < .01$ ; Study 2,  $\beta = .49$ ,  $p < .01$ ).



moral conviction and group efficacy. Indeed, the Wald-test for model modification indicated that this parameter could be omitted from the model without worsening model fit. This result can be interpreted as being in line with a full mediation account of the relationship between moral conviction and group efficacy through politicized identification (i.e., moral conviction increases group efficacy entirely because of its link with politicized identification).

Because the causal predictions in the model are tested on correlational data, we also tested the viability of a number of alternative models. The first alternative model reversed the moral conviction and politicized identification variables, which suggests that moral conviction rather than politicized identification is the mediating variable. This model did not fit the data well, with a significant chi-square statistic,  $\chi^2(2) = 22.04$ ,  $p < .01$ , indicating that the hypothesized covariance matrix differed from the actual covariance matrix. Other fit indices corroborated this evaluation of the model: CFI = .90, GFI = .92, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .34. The second alternative model portrayed moral conviction as a correlate of politicized identification, and as an independent predictor of collective action tendencies. This model did not fit the data either,  $\chi^2(3) = 17.07$ ,  $p < .01$ , CFI = .92, GFI = .93, SRMR = .10, RMSEA = .23. Finally, we tested the alternative model that treats moral conviction as a predictor of collective action tendencies, and as completely independent of any SIMCA variables. Again, this alternative model did not fit the data,  $\chi^2(4) = 47.08$ ,  $p < .01$ , CFI = .78, GFI = .82, SRMR = .27, RMSEA = .35. In sum, the predicted model received better support than any of the alternative models.

## Discussion

The results of Study 1 provide support for our novel integration of moral conviction and SIMCA. Moral conviction predicted politicized (but not non-politicized) identification, which in turn predicted group-based anger, group efficacy, and collective action tendencies. Group-based anger and group efficacy also predicted collective action tendencies. These results suggest that there is indeed a special link between moral conviction, politicized identification, and collective action.

Despite these encouraging first results, Study 1 has several potential limitations. For one, we measured collective action tendencies rather than actual behaviour. Meta-analytic evidence suggests that the use of such proxies in collective action research inflates effect sizes but does not invalidate their effects (Van Zomeren, Postmes, *et al.*, 2008). It follows that our current results would have been weaker if we had measured actual behaviour. Because our integrative model explained 69% of the variance in individuals' collective action tendencies (i.e., a very high percentage), this does not appear to be a major cause for concern. However, to put this assumption to the test, we included a measure of actual behaviour in Study 2 (i.e., signing a petition).

We also focused on a different population and context in Study 2. Although the Study 1 student population has been used more often in collective action research, a critic might point to the relatively low mean score on the moral conviction scale. On average, students indeed did not appear to be strongly morally bound to the issue of increased tuition fees. Although this should have only worked *against* our hypotheses, thus providing a conservative test of our integrative model, we nevertheless wanted to test our model employing an issue that would be more likely to be moralized on average. Study 2 thus aimed to replicate support for our integrative model with a different moral issue and population, and see if the model would predict actual behaviour.

## STUDY 2

### Method

#### *Participants and procedure*

One-hundred-and-eighteen Italian participants (62 men, 52 women, four unknown; mean age = 24.77 years) participated voluntarily by completing a questionnaire in the context of a Greenpeace protest against the non-visible use of cloned (i.e., genetically modified) meat in consumer products. The questionnaire was introduced as a joint study of Greenpeace and an Italian university that contained a questionnaire section with measures of moral conviction, group-based anger, efficacy, politicized and non-politicized identification, collective action tendencies, and provided an opportunity to sign a Greenpeace petition against the non-visible use of cloned meat in consumer products.

Participants received a booklet that introduced the collective disadvantage. This introduction stated that the Italian university and Greenpeace had decided to join forces in order to examine how people think about important issues related to cloned food. The survey continued with information about cloned food, and about the plan of the European Committee that allowed food producers to use cloned meat in their products without mentioning this clearly on food labels. The issue thus concerned consumers' 'right to know'. The following page introduced the questions that composed our measures. As in Study 1, all measures employed seven-point response scales (ranging from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*). The final page provided the opportunity to sign the petition.

#### *Measures*

In Study 2, we were faced with space constraints in the questionnaire. We therefore assessed some of the constructs with fewer items than in Study 1. As can be seen further, however, all scales were reliable, and the results of factor analyses were similar to those in Study 1. Table 2 provides the correlations between the key measures.

#### *Moral conviction*

Moral conviction was measured in this study with three items also used in Study 1 ( $M = 5.29$ ;  $SD = 1.30$ ;  $\alpha = .78$ ; with the items: 'My opinion about the right to know is an important part of my moral norms and values', 'I believe that my opinion about the right to know has a moral character', and 'My opinion about the right to know is a universal moral value that should apply everywhere in the world'). These items were chosen

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

	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Moral conviction	.41*	.35*	.52*	.49*	.45*
2. Politicized identification		.51*	.32*	.36*	.59*
3. Group-based anger			.30*	.52*	.56*
4. Group efficacy				.42*	.44*
5. Non-politicized identification					.44*
6. Collective action tendencies					

\* $p < .05$ .

because they reflect the very essence of moral convictions – strong and absolute stances on moral issues. A principal axis factoring analysis with oblique rotation extracted one factor that predicted 69.89% of the variance, with factor loadings ranging from .77 to .92. Given the relatively high mean score on this measure, it seems this issue was more moralized than the Study 1 issue.

#### *Predictors of collective action*

We measured group efficacy with 4 items also used in Study 1 ( $M = 4.92$ ;  $SD = 1.50$ ;  $\alpha = .88$ ; 'As consumers, I think we can change these plans of the European Committee', 'As consumers, I think we can influence this situation'; 'I think that, as consumers, we can successfully defend our interests together', and 'I think that, as consumers, we can change this situation together'). We measured group-based anger with two items also used in Study 1 ( $M = 4.09$ ;  $SD = 1.63$ ;  $r = .84$ ,  $p < .01$ ; i.e., 'As a consumer, I feel *angry/furious* because of these plans of the European Committee'). A principal axis factoring analysis with oblique rotation extracted two factors that predicted 71.53% of the variance, and with the four group efficacy items loading on one factor, and the two group-based anger items loading on the other factor, with factor loadings ranging from .74 to .95.

We further measured politicized identification with three items also used in Study 1 ( $M = 4.56$ ;  $SD = 1.53$ ;  $\alpha = .92$ ; 'I see myself as a member of Greenpeace', 'I identify with Greenpeace members', and 'I feel strong ties with Greenpeace'), and non-politicized identification with three items also used in Study 1 ( $M = 5.36$ ;  $SD = 1.17$ ;  $\alpha = .70$ ; 'I see myself as a consumer', 'I identify with consumers', and 'I feel strong ties with the group of consumers'). A principal axis factoring analysis with oblique rotation extracted two factors that predicted 62.65% of the variance, and with the three politicized identification items loading on one factor, and the three non-politicized identification items loading on the other factor. Factor loadings ranged from .60 to .94.

Finally, we measured collective action tendencies with four items also used in Study 1 ( $M = 4.44$ ;  $SD = 1.54$ ;  $\alpha = .91$ ; i.e., 'I would participate in a demonstration against this issue', 'I would like to do something together against this issue', 'I would like to do something with other consumers against this issue', and 'I would like to do something against these plans'). A principal axis factoring analysis with oblique rotation extracted one factor that predicted 71.33% of the variance, with factors loading ranging from .79 to .90.

#### *Collective action*

Moving beyond Study 1, we measured actual collective action through the signing of a Greenpeace petition (1 = signed the petition, and 0 = did not sign the petition). In total, 44 out of 118 participants signed the petition (=37.3%).

## **Results**

Gender and age were controlled for in initial analyses, but, as in Study 1, these variables did not influence the results and are not controlled for in analyses further.

#### ***Predicting collective action tendencies and collective action***

Predictions were tested with a series of multiple regression analyses. Results replicated the Study 1 results: Moral conviction predicted collective action tendencies ( $\beta = .45$ ,

$p < .01$ ), group-based anger ( $\beta = .35, p < .01$ ), group efficacy ( $\beta = .52, p < .01$ ), politicized identification ( $\beta = .41, p < .01$ ), and, importantly, actual behaviour (by linear regression:  $\beta = .19, p < .04$ ; by binary logistic regression:  $B = .33, SE = .16, \chi^2(1) = 4.25, p < .02$ ). Different from Study 1, moral conviction also predicted non-politicized identification ( $\beta = .49, p < .01$ ).

We then regressed collective action tendencies onto moral conviction, politicized identification, group-based anger, and group efficacy. Replicating Study 1, and in line with our integrative model, the effect of moral conviction was no longer significant ( $\beta = .15, p > .07$ ), with politicized identification ( $\beta = .35, p < .01$ ), group-based anger ( $\beta = .25, p < .01$ ), and group efficacy ( $\beta = .16, p < .05$ ) all predicting collective action tendencies. To check whether non-politicized identification played an unexpected role in Study 2, we added this variable as another predictor in the analysis. Results showed that it did not predict collective action tendencies ( $\beta = .02, p > .82$ ). Hence, consistent with Study 1, moral conviction had a special link with politicized (rather than non-politicized) identification and collective action tendencies.

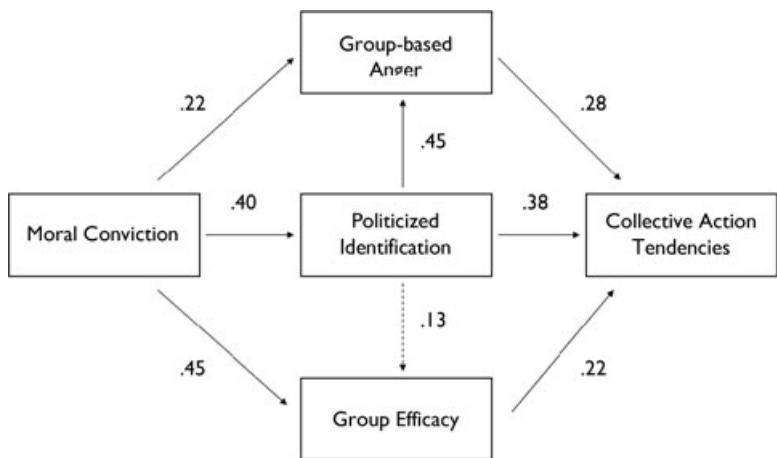
We subsequently extended our integrative model to include actual behaviour. We already observed that moral conviction predicted signing the petition. The model predicts that, when entering moral conviction, politicized identification, group-based anger, and group efficacy and collective action tendencies as predictors, only the latter would predict signing the petition (as it is the most proximal variable to actual behaviour; see Van Zomeren, Postmes, *et al.*, 2008). In line with expectations, results showed indeed that only collective action tendencies (by linear regression:  $\beta = .37, p < .01$ ; by binary logistic regression:  $B = .63, SE = .22, \chi^2(1) = 8.21, p < .01$ ) predicted actual collective action (for all other parameters,  $p > .39$  in the first analysis, and  $p > .30$  in the second).

### Structural equation modelling

As in Study 1, we tested our integrative model and a number of alternative models through structural equation modelling. Our integrative model (with collective action tendencies as the outcome variable) again fit the data quite well,  $\chi^2(2) = 4.92, p > .08$ ; CFI = .98, GFI = .98, SRMR = .04. Although the RMSEA (= .11) was higher than is ideally the case, tests for model modification did not suggest that the model could be significantly improved by dropping or adding a parameter. The model explained 47% of the variance in collective action tendencies.

Inspection of the parameter estimates (see Figure 3) showed, as in Study 1, that all were positive and significant, with the exception of the parameter estimating the relationship between politicized identification and group efficacy. Indeed, the Wald-test for model modification indicated that this parameter could be dropped from the model without losing model fit. Thus, the Study 2 results showed two differences compared with the Study 1 results. First, the relationship between *moral conviction* and group efficacy was positive and significant in Study 2 (but not significant in Study 1), and the relationship between *politicized identification* and group efficacy was not significant in Study 2 (but significant in Study 1). In the light of testing the considerable number of relationships between variables simultaneously across the two studies, however, the correct predictions made by our integrative model by far outnumber these inconsistencies. We interpret and discuss the inconsistencies further in the discussion section later.

As in Study 1, we tested a number of alternative models. The first alternative model reversed the moral conviction and politicized identification variables, which suggests



**Figure 3.** Integrative model, Study 2.

that moral conviction is the mediating variable. This model did not fit the data well,  $\chi^2(2) = 17.78$ ,  $p < .01$ , CFI = .90, GFI = .94, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .27. The second alternative model portrayed moral conviction as a correlate of politicized identification, and as an independent predictor of collective action. This model did not fit the data either,  $\chi^2(3) = 31.58$ ,  $p < .01$ , CFI = .83, GFI = .89, SRMR = .13, RMSEA = .29. Finally, we tested an alternative model that treats moral conviction as a distinct predictor of collective action, and as independent of any SIMCA variable. Again, this alternative model did not fit the data,  $\chi^2(4) = 59.02$ ,  $p < .01$ , CFI = .67, GFI = .82, SRMR = .25, RMSEA = .35. Thus, the Study 2 data provide more support for our predicted model than for a number of alternative models.

Finally, we tested the fit of our integrative model including actual behaviour as a consequence of collective action tendencies. This model also fit the data very well,  $\chi^2(6) = 6.06$ ,  $p > .41$ , CFI = 1.00, GFI = 1.00, SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .01. Inspection of the parameter estimates showed the same pattern as depicted in Figure 3, with the addition of a positive and significant parameter between tendencies and behaviour ( $= .42$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The model explained 18% of the variance in collective action. By contrast, none of the alternative models fit the data (alternative 1:  $\chi^2(6) = 18.94$ ,  $p < .01$ , CFI = .93, GFI = .95, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .14; alternative 2:  $\chi^2(7) = 32.74$ ,  $p < .01$ , CFI = .86, GFI = .91, SRMR = .11, RMSEA = .18; alternative 3:  $\chi^2(8) = 51.87$ ,  $p < .01$ , CFI = .76, GFI = .88, SRMR = .19, RMSEA = .22). Thus, the Study 2 data extend our integrative model to include actual behaviour.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> We also tested the significance of the indirect effects using bootstrapping analyses as recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008). Study 1 showed that the total indirect effect was significant (confidence interval [CI] = .17–.56), with unique significant contributions of politicized identification (CI = .06–.32), group-based anger (CI = .01–.26), and group efficacy (CI = .01–.20). Study 2 replicated these findings, with a significant total indirect effect (CI = .17–.56), and unique contributions of politicized identification (CI = .06–.32), group-based anger (CI = .01–.26), and group efficacy (CI = .01–.20).

## Discussion

The results of Study 2 largely replicate, and importantly move beyond, the results of Study 1. While Study 2 focused on a different moral issue and a different population, results showed in line with our integrative model that moral conviction predicted politicized identification, which predicted group-based anger, and group efficacy, collective action tendencies, and actual collective action. Group-based anger and group efficacy also predicted collective action tendencies and collective action. This supports our prediction that there is a special link between moral conviction, politicized identification, and collective action, which explains how seemingly individualistic moral convictions can have collective consequences. Moreover, the Study 2 results move beyond those of Study 1 by demonstrating that our novel SIMCA model also predicts actual behaviour (i.e., signing a petition), although, unsurprisingly, to a smaller extent than it predicts collective action tendencies. This pattern of results is fully in line with the meta-analytic findings on which SIMCA was originally tested (Van Zomeren, Postmes, *et al.*, 2008).

The Study 2 findings diverged somewhat from the Study 1 findings in terms of the relationships between moral conviction, politicized identification and group efficacy beliefs. Although in both studies the correlations between the variables were positive and significant (as predicted by our integrative model), only the Study 1 data suggested that the relationship between moral conviction and group efficacy was fully mediated by politicized identification. We believe that the most likely explanation for this inconsistency is that identification with the student union, as compared to identification with Greenpeace, might be associated with a stronger sense of (issue-specific) collective agency. Student unions, for example, are specifically focused on fighting increases in tuition fees efficiently, and thus identification with the union is a good basis for assessing group efficacy beliefs (as found in Study 1). This may be the case to a lesser extent for identification with Greenpeace (as found in Study 2), which is an organization whose targets are more diffuse than GM foods alone. We believe this might be the reason for why one's assessment of the group's efficacy for tackling any specific issue was not grounded in the Greenpeace identity as strongly as in the student union identity. Of course, future research is necessary to establish the validity of this explanation.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

The results of two studies supported our integration of moral conviction with SIMCA with respect to predicting collective action tendencies (Study 1 and 2) and actual behaviour (Study 2). These data support the idea that moral convictions, at least when violated, can energise collective action through a relevant social identity, and hence have collective consequences. This relevant identity is more likely a politicized than a non-politicized identity because the former typically has a stronger normative content and is more strongly geared toward collective action to realize the ideals that moral convictions and politicized identity have in common. Our integrative model thus unites seemingly individualistic moral convictions with group-based variables and processes that lead to collective action (as identified by SIMCA) through social identity content. Given the lack of integration between the moral conviction and collective action literatures (e.g., Van Zomeren & Spears, 2009), our integrative model represents a conceptual advance because we specify what is so special about moral convictions (i.e., the violation of strong and absolute stances on moral issues that tolerate no exceptions) that creates such a potentially strong and special link with politicized identification and collective

action. Further, we discuss the theoretical and practical implications of our integrative model, as well as limitations and directions for future research.

### Theoretical implications

The current results provide novel insights into the psychology of collective action by offering a strong pointer toward moral convictions as energisers of the three predictors of collective action identified by SIMCA. Our view of moral conviction specifies and explicates that the experience of a violation of a strong and absolute stance on a moral issue is what is so special about this particular variable. As such the current work makes clear that collective action theorists should disentangle individuals' perceptions of illegitimacy (e.g., Ellemers, 1993; Mummendey *et al.*, 1999; Tajfel, 1978) or relative deprivation (e.g., Folger, 1986, 1987) from having a moral conviction about collective disadvantage.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, our results broaden the domain of actions that moral convictions are known to influence. Whereas it has been found that moral convictions play an important motivational role in predicting, for example, voting behaviour (Skitka & Bauman, 2008), our findings link them to participation in *collective* action on the basis of a relevant social identity (i.e., signing a petition, Study 2). Moral convictions may therefore play a larger role in individuals' participation in civic society than was hitherto thought.

It is important to reiterate that our integrative model moves beyond the assumption that moral conviction is solely based in the personal self. Whereas theory and research on moral conviction has utilized the personal self as the basis for moral convictions (e.g., Skitka *et al.*, 2005; Turiel, 1983), the current results show strong evidence that moral convictions are not restricted to the domain of the personal self (see also Tetlock, 2002). This is an important first step in theory development about the nature and effects of moral convictions on group processes, which weds the power of moral convictions to energise action with the power of social identities as psychological platforms for collective action (Van Zomeren, Postmes, *et al.*, 2008; see also Van Zomeren & Spears, 2009).

An important next step would be to further examine the relationship between moral conviction and politicized identification. Currently, we view this relationship as a two-way relationship. First, from a self-categorization perspective individuals may join groups within which strong group norms develop that are adopted by group members. In this scenario, the psychological process that links moral convictions to group identification is *self-stereotyping* (e.g., Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997; Meeus, Duriez, Vanbeselaere, & Boen, in press; Pehrson, Brown, & Zagefka, 2009). However, we believe that it is also possible that individuals develop moral convictions and then project them onto a relevant social identity. In this scenario, the process is more likely one of *self-anchoring* than self-stereotyping (e.g., Cadinu & Rothbart, 1996; Otten & Wentura, 2001). It is clear that the correlational nature of the current studies does not enable us to pinpoint

<sup>5</sup> Our line of thought implies that moral conviction cannot be reduced to perceptions of unfairness, or feelings of group-based anger. In Study 1, principal axis factoring with oblique rotation extracted two factors when including the six moral conviction items and the three anger items (explained variance was 66.85%), with each item loading on its predicted factor (for moral conviction, factor loadings >.62; for anger, factor loadings >.89). A similar analysis extracted two factors when including the six moral conviction items and two unfairness items (explained variance 60.09%), with each item loading on its predicted factor (for moral conviction, factor loadings >.62; for unfairness, factor loadings >.67). In Study 2, factor analyses including the unfairness items failed to produce a factor solution, but principal axis factoring including the three moral conviction items and two anger items extracted two factors (explained variance was 78.96%), with each item loading on its predicted factor (for moral conviction, factor loadings >.75; for anger, factor loadings >.94). Thus, our data support the idea that moral conviction cannot be reduced to unfairness or anger.



which of the two processes underlies our findings. Our analysis nonetheless offers a clear pointer toward future theory and research to experimentally flesh out these possibilities.

Another important implication of our current findings is that we need to know more about what politicized identities are. Although our results are in line with our argument that politicized identities have a stronger normative content and are more geared towards collective action than non-politicized identities (e.g., Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Stürmer & Simon, 2004; Van Zomeren, Postmes, *et al.*, 2008), these differences can be examined more rigorously in future research. For example, although Simon and Klandermans (2001) offered multiple aspects of the process of politicization (i.e., shared grievances, adversarial attributions, and involvement of society at large), research has not yet translated these aspects into measures of politicized identity. Instead, and as in the current studies, researchers have relied on proxies such identification with a social movement organization (e.g., the union, Greenpeace). We note that our integrative model to some extent accommodates Simon and Klandermans' (2001) conditions for politicization. For example, shared grievances and adversarial attributions reflect the phenomenology of group-based anger (e.g., Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991), which explains the positive and significant relationships between politicized identification and group-based anger that we found in the current studies. Moreover, individuals' realization of the involvement of society at large might reflect that moral convictions should be applied to all, everywhere, and at all times, which suggests a strong motivation to impose one's stance onto the world at large. We believe that moral convictions, and in particular its aspect of subjective absolutism, might be an important 'missing link' in our understanding of how non-politicized identities transform into politicized identities – with moral convictions shaping such social identity content.<sup>6</sup>

A final implication of our integrative model is that moral convictions and their effects cannot be reduced to the individual or group level. Indeed, moral convictions might actually contribute more to explaining collective action than their potentially strong normative fit with a relevant social identity that gears group members up for action. Specifically, our data show that politicized identification does not always *fully* explain the relationships between moral conviction on the one hand, and group-based anger, group efficacy, and collective action (tendencies) on the other hand. In both Study 1 and 2, for example, politicized identification only partially explained the effect of moral conviction on group-based anger. As noted in Footnote 2, however, anger is a common response to norm violations, and it is very well possible that violated moral convictions increase anger independent of any relevant social identity. Moreover, the absolute stance so central to moral convictions implies that others *must* also be ready to act to defend one's convictions – a factor that increases group efficacy beliefs independent of increases in social identification (Van Zomeren *et al.*, 2004). Thus, although SIMCA's focus on social identity as bridging these levels is clearly confirmed in the current studies, it is also clear that violated moral convictions can influence group-based anger and group efficacy beliefs independent of social identity. This constitutes another interesting avenue for future research.

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<sup>6</sup> Our analysis further contributes to theory and research on descriptive group norms (i.e., what group members do) and injunctive group norms (i.e., what group members ought to do; Spears, Lea, & Lee, 1990) by differentiating group norms that are perceived as absolute and hence allow no violation (i.e., moral convictions). Whereas group members might forgive a violation of a descriptive norm more than a violation of an injunctive norm, our analysis suggests that forgiveness is unlikely when a moral conviction is violated.



### **Practical implications**

Our integrative model provides new practical implications because of its inclusion of moral convictions. In general, our findings suggest that social movements and other organizations that seek to mobilize individuals to achieve social change should focus on their moral convictions, as well as on their politicized identification, group-based anger, and group efficacy beliefs. These factors do not only stimulate individuals' collective action tendencies (Study 1 and 2), but also their actual behaviour (Study 2). More specifically, the special link between moral conviction, politicized identification and collective action suggests that organizations should not only communicate and express the organization's identity, but also make clear what it *normatively means* to be a group member. In fact, such groups should clearly communicate on which issues or domains they cannot tolerate exceptions (i.e., 'we will never compromise on GM foods'). Setting such absolute standards in the context of collective disadvantage should resonate with those who have such convictions, and thus energise their identification with the organization, their group-based anger, group efficacy beliefs, and their (willingness to undertake) collective action.

However, it is easy to imagine backlash effects of too strong a focus on absolute stances. It is quite possible that by communicating absolute standards to group members, one is actually imposing a key criterion for group membership. This implies that by communicating absolute standards to group members one is effectively *excluding* those who may share one's strong but non-absolute stance on a moral issue, which effectively turns friends into foes (Van Zomeren, 2010). Such dynamics go against the goal of mobilizing as many individuals as possible to achieve social change. It is therefore important to consider one's audience before using references to absolute standards in a mobilization attempt because it might energise 'believers', but alienate 'sympathisers'.

### **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. As much as this is true, it is also true that the study of moral convictions by and of itself almost *has* to rely on measures rather than manipulations of this construct. By its very nature it is hard to meaningfully manipulate moral conviction in the laboratory, and hence it is difficult to establish any causal link that implicates moral conviction. This is not the case for the SIMCA variables, however – previous experimental research has already established that the causal effects of the three predictors on collective action as identified by SIMCA exist (Van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008; see also Van Zomeren et al., 2008; Van Zomeren, Leach, & Spears, 2010). The logical step for future research is therefore to examine whether moral conviction *moderates* individuals' responses to experimental manipulations of the SIMCA variables. Future research can experimentally examine the effects of manipulations of social identification or social identity salience, group-based anger, and group efficacy on collective action among conviction holders versus non-conviction holders.

Another avenue of future research is to extend our integrative model to collective action among the *advantaged*. Indeed, our integrative model might be even more important in explaining collective action among the advantaged than among the disadvantaged because the strong and absolute stance on a moral issue implied by violated moral conviction *overrides* the presumed motivation among the advantaged to protect the status quo. In fact, such violations of moral convictions might harness the

psychological power to motivate the advantaged to undertake collective action on behalf of the disadvantaged group (Van Zomeren *et al.*, 2010).

In closing, we hope that our integration of moral conviction and SIMCA inspires future theory and research on the role of moral convictions in collective action, and on the individual- and group-level nature and effects of moral conviction. We believe this is an important conceptual advance in the collective action literature. As noted by Van Zomeren and Spears (2009), this literature has focused on individuals as *intuitive economists* (e.g., driven by individualistic cost-benefit calculations including efficacy beliefs), *intuitive politicians* (driven by strategic social identity and emotional expression), but now also, with an eye to moral conviction, on individuals as *intuitive theologians* (for an overview of these and other metaphors, see Tetlock, 2002). Our integrative model indeed includes very different but fundamentally interrelated aspects of psychology: Identity, injustice, emotion, efficacy, and moral conviction. The next challenge is therefore to examine when and how these variables interrelate and predict collective action in conjunction.

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