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2022-06-09

Deposited version:

Accepted Version

Peer-review status of attached file:

Peer-reviewed

Citation for published item:

Stathi, S., Vezzali, L., Waldzus, S. & Hantzi, A. (2019). The mobilizing and protective role of national identification in normative and nonnormative collective action. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*. 49 (9), 596-608

Further information on publisher's website:

[10.1111/jasp.12619](https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12619)

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<https://doi.org/10.1111/jasp.12619>

The mobilising and protective role of national identification on normative and non-normative collective action

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Abstract

In the context of the financial crisis in Europe and drawing on social identity and perceived disadvantage literature, this research explored national identification, perceived prejudice, perceived ostracism, and anger as predictors of intentions to engage in normative collective action and support for non-normative, destructive action. Correlational data were collected in Greece ($N = 218$), Portugal ($N = 312$) and Italy ($N = 211$) during the financial crisis that affected several European countries in the early 2010's. Hierarchical regressions showed that national identification, above and beyond all other variables, positively predicted normative collective action, and negatively predicted support for non-normative action. That is, people who identified more strongly with their national identity were more likely to report that they will engage in collective action to enhance the position of their ingroup, and less likely to support destructive collective action. Mediation analyses revealed that in the case of Portugal and Italy, national identification associated negatively with anger, while anger positively predicted normative collective action. The findings of this research point to the importance of national identification as a factor that, on the one hand, motivates people's mobilisation toward supporting the rights of the ingroup but on the other hand, impedes the more negative, destructive side of collective action. The contextual and instrumental role of national identity in contexts of threat is discussed.

KEYWORDS: Collective action, national identity, perceived prejudice, anger, non-normative action

The mobilising and protective role of national identification on normative and non-normative collective action

In the early 2010's several European countries were subjected to a financial crisis that, to an extent, is still ongoing. Greece, Ireland and Portugal were most severely stricken by the crisis, while the economies of Italy, Spain and Cyprus were also affected. In April 2010, the Greek government asked the International Monetary Fund and the European Union to put together a "rescue" package to assist the country's economy. In 2011, the Portuguese government asked for a European Union-International Monetary Fund bailout. The loans from the European Union and the International Monetary Fund came with severe austerity measures. In 2011, also the Italian government pushed for substantial economic reforms to reduce public expenditure. The financial crisis in these countries had dramatic implications in terms of reductions in people's income, exploding unemployment, cuts in public service, while in this context people actively redefined their ingroups and outgroups (Gkinopoulos & Hegarty, 2018). The acute austerity prompted civil unrest and a general sentiment of agony and discontent became salient (Papastamou, Valentim, Mari, & Marchand, 2018). During this period, anti-austerity protests were taking place regularly in the three countries, and civil movements such as the "Indignados" started emerging, indicating large-scale social mobilisation. Demonstrations, square sit-ins, marches and strikes took place in several cities in the three countries, while some protests turned violent (Bacchi, 2012; Dalakoglou, 2011; "EU against austerity: Protesters clash with police amid unrest in Spain, Portugal", 2013; "Greece strike: Police and protesters clash in Athens", 2011).

In this context, where perceived disadvantage, protest movements and civil mobilisation were salient, we conducted our research simultaneously in Greece, Portugal and

Italy. Drawing on recent advances on collective action literature from a social psychological perspective, we examined the predictive roles of identity and cognitive and affective components of perceived disadvantage (perceived prejudice and ostracism, and anger, respectively) on (a) intentions to engage in normative collective action (such as participating in demonstrations, marches and writing of flyers) and (b) support for non-normative, disruptive action (such as destructive action that violates norms and/or breaks the law, see Becker & Tausch (2015)). Specifically, we integrated social identity and social deprivation approaches to understand engagement in collective action and tested whether national identification, perceived prejudice and perceived ostracism by the European Union, and anger predict normative and non-normative collective action, and examined the generalizability of these predictive factors across the three countries. In addition, we tested anger, perceived discrimination and perceived ostracism as potential mediating mechanisms in the identity-collective action path (in line with the social identity perspectives on collective action, Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008).

The social psychological basis of normative collective action

Wright, Taylor and Moghaddam (1990) provide a comprehensible approach of when collective action at a group level takes place indicating that “a group member engages in collective action anytime that he or she is acting as a representative of the group and the action is directed at improving the condition of the entire group” (p. 995). Thus, collective action often aims at confronting injustice or disadvantage on the basis of a group membership. In the context of our research and in line with this definition, people in Greece, Portugal and Italy acted collectively to overcome the disadvantage stemming from the imposed austerity. Broadly speaking, collective action may conform to existing societal norms and rules or disobey them. In other words, collective action can take the form of

normative mobilisations, such as peaceful sit-ins and marches, or non-normative, disruptive and violent acts (Martin & Murray, 1984).

The topic of collective action has been approached from various theoretical perspectives within social sciences. Research from the fields of sociology and political science tends to explore the societal and structural conditions that underlie people's mobilisation (see Klandermans, 1997). Social psychological research focuses less on the structural conditions and more on the individual (i.e. subjective) factors that predict engagement in collective action (Corcoran, Pettinicchio, & Young, 2011; Van Zomeren, 2013; Wright, 2009; for meta-analysis see Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008).

With regard to the core psychological motivations that promote collective action, the central role of social identity, perceived disadvantage and anger have been highlighted (Klandermans, Van der Toorn, & van Stekelenburg, 2008; Tausch et al., 2011; Van Zomeren et al. 2008). People fundamentally perceive their social world in group terms so identifying with a group motivates behaviour and action that aims at the group's interests (see social identity theory, Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In an intergroup context of injustice, individuals' identification with their disadvantaged group leads them to experience disadvantage as shared. Highly identified minority group members are more strongly motivated to enhance their group status (Saguy, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2008), especially when they perceive their disadvantaged status as illegitimate (Ellemers, 1993). Van Zomeren et al. (2008) showed in their meta-analysis that social identity is a moderate-sized predictor of collective action intentions and behaviour. When group identity is salient or threatened people react with strategies of resistance and competition (Van Zomeren et al., 2008).

Research that looks into social identity as a motivator of collective action often explores people's identification with certain protest or opinion-based movements (for example, a politicised protest movement in Becker, Tausch, Spears, & Christ, 2011; the

‘United Nations’ Water for Life’ in Thomas, Mavor, & McGarty, 2012; for the role of politicised identity see Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Turner-Zwinkels, Van Zomeren, & Postmes, 2015) or ingroups that, arguably, do not necessarily evoke high levels of identification (such as being a student, for example in Becker et al., 2011). In our research we place the emphasis on national identity and argue its role will be particularly crucial in predicting collective action because it represents a highly meaningful social identity that motivates people’s attitudes and behaviours (Brown, 2000). In the countries affected by the financial crisis in Europe, national identification may be a particularly salient instigator of mobilisation. In other words, to the extent that national identity is central and meaningful for individuals (Brown, 2000; [see also Emerson, 1962](#)), collective action may represent the potent effort to enhance the position of one’s nation.

When looking into the predictors of collective action, the literature also highlights the role of perceived disadvantage at an intergroup level (Walker & Smith, 2002; Wright & Tropp, 2002). Disadvantaged groups are motivated to enhance their social identity (Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2006) and improve the group’s social position (Bobo, 1999; Mummendey, Kessler, Klick, & Mielke, 1999). Perceptions of injustice and unequal status predict collective action directly (Van Zomeren et al., 2008) and indirectly (Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2009). Van Zomeren et al.’s meta-analysis (2008) found that perceived disadvantage is, like social identity, a moderate-sized predictor of collective action intentions and, to a lesser extent, behaviour. Building on this literature, we suggest that the subjective appreciation that one’s group faces disadvantage predicts collective action. We approach the concept of disadvantage from an intergroup relations perspective, tapping on the cognitive components of perceptions of prejudice and ostracism by the European Union, and the affective component of anger (Van Zomeren, 2013). Perceiving that one’s own nation is discriminated against and ostracized by other nations can reflect the relational nature of

perceived disadvantage which can drive collective action. Similarly, anger represents an affective reaction to perceived disadvantage, and among disadvantaged group members anger is a predictor of collective action (Tausch & Becker, 2012).

Explicitly recognising the disadvantage or injustice targeting one's group in the form of perception of prejudice can motivate collective action (Ellemers & Barreto, 2009; Liss, Crawford, & Popp 2004; Wright & Tropp, 2002). For example, Ellemers and Barreto (2009) looked into modern and old-fashioned sexism and argued that being able to perceive group-level injustice (i.e. perceived sexism) motivates the emergence of collective action. Additionally, Friedman and Leaper (2010) found that experiences of gendered heterosexism (defined as sexist and heterosexist discrimination) was a significant predictor of collective action. Relative to our research, negative stereotyping often accompanied the portrayal of southern Europeans (for example, "lazy" and "disorganised"), while southern Europeans perceived the attitudes of other European Union countries as judgmental, negative and hostile (Van Vossle, 2016). In this setting, a generalised sense of collective disadvantage in relation to other European countries was salient (Lialiouti & Bithymitris, 2017).

In the context of European Union, we suggest that disadvantage manifests not only as perceived prejudice but also as perceived ostracism by other country-members. Extensive research has demonstrated that ostracism threatens people's fundamental needs, such as belonging, self-esteem, control, and the need for a meaningful existence (for review see Williams, 2007). Behavioural reactions to ostracism can range from pro-social in nature (Williams & Sommer, 1997), to socially avoidant to antisocial (Leary, Twenge, & Quinlivan, 2006; for review see Smart Richman & Leary, 2009). Twenge, Catanese, and Baumeister (2003) found that social exclusion can lead to self-defeating behaviours and Carter-Sowell, Chen, and Williams (2008) found that participants who were socially rejected became more socially susceptible, and thus more likely to become manipulated into performing undesirable

acts. Furthermore, perceptions of rejection by the outgroup promoted minority groups' ethnic identification, a process that then increased support for political action to support the ingroup (Barlow, Sibley, & Hornsey, 2012). Based on the research reviewed above, we suggest that perceptions of prejudice and ostracism, both representing cognitive components of perceived disadvantage, will predict engagement in collective action in Greece, Portugal and Italy.

The affective component of perceived disadvantage most closely linked to social mobilisation is anger. When seeking to restore justice anger is the most relevant emotion (Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009; Tausch & Becker, 2012) as it motivates people to act (Klandermans et al., 2008; Van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004; Yzerbyt, Dumont, Wigboldus, & Gordijn, 2003). Livingstone, Spears, Manstead, Bruder, and Shepherd (2011) demonstrated that participants were more willing to engage in collective action when they shared the emotion of anger with other group members. Furthermore, Tausch et al. (2011) showed that anger predicts primarily normative action. Therefore, we suggest that the emotion of anger will be also a predictor of normative collective action in Greece, Portugal and Italy.

Van Zomeren et al. (2008) focused on the psychological motivators of social mobilisation and theorised the social identity model of collective action (SIMCA), which places significant emphasis on the role of social identity and emotion relating to perceived injustice as predictors of collective action. The model, which also highlights the role of efficacy and was then extended to include morality as predictors of action (see Van Zomeren, 2013), has received significant empirical support (Cakal, Hewstone, Schwarz, & Heath, 2011; Chan, 2017; Thomas et al., 2012). Importantly, SIMCA proposes that social identity has a key role both as a *direct* predictor of action and an *indirect* one, exerting its effect via perceptions of disadvantage and reactions to it. Van Zomeren (2013) suggested that it is specifically group-based anger that mediates the relationship between social identity and

action. For example, Van Van Zomeren, Spears, and Leach (2008) found that those who perceive their student identity as an important part of the self reported more anger following the threat to increase university fees, which then predicted collective action tendencies. Thus, we suggest that national identification will predict normative collective action directly, and indirectly via increasing perceptions of disadvantage and specifically perceived prejudice, ostracism and anger.

Non-normative collective action

In this research we explored predictors not only of intentions to engage in normative collective action but also of support for non-normative, disruptive action, a topic that has received less scholarly attention compared to more traditional forms of mobilisation. We argue that this is a particularly noteworthy research avenue, which becomes increasingly relevant to real-world phenomena such as riots and sympathy for extremism (Lyons-Padilla, Gelfand, Mirahmadi, Farooq, & Va Egmond, 2015; see also Jasko, LaFree, & Kruglanski, 2016). In relation to riots specifically, the Elaborated Social Identity Model of crowd behaviour (Drury & Reicher, 2000; Reicher, 1996; Stott & Reicher, 1998a,b) has theorised that crowd events (such as riots) reflect the dynamic interactions between groups (for example, protesters versus police), and these interactions can eventually shape a new sense of social identity and collective action among crowd members. Relative deprivation has been theorised as a key variable instigating acts of violence (Martin & Murray, 1984). Experiences of discrimination have been found to predict violent behaviour (Caldwell, Kohn-Wood, Schmeelk-Cone, Chavous, & Zimmerman, 2004), while negative emotions such as contempt have been linked to non-normative action (Tausch et al., 2011). We therefore tested perceptions of prejudice and ostracism and anger as predictors of support for non-normative action.

While the role of social identity in predicting social mobilisation is established (Van Zomeren et al., 2008), whether it also predicts non-normative, disruptive action is less clear. Within the context of our research, we argue that identification with a meaningful group like that of one's nation will predict (a) increased intentions to engage in normative action because this will likely enhance the rights of one's nation and (b) decreased support for non-normative action. We base this prediction on research that demonstrates the psychological benefits of group identification. A strong and positive ingroup affiliation is related to positive outcomes (Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999). A large body of research supports that a salient and meaningful social identity, for example an ethnic identity, can act protectively at an individual level, for example it can enhance mental health and reduce risk behaviours (Brook, Balka, Brook, Win, & Gursen, 1998; Klonoff, Landrine, & Ullman, 1999; Sellers, Linder, Martin, & Lewis, 2006). More relevant to non-normative, violent behaviours (albeit from an interpersonal perspective), Arbona, Jackson, McCoy, and Blakely (1999) found in a sample of Black American teenagers that ethnic identification was positively associated with attitudes against fighting. Thus, it appears that identifying with one's ingroup, and specifically with one's ethnic group, may protect against engaging in violent behaviours. In other words, we argue that feeling greater attachment to a meaningful ingroup, such as a national ingroup, will motivate people to try to protect the group's rights when facing disadvantage via engaging in normative forms of collective action. However, and critically, since increased affiliation to one's group is linked with supporting and protecting this group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), we expect that increased national identification will be associated with reduced support for non-normative collective action that can harm the disadvantaged group even further.

The current research

Our research explored intentions to engage in normative collective action and support for non-normative, disruptive collective action in the context of the financial crisis in Greece, Portugal and Italy, three country-members of the European Union. This context has interesting connotations regarding not only people's representations of factors that caused the crisis (e.g., individual behaviours or systemic issues) but also participatory activities that aim to challenge the crisis (Papastamou, Valentim, et al., 2018; Papastamou et al., 2018). Drawing upon the literature on perceived disadvantage (e.g., Ellemers & Barreto, 2009; Lialiouti & Bithymitris, 2017; Wright & Tropp, 2002) and the SIMCA (Van Zomeren et al., 2008), we focused on the predictive roles of social identity, and cognitive and affective components of perceived disadvantage, that is perceived prejudice and ostracism by the European Union and anger, as predictors of intentions to engage in normative action. Contributing to the relatively scarce research on non-normative action we also tested the above variables as instigators of support for such action. Previous research has looked into identification with protest movements (such as Greenpeace) or with somewhat limited in scope identities (such as being a student) as a mobilising factor, however such identities may be marginal and not relevant to larger groups of people. In our research, we focused on the role of national identification as a more overarching and meaningful membership that can predict mobilisation intentions and support. This is a relevant social identity when considering the financial crisis in Europe, which affected profoundly specific countries. Furthermore, we examined the generalizability of the predictive role of the variables by conducting the research in three countries, i.e., Greece, Portugal and Italy, and testing our hypotheses separately in each country. We hypothesise that high levels of national identification will predict higher intentions to engage in normative collective action and less support for non-normative action. In line with SIMCA, we further expect that national

identification will exert its effect via increasing cognitive and affective components of perceived disadvantage and specifically perceived prejudice, ostracism and anger.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Our sample consisted of 741 participants from Greece, Portugal and Italy who fully completed the measures under study. The Greek sample comprised 218 participants, 152 females and 66 males (ages ranged from 18 to 67 years, M age = 28.96, SD = 12.04). The Portuguese sample comprised 312 participants, 189 females and 123 males (ages ranged from 17 to 85 years, M age = 30.13, SD = 13.57). The Italian sample comprised 211 participants, 159 females, 52 males (ages ranged from 18 to 70 years, M age = 32.50, SD = 13.90). University students and community participants were approached by research assistants and Lecturers in University lecture halls or via email lists, and were asked to complete a study regarding the current economic situation in their country (the study was conducted in 2012), either online or using a paper version, in the country's native language (i.e. Greek, Portuguese and Italian respectively). The samples in Greece (M = 2.63, SD = .87), Portugal (M = 2.84, SD = .80) and Italy (M = 2.62, SD = .83) reported on average a left wing political orientation on a 5-point scale where 1 indicated extreme left, 3 indicated centre, and 5 indicated extreme right; one sample- t -tests, $t(217) = 44.63$, $p < .001$, $t(311) = 62.55$, $p < .001$, $t(210) = 45.41$, $p < .001$ for Greece, Portugal and Italy respectively. To account for the role of political orientation on the study variables, we included it as a control variable in the main analyses.

Measures¹

All measures were on a 7-point scale (1-7), with higher numbers indicating higher agreement with the statements.

National identification. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they agree with four items regarding their national identification (adapted from Branscombe et al., 1993). Example items included: “I identify strongly with other [Greek/Portuguese/Italian] people”, “Being [Greek/Portuguese/Italian] is an important part of who I am (Greece $\alpha = .86$, Portugal $\alpha = .78$, Italy $\alpha = .90$).

Perceived prejudice. Four items were used to measure perceived prejudice, with participants being asked to rate the extent to which they perceived that there is prejudice against people of their nationality (adapted from Operario & Fiske, 2001). Example items included: “In general, [Greek/Portuguese/Italian] people are viewed negatively”, “There is prejudice against [Greek/Portuguese/Italian] people” (Greece $\alpha = .78$, Portugal $\alpha = .86$, Italy $\alpha = .84$).

Perceived ostracism. Four items were used to measure perceived ostracism, with participants being asked to rate their agreement with items such as “[Greece/Portugal/Italy] is rejected by Europe”, “[Greece/Portugal/Italy] is isolated in Europe” (Greece $\alpha = .84$, Portugal $\alpha = .91$, Italy $\alpha = .91$).

To ensure that the perceived prejudice (four items) and perceived ostracism (four items) measures composed separate factors, principal component analysis with varimax rotation was performed to examine the underlying structure of the eight items, separately for the three countries. Two components with four items each were clearly identified in the case of every country. For Greece, Component 1, i.e. ‘perceived ostracism’, accounted for 46.81% of variance, while Component 2, i.e. ‘perceived prejudice’, accounted for 18.88% of variance. For Portugal, Component 1, accounted for 57.17% of variance, while Component 2 accounted for 19.16% of variance. Similarly, for Italy, Component 1 accounted for 54.86% of variance, while Component 2 accounted for 18.99% of variance.

Anger. Participants were asked to rate the extent to which they feel “angry” and “hostile” when thinking about the current situation in their country (Greece $r = .40, p < .001$, Portugal $r = .60, p < .001$, Italy $r = .68, p < .001$).

Intentions to engage in normative collective action. Participants were asked to indicate how likely they are to participate in a series of eight actions to show their opinion regarding the situation in their country (adapted from Becker & Wright, 2011). Such actions were, for example: demonstrations, strikes, writing of flyers (Greece $\alpha = .77$, Portugal $\alpha = .62$, Italy $\alpha = .78$).

Support for non-normative collective action. As the understanding of what can be considered as normative or non-normative collective action may vary across cultural contexts, different groups and inter-individually, we used a measure that did not refer to particular pre-defined actions. Instead, participants first read that sometimes people in [Greece/Portugal/Italy] respond to the imposed austerity by engaging in unusual actions that are considered by others as destructive because they violate important norms or even break the law; and were then asked to indicate their agreement with such actions using three items), for example “I consider such destructive actions as legitimate”, “I strongly condemn such destructive actions” (reverse-coded) (Greece $\alpha = .74$, Portugal $\alpha = .77$, Italy $\alpha = .71$).

Results

Preliminary analysis

Analyses of variance were performed to examine if there were significant differences in the measured variables between the countries. One way-ANOVAs indicated that the countries significantly differed on all measured variables [national identification: $F(2, 738) = 64.62, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .15$; perceived prejudice: $F(2, 738) = 53.89, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .13$; perceived ostracism: $F(2, 738) = 23.58, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .06$; anger: $F(2, 738) = 48.46, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .12$; intentions to engage in normative collection action: $F(2, 738) = 21.01, p <$

.001, $\eta^2_p = .05$; support for non-normative action: $F(2, 738) = 5.67, p = .004, \eta^2_p = .02$].

Indicatively, Tukey pairwise comparisons showed that participants in Greece reported greater perceived prejudice, ostracism, and normative collective action intentions than participants in both Portugal and Italy. Furthermore, participants in Portugal reported higher national identification than participants in Greece and Italy, and higher support for destructive action than participants in Italy but not those in Greece. Participants in Italy reported higher levels of anger than those in Greece and in Portugal. The exact means, standard deviations and differences between the three countries can be found on Table 1.

Zero-order correlations among the variables in the three countries can be found in Table 2.

Predictors of intentions to engage in normative collective action

In order to test the hypothesis that national identification predicts intentions to engage in collective action via perceived prejudice, perceived ostracism and anger, three three-stage hierarchical regression analyses were conducted, one for each country, with intentions to engage in collective action as the dependent variable. Political orientation was entered at stage one of the regression to control for the influence of the variable. National identification was entered at stage two, and perceived prejudice, perceived ostracism and anger at stage three. The detailed regression statistics for three countries are in Table 3. In the case of Greece, political orientation significantly contributed to the regression model, $F(1, 216) = 15.52, p < .001, R^2 = .07$, while adding national identification led to a statistically significant increase in $R^2, F(1, 215) = 22.44, p < .001, R^2 = .16$. Adding perceived prejudice, perceived ostracism and anger in the regression model led to a further statistically significant increase in $R^2, F(3, 212) = 3.27, p = .022, R^2 = .19$. When all independent variables were included in stage 3 of the regression model, national identification remained a predictor of collective action intentions ($\beta = .265, t = 3.956, p < .001$), however none of the other predictors were

significant (perceived prejudice, $\beta = .092$, $t = 1.276$, $p = .203$; perceived ostracism, $\beta = .115$, $t = 1.647$, $p = .101$; anger, $\beta = .061$, $t = .966$, $p = .335$).

In the case of Portugal, political orientation significantly contributed to the regression model, $F(1, 310) = 52.31$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .14$, while adding national identification led to a statistically significant increase in R^2 , $F(1, 309) = 6.96$, $p = .009$, $R^2 = .16$. Adding perceived prejudice, perceived ostracism and anger in the regression model led to a further statistically significant increase in R^2 , $F(3, 306) = 19.12$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .30$. When all independent variables were included in stage 3 of the regression model, national identification remained a predictor of collective action intentions ($\beta = .177$, $t = 3.575$, $p < .001$), as were perceived prejudice, $\beta = .121$, $t = 2.100$, $p = .037$ and anger, $\beta = .311$, $t = 5.970$, $p < .001$. Perceived ostracism was not a significant predictor, $\beta = .024$, $t = .415$, $p = .679$).

In the case of Italy, political orientation again significantly contributed to the regression model, $F(1, 209) = 20.27$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .09$, and adding national identification led to a statistically significant increase in R^2 , $F(1, 208) = 5.37$, $p = .021$, $R^2 = .11$. Adding perceived prejudice, perceived ostracism and anger in the regression model led to a further statistically significant increase in R^2 , $F(3, 205) = 7.16$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .20$. When all independent variables were included in stage 3 of the regression model, national identification remained a predictor of collective action intentions ($\beta = .189$, $t = 2.878$, $p = .004$), as did anger, $\beta = .270$, $t = 4.004$, $p < .001$. Neither perceived prejudice, $\beta = .096$, $t = 1.294$, $p = .197$, nor perceived ostracism, $\beta = -.036$, $t = -.489$, $p = .626$, were significant predictors.

To explore the hypothesised indirect effect of national identification on intentions to engage in collective action via the cognitive and affective factors relating to perceived disadvantage, mediation models were tested, one for each country. Bootstrapped serial mediation analyses (5,000 resamples) were conducted using the PROCESS macro for SPSS,

Model 4. National identification was the predictor variable, collective action was the outcome variable and perceived prejudice, perceived ostracism and anger were all entered as parallel mediators. For all analyses, political orientation was controlled for. Overall, in the case of Greece, the direct effect of national identification on collective action was significant ($b = .23$, $SE = .06$, $t = 3.96$, $p < .001$; CI: .12, .35) but no indirect effect emerged as significant. In the case of Portugal, the direct effect of national identification was significant ($b = .21$, $SE = .06$, $t = 3.58$, $p < .001$; CI: .09, .32), while the only significant indirect effect was via anger ($b = -.06$, $SE_{boot} = .03$; CI: -.12, -.01). Finally, in the case of Italy the direct effect of national identification was significant ($b = .15$, $SE = .05$, $t = 2.88$, $p = .004$; CI: .05, .26) and, as with Portugal, the only significant indirect effect was via anger ($b = -.04$, $SE_{boot} = .02$; CI: -.08, -.01). In both countries, higher national identification predicted lower levels of anger, while anger predicted more collective action intentions.

Predictors of support for non-normative collective action

Analyses were identical to those reported above. This time, however, to account for the level of support for disruptive action that derives from support for collective action generally, normative collective action intentions was also entered as a control variable in stage 1. The detailed regression statistics for the three countries are in Table 4.

In the case of Greece, political orientation and collective action intentions significantly contributed to the regression model, $F(2, 215) = 18.93$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .15$, and adding national identification led to a statistically significant increase in R^2 , $F(1, 214) = 7.20$, $p = .008$, $R^2 = .18$. Adding perceived prejudice, perceived ostracism and anger in the regression model did not lead to a significant increase in R^2 , $F(3, 211) = 1.06$, $p = .365$, $R^2 = .19$. When all independent variables were included in stage 3 of the regression model, national identification negatively predicted support for non-normative collective action ($\beta = -.197$, $t = -2.820$, $p = .005$), while perceived prejudice, perceived ostracism and anger were not

significant predictors ($\beta = .095, t = 1.317, p = .189$; $\beta = -.096, t = -1.362, p = .175$; $\beta = .051, t = .795, p = .421$ respectively).

In the case of Portugal, political orientation and collective action intentions significantly contributed to the regression model, $F(2, 309) = 29.94, p < .001, R^2 = .16$, while adding national identification led to a statistically significant increase in $R^2, F(1, 308) = 13.10, p < .001, R^2 = .20$. As with Greece, adding perceived prejudice, perceived ostracism and anger in the regression model did not lead to a significant increase in $R^2, F(3, 305) = 2.45, p = .064, R^2 = .22$. When all independent variables were included in stage 3 of the regression model, national identification again negatively predicted support for non-normative collective action ($\beta = -.152, t = -2.843, p = .005$), while anger positively predicted non-normative action support ($\beta = .127, t = 2.172, p = .031$). However, perceived prejudice and perceived ostracism were not significant predictors ($\beta = -.103, t = -1.688, p = .092$; $\beta = .039, t = .627, p = .531$ respectively).

Finally, in the case of Italy, political orientation and collective action intentions significantly contributed to the regression model, $F(2, 208) = 3.79, p = .024, R^2 = .04$, and adding national identification led to a statistically significant increase in $R^2, F(1, 207) = 9.64, p = .002, R^2 = .08$. As with Greece and Portugal, adding perceived prejudice, perceived ostracism and anger in the regression model did not lead to a significant increase in $R^2, F(3, 204) = .46, p = .710, R^2 = .08$. When all independent variables were included in stage 3 of the regression model, national identification negatively predicted support for non-normative collective action ($\beta = -.201, t = -2.813, p = .005$), however, perceived prejudice, perceived ostracism and anger were not significant predictors ($\beta = -.057, t = -.714, p = .476$; $\beta = .090, t = 1.132, p = .259$ and $\beta = .010, t = .131, p = .896$ respectively).

Bootstrap analyses revealed, in the case of Greece, the direct effect of national identification on supporting non-normative collective action was significant ($b = -.23, SE =$

.08, $t = -2.82$, $p = .005$; CI: -.40, -.07) but no indirect effect emerged as significant. Again, in the case of Portugal, the direct effect of national identification was significant ($b = -.23$, $SE = .08$, $t = -2.84$, $p = .005$; CI: -.39, -.07), while the only significant indirect effect was via anger ($b = -.04$, $SE_{boot} = .02$; CI: -.09, -.01). Higher national identification predicted lower levels of anger while anger predicted more support for non-normative action. Finally, in the case of Italy the direct effect of national identification was significant ($b = -.20$, $SE = .07$, $t = -2.81$, $p = .005$; CI: -.35, -.06) and, as with Greece, there were no significant indirect effects.

Discussion

In the context of the financial crisis in the European south, our research explored national identification, perceptions of prejudice, perceptions of ostracism, and anger, as predictors of intentions to engage in normative and to support non-normative collective action in three settings, Greece, Portugal and Italy. The results predominantly demonstrated the decisive role of national identification in predicting higher normative collective action intentions and less support for non-normative action. In other words, in Greece, Portugal and Italy, high levels of national identification against all other variables predicted increased intentions to engage in collective action, and also predicted lower support for disruptive action. This finding indicates that national identification is a factor that, on the one hand, motivates people's mobilisation but on the other, impedes the more negative, destructive side of social action. To our knowledge, this is the first time that this fundamental role of national identification has been pointed out in collective action research. Future research should further examine these findings by also considering the association between non-normative collective action and extreme forms of social identification, such as endorsing extreme nationalism. It is important to disentangle, for example, our findings from the violent action supported by ultra-right nationalists (e.g., Bjørgo, 1995). We will return to this point later on in the discussion.

Driven by the perceived disadvantage literature (Walker & Smith, 2002), we focused both on the cognitive components of perceived prejudice and ostracism, and the affective component of anger. In line with SIMCA, we tested whether national identification exerts its effect via perceived prejudice, ostracism and anger. The results of these analyses were mixed, in Greece none of the mediations were significant, whereas in Portugal and Italy only anger emerged as a significant mediator (in the case of Italy only for normative collective action). Interestingly, in Portugal and Italy, when considering normative collective action, although the direct effect of national identification on collective action is positive (i.e. higher levels of national identification predict more intentions to engage in collective action) the indirect effect was negative (i.e. higher national identification predicted lower levels of anger, which was then positively associated with collective action). In other words, for normative collective action results provide a complicated picture, such that national identification predicts more support for collective action *directly* and less support for collective action *indirectly* (via anger). This inconsistency is due to the unpredicted negative association in the two countries between national identification and anger.

The fact that national identification is a negative predictor of anger is at first glance a surprising finding. According to SIMCA, identification is suggested to exert its effect on collective action via increasing anger. Based on our results, however, national identification was negatively related to anger, while anger was in turn positively related to collective action in both Portugal and Italy. National identification not only predicted lower levels of anger but also lower support for disruptive action in the three countries. These results suggest that identifying with one's nation in critical times buffers the negative consequences that stem from collective disadvantage in terms of experiencing negative (albeit mobilising) emotions such as anger. Additionally, the results suggest that national identification incites people to protect the ingroup by not supporting destructive action, which could further perpetuate its

disadvantaged position. Although this finding is not in line with SIMCA, which has often focused on identities that may be marginally important for individuals compared to nationality, it is in line with research from individual and interpersonal domains supporting the beneficial role of a positive social identity in sustaining mental health and protecting against various negative or risky behaviours such as support for violence (Arbona et al., 1999; Branscombe et al., 1999). It appears that high levels of national identification motivate people to support collective action in order to help their ingroup's goals but discourage people from supporting behaviours that are seen as disruptive and can thus harm the national ingroup. Therefore, the results regarding the negative relationship between national identification and non-normative action could reflect a strategic decision of disadvantaged group members to protect the ingroup, that is to engage in normative action in order to improve its standing, but to not approve of behaviours that could entrench further disapproval or prejudice against it. Although this explanation may fit the specific context, we acknowledge that when violence or destructive action is engrained in the group's norms, for example in the case of some militant groups, engagement in such action may further strengthen the group's goals.

Our findings point to the contextual and instrumental role of national identity, which relates to the threat that is activated in specific contexts. At the time of the data collection, the threat of further economic austerity in the countries we examined was salient, and the representation of the countries in global media was negative (Capucha, Estêvão, Calado, & Capucha, 2014). People in these countries were aware that they were being watched by other countries and thus, a strategic component might have influenced their actions; they might have cared about their reputation and at the same time tried to influence European Union politics. As such, those who "cared" more about their country, i.e. high national identifiers, were less supportive of destructive collective action that could motivate further exclusion

from within or outside the European Union. In this context, normative action is not only more justifiable but also more instrumental. At a different context of threat, though, higher identification could motivate support for destructive action. Threat from immigration, for example, may lead people high in nationalism to engage in destructive action (such as violent acts against those perceived as instigating the threat) in an effort to “protect” the country. Therefore, it is crucial to explore the interplay between context (in our research, the specific contextual threat) and instrumental actions that aim to change the perceived disadvantage of the ingroup (Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2006).

Our research focused on national identity and perceived disadvantage in predicting social action without exploring efficacy as a further motivator. Efficacy has indeed been found to predict collective action intentions and behaviour (for meta-analysis, see Van Zomeren et al., 2008). Our research approached collective action from a primarily intergroup relations perspective where the chosen predictors related to the “European” versus the “national” context, therefore the role of efficacy was not seen as directly relevant (see also Van Zomeren, Leach, & Spears, 2012 for dual pathway to coping with collective disadvantage). However, we acknowledge that efficacy could have also been an important predictor of the social mobilisation during the financial crisis in the European south, and it is important that future research tests a more exhaustive list of predictors in order to acquire a more complete stance on the topic. We also acknowledge that the European financial crisis did not only affect Greece, Portugal and Italy but also other European countries such as Spain, Cyprus and Ireland, where collective action was also taking place. We do not have data from these countries, however the consistent pattern of our results allows us to speculate that similar processes might have underlined mobilisation in those countries too. In our research we only analysed within-country interindividual variance, and for that we had to adopt a conservative approach and analyse the data separately by country. Future research

may also look at between-country variation, which would, however, require a larger number of countries so that multi-level analysis is possible. Additionally, our research did not account for the role of other social identities that could also play a role in this context, such as identifying with being European, or as trade unionist. Exploring social identities [which vary in how inclusive they are \(Gkinopoulos & Hegarty \(2018\)\)](#) can shed further light into the motivators of collective action.

Although our hypotheses were theory-driven and our results were largely consistent across the three countries with regard to the decisive role of national identification, our research is correlational and as such, causality among the variables cannot be inferred. Future research can explore the role of national identification in the context of real-life disadvantage in a more stringent, experimental design. Becker et al. (2011) showed, for example, that participation in radical, non-normative action leads to disidentification from the ingroup, especially when the radical action mismatches ingroup norms. Their research measured (dis)identification with the ingroup of “student” and “member of the protest movement”. As such, it would be interesting to see if engagement with non-normative action also affects identification with more meaningful identities such as that of nationality. Drawing upon the Elaborated Social Identity Model of crowd behaviour (Reicher, 1996), research can also study the dynamic relationship between protesters and the police, and examine the potential interplay between national identity and emerging social identities.

The variance explained by our measured variables was rather small, so future research can also delve into the relevant moderators and mediators of the national identification-collective action relationship. For example, current work by Cakal and colleagues approach collective action from an intergroup relations perspective and, following the evidence regarding the predictive and moderating role of intergroup contact on the identity-collective action path, argue for an integration of the SIMCA and contact theory (Cakal, Hewstone,

Schwar, & Heath, 2011). Cakal and colleagues also demonstrated that perceived symbolic and realistic threats as well as common ingroup perceptions are significant antecedents of collective action (Cakal, Eller, Sirlopu, & Perez, 2016; Cakal, Hewstone, Guler, & Heath, 2016). In the case of our research, one-group representations with the European nations and contact with other European citizens could moderate the path to collective action. Such findings can inform the development of research that aims to explore further the role of national identification on normative and non-normative action.

Examining predictors of not only normative but also non-normative, disruptive action, especially in settings of economic or social disadvantage, has important applied implications. Violent social mobilisation, including riots and acts of terrorism, has been linked to disadvantage and social isolation. A survey of 3,000 young people in the United Kingdom, France and Spain showed that those who experienced social marginalisation and discrimination were more likely to use violence (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2010). Marginalisation and discrimination were also found to predict attraction to fundamentalist groups via feeling a loss of significance (Lyons-Padilla et al., 2015). Our research suggests that a strong sense of national identification in conditions of high threat, such as those created under severe financial austerity, can protect against the approval of non-normative actions. Researchers, practitioners and policy-makers can work together to devise interventions that create, enhance and sustain positive identities such as that of a meaningful but *inclusive* national identity. We place particular emphasis on enhancing inclusivity in relation to national identity, as this is fundamental in the effort to promote diversity norms and pro-immigrant attitudes.

It is further important to disentangle different forms of non-normative collective action and examine possible differing motivations that drive them. For example, support for some degree of violence embedded in demonstrations and marches (writing graffiti, etc.) may

have different instigators compared to support for violence against targets perceived as responsible for a situation (physical attacks, arson attacks etc.), or compared to support for active terrorism. Understanding the factors that motivate and help sustain support for different forms of non-normative action can be a topical and fruitful area of future research.

To summarise, we conducted our research in three European Union countries affected by a stern financial crisis, Greece Portugal and Italy. Drawing on perceived disadvantage literature and the SIMCA, we explored national identity, as well as cognitive and affective components of perceived disadvantage, as predictors of normative collective action intentions and non-normative collective action support. Specifically, we tested the predictive role of national identification, perceived prejudice, perceived ostracism and anger. Our results highlighted consistently among the three countries that high levels of national identification predict greater intentions to engage in normative collective action when tested against the other predictors. High national identification also predicted less support for disruptive action, above and beyond the cognitive and affective components of perceived disadvantage. The role of anger was also highlighted as a process driving the effects on mobilisation, and interestingly anger was negatively linked to national identification. The theoretical contribution of the current research can provide a framework for delving deeper into the decisive role of national identification under conditions of threat (in this case it was economic austerity), particularly in relation to non-normative collective action. From an applied perspective, the results of this research can be utilised in real-world efforts to promote social justice via non-violent means.

Footnotes

1. The survey was part of a larger research project among the three countries, which included several measures that were not related to the aim of the current research paper.

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