

THE MINORITY REPORT: EXAMINING THE UNIQUE EFFECT OF GROUP-SPECIFIC  
IDENTITY CONTENT IN PREDICTING COLLECTIVE ACTION FOR MARGINALISED  
GROUPS

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## Abstract

Socio-structural inequality and discrimination have significant and pervasive negative impacts on societally marginalised groups and the people who identify with them. Despite this, collective action to redress status-based iniquities is a rare occurrence. Past research has uncovered several reliable predictors of collective action that motivate or inhibit social action for change. However, these established predictors are very general. Collective action research rarely incorporates unique identity content, specific to the marginalised group in question. Due to this oversight, nuances in the way marginalised individuals respond to disadvantage are overlooked. Thus, the present thesis used three different data-sets to examine the unique effect of group-specific identity content on collective action for three separate marginalised groups.

Study 1 established support for the status-legitimacy hypothesis (i.e., that disadvantaged groups may legitimise the status quo more so than advantaged groups, often to their own detriment) using a large sample of ethnic majority and ethnic minority participants. Results showed that system justification attenuated the relationship between group-based deprivation and collective action for ethnic minorities, but not for the ethnic majority. Study 2 included only Māori (an ethnic minority) participants from the same data-set, and expanded on this finding using the same model. A measure of the historical and cultural significance of Māori ethnic identity was also included. Results showed that system justification had no impact on collective action for Māori who highly valued their ethnic identity. Study 3 examined the relationships between ambivalent sexism and collective action for women, moderated by self-objectification. This study demonstrated that both hostile and benevolent sexism predict gender-based collective action for women, but only when participants had low levels of self-objectification. Finally, Study 4 used the minority stress model and examined the moderating effect of internalised homophobia on the relationship between discrimination

and collective action in a large sample of LGBTQIA+ participants. Results showed that discrimination only predicted collective action when participants also had low levels of internalised homophobia.

Taken together, the collective findings of these studies highlight, and provide some of the first empirical support for, the importance of group-specific identity content in predicting collective action for marginalised individuals.

Submitted on this – the 28<sup>th</sup> day of July – this thesis is dedicated to my very best friend, my  
beloved mother:

Ngaire Patricia Townrow (née Cockfield)

b. July 28, 1955 d. June 17, 2020

Happy birthday, mum

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## Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Dedication.....	iv
Acknowledgments.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Tables.....	x
List of Figures.....	xi
Co-Authorship Forms.....	xii
Chapter One.....	1
Thesis Overview.....	1
General Introduction.....	3
Collective Action.....	6
Social Identity Theory.....	13
Social Identity Model of Collective Action.....	18
Politicised identity.....	24
Critiques of politicised identity.....	25
Identity content.....	36
Out-group determinisation of identity content.....	40
Thesis aims and overview.....	49
Data and Ethics Information.....	60
Chapter Two.....	62
Abstract.....	63
Introduction.....	64
Relative Deprivation Theory.....	67
System Justification and the Status-legitimacy hypothesis.....	68
Current Study.....	72
Methods.....	73
Participants.....	73
Predictor Variables.....	74
Outcome Measures.....	74
Covariates.....	75
Results.....	77

Discussion.....	80
Study Two.....	82
Methods.....	83
Participants.....	84
Measures .....	84
Results.....	87
Discussion.....	90
General Discussion .....	91
Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions .....	92
Conclusion .....	96
Bridging Statement One.....	98
Chapter Three.....	100
Abstract.....	101
Introduction.....	102
Hostile and Benevolent Sexism .....	109
Self-objectification.....	113
Hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and self-objectification .....	117
Current Study .....	118
Methods.....	119
Participants.....	120
Predictor Variables.....	120
Covariates .....	120
Outcome Measure .....	121
Results.....	124
Hostile sexism.....	124
Benevolent sexism .....	126
Discussion.....	130
Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions .....	133
Conclusion .....	136
Bridging Statement Two .....	138
Chapter Four .....	141
Abstract.....	142
Introduction.....	143
Minority Stress Model .....	147
Discrimination.....	149
Internalised Homophobia.....	150
Current Study .....	155



Methods.....	157
Participants.....	157
Predictor Variables.....	158
Covariates .....	159
Outcome Measure .....	161
Results.....	163
Discussion.....	166
Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions .....	168
Conclusion .....	171
Chapter Five.....	173
General Discussion .....	173
Chapter Two: Minority Ethnic Groups, the Status-Legitimacy Hypothesis and the Historical and Cultural Significance of Ethnic Identity.....	179
Chapter Three: Women, Ambivalent Sexism, and Self-Objectification.....	180
Chapter Four: The LGBTQIA+ Community, Discrimination, and Internalised Homophobia .....	181
Considerations.....	182
System justification and legitimisation of disadvantaged status.....	182
Internalisation of negative identity content.....	184
Onus and responsibility for social change .....	185
Out-group allies .....	189
Identity content and allies .....	194
Implications.....	196
Theoretical implications.....	196
Practical implications.....	210
Limitations and Future Directions .....	214
A note of consideration: Imposing world views. Who decides what is ‘right’?.....	219
A note on ethical considerations: Research and marginalised populations .....	221
A closing note. ....	224
Conclusion .....	225

## **List of Tables**

Table 2.1. Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations Between the Variables Included in the Analysis. ....	76
Table 2.2. Multiple regression analysis predicting collective action support as a function of key covariates, ethnicity, group-based relative deprivation, system justification, and their interaction. ....	78
Table 2.3. Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations Between the Variables Included in the Analysis. ....	86
Table 2.4. Multiple regression analysis predicting collective action support as a function of key covariates, identity content, group-based relative deprivation, system justification, and their interaction. ....	88

## List of Figures

Figure 2.1. Participants' support for ethnic-group based collective action as a function of group-based relative deprivation and system justification moderated by ethnic group membership .....	79
Figure 2.2. Participants' support for ethnic-group based collective action as a function of group-based relative deprivation and system justification moderated by identity content. .	89
Figure 3.1. Participants' support for gender-based collective action as a function of hostile sexism moderated by self-objectification.....	128

## Chapter One

### Thesis Overview

The aim of this thesis is to examine unique psychological motivators, and barriers to engaging in collective action which are specific to the identity content of particular marginalised groups. To these ends, three chapters are presented, each of which focuses on a different marginalised group.

This thesis will be presented in five parts:

- I. Chapter One: This chapter provides a review of the literature pertaining to collective action and marginalised group identities. Namely, I provide a brief review of the literature on (a) social inequality and (b) collective action. I then provide an overview of (c) social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and a detailed outline of (d) the social identity model of collective action (van Zomeren, Spears, et al., 2008). Following this, I critically discuss the concept of identity as i) politicised, and ii) determined by out-group others. Lastly, I provide an overview of the aims of this thesis and an outline of its content.
- II. Chapter Two: This chapter focuses on ethnic minority group members and contains two studies. The first empirical study tests the status-legitimacy hypothesis (Brandt, 2013). This study examines how system justification – an ideology which legitimises existing social hierarchies and the status quo (Jost & Banaji, 1994) – differentially moderates the relationship between group-based relative deprivation (Runciman, 1966) and collective action intentions for ethnic minority versus ethnic majority group members. The second empirical study uses the same model and data as study one, but only included Māori (an ethnic minority group) participants). This study examines

whether positive identity content (i.e., valuing the historical and cultural significance of one's ethnic group), impacts the mitigating effect of system justification on collective action for ethnic minorities.

- III. Chapter Three: This chapter focuses on women. Using ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001a), the empirical study presented in this chapter examines how women's endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism impacts their support for gender-based collective action, and whether these relationships are moderated by self-objectification – an internalisation of patriarchal beauty ideals which has implications for women's self-esteem, and perceptions of their own ability (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997).
- IV. Chapter Four: This chapter focuses on the LGBTQIA+ community. In this chapter, an empirical study uses the minority stress model (Meyer, 1995) as a framework to examine how perceptions of sexual identity-based discrimination impacts collective action behaviour for LGBTQIA+ individuals, and whether this relationship is moderated by internalised homophobia (Meyer & Dean, 1998).
- V. Chapter Five: This chapter will provide a summary and discussion of the results of all four studies. These results will be collectively and critically examined with reference to social identity theory and the collective action literature. Additionally, this chapter will consider the strengths, weaknesses, limitations, and practical and theoretical implications of the results of the four studies included in this thesis, as well as future research directions.

## General Introduction

Structural inequality and discrimination against marginalised<sup>1</sup> groups are ingrained and persistent characteristics of all hierarchically organised societies (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). One pertinacious feature of hierarchically organised societies is the unequal distribution of material and social resources (O'Brien & Major, 2009; Sidanius & Pratto, 1993), wherein marginalised groups receive fewer social goods than do advantaged groups (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Tajfel, 1981). This pervasive injustice, and the associated inequality, negatively impacts not only marginalised group members, but also the socially advantaged (Jost, Wakslak, et al., 2008; Osborne, García-Sánchez, et al., 2019; Wakslak et al., 2007; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010). However, the consequences of societal iniquity are particularly detrimental to the wellbeing of socially marginalised groups (Meyer, 1995; Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). For example, individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+ experience lower levels of psychological wellbeing compared to heterosexuals (Allen & Oleson, 1999; Fergusson et al., 2005; Rowen & Malcolm, 2003). Ethnic minority groups such as African Americans (Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000), and New Zealand Māori (Lee et al., 2017) report lower levels of mental health compared to the ethnic majority. Similarly, relative to men, women indicate significantly lower levels of wellbeing (Meisenberg & Woodley, 2015; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2009).

Marginalised groups experience discrimination and prejudice on a structural (e.g., Herek, 2007), interpersonal (e.g., Frost, 2011; Major & O'Brien, 2005), and intrapersonal level (e.g., Meyer & Dean, 1998), which, in addition to decreasing wellbeing, results in negative individual and societal repercussions. The consequences of exposure to both

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<sup>1</sup> Several terms are used to describe marginalised groups (e.g., disadvantaged, stigmatised, minority etc.). This thesis includes two groups which are minorities, and one which is not. Though all three groups are socially marginalised. Therefore, this is the term which will be used throughout this thesis when discussing matters relevant to all three groups. Terminology will differ between the papers presented in this thesis as they focus on each group individually.

external and internal stigmatisation, as well as the resultant status-based asymmetrical treatment, are numerous and widespread (see Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002). For example, Fingerhut and Abdou (2017) suggest that both identity, and stereotype threat negatively impact LGBTQIA+ individuals access to, and experiences of, healthcare. Similarly, in a review of existing literature, Wilson and Yoshikawa (2007) found three primary contributing factors which affect the physical and mental health of sexual and ethnic minorities, as well as their access to, and utilisation of, healthcare services. Namely, the impact that discrimination has on health and risk behaviour, ingrained implicit and overt racism and homophobia in both primary healthcare and health research settings, and how immigration experiences may negatively impact healthcare access and use.

Marginalised groups have more limited, or prejudiced access to social services such as housing (Houkamau & Sibley, 2015a), and truncated consideration for employment, or workplace advancement (Fraser et al., 2015). For example, Pager et al. (2009) conducted a field experiment with White, Black and Latino confederates who had resumes detailing equal qualifications. These confederates were then sent out to apply for hundreds of low-wage jobs. Results showed that, compared to White applicants, Black applicants received half the number of call backs or job offers. Additionally, White applicants with resumes indicating that they had recently been released from prison received similar responses to their job applications as Black and Latino applicants who had no criminal record.

Women, compared to men, face similar discrimination in the workplace receiving fewer interview opportunities and job offers (Neumark et al., 1996). That this discrimination has a base in gender is clearly demonstrated in a study conducted by Goldin and Rouse (2000). They implemented a blind audition for orchestra selection which increased the probability of women advancing to the next stage of the audition process and ultimately being hired by 50%. Likewise, the discrimination members of the LGBTQIA+ community

encounter in workplace settings are well known and documented. These include reduced consideration for hiring, being stigmatised by co-workers and employers within the workplace, and even having their employment terminated if their sexual identity becomes known (see Sears & Mallory, 2014 for a review).

A social constructivist perspective on crime purports that criminality is disproportionately defined by, and attributed to behaviours associated with, those who have a marginalised ethnic, gender, or sexual identity (Gaynor, 2018; Mogul et al., 2011; Ritchie, 2013). Marginalised groups experience disparate treatment by the criminal justice system where rates of arrest and incarceration are higher for ethnic minorities (Jones, 2016; Nellis, 2016). Correspondingly, ethnic minorities receive longer prison sentences than do ethnic majorities for the same, or comparative, crimes (Hill, 2018). Compared to the societally advantaged, marginalised groups also have unequal educational opportunities. These include the way that schools are organised (Mickelson, 2003), incongruent academic results and treatment by educators which result from stereotype content associated with their marginalised identity (e.g., men are more intelligent than women; Aronson et al., 1998; Nosek et al., 2009; Spencer et al., 1999), and highest attained level of academic achievement (Adelman, 1998; Felder et al., 1995).

These overt miscarriages of the principles of justice and equality require redress. However, there are a multitude of barriers to attaining such an outcome. For example, advantaged groups are generally motivated to maintain their elevated position in the social hierarchy, and therefore, the status quo of unequal treatment (e.g., Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Additionally, marginalised group members, often as a direct result of the discrimination they experience, possess lower levels of resilience and coping abilities when confronted with negative events (e.g., Major, Gramzow, et al., 2002; Meyer & Dean, 1998), while also having more limited access to external resources which would be beneficial in confronting their



deprived circumstances (Crocker & Garcia, 2006; Major, Quinton, et al., 2002). Moreover, marginalised group members must navigate a psychological quagmire in an attempt to balance, or trade-off between accepting, or even legitimising, their degraded status – to the detriment of their self-esteem, and group interests – in order to attain apocryphal psychological comfort (Jost et al., 2004; Jost, Glaser, et al., 2003a; Jost & Hunyady, 2005), and defending and protecting their self-esteem and group interests by taking action against that which oppresses them (Crocker & Garcia, 2006).

One of the most effective methods of promoting marginalised group interests, and bringing about social change is via collective action (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wright et al., 1990a). However, there are many obstacles including structural, social, and psychological impediments which prevent or discourage members of marginalised groups from participating in, or even supporting, collective action. The next section will provide an overview of the literature on collective action including known predictors, theoretical approaches, and how prevalent it is in society.

### **Collective Action**

Arguably the most frequently used definition of collective action in psychological literature comes from Wright et al. (1990b). They note that collective action involves any action that a representative of a group takes with the aim of improving the conditions of that group. The broad scope of this definition is valuable as it does not demand extreme, or radical acts from group members which are rare occurrences. Instead, it recognises that any action which contributes to the benefit of the group is a group-oriented (i.e., collective) action. As such, many different types of endeavours fall under the rubric of collective action ranging in intensity from mass violence (e.g., the 1992 Los Angeles Rodney King Riots), to less aggressive, but nonetheless potentially disruptive, responses including protest marches (e.g., the 2017 U.S Women’s Marches), strikes (e.g., the 1913 Wellington Waterfront Great

Strike), and public demonstrations (e.g., the 2011 Occupy Wall Street sit-in). Also included in this definition are comparatively peaceful acts such as signing petitions or writing letters to public officials. The very broad nature of this definition of collective action is also what makes it so appealing and externally valid. By defining collective action in such an inclusive manner, *all* actions, be they large or small, are considered to be collective action. Therefore, the efforts and actions of those who, for example, have fewer resources, potential hinderances to physically demanding behaviours such as a disability, or who live in oppressive situations and may not be able to act in a demonstrative fashion due to risk, but *do* act nonetheless, are not ignored. Because of this tremendous variation in activities, the collective action literature sometimes distinguishes between normative and non-normative forms of action. Where the more agentive, or risky actions are classified as non-normative, and those which generally require less personal commitment in the form of time or resources, and have a lower levels of personal risk are classified as normative (Gamson, 1968; Gamson, 1971). This distinction is important because these two types of collective action are thought to be motivated by different processes (Johnson & Kaye, 2013; Jost et al., 2012).

Another feature of collective action which must be considered is the type of disadvantage being redressed. Generally, the literature distinguishes between two different types of disadvantage: structural and incidental. Structural disadvantage relates to groups who are disadvantaged because of their marginalised (i.e., low status) position in society, and the negative stereotypes and discrimination they face due to that group membership (Jost & Hunyady, 2003; Major, 1994; Tajfel, 1978). In contrast, incidental disadvantage refers to situational or issue based disadvantages (Klandermans, 1997; Walsh, 1988), such as tax increases or compulsory vaccinations. People will engage in collective action against structural disadvantages such as discrimination against women, ethnic minorities and the LGBTQIA+ community, as well as incidental disadvantages. The crucial difference is that, in

the case of incidental disadvantage, individuals must form their group identity by finding like-minded others who are passionate about their specific issue, whereas with structural disadvantage, that identity is generally prescribed by the socio-structural environment. That is, much like Victor Frankenstein, structural disadvantage creates that which will *hopefully* one day destroy it.

Notably, the three marginalised groups which are the focus of the empirical studies included in this thesis – ethnic minorities<sup>2</sup>, women<sup>3</sup>, and the LGBTQIA+ community – are all groups which experience structural disadvantage. They are also groups which, to varying degrees, membership is socially prescribed. The nuances around this point will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter. Nonetheless, because of this focus, I will attend to structural disadvantage more so than incidental.

Structural disadvantage, unlike incidental disadvantage, can cause psychological harm to the individual, and the group (Major, 1994; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002). Indeed, experiencing structural discrimination is enervating and debilitating. This form of disadvantage often leads to societal disengagement for marginalised individuals, as they begin to believe that they will never be perceived as equal, or treated fairly (Hafer, 2000; Kamans et al., 2009). Yet, structural disadvantage is more difficult to act against. There are numerous reasons for the intractability of structural disadvantage. For example, attempting to counter structural disadvantage means engaging in a power struggle with advantaged, high status groups who are motivated to maintain the status quo, enhance group boundaries, and preserve their own position at the top of the social hierarchy (Jost & Major, 2001; Sidanius &

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<sup>2</sup> There is some contention in the literature regarding this claim, particularly in regard to ethnicity i.e., as a stable, and immutable characteristic versus as a social construction (see Alim et al., 2020). This will be addressed later in the current chapter.

<sup>3</sup> I acknowledge that gender is not a binary consisting of men and women (e.g., Richards et al., 2016). That for many it is a fluid concept, or one which does not need to be ascribed to at all (e.g., Sweetnam, 1996). However, for the purposes of this thesis, the term ‘women’ will refer to people who self-identify as women, including cis and trans women.

Pratto, 1999). Additionally, there are fewer resources available for combating structural disadvantage, as these are generally controlled by advantaged groups (Klandermans, 1997). Finally, as will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, members of marginalised groups are sometimes motivated to justify their disadvantaged position in society (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2004). As a consequence, they may not perceive the structural disadvantage as one which needs to be addressed (Ridgeway, 2001). In a meta-analysis of studies on collective action, van Zomeren, Postmes, et al. (2008) found weaker mean effect sizes for efficacy and injustice, but not identity, on collective action for structural (as opposed to incidental) disadvantage. This is likely related to the knowledge of being up against a more powerful group, the lack of available resources, and the fact that some individuals' motivation to justify their own state of disadvantage results in them perceiving less injustice than exists.

As demonstrated at the beginning of this chapter, marginalised group members *do* experience discrimination, stigmatisation and iniquitous treatment in almost every facet of their lives. This societal derogation and neglect has implications for the physical health, psychological wellbeing, education, economic stability and freedom for marginalised group members. Yet, despite its overwhelming pervasiveness, research suggests that people often find it difficult to recognise injustice (Crosby, 1984; Crosby et al., 1989; Taylor et al., 1990). This is likely one amid many reasons why collective action to address and resolve inequalities rarely occurs relative to the extent of those inequalities (Jost, Becker, et al., 2017; Klandermans, 1997; McAdam & Boudet, 2012; Osborne, Jost, et al., 2019). Indeed, even when members of marginalised groups recognise and experience dissatisfaction with their disadvantage and sympathise with associated social movement goals, only a small number participate in collective action to achieve those goals (Klandermans, 1997; Walsh &

Warland, 1983). For example, as few as 5% of individuals who experience disadvantage participate in group-oriented collective action (Jost, Becker, et al., 2017).

Research has identified a number of structural and psychological factors which partially explain why, despite being dissatisfied with their circumstances and the broader social system, not everyone participates in collective action. A feeling of disconnectedness to their social network (Montagno & Garrett-Walker, 2022; Pitt et al., 2021), a lack of sympathy for the cause associated with a movement (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987), fear of being perceived as, or being associated with, people who are perceived as ‘extremists’ or ‘self-righteous’ (Stuart et al., 2018), lack of organisation (Troost et al., 2013), perceptions that the urgency of change is not great (Hensby, 2017), the psychological, social, and material cost of participating (Morgan & Chan, 2016), and the seemingly immutable presence of structural barriers (Klandermans & van Stekelenburg, 2013) have all been linked to non-participation. This gross misalignment between reality and responses to inequality helps explain why collective action is of interest to so many and is studied so assiduously.

Indeed, collective action has been of abiding interest to multiple different research disciplines including history, political science, economics, sociology and psychology (e.g., Davies, 1962; Davis, 1959; Gurr, 1968, 1970; McAdam, 1983; Olson, 1965; Tarrow, 1998; Turner, 1964). Prior to this surfeit of academic attentiveness, early social theorists (e.g., de Tocqueville, 1835; Marx, 1875) conjectured that rising inequality would act as an incendiary force on the disadvantaged masses, mobilising and inciting them to relentlessly exercise the political power afforded them by democracy to demand a shift towards greater equity. However, such acts of mass mobilisation and revolution occur infrequently (Kinder & Sears, 1985; Zinn, 2002).

Quite contrary to those early social theories who envisioned a collective rise of the proletariat, the relatively more contemporary initial theories of collective action have their

foundation in economics (e.g., Olson, 1965). These theories claim that each individual is a self-interested, rational actor who will weigh the costs and benefits to themselves (not their group) when making the decision to participate in a collective movement or not. The assumed result was that the cost / benefit analysis would almost never equate to action being favourable or beneficial to the individual, and so they would not act. This was used to explain the dearth of collective action. Indeed, this outcome was significantly supported in controlled laboratory studies using game theory, and the Prisoner's Dilemma (Hardin, 1971; Rasmusen, 1989). However, the lack of generalisability to more natural social situations was problematic (Hardin, 2015; Hechter, 1992; Schneider & Pommerehne, 1981). Subsequent research and theoretical approaches have shown that some people *are* motivated, often at their own expense, to champion a collective good (see e.g., Bliuc et al., 2007; Smith et al., 2015).

Many theories of collective action which followed had a common *ab initio* assumption – that people initiate and participate in collective action in response to their state of objective disadvantage. This, like economic theories of collective action, is a rather rational approach which uses if / then logic, and implies that specific material causes of collective action can be identified (e.g., Shaw, 1988). Objective disadvantages are important; however, largescale systematic historical analyses have shown that they have an elusive and weak empirical association with collective action (e.g., Green et al., 1998; Tilly et al., 2013). Stouffer et al. (1949), discovered via observations of different military groups' satisfaction with the rate at which they were promoted, that people's perceptions of their circumstances – as they compare them to others – were more indicative of their responses than their objective state of disadvantage. Screeds of research followed which supported this observation (e.g., Runciman, 1966) and the phenomena became known as relative deprivation (see Chapter Two). Perhaps due to the fact that objective disadvantage proved to be such a dilute and ineffectual predictor of collective action, relative to subjective disadvantage (Major, 1994;

Postmes et al., 1999), literature increasingly appertained itself with socio-psychological contributors to collective action (Klandermans, 1997). Indeed, the underlying psychology of collective action is now widely considered to be the most proximal explanation for the behaviour. As philosopher and abolitionist Henry David Thoreau (1854) wrote; “Things do not change; we change.” (p. 328), “...all the change is in me.” (p. 193). That is, it is people, their ideologies, underlying psychological motivations, attitudes and beliefs which have the power to change systems. Unlike many other disciplines, psychology can account for why, when economic and objective, structural and societal forces amalgamate to form what are, ostensibly, the ideal conditions for the emergence of collective action, that action does not materialise.

A veritable outpouring of social psychological research followed attempting to answer that very question (for reviews see e.g., Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996; Klandermans, 1997, 2004; Stürmer & Simon, 2004a). From the deluge propagated by the academe during that time, three factors consistently emerged as reliable, independent, and valid predictors of collective action. These are group identification (identity), group-based anger / perceptions of discrimination (injustice), and belief in the ability to effect change (efficacy; Gamson, 1992; Klandermans, 1997, 2004). The distinct theoretical traditions from which these three factors originated occasionally conflict in their explanations of collective action (e.g., Finkel & Rule, 1986; Gurney & Tierney, 1982; Walker & Smith, 2002). Despite this, several scholars have attempted to theoretically integrate two or three of the factors into a cohesive model of collective action, often with social identity (Tajfel, 1974) as the fulcrum (e.g., Kawakami & Dion, 1995; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996; Klandermans, 2004; Mummendey et al., 1999; Stürmer & Simon, 2004a).

van Zomeren, Postmes, et al. (2008) acknowledged the value of these attempts to create a singular model of collective action; however, they levied criticism at the fact that

none of the models took into account the associations *between* the three factors. Thus, they argued they could not be considered truly integrative. Furthermore, several of the models made very different predictions for collective action. In order to address these gaps, they proposed their own integrative model; the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) which, as the name suggests, positioned social identity firmly at the centre. Moreover, it accounted for the predictive power of each factor individually, the relationships between all three factors, and demonstrated how social identity further predicts collective action indirectly via injustice and efficacy motivations.

The SIMCA has been shown, via copious amounts of research, to be both a valid and reliable predictor of collective action (e.g., Cakal et al., 2011; Sabucedo et al., 2018; Wermser et al., 2018). Additionally, it is generally considered to have a wide degree of generalisability both internationally and to different cultural groups. Much of the groundwork for the SIMCA came from social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As such, a review of the literature on social identity theory, with particular reference to its relevance to collective action, will be discussed next. Following this, a more comprehensive overview of the SIMCA will be provided as this model is utilised by all four empirical studies presented in this thesis.

### **Social Identity Theory**

In the 1970s, a revolutionary social psychological theory explaining the formation and salience of group identity emerged in the form of social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). A central tenet proposed by social identity theory was that individuals endeavour to benefit from positive social identities associated with groups which they are members of. The theory further posits that individuals fundamentally desire to attain positive self-esteem. These aspirations then motivate two separate socio-cognitive processes: categorisation, where individuals are induced to observe, or create, distinctions between



social groups; and self-enhancement, where individuals incommensurately emphasise and endorse stereotypes and norms which reflect positively on their chosen in-group.

Accordingly, social identity theory predicts that individuals will choose to identify with high status groups as this will positively contribute to their self-esteem. Conversely, they will shun association, or identification with low status groups because this will lower their self-esteem.

Naturally, this begs the question of why individuals would identify with groups which negatively impact their image and self-esteem. One answer, which will be considered in greater detail later in this chapter, is that the individual has no choice regarding their membership in a low-status, or marginalised group. That is, groups which are either biologically determined, or widely socially considered to be such, where membership may also be accompanied by physical or phonological characteristics (e.g., body shape, skin colour, accent) which indelibly mark one as a group member. Such externally visible cues make denial of membership a nonviable option. However, social identity theory does suggest three separate identity management strategies which individuals may use, if possible, when they are dissatisfied with their group membership. They may (a) attempt to exit their own group and gain entry into the more advantaged group (social mobility), (b) choose to interpret the traits and stereotypes associated with their group as positive, and with pride, rather than as a stigma which should incur shame (social creativity), or (c) attempt to raise the status of their group by engaging in collective action (social change; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The choice and success of each strategy depends upon how individuals perceive three different socio-structural variables: the permeability of group boundaries, the legitimacy of intergroup relations / status differences, and the stability of the status difference.

The first strategy, social mobility, is an individual action for advancement, whereas the latter two, social creativity and social change, are both related to group identity management. As I will discuss in more detail later in this chapter, the boundaries of each of

the marginalised groups examined in this thesis – ethnic minorities (Chapter Two), women (Chapter Three), and the LGBTQIA+ community (Chapter Four) – are groups which are generally viewed as having extremely limited, to no permeability (Ellemers et al., 1990; Jackson et al., 1996; Tajfel, 1974; van Zomeren et al., 2016). As such, exiting their own group and attempting to gain entry to the group of their more advantaged counterpart is infeasible. However, increasing esteem through a reinterpretation of group traits and stereotypes is possible for each of these marginalised groups, and has indeed been utilised to positive effect with regards to identity management and maintenance (Petriglieri, 2011; Slay & Smith, 2011). For example, some Māori report prizing their cultural identity and distinctiveness to the benefit of their social outlook (Houkamau, 2006). Reappropriating the pejorative ‘queer’ as a positive self-label and identity-defining word led LGBTQIA+ individuals to feel more powerful (Galinsky et al., 2013). Furthermore, endorsing stereotypes which present the group as positive such as benevolent sexism (discussed in detail in Chapter Three) – a form of prejudice which presents women as subjectively wonderful, but nonetheless functions to their disadvantage and contributes to status quo management (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001a) – increases happiness for women<sup>4</sup> (Hammond & Sibley, 2011). Regardless, while creating and maintaining a positive group identity via social creativity may be efficacious, it does not change the marginalised status of the group, or effect the negative societal outcomes suffered by the group.

This does not discount the benefits to psychological wellbeing and positive group identity formation and affirmation which result from employing social creativity strategies. However, these benefits have a limited range of influence, generally only bolstering the individual who employs the method, or those within their immediate sphere of influence. It

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<sup>4</sup> However, this relationship was mediated by gender-specific justification suggesting that some attempts to bolster identity via acceptance of stereotypes may actually, inadvertently, come at a cost to the group (see Burkley & Blanton, 2008).

also must be taken into consideration that this strategy, whether intentionally or not, could be used as a crutch by placing a rose coloured film over the negative realities associated with marginalised identity and therefore allowing oneself to be satisfied with the iniquity of the status quo. Only the third strategy, collective action, has the potential to challenge, mitigate, and eventually dispense with widespread socio-structural discrimination and its adverse consequences.

However, in general, adoption or choice of strategy depends on how individuals perceive the permeability of group boundaries, the legitimacy of group status, and the stability of group status (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The permeability of group boundaries refers to how easily an individual may move from one group to another, which is widely assumed to be the preferred choice for members of low-status or marginalised groups (Ellemers, 1993; Ellemers et al., 1988; Tajfel, 1975; Taylor & McKirnan, 1984). The extent to which group boundaries are permeable mean different things to individuals depending upon their status. For example, Terry et al. (2006) found that perceptions of boundary permeability have different implications for the wellbeing of high versus low status groups. Low status groups viewed permeable boundaries as a protection, presumably because they allow for the possibility of moving from the low to the high status group. In contrast, high status group members were threatened by the permeability of group boundaries, likely because they call into question the stability and legitimacy of their own elevated status.

The legitimacy of group status refers to how valid and justifiable people perceive the hierarchical differentiation between the status of groups. This is something which likely varies between individuals depending upon their world view (e.g., Altemeyer, 1981; Sidanius & Pratto, 1993). The stability of group status refers to how susceptible the current social order is to change. Stability perceptions are often mutually influenced by legitimacy perceptions. That is, if group positions are perceived as subject to change, the legitimacy of

the existing positions are called into question. Likewise, if the legitimacy of existing social structures is called into questions the stability of those structures is likely to be undermined (Ellemers, 1993, 2001).

When, how, and by whom these strategies are applied has been explored with some rigour, though findings have been mixed and occasionally at odds with theory. Social identity theory predicts that the socio-structural context determines which strategy members of marginalised groups will employ. For example, social mobility, or ‘exit’ (see also, Hirschman, 1970) strategies are likely to be attempted when group boundaries have high permeability, as this is the only condition where such a strategy would be successful (Ellemers et al., 1990; Ellemers et al., 1993; Taylor & McKirnan, 1984; van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 1993). Conversely, collective action is only predicted when group boundaries are considered relatively impermeable, the differences between group status are considered illegitimate, and that status difference is considered unstable, and therefore able to be challenged and changed (Tajfel, 1978).

Research on the permeability of group boundaries consistently demonstrates that boundary impermeability motivates collective action<sup>5</sup> (Ellemers, 1993; Ellemers et al., 1997; Ellemers et al., 1988; Lalonde & Silverman, 1994). Social identity theory further predicts that, when marginalised group members perceive status differences to be unstable and illegitimate, they are likely to more strongly identify with their group and participate in collective action (Ellemers, 1993; Tajfel, 1978; Turner & Brown, 1978). The addition of group impermeability to perceptions of illegitimate and unstable status differences (i.e., all three socio-structural factors working together) further increases the likelihood, according to social identity theory, that individuals will be motivated to participate in collective action to

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<sup>5</sup> There are some discrepancies. For example, Jackson et al., (1996) found discordant results within the five different studies which comprised their paper regarding the viability of boundaries impacting strategy choice.

change, and enhance their group identity. This supposition is supported by empirical research (Becker, 2012; Bettencourt et al., 2001; Scheepers et al., 2006; Turner & Brown, 1978).

As outlined above, identity has strong associations with, and implications for, group-based collective action. However, research has revealed some inconsistencies. At variance with the theory, having a marginalised social identity, or belonging to a marginalised group, does not always engender low self-esteem, but is instead associated with high individual self-esteem (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Crocker et al., 1994; Crocker & Major, 1989; Rosenberg, 1979). Furthermore, the strategies intended to combat the stigma associated with marginalised identities are not always utilised (e.g., Jackson et al., 1996; van Zomeren et al., 2016). This intimates that not every individual who is a member of a marginalised group feels a loss of self-esteem due to that group membership or engages in collective action on behalf of that group. This suggests that, while social identity theory presents identification with a marginalised group as a proximal predictor of collective action (Ellemers, 1993; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996; Mummendey et al., 1999; Tajfel, 1978), other factors also need to be considered. Thus, we now return to the meta-analysis findings of van Zomeren, Postmes, et al. (2008) from which they developed the SIMCA which integrates the relevance of efficacy and injustice, as well as identity – which is at the centre of the SIMCA – to predicting collective action.

### **Social Identity Model of Collective Action**

The SIMCA (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008) was developed from a meta-analysis of three discrete literatures that incorporated 182 effects of perceived injustice, efficacy and identity on collective action. In doing so, the SIMCA integrated the psychological literature on collective action using social identity as a theoretical foundation. Where the SIMCA differs from other models which attempted theoretical integration is that the SIMCA accounts not only for the predictive effect of each of the three variables in

isolation on collective action, but also the associations *between* the three predictors. This approach, and the model which followed, resulted in a deeper understanding of the social psychological processes which motivate collective action. There are four tenets upon which the SIMCA are based. The first is that, in accordance with social identity accounts of collective action, collective action is predicted by the extent to which an individual identifies with the relevant group (Drury & Reicher, 2009; Ellemers et al., 1997; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). It is also noted that this effect is stronger when identity is politicised (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). This is supposedly because such identities are already normatively directed in favour of taking action (Simon & Klandermans, 2001).

The second is that, in line with relative deprivation theory which determined that perceived experiences of disadvantage are more closely associated with how a person will react than their objective state of disadvantage (e.g., Runciman, 1966; Stouffer et al., 1949; Walker & Smith, 2002), the SIMCA asserts that perceptions of group-based injustice will predict collective action. The social psychological literature on fairness judgements which examine people's responses to procedural and distributive fairness (Leventhal, 1980; Lind & van den Bos, 2002; Tyler et al., 1997; van den Bos, 2009; van den Bos & Lind, 2002) echo the idea that subjective experiences are of greater importance than objective circumstances with regards to how individuals will act. Theory and research has shown that, despite the reality of the situation, some people will perceive socially iniquitous distributions as fair (e.g., Jost & Major, 2001; Major, 1994), and that people will react less negatively to undesirable outcomes if they perceive the procedures used by authorities as fair (e.g., Folger, 1977). Similarly, Lind et al. (1990) found that, regardless of whether or not change occurs, people are apt to perceive an institution as fair *if* the institution allows them to voice their complaints. In other words, giving people the opportunity to air their grievances can attenuate the direct influence people's evaluations of the fairness of a system has on their attempts to

generate change (see also Kaiser et al., 2013). These subjective perceptions of fairness despite the objective circumstances being the opposite, and their relationship with inaction have major implications for collective action involvement. Relative deprivation theory clearly outlines that a subjective sense of group-based disadvantage and injustice must be perceived before collective action to address those inequalities will occur (Runciman, 1966). This position has been strongly supported by subsequent research (e.g., Smith & Ortiz, 2002; Smith et al., 2012; Walker & Mann, 1987).

The third tenet of the SIMCA is that collective action is predicted by an individual's group efficacy beliefs. This supposition resonates with subjective resource mobilisation approaches (Klandermans, 1984; Louis et al., 2005), and proposes that individuals are more motivated to participate in collective action on behalf of their group if they believe that group is capable of achieving their goal of social change (Kelly & Kelly, 1994; Mummendey et al., 1999; Simon et al., 1998; van Zomeren et al., 2004). The idea that efficacy is needed to motivate collective action is one that also builds upon Bandura's (1982) concept of self-efficacy, which states that people must believe that their actions will have meaningful consequences in order to be willing to engage in them. Consistent with this perspective, Corcoran et al. (2011) found in a study of over 40,000 participants from 48 different countries that perceived efficacy correlated positively with pursuing various forms of collective action including joining boycotts, signing petitions, and participating in strikes and demonstrations. Political efficacy also mediates the relationship between personal beliefs and engaging in actions that champion such views (van Zomeren et al., 2012), further highlighting that potential activists must believe that their actions will facilitate change in order to engage in them (Chan, 2016; Stürmer & Simon, 2004a). In essence, efficacy beliefs view the group as a viable agent of social change capable of achieving relevant goals via collective effort (Cohen-Chen & Van Zomeren, 2018; van Zomeren et al., 2010)

Lastly, the SIMCA considers identity the psychological basis for collective action and suggests that it bridges both injustice and efficacy motivations for collective action, thereby integrating all three key concepts. The assumption behind the centrality of identity in the model is that a relevant social identity is a necessary antecedent for collective action as it is upon this basis that individuals conceptualise and understand the group's situation in terms of both efficacy and injustice. That is, identifying with a group makes the experience of subjective disadvantage and injustice relevant to the self (Iyer et al., 2003; Smith et al., 2007; van Zomeren, Spears, et al., 2008). This, in turn, heightens the motivation to maintain, protect and promote a positive social identity which can be achieved via collective action (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Additionally, perceptions of efficacy are strengthened via stronger identification with a group due to increased group-based social support (van Zomeren et al., 2004) and feelings of empowerment which can ensue as a result of taking action on behalf of one's group, even if that action is not initially successful (Drury & Reicher, 2005).

Jost and colleagues (2017) updated the SIMCA to include system justification, which provides a valuable addition by incorporating ideology into the model. Specifically, system justification has been shown to undermine the positive relationships all three existing variables have with collective action (e.g., Jost, 2020). Jost et al. (2017) argue that participation in collective action (or the lack thereof) is an inherently ideological process. Indeed, deciding to fight against a system typically reveals how a person feels about the existing social structure. That is, a person would not act unless they were dissatisfied with the system. Instances of collective action also generally gravitate towards one of the two typically acknowledged political poles – left (liberal) and right (conservative). There is a history of how these two poles evaluate the status quo: whereas the left often pushes for (progressive) social change, the right is motivated to maintain the current social order (Jost et



al., 2008). Given the ideological focus of this thesis, this updated version of the SIMCA which includes system justification was used for all empirical studies.

The original SIMCA was also independently updated by van Zomeren and colleagues (2018) to include identity content and moral beliefs (but overlooked system justification). Though informative, van Zomeren and colleagues' updated version of SIMCA was not used in this thesis for numerous reasons. First, each of the studies included in this thesis were designed prior to, or only just proceeding, the publication of van Zomeren et al.'s updated model. The studies were thus not modified to include that paper's definition of identity content, nor moral beliefs, as variables.

The second reason for not incorporating van Zomeren and colleagues' (2018) updated SIMCA is that the conceptualisation of identity content is too reminiscent of the notion of politicised identity which is critiqued below. As such, it is subject to the same shortcomings of that concept. Identity content, as it is defined by van Zomeren et al., does not resemble the broader definition provided by Ashmore et al. (2004), which this thesis utilises. The rationale for using Ashmore and colleagues' definition was that it is reflective of the histories, cultures and social and structural environments of the marginalised groups in question. This more inclusive, ethno-relative approach is preferable to van Zomeren et al.'s label-oriented definition which does not align with the aims of this thesis, nor does it reflect the lived experiences of marginalised groups.

With respect to moral beliefs, the definition and conceptualisation employed in van Zomeren et al.'s (2018) updated SIMCA is incredibly broad. For example, they consider whether events were violations of general "perceived rights" (p. 132), "the right to safe existence" (p.134), and the "right to free education" (p.136). The 'right' to these things can certainly be considered a moral imperative by individuals. However, the broad scope of these

rights, and the issues to which they were applied in the 2018 review, appear to more closely resemble instances of incidental, rather than structural, disadvantage.

I would argue that the generality of van Zomeren et al.'s (2018) conceptualisation of moral beliefs renders it ill-suited for structurally marginalised groups particularly. That is, consistent with the value protection model of justice, moral beliefs are independent of people's evaluations and perceptions of the fairness of the social system (Napier & Tyler, 2008; Skitka, 2002; Skitka & Houston, 2001; Skitka & Mullen, 2002; Skitka & Mullen, 2008). For example, Skitka (2002) found that the outrage and action associated with moral beliefs was only activated when an individual's own moral position was under *direct* threat (e.g., policy / law change). Furthermore, a recent comprehensive theoretical review argues that moral reasoning and beliefs are insufficient to further moral progress at both the individual and structural level (see Tam, 2020). These findings suggest that deeply ingrained socio-structural issues which comprise the status quo, such as those which impact the day to day lives of marginalised groups, are unlikely to incite moral outrage or the subsequent motivation to action. As such, moral positionality may make a poor predictor of collective action to redress structural inequalities. Nevertheless, future research may seek to replicate the studies included in this thesis using moral belief measures.

In sum, group identification is central to the SIMCA, as it predicts collective action not only directly, but also indirectly via perceptions of injustice and efficacy. That is, rather than acting as an isolated individual, identifying with a group motivates people to think, feel, and act *as* members of the group, *for* members of the group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). When considered in the context of collective action, *politicised* group identification is considered by some to be a more relevant concept to consider than the more general group identification (e.g., Simon et al., 1998; Stürmer & Simon, 2004a, 2004b; van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). As such, I will discuss it next as a distinct attribute.

### *Politicised identity*

Politicised identity is considered by some scholars to be a stronger predictor of collective action because, they suggest, group norms towards action are an integral part of politicised identities. As such, politicised groups, as opposed to non-politicised groups, have a stronger inclination towards collective action, as well as a greater feeling of internal obligation to participate (van Zomeren, 2016; van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008).

Politicised identity is commonly distinguished from group identity by being defined and measured as identification with a social movement, or with an activist identity (e.g., feminist is the politicised activist label most commonly discussed in the literature). Neither measures, however, are ideal operationalisations of the concept. Whereas a non-politicised identity is measured in terms of the extent to which an individual identifies with a marginalised group (i.e., in-group identification; van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008).

There is some evidence to support the need to distinguish between politicised group identity and broader group-identification. For example, van Zomeren, Postmes, et al. (2008) found that identification with a social movement or action group had a stronger overall effect size on collective action intentions and participation than did identification with a broader marginalised group. Due to these results, they suggested that, while an individual's identity as a woman should reasonably predict their willingness to take action on behalf of women, an even better predictor would be their identification with the feminist movement. Hercus (1999) provided some evidence for this supposition. Likewise, Simon et al. (1998) found that identification with the Grey Panthers was a stronger predictor of collective action intentions than identification with the elderly in general. They also found that identification with the gay movement was a stronger predictor of collective action than identification with gay people in general. They further suggested that identification with the politicised group fully mediated the relationship between general group identification and collective action. Similarly,

(Stürmer & Simon, 2004b) conducted a longitudinal study on gay men and found that politicised group identification at Time 1 was a stronger predictor of collective action than identification with the broader group. However, their results at Time 3 contradicted this finding. Finally, Stürmer et al. (2003) found that identification with NAAFA, a fat acceptance movement, was more predictive of collective action than identification with overweight people in general.

Despite these empirical findings, and some popular support of the superiority of politicised identification over group identification in predicting collective action intentions and behaviour, a closer examination of the literature reveals that there are few aspects which warrant further examination and exegesis. These critiques will be presented next.

### *Critiques of politicised identity*

There are a number of issues with the concept and operationalisation of politicised identity. The first I will address is the explanation most frequently presented for why politicised identity should more strongly predict collective action intentions and involvement than group-identification. The justification recurrently provided in associated literature which followed the work of Simon et al. (1998), Stürmer et al. (2003), and Stürmer and Simon (2004b) is a variation of

... those who identify with action-oriented groups feel a stronger “inner obligation to participate”, which basically reflects an internalized group norm that one ought to act. This suggests that not just the strength but also the content of the relevant group identity (i.e., what it means to be a group member) is important with respect to its predictive power” (van Zomeren, 2016, p. 91).

This explanation suggests that, through the internalisation of the norms of the politicised group to which they belong, individuals have turned taking action on behalf of their group into an important aspect of their identity. Thus, situating normative behaviour at

the root of politicised social identity and its association with group-based action taking. However, this rationalisation bears little resemblance to the original operationalisation of the normative motivation used in those studies which was defined thus;

The normative motive concerns selective benefits in terms of the expected reactions of significant others to one's participation in collective action (e.g., ridicule or admiration by friends or family). It is conceptualised as the multiplicative function of the subjective (positive or negative) valence of others' expected reactions and the personal importance of these reactions (Stürmer & Simon, 2004a, p. 64).

Glaringly, a crucial component in the supposition of why politicised identification is a stronger predictor of collective action than group identification appears to have passed through a whispering gallery. Specifically, the term "norm" has been transmuted in a semantic shift away from the original usage which referred to the benefits associated with expectations of significant others, to being, via the context in which it is used, presented (whether intentionally or not) as the more typical concept of a group norm employed by social psychology literature. That is, commonalities which help to define group membership and which often result in individuals behaving in a group-consistent manner (see Matelski & Hogg, 2015).

Addressing the other primary point of contention, there is limited evidence that a politicised identity is more closely associated with an 'inner obligation' to act than high group-based identification<sup>6</sup>. Stürmer et al. (2003) did, however, include a single item measuring inner obligation "I feel a sense of inner obligation to participate in the activities of NAAFA" (p. 75). Their results indicated that obligation was positively associated with

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<sup>6</sup> Though, relatedly, van Zomeren et al., (2012) found positive evidence that moral convictions – which, they argue, obligate people to act – regarding an issue predict people's willingness to engage in collective action related to that issue. Additionally, they demonstrated some evidence that moral convictions are more strongly associated with a politicised identity as opposed to the broader group identity.

politicised identification. Furthermore, they found that the relationship between politicised identification and willingness to participate in collective action was fully mediated by the sense of obligation to participate in the group's activities. It is acknowledged that different disciplines, including the separate literatures on social movements, voter turnout and collective action, employ different definitions, concepts and assumptions which can obfuscate and hinder the transfer and acculturation of ideas, including the meaning and relevance of politicised identity (for discussions, see Jasper, 2011; McAdam et al., 2003; Opp, 2009). However, the above seems more to be a case of metamorphosed understanding whereby the substance and consequence of politicised identity was altered over time which is just as disadvantageous for theoretical integration and comprehension.

The second issue I will address regarding politicised identification is that it is commonly distinguished from group identity by being defined and measured as either identification with a social movement, or identification with an activist identity (e.g., feminist). I contend that both definitions have the potential to confound and delegitimise the significance of the relationship between politicised identity and collective action. I will begin with identification with a social movement. Participants from all of the studies mentioned above were recruited from existing, legitimate social movement organisations directly related to the group identity in question (e.g., Grey Panthers, NAAFA). The participants were already registered, and in some cases due paying, members of these organisations. It was from these pools of participants that individuals identified more strongly with their politicised identity than their in-group in general, and that politicised identity was found to be a stronger predictor of collective action intentions and behaviour than group identification (Simon et al., 1998; Stürmer & Simon, 2004b; Stürmer et al., 2003). While I do not discount the reliability of these findings, I do question their validity. Indeed, I would argue that it is bordering on

*petitio principia* to state that, for example, members of the gay movement are more likely to take part in the gay movement.

As mentioned, participants were already involved with the various social movements in question. Therefore, as members they would have, according to social identity theory (Tajfel, 1974, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), been motivated to engage in the socio-cognitive process of categorisation. That is, they would have been motivated to distinguish their group from others. Even if those others could *objectively* be classified as having the same identity as them (e.g., elderly people), they would still be considered and classified as out-group others because they were not a member of the specific in-group (e.g., Grey Panthers). Following this, the in-group (e.g., Grey Panthers) would then be motivated to engage in self-enhancement strategies, emphasising and endorsing stereotypes and norms which reflect positively on their chosen in-group (as opposed to the out-group, e.g., elderly people). Therefore, the fact that group members more strongly identified with their social movement group than a comparative general identity is unsurprising. Participants had chosen to join their group and people are motivated to favour their in-group (Tajfel et al., 1971; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986), and view it as distinctive compared to others (Brewer, 1999). However, it does not necessarily follow that in-group members' motivations for, and increased likelihood of, participating in collective action significantly differ from individuals who share their identity but are not members of the social movement. Contextually manufactured higher levels of in-group *politicised* identification may partially obscure the contribution of general group-identification to willingness to participate in collective action on behalf of the marginalised group (e.g., Simon et al., 1998). This is an issue because there is a reasonable theoretical likelihood that the former may be more strongly associated with already belonging to the group than the politicisation of identity. However, because all of the studies demonstrating these results sampled from populations that were already members of the

social movement groups under investigation, this potential confound cannot be adequately addressed.

Another issue associated with using social movement group membership as evidence of a politicised identity, or a definition of the same, is that doing so discounts the act of *joining* a social movement group as a form of collective action. Which, given the broadness of the definition most commonly used in psychology (Wright et al., 1990b), it is. As such, the time, energy, and other potential resources (e.g., membership fees) that an individual has put into joining and maintaining their membership with an activist group is allotted reduced importance or disregarded when social movement group membership is conceptualised as politicised identity and a predictor of collective action instead of an outcome in and of itself. Furthermore, practical considerations such as the fact that social movement groups are typically, and titularly, the organisers of social movements need to be considered. As members of a social movement, individuals would have greater access to information and resources regarding upcoming collective action events (Lee, 2007). This could, in part, account for the increased participation of group members in comparison to non-group members who lack that information. However, if politicised identity is defined as belonging to a social movement, this difference would likely be attributed to said concept, not the more mundane, but likely reason.

The final issue I will address regarding politicised identity relates to the second way it is commonly distinguished from group identity and defined and measured in the literature. That is, identification with an activist identity. As the activist identity ‘feminist’ (as opposed to a broader group identification with women) is the one most commonly discussed in the literature, I, too, will use it as an example to demonstrate the concerns that relying on such deterministic labels present.



While there is empirical evidence showing that identifying as a feminist predicts collective action behaviour (see Crosby et al., 1996), the word feminist—how it is defined, and the perceptions associated with it—make the label a complicated and problematic one. Indeed, the definition of feminist and feminism is amorphous which makes it a poor indicator as a self-labelled identity alone. Because the concept *means* different things to different people, the internal reliability and external validity of the label as a predictor is significantly reduced (Szymanski, 2004). There have been multiple waves of feminism, each with different goals, values and ideologies, with much contention and critique relating to those goals, values and ideologies purported by each wave between individuals who self-identify as feminists dependent upon the wave to which they adhere (see, Branaman, 2011, 2020, for reviews). Meanwhile, research demonstrates that conservative female politicians who self-identify as feminist have co-opted certain elements of feminism, while obfuscating or abstracting others, in order to formulate an identity of feminism which allows them to maintain and create policies which are distinctly anti-feminist, while still projecting themselves as appealing to female voters (Swift, 2019). This suggests that the label ‘feminist’ can be covertly used against women—even by other women. It also must be noted that self-labelling as a feminist is often related to an ignorance to, or dismissal of, the structural barriers women face in society (Eddy & Ward, 2017).

Scholars who research attitudes towards feminism have consistently found that agreement with feminist ideology, values and goals is common amongst women, but labelling oneself as a feminist is not (Buschman & Lenart, 1996; Cowan et al., 1992; Liss et al., 2001; Williams & Wittig, 1997). Indeed, past research has consistently found that approximately one third of participants refer to themselves as feminists (see e.g., Kamen, 1991; Korman, 1983) – though this percentage has decreased in recent decades, and appears impervious to intervention. For example, from a sample population of women who endorsed

feminist ideologies and beliefs, approximately a third of whom self-identified as feminists, Anastasopoulos (1999) through extensive and specific questioning identified a sub-group of extremely pro-feminist women. However, even amongst that group, only 32% labelled themselves as feminists. Similarly, Dyer and Hurd (2018) attempted an intervention approach with participants who were enrolled in a university women's studies course. Despite encouraging attitude changes which occurred via discourse and almost universal support for the women's movement, most participants still refused to call themselves feminists by the end of the study. Even during the recent influx of female participation in politics in the U.S following the highly successful Women's Marches beginning in January, 2017, there remained a reluctance to label oneself as feminist – including amongst those who were actively participating in collective action on behalf of women. For example, Lommel et al. (2019) examined tweets posted on, and around, the 'Day without a Woman' strike in March 2017. The results of their qualitative analyses revealed that most women noted their reasons for involvement in, and support for, the movement primarily related to having a common enemy. That is, an antipathy towards then-President Donald Trump. However, contrary to what they expected, though the relevance of what could be defined as 'feminist claims' were strongly referenced by women, persistent barriers still remained to identifying and labelling oneself as a feminist. However, it must be noted that exposure to positive stereotypes of feminists in an experimental setting has been shown to increase the likelihood of feminist self-identification among heterosexual and sexual minority women (Moore & Stathi, 2020).

A large part of the reluctance to label oneself as a feminist is due to the predominately negative images and stereotypes associated with the label (for reviews see e.g., Crossley, 2018; Faludi, 1991). In turn, these negative portrayals lead women to fear being perceived negatively if they associate themselves with feminists (Swim & Cohen, 1997). Unfortunately, that fear which is well founded. MacDonald and Zanna (1998) found that identifying as a

feminist during a job interview reduced the likelihood that women applicants would be offered the job.

Along with fear of social reprisal or censure, disinterest also appears to explain why women who espouse feminist beliefs refrain from calling themselves feminists. Following a series of interviews with young women who refused to self-label as feminists but nonetheless actively participated in collective action on behalf of women, Morgan (1995) suggested that many women reject the feminist label because they view it as irrelevant to their identity. Meanwhile, Kelly and Breinlinger (1996) found that both identifying as a feminist *and* identifying with women in general predicted collective action, while Liss et al. (2004) found that self-labelling as a feminist was negatively associated with collective action. This suggests that there is much more to being a feminist than identifying as feminist, which is an issue if researchers studying politicised identity rely on participants to identify as a feminist. Given the evidence presented above, utilising attitudinal and ideological markers—markers which people are more prone to endorse—as opposed to concrete identities appears to be a more appropriate and beneficial method of measuring politicised identity.

It bears consideration that some, if not all, marginalised identities are political by their very nature in a way that may not be easily, or tangibly measured, but that is glaringly apparent to those who belong to those identity groups (Alcoff, 1988). Theory and research has largely moved beyond the basic tenet underlying structuralism – that is, that cognitive thought and social life are structured by binary opposites in a patterned and universal way (e.g., Lévi-Strauss, 1969). This notion of deterministic dualism was heavily challenged (e.g., Derrida, 1976), and the theory of poststructuralism followed. Criticisms of structuralism became central to feminist (particularly its division between public and private), post-colonial (particularly its ideas regarding ‘universal’ truths), and queer theory (e.g., Nicholson et al.,

1995; Seidman, 1998). Yet, dualist thought maintains its relevance, and permeates the way most societies are structured, as illustrated by the following quote:

“Different modes for the classification of populations, differential treatment on the basis of labelling or attributions of capacities and needs, and modes of exclusion that operate on this basis (the core features of what may be called social divisions) are characteristic of modern social formations. They permeate the social order and indeed lie at the very heart of discursive, symbolic, psychic, economic and political practices” (Anthias, 1998, p. 506).

The concept of binary, dualist opposites (e.g., rational / emotional, man / woman, educated / ignorant, white / black, normal / deviant, straight / queer), where one is valued while the other is considered dangerous, uncomfortable, or requiring control are central to the process of creating and sustaining hierarchical social divisions. Society divides (i.e., differentiates and identifies) people into social categories using dualist thought and positions these categories in a hierarchy based on their comparative value in relation to one another. These processes have acute and chronic political consequences relating to another binary, inclusion versus exclusion, within the framework of exclusionary politics based on group identity (Christensen & Siim, 2010; Laakso, 2007; Mendelberg, 2001; Wilkinson, 2006). They are also deeply political for the individuals who are marginalised by them, and may lead them to consider their identity political (Anthias, 2001, 2013).

For example, in their book, *Taking up Space*, Kwakye and Ogunbiyi (2019) observe that their marginalised identity as minority students at a mostly-white Cambridge University is inherently political, and as such, so are all of their actions. This, they posit, is due to the extent to which the identity of (in their example) a black woman is saturated in a history of sexism, racism, and classism. Greaves et al. (2018) offered a similar supposition; that having a Māori ethnicity is intimately and intricately linked to politics. This is, they suggest, because

the historical experiences of Māori have rendered political consciousness a crucial aspect of what it means to be Māori in the present day (Houkamau, 2006, 2010). A situation which is common for indigenous identities (Durie, 1998; Walker, 2004). Additionally, the lived experiences of many Māori are affected by the socio-political context (Houkamau, 2010; Rata et al., 2008). Indeed, Mahinekura Reinfelds (2000, as quoted in Pihama, 2001, p. 82) remarked, “[f]or some Māori people, to get up in the morning is a political act.” Suggesting that what it means to be Māori is inextricably, inherently political.

With regards to the LGBTQIA+ community, Brickell (2000) notes that heterosexuality is considered to be the ‘normal’ state. Because of this, it is presumed by default and is thereby visible to the point of being invisible. That is, the heterosexual identity only becomes evident under circumstances that force a comparison to a minority sexual identity – a structuralist binary of normal, as opposed to not normal which positions the normal on the top of the social hierarchy. Brickell further notes that the inconspicuous nature of heterosexuality allows it to be socially apolitical. By contrast, homosexuality and other minority sexual identities are, due to their distinct status as ‘other’ and ‘abnormal’ resulting from the overwhelming presumption of heterosexual as the norm, construed as complexly political.

Finally, while women are not a minority, they are still a socially and politically disadvantaged and marginalised group. Ethnic and sexual minority groups can be ignored and discarded by their more privileged counterparts. However, men, while seeking to maintain the gender power differential, are motivated to coexist with women to satisfy their interdependent relationship needs (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 1996; Hammond & Overall, 2013; Hammond & Overall, 2015). This makes women’s perceptions and experiences of their identity as political slightly different. The second wave feminist slogan ‘the personal is political’, was coined in 1968 by Carol Hanisch. Rosen (2000) states that the purpose of the

slogan was to dismantle the structuralist, dualistic determination that there is a clear separation between one's public and private life. To convey the idea that, for women in particular, there are political dimensions to both their public and private lives. Moreover, power relations impact and shape every aspect of those interdependent relationships, making their personal life, and their identity, political.

In sum, group members may not profess a politicised identity (e.g., feminist), or join a politicised social group for a number of reasons. However, this hesitancy does not necessarily preclude that those individuals hold similar values, beliefs and motivations as fellow in-group members who *do* indicate a politicised identity as it is commonly operationalised in the literature. Politicised identities have the potential to be viewed, by both the individual and others, as formidable, self-righteous, zealous, or radical (Stuart et al., 2018). As such, they may produce a social stigma which can result in a fear or reluctance to join such groups or self-categorise with such descriptors. By only considering and measuring politicised identity via these extreme and constrained terms, researchers may end up overlooking, and therefore devaluing, the contribution of more subtle forms of political identity and the impact these have on marginalised individuals' motivations or intentions to participate in collective action on behalf of their in-group. Additionally, marginalised identities who are subject to structural disadvantage such as women and ethnic and sexual minorities may be political in a way that cannot be measured empirically, but can be assumed based on social, cultural and historical context.

Although measuring politicised identities present several issues, that identity is central to the SIMCA (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008) and an integral psychological facet of collective action (Drury & Reicher, 2009; Ellemers, 1993; Mummendey et al., 1999) is indisputable. Likewise, it is clear that there are multiple conceptualisations of identity, many of which overlap and incorporate the cultural, social, political, and historical contexts of

identity (see e.g., Gilbert, 2010; Loseke, 2007). In the next section, I will discuss two separate, but related, concepts of identity: identity content and out-group determination of identity content. I will also discuss and incorporate how identity informs and relates to the three different marginalised groups which are the focus of the empirical studies included in this thesis.

### ***Identity content***

Much of the collective action literature examines groups under the assumption that their identity is politicised due to structural factors such as those mentioned in the previous section. Indeed, numerous studies examining a vast array of (assumed) politicised group identities from different cultures and countries have demonstrated that the SIMCA (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008) has a certain degree of external validity with regards to predicting minority, or marginalised, groups' engagement with collective action. For example, studies investigating the motivation to protest for Blacks and Whites in South Africa (Cakal et al., 2011), Spanish citizen and student protesters (Sabucedo et al., 2018), conflict between Muslim and Christian groups in Lebanon (Tabri & Conway, 2011), activist and non-activist responses to the U.S 'Ferguson' context which later evolved into the Black Lives Matter movement (Wermser et al., 2018), and the intention to vote in Dutch, Israeli, and Italian national elections (Van Zomeren et al., 2018) have all provided empirical support for some of the major aspects of the SIMCA.

Despite these promising examples of the generalisability of the SIMCA to diverse group identities, it has been suggested that the *content* of group identity (i.e., identity content) is an important factor to consider in order to better understand the contribution of politicised group<sup>7</sup> identity to collective action intentions and engagement (Reynolds et al., 2012; Simon

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<sup>7</sup> The term politicised group does not relate, or refer to politicised identity, but is instead a separate concept used to refer to a group that, by its very nature, exists in the political realm and is politicised by out-group others. For example, ethnic minority groups, women, the LGBTQIA+ community.

& Klandermans, 2001; van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). Identity content refers to the meanings associated with a particular identity including its ideologies, values, stereotypes, history, characteristics, and beliefs (Ashmore et al., 2004). Identity content is fundamentally a conceptualisation and statement of categorical group membership which is shared with others who have common characteristics. These commonalities may be ascribed characteristics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, sexual identity), or preference states (e.g., sports team fan, political affiliation, occupation), and factors which are associated with those things (Deaux, 1996; Sedikides & Brewer, 2015; Simon & Klandermans, 2001).

Identity, and to some extent identity content, is often examined in the broader social movement literature. It is, however, important to note that this literature is less constrained by the stricter assumptions and definitions which are used in the collective action literature (e.g., Jasper & Polletta, 2019; Melucci, 1995; Polletta & Jasper, 2001; Taylor & Whittier, 1992). However, despite its assumed importance (e.g., Simon & Klandermans, 2001; van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008) and potential for an informative and symbiotic relationship with group identification which would further broaden understanding (e.g., Becker & Wagner, 2009; Reynolds et al., 2012), identity content has been largely neglected in collective action research. Indeed, despite oftentimes receiving insubstantial, intransitive respect and acknowledgment regarding its significance to the group in question, identity content is most often assumed and even interpreted with no actual assessment or measurement to support such claims. Following their original meta-analysis which yielded the SIMCA, van Zomeren, Postmes, et al. (2008), upon reflection, suggested that it may be the *content* of social identity, rather than social identity or social group identification, that prepares and drives individuals to take part in collective action. Similarly, Simon and Klandermans (2001) placed a great deal of emphasis on the importance of identity content. However, the majority of empirical research which followed operationalised both politicised identity and identity content by



asking participants about the extent to which they identified with the relevant group (i.e., group identification). In sum, there exists a breadth of knowledge regarding the relationship between how strongly people identify with their in-groups, and to some extent with a politicised identity. However, very little is known about what this means to them either as individuals, or within the broader social context. Nor is much known about how, and to what extent, identity content fits within the broader social psychology of collective action.

The value of identity content to understanding collective action behaviour is perhaps best understood through the lens of self-categorisation theory (Turner, 1985) which purports that the norms and meanings associated with a social group identity are internalised by individuals. This deeper understanding of their identity provides individuals with their place in the social world (Simon et al., 2008), as well as the means by which to recognise and comprehend that place in relation to the wider world. Through this process, the socially shared identity content of members of a social group come to influence an individual's perceptions, behaviours and thoughts – such as their response to the broader social environment – as these become a more integral part of the 'self'. That is to say, the 'self', or individual, via self-categorisation with a group, and internalising the identity content of that group, becomes more likely to think, feel, and behave as the group does (Simon et al., 2008). Indeed, both observational studies (e.g., Iyer et al., 2009; Livingstone & Haslam, 2008) and laboratory settings have found that, although the strength of an individual's identity determines the extent to which they are influenced, identity content determines *how* they are influenced (Jetten et al., 2002; Postmes et al., 2001).

With respect to collective action, the latter designation is critical to understanding why some individuals choose to act while others do not. That is, the extent to which they internalise and adjudicate the valence of the identity content of their group, or even the degree to which they accept the validity or existence of said content. For example, Becker

and Wagner (2009) operationalised identity content for women using gender-role preference (i.e., a measure of individual approval of traditional versus progressive societal gender roles for women). They found through both correlational studies and experimental data that women were more likely to reject benevolent, hostile and modern sexism, and participate in collective action on behalf of women. However, this effect only occurred when participants both identified with women as a group, and had internalised progressive gender-role identity content. Additionally, they noted that identity content had weaker or null effects on endorsement of sexism and collective action behaviour when women had low identification with their gender in-group.

Becker and Wagner's (2009) results highlight the cruciality of understanding the effects of identity content, particularly the way in which it interacts with group identification. Indeed, they went so far as to state that increasing women's gender in-group identification is insufficient, and may even be counterproductive, to change sexist attitudes and motivate gender-based collective action if identity content is overlooked. The reasoning behind this, they submitted, was that if the identity content endorsed by an individual leaned towards more traditional gender roles, then increasing group identification could result in a higher acceptance of sexist attitudes and the presiding gender status quo. They proposed that social intervention would increase if group identification was heightened in concert with change to identity content. These results emphasise the value of identity content, while simultaneously demonstrating that in-group identification is also necessary and important for motivation and mobilisation. That is, an integrative understanding of identity content and group identification will aid in elucidating why some group members choose to act while others do not.

Gender role preference as a measure of identity content is but one example of how many aspects of identity content are ascribed to groups by out-group others – most often the dominant out-group. Next, I will discuss out-group determinisation of the identity content of

marginalised groups and how these determinations become the presiding cultural narrative—a powerful causal factor in the way a group defines its own identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and the negative impact this has on marginalised individual's perceptions of their own identity as well as their physical and psychological well-being. I will also present research showing that marginalised individuals often internalise, legitimise, and endorse identity content that is imposed upon them, and articulate how this impacts collective action.

### *Out-group determinisation of identity content*

The nature of the identity content ascribed to one group by another is partially rooted in intergroup relations and, as such, is coloured by in-group bias and out-group prejudice (see Allport, 1954). Stereotypes (i.e., thoughts and expectations about how an individual will act based on their group membership that inform how others think about, and respond to that group; Dovidio et al., 2010) constitute the majority of what out-group determined identity content is comprised of. Stereotypes are often accompanied by evaluative judgments of how warm (i.e., approachable; versus cold) and competent (versus incompetent) a person is based on their group membership (Fiske et al., 2002). According to the stereotype content model, the tendency to make these judgements is motivated by power and the socio-structural conditions which govern intergroup relations (Fiske et al., 1999). Stereotypes are widely held generalisations (Allport, 1954; Smith & Bond, 1999), though, despite their near omnipresence, not all people personally endorse them (Devine, 1989). Prejudice and discrimination against others occurs when people believe stereotypes to be accurate depictions of out-groups and apply their content to their actions, evaluations and attitudes towards them (Allport, 1954; Devine, 1989).

A significant portion of the identity content of marginalised groups is imposed upon them by dominant out-groups (Herek, 2009a, 2009c; Young, 1990). As the more powerful group, dominant groups control intellectual production and dissemination allowing them to

shape the sociocultural understanding of society. So, stigmatised identities are created and maintained by those with power against those who have less power (see Link & Phelan, 2001). Or, in the words of Marx and Engels (1845) “The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas.” (p. 30). Further, because of the intertwined relationship between identity content and intergroup relations, many aspects of imposed identity content reflect, reinforce and act to legitimise the existing power structure, social hierarchy, and status quo (Fiske et al., 1999; Glick et al., 2004; Hokowhitu, 2004; Link & Phelan, 2001; Piumatti, 2017; Reyna et al., 2014; Young, 1990, 2002). Because of this motivation, the content often frames marginalised identities in undesirable, inferior, vulnerable, or repellent terms (Herek, 2009a, 2009c; Hokowhitu, 2004; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). For example, stereotypes often portray ethnic minorities as unintelligent, women as overly emotional, and gay men as promiscuous. These perceptions then become social and cultural expectations of marginalised identities that permeate public opinion to the point where they are assumed to be based on fact (Allport, 1954; Barnes et al., 2012; Goffman, 1963; Williams et al., 1997). Indeed, out-group determinations of the identity content of marginalised groups are afforded such eminence in the collective social consciousness that they become entrenched in almost every facet of society (Best & Williams, 1997; Herek, 2007; Smith & Bond, 1999; Young, 1990). For example, Dasgupta (2004) noted that individuals – regardless of status – tend to implicitly favour groups which are valued by mainstream culture. Because the content of marginalised group-identity, as it is determined by dominant out-groups, is typically derogated and viewed as undesirable within the cultural milieu (Herek, 2007; Young, 1990), members of advantaged groups are widely preferred to members of marginalised groups. This preference manifests itself perniciously and pervasively.

In an increasingly digital world, the majority of people get their information – be it social, cultural, or political – online. However, the internet, as a consequence of how it was

developed, is a reflection of the real world. Therefore, it is unsurprising that the internet also propagates and perpetuates negative and biased perceptions of marginalised identities (Edwards & Veale, 2018; Sánchez-Monedero et al., 2020). Noble (2018) notes that this is because the algorithms and the subsequent platforms they support are only as good as the data put into them. She further explains that the training data initially used for most sites was typically overwhelmingly biased due to the *presumed* implicit biases of the original coders and creators who were almost exclusively heterosexual, white men (see also, Cohn, 2019). Unfortunately, this has led to a racist, sexist internet. Google image searches almost exclusively provide gender-stereotypical representations of occupations (e.g., doctor = man, nurse = woman; Cohn, 2015). While Google search's autocomplete function commonly finishes the phrase 'women should...' with *charming* directives such as 'stay at home', 'be in the kitchen', or 'be slaves', searching 'women shouldn't...' yields equally sexist results including 'vote', 'work', and 'have rights'. Doubling down on its prejudice, using Google to search seemingly innocuous, neutral words such as 'beautiful' or 'professor' overwhelmingly produces images which are disproportionately of white people (Noble, 2018).

Though algorithms – and the advantaged individuals who created them – may take the initial blame for these instances of discrimination, ordinary internet users also contribute to the pervasive racism online. For example, an analysis of 19 million tweets from the United Kingdom and United States over a four year period found that 40% of them contained racially offensive language (Brandwatch, 2016). Importantly, online biases – which are in large part the result of a dominant group imposing their beliefs about the identity content of marginalised groups – have real world implications. A review of research on the impact of exposure to online content revealed that the gender stereotypes negatively influence women's attitudes and beliefs about their own bodies, sexual relationships, and gender roles (Ward & Harrison, 2005). Further, Noble (2018) argues that no aspect of the internet is apolitical, and

that the prejudices implicitly built into and expressed online incite real world violence and discrimination.

That marginalised groups have a proportion of their identity content foisted upon them by dominant out-groups is consistent with the literature on self-stereotyping<sup>8</sup> (i.e., holding stereotypical beliefs about one's group and / or oneself; Simon & Hamilton, 1994), and meta-stereotypes (i.e., believing that out-groups endorse stereotypes pertaining ones in-group; Vorauer et al., 1998). This research demonstrates that marginalised groups not only recognise that out-groups view their identities in certain ways, but that they also often endorse and behave in ways that reinforce their (imposed) identity. Personally endorsing and believing that out-groups endorse stereotypes which reflect negatively on one's group identity is deleterious to both personal and in-group well-being. For example, self-stereotyping correlates positively with depressed emotional state for gay men, while meta-stereotyping predicts lower feelings of life satisfaction and self-worth (Hinton et al., 2019). While a meta-analysis revealed that women who endorse gender stereotypes and allow them to shape their self-concept have lower self-esteem than women who reject gender stereotypes (Whitley, 1983). Furthermore, it is not even necessary to personally endorse a stereotype for it to have a negative impact; simply being aware of its existence is enough (Steele, 1997). For instance, in a sample of black women, meta-stereotyping was directly related to hostility, depression and anxiety, and indirectly related to poor self-care (Jerald et al., 2017). Dasgupta (2004) also found that, for marginalised groups, implicit negative self-stereotyping may unintentionally lead to behavioural consequences which are harmful not only to the individual who exhibits them, but also to their group as a whole. Additionally, Rudman et al.

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<sup>8</sup> Self-stereotyping has been defined in two ways within the literature. One definition refers to prototypicality – how similar one feels to a typical group member (Spears et al., 1997). The other definition defines self-stereotyping as believing stereotypic traits accurately describe oneself or ones in-group. In this thesis, I use the latter definition.

(2002) demonstrated that chronic exposure to negative stereotypes about one's group can cause marginalised individuals to feel implicit disdain towards their own group.

Despite the myriad of adverse consequences, encountering and responding to stereotypes is a life-long occupation. Indeed, for some, their experience with identity defining stereotypes pre-dates their birth and encroaches upon their months as a resident of the womb. These unfortunate yet-to-be-borns attempt to gestate peacefully while their parents, and other soon to be significant people in their life throw a party devoted entirely to their genitals. The most common method employed to reveal this information to others is to cut open a cake – if the inside is blue, it is a boy. If the inside is pink, it is a girl. The stereotypical colour symbolism should be more than enough, however, these cakes often come with an icing slogan typically in the form of a question about what sex the baby will be. It is here that the stereotypes become overt, noxious and impossible to ignore. Popular slogans include: 'Sparkles or Sports?' 'Guns or Glitter?', 'Cupcake or Stud Muffin?', 'Tutus or Touchdowns?', and 'Boys or Badges?'. In two words, not including the conjunction, these cakes manage to objectify, disempower, sexualise and constrain the interests of children who have not even made it into the world yet, based solely on stereotypical identity content regarding what a boy or girl *should* be.

To a great extent, children (and adults) do toe this line drawn for them before they are born. From a young age, members of marginalised groups are inclined to think and act in ways that adhere to, and reflect social expectations and opinions about them. For example, children begin to define and differentiate themselves as a function of their gender very early on, with girls behaving more cooperatively (as opposed to competitively) than boys (McGuire & McGuire, 1988). Girls as young as six are more likely to say that boys are incredibly intelligent, but that girls are not. Further, girls begin to shy away from activities described as being for incredibly intelligent children at this age (Bian et al., 2017), and

African-American preschool (Ramsey, 1987; Williams & Morland, 2018) and school age (Averhart & Bigler, 1997; Porter, 1991) children associate negative characteristics and behaviour with darker skin colour. Further, research has shown that children are penalised for acting in counter-stereotypical ways (Levy et al., 1995; Martin, 1990; Sandnabba & Ahlberg, 1999; Smetana, 1986) which reinforces (or, rather, *enforces*) their tendency to think and behave in a manner which complies with what is expected of them.

The validity and subsequent widespread acceptance of negative identity content ascribed to marginalised groups is perpetuated, in part, because people – often advantaged out-group others who have a stake in maintaining the status quo – are motivated to match their expectations to their observations. When confronted with counter-stereotypical exceptions, people attempt to rationalise them, or attribute success to external circumstances such as luck, or temporary circumstances such as ease of task, or cheating (for a review, see Swim & Sanna, 1996). For instance, Tiedemann (2000) demonstrated how mathematics teachers viewed the identical achievements of boys and girls differently and in line with stereotypical expectations of what they should be capable of based on their gender group identity. They attributed the high test scores of boys to their greater logical reasoning ability, while the same high scores of girls were considered to be due to exceptional effort. Conversely, teachers viewed the low test scores of boys as due to lack of effort, whereas the low test scores of girls were attributed to their lack of logical reasoning ability. Therefore, while out-group others attempt to confirm their stereotypical beliefs and expectations, marginalised group members often internalise the same (Feinstein et al., 2012).

Indeed, research has shown that individuals internalise socio-cultural expectations of themselves and their groups. One of the ways people accomplish this is to develop feelings of entitlement (i.e., what they should receive based on *who* they are) and deservingness (i.e., what they should receive based on what they have *done*) which are consistent with the status



of their group (O'Brien & Major, 2009; Ridgeway, 2001). Literature on depressed entitlement has shown that, like children, adults may act in a manner consistent with the dominant, normative judgements of the social value of their marginalised identity, often to the detriment of themselves. For example, Jost (1997) found that women who performed a task equally as well as men – as rated by gender-blind evaluators – considered their contributions to be less insightful than their male counterparts. Additionally, women believed they should have been paid less than what men believed they should have been paid. Indeed, female participants indicated that they would have paid themselves 18% less than the male participants indicated they would have paid themselves. This suggests that internalising and endorsing negative stereotypes about one's group is likely to inhibit their willingness to challenge unfair systems and situations (e.g., the gender wage-gap). Negative self-stereotyping validates and legitimises the existing social structure, meaning it is perceived by the individual as veridical, and not open to change, leading them to be satisfied with it, even as it disadvantages them (Blanton et al., 2001).

The determination of marginalised groups' identity content by dominant out-group others is extremely relevant to the study of collective action. If marginalised individuals internalise (Bearman et al., 2009; Meyer, 1995; Ridgeway, 2001; Szymanski et al., 2009), legitimise (O'Brien & Major, 2009; Reynolds et al., 2013; Ridgeway, 2001), and endorse (Jost, 1997; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Ridgeway, 2001; Young, 1990) these negative conceptions of their identity, they would be more likely to perceive the existing power structure (including their own disadvantaged place within it) as both stable and legitimate. These perceptions would, according to social identity theory, severely dampen support for collective action (Ellemers et al., 1993; Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986; Turner & Brown, 1978).

That marginalised individuals internalise unfavourable perceptions of themselves and their group is likely due to a variety of factors including those which are structural and situational (see e.g., Burkley & Blanton, 2008) such as life experiences (Liss et al., 2004), cultural differences and intersecting identities (Stryker et al., 2000). Yet, there are also numerous psychological factors which are important to consider. As has been discussed, much of what constitutes identity content is imposed upon marginalised groups by more advantaged out-group others. However, while individuals may be members of the same marginalised group and be aware of the same negative determinations out-group others make about their group identity, they do not necessarily interpret and apply that information in the same way (i.e., there is within group variance). Individuals make value judgements about all aspects of their identity content – including that content which is imposed on them – regarding whether that content applies to them, its relevance, its valence, and its validity. Psychological trait, and processes such as social dominance orientation (i.e., a disposition towards accepting and preferring circumstances that sustain social inequality, and a preference for structural social hierarchies; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), and right wing authoritarianism (i.e., a disposition towards perceiving authorities as legitimate, submitting to those authorities, and a propensity towards adhering to social norms; Altemeyer, 1981) may explain some of this difference. However, members of marginalised groups generally have lower levels of these traits than advantaged group members which would limit their influence here.

Conversely, system justification theory posits that people have a fundamental need to believe that social systems, structures, and the status quo are fair, just, and legitimate (Jost & Banaji, 1994). The theory outlines clear processes, which have been consistently supported by empirical research, which describe how, when and why even marginalised individuals would be motivated to interpret information and situations which are objectively

unfavourable to them as favourable (Chapter Two of this thesis defines and discusses system justification in more detail). These differences in interpretation may partially explain why some group members choose to take action against injustice while others do not. For example, individuals who fail to protest may not perceive the situation as one which needs changing, or they may have rationalised and legitimised the inequality or disparity in treatment (e.g., Becker & Wagner, 2009). Indeed, even aspects of identity that should be considered objective, such as historical injustices perpetrated against the group, are differentially and subjectively understood and responded to by individuals within that group (Osborne et al., 2017; Sibley, 2010).

In sum, identity content influences the way individuals think about, feel about, and respond to the world around them. However, identity content is not politically neutral and many aspects of the identity content of marginalised groups are imposed upon them by dominant out-groups. These processes justify and maintain the existing power structure, status quo and social hierarchy. Evidence supports the idea that marginalised individuals may internalise, legitimise, and endorse unfavourable stereotypes about themselves and their group. This may subsequently lead them to think and behave in ways consistent with those unfavourable stereotypes which can result in negative outcomes for both the individual and their group. Identity content is subjectively interpreted by the individual, meaning that not all members of a group view, for example, a stereotype about their group, the same way. This, in turn, helps explain why some members of a group choose to engage in collective action while others do not. Indeed, several scholars have suggested that while in-group identification may galvanize collective action intentions, the different ways people interpret the content of their group identity directs how, and to what extent, those intentions are manifested (Becker & Wagner, 2009; Jetten et al., 2002).

In the next section, I will provide an outline of the aims of this thesis and a brief overview of the four empirical studies included to serve as a guide and summary for the reader. Chapters Two, Three and Four contain separate empirical studies. Each chapter will also be precluded by a short bridging statement.

### **Thesis aims and overview**

Politicised identity when defined as belonging to a social movement group or identifying with a particular identity label (e.g., feminist, activist), has been suggested to be a better predictor of collective action than group-identification (Stürmer et al., 2003; van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). However, some marginalised identities may be, by their very nature, political ones (Brickell, 2000; Kwakye & Ogunbiyi, 2019; Rosen, 2000). Furthermore, while in-group identification is a consistent and important motivating factor of collective action (Ellemers, 1993; van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008), identity content is an oft neglected, but critical component to consider. This is because individual marginalised group members subjectively interpret the valence, relevance, and veracity of that content which can result in different responses to group-based disadvantage (Becker & Wagner, 2009). Members of marginalised groups may also be psychologically motivated to justify and legitimise their own disadvantage – particularly if they have internalised the belittling, denigrating and discriminatory identity content imposed upon them by dominant out-group others. This legitimisation of the social hierarchy and their own devalued status may then act to inhibit collective action intentions (Jost et al., 2004; Jost, Becker, et al., 2017).

The aim of this thesis is to examine unique psychological motivators and barriers to engaging in collective action which are specific to the identity content of particular marginalised groups. To these ends, I include four separate empirical studies, each of which focuses on a single marginalised group. Studies one and two examine ethnic minorities (Chapter Two), study three focuses on women (Chapter Three), and study four incorporates a

large sample of the LGBTQIA+ community (Chapter Four). By looking these three groups, I provide novel examinations of group-specific identity content as unique motivators or barriers of collective action for marginalised groups.

Many marginalised groups have a long and continuing history of their collective identity being dictated by the dominant social narrative. The disparity in power between marginalised groups and advantaged groups makes this possible as advantaged groups exert more influence over institutional structures such as laws and policies which are often designed to maintain the existing power hierarchy (Herek, 2007). In addition to wielding structural control over marginalised groups, dominant groups exercise interpersonal control by socially policing aspects of their identity. These experiences of public and personal regulation are ones which ethnic minorities (Butterworth, 1972; Fleras, 1985; O'Sullivan, 2007), women (Chesney-Lind, 2017; Hoskyns, 1996; Meloy & Miller, 2010), and the LGBTQIA+ community (Belavusau, 2020; D'amico, 2015; Knauer, 2012) are intimately familiar with. This surveillance is also indelibly associated with dominant groups' motivation to ensure that marginalised groups are acting in accord with their prescribed status and identity content.

In this thesis, I assess identity content by operationalising it as the extent to which marginalised group members either acknowledge the iniquity of, endorse, or internalise out-group ascribed identity content. The social and psychological variables I have included for this purpose in each study are ones which are either specific to, and have been shown to particularly impact, the marginalised group in question. They are also concepts which have individual, societal and political implications. I consider this to be a subtle, yet crucial, measure of the politicisation of marginalised group identity as it shows how the day to day lived experience of having a marginalised identity is, in itself, political (e.g., Brickell, 2000; Kwakye & Ogunbiyi, 2019), and that that experience may differ between individuals. That is,

people recognise and internalise the politicisation of their identity by out-group others (via stereotypes etc) to different degrees. This, in turn, shapes their response to their marginalised status. Most importantly for this thesis, it may shape their collective action intentions and behaviours.

According to theory, collective action should be seen as a monumental undertaking for ethnic minorities, women, and LGBTQIA+ individuals. Social identity theory outlines three socio-cognitive factors (namely, group permeability, legitimacy of the existing social structure, and stability of the existing social structure) which determine collective action intentions (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). However, the structural and social environment provides barriers regarding all of these factors for each of the marginalised groups included in this thesis. First, each of the groups experience structural disadvantage. Structural disadvantage is considered more difficult to challenge as it is believed to be more stable than incidental disadvantage. Facing structural disadvantage should influence individuals' perception of the stability of the existing social structure leading them to perceive it as more stable, thus decreasing the likelihood of collective action. This also maps onto perceptions of efficacy as outlined in the SIMCA (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). Individuals may not feel as strong a sense of efficacy to achieve their goal when confronting a stable social system. Second, negative opinions of, and stigmas associated with, their group identity should, according to social identity theory, lead individuals to engage in identity management strategies to combat them (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). These are social mobility (exiting the group in favour of a more advantaged one), social creativity (attempting to interpret the traits and stereotypes associated with their group as positive), and social change (i.e., collective action). However, if marginalised individuals endorse and internalise these derogatory and devaluing externally determined aspects of their identity, then it is likely that

they will see the existing social system as legitimate. This, in turn, would reduce the probability that they would partake in collective action.

Even in the absence of a direct reminder, internalised negative identity content persists. Indeed, some purport that it never entirely subsides (e.g., Gonsiorek, 1988). Furthermore, it has been argued that individuals who are members of groups which are easily distinguishable visually or are considered socially disruptive are more likely to internalise stigmas associated with their group identity (Blankenship, 2019; Catanuso, 2018; Crocker, 1999; Jones, 1984; Moradi et al., 2010). For example, Jiménez-Loaisa et al. (2020) undertook a thematic analysis of overweight women and found that chronic exposure to highly prevalent health-centric discourses that demonise women who do not appeal to the physical ideal was strongly associated with the extent to which participants internalised stigmas associated with being overweight. Similarly, via an examination of the narratives of black sexual minorities, Ajayi and Syed (2021) noted that degree of prototypicality (with regards to ethnicity, sexual minority status, or both) was positively associated with internalising social stigmas associated with those groups. Furthermore, socio-political invisibility was negatively associated with oppression and stigma internalisation.

Generally speaking, women and ethnic minorities are visually distinguishable and many consider minority sexual identities to be socially disruptive. Indeed, a large body of research has shown that ethnic minorities (Barnes et al., 2013; Cross Jr, 1991; Wester et al., 2006), women (Bearman et al., 2009; Szymanski & Kashubeck-West, 2008), and sexual minorities (Frost & Meyer, 2009; Russell & Bohan, 2006) internalise prejudiced and discriminatory perceptions of themselves, their group, and their inferior status in society<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> Here, I have discussed internalised prejudice for ethnic minority groups, women, and sexual minorities separately. However, it is important to note – and will be discussed in Chapter Five of this thesis – that these experiences are not always mutually exclusive. Individuals who identify with more than one marginalised group experience identity-based stigma at the intersection of their identities (e.g., Collins et al., 2008; Meyer et al., 2008). Intersectionality is not, however, the focus of this thesis. This thesis, instead, aims to examine, and further understand, each identity group separately.

This internalisation could yield a legitimising ideology (e.g., Jost & Banaji, 1994) which validates the existing social structure, thereby reducing collective action intentions for members of these groups. This is also peripherally related to perceptions of injustice as outlined in the SIMCA (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). If marginalised individuals have rationalised and legitimised their disadvantaged status, they are less likely to consider that same status as unjust.

Finally, all three marginalised groups have limited to no permeability. That is, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, for an individual to raise their own status by removing themselves from their marginalised group and joining its more advantaged counterpart (Jackson et al., 1996; Tajfel, 1978, 1982). Though, the extent of *how* difficult this is differs for each of the groups, and I will discuss each in turn starting with ethnic minorities. Although race and ethnicity were once believed to be natural, fixed and predetermined (e.g., Geertz, 1963; Shils, 1957), the majority of scholars today agree that ethnicity is instead, socially constructed (see Alim et al., 2020). In New Zealand, for example, the practice of micro-classifying people's ethnicity as 'half-caste' or similar was abandoned as it was viewed as a problematic relic of colonialism (Cormack & Robson, 2010). Some scholars insist that cultural symbols, shared myths and histories are integral to the construction of ethnic identity (Conversi, 1995; Smith, 2009). Others go a step further and claim that ethnic identities are a creation of entrepreneurs and state elites for the purpose of gaining power (Baum, 2006), and political and economic advantages (Brass, 1991; Hechter, 2000).

While I agree that ethnicity is socially constructed, there is no denying that many ethnic minorities have visible (e.g., skin colour) or audible (e.g., accent) physical and phonological commonalities which are used to differentiate and ascribe ethnic identity (Wilkins et al., 2010). Indeed, phenotypic prototypicality (i.e., the extent to which a person looks like a typical member of their ethnic group) influences not only the way in which



people self-identify as members of an ethnic group (Brown et al., 1999), but also the way they are identified (Holmes et al., 2001; Thomas & Nikora, 1991) and treated (Davies et al., 2016; Eberhardt et al., 2006) as such by others. Individuals who are members of an ethnic minority group who physically display low phenotypic prototypicality, and instead more closely resemble the dominant ethnic majority group, could more easily attempt to join that ethnic majority group as a social mobility strategy (Williams, 2000) than those who are perceived to be high in phenotypic prototypicality. This is a process which is referred to as ‘passing’ and will be discussed in the next section.

Although this point has previously been made in a footnote, I would like to state again for the sake of absolute clarity that I acknowledge that gender does not operate on a binary (Richards et al., 2016), and is considered by many to be a fluid, socially constructed, or even non-existent concept (Sweetnam, 1996). The categorising term ‘women’ as it is used in this thesis refers only to individuals who themselves identify as female – including cis and trans women. Research which studies the way people perceive other people has consistently found that gender is considered a primary feature (Brewer & Miller, 1988; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Stangor et al., 1992). While Pope Joan and Disney’s *Mulan* managed to pull it off for a time, women are a marginalised group who would have relatively more difficulty shedding their gender identity and adopting the more advantaged one (i.e., men; e.g., Tajfel, 1975). Because gender is typically, though not always, aligned with biological sex, there are many physical, as well as phonological, characteristics which identify an individual as a woman making them quickly, and easily categorised as one. Indeed, even when gender is irrelevant to a situation and has no informational benefit, both children and adults alike will implicitly and immediately group unknown individuals together based on gender (Bennett et al., 2000; Ito & Urland, 2003).

When being seen is not necessary, women are sometimes able to ‘pass’ as men. For example, there is a long history of female authors (e.g., Mary Ann Evans aka George Eliot, the Brontë sisters Charlotte, Emily and Anne aka Currer, Ellis and Acton, and Joanne aka J.K Rowling) publishing under male nom de plumes so that they can contribute to this male dominated field without their work being pre-judged because of their gender. However, as evidenced by the fact that I just provided those examples, this form of ‘passing’ is not likely to endure. Indeed, a contemporary of Mary Ann Evans’, fellow author Charles Dickens, suspected that she was a woman following the publication of her first novel and wrote her a letter intimating as much<sup>10</sup>.

Though physically ‘passing’ is a near impossibility for women, some women may attempt group exit via psychologically distancing themselves from their marginalised group (Jackson et al., 1996). This is most typically achieved by enhancing perceived similarity to the target group, for example, adopting ideologies, interests and mannerisms which are associated with men (i.e., the ‘one of the guys’ approach). Or decreasing perceived similarity to their in-group, for example, women may, in an attempt to ingratiate themselves, denigrate their in-group in order to make themselves appear different and special by comparison (i.e., the now infamous ‘I’m not like other women’ approach).

LGBTQIA+ individuals are the marginalised group members that could most easily physically ‘pass’ into the more socially advantaged, heterosexual group. This is because there are no visible physical characteristics which mark them as belonging to a minority sexual identity group. Their identity is only made public if and when they choose to ‘come out’, that is, tell people about their sexual preference or identity. In fact, LGBTQIA+ individuals have the option of being open about their sexual identity with some people, and ‘passing’ with

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<sup>10</sup> Although, it must be noted that he was very subtle, and nice about it. Further, when he discovered that she was, in fact, a woman he wrote her another incredibly encouraging and supportive letter regarding this truth.

others depending upon who they come out to (Adams, 2011; Manning, 2014, 2015). For example, many LGBTQIA+ individuals may come out to their family and friends, but they will not do so at work out of fear of reprisal in their professional lives (Sears & Mallory, 2014).

If group boundaries are slightly permeable for ethnic minorities, they are even more so for members of the LGBTQIA+ community. ‘Passing’, therefore, *is* possible for some ethnic minority group members and for LGBTQIA+ individuals, and many consider it a beneficial possibility. Indeed, during discussions, participants have raised the concept of ‘passing’ as a viable strategy to attain the privileges and status which come with being white, and as a way to avoid the consequences of societal racism (Edwards, 1992; Ziersch et al., 2011). Despite the potential to cross boundaries, there is some evidence that choosing to ‘pass’ oneself off as an advantaged group member may not be the best strategy for self, and identity enhancement. Rather, passing may instead be taking the primrose path. The primary reason for this is the benefits attained from social relationships with other marginalised group members. For example, van Zomeren et al. (2016) found that the most effective method of coping with belonging to a low status group was to seek comfort and support in social connections and relationships with in-group others. Something that would be difficult if one isolated oneself by ‘passing’ (see also Frost et al., 2016; Haslam et al., 2005). Furthermore, research suggests that for those individuals with a marginalised identity who are able to visually ‘pass’, the ever-present decision to either reveal or conceal their identity becomes a chronic stressor. While fear of discovery also creates a significantly stressful cognitive burden (Frost & Bastone, 2008; Goffman, 1963; Meyer, 2003a; Smart & Wegner, 1999).

Finally, ‘passing’ can be protective in that it can allow an individual to escape the discrimination associated with their marginalised identity group. It may also have a palliative psychological effect as a self-enhancement strategy. However, ‘passing’ does not necessarily

improve an individual's objective circumstances and outcomes. Houkamau and Sibley (2014) examined differences in a variety of outcomes between New Zealand Europeans (the ethnic majority group) and individuals who self-identified as New Zealand European but also reported Māori ancestry (i.e., they had the option to choose to identify as Māori, but did not). This latter group comprised members of the Māori population who were most likely to, and most capable of, 'passing' (i.e., identifying, and acting as a member of the dominant ethnic group). Their results showed that those who identified as New Zealand European with Māori ancestry closely resembled New Zealand Europeans on numerous ideological variables such as political and intergroup attitudes. However, they were much more comparable to sole identified Māori in other respects such as their lower levels of subjective well-being, poorer health ratings, overall levels of poverty and other systematic indicators of disadvantage which were significantly lower than those observed for ethnically identified New Zealand Europeans.

In sum, employing the social mobility strategy of exiting one's marginalised group and attempting to gain entry into the more advantaged group by 'passing' may be possible for some members of the LGBTQIA+ community and some ethnic minority individuals. However, the psychological costs may outweigh the benefits and there is some evidence to suggest that marginalised individuals who 'pass' into the advantaged group do not gain many of the benefits that advantaged group members enjoy.

Individual mobility and social creativity (discussed with reference to each of these marginalised groups earlier in the chapter) have a limited range of influence, generally only benefitting and bolstering the individual who employs the method (individual mobility), or those within their immediate sphere of influence (social creativity). Of the three identity management strategies, only the third strategy, social change (i.e., collective action), can challenge, mitigate, and eventually dispense with widespread socio-structural discrimination

and its adverse consequences. Indeed, for those individuals who identify with a marginalised group that faces structural disadvantage, and has limited (ethnic minorities), conditional (LGBTQIA+ individuals), or no (women) permeability, collective action is the most feasible and promising option to address iniquities and enhance the status of their identity. However, a person's perception of their own— and their group's—circumstances are subjectively evaluated by the individual in a way that may impact their collective action support and behaviour. One way to understand this phenomenon better is to consider the identity content associated with marginalised groups and the extent to which individuals endorse or reject it. This is what I aim to do in this thesis.

Within the framework of the SIMCA, I look at psychological mechanisms and variables which measure stereotypes and specific discriminations associated with each marginalised group to see how these aspects of identity content impact collective action intentions when group identification is accounted for. That is, I operationalise politicised identity by measuring predictors which have significance to the known historical, and current disadvantages, stereotypes, and / or psychological conflicts of the marginalised group in question. Chapter Two focuses on ethnic minorities. Here, I include two studies. The first tests the status-legitimacy hypothesis (Brandt, 2013) and examines how system justification – an ideology which legitimises existing social hierarchies and the status quo (Jost & Banaji, 1994) – differentially moderates the relationship between group-based relative deprivation and collective action intentions for ethnic minority versus ethnic majority group members. This initial study demonstrates how marginalised individuals *under certain conditions* legitimise the status quo more than advantaged individuals, often to their own detriment. The second study included in Chapter Two focuses on a specific ethnic minority group (New Zealand Māori), and examines how valuing the historical and cultural significance of their ethnic identity may mitigate the effects of system justification. Chapter Three focuses on

women. In this chapter, using ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001a), I look at how the extent to which women endorse hostile and benevolent sexism impacts their support for gender-based collective action, and whether these relationships are moderated by self-objectification – an internalisation of patriarchal beauty ideals which has implications for women’s self-esteem, and perceptions of their own ability (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Chapter Four focuses on the LGBTQIA+ community. Here, I consider the minority stress model (Meyer, 1995) and examine how perceptions of sexual identity-based discrimination impact collective action behaviour for LGBTQIA+ individuals and whether this relationship is moderated by internalised homophobia (Meyer & Dean, 1998). Chapter Five will include a summary and discussion of the results of all four studies. These results will also be critically examined with reference to social identity theory and the collective action literature. Additionally, Chapter Five will include a consideration of the strengths, weaknesses, limitations, practical and theoretical implications of the results of the four studies included in this thesis, as well as future directions.

The studies presented in Chapters Two to Four were written for the purpose of submission to peer-reviewed academic journals. As such, they are designed to be read as standalone works. Consequently, there may be some repetition and overlap in literature and content. However, collectively, they all seek to answer a similar question; in what way does the identity content of marginalised groups impact how individuals respond to inequality, discrimination and their marginalised group status. Specifically, how does it influence their collective action intentions or behaviours.

## **Data and Ethics Information**

The data used for the empirical studies presented in Chapter Two came from the 2011 iteration of Vote Compass New Zealand. The Vote Compass research team designed and implemented the study with no input from myself. All ethical considerations were applied for by, and granted to, them. I later received special permission from the research team to access these data which is held confidentially and is not publicly accessible. Members of the Vote Compass research team are listed as co-authors on this chapter for their contribution to data collection and collation. Of these, only Danny Osborne was involved in the preparation of the manuscript.

The research program which yielded the data used for the empirical studies presented in Chapter Three was designed and implemented by myself. Specifically, I submitted an ethics application to The University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC) and was granted approval on 23 September, 2018 (Protocol Number: 022430). The study was conducted online, via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk), on 6 June, 2022. Participants were recruited via the MTurk discussion board and paid US\$1 to complete the survey. To mitigate any potential harm to participants which arose from participating in this study, the following message was displayed on the final page of the questionnaire:

If you are feeling distressed and need to talk to someone, please free-call the National Alliance on Mental Illness Helpline: 1-800-950-6264 or text NAMI to 741-741. Also available to free-call is the National Eating Disorders Association Helpline: 800-931-2237

The research program which yielded the data used for the empirical study presented in Chapter Four was designed and implemented by myself. Once again, I submitted an ethics

application to the UAHPEC and was granted approval on 4 September, 2019 (Protocol Number: 023963). The study itself was conducted online, via Qualtrics, between December, 2019 and January, 2020. Due to the potentially distressing nature of some of the survey items for this vulnerable population, the following message was displayed prominently at the bottom of each page of the questionnaire:

Need help, or someone to talk to? Please consider the following available services:

Lifeline Aotearoa (open 24/7): 0800 543 354 or Text HELP to 4357

OUTLine - confidential, free LGBTQIA+ affirming support and counselling (open 7 days a week 6pm-9pm): 0800 688 5463.

Additional information relating to data collection and the recruitment of participants is described in the corresponding chapters.



## **Chapter Two**

Quieting the disquieted: System justification suppresses the incitement of group-based relative deprivation for collective action support, particularly for ethnic minorities. The protective impact of valued ethnic identity content.

## Abstract

This paper includes two related studies. Study one tests the status-legitimacy hypothesis – that under certain conditions, marginalised groups are more motivated to perceive the system that oppresses them as legitimate. Therefore, they are less likely to challenge it with collective action. We examined this using a large sample of ethnic minority and majority participants ( $N = 15,090$ ). Consistent with the status-legitimacy hypothesis, the mitigating effects of system justification on the relationship between group-based relative deprivation and collective action were more pronounced for ethnic minorities. Demonstrating that system justification undermines responses to injustice more powerfully for ethnic minorities. Under the assumption that system justification inhibits collective action for ethnic minorities, we devised a second study to examine if positive identity content related to one's ethnic group moderated this effect using the same basic model as study one. This analysis included only Māori participants ( $N = 518$ ). Results showed that group-based deprivation had no impact on collective action for participants who highly valued their identity content. Furthermore, highly valuing ethnic identity content entirely eliminated the effect of system justification on collective action for this group. In contrast, under the condition of high group-based deprivation / low identity content value, participants who endorsed system justifying beliefs were significantly less likely to indicate collective action intentions than those who did not. These results have significant implications for ethnic minorities, demonstrating that positively valuing ethnic identity eradicates the inhibiting effect of system justification on collective action.

## Introduction

“If your life has been too smooth and uneventful, then you may be too accepting of the status quo. In this regards, struggle is important and formative. It makes you think about what you’re for, as well as what you are against.”

- Selwyn Kātene; *Fire that Kindles Hearts* (2015).

New Zealand, the country in which the current study takes place, has a long, and not so proud history of publicly despising and disparaging government beneficiaries, or ‘dole-bludgers’ in the vitriolic vernacular of the nation. In 2010, after taking over from the Labour government, the new National-led government made extreme changes to welfare policy which had severe repercussions for those who relied on the system for support—people who were disproportionately Māori (i.e., New Zealand’s indigenous people and an ethnic minority). The then-Minister of Social Development, Paula Bennett – herself a Māori woman who had benefitted significantly from government welfare support in the past – was the face and voice behind this radical reform.

Speaking on 30 March 2010, Bennett made use of emotionally charged rhetoric which framed the prior, more inclusive, welfare system of the Labour government as excessive and imbalanced while simultaneously propagating the inherent fairness of the new system and the National-led government that was enforcing it. Her word choice was evocative in that it appealed to people’s perceptions of deservingness, dog-whistled about the laziness of government beneficiaries, and outright decried the nation’s most vulnerable people as entitled. The choice of speaker may have not been deliberately calculating, but it certainly created effective optics. That a woman who herself was an ethnic minority who had benefitted from the prior system, who, for all intents and purposes *should* have been a champion of the prior, more liberal welfare system, considered that same system to be unfair,

so much so that she was instrumental in implementing and promoting the new, austere policy conveyed a subconscious, but unmistakable message: The new system is fair to all, if you disagree with that, then you are simply not working hard enough. It was a speech intended to justify the system which, for the most part, worked, as public dissent and backlash was minimal.

However, inequality in New Zealand is prevalent and increasing (e.g., Nolan et al., 2019; Perry, 2019; Sibley et al., 2011). Most notable are the disparities in wealth, resources and outcomes between Pākehā (the ethnic majority), and ethnic minority groups. With Māori (New Zealand's indigenous people), and Pacific Islanders suffering the worst of its effects. While income inequality certainly exists between the ethnic majority and ethnic minorities (Rashbrooke, 2013), it is not the only discrepancy. Indeed, research has shown that ethnic minorities fare worse than Pākehā on a variety of outcomes including food insecurity (Reynolds et al., 2020), and the amount of student debt remaining two years post-graduation (Theodore et al., 2018). Many sources of inequality can be traced back to structural systems which disproportionately affect ethnic minorities. For example, Shackleton et al. (2018) found that ethnic group differences, with Māori and Pacific children having the worst outcomes, could already be found in the quality of dental care they received by the age of four. Similar results were found for obesity (Shackleton et al., 2019), where Māori children at age four were more likely to be unhealthily overweight than any other ethnic group. Ethnic group differences have also been noted in the way New Zealand's child welfare system operates, specifically, the biases it operates under. Keddell and Hyslop (2019) presented child welfare practitioners with identical vignettes describing the situation of a potentially at risk child. Half of the practitioners were told the child was part of a Māori family, the other half were told the child was part of a Pākehā family. Their results showed significant differences in the level of risk practitioners assigned to the child's situation based on ethnicity, where the

Māori family was perceived to pose a greater risk. Additionally, more suggestions and decisions regarding follow-up action were made about the Māori family.

Stephens et al. (2022) found longitudinal evidence of ethnic differences in healthy aging within the New Zealand population. This could, in part, be attributed to New Zealand's healthcare system which also shows marked disparities in treatment based on ethnicity (Matheson, 2020; Te Karu, 2021). Research has found ethnic group differences favouring the ethnic majority in breast cancer survival rates (Tin Tin et al., 2018), and occurrences of rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease (Bennett et al., 2021). Chiang et al. (2021), reviewed Asian New Zealanders healthcare experiences and found overwhelmingly negative reports. Reasons noted for poor experiences included Eurocentric discourse which delegitimised Asian experiences and made no allowances for their cultural values, and explicit systematic racism. Furthermore, Kapeli et al. (2020), noted that for Pacific Islanders, both physical health and psychological well-being were negatively associated with perceived discrimination. This suggest that while socio-structural systems contribute to poorer outcomes for ethnic minorities, perceptions of discrimination and the way they are treated within society also contributes to these inequalities.

Given the overwhelming level of income, social and structural inequality which results in disparities in opportunities, wealth and treatment between the ethnic majority and ethnic minority groups, it is a wonder that collective action and protest are not commonplace as opposed to remarkable (see also Jost, Becker, et al., 2017). However, this apparent apathy towards injustice is not exclusive to New Zealand. Research has often noted that, despite a myriad of reasons to be incited to action, globally, inaction is the more likely response (Kinder & Sears, 1985; Kluegel & Smith, 1986). One potential reason for political inaction in the face of inequality is that some people may be ironically motivated to justify the status quo. Indeed, system justification theory argues that people have a persistent, underlying

motivation to perceive society as fair, and the social structure as legitimate. Which does indeed function to justify, and maintain the status quo (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2004). Consistent with this theoretical assumption, Osborne and Sibley (2013) sought to understand dearth of collective response to inequality in New Zealand by examining the mitigating effect of system justification on collective action support in a New Zealand-based sample. They achieved this by measuring group-based relative deprivation, system justification motivation, and support for collective action. Their results revealed that system justifying ideologies attenuate the positive relationship between group-based relative deprivation and support for collective action.

In the current study, we seek to replicate and extend these results by including both ethnic minority and ethnic majority participants and investigating whether this moderating effect is stronger for ethnic minorities as would be expected under the status-legitimacy hypothesis. We begin by providing a brief overview of relative deprivation theory, system justification theory, and the status-legitimacy hypothesis. We then outline our hypotheses and test them using a large sample of New Zealanders.

### **Relative Deprivation Theory**

To be clear, scholars have long-noted the disconnect between objective instances of injustice and people's response to inequality. Stouffer et al. (1949), discovered via observations of different military groups' satisfaction with the rate at which they were promoted, that people's perceptions of their circumstances – as they compare them to others – were more indicative of their propensity to act than their objective state of disadvantage. Relative Deprivation Theory was developed as a way to explain how subjective, rather than objective, experiences with injustice better predict one's reactions to injustice (Runciman, 1966).

Although relative deprivation is a critical predictor of responses to inequality, studies have identified two distinct ways in which one can feel relatively deprived: (a) Individual-

based relative deprivation, which reflects personal comparisons between the self and others, and (b) Group-based relative deprivation, which reflects how disadvantaged a person perceives their ethnic group to be compared to other ethnic groups in society (Runciman, 1966; Smith et al., 2012). This distinction is important because the two types of relative deprivation predict different kinds of responses to perceived deprivation. Specifically, individual-based relative deprivation, as a self-focused appraisal, is thought to predict taking action to enhance the self (Olson et al., 1995). In contrast, group-based relative deprivation, as a group-focused appraisal, is associated with support for collective action taking to enhance the wellbeing of the group (Osborne et al., 2012; Smith & Ortiz, 2002; Smith et al., 2012; van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008; Walker & Mann, 1987).

Given this critical distinction between different experiences of deprivation, the current study focuses on group-based relative deprivation. Indeed, prior research demonstrates that group-based relative deprivation is a better predictor of support for collective action. Feelings of relative deprivation are born of comparison, where perceptions of injustice are incited when established norms of what is considered fair are violated (Deutsch, 1985; Gurr, 1970; Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994; Walker & Pettigrew, 1984; Walker & Smith, 2002). That is, group-based relative deprivation is not an objective assessment of circumstances. However, feelings of relative deprivation are generally argued to be more predictive of how people will respond to inequality than their actual, objective circumstances are (Runciman, 1966; Stouffer et al., 1949; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2006, 2010) making this perception a critical variable to consider when investigating collective action against the governing body or system.

### **System Justification and the Status-legitimacy hypothesis**

Although shifting the focus from objective to subjective experiences with inequality may help to partly explain why protests are so infrequent, the paucity of collective action in the face of gross inequities still belies explanation those inequalities (Jost, Becker, et al.,

2017; Klandermans, 1997; McAdam & Boudet, 2012; Osborne, Jost, et al., 2019). Indeed, even when members of marginalised groups recognise and experience dissatisfaction (Jost, Becker, et al., 2017; Klandermans, 1997; Walsh & Warland, 1983). To these ends, system justification theory posits that people have a fundamental need to believe in the legitimacy and fairness of the societal status quo (Jost & Banaji, 1994). The reason for this is because, in doing so, people's need for certainty, security, and connections with others is met (Jost, Glaser, et al., 2003a; Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Considering that it would be difficult to rationalise, psychologically uncomfortable, and internally inconsistent to protest against a system that one is motivated to perceive as fair, system justification may undermine civil dissent (e.g., Becker & Wright, 2011; Jost et al., 2001; Osborne et al., 2015).

Intuitively, one would consider that those most disadvantaged by the system would be the most likely to stand up against injustice, as they would have the most to gain from challenging and changing the status-quo. However, research reveals that those who are the most disadvantaged by a system are sometimes *more* motivated to perceive that same system that represses them as fair, despite this going against their individual and group interests (Jost, Pelham, et al., 2003; Jost & Thompson, 2000; Sengupta et al., 2017). If this were to be the case, it would suggest that those who would benefit most from social change are simultaneously, the least likely to engage in collective action.

This counterintuitive phenomena, termed the status-legitimacy hypothesis (Brandt, 2013), purports that members of disadvantaged, marginalised, or lower status groups are, under certain conditions, *more* motivated to perceive the system that is suppressing them as fair and just, and are therefore *less* likely to question, challenge, or desire to change it (Jost, 2017; Jost, Pelham, et al., 2003). This idea has been considered rather controversial, as it seems to place the disadvantaged as the authors of their own adversity (Caricati, 2017; Trump & White, 2018). However, the notion that people are cognitively motivated to rationalise the



status quo has always been a central tenant of system justification theory (Jost, 2019, 2020; Jost & Andrews, 2011).

The status-legitimacy hypothesis contradicts self-interested models of political behaviour which argue that people typically act in ways that maximise utility for the self (e.g., Weeden & Kurzban, 2017). Yet there is a substantial amount of research demonstrating that the disadvantaged do, under some circumstances, justify the system more than do the advantaged. For example, numerous studies have found that those of lower socio-economic status are less likely to vote in support of more liberal economic redistribution policies than those of higher socio-economic status despite the fact that it would be in their own best interests to do so as they would benefit the most from them (Gilens, 1999; Henry & Saul, 2006; Kluegel & Smith, 1986). Beliefs which legitimise and justify the system also function to facilitate relationships with others, regardless of group status, by creating a perception of shared reality and social connectedness (Bahamondes, Sengupta, et al., 2021b; Jost et al., 2018). These positive relational factors may be very appealing to ethnic minorities who are more at risk for social isolation and experiences of loneliness (Smith & Calasanti, 2005), which can lead to increased stress and poorer physical and psychological health outcomes (Nelson et al., 2021). For example, Park et al. (2019) found that older Asian migrants in New Zealand felt extremely socially isolated and experienced intense feelings of loneliness. While Statistics New Zealand (2013), found that even after accounting for migrant status, New Zealand Asians were the loneliest group. Additionally, they noted that younger Asians were twice as likely to experience feelings of social isolation than similarly young people of any other ethnic group. However, consistent with the paradox that is the status-legitimacy hypothesis, the benefits of broader social connectedness may come at a cost (i.e., in-group derogation; Bahamondes-Correa, 2016; McCoy & Major, 2007; Suppes et al., 2019) for ethnic minorities who experience psychological discomfort and harm associated with the

conflict between out and in-group interests (Jost & Burgess, 2000; Jost et al., 2001).

Other work also supports the status-legitimacy hypothesis. Indeed, those high in system justification have been found to rationalize status-based differences between groups using stereotypes (Hoffman & Hurst, 1990; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2001; Jost et al., 2005). Additionally, members of low status groups sometimes display both implicit, and explicit out-group favouritism (Dasgupta, 2004; Dovidio et al., 2002; Jost & Burgess, 2000; Jost et al., 2001; Jost et al., 2002). These studies demonstrate that system justification motivations can sometimes override group-based motivations and interests (e.g., Jost et al., 2004). Furthermore, research has shown that system justification correlates *negatively* with support for collective action that challenges the status quo across a number of situations and circumstances (Jost et al., 2012; Kay et al., 2009; Kay & Zanna, 2009; Osborne, Jost, et al., 2019). Indeed, Jost and colleagues (2012) found that protestors exposed to system-justifying stereotypes experienced a reduction in their anger and their desire to protest suggesting that system justification can *discourage* further action among those who are already engaged in collective action.

Although there is evidence that the disadvantaged are sometimes more likely than the advantaged to support the status quo, some question the generalisability of the status-legitimacy hypothesis (e.g., see Brandt, 2013). Some studies have found inconsistent, and contradictory results (e.g., Caricati, 2017), while others have identified boundary conditions of the effect (e.g., Brandt, 2013; Sengupta et al., 2015). While it is important to keep these exceptions in mind, it is clear that the disadvantaged do, at least sometimes, support the status quo more than their advantaged counterparts (Jost, 1997; Jost et al., 2004; Jost et al., 2005; Jost et al., 2002; Jost, Pelham, et al., 2003). As such, it is important to strengthen our understanding of the reasons why, and the conditions under which, this phenomena occurs.

## **Current Study**

The current study uses a large sample of New Zealanders to replicate and extend upon the findings of Osborne and Sibley (2013). They demonstrated that, while group-based relative deprivation correlates positively with support for collective action, the endorsement of system justifying ideologies effectively dampens the aforementioned support. We extend these findings by including ethnic group minority / majority status as an additional moderating variable. We also go further than Osborne and Sibley, by ruling out a set of plausible alternative explanations. The influential Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) developed by van Zomeren, Postmes, et al. (2008) argues that perceived injustice, group identity, and political efficacy independently predict participation in collective action. However, these variables were omitted in Osborne and Sibley's preliminary investigation. As such, we include measures of group identification and political efficacy (as well as individual-based relative deprivation) as covariates in our model to control for their contributions to the outcomes. By adjusting for these known predictors of collective action and accounting for ethnic-group status, we provide a comprehensive examination of the way in which group-based relative deprivation and system justification predict people's support for taking collective action, while simultaneously ruling out several plausible alternative explanations.

Given that the experience of group-based deprivation motivates group-based responses to inequality (Osborne et al, 2012; Osborne & Sibley, 2013; Smith & Oritz, 2002; Smith et al., 2012; van Zomeren et al, 2008; Walker & Mann, 1987), we predicted that group-based relative deprivation would be positively associated with collective action. However, it is important to note that people also have a desire to justify the status quo (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Because justifying the status quo can legitimise inequalities between-groups, we also predicted that this relationship would be attenuated by system justification. Finally, in

keeping with the status-legitimacy hypothesis, we examined whether the assumed attenuating effects of system justification on the relationship between group-based relative deprivation and support for collective action would be stronger for members of ethnic minority groups, compared to the ethnic majority group.

## **Methods**

Data for this study came from the 2017 execution of Vote Compass in New Zealand. Vote Compass began in Canada and was first trialled in New Zealand for the 2014 General Election. Vote Compass was widely publicized via various media outlets including the evening news (Lees-Marshment et al., 2015; Lees-Marshment et al., 2018). The survey took place entirely online and was open to the public, meaning that the sample was entirely self-selected. The majority of the questions included in the survey assessed participants' agreement with statements related to policies focal to the 2017 General Election, with the aim of discovering which political party the respondents' personal values most closely aligned with in the upcoming election. After completing this initial survey, participants were asked if they would like to take part in a follow up, post-election survey (the survey used for this study), which examined a number of attitude variables and support for collective action. Participants were asked to provide their email address in order to take part in the post-election survey, and were then sent a link to the post-election questionnaire a few days following the completion of the 2017 General Election.

### ***Participants***

The current study focuses on the 15,090 participants who provided complete responses to our variables of interest<sup>11</sup>. Age was a categorised variable<sup>12</sup>. 2849 participants were in the 18-29 age range, 2553 were in the 30-39 age range, 3407 were in the 40-59 age

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<sup>11</sup> List-wise deletion was employed to handle missing data.

<sup>12</sup> This was not due to choice, or preference, but because this was the only form of measurement of age available in the dataset. Because age was not the focus of this study, we do not believe the necessity of treating age as a categorical variable unduly affected the results.

range, and 6281 were in the 60-65 age range. Age was dummy coded, with the 40-59 age group used as the reference group. 7573 participants were female, 7517 were male. Gender was also dummy coded as 0 = Female, 1 = Male.

### ***Predictor Variables***

**Majority / Minority ethnic group status.** Based upon the question ‘which ethnic group do you belong to?’, participants were placed into one of two groups i) the Ethnic Majority group ( $N = 11,496$ ) which consisted of New Zealand Europeans / Pākehā, or ii) the Ethnic Minority group ( $N = 3594$ ) which encompassed all of the minority ethnic groups represented in the New Zealand population. Ethnicity was dummy coded as 0 = New Zealand European / Pākehā, 1 = All other minority groups.

**Group-based relative deprivation.** Two items were adapted from Abrams and Grant (2012) to measure group-based relative deprivation measured on a 7-point scale. Group-based relative deprivation was assessed with the following items: “How do you think the average household income of someone from your ethnic group compares to other ethnic groups in New Zealand” and “I feel angry when thinking about what people from my ethnic group earn compared to what other ethnic groups in New Zealand earn.”

**System justification.** System justification was measured using three items from the system justification scale developed by Kay and Jost (2003), modified slightly to fit with the New Zealand context. These items were “In general I find society to be fair”, “In general the political system in New Zealand operates as it should”, and “Society is set up so that people usually get what they deserve”. Participants responded on a 7-point scale with anchors at 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 7 (Strongly Agree).

### ***Outcome Measures***

**Support for collective action.** Three items were used to measure support for collective action on behalf of one’s ethnic group, all measured on a 7-point scale. These were

“I have considered participating in demonstrations on behalf of my ethnic group.”, “I have considered voting in terms of what is good for my particular ethnic group.”, and “I have considered signing petitions on behalf of my ethnic group.” (Cronin et al., 2012). These items were combined into a single outcome measure.

### *Covariates*

**Individual relative deprivation.** Two items were adapted from Abrams and Grant (2012) to measure individual relative deprivation on a 7-point scale with anchors at 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 7 (Strongly Agree). Individual-based relative deprivation was assessed with the following items: “How do you think your household income compares to that of the rest of New Zealand”, and “I feel angry when thinking about what I earn compared to what other people in New Zealand earn.”

**Ethnic group identification.** Three items adapted from a scale developed by Sellers et al. (1997) were used to assess ethnic group identification. These were “Overall, my ethnic group membership has very little to do with how I feel about myself” (reverse coded), “My ethnic group membership is unimportant to my sense of what kind of person I am” (reverse coded), and “In general, being a part of my ethnic group is an important part of my self-image”. Each item was rated on a 7-point scale with anchors at 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 7 (Strongly Agree).

**Political efficacy.** Political efficacy was measured by the question “People like me have no say in what the government does” (reverse coded). This item was rated on a scale from 1-7.

**Political Ideology:** The following question was used to determine participants’ political ideology: “In politics people sometimes talk of left and right. Where would you place yourself on the scale below, where 0 is left and 10 is right?”

Table 2.1. Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations Between the Variables Included in the Analysis.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender	--											
2. Age 18-29	.003	--										
3. Age 30-39	.013**	-.352**	--									
4. Age 50-64	-.010**	-.396**	-.315**	--								
5. Ethnicity: Majority / Minority	.019**	.018**	.027**	-.048**	--							
6. Political Orientation	.111**	-.091**	-.025**	.090**	-.043**	--						
7. Political Efficacy	.038**	-.013	-.012	.019*	.007	-.030**	--					
8. Individual Relative Deprivation	-.090**	.112**	-.020*	-.030**	.027**	-.152**	.341**	--				
9. Ethnic Group Identification	-.069**	-0.014	-.018*	.023**	.079**	-.030**	.033**	.071**	--			
10. Group Relative Deprivation	-.075**	.026**	-.011	-.029**	.143**	-.143**	.203**	.340**	.199**	--		
11. System Justification	.154**	-.015	-.041**	.035**	-.051**	.556**	-.190**	-.246**	-.056**	-.200**	--	
12. Collective Action	-.098**	.008	-.039**	.012	.088**	-.083**	.136**	.210**	.277**	.430**	-.133**	--
<i>M</i>						4.97	3.51	3.00	3.51	2.31	3.47	2.66
<i>SD</i>						2.31	1.93	1.49	1.64	1.57	1.48	1.57
$\alpha$								.73	.71	.51	.73	.86

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## Results

Given that group-based relative deprivation has been shown to predict group-based action taking, we predicted a positive association between this and collective action intentions. System justification reflects a desire to perceive the status quo as fair and legitimate. Therefore, we predicted that system justification would be negatively associated with collective action intentions. Further, we predicted that system justification would attenuate the relationship between group-based relative deprivation and collective action, and that, in accordance with the status-legitimacy hypothesis, this palliative effect would be more pronounced for ethnic minority group members than the ethnic majority. To test these predictions, we conducted a multiple regression analysis using Model 3 in PROCESS (Hayes, 2012). All continuous variables were mean-centered prior to analysis.

The results of our regression analysis are displayed in Table 2.2. As shown here, being female ( $b = -.142, p < .001$ ) and within the age bracket of 30-39 ( $b = -.13, p < .001$ ) were negatively associated with collective action support. Conversely, individual-based relative deprivation ( $b = .04, p < .001$ ), ethnic group identification ( $b = .41, p < .001$ ), and political efficacy ( $b = .03, p < .001$ ) were all positively associated with the willingness to engage in collective action in support of one's ethnic group. Nevertheless, after adjusting for these critical covariates, group-based deprivation correlated positively ( $b = .38, p < .001$ ), whereas system justification correlated negatively ( $b = -.03, p < .01$ ), with support for collective action on behalf of one's ethnic group.

The second half of Table 2.2 illustrates the moderating effects of system justification and ethnicity. Consistent with Osborne and Sibley (2013), the relationship between group-based relative deprivation and support for ethnic-based collective action was significantly moderated by system justification ( $b = -.03, p < .001$ ). Specifically, system justification attenuated the positive relationship between group-based relative deprivation and collective



action support. Most importantly, this two-way interaction was qualified by a three-way interaction with ethnicity ( $b = -.02, p < .05$ ). Figure 2.1 illustrates the simple slope analyses for participants who were  $\pm 1$  SD from the mean of system justification (high / low), and the ethnic group which they belong to (majority / minority). Consistent with the status-legitimacy hypothesis, the dampening effect of system justification on the positive relationship between group-based relative deprivation and collective action support was significantly more pronounced for ethnic minorities vis-à-vis the ethnic majority group.

Table 2.2. Multiple regression analysis predicting collective action support as a function of key covariates, ethnicity, group-based relative deprivation, system justification, and their interaction.

	<i>B</i>	( <i>SE</i> )	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Constant	0.044	0.27	-0.009	0.096
Gender	-0.142***	0.23	-0.187	-0.097
Age 18-29	-0.01	0.04	-0.08	-0.059
Age 30-39	-0.13***	0.04	-0.203	-0.06
Age 50-59	0.02	0.03	-0.034	0.081
Ethnicity: Majority/Minority	0.04	0.03	-0.12	0.097
Political Orientation	0.01	0.01	-0.0001	0.022
Political Efficacy	0.03***	0.01	0.019	0.044
Ethnic group identification	0.41***	0.01	0.353	0.406
Individual relative deprivation	0.04***	0.01	0.028	0.058
Group relative deprivation	0.38***	0.01	0.328	0.367
System Justification	-0.03**	0.01	-0.052	-0.01
GRD x Ethnicity	0.11***	0.01	0.076	0.143
GRD x System justification	-0.03***	0.01	-0.039	-0.015
Ethnicity x System justification	0.01	0.01	-0.027	0.044
GRD x Ethnicity x System justification	-0.02*	0.01	-0.048	-0.006
<b>Model Summary</b>				
R <sup>2</sup>		.265		
F		362.157		

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

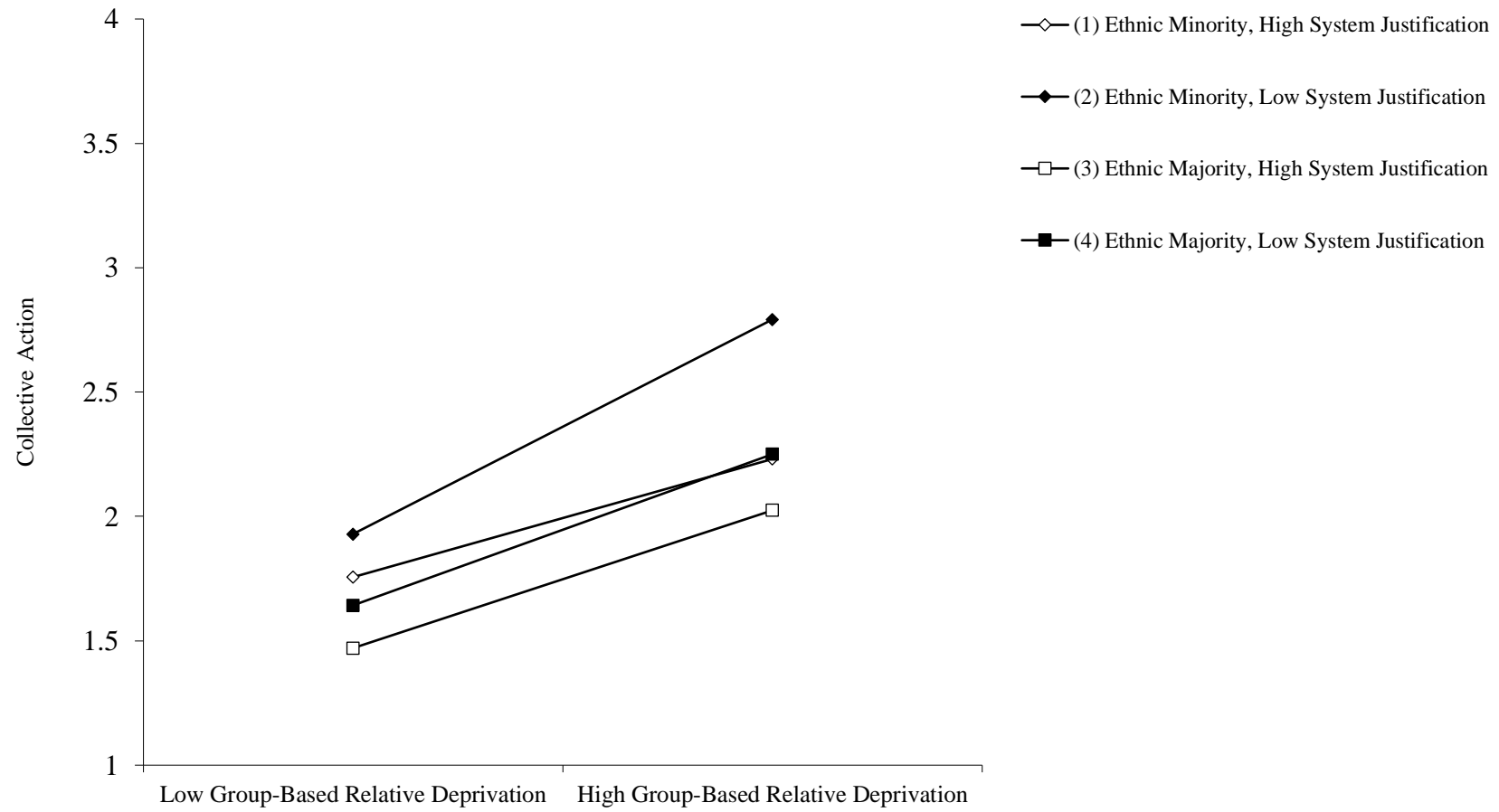


Figure 2.1. Participants' support for ethnic-group based collective action as a function of group-based relative deprivation and system justification moderated by ethnic group membership

## Discussion

Prior research demonstrates that *perceptions*, rather than objective circumstances, are often a better predictor of whether or not people will actively respond to adverse or unequal conditions (Runciman, 1966; Stouffer et al., 1949; Wilkinson & Pickett, 2006, 2010). Here, we investigated two different perceptions: Group-based relative deprivation and system justification. In doing so, we sought to ascertain how they effected willingness to engage in collective action that would benefit one's ethnic group. We were also interested in how system justification would interact with group-based relative deprivation with regards to our outcome, as well as the potentially differing strengths of these moderating effects for majority compared to minority ethnic groups.

To these ends, three focal relationships were examined. First, we examined the relationship between group-based relative deprivation and willingness to consider collective action on behalf of one's ethnic group. Second, we examined whether this initial relationship was attenuated by the endorsement of system justification. Finally, we investigated whether the hypothesized moderating effect of system justification on the relationship between group-based relative deprivation and collective action support was stronger for ethnic minority group members (vs the ethnic majority group) in accordance with the status-legitimacy hypothesis.

Consistent with previous studies (e.g., Osborne et al., 2012; Smith & Ortiz, 2002; Walker & Mann, 1987), our results show that group-based relative deprivation correlated positively with the support for collective action on behalf of one's ethnic group. This relationship was, however, attenuated by the endorsement of system justification. Notably, these results corroborate Osborne and Sibley's (2013) findings, albeit with a larger nationwide sample taken half a decade later. Thus, Osborne and Sibley's results appear to generalise across samples and time, providing confidence in their initial findings.

While the previous result aligned nicely with Osborne and Sibley (2013), their results predicting collective action support focused solely on ethnic minority participants. Here, we extended upon their work by including *both* minority and majority ethnic group members in order to discern whether the attenuating effects of system justification on the relationship between group-based relative deprivation and collective action support was stronger for ethnic minorities than ethnic majority group members. We also extended upon their study by including important covariates outlined in the SIMCA (namely, perception of injustice, political efficacy, group identification; van Zomeren et al., 2008).

Consistent with the status-legitimacy hypothesis, the attenuating effect of system justification on willingness to engage in collective action on behalf of one's ethnic group was significantly stronger for participants who identified as an ethnic minority. These participants demonstrated a greater drop in collective action support when they were higher in system justification relative to their ethnic majority counterparts. These results resonate with much of the system justification literature and show that the motivation to justify the system is present among disadvantaged groups and can sometimes have devastating consequences for social change (see Jost et al., 2004, for a review). The results of this study demonstrate the insidious power of system justifying ideologies to undermine the motivation of those more likely to engage in, as well as those who would most benefit from, collective action that addresses social and economic injustice and inequality. Suggesting that people may be uncomfortable, and less inclined, to speak out against a system which they themselves support, regardless of their perceptions of the necessity of it.

Research demonstrates that exposure to material designed to destabilise system justifying beliefs can increase the motivation to engage in collective action (Jost et al., 2012). Therefore, for ethnic minority groups, overtly counteracting system justifying ideologies may aid in bolstering support for action taking that will benefit their group as a whole, and reduce

the palliative effect system justification has on the positive relationship between group-based relative deprivation and collective action. One factor which may have a counteracting effect on system justification is a positive evaluation of the identity content of one's ethnic group. We examined this hypothesis in study two.

### **Study Two**

Identity content refers to the meanings associated with a particular identity including its ideologies, values, stereotypes, history, characteristics, and beliefs (Ashmore et al., 2004). The importance of considering identity content in collective action research is often remarked upon (Reynolds et al., 2012; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008), yet it remains woefully neglected in the literature. The value of identity content to understanding collective action behaviour is perhaps best understood through the lens of self-categorisation theory (Turner, 1985) which purports that the norms and meanings associated with a social group identity are internalised by individuals. This deeper understanding of their identity then provides individuals with their place in the social world (Simon et al., 2008), as well as the means by which to recognise and comprehend that place relative to others. Through this process, identity content comes to influence an individual's perceptions, behaviours and thoughts – such as their response to the broader social environment – as these become a more integral part of the 'self'.

As such, having a positive concept of the identity content of their ethnicity may lead marginalised ethnic minority individuals to recognise that the lower status afforded them by the socio-structural power hierarchy is unjust. This, in turn, could override legitimising ideologies and beliefs and motivate them to participate in collective action to improve their circumstances so that they are more consistent with their positive view of their ethnic identity. Indeed, both observational studies (e.g., Iyer et al., 2009; Livingstone & Haslam, 2008) and laboratory settings have found evidence to suggest that while the strength of an

individual's identity determines the extent to which they are influenced, identity content determines the *way* in which they are influenced (Jetten et al., 2002; Postmes et al., 2001). That is, a strong, positive perception of identity content could motivate action on behalf of their group. Whereas, a strong, negative perception of identity content could be demotivating and demoralising, reducing collective action motivations.

To test this hypothesis, we conducted a second study to determine if positive identity content related to one's ethnic group had an impact on the dampening effect system justification has on ethnic minority's collective action intentions. Using the same model as study one, we analysed whether identity content – which we operationalised as the extent to which individuals valued the historical and cultural significance of their ethnic identity – moderated the relationship between group-based relative deprivation, system justification and collective action intentions. Our first two predictions were analogous with study one. That is; i) group-based relative deprivation would be positively associated with collective action, and ii) this relationship would be attenuated by system justification. Lastly, we examined whether the assumed attenuating effects of system justification on the relationship between group-based relative deprivation and support for collective action would be weaker for participants who valued the historical and cultural significance of their ethnic identity more strongly.

### **Methods**

The same data set which was used in study one was also used here. However, we only included Māori (the ethnic minority group indigenous to New Zealand) participants in the analysis. The reasons for this are threefold. First, Māori were the largest of the ethnic minority groups. Second, Māori have a rich cultural history, which has often been said to be deeply intertwined with politics (Greaves et al., 2018). One reason suggested for this, is that the historical experiences of Māori have rendered political consciousness a crucial aspect of what it means to be Māori in the present day (Houkamau, 2006, 2010). Further, the lived

experiences of many Māori are affected by the socio-political context (Houkamau, 2010; Rata et al., 2008). As the indigenous people of New Zealand, Māori have suffered the impacts of colonialism. The history of Māori is often re-written or negated by the dominant ethnic majority, and attempts are made by this same dominant group to erase or devalue important cultural symbols of the Māori ethnicity (Satherley & Sibley, 2018; Sibley, 2010; Sibley & Liu, 2012; Sibley et al., 2008; Sibley & Osborne, 2016). As such, strongly valuing their ethnic identity may be seen to be in conflict with the dominant view of the country. This means that individuals who are motivated to justify and maintain the status quo may perceive valuing their identity as contradictory to that goal. Lastly, Māori were the only ethnic minority group that had identity content items measured in the dataset.

### *Participants*

The current study focuses on the 518 participants that self-identified solely as Māori in terms of ethnicity, who provided complete responses to our variables of interest<sup>13</sup>. Age was a categorised variable with 70 participants in the 18-29 age range, 86 in the 30-39 age range, 156 in the 40-59 age range, and 206 in the 60-65 age range. Age was dummy coded, with the 40-59 age group used as the reference group. 336 participants were female, 182 were male. Gender was also dummy coded as 0 = Female, 1 = Male.

### *Measures*

All predictor, outcome, and covariate variables included in this analysis were identical to those used in study one. The only exceptions were the removal of the ethnic minority / majority group predictor as this was not relevant here, and the inclusion of a measure of identity content.

**Historical and cultural significance of ethnic identity content.** Three items were used to measure the extent to which participants valued the historical and cultural

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<sup>13</sup> List-wise deletion was used to handle missing data.

significance of their ethnic identity. These were, “How much support should there be for the Māori language?”, “How much of a role should the Treaty of Waitangi have in New Zealand law?”, and “How much should the government do to make amends for past injustices committed against Māori?” All of these were measured on a 1 – Much less to 5 – Much more scale. These items were then combined and averaged to create an identity content scale.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The items used to measure identity content may appear to be closely related to, or overlap strongly with, the items used to measure collective action. To ensure this was not the case, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using the six raw items. Two separate factors were extracted with eigenvalues greater than 1. Factor one comprised the three collective action items with factor loadings ranging from .852 - .933. Factor two comprised the three identity content items with factor loadings ranging from .844 - .902. These results demonstrate that the two concepts are empirically distinct.



Table 2.3. Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations Between the Variables Included in the Analysis.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender	--											
2. Age 18-29	.001	--										
3. Age 30-39	-.004	-.352**	--									
4. Age 50-64	.028*	-.361**	-.298**	--								
5. Political Orientation	.048**	.017	-.007	.018	--							
6. Political Efficacy	.034	.043	-0.08	-.025	.015	--						
7. Individual Relative Deprivation	.008	.052	-.019	.033	-.065	.397**	--					
8. Ethnic Group Identification	-.039	-.076	.052	.041	-.101*	-.005	.111**	--				
9. Group Relative Deprivation	-.063	-.02	.032	.021	-.155**	.106*	.237**	.273**	--			
10. System Justification	.142**	.002	-.017	.066	.304**	-.222**	-.222**	-.169**	-.405**	--		
11. Identity Content	-.149**	.018	-.014	-.004	-.189**	.06	.174**	.313**	.362**	-.366**	--	
12. Collective Action	-.062	-.021	.002	.005	-.135**	.057	.143**	.365**	.439**	-.284**	.509**	--
<i>M</i>					4.47	4.01	4.07	4.68	5.51	2.81	4.29	4.94
<i>SD</i>					2.24	2.15	1.78	0.89	1.43	1.36	0.83	1.75
$\alpha$							.73	.71	.51	.73	.84	.86

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## Results

As with study one, given that group-based relative deprivation has been shown to predict group-based action taking, we predicted a positive association between this and collective action intentions. System justification reflects a desire to perceive the status quo as fair and legitimate. Therefore, as we did in study one, we predicted that system justification would be negatively associated with collective action intentions. Further, we predicted that system justification would attenuate the relationship between group-based relative deprivation and collective action. That is, we predicted that the palliative effect of system justification would be weaker for Māori who strongly valued the historical and cultural significance of their ethnic identity. To test these predictions, we conducted a multiple regression analysis using Model 3 in PROCESS (Hayes, 2012). All continuous variables were mean-centered prior to analysis.

The results of our regression analysis are displayed in Table 2.4. As shown here, of all the covariates included in the analysis, only ethnic group identification ( $b = .42, p < .001$ ) was significantly, positively associated with ethnic group-based collective action intentions. After adjusting for these critical covariates, group-based deprivation ( $b = .49, p < .001$ ) and identity content ( $b = 1.04, p < .001$ ) correlated positively with ethnic group-based collective action intentions. Surprisingly, system justification also correlated positively with this outcome ( $b = .39, p < .01$ ).

The second half of Table 2.2 illustrates the moderating effects of system justification and identity content. Consistent with the results of study one, the relationship between group-based relative deprivation and support for ethnic-based collective action was significantly moderated by system justification ( $b = -.18, p < .01$ ). Specifically, system justification attenuated the positive relationship between group-based relative deprivation and collective action support. Most importantly, this two-way interaction was qualified by a three-way

interaction with identity content ( $b = .11, p < .01$ ). Figure 2.1 illustrates the simple slope analyses for participants who were  $\pm 1$  SD from the mean of system justification (high / low), and the ethnic group which they belong to (majority / minority). As shown here, the mitigating effect of system justification on the positive relationship between group-based relative deprivation and collective action support was only significant for Māori who did not strongly value the historical and cultural significance of their identity. For those participants who did highly value their ethnic identity, system justification had no impact at all.

Table 2.4. Multiple regression analysis predicting collective action support as a function of key covariates, identity content, group-based relative deprivation, system justification, and their interaction.

	<i>B</i>	( <i>SE</i> )	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Constant	-0.436	0.26	-0.943	0.069
Gender	0.04	0.13	-0.221	0.294
Age 18-29	-0.06	0.2	-0.461	0.336
Age 30-39	-0.1	0.19	-0.474	0.274
Age 50-59	-0.13	0.15	-0.429	0.162
Political Orientation	0.01	0.03	-0.042	0.065
Political Efficacy	-0.001	0.03	-0.069	0.056
Ethnic group identification	0.42**	0.07	0.277	0.571
Individual relative deprivation	0.02	0.04	-0.057	0.095
Group relative deprivation	0.49**	0.11	0.305	0.689
System Justification	0.39*	0.14	0.106	0.672
Identity Content	1.04**	0.15	0.741	1.345
GRD x Identity Content	-0.11	0.06	-0.223	0.005
GRD x System justification	-0.18*	0.06	-0.298	-0.066
Identity Content x System justification	-0.26*	0.09	-0.439	-0.074
GRD x Identity Content x System justification	0.11*	0.03	0.03	0.165
<b>Model Summary</b>				
R <sup>2</sup>		0.393		
F		21.673		

\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*  $p < .001$

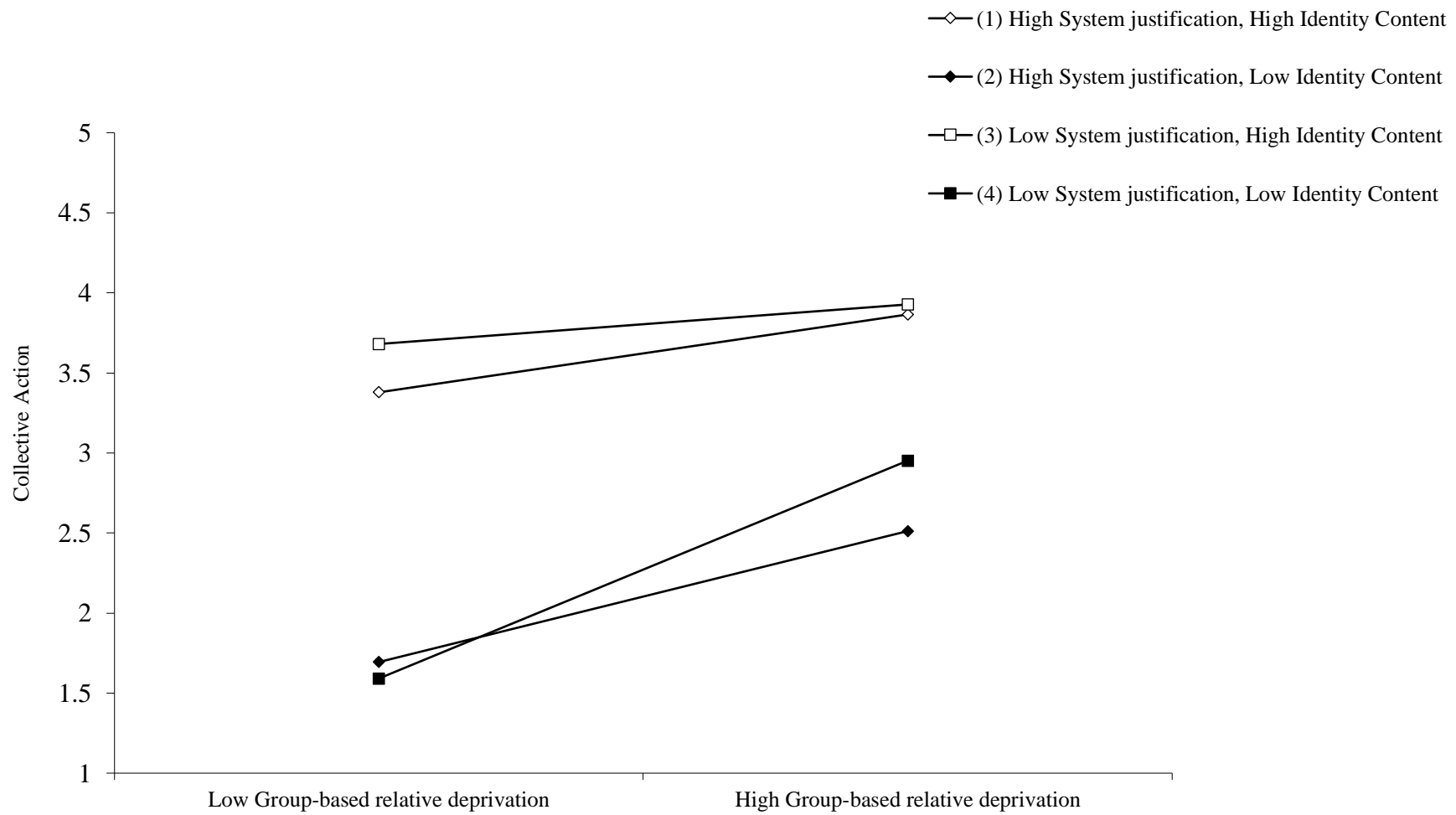


Figure 2.2. Participants' support for ethnic-group based collective action as a function of group-based relative deprivation and system justification moderated by identity content.

## Discussion

Using an experimental manipulation, Jost et al. (2012) demonstrated that exposure to material designed to destabilise system justifying beliefs can increase individuals' motivation to participate in collective action. Based on this finding, we determined to examine if there were trait aspects of individuals – specifically strong, positive perceptions of their ethnic identity content – which may have the same effect. Scholars have repeatedly acknowledged that identity content is likely to substantially effect and contribute to the way individuals respond to discrimination and disadvantage, and subsequently engage in collective action (Reynolds et al., 2012; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). However, empirical studies of this hypothesis are extremely rare. Thus, the results of this study make a valuable contribution to the existing literature. Jetten et al. (2002) argued that the different ways people interpret the content of their group identity directs how, and to what extent their collective action intentions are manifested (see also Becker & Wagner, 2009). This supposition is strongly supported by the results of this study.

The findings of this study were novel and important. System justification is widely considered to suppress collective action, especially for marginalised individuals such as ethnic minorities (Gaucher & Jost, 2011; Osborne, Jost, et al., 2019; Osborne & Sibley, 2013). However, the results of this study demonstrate that identity content impacts its predictive significance, revealing that the palliative effect of system justification on collective action depends upon the valence individuals place upon their identity content. Results showed that group-based relative deprivation had no impact on Māori participants who highly valued their identity content. That is, they were equally likely to indicate collective action intentions on behalf of their ethnic group under low and high deprivation conditions. Additionally, highly valuing ethnic identity content entirely eliminated the effect of system justification on collective action. These participants indicated high levels of collective action

intentions independent of their system justifying beliefs. These results are somewhat consistent with the findings of Houkamau (2006), who noted that attaching valuing their cultural identity and distinctiveness benefited the social outlook of some Māori. In contrast, the results for participants who did not value the historical and cultural importance of their identity as strongly were what would be expected based on system justification theory. That is, under the condition of high group-based deprivation, participants who endorsed system justifying beliefs were significantly less likely to indicate collective action intentions on behalf of their ethnic group than those who did not. These results have significant implications for ethnic minorities, and Māori in particular, as they demonstrate that placing positive value of the significance of one's ethnic identity eradicates the inhibiting effect of system justification on collective action.

### **General Discussion**

Results from study one supported the status-legitimacy hypothesis (Brandt, 2013), demonstrating that the mitigating effect of system justification on willingness to engage in collective action on behalf of one's ethnic group was significantly stronger for participants who identified as an ethnic minority. These participants exhibited a greater drop in collective action intentions when they were higher in system justification relative to their ethnic majority counterparts. These results resonated with much of the system justification literature and showed that the motivation to justify the system is present among disadvantaged groups, and can sometimes have devastating consequences for social change by inhibiting collective action intentions (for reviews see Jost, 2019; Jost, 2020).

However, marginalised and low-status groups do not always seek to legitimise and justify the socio-structural system which oppresses them (for reviews see Brandt, 2013; Jost, 2019). System justification theory clearly states that only under certain conditions will disadvantaged individuals seek to legitimise the status quo (Jost, 2004; Jost et al., 2004). The

results of our second study appear to have uncovered one of these conditions – that is, when individuals do not highly value important aspects of their identity content. Under this condition, system justification beliefs suppress collective action intentions. Whereas, for those who highly value their historical and cultural ethnic identity, the dampening effects of system justification are entirely overpowered, and collective action intentions are significantly higher independent of status-legitimising beliefs. This suggests that positive identity content may have a protective effect against some of the pernicious outcomes related to endorsing system justification.

Taken together the results of these two studies show that system justification does have a significant impact on collective action intentions, particularly for ethnic minority groups. Specifically, highly endorsing status-legitimising beliefs for ethnic minorities functions to suppress the expected collective response to injustice. However, this effect may only occur when ethnic minorities place a low level of value on their ethnic identity content. These results have significant implications for ethnic minorities, as they illustrate that placing positive value on the significance of one's ethnic identity is protective against, and indeed eradicates the inhibiting effect of system justification on collective action.

### **Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions**

The decision to support or engage in collective action is a complex and layered one with innumerable psychological, as well as practical, considerations. The SIMCA (van Zomeren et al., 2008) outlines several variables which have been shown to be both valid, and reliable predictors of collective action. A strength of this study is that we have accounted for the variance of these variables, as well as a number of relevant demographic predictors, while also highlighting three psychological variables which have a unique and independent impact on the outcome (namely, group-based relative deprivation, system justification, and identity content). This is an important addition to the literature on predictors of collective action, as it

demonstrates that, while demographic predictors and the established variables outlined in the SIMCA are necessary to take into account, there remain additional barriers to collective action.

Building on these insights, study one explored two additional variables that were likely to affect one's motivation to engage in collective action (namely, group status and system justification). Study two went a step further and explored the effect of ethnic-group based identity content on this relationship. Despite these worthwhile additions, there are likely numerous other variables that would impact this particular outcome for this particular group. For example, the seminal work of Freire (1970) stressed that education, particularly education emphasising democratic ideologies and the merits associated with participating within that democracy, was essential to creating liberated, free-thinking, active citizens who are justice-oriented (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). A large body of empirical research corroborates these assertions (e.g., Gohn, 2006; O'Sullivan, 1999; Santos, 2006). Furthermore, it has been suggested that the tenets of Freire's pedagogy may be self-perpetuating. That is, participating in collective action initiatives further increases people's knowledge and education regarding social justice, rendering them more likely to be motivated to take action in the future (Barbosa & Lopes, 2021; Choudry & Kapoor, 2010; Cox, 2014; Foley, 1999). This form of explicit, justice-oriented education which highlights the structural roots of inequality may be one such factor that would not only encourage collective action, but should also reduce the efficacy of system justifying ideologies (Freire, 1979, 1993, 2000; Prilleltensky, 1994; Watts et al., 1999). Future research could seek to understand how this unique form of critical, social education relates to the development of a positive concept of one's ethnic identity. For example, this type of education may partially explain why an appreciation for one's unique historical and cultural ethnic heritage reduces



system justifying ideologies (Watts et al., 1999). Alternatively, such an education may be an antecedent of developing positive ethnic identity content (Dogan et al., 2021).

That this model would hold up for *all* marginalised or low status groups, or *all* forms of identity content is not guaranteed. Further research would be needed to investigate whether or not these variables have the same impact, and / or interact in the same way with a different sample population, for example, women, who have different historical grievances, current social issues and disadvantages, preconceptions, prejudices, and psychological burdens. With regards to study one, support for the status-legitimacy hypothesis may be more likely to be found in some countries, such as New Zealand, than it is in others. Indeed, it has been suggested that the effect is expected to occur more readily in democratic, socially liberal countries such as New Zealand (Jost, Glaser, et al., 2003a, 2003b). Although the current study accounted for a number of important covariates, Vote Compass did not include a measure of meritocracy. Given the conceptual overlap between meritocracy and system justification (e.g., see Jost & Hunyady, 2005), it would be valuable to see if the moderating effects of system justification hold after accounting for meritocracy. Another limitation of these data was that they only included a single-item measure of political efficacy. As such, the measure of political efficacy used for these studies may be less reliable than multi-item measures. Nevertheless, our results were consistent with the broader empirical and theoretical literature. Thus, it is unlikely that the use of a single-item measure grossly impacted the overall results and conclusions presented herein.

It must also be noted that participants in this study were self-selected. Although the sample was large, it is not representative of the population of New Zealand. As such, care should be taken in generalising the results. Furthermore, the correlational nature of these data means that we cannot ascertain the causal order of our results. It may be that the cognitive effort involved in justifying an unjust system increases the salience of group-based relative

deprivation. Although, Bahamondes, Sibley, et al. (2021), using a longitudinal design found evidence which suggests that system justifying beliefs precede and reduce perceptions of group-based deprivation for minority group members. Alternatively, participation in collective action could raise awareness about group-based injustices. There is, however, some evidence to support the causal pathway outlined here. For example, Jost and colleagues (2012), found that exposure to system justifying ideas decreased the anger and dissatisfaction of active protestors making them more likely to cease their collective action activities. Likewise, some longitudinal work demonstrates that the experience of relative deprivation precedes support for collective action (see Thomas et al., 2020). Nevertheless, future research will need to directly examine the assumed causal pathways outlined here with either longitudinal or experimental methods in order to draw stronger conclusions about the direction of causation.

The form of ethnic group identity content measured here – that is, the extent to which individuals value the historical and cultural significance of their ethnic identity – shares some similarities with the post-colonial ideologies historical negation and symbolic exclusion (Sibley, 2010). Historical negation refers to the belief that colonial history has no bearing on contemporary ethnic-group based inequalities. While symbolic exclusion refers to the idea that the culture of indigenous people (i.e., Māori) is not a relevant aspect of national identity. These ideologies are more strongly endorsed by the majority ethnic group in New Zealand. Indeed, they are considered to be justifying ideologies themselves, as they function to allow people to (co)exist without guilt in a post-colonial, bicultural society (Sibley, 2010). However, Māori too endorse these erasures of their history and culture. These ideologies are theorised to function in tandem, and have been shown to predict opposition to biculturally inclusive policies (Newton et al., 2018). As such, they could assist in explaining the differentiation in identity content value amongst Māori, as well as why lower identity content

value was significantly associated with reduced collective action intentions on behalf of their group. Future research incorporating measures of identity content, historical negation and symbolic exclusion could shed further light on the impact of identity for indigenous, minority ethnic groups on collective action in post-colonial societies.

The types of collective action which made up the dependant variable of this study were mostly of an unobtrusive nature; signing a petition, voting, participating in a demonstration. That is, the items all referred to non-disruptive, normative forms of opposition. These types of low-cost, low-risk forms of collective action differ greatly from non-normative, disruptive forms of collective action (e.g., protest, strikes, boycotts; Gamson, 1968; Gamson, 1971). Additionally, this study only examined *support* for collective action not participant's actual personal experience engaging these activities. Although, the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985, 1991) argues that a person's intentions to engage in a behaviour (i.e., collective action) can predict their actual participation in that behaviour. This theoretical argument has been generally well supported by empirical research (for reviews see Fishbein & Ajzen, 2005, 2011; Webb & Sheeran, 2006). Future research could investigate whether this pattern of results holds when more disruptive types of collective action, or actual engagement in collective action, are being considered.

## **Conclusion**

The current study first replicated and extended Osborne and Sibley's (2013) research on the dampening impact of system justification on the relationship between group-based relative deprivation and support for collective action by examining differences across ethnic groups and showing that the aforementioned effect was stronger for ethnic minority participants than it was for those in the ethnic majority group. A second study was conducted to follow-up on the understanding that system justification has a significant impact on collective action intentions for ethnic minorities in particular. This study included only Māori

participants and employed a measure of identity content to examine if positive conceptions of one's ethnic identity impacted the dampening effect of system justification observed in study one. Results showed that group-based relative deprivation had no impact on Māori participants who highly valued their identity content. Additionally, highly valuing ethnic identity content entirely eliminated the effect of system justification on collective action. In contrast, participants who did not value the historical and cultural importance of their identity as strongly were significantly less likely to indicate collective action intentions on behalf of their ethnic group, especially when they also highly endorsed system justifying beliefs.

By including a number of additional known predictors of collective action, we were also able to rule out a number of plausible alternative explanations and demonstrate the robustness of the initial findings. The results of these studies have important implications, particularly for members of ethnic minority groups, as they demonstrate how widely held beliefs and rationalisations of the system can inhibit people from taking action that would improve the wellbeing of themselves and their group. However, they also provide hope by demonstrating that placing positive value on the significance of one's ethnic identity eradicates the inhibiting effect of system justification on collective action. Suggesting that valuing the content of one's ethnic identity can be protective against the inhibitory influence of system justification.

### **Bridging Statement One**

The preceding chapter investigated and found support for the status-legitimacy hypothesis (i.e., that low-status groups will legitimise inequality and disadvantage more than high status groups even if doing so is to their own detriment; Brandt, 2013). This controversial hypothesis has its foundation in system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994) which was developed, in part, to account for the hitherto inexplicable phenomena of disadvantaged individuals endorsing negative stereotypes about themselves, and positive stereotypes about advantaged out-groups. Particularly, the fact that they will do so even in the face of explicit power differentials between groups. As the theory developed and was empirically tested, it became clear that *under certain conditions* disadvantaged individuals will legitimise a social system that oppresses them (Jost, 2019, 2020). That marginalised individuals will endorse negative stereotypes about themselves – which can then be internalised and shape the content of their identity – is one of the central aspects of this thesis, alongside how this then affects collective action intentions, support and behaviour. Thus, this thesis opened with a test of the status legitimacy hypothesis.

The hypothesis was examined using a large sample of ethnic majority (advantaged) and ethnic minority (marginalised) New Zealanders. Results showed that ethnic minorities *were* more likely than the ethnic majority to legitimise the existing socio-structural system. Further, enhanced system justification among ethnic minorities dampened their reaction to group-based relative deprivation, resulting in reduced ethnic-based collective action intentions. We then conducted a second study from the same dataset, using the same model. However, study two only included participants who identified as Māori (New Zealand's indigenous ethnic group). We also included a measure of identity content (i.e., the extent to which individuals valued the historical and cultural significance of their identity). The results were promising and surprising. Highly valuing one's ethnic identity eradicated the mitigating

effect of system justification on collective action intentions. However, system justification still reduced collective action intentions for those who did not strongly value their ethnic identity content. This study provided preliminary support for the importance of group-specific identity content in predicting collective action. Specifically, how the extent to which it is endorsed can impact the strength, or even significance, of a previously validated relationship (i.e., group-based relative deprivation predicting collective action moderated by system justification).

The aim of this thesis is to examine identity content for three different marginalised groups. The preceding chapter looked at ethnic minorities, the following chapter will look at women. *Looking* at women, or, if you are a woman, being *looked at*, is a constant. Indeed, is an unavoidable aspect of womanhood which has a multitude of pernicious consequences. The following chapter will look at one of these, self-objectification, as a measure of identity content for women. Specifically, it will examine whether self-objectification (the internalisation of societal beauty norms perpetuated by the male gaze; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) moderates the relationship between both aspects of ambivalent sexism (i.e., hostile and benevolent; Glick & Fiske, 1996) and gender-based collective action support.

## **Chapter Three**

Male, Male in your perspective, am I an object, or can I have an objective?: The impact of benevolent, and hostile sexism, and self-objectification on gender-based collective action

## **Abstract**

Hostile and benevolent sexism are two complementary forms of sexism which function together to maintain the patriarchal status quo and, ultimately, undermine women's support for gender-based collective action. Self-objectification is the internalisation of male objectification of female bodies, and societal beauty ideals. This process redirects women's thoughts and actions onto focusing on their bodies and how they physically appear to others. This then reduces cognitive resources, as well as perceptions of agency and efficacy. All necessary antecedents for collective action. Here, we examine whether the relationships between trait levels of ambivalent sexism and gender-based collective action are moderated by self-objectification in a sample of 295 women. Results demonstrated that self-objectification – a measure of individual identity content – significantly and differentially moderated these relationships. Specifically, hostile sexism was negatively associated with collective action support only under the condition of high self-objectification. While benevolent sexism was positively associated with the outcome only under the condition of low self-objectification. These results demonstrate the crucial role of self-objectification in predicting women's support for gender-based collective action.



## Introduction

“Taught from infancy that beauty is woman's sceptre, the mind shapes itself to the body, and roaming round its gilt cage, only seeks to adorn its prison.”

- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)

“Pretty.”

- Carly Townrow, (1988).

My first word was ‘pretty’. The entire event was unintentionally recorded for posterity on a borrowed Sony HandyCam. The half hour segment documents my mother preparing my 10 month old self for bed, vying for my attention by repeatedly saying “Carly? Are you pretty? Pretty. Yes, you’re pretty.” Once done, she sets me on her lap and, as I make a clumsy, infantile attempt at brushing my own hair (indoctrinated already, I was aware of the importance of appearance), I enunciate my primogenial vocalisation. This incident is not particularly surprising. Within the first 24 hours of being born, female infants are much more likely to be referred to as ‘beautiful’, ‘pretty’ and ‘cute’ than their male counterparts (Rubin et al., 1974). The trend only continues from there with parents of female children placing considerable importance on their physical appearance and beauty throughout their adolescence and young adulthood (Striegel-Moore & Kearney-Cooke, 1994). As a result, female children hear the word ‘pretty’ and associated synonyms often, and their physical appearance becomes one of, if not *the* primary metric which they use to evaluate their own worth (e.g., Bowker et al., 2003; Kim & Lee, 2018; Tiggemann & Rothblum, 1997).

The relationship between women and beauty is both complex and extremely simple. It is complex in that it is a moving target – ideals, and standards of beauty shift, and change (see Zones, 2000). However, it is also simple in that throughout history, cross-culturally, and almost universally, in some form or another, a women’s physical beauty is inextricably tied

to her worth (for a review see Calogero et al., 2007). Lee (1994), described the external body as the “text of culture” (p. 82), and noted that it is the “symbolic form upon which the norms and practices of society are inscribed.” (p. 82). Given the patriarchal social order of the majority of societies, it is generally men who set what the current standard for beauty is, and men who judge women based on the same. Regardless of whether they are considered beautiful or not, this judgement, and the beauty-centric culture which demands it, oftentimes negatively impacts women. Indeed, being dissatisfied with their body and overall appearance is considered normative for girls and women in Western cultures (see Rodin et al., 1984; Smolak, 2006). From as young as 6 years old, girls begin to have concerns about their weight and express body dissatisfaction (Flannery-Schroeder & Chrisler, 1996; Schur et al., 2000; Smolak & Levine, 1994). These persistent, negative evaluations women make about their own bodies are widely considered to be a response to societal based norms regarding what a woman should look like (Clark & Tiggemann, 2006), and the extreme importance culture places on female physical beauty (see Bartky, 2003; Bordo, 1993).

The cost of adhering to societal beauty norms is more than a heavy psychological burden (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Consider the corset, foot binding, lead-based make-up, anorexia, and bulimia - the pursuit of female beauty has, and continues to lead, in extreme cases, to body mutilation, and death (see Calogero et al., 2007). Societal norms regarding appearance also seem to be designed as a trap to catch and punish non-conforming women. Women who wear cosmetics, as opposed to those who do not, are rated as healthier, more confident, and are judged to have greater earning potential (Nash et al., 2006). Overweight female job applicants are less likely to be hired (Pingitore et al., 1994), and ‘well-groomed’ women are paid more than women who are not considered ‘well-groomed’ (Wong & Penner, 2016). As such, women appear to have little choice but to ‘buy in’ to these norms in order to be successful. But paradoxically, these norms make success more difficult, as adhering to

them is costly in terms of both time and money (see e.g., Adomaitis et al., 2017; Rhode, 2010), thereby reducing women's resources.

In addition to the personal consequences of gender-based norms, women's appraisal of their personal appearance based on societal beauty norms may hinder their desire or ability to engage in collective action to redress gender-based inequalities (see Gothreau, 2021, for a review). Many scholars have argued that prevalent cultural gender norms and stereotypes exist, in part, because they function to facilitate and rationalise societal gender inequality (Eagly & Mladinic, 1994; Glick & Fiske, 2001a; Hoffman & Hurst, 1990; Jackman, 1994; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). In addition, because of how deeply they are culturally ingrained, and their strong association with the social order, gender norms and stereotypes are extremely resistant to change (Fiske & Stevens, 1993). Furthermore, it has been suggested that, in a manner similar to other subordinate groups, women are likely to attend more closely to situational forces – such as norms and stereotypes – and subsequently feel more constrained by them compared to men (Fiske, 1993a, 1993b; Hecht & LaFrance, 1998; Keltner et al., 2003; Nosek et al., 2007; Roberts, 1991). Indeed, Roberts and Pennebaker (1995) conducted a review of gender differences and concluded that women – in comparison to men – utilise external situational cues to define and determine their internal state to a much greater degree. In sum, gender norms and stereotypes can be harmful to women, are particularly inexorable and facilitate a gender-based power hierarchy. Women look to situational cues to determine their internal state, making them particularly vulnerable to the effects of norms and stereotypes. Often, these situational factors function to constrain and control them, making gender-based norms and stereotypes a significant hindrance to women's participation in gender-based collective action.

Although the United States (U.S.; i.e., the country where the current study takes place) has seen a marked increase in gender equality over the past 50 years, progress has

stalled recently and fallen far short of attaining gender parity (for a review, see England et al., 2020). Moreover, it is difficult to think of a piece of legislation, or a shift in public opinion, benefitting the rights of women that was simply given to them. Every step towards gender equality has been hard fought for by women, often by employing methods of collective action such as marches, protests, and petitions. This demonstrates that women's involvement in gender-based collective action is imperative if equality is to be obtained. Therefore, it is critical to understand factors which serve as barriers to engagement, such as self-objectification, an internalisation of gender-based norms.

To be clear, there are many barriers to women's engagement in collective action for the benefit of their group (for a review see Radke et al., 2016). Many of these barriers are a result of social construction (Jackman, 1994). These include overt and covert encounters with sexism (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Ellemers & Barreto, 2009), the interdependent nature of the relationship between women and men (Fisher et al., 2008), negative societal perceptions of feminists (Crossley, 2018; Faludi, 1991; Swim & Cohen, 1997), or, paradoxically, the belief that we live in a post-feminist world where sexism no longer exists (Swim et al., 1995). Additionally, socialised female gender roles ascribed to women dictate that they are 'nice' and 'communal' (Wood & Eagly, 2002). As a result, women are perceived as crazy, overly emotional, unreasonable, pre-menstrual (King et al., 2014; Thornton, 2013), or as having lost control (Chrisler, 2008) if they express anger. Further, they are derogated for the same as doing so violates prescribed gender norms (Mahalik et al., 2005). The structural and normative impact on women's disengagement with collective action is aptly demonstrated by research which found that women often will not confront discrimination out of fear of being perceived as impolite (Swim & Hyers, 1999; Swim & Hyers, 2009), a clear violation of the gendered social-norm of women as 'nice'. Moreover, women often will not confront

discrimination because the social setting (i.e., situational forces) makes it intimidating to do so (Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001).

Here, we investigate two barriers to women's participation in gender-based collective action: Namely, sexism (both hostile, and benevolent), and self-objectification. Whereas much of the foundational work on sexism focused on unidimensional conceptions of antipathy toward women (e.g., Swim et al., 1995), contemporary research demonstrates that sexism consists of two separate, albeit related, ideologies (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001a). Hostile and benevolent sexism are two complementary forms of sexism which function together to maintain the patriarchal status quo, and male hegemony (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001a; Glick et al., 2000; Sibley et al., 2007), rendering the endorsement of them a barrier to engaging in gender-based collective action. Becker (2010) argues that a woman's endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism is not entirely a reflection of how they view themselves, or the way they are treated. Rather, the extent to which women endorse hostile and benevolent sexism is strongly associated with the subtype of women they were thinking of when responding to the items. In the first of three studies testing this hypothesis, Becker (2010) found that women who endorsed hostile sexism were more likely to be internally referencing non-traditional women (e.g., feminists, career women). Additionally, the frequency with which women considered gender non-conforming female subtypes when responding to the questionnaire correlated positively with endorsement of hostile sexism. These findings help explain why women can endorse such negative conceptions of their own gender alongside more subjectively positive ones (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Becker & Wagner, 2009; Kilianski & Rudman, 1998). That is, a woman's endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism partially reflects what they believe about *other* women and how *they* should act. Indeed, research has shown that women's hostile sexism, like men's is primarily directed against women who deviate from prescribed gender social norms (Becker, 2010;

Glick et al., 1997; Parks-Stamm et al., 2008). As such, the extent to which women endorse hostile and benevolent sexism relates strongly to their beliefs about traditional gender roles, the legitimacy of the gender hierarchy, the status quo and male hegemony (Becker, 2010; Becker & Wagner, 2009). Indeed, Sibley and Becker (2012) found that women who highly endorsed *both* hostile and benevolent sexism – an indication of traditional gender-role acceptance – also held the highest levels of gender-specific system justification (Jost & Kay, 2005), indicating their strong belief in the legitimacy of the status quo of the gender hierarchy. Together these findings suggest that women who highly endorse hostile and benevolent sexism would be resistant to gender-based social change, and unlikely to support it.

We also examine the impact of self-objectification on women's support for gender-based collective action. Ambivalent sexism reflects the extent to which women endorse prevailing gendered social norms, stereotypes and the associated patriarchal hierarchy. Whereas self-objectification, reflects the extent to which women internalise the overt sexualisation of the female body in society, and the patriarchally dictated social norms regarding beauty (Bartky, 1990; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Both, however, function to maintain the existing gender hierarchy (Calogero, 2013b), though in different ways. Self-objectification is associated with a multitude of negative consequences for women, many of which directly impact their political competency and perceptions of their ability to make meaningful change. For example, self-objectification is related to less political interest and information seeking (Gothreau, 2021). Furthermore, it reduces women's competence, social and behavioural agency (Calogero, 2013a; Cikara et al., 2011; Saguy et al., 2010), and political efficacy (Gothreau, 2021; Heldman & Cahill, 2007; Hurst, 2014), all of which are necessary antecedents for collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008).

Additionally, self-objectification has been shown to correlate negatively with participating in gender-based collective action (Calogero, 2017; Calogero, 2013a).

Physical appearance is intrinsically and inextricably tied to what it means to be a woman (Calogero et al., 2007). Women evaluate and adjudicate their appearance relative to gendered social beauty norms which are patriarchally dictated (Bartky, 1990; Lee, 1994) and allotted an overwhelming level of importance in society (Bartky, 2003). Identity content refers to meanings, values, stereotypes, characteristics and norms associated with belonging to a particular group (Ashmore et al., 2004) As such, women's perceptions of their appearance, and the extent to which they internalise hegemonically dictated norms regarding their appearance (i.e., self-objectification), is a measure of the identity content of women. Becker and Wagner (2009), demonstrated how gender-based identity content – in their study operationalised as gender-role preference, another norm-based measure – inhibited gender-based collective action for women by moderating the relationship between in-group identification and collective action. We expect to see a similar pattern of results in the current study. That is, we expect that self-objectification will moderate the relationships between hostile and benevolent sexism and gender-based collective action support. Ambivalent sexism and self-objectification are related, but distinct concepts (Calogero & Jost, 2011). We predict that trait levels of ambivalent sexism will determine whether an individual believes the status quo needs changing, thus it will predict their level of support for gender-based collective action. Self-objectification, however, should moderate this relationship. Indeed, not only are individuals who internalise social beauty norms more likely to believe in the necessity and veracity of structural gender differences (Blanton et al., 2001), they are also less likely to perceive themselves as being capable of making efficacious social change (Gothreau, 2021).

In the following sections, we outline ambivalent sexism theory and discuss research related to how both benevolent and hostile sexism impact political collective action. We then examine self-objectification theory and explain how the process of focusing on one's appearance plays a key moderating role in undermining women's support for gender-based collective action. We then outline our hypotheses, and test them using a sample of female, U.S citizens.

### **Hostile and Benevolent Sexism**

"Women are systematically degraded by receiving the trivial attentions which men think it manly to pay to the sex, when, in fact, men are insultingly supporting their own superiority."

- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)

A plethora of research has found that women are less involved at all levels of politics (Burns et al., 2021; Carreras, 2018; Coffé & Dilli, 2015; Espinal & Zhao, 2015; Fox & Lawless, 2010, 2011, 2014; Lawless & Fox, 2010; Pruyssers & Blais, 2014; Verba et al., 1997). One explanation for this is that sexism is ingrained within the very framework of politics, and the institutions where political decisions and changes take place (see Lovenduski, 2014). Ambivalent sexism theory (AST) describes two complementary ideologies that comprise sexism and maintain the current gender hegemony: hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostile sexism is rooted in antipathy towards women, and comprises unfavourable stereotypes of women (e.g., that women make unreasonable demands of men, or complain too often of discrimination). Hostile sexism is more in line with what would be considered typical sexism or prejudice against women. Conversely, benevolent sexism describes subjectively positive, but nonetheless patronizing, attitudes towards, and beliefs about women that are rooted in the traditional ideology of female purity and dependence (Glick & Fiske, 2001a, 2001b). One of the ways that



ambivalent sexism perpetuates the status quo is by organising women into sub-categories whereby hostile sexism punishes women for daring to defy traditional gender roles (e.g., feminists, career women), while benevolent sexism rewards women for accepting and complying by traditional, feminine gender categories (e.g., wife, mother; Becker, 2010; Glick et al., 1997; Glick & Fiske, 2001a). Ambivalent sexism predicts nation-level gender inequality (Glick et al., 2000). Furthermore, for women, hostile and benevolent sexism have been shown to reciprocally reinforce one another over time (Cross et al., 2021). These findings demonstrate the import of ambivalent sexism for gender equality, and the role women in particular will take in addressing it.

Considerable research demonstrates that hostile sexism is negatively associated with attitudes toward women who violate the male-dominant status quo. For example, Glick and Fiske (1996) determined that hostile sexism predicted negative attitudes towards women who challenge traditional female gender roles. Likewise, Masser and Abrams (2004) found that hostile sexism correlated positively with discriminating against a female candidate for a managerial role, and also with providing negative evaluations of that candidate. Other work similarly shows that hostile sexism is related to negative perceptions of women. Hostile sexism is associated with the perpetuation of rape-myths, victim-blaming, and even the likelihood of committing acquaintance rape (Abrams et al., 2003). It is also correlated with anti-abortion attitudes (Begun & Walls, 2015), decreased likelihood of supporting gender-based affirmative action (Fraser et al., 2015) and reduced perceptions of overt sexual harassment in the workplace (Wiener et al., 2010). Hostile sexism is also associated with negative perceptions of, and less satisfaction within, intimate relationships (Hammond & Overall, 2013). Further, Connor and Fiske (2019) found that hostile sexism was positively associated with acceptance of gender income inequality, and that perceptions of societal fairness (i.e., the legitimacy of the existing gender-based power structure) mediated this

relationship. They concluded that hostile sexism is a considerable attitudinal barrier to supporting equal pay policies and initiatives for both men and women. However, very little research to date has examined the direct relationship between hostile sexism and gender-based collective action (for exceptions, see Becker & Swim, 2011; Becker & Wright, 2011).

Despite its positive appeal, benevolent sexism also appears to undermine support for challenging the status quo (Becker & Wright, 2011; Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001a). Specifically, the way benevolent sexism represents women functions to justify gender inequality (Jost & Kay, 2005). For example, benevolent sexism correlates positively with the perception that gender relations are equal and fair amongst women (Hammond & Sibley, 2011). Indeed, heterosexual women generally express an attraction and preference for men whose attitudes and behaviours align with benevolently sexist expectations (e.g., chivalrous, protective; Bohner et al., 2010; Hammond et al., 2014; Kilianski & Rudman, 1998; Viki et al., 2003), and women are more likely to accept gender inequalities when they are portrayed in a benevolently sexist manner (e.g., Jackman, 1994; Moya et al., 2007). Moreover, benevolent sexism encourages cross-gender reliance. Shnabel et al. (2016), demonstrated with both correlational and experimental data that for women, benevolent sexism is associated with a preference for receiving dependency-oriented help – as opposed to acquiring the tools required for autonomous help. Further, they showed that for women and men, benevolent sexism encourages cross-gender helping behaviour that perpetuates traditional gender-roles. Benevolent sexism is also negatively correlated with a number of issues which gender-based collective action seeks to address such as reproductive rights (Huang et al., 2016) and workplace equality (Hideg & Ferris, 2016). But, again, to date there has been limited research on the direct relationship between benevolent sexism and gender-based collective action specifically.

The most notable exception is Becker and Wright (2011), who conducted a series of experiments where they exposed participants to either benevolent or hostile sexism, then measured participants' engagement in collective action. Their results showed that hostile sexism promoted, whereas benevolent sexism undermined, intentions to participate in collective action. Although this work helps to demonstrate the causal role of sexism in attitudes toward collective action, more (non-experimental) work is needed to see how women's ingrained ideologies regarding sexism (i.e., trait-level sexism) influences their support, or lack thereof, for gender-based collective action.

Given its overtly negative depiction of women, it is difficult to understand why women would endorse hostile sexism as doing so does not, on the surface, appear to redound to their personal benefit (Weeden & Kurzban, 2017). The answer to this question may be related to the sub-typing of women which is so central to AST. Becker (2010) found that women endorse hostile sexist beliefs more strongly when they think about one of the sub-groups of women (e.g., feminist, career women) who are demonised by hostile sexism rather. Thus, women who endorse hostile sexism may not *necessarily* assign such negative qualities to themselves. Instead, they assign them to 'others' who fail to live within traditional gender roles. However, Becker (2010) also found that women who had internalised hostile sexism were more likely to endorse the concept. This internalisation suggests that women who highly endorse hostile sexism consider these views to be veridical and an accurate description of women, as they believe the items apply to both themselves and other women. As such, women who endorse hostile sexism should be less likely to support gender-based collective action, as they do not approve of women who challenge the patriarchal status quo (Hypothesis 1).

Unlike hostile sexism, women often fail to see benevolent sexism as discriminatory (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Hopkins-Doyle et al., 2019; Swim et al., 2005). Rather, women

describe it as favourable, and flattering (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Glick & Fiske, 2001a; Hopkins-Doyle et al., 2019). Yet benevolent sexism supports and bolsters the status quo by rewarding women who act within the bounds of traditional femininity, and punishing those who do not (Becker, 2010; Fraser, 2015; Glick et al., 1997; Glick et al., 2015; Hopkins-Doyle et al., 2019; Mastari et al., 2022). Additionally, gender inequalities are legitimised by the way benevolent sexism portrays women as weak, but wonderful and in need of male protection (Farkas & Leaper, 2016; Glick & Fiske, 2001a; Glick & Raberg, 2018; Jost & Kay, 2005; Scotto di Carlo, 2021; Silván-Ferrero & Bustillos López, 2007). Women who have internalised these normative prescriptions more strongly endorse benevolent sexism (Becker, 2010). As such, women who endorse benevolent sexism should also be less likely to support gender-based collective action that challenges the status quo (Hypothesis 2).

### **Self-objectification**

“...men endeavour to sink us still lower, merely to render us alluring objects for a moment.”

- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)

Physical appearance is intrinsically and inextricably tied to what it means to be a woman (Calogero et al., 2007). Women evaluate and adjudicate their appearance relative to gendered social beauty norms which are patriarchally dictated (Bartky, 1990; Lee, 1994). Given the overwhelming level of importance attached to female beauty (Bartky, 2003), women often end up internalising these social norms leading to self-objectification (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). This internalisation then becomes an integral facet of the content of their identity (Ashmore et al., 2004). Studies have shown that objectification, and more specifically self-objectification, leads to a wide variety of negative personal consequences for young girls and women including reduced self-esteem (Murnen et al., 2003; Strelan et al., 2003), eating disorders (Calogero et al., 2005), and shame (Calogero et al.,

2011; Moradi & Huang, 2008). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that when their physical appearance is emphasized, women are considered to be more like objects than humans (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009), and that being objectified causes women to feel powerless, and passive (Nussbaum, 1995; Saguy et al., 2010). Related to this, recent research has begun to identify the impact self-objectification has on the way women perceive and interact with the world around them. For example, Fox et al. (2013) demonstrated how exposure to sexualised online avatars in video games increased female self-objectification. Self-objectification has also been shown to be negatively associated with creativity (Mirucka & Kisielewska, 2022), and task performance (Quinn et al., 2006) for women and girls. Of particular import to this study, research has shown that self-objectification is positively correlated with conformity (Andrighetto et al., 2018), and negatively associated with perceptions of free-will (Baldissarri et al., 2019). Here, we focus specifically on the political domain, and outline how self-objectification relates to, and predicts, decreased involvement in all levels political activity, including collective action.

Objectification theory arose from consideration of the consequences, most particularly for girls and women, of living in a culture of increased sexualisation of the female body, and the ensuing objectification of women (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The theory argues that frequently encountering systematic sexual objectification forces women to adopt a disembodied third-person perception of themselves. As a result, many women both see and evaluate their worth through this panoptical observer's gaze. Ultimately, such a third-person perspective leads women to view their body as not their own, but belonging instead to this 'observer other'. In turn, women begin to view the value of their body not by its functionality, but instead in terms of its attractiveness to others. More specifically, male others, as it is noted that objectification is distinctly gendered, with the male-gaze being the one that is considered. Indeed, it has long been observed that, particularly in cultures where

the dominant perspective is that of the heterosexual male, gender—and gender norms—shape and direct the objectifying lens which women internalize (Berger, 1972; Henley, 1977; Horney, 1937; Lerner, 1983). Therefore, women’s tendency to self-monitor and self-objectify is dictated by a patriarchal perspective (Bartky, 1990). More recent research demonstrates that the male-gaze significantly, and insidiously, contributes to women’s self-objectification (Calogero, 2004; Saguy et al., 2010).

Gender bias, particularly in the media, permeates women’s involvement in politics (e.g., see Bystrom et al., 2001; Fountaine & McGregor, 2002; Larson, 2001; Schroeder & Borgerson, 1998; Witt et al., 1995), which often results in a distinct disadvantage to female candidates (Kahn, 1992, 1994; Kahn & Fridkin, 1996). These biases, and a predominate focus on female physical appearance (as opposed to qualification), extend to the highest level of political involvement. Heldman et al. (2005) analysed media coverage of the 1999 Republican Presidential nomination and found that, despite ranking second of the five candidates in the polls, newspaper articles about Elizabeth Olsen – the only female candidate – attended mainly to her physical appearance, and that their continued reference to her being the first woman considered a viable candidate drew attention away from the more relevant aspects of her campaign.

Similarly, Heflick and Goldenberg (2009) found that the overwhelming media focus on Sarah Palin’s physical appearance during the 2008 U.S Presidential election led people to dehumanize Palin, and to perceive her as less moral and competent. Indeed, their results showed that, six weeks prior to the election, Republican participants who were primed to focus on Palin’s appearance were significantly less likely to report that they would vote for the McCain-Palin ticket. Heflick and Goldenberg further argue that these perceptions may have heightened Palin’s attentions to her own appearance which, via self-objectification, subsequently diminished her competency. Research has demonstrated that cognitive

functioning is reduced for women who self-objectify because part of their attention is dedicated towards the constant self-monitoring of their own bodies in preparation of, or reaction to the objectifying gaze they are subjected to by others (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Gapinski et al., 2003). Women who self-objectify are not only seen as less competent (Gapinski et al., 2003), they are also less likely to perform with competence (Quinn et al., 2006). When women, and girls, observe the objectification of these most powerful women, it they will likely begin to doubt their own capacity for effecting change. Indeed, Campbell and Wolbrecht (2006) demonstrated that the role model effect (i.e., seeing females running for office) has a significant impact on women's perceptions of their own political competency. This is one of the many ways that self-objectification suppresses political involvement, as women observe and internalise this norm, stifling their own success as they engage in double consciousness.

Another way that self-objectification negatively predicts political involvement is by undermining women's agency. Within the political domain, agency is associated with competence, and is used to describe the extent to which an individual believes that they can influence the world, and that their actions will have the desired consequences (Bandura, 1989, 2006). Cikara, Eberhardt, and Fiske (2011) found that women who are sexually objectified experience a marked decrease in agency and competence. Furthermore, research reveals that women who self-objectify suffer decreases in both social and behavioural agency (Calogero, 2013; Saguy, Quinn, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2010). These reductions in agency would make women who self-objectify less likely to engage in political action.

Lastly, self-objectification may reduce collective action support by undermining women's political efficacy. Political efficacy, the extent to which a person believes their actions have an impact in the political domain, is a crucial predictor in people's decision to participate in collective action (Kelly & Kelly, 1994; Klandermans, 1984; van Zomeren,

Postmes, et al., 2008). For example, individuals with higher levels of political efficacy are more likely not only to vote, but also to participate in other civic and political actions (Clarke & Acock, 1989). Multiple studies demonstrate that women who self-objectify exhibit lower rates of political efficacy (Gothreau, 2021; Heldmen & Cahill, 2007; Hurst, 2014), as well as reduced political interest, and less political information seeking (Gothreau, 2021). Finally, Calogero (2013, 2017), found that for women, trait self-objectification is negatively correlated with engaging in gender-based social activism. As such, self-objectification should correlate negatively with support for gender-based collective action (Hypothesis 3).

### **Hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and self-objectification**

“If we revert to history, we shall find that the women who have distinguished themselves have neither been the most beautiful nor the most gentle of their sex.”

- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)

Ambivalent sexism and self-objectification are related, but distinct concepts (Calogero & Jost, 2011). Women’s endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism is an indication and manifestation of their overarching worldview of women in general. That is, a woman’s endorsement of hostile and benevolent sexism reflects what they believe about other women and how they should act, particularly with respect to prescribed gender norms (Becker, 2010; Glick et al., 1997; Parks-Stamm et al., 2008). Indeed, the extent to which women endorse hostile and benevolent sexism relates strongly to their beliefs about traditional gender roles, the legitimacy of the gender hierarchy, the status quo and male hegemony (Becker, 2010; Becker & Wagner, 2009). As such, trait levels of ambivalent sexism should be associated with whether an individual believes the status quo needs changing, thus we predicted that endorsement of both benevolent and hostile sexism will be negatively correlated with support for gender-based collective action.



Self-objectification is also a product of gender-based societal norms, specifically, beauty norms. Individuals who internalise those norms – as women with high levels of self-objectification have – come to more strongly believe in their accuracy and veracity (Simon & Hamilton, 1994), which can result in them legitimising the existing social structure, even as it disadvantages them (Blanton et al., 2001). Notably, the negative consequences associated with internalising self-objectification, particularly as they relate to the political domain, such as efficacy and agency (Gothreau, 2021), are associated with the extent to which an individual believes they are capable of making efficacious social change. Likewise, the positive association between self-objectification and conformity (Andrighetto et al., 2018) is likely indicative of a propensity to accept the existing status quo. As such, self-objectification should moderate the relationship between ambivalent sexism and group-based collective action support. Specifically, higher self-objectification should further dampen support for collective action in both instances.

### **Current Study**

The current study aims to investigate the independent relationships hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and self-objectification have with support for gender-based collective action. We also examine the possibility that self-objectification moderates the relationships both forms of sexism have with collective action support. Research has consistently demonstrated that members of a disadvantaged group often, by endorsing stereotypes that negatively impact their group, play a key role in maintaining the status quo despite the fact that that power dynamic is disadvantageous to them (Becker, 2010; Jackman, 1994; Jost & Kay, 2005). The disadvantaged group here is women. Both hostile and benevolent sexism reflect attitudes towards women, not men. Additionally women, much more so than men are affected by self-objectification (Fredrickson et al., 1998; Moradi & Huang, 2008), and the negative impact self-objectification has on political efficacy is more damaging for women

than it is for men (Hurst, 2014). Therefore, given our variables of interest, we focus only on female participants. To demonstrate that our predictions hold after accounting for the most plausible alternative explanations, we also assessed the three instrumental variables outlined in van Zomeren et al.'s (2008) social identity model of collective action (SIMCA): perceived injustice, group identification, political efficacy.

To test our hypotheses, we conducted two different regression analyses. The first model with hostile sexism predicting support for gender-based collective action, moderated by self-objectification. The second with benevolent sexism predicting support for gender-based collective action, moderated by self-objectification. Based on theory and the literature reviewed above, we predicted that both hostile and benevolent sexism would be negatively associated with support for gender-based collective action (Hypothesis 1 and 2, respectively). We also predicted that self-objectification would be negatively associated with our outcome (Hypothesis 3). Finally, we predicted that self-objectification would dampen support for gender-based collective action for both hostile, and benevolent sexism (Hypothesis 4).

### **Methods**

Data for this study came from a survey conducted using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Participants were MTurk workers who responded to an advertisement placed on that site in 2021 which described a study examining people's social attitudes and political participation. To be eligible to participate in the study, workers had to be over 18 years of age, and eligible to vote in the United States of America (U.S.). Participants were paid \$1US for completing the approximately 25-minute survey. The survey took place entirely online, and the sample was self-selected from within the pool of MTurk workers. Ethics approval was obtained via the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee.

### *Participants*

The current study included 295 female participants, who were all U.S citizens<sup>15</sup>. With regards to ethnicity, the sample was predominately Caucasian ( $N = 245$ ). The remainder comprised of participants who identified as Black ( $N = 36$ ), Latinx ( $N = 5$ ), Native American ( $N = 5$ ), and Asian ( $N = 4$ ). Participants' age ranged from 22 – 74 ( $M = 41.76$ ,  $SD = 11.42$ ).

### *Predictor Variables*

**Hostile and Benevolent Sexism.** The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996) was used to measure hostile and benevolent sexism. The ASI consists of 22 items, half of which assess hostile sexism (e.g., ‘Many women are actually seeking special favours, such as hiring policies that favour them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality"’), while the other half gauge benevolent sexism (e.g., ‘Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.’). These are all measured on a 7-point scale.

**Self-objectification.** Participants were asked to rate how they felt about 16 items including: ‘I feel ashamed of myself when I haven’t made the effort to look my best’, and ‘I rarely compare how I look with how other people look’ (reverse-coded), on a 7-point scale where 1 indicated strong agreement, and 7 indicated strong disagreement. These items were taken from McKinley and Hyde’s (1996) measure of self-objectification.

### *Covariates*

**Political Ideology.** The following question was used to ascertain participants’ political ideology: ‘How politically conservative versus liberal do you consider yourself?’ where 1 denoted a very conservative ideology, and 7 represented a very liberal ideology.

**Political efficacy.** Six items, taken from van Zomeren et al., (2008), were used to measure political efficacy. Example items include ‘I think people can successfully stand up

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<sup>15</sup> List-wise deletion was used to handle missing data.

for their rights’, and ‘The average citizen can have an influence on government decisions’.

All items were measured on a 7-point scale.

**Individual and group-based relative deprivation.** Two items adapted from Abrams and Grant (2012) were used to measure relative deprivation on a 7-point scale. Individual relative deprivation was assessed with the item: ‘I feel angry when I think about my personal standard of living compared to other people in general’. Group-based relative deprivation was measured by the item ‘I feel angry when I think about the standard of living for men compared to women’.

**Gender identification.** Six items adapted from a scale from Leach et al. (2008) were used to assess the extent to which participants identified with being female. Examples of items include, ‘I feel solidarity with my gender’, and ‘My gender is an important part of my identity’. All items were measured on a 7-point scale.

**Gender-specific system justification.** Gender-specific system justification was measured using eight items from Jost and Kay (2005). These items included, ‘For women, the United States is the best country in the world to live in’, and ‘Most policies relating to gender and the sexual division of labour serve the greater good’, and were all measured on a 7-point scale.

### ***Outcome Measure***

**Support for gender-based collective action.** Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they supported engaging in collective action for a number of social and political issues. Five of these were issues directly relating to women’s rights. These were: ‘Equal pay for women and men in the same job’, ‘Affirmative action for women studying Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects’, ‘Increased paid maternity leave’, ‘Gender quotas for equal hiring of men and women in government / positions of authority (i.e., CEOs, board members)’, and ‘Marches in support of women’s

rights'. These five items were combined into a single scale.

Table 3.1. Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations Between the Variables Included in the Analysis.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1. Age	--														
2. Ethnicity: Asian	-.013	--													
3. Ethnicity: Black	-.113	-.038	--												
4. Ethnicity: Latinx	-.004	-.013	-.049	--											
5. Ethnicity: Native American	-.048	-.013	-.049	-.017	--										
6. Political Orientation	-.055	-.02	.132*	.059	-.005	--									
7. Political Efficacy	.007	-.132*	.151**	.044	-.004	.250**	--								
8. Individual Relative Deprivation	-.147*	-.089	.021	-.093	-.017	-.068	-.120*	--							
9. Group Relative Deprivation	-.082	-.073	-.053	-.076	.027	-.01	.035	.663**	--						
10. Gender Identification	-.012	.019	.172**	-.002	-0.11	-.06	.331**	.308**	.346**	--					
11. Gender-Based System Justification	.003	-.081	-.024	-.034	.007	-.346**	-.052	.222**	.073	.166**	--				
12. Hostile Sexism	-.185**	-.034	.006	.005	.082	-.371**	-.383**	.497**	.305**	.096	.590**	--			
13. Benevolent Sexism	-.236**	-.07	.215**	.043	.072	-.186**	-.068	.472**	.358**	.318**	.460**	.627**	--		
14. Self-Objectification	-.233**	.064	-.029	.007	.015	-.078	-.178**	.271**	.168**	.088	-.026	.185**	.130*	--	
15. Collective Action	-.112	-.026	.169**	.023	-.078	.203**	.437**	.161**	.334**	.429**	-.223**	-.243**	.08	-.06	--
<i>M</i>	41.76					4.07	4.86	4.55	4.66	5.54	4.49	3.82	4.12	3.71	5.54
<i>SD</i>	11.42					2.07	0.92	1.21	1.15	0.93	1.03	1.27	1.24	0.79	1.05
$\alpha$							0.72			0.84	0.79	0.89	0.89	0.77	0.8

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## Results

### Hostile sexism

Given that women who endorse hostile sexism likely hold negative attitudes towards non-conforming women and have a preference for those who adhere to the status quo, we predicted that hostile sexism would be negatively associated with support for gender-based collective action (Hypothesis 1). Furthermore, because self-objectification reduces women's sense of agency, we predicted that self-objectification would also be negatively associated with our outcome (Hypothesis 3). Finally, because internalising social norms can function to legitimise the status quo, and self-objectification in particular is associated with reduced perceptions of personal political efficacy and agency, we predicted that self-objectification would moderate the relationship between hostile sexism and gender-based collective action in that higher self-objectification would further weaken the relationship (Hypothesis 4). To test our hypotheses, we analysed our data using Model 1 in PROCESS (Hayes, 2012). All continuous variables were mean-centred prior to analysis.

The results of our regression analysis with hostile sexism predicting gender-based collective action support are displayed in Table 3.2. As shown here, political efficacy ( $b = .27, p < .001$ ), group-based relative deprivation ( $b = .26, p < .001$ ), and gender identification ( $b = .28, p < .001$ ) were positively associated with support for gender-based collective action. Conversely, age ( $b = -.01, p < .05$ ), and gender-specific system justification ( $b = -.22, p < .001$ ) were negatively associated with support for gender-based collective action. After adjusting for these critical covariates, both hostile sexism ( $b = -.19, p = .01$ ) and self-objectification ( $b = -.27, p < .001$ ) were negatively associated with support for gender-based collective action supporting Hypotheses 1 and 3. Moreover, the relationship between hostile sexism and support for gender-based collective action was significantly moderated by self-objectification ( $b = -.13, p = .003$ ). As shown in the simple slopes displayed in Figure 3.1,

supporting Hypothesis 4, hostile sexism did predict a decrease in collective action support, however, this relationship was only significant for those who were also high in self-objectification.

Table 3.2. Multiple regression analysis predicting collective action support as a function of key covariates, hostile sexism, self-objectification, and their interaction.

	<i>B</i>	( <i>SE</i> )	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Constant	.493**	0.19	0.128	0.859
Age	-0.01*	0.004	-0.019	-0.002
Ethnicity: Asian	0.13	0.47	-0.788	1.051
Ethnicity: Black	0.21	0.15	-0.096	0.502
Ethnicity: Latinx	0.24	0.36	-0.465	0.959
Ethnicity: Native American	-0.35	0.36	-1.063	0.361
Political Orientation	0.003	0.03	-0.046	0.053
Political Efficacy	0.27***	0.06	0.147	0.399
Group-based relative deprivation	0.26***	0.06	0.147	0.371
Individual relative deprivation	0.07	0.06	-0.048	0.182
Gender identification	0.28***	0.06	0.164	0.403
Gender-specific system justification	-0.22***	0.06	-0.343	-0.099
Benevolent sexism	0.09	0.05	-0.018	0.197
Hostile sexism	-0.19**	0.06	0.128	0.859
Self-objectification	-0.27***	0.08	-0.424	-0.118
Hostile sexism x Self-objectification	-0.13**	0.04	-0.209	-0.042
<b>Model Summary</b>				
R <sup>2</sup>		.4682**		
F		16.378		

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



## Benevolent sexism

Benevolent sexism supports and bolsters the status quo, and rewards women who act within the bounds of traditional femininity, while legitimising gender inequalities. As such, we predicted that benevolent sexism would be negatively associated with support for gender-based collective action (Hypothesis 2). Additionally, for the reasons mentioned above, we also predicted that self-objectification would be negatively associated with the outcome (Hypothesis 3). Finally, we predicted that self-objectification would moderate the relationship between benevolent sexism and gender-based collective action in that higher self-objectification would further weaken the relationship (Hypothesis 4). Again, we analysed our data using Model 1 in PROCESS (Hayes, 2012), and all continuous variables were mean-centred prior to analysis.

The results of our regression analysis with benevolent sexism predicting gender-based collective action support are displayed in Table 3.3. As shown here, political efficacy ( $b = .26, p < .001$ ), group-based relative deprivation ( $b = .25, p < .001$ ), gender identification ( $b = .27, p < .01$ ) were positively associated with support for gender-based collective action. Conversely, age ( $b = -.01, p < .05$ ), gender-specific system justification ( $b = -.20, p < .01$ ), and hostile sexism ( $b = -.19, p < .01$ ) were negatively associated with the outcome. After adjusting for these critical covariates, we found that, on its own, benevolent sexism was not significantly associated with support for gender-based collective action ( $b = .08, p = .17$ ), but, as predicted, self-objectification was negatively associated with the outcome ( $b = -.22, p < .01$ ). As such, Hypothesis 2 was not supported, but again, Hypothesis 3 was. Consistent with our prediction, the relationship between benevolent sexism and support for gender-based collective action was significantly moderated by self-objectification ( $b = -.11, p = .007$ ). However, the results were surprising. Figure 3.2 displays the simple slopes and shows that, contrary to what we expected (Hypothesis 4), *higher* levels of benevolent sexism were

associated with *increased* support for gender-based collective action, but only under the condition of low self-objectification. In all other cases, there was no significant difference in support for the outcome.

Table 3.3. Multiple regression analysis predicting collective action support as a function of key covariates, benevolent sexism, self-objectification, and their interaction.

	<i>B</i>	( <i>SE</i> )	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper
Constant	.448***	0.19	0.079	0.816
Age	-0.01*	0.004	-0.018	-0.001
Ethnicity: Asian	0.15	0.47	-0.767	1.077
Ethnicity: Black	0.2	0.15	-0.097	0.502
Ethnicity: Latinx	0.26	0.36	-0.451	0.976
Ethnicity: Native American	-0.35	0.36	-1.064	0.362
Political Orientation	0.003	0.06	-0.046	0.053
Political Efficacy	0.26***	0.06	0.143	0.394
Group-based relative deprivation	.25***	0.06	0.138	0.361
Individual relative deprivation	0.06	0.06	-0.053	0.177
Gender identification	.27***	0.06	0.153	0.394
Gender-specific system justification	-0.2**	0.06	-0.322	-0.082
Hostile sexism	-0.19**	0.06	-0.311	-0.059
Benevolent sexism	0.08	0.05	-0.033	0.183
Self-objectification	-0.22**	0.07	-0.358	-0.081
Benevolent sexism x Self-objectification	-0.11**	0.04	-0.167	-0.025
<b>Model Summary</b>				
R <sup>2</sup>		.449***		
F		15.022		

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

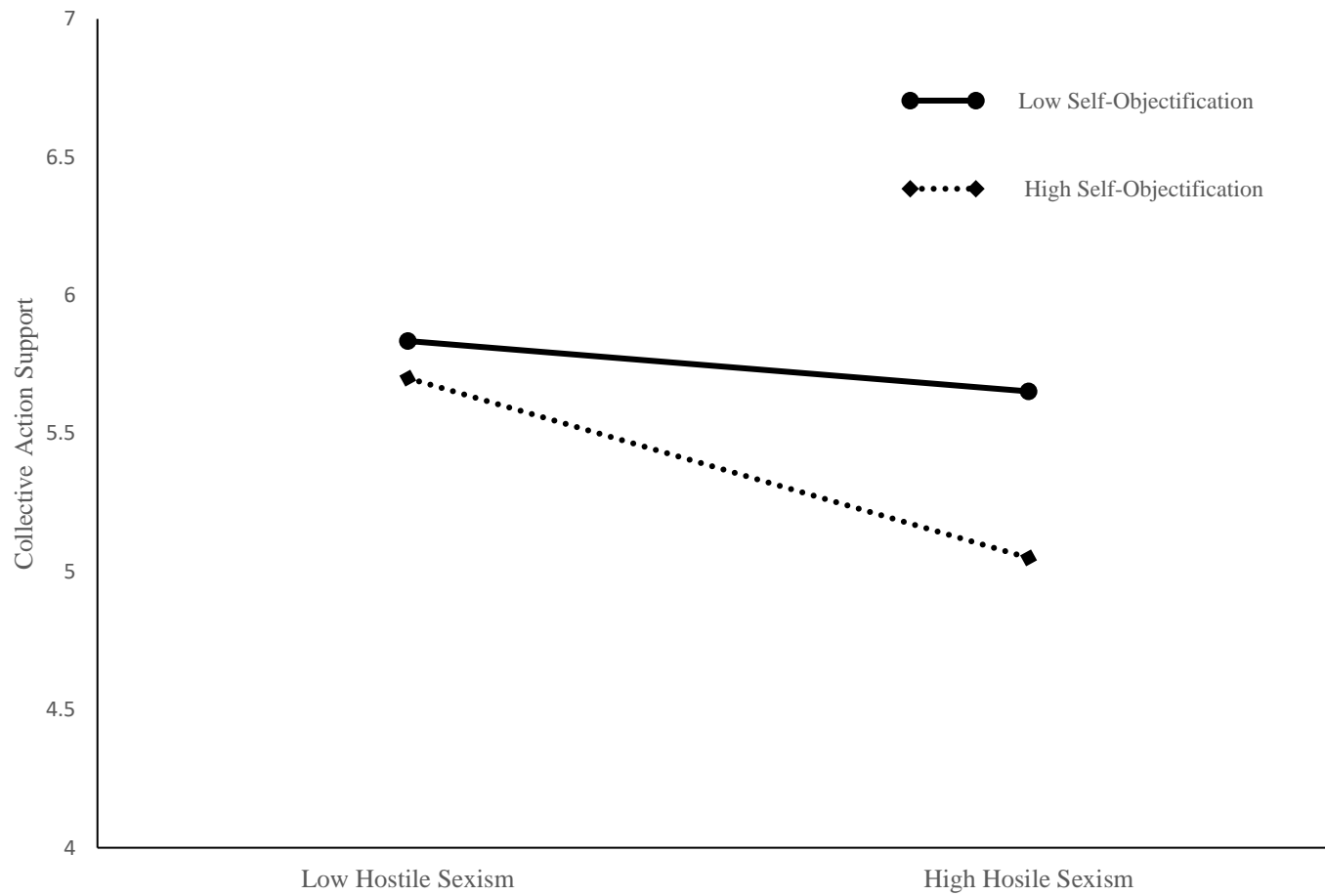


Figure 3.1. Participants' support for gender-based collective action as a function of hostile sexism moderated by self-objectification.

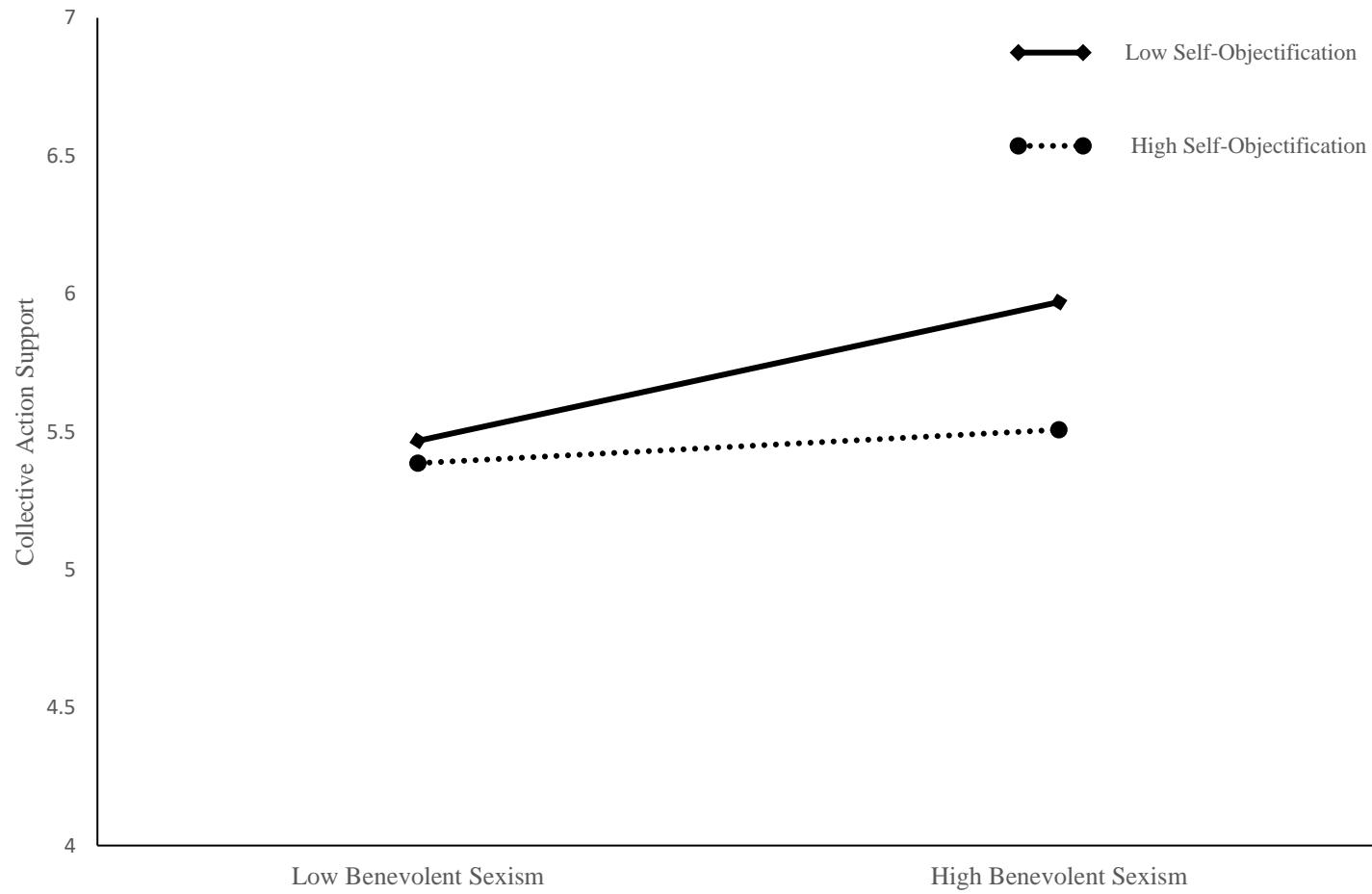


Figure 3.2. Participants' support for gender-based collective action as a function of benevolent sexism moderated by self-objectification.

## Discussion

Despite many advances over the past 50 years, the push towards gender equality remains an unrealised ideal (see England et al., 2020). Given that most gains in social parity have been won through group-based collective action, it is imperative to identify the factors that motivate, or discourage, women from acting on behalf of their group to attain equal rights. Here, we investigated three such factors: hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and self-objectification. In doing so, we sought to ascertain how they effected support gender-based collective action. We also investigated the interactive effects self-objectification had with both types of sexism on collective action support. To these ends, two separate analyses were conducted. First, we examined the relationship between hostile sexism and support for gender-based collective action, and whether this association was moderated by self-objectification. Second, we examined the moderating effects of self-objectification on the predicted negative relationship between benevolent sexism and support for gender-based collective action.

As we predicted, endorsement of hostile sexism was negatively associated with support for gender-based collective action. Although these results contradict those of Becker and Wright (2011), who showed that exposure to hostile sexism can elicit collective action support, they coincide with our theoretical justification that women who personally *endorse* hostile sexism should be motivated to maintain the patriarchal status-quo. Moreover, this relationship was significantly moderated by self-objectification. Specifically, hostile sexism correlated negatively with support for gender-based collective action, albeit only for those who expressed high levels of self-objectification. Although our results support our hypotheses for hostile sexism, our results for benevolent sexism were unexpected. Contrary to our expectations, benevolent sexism, on its own, did not significantly predict support for gender-based collective action. This relationship was, however, significantly moderated by

self-objectification in that participants with high levels of benevolent sexism and low levels of self-objectification were more likely to support gender-based collective action. This result is not only counter to our prediction, but it also contradicts the findings of Becker and Wright (2011) who found that benevolent sexism was negatively associated with collective action. However, again, their findings were the result of experimental exposure to different types of sexism, whereas here we were interested in individual's trait levels of sexism. It is difficult to understand how endorsement of a belief system that functions to maintain the existing gender hierarchy via rewarding women for their complicity would be positively associated with support for gender-based collective action that would challenge the status quo. Two possible explanations are discussed.

The first involves research conducted by Glick et al. (2000) who demonstrated that the positive relationship between benevolent and hostile sexism among women is particularly strong in more inegalitarian countries. These results suggest that women adopt benevolent sexism as a way to protect themselves against higher societal levels of hostility. Indeed, Fischer (2006) found that women reported higher levels of benevolent sexism when they were told that men held negative and hostile attitudes towards women. Given that the current study was conducted on the heels of the Trump presidency—a particularly turbulent time for women's rights, it may be that participants, in response to this cultural setting, viewed benevolent sexism as a way to protect themselves from this perceived hostility. If this was a conscious decision, then those women who more strongly endorse benevolent sexism for its protective benefits are, in fact, the same women who are the most aware of the need for change to the gender structure, and would be more likely to support collective action to achieve that aim. Following this line of reasoning, participants low in benevolent sexism may not see the need for change, and so do not feel the need to endorse the ideology as a buffer against inequality and hostility. However, for those who *do*, it is only those who are low in

self-objectification who may feel competent enough to act against the injustices that they are aware of.

A second possible explanation comes from increased education, and awareness. A search of the GenderWatch database which collates ‘Articles on gender topics such as sexuality, religion, societal roles, feminism, eating disorders, healthcare, and the workplace’ from newspapers, magazines, blogs, and websites provided 769 articles from sources such as *The New Yorker*, and *The Washington Post*, to the *Daily Mail*, and *Men’s Health*, with almost every other type and quality of publication in between on the dangerous, paternalistic, and insidious nature of benevolent sexism when the search was limited to the last ten years. As such, the public in general may now be more informed than they were a decade ago about the problematic nature of benevolent sexism. Therefore, they may be more likely to consider it a system worth fighting against, despite endorsing it personally for its positive personal and interpersonal benefits such as within intimate relationships (Hammond & Overall, 2017; Hammond & Sibley, 2011; Hammond et al., 2014).

Although the current data are unable to parse out these competing explanations, our results demonstrate clearly that self-objectification plays an important role in establishing whether or not women will support collective action to benefit their group. It is likely that the lack of agency (Cikara et al., 2011), and political efficacy (Gothreau, 2021; Heldmen & Cahill, 2007; Hurst, 2014) which are associated with high self-objectification undermine women’s political action intentions, while an increase in those same factors for women low in self-objectification strengthens their resolve to support collective action that will benefit their group. Likewise, women who internalise gender norms are more likely to perceive them as veridical (Simon & Hamilton, 1994), thus legitimising the status quo, and reducing the likelihood that they will challenge it (Blanton et al., 2001; Burkley & Blanton, 2008). Similarly, hostile and benevolent sexism subtypes women to categories of ‘good’ traditional

women (e.g., wife, mother), and ‘bad’ non-conforming women (e.g., feminists, career women) in an effort to support traditional gender hegemony. Self-objectification is the process of internalising and valuing oneself by the male gaze. As such, it makes sense that only women who are low in self-objectification feel capable of, and indeed justified to, fight against these constricting categories.

One of the most effective, and efficient ways to incite social change is via collective action (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wright et al., 1990b). Women have a greater understanding of the issues facing them by virtue of the simple fact that they directly affect them. Therefore, it is necessary for women to bring these issues to the forefront of public consciousness if change is ever to occur. However, if women feel as though doing so will be stepping outside of their traditional place, or their gender role, they are unlikely to pursue social change. Which is why addressing self-objectification, its association with gender-based social norms and expectations, and the way these relate to collective action is necessary to improving women’s status, and social condition.

### **Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions**

Here, we provide a novel examination of the impacts hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and self-objectification have on support for gender-based collective action. In doing so, we include a number of critical covariates, including those identified by SIMCA (van Zomeren et al., 2008) and system justification theory (namely, gender-specific system justification) to account for the palliative effect this would likely have on the result (see Calogero & Jost, 2011). However, the greatest strength of this study is how the results demonstrate the crucial role of self-objectification with regards to women’s support of gender-based collective action. Here, we utilised self-objectification as a measure of identity content. Gendered social norms, particularly those regarding physical appearance, are an intrinsic and unavoidable part of what it means to be a woman. Therefore, our results



demonstrate the way that negative, out-group-imposed identity content can adversely affect women's support of collective action that would benefit their group. Self-objectification is the internalisation of patriarchally prescribed gender norms (Bartky, 1990; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). In a manner similar to Becker and Wagner (2009), our findings highlight how accepting, endorsing and internalising traditional, gender roles and stereotypes which function to maintain the existing power hierarchy can negatively impact social change intentions, and thus perpetuate the status quo.

Self-objectification as a predictor of collective action has received some attention (e.g., Calogero, 2013, 2017), but much more research is required to fully understand how sexism and self-objectification interact to undermine women's quest for greater gender equality. For example, our study sample consisted, almost exclusively, of white women. Very little research has been conducted on the experiences of self-objectification for women of colour (Calogero, 2012). To attain a clearer picture of how self-objectification and sexism impact upon collective action support among women of colour, future research must take into account intersectionality.

There are a few limitations to this study which must be noted. First, our sample was self-selected and, as such, cannot be considered representative of the population. Second, as our data are correlational, we cannot infer causation - an experimental methodology would need to be employed in order to do so. However, given that our interest lies in trait levels of hostile and benevolent sexism, as well as self-objectification, a correlational approach is better suited than experimental methods. Nevertheless, future longitudinal work could track changes in our variables of interest over time in order to more firmly assess the causal direction of these results. Third, there is strong evidence to suggest that women's endorsement of ambivalent sexism is related to their beliefs about specific sub-types of women (e.g., career women versus mothers), but not necessarily themselves (Becker, 2010;

Becker & Wagner, 2009; Becker & Wright, 2011; Glick et al., 1997; Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001a, 2001b). The abstract nature of the phrasing of items measuring ambivalent sexism (e.g., “A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man”, “Women exaggerate problems they have at work”) further supports the idea that female respondents are referring to, at the very least, women in general, not themselves. However, the measures used in previous research examining the sub-types women were thinking of when responding to these items were not employed in this study. As such, although our results are consistent with both theoretical (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001b), and empirical (Becker, 2010; Becker & Wright, 2011; Glick et al., 1997; Parks-Stamm et al., 2008) work, we cannot be certain that cognitive subtyping occurred here. That is, we do not know whether participants were considering themselves, women in general, or specific subtypes of women.

This lack of specificity regarding *who* (i.e., the self or other women) was being referred to may have impacted the strength and even the directionality of our results. Altering the ambivalent sexism items to read as personal evaluations would likely produce very different outcomes with respect to the level of endorsement of both benevolent and hostile sexism. For example, women who indicated that *they themselves* strongly believed statements such as “I am actually seeking special favours, such as hiring policies that favour *me* over men, under the guise of seeking equality” and “I seek to gain power by getting control over men” and thus a strong personal belief in hostile sexism, should, in contrast to our results, be *more* likely to support gender-based collective action for affirmative action and abolishing the gender pay gap. The motivations behind this support would, however, almost certainly differ. Indeed, they would likely be strongly associated with psychological entitlement - a specific facet of narcissism which is characterised by a sense of deservingness, demandingness and an expectation of special treatment (Campbell et al., 2004). Future research could examine women’s collective action support using explicit, personal versions

of the ASI. However, social desirability biases (Edwards, 1953) would likely hinder the accuracy of people's responses.

Lastly, we were only able to measure *support* for gender-based collective action, not actual collective action behaviour. This was, in part, because the study was administered in 2021, where Covid-19 restrictions severely limited people's movements and actions. Although, the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985, 1991) argues that a person's intentions to engage in a behaviour (i.e., collective action) can predict their actual participation in that behaviour. This theoretical argument has been generally well supported by empirical research (for reviews see Fishbein & Ajzen, 2005, 2011; Webb & Sheeran, 2006). However, a future study which included behavioural collective action outcome measures would be beneficial. Particularly one which contrasted private forms of collective action (e.g., organising protests, donating money), to more public ones (e.g., participating in marches or demonstrations). The perpetual body and self-monitoring that is inherent to self-objectification may render individuals who more strongly self-objectify much less likely to participate in forms of collective action which would require them to be on display. It is also likely that their commitment period to public collective action approaches would be shorter than those lower in self-objectification. This is because the internal, negative feedback loop regarding perceptions of themselves may reduce the ability or desire of individuals who highly self-objectify to continue to subject themselves to that environment.

## **Conclusion**

The current study sought to examine the relationship between two complementary types of sexism (namely, hostile and benevolent sexism) and support for gender-based collective action. We also examined the interactive effects of self-objectification, a measure of identity content. Results showed that hostile sexism correlated negatively, whereas benevolent sexism correlated positively, with support for collective action. Notably, these

associations only emerged amongst women who were low on self-objectification. Moreover, these results were robust to multiple critical covariates known to predict collective action. The results of this study have important implications for women, as they clearly demonstrate how the internalisation of male-perpetuated beauty ideals can inhibit them from taking action that would lead to greater gender equality. In closing, it must be noted that the ideas expressed and analysed in this paper are not new. As the Wollstonecraft (1792) quotes which open many of the sections demonstrate, the subjugation and objectification of women by men, as well as women's socialised complicity with the same, has occurred for centuries. Regardless of the advances in women's rights since then, the same processes still function to neuter female capacity and desire to protest against the system that suppresses them, suggesting that this is a very effective method by which to maintain a patriarchal gender hierarchy. Though we hope that disseminating this knowledge will one day lead to these practices being dissolved.

“My own sex, I hope, will excuse me, if I treat them like rational creatures, instead of flattering their fascinating graces, and viewing them as if they were in a state of perpetual childhood, unable to stand alone.”

- Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792)

## **Bridging Statement Two**

The preceding chapter investigated the relationship between ambivalent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001a) – two complementary types of sexism; hostile, and benevolent which function together to maintain the gender hierarchy, and support for gender-based collective action for women. Examining the potential impact of group-specific identity content on marginalised groups' support for collective action is the primary focus of this thesis. With this aim in mind, the chapter also investigated the moderating effect of self-objectification – the internalisation of patriarchally dictated gendered social norms regarding female appearance (Bartky, 1990; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997) – on these relationships. Results showed that this facet of women's identity content differentially moderated the relationship between ambivalent sexism and gender-based collective action support. Specifically, participants who highly self-objectified were much less likely to support gender-based collective action under the condition of high hostile sexism. Further, participants who expressed low levels of self-objectification were much more likely to support gender-based collective action under the condition of high benevolent sexism. Sexism (e.g., Becker & Wright, 2011; Chamberlin, 2019; Glick & Raberg, 2018), is commonly used to predict collective action on behalf of women. However, the findings revealed in the preceding chapter show that gendered identity content, specifically self-objectification, impacts the way sexism shapes women's collective action responses. That is, collective responses to sexism are not unidimensional, but are significantly impacted by a woman's identity content. These findings have significant implications for women, as they highlight how accepting, endorsing and internalising gender stereotypes which function to maintain the existing power hierarchy can negatively impact social change intentions for greater gender equality, and thus perpetuate the status quo.

The findings included in the preceding chapter support research which demonstrates that marginalised individuals who internalise negative norms and stereotypes about their group identity are more likely to perceive them as veridical (Simon & Hamilton, 1994). These beliefs then function to legitimise the status quo, thereby reducing the likelihood that marginalised individuals will challenge it (Blanton et al., 2001; Burkley & Blanton, 2008). Sexual minorities are another marginalised group who are exposed to high levels of out-group prejudice. They are also a group which is vulnerable to internalising discriminatory stereotypes and out-group ascribed characteristics regarding their identity. Every step towards the recognition and level of equality which currently exists in society for sexual minorities has been hard fought for by members of the LGBTQIA+ community via collective action. As such, identifying factors which motivate or inhibit LGBTQIA+ individual's collective action intentions is a critical endeavour.

The way that minority sexual identities are socially constructed and developed, is a crucial facet of what it means to be LGBTQIA+ (Grzanka et al., 2016; Tolman & Diamond, 2001). Therefore, the following chapter will incorporate the minority stress model (Meyer, 1995, 2003) with the social identity model of collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). This will add to the general research on collective action by investigating potential similarities in motivation to pursue collective action between the general population and a quintessential marginalised minority group, while also providing valuable insight into unique identity content predictors that are distinctive motivators of collective action for those who identify as LGBTQIA+. Specifically, the following chapter will examine the relationship between perceptions of sexual identity-based discrimination and collective action behaviour for LGBTQIA+ individuals. Further, it will investigate whether this relationship is moderated by internalised homophobia (the internalisation, application, and acceptance of the prejudices, negative attitudes and stereotypes of a heterosexist society; Meyer & Dean, 1998).

Internalised homophobia is measure of identity content for the LGBTQIA+ community somewhat akin to self-objectification for women which is predicted to function in a similar manner with respect to collective action for this group.

## Chapter Four

**Pride** and Prejudice: It is a supposition supported by the findings of this study, that a highly discriminated against LGBTQIA+ individual in possession of low levels of internalised homophobia, must (be more likely to) be in want of collective action



## **Abstract**

The minority stress model outlines the following three processes by which members of the LGBTQIA+ community endure increased stress: objective instances of discrimination, fear and anticipation of future instances of discrimination, and internalised homophobia. While generally used to predict mental health outcomes within the LGBTQIA+ community, research has recently begun to include measures of collective action – though never as an outcome of the minority stress processes. Here, we sought to fill this gap in the literature using data collected from 882 LGBTQIA+ participants. Specifically, we examined the association between perceived discrimination and collective action, as well as the potential moderating effect of internalised homophobia in weakening the strength of this relationship. Results were surprising. Perceived discrimination was positively associated with our collective action outcome, but only for participants who indicated low levels of internalised homophobia. These findings demonstrate the crucial role internalised homophobia has on collective action participation for the LGBTQIA+ community. Additionally, they highlight the importance of including variables which are unique to the specific population being studied.

## Introduction

The LGBTQIA+ community has a long history of engaging in collective action in order to decriminalize their sexuality, have their identity recognised, and obtain equal rights and freedoms within society. Notably, these collective fights have been wrought with setbacks and at great cost to the individual participants. Indeed, those who identify as LGBTQIA+ have participated in collective action even when faced with extreme prejudice, discrimination, verbal abuse, threats of physical violence, and even death threats (see Beemyn, 2003; Stein, 2012). While most, if not all, social movements which utilise collective action face some form of backlash from the public who desire to maintain the status quo (see Jost, Becker, et al., 2017), or groups which are morally, socially, or politically opposed to their agenda, the LGBTQIA+ community particularly has endured many hurdles and experienced much hostile resistance.

In the more than 50 years since the 1969 Stonewall Riots, widely considered to be the genesis of LGBTQIA+ movements worldwide (Armstrong & Cragg, 2006), the community has fought for, and attained, several victories. New Zealand, where the current study takes place, has undergone numerous changes with regards to LGBTQIA+ rights including the disavowal of sexual identity as a mental illness in 1979, decriminalisation of same-sex relationships in 1989, implementation of anti-discrimination policy based on sexual identity in 1993, legalisation of civil unions in 2005, and complete marriage equality in 2013. Despite these gains, prejudice and discrimination still exists towards the LGBTQIA+ community, and collective action to be seen—and treated—as equal remains necessary. For example, Power et al. (2014) found that parents of sexual minority children are more isolated within their communities, and their children experience a higher rate of bullying at school. LGBTQIA+ individuals face discrimination in the form of unequal response strategies that prioritise the needs of heterosexual ‘nuclear’ families over LGBTQIA+ households following natural

disasters (Gorman-Murray et al., 2014). In 2016, the rental application of a gay man was denied on the basis of his sexual orientation in New Zealand (El-Gamel, 2016), which is just one of many examples of discrimination the LGBTQIA+ population face with regards to acquiring housing (see Teliti, 2015). In New Zealand, gender-diverse and trans individuals face multiple bureaucratic barriers when attempting to obtain gender-concordant identity documents (i.e., legal gender recognition), which results in decreased mental health outcomes (Tan et al., 2022). While Magni and Reynolds (2021) found evidence of electoral discrimination against LGBTQIA+ identified candidates in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

As a result of the continued lack of equality and acceptance from broader society, there are glaring disparities in mental health between heterosexuals and the LGBTQIA+ community. Iwasaki and Ristock (2007) found that sexual minorities were one of the most highly stressed populations in society. These findings comport with the minority stress model (Meyer, 1995, 2003b), which outlines the unique, and detrimental, stress LGBTQIA+ individuals face, as well as the negative consequences of this stress on the mental health of the community. The LGBTQIA+ population experiences higher rates of depression, anxiety, substance abuse, self-harming behaviour, suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, and suicide than the heterosexual population (Fergusson et al., 2005; *Supporting LGBTI Young People in New Zealand*, 2015), much of which has been linked to the social exclusion and prejudice they encounter (Meyer, 1995, 2003b). These disturbing statistics highlight the necessity of continued action to promote equality and negate prejudice, as well as the harmful consequences failing to do so has on the stress experienced by the LGBTQIA+ community.

Research has uncovered many factors which predict LGBTQIA+ participation in collective action including in-group identification (Friedman & Leaper, 2010; Simon et al., 1998), activist identity, (i.e., viewing oneself as an LGBTQIA+ activist: Simon &

Klandermans, 2001; Simon et al., 1998; Stürmer & Simon, 2004b), social involvement within the LGBTQIA+ community (Lewis et al., 2011; Swank et al., 2013), and a sense of connection and belonging to the community – independent of group-identification (Battle & Harris, 2013a, 2013b; Harris & Battle, 2013). This study seeks to further expand upon research in this area using the minority stress model framework in order to uncover further psychological motivations which are unique to this community, while also accounting for well-known predictors of collective action for the general population.

The social identity model of collective action (SIMCA; van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008) outlines three factors which reliably predict collective action. These are; group-identification, perceived efficacy, and perceived injustice / discrimination. The model has received general support for its validity and reliability with respect to divergent cultural and religious groups (e.g., Cakal et al., 2011; Sabucedo et al., 2018; Tabri & Conway, 2011). However, the majority of collective action research which focuses on the LGBTQIA+ population takes an approach centred around inter-group contact (e.g., Becker et al., 2013; Reimer et al., 2017; Techakesari et al., 2017), or has a heavy focus on psychological well-being outcomes (Bagci & Turnuklu, 2019; Chan & Mak, 2021; Watson et al., 2018). There is almost no research on the collective action behaviours of this community which takes a social identity approach (for exceptions, or partial exceptions see Bagci et al., 2022; Eisner et al., 2021). The paucity of literature investigating the role of social identity variables for the LGBTQIA+ community severely inhibits our understanding of what motivates, or inhibits these individuals with respect to participating in collective action.

This is particularly important because identity, and the way it is socially constructed and developed, is a crucial facet of what it means to be LGBTQIA+ (Bohan, 1996; D'Augelli, 1994; Edwards & Brooks, 1999; Grzanka et al., 2016; Tolman & Diamond, 2001). The positive relationship between in-group identification and collective action support has been

established for gay men (Simon et al., 1998; Stürmer & Simon, 2004b), and queer / lesbian women (Friedman & Leaper, 2010). Although, studies including samples of lesbians, gay men, and bisexual men and women demonstrated that feeling a sense of connectedness to the wider LGBTQIA+ was a stronger predictor of collective action than group-identification (Battle & Harris, 2013a, 2013b; Harris & Battle, 2013). These findings suggests that the SIMCA has predictive value for this community and therefore should be accounted for. However, it also suggests that there are identity caveats specific to the LGBTQIA+ community that may influence or interact with the thee factors outlined in the SIMCA. For example, Stürmer and Simon (2004b) initially found that politicised in-group identification was the strongest predictor of collective action for gay men. However, in a follow-up study two years later they noted that extreme changes the socio-political climate had undergone during that time regarding gay rights had a definite impact on the relationship between group-identification and collective action. Due to the limited amount of research on the LGBTQIA+ community using the SIMCA, little is known about the relationships between efficacy and injustice on collective action for this group. Though, objective instances, and fear of future instances of discrimination (injustice) are factors included in the minority stress model (Meyer, 1995), which heavily implies awareness of injustice. Further, internalised homophobia is generally positively associated with perceptions of stigma (Bianchi et al., 2017). In this way, we are able to make predictions based on known correlates using the minority stress model. For example, internalised homophobia is associated with increased feelings of shame (Greene & Britton, 2012; Moss, 2003) and shame is associated with decreased perceptions of efficacy (Baldwin et al., 2006), therefore internalised homophobia is likely negatively associated with efficacy. Also, internalised homophobia is associated with reductions in community support (Shidlo, 1994), which has been shown to inhibit group-identification (Górska et al., 2017). Instead of relying on this form of if / then logic however,

it would be more effective and informative to integrate the two models in order to better understand how unique aspects of LGBTQIA+ identity content predict collective action alongside and interactively with the variables included in the SIMCA.

Taking this comprehensive approach will have two major benefits for the literature on collective action. First, it will add to the general research on collective action by investigating potential similarities in the motivation to pursue collective action between the general population and a quintessential marginalised minority group. Second, it will provide valuable insight into unique predictors that specifically motivate those who identify as LGBTQIA+. Collective action research on this specific group is woefully rare, especially in the New Zealand context, and any insights are long overdue, necessary, and important.

### **Minority Stress Model**

Most scholars conceptualise any situation, condition, or factor which requires an individual to change or adapt as a stressor (Dohrenwend, 1998; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Pearlin, 1999). Meyer (1995, 2003), extended upon this definition with the development of the minority stress model which posits that minority groups, specifically, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, experience chronic stress due to external and internal stigmatisation, their disadvantaged social position, and a generally hostile, or homophobic, social environment (Meyer et al., 2008).

The minority stress model outlines three distinct processes via which LGBTQIA+ individuals are exposed to, or assailed by, minority stress. The first – external events, and environmental factors – is considered the most distal to the individual, and is the most objective source of stress that can be observed, and verified, by others. Physical and verbal harassment, overt discrimination (e.g., refusal of goods or services), and threats against the individual are some examples of the first process. The second – expectation, anticipation, and vigilance – refers to the constant state of heightened awareness, suspense, and enhanced

belief in the likelihood of a stressful external event, such as those mentioned above, occurring. These expectations of stress comprise the cloud under which LGBTQIA+ people live under every day. This wariness is wearying. The caution, and attentiveness to potential negative external threats leads to enhanced distress for the individual. The third process is most often referred to as internalised homophobia. In addition to being the most proximal process, internalised homophobia varies the most between individuals as it involves not only a subjective evaluation of the environment, but also the socialisation and beliefs of said individual. Succinctly defined, internalised homophobia occurs when an LGBTQIA+ individual applies the prejudices, negative attitudes and stereotypes of a heterosexist society to their own person to the detriment of their self-concept, self-acceptance, and psychological well-being (Allen & Oleson, 1999; Herek et al., 1998; Maylon, 1982). Internalised homophobia negatively impacts a person's resilience and ability to cope when confronted with negative events, and is considered the most insidious of the three processes in the minority stress model (Meyer & Dean, 1998).

The minority stress model is most commonly, indeed almost exclusively, used to predict and understand mental health outcomes in the LGBTQIA+ community (Allen & Oleson, 1999; Feinstein et al., 2012; Herek et al., 1998; Igartua et al., 2009; Rowen & Malcolm, 2003; Szymanski et al., 2001). With regards to how collective action relates to the minority stress model, results have been somewhat mixed. Some studies have found that participating in activist events provides a buffer between *some* minority stress processes for sexual minority women (DeBlaere et al., 2014), though only when levels of discrimination are low (Szymanski & Owens, 2009). However, neither of these studies measured internalised homophobia. As such, while some studies suggest that participating in collective action can positively impact the mental well-being of the LGBTQIA+ community, the role of internalised homophobia in this area is relatively unknown. An exception to this is a study

conducted by Breslow et al. (2015), with a sample of transgender individuals. Their results demonstrated that participating in collective action *strengthened* the positive relationship between internalised homophobia and psychological distress. In contrast, Velez and Moradi (2016) found that low, or moderate levels of engagement in collective action weakened the positive relationship between discrimination and internalised homophobia amongst a sample of sexual minority adults. In this study, we seek to expand upon research on the minority stress model and collective action by ascertaining whether all three processes which make up the minority stress model will predict participation in collective action for individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+.

### **Discrimination**

That members of the LGBTQIA+ community are discriminated against is undeniable (e.g., King et al., 2008; Neisen, 1990; Rankin et al., 2010; Russell & Greenhouse, 1997; Smiley, 1997). In an early review of 24 studies, Herek and Berrill (1992) found that 80% of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals had been verbally harassed, 44% threatened with violence, 17% had actually been physically assaulted, and 13% had been spat at. Herek et al. (1999) subsequently found that a quarter of men and a fifth of the women surveyed had experienced discrimination, or victimisation because of their sexual orientation. A more recent report by the European Union asserts that discrimination against the LGBTQIA+ community shows few signs of decreasing (*A long way to go for LGBTI equality*, 2020). The report outlines in detail how LGBTQIA+ individuals encounter verbal and physical harassment, as well as threats of future verbal and physical harassment. These experiences lead to increased anxiety of public places, or openly acknowledging their romantic relationships (e.g., holding their partner's hand in public) due to fear of discriminatory reprisal. It also describes the discrimination experienced by LGBTQIA+ people at school and in the workplace, while staying at hotels, at cafes and restaurants, and when attempting to access healthcare and



social services. This information is consistent with the minority stress model (Meyer, 1995, 2003) which identifies both objective, observable instances of discrimination, as well as fear of, and vigilance towards, future instances of discrimination, as stressors for the LGBTQIA+ community.

The conviction that current circumstances are unjust has long been known to be a powerful motivator of collective action (Klandermans & van Stekelenburg, 2013; Turner & Killian, 1987). As noted, the LGBTQIA+ community experiences discrimination from the general public. However, LGBTQIA+ individuals are also discriminated against at the structural level (e.g., social services, law enforcement). Indeed, LGBTQIA+ protests have been incited in a number of countries because of public intolerance, and police repression (Bakacak & Öktem, 2014; Currier, 2012, 2018; Grinnell, 2012). In this study, we use a measure of discrimination, the Gay and Lesbian Oppressive Situations Inventory-Frequency scale (GALOSI-F; Highlen et al., 2000) adapted to be more inclusive of the broader LGBTQIA+ community, which consists of items designed to gauge levels of both objective, and perceived future discrimination. Discrimination, both objective – the first of the minority stress model processes, and perceived – the second process, is a well-known, reliable predictors of collective action (see e.g., Smith et al., 2012; van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). Therefore, we predict that discrimination will be positively associated with collective action.

### **Internalised Homophobia**

Internalised homophobia occurs when an LGBTQIA+ individual directs the prejudices and negative attitudes society holds against sexual minorities towards themselves (Meyer & Dean, 1998). This process involves applying prevailing heterosexist norms, stereotypes and opinions to their own person (Russell & Bohan, 2006). Internalised homophobia is incredibly detrimental, as it can result in ongoing, and persistent negative self-

perceptions relating to sexual identity (Herek et al., 1998; Jaspal & Breakwell, 2022; Malyon, 1982; Peterson & Gerrity, 2006; Rowen & Malcolm, 2003). Internalised homophobia is also characterised by an internal conflict between awareness of one's own sexual identity, and a need or desire to be heterosexual (Herek, 2004). As such, internalised homophobia is associated with delayed sexual identity acceptance, and coming out (Ong et al., 2021). Relatedly, internalised homophobia often results in LGBTQIA+ individuals fearing, feeling shame towards, or despising their own sexuality (Cabaj, 2000; Davies, 1996; Desmond, 2016; Dew et al., 2006; Neisen, 1993; O'Connell, 2011; Plummer, 2002). It is important to note, however, that internalised homophobia is not rooted in an individual's personality, nor is it the result of an internal pathology. Instead, it stems from widespread heterosexism and prejudice against sexual minorities placing its origin firmly in the social sphere (Russell & Bohan, 2006). Indeed, minority sexual identity development and acceptance is a complex and deeply personal process (see Bohan, 1996). However, it is a process that is also unavoidably influenced by an individual's social and cultural environment (see Edwards & Brooks, 1999). Many models and theories have been forwarded in an attempt to understand the development of sexual minority identities (e.g., Cass, 1979; Diamond & Savin-Williams, 2000; Fassinger & Miller, 1997; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). Some of these models focus on a single sexual minority identity (e.g., lesbian), while others attempt an integrative approach which can be applied to multiple sexual minority identities. However, a thread of commonality which runs through each of these models, is that they all note the importance of social context (e.g., norms), and the impact of interpersonal relations (i.e., what it means to be categorised as having a subordinate, marginalised identity; see Dillon et al., 2011). For example, a crucial component of D'Augelli's (1994) model of sexual orientation identity development is the notion of "developmental plasticity" (p. 320). That is, how an individual is forced to spontaneously and instantaneously respond to different environmental factors and stimuli

with regards to their minority sexual identity. The model also stresses the importance of inter-individual differences in sexual identity development, noting that it is a heterogeneous process.

Within the literature on sexual identity development there is an ongoing debate between essentialism (i.e., biological determinants), and social constructionism (i.e., the influence of, and meanings given by socio-cultural forces; e.g., Bohan, 1996; DeLamater & Hyde, 1998; Grzanka et al., 2016). Tolman and Diamond (2001), argued that sexual orientation and identity can, and should be conceptualised within the framework of both. That is, sexual attraction and gender identity are generally biological determined, but the meanings individuals assign to their minority sexual identities are strongly influenced by the social context. In other words, the content of LGBTQIA+ individuals' identity is partially shaped by external forces such as social and environmental cues, and the way they are perceived by others. Identity content refers to the meanings associated with a particular identity including its ideologies, values, stereotypes, history, characteristics, and beliefs (Ashmore et al., 2004). Internalised homophobia is a key example of identity content for LGBTQIA+ individuals, as it highlights the impact external influences such as socialisation and environmental factors, norms and prejudices have on the evaluative judgments individuals make about the characteristics of their identity. LGBTQIA+ individuals are typically raised by heterosexuals. They grow up exposed to heterosexual norms, are socialised as heterosexuals by default, and are exposed to homophobic attitudes and negative stereotypes of the LGBTQIA+ community which are prevalent in a heterosexist society all before they are aware of their own sexual identity. Accordingly, prior to realising their own sexual identity, LGBTQIA+ individuals have often adopted the dominant culture's attitudes, and prejudices towards the LGBTQIA+ community (Dreyer, 2007; Isay, 1989), and have engaged in sharing heterosexist narratives before they are even fully cognisant of what they mean (see Russell, 2007). Thus, by the time

an individual recognises their own sexual identity, it is likely that they have already, via socialisation, internalised negative attitudes towards sexual minorities (Hanekom, 2021; Malyon, 1982; McCann et al., 2020; Rowen & Malcolm, 2003).

Compounding the problem of socialisation, prior to the discovery of their own sexual identity and coming out, LGBTQIA+ individuals often have limited, or no exposure to a positive reference group – such as other members of the LGBTQIA+ community – to serve as role models, or mentors who could guide them in developing a healthy conception, and acceptance of their own sexual identity (Avery et al., 2007; Bird et al., 2012; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2004; Hetrick & Martin, 1984; Warren, 1980). Even television, a powerful socialising force (Fisherkeller, 2002, 2011), which has been shown to have a positive impact on LGBTQIA+ adolescents by simulating a sense of community and demonstrating positive role models (Bond, 2015a, 2015b) can be detrimental. Sexual minorities are consistently underrepresented and often portrayed as harmful stereotypes, on television (GLAAD, 2017). Furthermore, LGBTQIA+ youth who look to queer fictional characters, or actors as role models often experience dissociation with the LGBTQIA+ community, and increased psychological distress due to the inaccessibility of their chosen role model (Bird et al., 2012). This dearth of encouragement and affirmation leaves LGBTQIA+ individuals vulnerable to internalising societal and structural discriminatory homophobic attitudes, which may then create internal conflict upon realisation of their own sexual identity (Cass, 1979, 1984a; Cohen & Stein, 1986; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989). As such, due to a combination of the strength of early socialisation and continued exposure to negative attitudes, prejudice, and discrimination within society, internalised homophobia often remains part of the psyche and self-perception of LGBTQIA+ individuals post personal sexuality acceptance and coming out to others (Cass, 1984a, 1984b; Gonsiorek & Rudolph, 1991; Malyon, 1982; Nungesser, 1983; Troiden, 1989).

Higher levels of internalised homophobia have been associated with lower levels of social support, and, more particularly, with receiving less support from other members of the LGBTQIA+ community (Shidlo, 1994). Stryker et al. (2000) found that there was a strong relationship between social identity and being an activist, and closer association, and identification with a group positively predicts involvement in collective action (e.g., van Zomeren et al., 2008). The strength of both social identity, and group identification is inhibited by internalised homophobia and the lack of group-based social support associated with it (Górska et al., 2017). Similarly, Montagno and Garrett-Walker (2022) found that feeling socially connected to the LGBTQIA+ community was associated with lower levels of internalised homophobia and greater participation in certain activist activities. Research has also found that emotions play an integral role in initiating goal directed behaviour such as collective action (Frijda et al., 1989; Williams & DeSteno, 2008) which may likely impact the effect of internalised homophobia on collective action. For example, Ridinger (2020) found that feelings of shame were associated with stronger adherence to social norms, and a greater propensity to follow rules. Higher levels of shame also correlate negatively with perceptions of efficacy (Baldwin et al., 2006), which is considered to be a necessary component for turning intentions into actions (Bandura, 1982). Likewise, internalised homophobia is associated with perceptions of hopelessness about the future (Szymanski & Chung, 2001) which likely impact the extent to which an individual believes taking action to effect change would be efficacious. Thus, taking into account the emotional burden of shame (Moss, 2003), and perceptions of hopelessness (Szymanski & Chung, 2001) inherent to internalised homophobia which likely impact political efficacy, and the reduced support experienced by those higher in internalised homophobia (Shidlo, 1994), and the associated reduction in in-group identification (Górska et al., 2017) we predict that this process will inhibit collective action engagement for LGBTQIA+ individuals.

## **Current Study**

The aim of the current study is to examine whether the stress endured by LGBTQIA+ individuals, as outlined in the minority stress model (Meyer, 1995, 2003), predicts collective action participation. The minority stress model describes objective discrimination events, and anticipation of future discrimination events as two distinct processes which contribute to LGBTQIA+ stress. Here, we combine the two under the banner of discrimination using the GALOSI-F (Highlen et al., 2000), a scale which includes items which measure both processes. It is well documented that discrimination, both objective and perceived, is a reliable, and independent predictor of collective action (Turner & Killian, 1987; van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013; van Zomeren et al., 2008). As such, we aim to see if this relationship maintains its significance when fear and anticipation of future discrimination events is also being considered.

The third processes outlined in the minority stress model is internalised homophobia. Here, we are interested in the direct relationship between internalised homophobia and collective action, as well as the moderating role internalised homophobia may have on the relationship between discrimination and collective action. Group identification and efficacy are both reliable motivators of collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). Internalised homophobia is tangentially, via social connectedness, associated with lower in-group identification (Górska et al., 2017). Similarly, it is peripherally related to decreased efficacy via shame (Baldwin et al., 2006; Moss, 2003), and perceptions of hopelessness regarding the future (Szymanski & Chung, 2001). Therefore, we predict that internalised homophobia will be negatively associated with collective action.

The norms, stereotypes, and prejudices which LGBTQIA+-based collective action often aims to address have been internalised by individuals who experience greater feelings of internalised homophobia (Meyer, 1995; Meyer & Dean, 1998). Internalising these forms of

identity content can lead an individual to more firmly believe in the accuracy and legitimacy of that content, even if it reflects negatively upon their own identity (Simon & Hamilton, 1994). This can result in perceptions that status-based differences, and the disadvantage afflicting marginalised groups and their members are justified (Blanton et al., 2001; Ridgeway, 2001). This legitimises the status quo and reduces individuals' motivation to challenge it (Jost & Banaji, 1994) which is what collective action would do. Research has shown that the different ways people interpret the content of their group identity directs how, and to what extent their collective action intentions are manifested (e.g., Becker & Wagner, 2009; Iyer et al., 2009; Jetten et al., 2002; Livingstone & Haslam, 2008; Postmes et al., 2001). LGBTQIA+ individuals who have high levels of internalised homophobia have interpreted the identity content of their group via a discriminatory out-group lens. Thus, they are more likely to agree with the idea that their sexual identity, and the LGBTQIA+ community in general, is inferior. Indeed, internalised homophobia is positively associated with belief in the inferiority of minority sexualities, and acceptance of negative myths and stereotypes about those identities (Cabaj, 1988). Additionally, Nicholson and Long (1990), found that internalised homophobia is associated with self-blame and avoidance-based coping strategies. While Szymanski and Chung (2001), found that internalised homophobia is associated with perceptions of hopelessness about the future. This suggests that LGBTQIA+ individuals who have high levels of homophobia may feel that discrimination aimed at them is deserved or justified. Further, when confronted with discrimination they would be more likely to avoid the issue rather than confront it (e.g., with collective action). As such, we expect that, despite seeing and experiencing discrimination themselves, LGBTQIA+ individuals with higher levels of internalised homophobia will be less likely to participate in collective action which would benefit their group, thus weakening the predicted relationship between discrimination and collective action.

In order to rule out as many alternatives as possible, and to integrate the two models in an attempt to better understand how unique aspects of LGBTQIA+ identity content predict collective action alongside and interactively with the variables included in the SIMCA, we have included group identification, and political efficacy – two variables (along with discrimination) outlined in van Zomeren et al.’s (2008) model. We also included measures of system justification, identity openness (i.e., a measure of how many groups of people (e.g., friends, family) an individual is ‘out’ to), general support for collective action, and past collective action behaviour. As all of these variables have been shown to influence the relationship between the three minority stress processes and collective action, or the way marginalised groups respond to disadvantage with collective action (see e.g., Brandt, 2013; DeBlaere et al., 2014; Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011; Górska et al., 2017; Smith, 1999; Stürmer & Simon, 2004b; Szymanski & Owens, 2009; Velez & Moradi, 2016), we wanted to account for their variance.

## **Methods**

Data for this study came from an online survey conducted using Qualtrics. Participants were recruited from two different sources. A large New Zealand University’s Rainbow Network sent an email containing a description of the study, as well as a link to it, to all of its members. Additionally, Auckland Pride promoted the study on their social media pages where they also included both a description of, and link to, the study. In order to be eligible to participate, participants had to identify as LGBTQIA+ and be 18 years of age or older. The survey took approximately 20-25 minutes to complete, and participants were offered a \$10 Amazon e-voucher for their participation.

### ***Participants***

The current study included 882 participants who self-identified as members of the



LGBTQIA+ community<sup>16</sup>. In terms of gender, 411 participants identified as male, 426 identified as female, 30 indicated their gender as non-binary, and 15 noted their gender as other. With regards to ethnicity, the sample was predominately Pākeha ( $N = 693$ ). The remainder comprised of participants who identified as Māori ( $N = 71$ ), Pacific Islander ( $N = 59$ ), and Asian ( $N = 59$ ). Participants' age ranged from 18 – 62 ( $M = 29.53$ ,  $SD = 6.33$ ). Both gender and ethnicity were dummy-coded with male and Pākeha being the reference groups, respectively.

### ***Predictor Variables***

**Discrimination.** 62 applicable items from the Gay and Lesbian Oppressive Situations Inventory-Frequency scale (GALOSI-F; Highlen et al, 2000) were adapted for the broader LGBTQIA+ community and used to measure discrimination. The GALOSI-F includes items which measure multiple types of discrimination including Verbal Harassment and Intimidation (e.g., I have had anti-LGBTQIA+ remarks directed at me), Stigmatising and Stereotyping (e.g., I have seen parents teach their children that identifying as LGBTQIA+ is disgusting), Exclusion, Rejection and Separation (e.g., I have had biological family members ask me to pretend that I do not identify as LGBTQIA+), Dangers to Safety (e.g., I have been physically injured because I identify as LGBTQIA+), and Intimacy Issues (e.g., I have been afraid to publicly display affection for my partner /girlfriend/boyfriend). All items were measured on a 7-point scale with anchors at 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 7 (Strongly Agree)<sup>17</sup>.

**Internalised Homophobia.** Participants were asked to rate how they felt about 18 items including; 'I try not to give signs that I identify as LGBTQIA+. I am careful about the way I dress and the places, people, and events I talk about', and 'I quite often wish that I was

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<sup>16</sup> List-wise deletion was used to address missing data.

<sup>17</sup> Though the GALOSI-F contains five sub-scales, all of these measure instances of perceived injustice / discrimination (the variable of interest). As such, all 62 items were combined into a single measure of perceived discrimination. Additional analyses were conducted using each of the five sub-scales separately. However, the results did not differ substantively from those presented below. Thus, in the interest of brevity, the 62-item perceived discrimination scale was used for this study.

heterosexual’, on a 7-point scale with anchors at 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 7 (Strongly Agree). These items, used to measure internalised homophobia, were taken from Pacilli et al. (2011). Items which were too specific to a particular sexual identity (e.g., ‘I can’t stand lesbians who are too butch. They make lesbians as a group look bad.’) were not included so that the scale could apply to the LGBTQIA+ community in general. This removed five items from the original 23 item scale.

### *Covariates*

**Political Ideology.** The following question was used to ascertain participants’ political ideology using a 1 (Very Conservative) to 7 (Very Liberal) scale: ‘How politically conservative versus liberal do you consider yourself?’.

**Political efficacy.** Six items, taken from van Zomeren et al. (2008), were used to measure political efficacy. Example items include, ‘I think people can successfully stand up for their rights’, and ‘The average citizen can have an influence on government decisions’. All of which were measured on a 7-point scale with anchors at 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 7 (Strongly Agree).

**Group identification.** 20 items, adapted from Leach et al. (2008), were used to assess participants identification with members of the LGBTQIA+ community. Examples of items include: ‘I feel solidarity with the LGBTQIA+ community’, and ‘Being LGBTQIA+ is an important part of my identity’. All items were measured on a 7-point scale with anchors at 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 7 (Strongly Agree).

**System Justification.** System justification was measured using eight items adapted from Kay and Jost (2003). These included, ‘Society is set up so that people usually get what they deserve’, and ‘In general, the New Zealand political and social system operates as it should’, and were all measured on a 7-point scale with anchors at 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 7 (Strongly Agree).

**Identity openness.** Modelled after a measure of ‘outness’ utilised by Meyer et al. (2002), participants were asked to indicate which, if any, groups of people they openly identified as LGBTQIA+ to. Each group was given a score (from 0-3) based on the extent of openness (scores will be shown in parentheses). These groups were All family (extended; 3), All family (immediate; 2), Some family (1), No family (0), All friends (2), Some friends (1), No friends (0), All colleagues / classmates (2), Some colleagues / classmates (1), No colleagues / classmates (0). These scores were then combined for each participant giving them an identity openness score which could range from 0 (low openness) to 9 (high openness).

**LGBTQIA+-based collective action support.** Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they supported people engaging in seven different forms of collective action on behalf of the LGBTQIA+ community. These actions were: signing petitions, taking part in demonstrations or protests, writing letters or emails to someone in authority (e.g., the Dean, your MP, a Letter to the Editor) expressing views on the matter, expressing views on the subject on social media (Twitter, facebook etc), participating in classroom / workplace walkouts, boycotts of businesses or companies that purport anti-LGBTQIA sentiments, and volunteering time for LGBTQIA+ meetings or events. Support was measured on a 7-point scale with anchors at 1 (Strongly Disagree) and 7 (Strongly Agree).

**Past collective action behaviour.** Participants were asked to indicate whether they had done any of the following in support of LGBTQIA+ issues in the past two years; signed a petition, taken part in an organised demonstration or protest, been part of organising a demonstration or protest, written a letter or email to someone in authority expressing your views, expressed their views on a political matter on social media (Twitter, facebook etc), boycotted a business or company that purports anti-LGBTQIA+ sentiment, volunteered their time for an LGBTQIA+ meeting or event. A score of 1 was given for each ‘yes’ response, a

response of 'no' had a score of zero. These scores were totalled to make up the variable where there was the possibility of a minimum of 0 and a maximum of 7.

### ***Outcome Measure***

**Donation.** Participants received a \$10 Amazon voucher for their participation in this study. However, after completing the study, they were directed to a page which provided information about OUTLine – a free, confidential telephone helpline, answered exclusively by trained LGBTQIA+ identifying volunteers, which exists to support the LGBTQIA+ community in New Zealand. Participants were then given the option to, in lieu of receiving a \$10 voucher, donate their \$10 to OUTLine. Whether or not they chose to forfeit their voucher and instead have the money donated was the outcome variable of this study. The outcome was dummy-coded where 0 indicated the person did not donate, and 1 indicated that they did.

Table 4.1. Descriptive Statistics and Bivariate Correlations Between the Variables Included in the Analysis.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. Age	--															
2. Female	.078*	--														
3. Non-Binary	.008	-.069*	--													
4. Gender (Other)	.020	-.039	.217**	--												
5. Māori	-.026	-.077*	-.033	-.007	--											
6. Asian	.001	.005	.025	.105**	-.079*	--										
7. Pacific Islander	.054	.086*	-0.05	.001	-.063	-.072*	--									
8. Political Orientation	.087*	-.013	.131**	.045	-.001	-.004	-.016	--								
9. Political Efficacy	.148**	.086*	.172**	.109**	-.017	.003	-.053	.345**	--							
10. System Justification	-.139**	-.060	-.308**	-.178**	-.040	.031	.072*	-.161**	-.221**	--						
11. Group Identification	-.057	.030	.013	.014	-.035	.011	-.013	.278**	.366**	.229**	--					
12. Identity Openness	.128**	.172**	.127**	.115**	.013	.059	.180**	.213**	.268**	-.347**	.104**	--				
13. Collective Action Support	.117**	.024	.182**	.123**	.006	.034	-.004	.462**	.457**	-.120**	.505**	.276**	--			
14. Past Collective Action	.177**	.038	.112**	.027	-.044	.036	.059	.219**	.311**	-.205**	.274**	.298**	.340**	--		
15. Perceived Discrimination	-.051	-.094**	-.016	.034	.020	.008	.053	.031	-.142**	.278**	.291**	-.051	.224**	-.032	--	
16. Internalised Homophobia	-.185**	-.067*	-.102**	-.059	-.004	.024	.072*	.016	-.160**	.506**	.345**	-.143**	.251**	-.046	.724**	--
17. Donation	.226**	.087*	.407**	.264**	.033	.059	-.057	.289**	.392**	-.589**	-.0013	.425**	.320**	.250**	-.099**	-.316**
<i>M</i>	29.53							5.09	4.61	4.38	5.15	5.96	5.06	2.86	4.61	4.58
<i>SD</i>	6.33							1.5	0.77	0.87	0.82	3.46	0.97	1.63	0.98	0.74
$\alpha$									.78	.70	.97		.88		.90	.91

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

## Results

Given that experiences with injustice is a key motivator of collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008), we predicted that participants' exposure to discrimination would predict the likelihood of donating to OUTLine. Internalised homophobia is positively correlated with feelings of shame (Moss, 2003). Shame is associated with a stronger propensity to adhere to social norms (Ridinger, 2020), and lower perceptions of efficacy (Baldwin et al., 2006), another key motivator of collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). Additionally, the strength of group identification is inhibited by internalised homophobia for LGBTQIA+ individuals (Górska et al., 2017). Group identification is also a key motivator of collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). Therefore, we predicted that internalised homophobia would be negatively associated with collective action. Finally, considering that part of internalised homophobia is an acceptance, or agreement with heterosexist societal structures and prejudices (Cabaj, 1988; Meyer, 1995), and is associated with avoidance-based coping strategies (Nicholson & Long, 1990), and feelings of hopelessness about the future (Szymanski & Chung, 2001) we predicted that internalised homophobia would moderate the relationship between discrimination and collective action in that higher internalised homophobia would weaken the relationship. To test these hypotheses, we conducted a logistic regression analysis on our data using Model 1 of PROCESS (Hayes, 2012). All variables included in the interaction were mean-centred prior to analysis.

The results of our analysis are displayed in Table 4.2. As shown here, non-binary gender identity, political orientation, political efficacy, identity openness, and collective action support were positively associated with the likelihood of donating to OUTLine. Conversely, system justification and, surprisingly, group identification were negatively associated with the outcome. After adjusting for these critical covariates, we found that, on its own, discrimination was not significantly associated with collective action. Nevertheless, as

predicted, internalised homophobia was negatively associated with the likelihood of donating to OUTLine. Also as predicted, the relationship between discrimination and collective action was significantly moderated by internalised homophobia. Simple slope analyses at  $\pm 1$  SD of internalised homophobia indicated that experiences with discrimination were positively associated with the likelihood of donating to OUTLine among those low in internalised homophobia. Conversely, amongst those high in internalised homophobia, the relationship between experiences with discrimination and the likelihood of donating was non-significant.

Table 4.2. Logistic regression analysis predicting collective action as a function of key covariates, discrimination, internalised homophobia, and their interaction.

	<b>Log-odds</b>	<b>SE</b>	<b>Confidence Intervals</b>		<b>Odds Ratio</b>	<b><i>p</i></b>
Age	0.0122	.02	(-9.284	-1.538)	1.012	.59
Female	0.3051	.41	(-0.490	1.100)	1.357	.45
Non-Binary	2.1584	.69	(0.799	3.517)	8.657	.001
Gender Other	1.6459	1.1	(-0.440	3.732)	5.186	.12
Maori	0.366	.63	(-0.860	1.592)	1.442	.55
Asian	1.1794	.62	(0.043.	2.402)	3.252	.05
Pacific Islander	-1.0441	.93	(-2.862	0.774)	0.352	.26
Political Orientation	0.5954	.18	(0.246	0.944)	1.814	<.001
Political Efficacy	0.565	.24	(0.092	1.037)	1.759	.01
System Justification	-1.0484	.23	(-1.500	-0.596)	0.35	<.001
Group Identification	-0.839	.28	(-1.398	-0.279)	0.432	.003
Identity Openness	0.243	.06	(0.126	0.359)	1.275	<.001
Collective Action Support	0.5867	.28	(0.003	1.170)	1.798	.04
Past Collective Action	-0.0756	.12	(-0.309	0.158)	0.927	.52
Discrimination	0.4256	.29	(-0.142	0.994)	1.531	.14
Internalised Homophobia	-1.8869	.43	(-2.720	-1.053)	0.152	<.001
Interaction	-0.6819	.24	(-1.158	-0.205)	0.506	.005
<b>Model Summary</b>						
Nagelkerke						.741

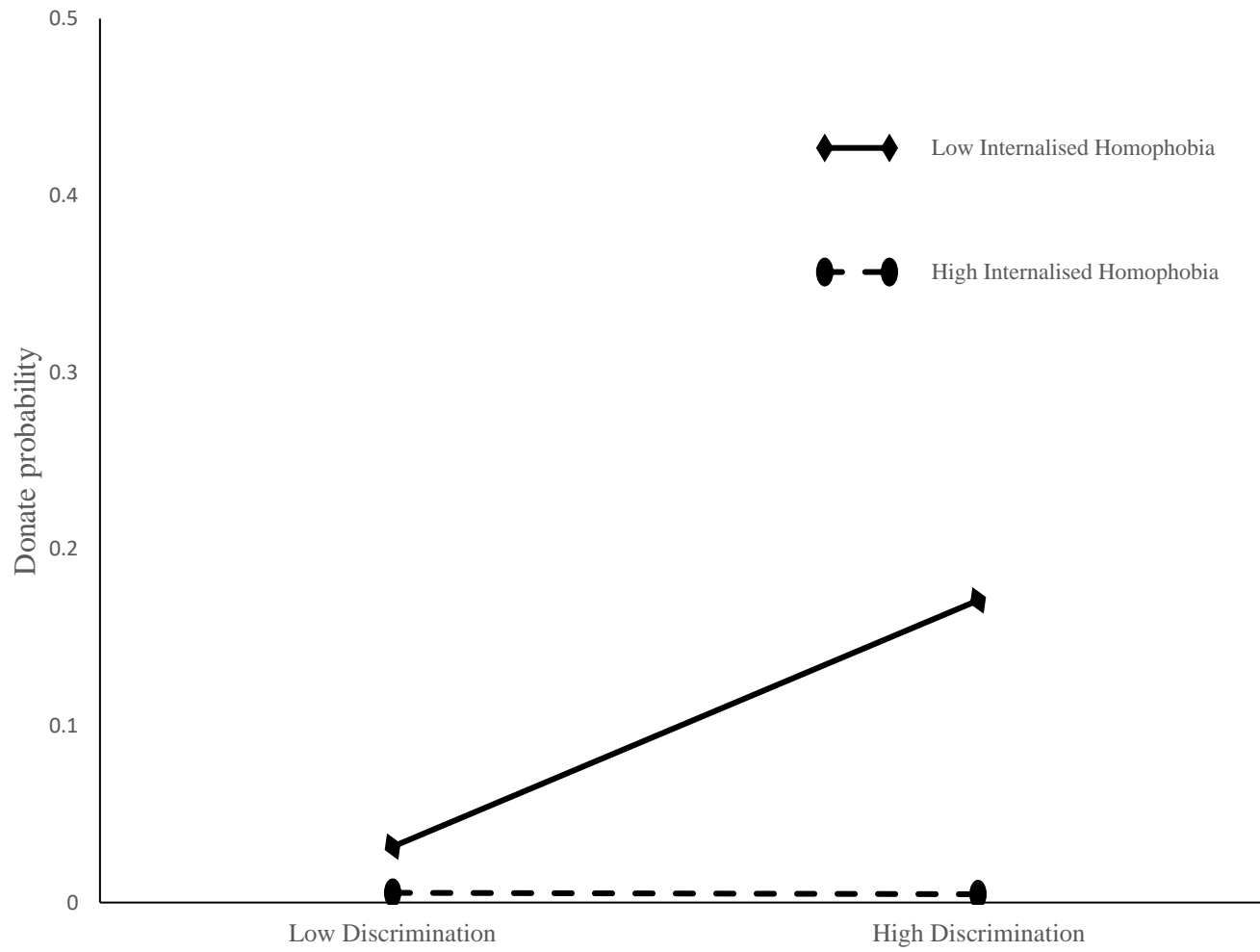


Figure 4.1. Probability of participants donating as a function of discrimination moderated by internalised homophobia.



## Discussion

Despite over five decades of struggle, the LGBTQIA+ community remains subject to intrapersonal (e.g., Maylon, 1982), interpersonal (e.g., Herek, 2009), and structural (e.g., Hatzenbuehler & McLaughlin, 2014) prejudice and discrimination. This discrimination results in stress and poor mental health outcomes for minority sexual identities (Meyer, 1995, 2003). Structural change which would result in greater inequality is needed, as LGBTQIA+ individuals continue to be discriminated against when attempting to access important social resources such as housing (Teliti, 2015), government assistance (Gorman-Murray et al., 2014), healthcare (Wilson & Yoshikawa, 2007), legal recognition of their gender-identity (Tan et al., 2022), education (Power et al., 2014) and employment (Sears & Mallory, 2014). Discriminatory treatment in these areas contributes significantly to lower levels of well-being within the LGBTQIA+ community (see Herek, 2007). Collective action is one of the most effective methods of bringing about social change (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wright et al., 1990b). As such, it is important to identify factors that encourage, or inhibit, engagement in collective action amongst members of the LGBTQIA+ community. This is of particular importance if those factors include the stresses they encounter due to their identity as a marginalised minority group member. As this would suggest that the very fact of being discriminated against prevents individuals from fighting against it. Here, we investigated the processes outlined in the minority stress model (Meyer, 1995, 2003) in order to ascertain how they affected members of the LGBTQIA+ community's willingness to engage in collective action (namely, donating money to an LGBTQIA+ cause).

To these ends, we conducted a logistic regression analysis to examine our hypotheses. Given that experiences with injustice are a prime motivator of collective action support (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008), we predicted that participants' self-reported perceptions and incidences of discrimination would be positively associated with collective action.

Conversely, internalised homophobia has been shown to be tangentially negatively associated with in-group identification (Górska et al., 2017), and efficacy via shame (Baldwin et al., 2006; Moss, 2003). Given that group identification and efficacy are also crucial motivators of collective action we expected that internalised homophobia would correlate negatively with the likelihood of donating money to an LGBTQIA+ organisation. Finally, given that part of internalised homophobia is an acceptance, or agreement with heterosexist societal structures and prejudices (Cabaj, 1988; Meyer, 1995), and is associated with avoidance-based coping strategies (Nicholson & Long, 1990) and feelings of hopelessness about one's future (Szymanski & Chung, 2001), we predicted that the positive relationship between discrimination and collective action would be attenuated by internalised homophobia in that higher levels of internalised homophobia would weaken the relationship.

Contrary to both our expectations and past research (e.g., Smith et al., 2012; van Zomeren et al., 2008), self-reported experiences with discrimination did not significantly predict collective action. However, this relationship was significantly moderated by internalised homophobia. As hypothesised, experiences with discrimination correlated positively with the likelihood of donating money to an LGBTQIA+ cause only among participants who expressed low levels of internalised homophobia.

The results of this study demonstrate that internalised homophobia plays an important role in establishing whether or not LGBTQIA+ individuals will participate in collective action. It is likely that the feelings of shame characteristic of internalised homophobia (Moss, 2003), coupled with the reduction in efficacy (Baldwin et al., 2006) and increased likelihood of adhering to social norms (Ridinger, 2020), undermine LGBTQIA+ individuals' participation in collective action. Likewise, the lack of community support (Shidlo, 1994), and lower levels of group identification (Górska et al., 2017) connected with internalised homophobia are also likely to reduce the likelihood of participating in collective action, as

both of these factors predict collective action among the LGBTQIA+ community (Friedman & Leaper, 2010; Lewis et al., 2011). Furthermore, because the norms, stereotypes, and prejudices which collective action aims to address are endorsed by those who experience greater feelings of internalised homophobia (Cabaj, 1988), and internalised homophobia is associated with avoidance-based coping strategies (Nicholson & Long, 1990) they may be unwilling, or unable, to act against their own beliefs. Finally, internalised homophobia also negatively impacts a person's resilience and ability to cope when confronted by adverse events (Meyer & Dean, 1998). As such, when exposed to discrimination, those higher in internalised homophobia are more susceptible to its negative impact and less able to challenge it.

### **Strengths, Limitations, and Future Directions**

The minority stress suffered by LGBTQIA+ individuals as a result of enduring societal prejudice and discrimination leads to various negative mental health outcomes (e.g., Feinstein et al., 2012; Igartua et al., 2009; Szymanski et al., 2001). Here, we have shown that those same minority stress processes, particularly internalised homophobia, insidiously and counterproductively inhibit members of the LGBTQIA+ community's participation in collective action to combat that prejudice and discrimination. The results of this study add to our understanding of the minority stress model, as well as the literature on collective action. The majority of research on the minority stress model has, to date, focused on mental health outcomes. Those studies using a minority stress framework which have included collective action focused on its relationship as a buffer between discrimination and internalised homophobia (Velez & Moradi, 2016), or minority stress and mental health (Kertzner et al., 2009; Kwon, 2013). Here, we show that the minority stress processes themselves are important predictors of whether or not members of the LGBTQIA+ community will participate in collective action.

With regards to the literature on collective action in general, by integrating the SIMCA with the minority stress model our results demonstrate that there are identity content based nuances in previously assumed reliable correlates of collective action. Specifically, perceived discrimination *did* predict collective action for LGBTQIA+ individuals, however this effect only emerged for those who had low levels of internalised homophobia. As such, our findings reveal the importance of taking into consideration factors unique to the study population in question in order to gain a clearer understanding of whether or not that specific population will engage in collective action. We included in our analysis a number of predictors of collective action which are well known and reliable when used in studies which investigate involvement in collective action amongst the general population. This further serves to demonstrate the distinct contribution of the minority stress processes when it comes to predicting collective action for the LGBTQIA+ community specifically.

There are many different forms of collective action. Here, we used whether or not an individual chose to donate money to OUTLine (versus personally receiving a gift voucher) as our measure of collective action. We believe that this particular form of collective action was well suited to our study, as OUTLine offers emotional and psychological support for members of the LGBTQIA+ community, while fostering a sense of belonging to the community. As such, OUTLine is a valuable resource for those who experience higher levels of both discrimination and internalised homophobia. Additionally, donating is a form of collective action that can be done anonymously which should have aided in counteracting any reticence individuals who experience higher levels of internalised homophobia had about engaging in more overt forms of collective action which would necessitate disclosure of their sexuality or draw attention to their sexual identity (Breslow et al., 2015; Frost & Meyer, 2009; Velez & Moradi, 2016). Something which is particularly relevant here, as the mean level of identity openness (i.e., ‘outness’) in our sample was rather low. That the likelihood of

donating was inhibited by internalised homophobia is an example of how negative internalised identity content can work against the interests of the individual and their group (for a similar argument, see Becker & Wagner, 2009). LGBTQIA+ persons who have high levels of homophobia would likely benefit greatly from OUTLine which functions to offer emotional, and resource-based support for LGBTQIA+ individuals, and to foster a sense of community and belonging. It is likely that the moderating role of internalised homophobia would be even stronger for those types of collective action which require more public involvement (e.g., protests). Future research examining this possibility would be beneficial.

Our sample was self-selected, therefore caution must be exercised in generalising the results. However, there is no sample framework for acquiring a random sample of this specific population, as sexual minorities are a difficult group to approach (Paz-Bailey et al., 2013). Additionally, the correlational nature of our data means that we cannot ascertain the causal order of our results. It may be that those who experience greater internalised homophobia inherently perceive more discrimination from others. Alternatively, the relationship between internalised homophobia and perceptions of discrimination may be bi-directional. Considering that it would be unconscionable to induce feelings of internalised homophobia, an experimental approach to determine causation would not be recommended. However, future longitudinal research could be conducted in order to draw stronger conclusions about the direction of causation.

Participants in our study were members of the LGBTQIA+ community in general. Though participants were asked to indicate their sexual identity, we did not include this in our analysis, nor did we conduct our analysis on each different group. That is, our study did not attempt to look at the differences between different groups within the LGBTQIA+ community, but rather, the commonalities. Our reasons for doing so were two-fold: first, participants were allowed to select as many forms of sexual identity as they considered

applied to them. We did not want participants to feel constrained to selecting only one form of sexual identity, and we would not presume to decide ourselves which among the identities selected was the primary one to be used for analysis. Second, Greaves et al. (2016) found that, within the New Zealand context, there was a large amount of diversity with regards to how LGBTQIA+ individuals self-identify, which may have made categorical separation meaningless. However, these reasons do not preclude the possibility that there may be differences for different sexual identities that should be explored in the future. For example, a recent European Union report indicated that experiences of discrimination are higher, and more damaging, for intersex and trans individuals than they are for other members of the LGBTQIA+ community (*A long way to go for LGBTI equality*, 2020). Jaspal and Breakwell (2022), found that identity resilience (i.e., efficacy, self-esteem, positive distinctiveness, continuity) may function to mitigate internalised homophobia for LGBTQIA+ individuals. Future research could incorporate these findings and examine if this positive form of LGBTQIA+ identity content attenuates the moderating effect of internalised homophobia on collective action.

## **Conclusion**

The aim of the current study was to determine whether minority stress processes predicted collective action taking for members of the LGBTQIA+ community. To these ends, we examined the relationship between discrimination and collective action, as well as investigating internalised homophobia as a moderator of that relationship. Results showed that higher perceptions of discrimination were associated with the likelihood of donating to an LGBTQIA+ helpline, but only when participants expressed lower levels of internalised homophobia. By including a number of additional known predictors of collective action, we were able to show the unique predictive power of these variables for the LGBTQIA+ community specifically. In doing so we, demonstrated the importance of considering factors

unique to the population when predicting collective action. The results of our study demonstrate the insidious effects of internalised homophobia and add to the literature on both minority stress and collective action by illustrating the myriad barriers to social change.

## Chapter Five

### General Discussion

Socio-structural inequality and discrimination against marginalised groups are an entrenched and enduring feature of all hierarchically organised societies (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). This underlying injustice adversely affects both advantaged (Jost, Wakslak, et al., 2008; Osborne, García-Sánchez, et al., 2019; Wakslak et al., 2007), and marginalised groups. However, the deleterious consequences for marginalised group members are deeper and more varied. Marginalised groups suffer materially as the unequal distribution of resources provide them with less than advantaged groups receive (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Tajfel, 1981). Furthermore, the prejudice and discrimination they encounter due to their lower social status is particularly harmful to the well-being of marginalised group members. Ethnic minorities (Lee et al., 2017; Williams & Williams-Morris, 2000), individuals who identify as LGBTQIA+ (Allen & Oleson, 1999; Fergusson et al., 2005; Rowen & Malcolm, 2003), and women (Meisenberg & Woodley, 2015; Stevenson & Wolfers, 2009) all report significantly lower levels of psychological well-being than their advantaged counterparts.

Members of marginalised groups also encounter iniquitous treatment, prejudice and discrimination on a structural (e.g., Herek, 2007), interpersonal (e.g., Frost, 2011; Major & O'Brien, 2005), and intrapersonal (e.g., Meyer & Dean, 1998) level. The consequences of being omnipresently exposed to both external and internal stigmatisation, and status-based asymmetrical treatment are widespread (see Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002). Women, ethnic minorities, and members of the LGBTQIA+ community are subjected to disparate and deficient consideration when attempting to access various important social services and resources. These include healthcare (Fingerhut & Abdou, 2017; Wilson & Yoshikawa, 2007), housing (Houkamau & Sibley, 2015a), employment (Fraser et al., 2015; Goldin & Rouse,



2000; Sears & Mallory, 2014), the criminal justice system (Gaynor, 2018; Hill, 2018; Jones, 2016; Nellis, 2016), and education (Adelman, 1998; Mickelson, 2003; Nosek et al., 2009).

These structural disadvantages (i.e., disadvantage aimed at groups because of their lower status in society which is partially due to negative stereotypes about that group; Jost & Hunyady, 2003; Major, 1994; Tajfel, 1978) require redress as they insidiously affect every aspect of the lives of those they target. Collective action – that is, any action that a representative of a group takes with the aim of improving the conditions of that group – is the most effective method of promoting marginalised group interests and bringing about social change (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wright et al., 1990a, 1990b). However, despite the manifold ways injustice manifests in the lives of marginalised group members, people often find it difficult to recognise (Crosby, 1984; Crosby et al., 1989; Taylor et al., 1990). Notably, even when marginalised group members do recognise their disadvantage and expressly support social movement goals to alter the status quo, very few individuals, perhaps as few as 5%, participate in collective action to achieve those goals (Jost, Langer, et al., 2017; Klandermans, 1997; Walsh & Warland, 1983). As such, collective action to address and resolve inequalities is a rare occurrence relative to the extent of those inequalities (Jost, Becker, et al., 2017; Klandermans, 1997; McAdam & Boudet, 2012; Osborne, Jost, et al., 2019).

Social identity theory argues that people seek to benefit from and enhance their self-esteem via positive identities associated with the groups to which they belong (Tajfel, 1974, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The theory further posits three identity management strategies individuals will employ if they are dissatisfied with their group membership. These are social mobility (i.e., attempting to exit their group and gain entry into the more advantaged one), social creativity (i.e., reinterpreting the negative stereotypes and traits associated with their group as positive), and social change (i.e., attempting to raise their group status by engaging

in collective action; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The first is a strategy for individual advancement, whereas the latter two seek to enhance group status.

An individual's choice of these three identity management strategies depends on how they perceive three separate socio-structural variables; the permeability of group boundaries, the legitimacy of group status, and the stability of group status (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Groups which face structural disadvantage are often ones which have limited to no permeability making exit an unviable, or difficult strategy (Ellemers et al., 1990; Jackson et al., 1996; Tajfel, 1974; van Zomeren et al., 2016). As such, social creativity strategies such as making downward social comparisons and choosing an alternative dimension of comparison (e.g., poor but happy) are a useful and widely used tool by individuals who are members of marginalised groups (Kay & Jost, 2003). However, their impact is limited, typically only serving to increase the self-esteem of those who employ them. Only the third strategy, collective action, can challenge, mitigate, and eventually dispense with widespread socio-structural discrimination and its adverse consequences.

Social identity theory predicts that when marginalised group members perceive status differences to be unstable and illegitimate they are likely to more strongly identify with their group and participate in collective action (Ellemers, 1993; Tajfel, 1978; Turner & Brown, 1978). Furthermore, research has demonstrated that when an individual belongs to a marginalised group which has limited to no permeability, and perceives the status difference between groups to be illegitimate and unstable, they are more likely to participate in collective action to change, and enhance their group identity (Becker, 2012; Bettencourt et al., 2001; Scheepers et al., 2006; Turner & Brown, 1978).

The social identity model of collective action (SIMCA; van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008) integrates these insights and argues that in-group identification is a primary predictor of collective action. The model also includes perceptions of efficacy and injustice as critical

antecedents of collective action through which identity operates. These three factors have received widespread empirical support as reliable and valid predictors of collective action (e.g., Klandermans, 1997, 2004). The SIMCA, however, integrated these three factors by accounting not only for the predictive effect of each of the variables in isolation, but also the associations *between* the three predictors. The SIMCA has received a breadth of empirical support as a functional model of collective action, and is largely considered to have a wide degree of generalisability both internationally, and amongst different cultural groups (Cakal et al., 2011; Sabucedo et al., 2018; Wermser et al., 2018).

Although in-group identification is an integral psychological facet of collective action intentions and behaviours (Drury & Reicher, 2009; Ellemers et al., 1997; Mummendey et al., 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), there are multiple conceptualisations of identity, many of which overlap, that incorporate the cultural, social, political, and historical contexts of the identity of the group (see e.g., Gilbert, 2010; Loseke, 2007). Indeed, some scholars have argued that identity content, that is, the meanings associated with a particular group identity including its ideologies, values, stereotypes, history, characteristics, and beliefs (Ashmore et al., 2004), is a critical factor to consider in order to better understand the contribution of in-group identification to collective action (Becker & Wagner, 2009; Mikołajczak et al., 2022; Reynolds et al., 2012; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). Indeed, both observational studies (e.g., Iyer et al., 2009; Livingstone & Haslam, 2008) and laboratory settings have found that, while the strength of an individual's group identification determines the extent to which they are influenced, identity content determines the *way* in which they are influenced (Becker & Wagner, 2009; Jetten et al., 2002; Postmes et al., 2001).

That identity content is critical to understanding collective action presents a problem for the disadvantaged. Indeed, a significant portion of the identity content of marginalised groups is imposed upon them by dominant out-groups (Herek, 2009a, 2009c; Young, 1990).

This ascription of identity content is rooted in intergroup relations, and therefore is coloured by in-group bias and out-group prejudice (see Allport, 1954). The intertwined relationship between identity content and intergroup relations means that many aspects of out-group-determined identity content reflect, reinforce and legitimise the existing power structure, social hierarchy, and status quo (Fiske et al., 1999; Glick et al., 2004; Hokowhitu, 2004; Link & Phelan, 2001; Piumatti, 2017; Reyna et al., 2014; Young, 1990, 2002). Therefore, marginalised group identities are frequently framed as undesirable, inferior, vulnerable, or repellent (Herek, 2009a, 2009c; Hokowhitu, 2004; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). These conceptualisations become embedded in society and are often considered accurate representations of marginalised groups (Barnes et al., 2012; Herek, 2007; Young, 1990). Furthermore, marginalised individuals often internalise, and endorse these derogatory perceptions of themselves (Bearman et al., 2009; Becker, 2010; Jost, 1997; Meyer & Dean, 1998) which may lead to them legitimising, and being satisfied with the existing social structure even as it disadvantages them (Blanton et al., 2001; Reynolds et al., 2013). However, individual marginalised group members interpret and respond to out-group-imposed identity content differently. It is this difference in how identity content is interpreted that may help to explain why some members of marginalised groups take collective action to advance the interests of their group while others do not (e.g., Becker & Wagner, 2009).

Despite its importance, identity content has been largely neglected in the collective action literature in that it has been often assumed, but very rarely explicitly measured. As a result, we know much about the relationship between how strongly people identify with their in-groups and collective action, but we do not know what identifying with their group actually means to individuals. Nor do we know how identity content may differentially impact collective action support, intentions and behaviours. The SIMCA (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008) works well for incidental disadvantage, where the primary, if not only,

form of shared identity content relevant is an individual's stance on whatever issue is being examined. It has also been shown to reliably predict collective action in cases of structural disadvantage – particularly when ideology – specifically system justification – is incorporated as it is in Jost, Becker et al.'s 2017 updated model which was used for this thesis. However, while the SIMCA accounts for the effect of in-group identification, group identity content is not a consideration in the model<sup>18</sup>. Because of this oversight, nuances in the way marginalised group members respond to disadvantage are overlooked.

The aim of this thesis was to address this oversight by examining the unique psychological motivators and barriers to engaging in collective action which are specific to the identity content of each of the marginalised groups included. I assessed identity content by operationalising it as the extent to which marginalised group members either acknowledge the iniquity of, endorse, or internalise aspects of their group identity. The concepts I measured were also ones which have individual, societal and political implications. In order to observe and extract the unique contribution identity content had on collective action support, intentions and behaviours, all of my studies controlled for the variables outlined in the SIMCA (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). Each study also included a measure of system justification, as recommended by an updated version of the SIMCA (Jost, Becker, et al., 2017), in order to account for the palliative effect of legitimising the status quo which has often been shown to impact marginalised groups more strongly than advantaged groups (e.g., Jost, Pelham, et al., 2003; Sengupta et al., 2017). Additionally, legitimising the existing social structure is inextricably tied to identity content development, interpretation and understanding for marginalised individuals (see Freire, 1970; Ridgeway, 2001).

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<sup>18</sup> Another updated version of the SIMCA does include a measure of identity content (van Zomeren et al., 2012). However, it is conceptualised very differently there compared to how it is in this thesis. Critiques of that conceptualisation and the rationale for why it was not used here are detailed in Chapter One.

In the following sections, I will briefly summarise the empirical findings revealed in prior chapters. Following this, I will review implications, limitations and future directions derived from the key findings of this thesis.

## **Chapter Two: Minority Ethnic Groups, the Status-Legitimacy Hypothesis and the Historical and Cultural Significance of Ethnic Identity**

Chapter Two included two studies which both focused on ethnic minorities as a marginalised group. This chapter had two aims. The first (Study 1), was to test the status-legitimacy hypothesis (Brandt, 2013). That is, how system justification – an ideology which legitimises existing social hierarchies and the status quo (Jost & Banaji, 1994) – differentially moderates the relationship between group-based relative deprivation (Runciman, 1966) and collective action intentions for ethnic minority versus ethnic majority group members. The results of this study supported the status-legitimacy hypothesis. Under high perceptions of group-based relative deprivation, ethnic minority participants who were also high in system justification were significantly less likely than ethnic minority participants low in system justification to indicate that they intended to take collective action on behalf of their ethnic group. This effect of system justification on collective action intentions was non significant for ethnic majority participants.

The second aim of this chapter was to examine if positive identity content related to one's ethnic group buffered against the dampening effect system justification has on ethnic minority's collective action intentions (Study 2). To test this, only Māori (the ethnic minority group indigenous to New Zealand) participants were included in the analysis. Using the same model as study one, we analysed whether identity content – operationalised as the extent to which individuals valued the historical and cultural significance of their ethnic identity – moderated the relationship between group-based relative deprivation and collective action intentions. The findings of this study were novel and important. Results showed that group-

based deprivation had no impact on Māori participants who highly valued their identity content. Specifically, they were equally likely to indicate collective action intentions on behalf of their ethnic group regardless of their level of relative deprivation. Additionally, highly valuing ethnic identity content entirely eliminated the placating effect of system justification. In contrast, results for participants who less strongly valued the historical and cultural importance of their identity were what would be expected based on system justification theory. That is, under the condition of high group-based deprivation, participants who endorsed system justifying beliefs were significantly less likely to indicate collective action intentions on behalf of their ethnic group than those who did not. These results demonstrate that placing positive value of the significance of one's ethnic identity eradicates the inhibiting effect of system justification on collective action.

### **Chapter Three: Women, Ambivalent Sexism, and Self-Objectification**

Chapter Three focused on women as a marginalised group. The aim of this chapter was to examine the relationship between two complementary types of sexism (namely, hostile and benevolent sexism; (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001a), and support for gender-based collective action. We also sought to add to this body of literature by investigating the potential moderating effects of self-objectification – an internalisation of patriarchal beauty ideals which has implications for women's self-esteem, and perceptions of their own ability (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Results showed that hostile sexism correlated negatively, whereas benevolent sexism correlated positively, with support for gender-based collective action. However, this relationship was stronger for hostile sexism, and on emerged for benevolent sexism when participants also expressed low levels of self-objectification. These results demonstrate how the internalisation of male-perpetuated beauty norms and ideals can inhibit women from not only taking, but even just supporting, action that would lead to greater gender equality.

## **Chapter Four: The LGBTQIA+ Community, Discrimination, and Internalised Homophobia**

Chapter Four focused on the LGBTQIA+ community. The aim of this chapter was to examine the relationship between sexual identity-based discrimination and collective action. Using the minority stress model (Meyer, 1995), we also sought to investigate the possible moderating effects of internalised homophobia – the extent to which an individual has internalised negative societal norms and perceptions about minority sexual identities (Meyer & Dean, 1998) – on this relationship. Results showed that perceived discrimination correlated positively with collective action, but only for those low on internalised homophobia. Conversely, participants high on internalised homophobia were much less likely to engage in collective action regardless of their perceptions of discrimination. These results have important implications for the LGBTQIA+ community, as they demonstrate that internalised homophobia can inhibit collective action on behalf of the ingroup.

Taken together, the novel results from the three empirical chapters that comprise this thesis demonstrate the need to consider the identity content specific to marginalised groups when predicting their collective action. Notably, these results emerged after accounting for in-group identification, efficacy and injustice, as well as system justification. That is, group specific identity content emerged as an independent and significant predictor of collective action intentions, support or behaviour in each study. Additionally, all three studies which included measures of identity content illustrated how the different ways marginalised individuals value and / or internalise the identity content of their group significantly impacts their collective action support, intentions and behaviours. This is something that would go unrecognised in a predictive model that did not consider group specific identity content. In the next section, I discuss some considerations that arose from the findings of the studies included in this thesis.



## Considerations

The studies included in this thesis were all designed to examine marginalised groups' collective action support, intentions, or behaviour, as well as factors – with a specific focus on identity content – which predicted those outcomes. Accordingly, with the exception of the first study in Chapter Two, only participants who are members of marginalised groups were included in the analyses. This decision raises three separate, but related, considerations that need to be addressed and explained: i) system justification and legitimisation of disadvantaged status by marginalised individuals, ii) the internalisation of negative identity content by marginalised individuals, and iii) the responsibility of social change.

### *System justification and legitimisation of disadvantaged status*

“That’s just the way it is. Some things will never change.”

- Tupac Shakur, *Changes*, (1998)

It is important to note that the stigmas attached to marginalised groups are entirely socially constructed (Herek, 2009b, 2009c). Furthermore, the subsequent discriminatory treatment of marginalised groups and the individuals who identify with them is a result of that social construction (Fine & Asch, 1988). There is nothing inherently negative about marginalised identities or the individuals who occupy them. That *some* individuals who are members of marginalised groups, under certain specific conditions, justify the system is not a failure, or weakness on their part. Nor is it a placid, indolent or ignorant acceptance of their disadvantaged, lower status in society.

System justification is a cognitive process which confers psychological benefits to those who endorse it (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2004; Jost et al., 2015). Furthermore, system justification theory recognises and acknowledges the cognitive conflict marginalised group members suffer in order to justify a system which oppresses them, as well as what they sacrifice in order to do so (Jost, 2020; Jost et al., 2001; Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Jost, Pelham,

et al., 2003). System justifying beliefs aid in fulfilling individuals' epistemic, existential and relational needs (Hennes et al., 2012; Jost & Andrews, 2011; Jost, Ledgerwood, et al., 2008; Kay & Zanna, 2009). They create a sense of shared reality which works to enhance social connectedness (Jost et al., 2018), and facilitate relationships with others regardless of status (Smith et al., 1956). Bahamondes, Sengupta, et al. (2021a) found that the desire to avoid social conflict is associated with a greater sense of belonging, and that this relationship is mediated by system justification. Furthermore, they noted that these associations predict enhanced perceptions of personal well-being.

Consequently, endorsing system justification serves to provide marginalised individuals with the belief that they have a place, and sense of belonging in society which allows them to feel positively about themselves. Legitimising the existing social structure via system justification diminishes the extent to which marginalised individuals perceive prejudice against themselves over time (Bahamondes, Sibley, et al., 2021). This leads people to perceive the world as less threatening (Major, Quinton, et al., 2002), and reduces stress (Miller & Kaiser, 2001).

However, despite these short-term, individualistic dividends, system justification is neither propitious, nor efficacious in the long-term for marginalised groups. That is, while endorsing system justification is assuasive for the individual, the societal consequences are injurious for the marginalised groups to which they belong. System justification functions solely as a protective psychological coping mechanism which confers only palliative, not practical, benefits. Indeed, system justification reduces the desire for social change that would benefit marginalised groups (Jost et al., 2004; Osborne & Sibley, 2013), and inhibits collective action intentions and behaviours (Jost, Becker, et al., 2017; Jost et al., 2012). In sum, system justification confers palliative psychological benefits which assist individuals who are members of marginalised groups. That marginalised individuals may, under certain

conditions, endorse beliefs that justify the very same status quo which disadvantages them is not a reflection on their mental acuity or a result of apathetic torpor. Rather, it is a coping mechanism employed to help navigate a society that judges and oppresses them.

### ***Internalisation of negative identity content***

“I am whatever you say I am. If I wasn’t, then why would you say I am? In the paper, the news, every day I am.”

- Eminem, *The way I am*, (2000)

Internalised stigmas are the most proximal sources of prejudice marginalised individuals experience (Meyer & Dean, 1998). They are also arguably the most persistent to the individual. Unlike external forms of discrimination, the effects of internalised stigmas pertinaciously remain salient even in the absence of a direct source of discrimination (Meyer, 2003a, 2003b). Indeed, some scholars argue that the effects of external stimulus on internalised stigma never entirely subside (e.g., Gonsiorek, 1988). However, it is important to clarify that an individual’s tendency to internalise stigma associated with their identity stems from the social and cultural prevalence of stigma. As such, the propensity to internalise stigma is not related to an individual’s personality, nor is it a considered and consensual process (Frost & Meyer, 2009; Russell & Bohan, 2006). Negative, stigmatised identities are often created and maintained by dominant out-groups with power against marginalised groups who have less power (see Link & Phelan, 2001). These social and cultural narratives then become the prevailing ones, entrenched in society and culture, considered by many to have a basis in fact (Allport, 1954; Barnes et al., 2012; Herek, 2007; Young, 1990).

Marginalised individuals live every day in a society which is shaped by social stigma against them (Herek, 2009b, 2009c). These socially generated stigmas then are readily internalised by some. Put simply, the stigmas themselves are socially generated, however the subsequent self-devaluation can be internally perpetuated (Frost, 2011).

The autogenous perpetuation of internalised negative identity content makes it extremely difficult to counteract or disconfirm. Marginalised individuals must exist within societies that are built on, shaped around, and propagate stigmatised perceptions of their identity. Thus, marginalised individuals such as women (Baum et al., 2020; Schaan et al., 2020), sexual minorities (Feinstein, 2020; Gamarel et al., 2022), ethnic minorities (Stathi et al., 2020; Younis & Jadhav, 2019), religious minorities (Balkaya et al., 2019; Sirin et al., 2021), and those with disabilities (Huang et al., 2020; Nario-Redmond, 2019) often approach social situations and interactions with caution and vigilance as a self-protective mechanism under the assumption that they will be rejected on the basis of their identity. Unfortunately, this hyper-consciousness of the stigma attached to their identity is a significant obstacle for out-group others who attempt to repudiate marginalised individual's expectations of rejection (Pinel, 2002).

In sum, marginalised individuals are inundated daily by social and cultural narratives, personal experiences, and external expectations regarding the negative, stigmatised content of their identity. The overwhelming prevalence of stigma is associated with people's tendency to internalise it. Detrimentially, internalising stigma associated with oneself can become an autogenic process. However, the stigmas themselves are socially generated, and the internalisation process is not a conscious choice, or even an internally consensual one.

### ***Onus and responsibility for social change***

“To revolutionise, make a change nothing's strange. People, people we are the same... Fight the powers that be.”

- Public Enemy, *Fight the Power*, (1988)

In this thesis, I examined the collective action intentions, support, or behaviour of individuals who belong to marginalised groups. This was done in order to discover which factors – particularly identity content – encourage or inhibit these individuals from taking

action that would benefit their group. In making this decision, however, I am not suggesting that the onus of social change should rest entirely on the already oppressed shoulders of those who are marginalised and disadvantaged by the existing socio-structural system. However, marginalised individuals are the ones who are most able to identify and articulate their needs. Deciding what changes need to be made for the comfort and security of marginalised groups should not be another thing that is out-sourced to, or determined by, out-group others analogous to the way identity content is, as there is no guarantee that they will act as allies. Indeed, there is every indication that, if left alone to do so, dominant groups with their implicit or explicit biases will miss the mark. Subsequently, what changes they do make may initiate further problems for marginalised groups. Such as was the case with the U.S Supreme Court's ruling that 'separate but equal' facilitates were just (Ferguson, 1896).

Furthermore, we must not discount what agency marginalised groups *do* have to protect and bolster their identities. Providing the disadvantaged with the space to speak up on their own behalf is especially important because marginalised individuals are generally reluctant to make discriminatory attributions (Auer & Ruedin, 2019; Major & Kaiser, 2005; Stangor et al., 2002; Taylor et al., 1990; Taylor et al., 1994). This minimisation of the discrimination they encounter likely occurs because claims of discrimination damage personal and group-based self-esteem and well-being for marginalised individuals (Branscombe et al., 1999; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2002; Schmitt et al., 2002). Targets of group-based discrimination are also hesitant to report instances of prejudice because they fear being perceived as impolite (Swim & Hyers, 1999; Swim & Hyers, 2009), or the social setting makes it intimidating to do so (Woodzicka & LaFrance, 2001).

Confronting prejudices perpetrated against them can also cost marginalised individuals greatly. Firstly, even the act of considering confronting bias is an emotionally taxing, and frightening prospect that could be interpersonally detrimental (Kaiser et al.,

2006). If a marginalised individual believes that they *would* stand up against discrimination when they encounter it and then they do not, cognitive suffering in the form of guilt, regret, disappointment in the self, obsessive thoughts and rumination can occur (Shelton et al., 2006). Secondly, actually confronting discrimination often involves a trade-off – that is, actively confronting discrimination generally results in being perceived negatively, or actively derogated by others, whereas letting it go results in being perceived more positively (Kaiser & Miller, 2001, 2003; Shelton & Stewart, 2004). If a behaviour (e.g., confronting discrimination) is followed by negative consequences for the individual (e.g., being derogated and negatively evaluated), then this feedback may alter a person’s future behaviour, conception of what is normal or acceptable, and control beliefs. This, in turn, will impact future intentions and actions (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2011). Thus, the reactions of out-group others to marginalised individuals when they report instances of prejudice may actively discourage them from doing so again in the future. Finally, the majority of people evaluate individuals who challenge the status quo as suspicious (Diekmann & Goodfriend, 2007), and negatively perceive them as self-interested (O’Brien & Crandall, 2005). Hostility towards activists intensifies if they criticise the social system (Rudman et al., 2012; Yeung et al., 2013). This likely occurs because the issue of prejudice threatens and causes anxiety for dominant groups (Kaiser & Miller, 2003), endangers beliefs about societal fairness, and dismantles the perception that the world is just (Kaiser et al., 2006; Major et al., 2007).

In considering this evidence, it is important to remember that marginalised individuals are *not* actively and consciously complicit in maintaining their own lower social status (though see, for example Mikołajczak et al., 2022). Additionally, pervasive social injustice affects not only marginalised groups and individuals, but advantaged ones as well (e.g., Wakslak et al., 2007). As such, addressing inequities should be a concern for all people. Unfortunately, many individuals who are members of advantaged groups and are on top of

the power hierarchy (i.e., dominant groups) are motivated to maintain the status quo and group-based power differential as it affords them privileges, status and enhances their self-esteem (Major, Gramzow, et al., 2002; Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). Advantaged group members also legitimise their higher status as natural, often via stereotypes (e.g., women are weaker than men. Ethnic minorities are less intelligent than women. Sexual minorities are deviant; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Kay et al., 2009; Kay & Jost, 2003; Kay & Zanna, 2009). Or, they attribute the differences in power, opportunities, and advancement between advantaged and marginalised individuals to differences in ability (for a review, see Swim & Sanna, 1996). This is because acknowledging the power differential and unequal opportunities that pervade society would devalue their own achievements which they desire to see as a result of their own ability and hard work (Major & Kaiser, 2017; Major et al., 2007; Napier & Jost, 2008). Indeed, advantaged individuals often feel threatened by policies which aim to reduce the opportunity gap between dominant and marginalised groups (Wellman et al., 2016).

Contemplating or perceiving intergroup relations as unjust and illegitimate can also elicit uncomfortable feelings of collective guilt for advantaged group members (Miron et al., 2006). These unnerving emotions may evoke competitive victimhood (Noor et al., 2012; Young & Sullivan, 2016) and cries of reverse discrimination – leading to increased endorsement of system justification in order to deflect responsibility from themselves for the state of collective inequality (Sengupta et al., 2019). Essentially, acknowledging socio-structural inequality, their own entitlement and discrimination towards marginalised groups is disadvantageous for dominant group members who want to believe that the world is fair and just and delivers unto *all* people what they deserve (Janoff-Bulman, 1989, 1992; Lerner, 1980; Lerner & Clayton, 2011).

It is too much to expect all advantaged individuals, and social structures to be as honourable as Mr. Darcy. To stand up and announce “The fault is mine, and so must the remedy be.” (Birtwistle, 1995). However, allies – that is, out-group individuals who support and engage in action to further the social movements and causes of marginalised groups – have long played a crucial role in advancing the rights of marginalised groups. Though, the motivations behind this assistance may drastically differ.

### ***Out-group allies***

“I’ll be there to protect you. With an unselfish love that respects you.”

- Jackson 5, *I’ll be there*, (1970)

Many scholars of collective action have investigated the topic of allies and allyship (e.g., Becker et al., 2019; Iyer & Leach, 2008; Radke et al., 2018; Saab et al., 2015). The extent of allyship varies between individuals, with some participating in action on behalf of a number of disadvantaged groups (e.g., Louis et al., 2016), while others only act on behalf of a single disadvantaged group, often one whose outcomes proximally affect them such as through a wife / daughter, or LGBTQIA+ identifying child (e.g., Ravarino, 2008). However, there is considerable variability amongst this research primarily due to different, and often contrasting, definitions. The reason for multiple definitions stems from scholars delineating allies based on their motivations for acting on behalf of the marginalised, and applying specific terms based on those delineations (Kutlaca et al., 2020; Louis et al., 2019; Radke et al., 2020).

Earlier research, and the mainstream view, on allies has a tendency to characterise them as advantaged individuals who are exclusively motivated by an altruistic desire to support marginalised groups, and improve their circumstances (e.g., Brown, 2015; Ostrove & Brown, 2018). For example, Ashburn-Nardo (2018) and Brown and Ostrove (2013) describe allies as well-informed, egalitarian individuals, outside of the disadvantaged group, who



challenge existing systems of inequality through actions which support and affirm the experiences of marginalised individuals. However, this definition of the ‘ideal’ ally has been widely criticised as it obscures the fact that allies are *not* always motivated purely by egalitarian concerns, and that their behaviour can oftentimes be problematic and create difficulties and tension within social movements (e.g., Louis et al., 2019).

There is no denying that allies can be extremely beneficial to marginalised groups. Enduring social change is often the result of a shift in broader public opinion towards supporting and prioritising the rights of marginalised groups over the status and privilege maintenance of advantaged groups (David & Turner, 1996; Subašić et al., 2008). Advantaged group allies are well placed to aid in facilitating this public shift. One of the main reasons for this is that advantaged, prejudiced individuals are more likely to listen to, and have their opinion swayed by, those they perceive to be more like in-group others. For example, Maass et al. (1982) found that conservative males expressed higher levels of support for abortion after speaking with a liberal male confederate who was pro-choice, than they were after speaking with a liberal female confederate who was pro-choice. A wide range of research also indicates that prejudice is more greatly reduced when advantaged, as compared to disadvantaged, group members confront it (Cihangir et al., 2014; Czopp et al., 2006; Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Eliezer & Major, 2012; Gulker et al., 2013; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010).

Despite these findings, research has also shown that allies can create issues and tension for marginalised groups and their social movements for a myriad of reasons – some more benign than others. For example, allies from advantaged groups often lack knowledge and awareness of the historical and systematic roots of oppression (Gopal, 2020).

Droogendyk et al. (2016) detailed numerous problems which advantaged group allies may generate. These include demanding gratitude or compensation for their efforts, attempting to make themselves the focus of attention – sometimes acting in ways which draw negative

attention and evaluations that damage the reputation of the social movement (Parker, 2020), refusing to act unless there is personal gain to be had, non-consensually assuming leadership positions within the group, pushing forward their own ideas at the expense of those of marginalised individuals, and expressing an overall expectation that marginalised individuals ‘owe’ them something for supporting them.

In response to the varying definitions and motivations attributed to advantaged out-group allies, Radke et al. (2020) reviewed the literature and proposed four motivational categories informed by an updated version of the SIMCA (van Zomeren et al., 2012) which can apply to advantaged group allies. These are: out-group focused motivation, ingroup-focused motivation, personal motivation and moral motivation. The out-group focused motivation is, perhaps, the most altruistic and closest to the definition of the ‘ideal’ ally. This motivation refers to advantaged out-group individuals who endorse the norms and beliefs of the marginalised group, and are willing and able to reject the existing power hierarchy, negative stereotypes and prejudicial beliefs. Allies with an out-group focused motivation, they suggest, identify more strongly with a larger superordinate group which leads to an increase in prosocial and helping behaviours, and a reduction in intergroup bias (Dovidio et al., 1997; Gaertner et al., 1993; Vezzali et al., 2015). Anger on behalf of the marginalised group (van Zomeren et al., 2011), and an acute understanding and awareness of their own privilege (Case, 2007a, 2007b; Crosby et al., 2006; Swim & Miller, 1999), are also thought to contribute to the out-group focused motivation.

Advantaged individuals who have an in-group focused motivation, in contrast, are theorised to be strongly identified with their own in-group. They are also thought to endorse, as opposed to reject, the status quo. Therefore, they will work to improve the status of a marginalised group on smaller issues, but not on those which threaten their own advantaged societal status. Advantaged allies with an in-group focused motivation will therefore

oftentimes appear somewhat inconsistent. Though their behaviour may sometimes seem to have an *out*-group focused motivation, they will retract their support if the status of their own group is threatened. In these instances, they will appear unconcerned about marginalised groups and their needs.

In extreme cases an in-group focused motivation of allyship leads to downright cartoon villain level dastardly actions. This is when advantaged ‘allies’ take action that ostensibly helps marginalised groups, but is actually designed to undermine them in the long run, while simultaneously benefitting and enhancing the status of their own in-group.

Strong in-group identification, theorised to be associated with this motivation, has an established link to behaviour which serves the interests of the in-group (Brown, 2000; Hornsey, 2008). These actions are more likely to take place when their advantaged status is being threatened (Scheepers, 2009; Scheepers et al., 2009). Thus, while advantaged allies may be concerned about the marginalised group, the status of their own group is always their primary consideration. For example, advantaged allies with an in-group motivation often seek to enhance the image of their in-group by helping marginalised groups (van Leeuwen, 2007) in an attempt to display their superior knowledge (Täuber & van Leeuwen, 2010), combat negative stereotypes about their in-group (Hopkins et al., 2007; van Leeuwen & Täuber, 2012), or have their group perceived as positive (Teixeira et al., 2020), or moral (Becker et al., 2019).

The personal motivation for allyship is a very individualistic one. It refers to advantaged group members who seek, via out-group helping, to bolster positive emotions about themselves, enhance their self-esteem, or gain something for themselves. Advantaged allies who have a personal motivation are theorised to identify less with both their in-group and the marginalised out-groups. Instead, they have a more self-focused identity. This motivation is a selfish one where advantaged individuals use out-group helping as a platform

to improve their reputation or image, increase respect shown to them, accrue material or personal gains, enhance their popularity, or, for politicians, increase their chances of being elected.

Lastly, the moral motivation for allyship is perhaps the most detached one with regards to groups and group interests. Advantaged allies who are morally motivated will act on behalf of marginalised groups simply because the treatment of them violates their personal beliefs and convictions about what is universally 'right' and 'wrong' (Graham & Haidt, 2012; Gray et al., 2012). Holding strong moral beliefs is thought to increase identification with a superordinate identity, where groups, whether in-groups or out-groups, are not as important as the violation of personal, autonomous concerns about global moral principles (Hornsey et al., 2003; Hornsey et al., 2007). Thus, moral convictions transcend group boundaries and may prompt individuals to act on behalf of people with whom they have nothing in common (Skitka, 2010; Turiel, 2002; van Zomeren et al., 2011). Individuals with a moral motivation are more concerned with doing what they 'ought' than conforming to authority or societal norms (Skitka, 2010). As such, these advantaged allies are thought to reject their own privilege and the status quo not for group-based reasons, but because they violate their personal moral convictions.

There are many benefits to this model of advantaged ally motivations. For example, because the model distinguishes clearly between motivations and behaviours, it acknowledges that an individual may have co-existing motivations which, depending upon individual ideology, will differentially supplant one another. Furthermore, it allows for the possibility that an individual's motivations may change if their ideologies and beliefs change over time, such as likely occurred in the case of Ron Woodroof. Woodroof was a heterosexual man who was diagnosed with HIV in 1985 which he contracted via a tainted syringe. At the time, the AIDs crisis was beginning to balloon and discrimination against

homosexual men was extreme. Woodroof initially had a purely selfish, personal motivation for illegally importing HIV medication into the U.S. However, over time, he became close with the gay men who purchased the medication from his 'buyers club', and these interactions had an impact on his motivations which later more closely resembled out-group focused, or even morality ones.

One thing this model does make abundantly clear is that advantaged allies have their own motivations and agendas for participating in collective action on behalf of marginalised groups. Some of these motivations are benevolent, whereas others are sinister. Therefore, for collective action to truly redound to the benefit of marginalised groups, it is critical that individuals who are members of those groups lead and direct any forms of social action for change that are taken. That is, the responsibility to dismantle the existing power hierarchy is not theirs alone, but only they have the knowledge and largely unconflicted motivations to ensure that they will truly gain from the actions taken.

### ***Identity content and allies***

The identity content of marginalised individuals is generally exclusive to their specific marginalised group identity and experience. However, knowledge of, or sympathy for, that identity content likely impacts each of the four motivations for out-group allies, though in very different ways. Out-group focused motivations reject negative stereotypes and prejudices against marginalised groups, and respect their norms and beliefs. So, for individuals with this motivation, increasing awareness of identity content would likely increase collective action on behalf of marginalised groups.

In contrast, many facets of marginalised groups' identity content are imposed upon them by dominant out-groups and function to maintain the power hierarchy and status quo. Advantaged allies who have an out-group motivation desire to attain their own place at the top of the hierarchy and are threatened by suggestions that the status quo is not legitimate. As

such, they are likely to endorse negative aspects of marginalised groups' identity content. Furthermore, the implication that said identity content is not a legitimate reflection of reality may prompt them to take action which actively undermines marginalised groups' attempts to improve their situation and amend the status quo. With respect to the personal motivation, whether or not awareness of marginalised groups' identity content would motivate those individuals to engage in collective action on their behalf would likely depend entirely on if, or how they perceive this benefitting them personally. Likewise, advantaged allies with a moral motivation would likely only act against negative identity content if it resonates with their personal moral code, and convictions.

In contrast to advantaged allies, marginalised allies are allies who are members of a different, but similarly marginalised, group. There is a long and complex history of both solidarity, and division in the relationships between disadvantaged groups. Conflict is primarily due to competition for scarce social, political and material resources (Lang, 2020). However, when marginalised allies are primed with reminders of the similar histories of oppression and shared values between them and the target marginalised group, they express more support for policies which would improve the status of that marginalised group (Burson & Godfrey, 2018). Common experiences of injustice and discrimination (Godfrey & Burson, 2018; Shnabel et al., 2013; Vollhardt, 2015) could facilitate out-group focused, or moral motivations in marginalised allies (Radke et al., 2020). While identity content is generally specific to a particular marginalised group, there is a certain amount of cross-over between groups. Further, aspects of identity content between groups have many commonalities. For example, they are generally the result of negative stereotypes, are steeped in prejudice, and maintain the existing power-based social structure, and status quo. As such, making marginalised allies aware of the identity content of the target marginalised group should increase the likelihood that they would participate in collective action on behalf of that group.

In sum, identity content is an important factor to consider in predicting collective action on behalf of marginalised groups. This is because it not only impacts the extent to which marginalised individuals themselves will participate in movements for social change, but it is also likely to impact if, and the way in which, their advantaged and marginalised allies participate on their behalf.

The findings in this thesis have both theoretical and practical implications which I will discuss next. Following that, I will outline the limitations of this thesis, and possible directions for future research.

## **Implications**

### *Theoretical implications*

**Social identity theory.** Social identity theory predicts that group-based collective action is most likely to occur under conditions of low group permeability and high perceptions of the existing social structure as both illegitimate and unstable (Tajfel, 1978; Turner & Brown, 1978). The theory also presents identification with a marginalised group as the proximal predictor of collective action (Ellemers, 1993; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996; Mummendey et al., 1999; Tajfel, 1978). Results from all four empirical studies included in this thesis provided general support for these theoretical assumptions, though there were some exceptions.

Group permeability was not explicitly measured in any of the studies included here. However, reasonably functional proxies were used in order to attain some understanding of how permeable participants perceived their group membership to be. In Chapter Two, participants self-identified their ethnic group. In the first study, participants were then categorised into a dichotomous majority versus minority ethnic group. Those who identified as New Zealand European / Pākehā were labelled the majority group, and all other ethnicities were categorised as the minority group. However, because our ethnic minority category

encompassed so many different ethnic groups, this was not an adequate gauge of participants' perceptions of group permeability.

The second study included in Chapter Two had a more solid foundation for assessing group permeability. Again, ethnicity was self-identified, and only those participants who identified solely as Māori were included in these analyses. Participants had the option of choosing other ethnic identities including 'New Zealand European *and* Māori', and 'Māori *and* Other'. That participants chose to identify as Māori only suggests that they consider this ethnic identity salient, important, and more finite to themselves and implies that they perceive their ethnic group boundary to have low permeability. This method of discerning the extent to which Māori consider their ethnic identity fixed has been used in past research as a measure of whether or not Māori participants are capable, or desirous of, 'passing', and thus, as a measure of group permeability (Houkamau & Sibley, 2015a, 2015b).

In Chapter Three, participants were asked which gender they identified as and given the options of 'female', 'gender diverse' and 'would prefer not to answer'. Only those who indicated that they identified as female were included in the analysis. While not definitive, this does suggest that the participants in this study considered their gender identity to be female and, at least for themselves, generally impermeable.

Finally, Chapter Four included a measure of 'identity openness' – a scale score based on the number of groups participants indicated that they were 'out' to which ranged from 0 (low) to 9 (high). As such, this variable measured how open participants were about their minority sexual identity. Though not a perfect facsimile, this is a reasonable proxy for group permeability because perceptions of group permeability should shrink for individuals who are more open about their identity. The sample used for this study had a relatively low mean level of identity openness ( $M = 3.67$ ,  $SD = 2.35$ ), suggesting that, on average, participants considered their group permeability to be reasonably high. Regardless, identity openness was



positively associated with collective action (i.e., lower permeability was associated with collective action) which is consistent with the predictions of social identity theory.

Perceptions of the legitimacy of the existing system were examined in all empirical studies included via a measure of system justification (i.e., the extent to which individuals perceive the existing social system to be fair, just, and legitimate; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2004). Results from the first study in Chapter Two, Chapter Three, and Chapter Four all supported the prediction made by social identity theory that individuals are more likely to support or participate in collective action if they perceive the existing social structure as illegitimate. In each of these studies, system justification was negatively associated with the collective action outcome. The only exception was the second study in Chapter Two. Here, the effect of identity content significantly overrode perceptions of system legitimacy for those participants who highly valued the historical and cultural significance of their ethnic identity.

Finally, each of the studies included a measure of efficacy (e.g., ‘The average citizen can have an influence on government decisions.’, ‘I think people can successfully stand up for their rights.’), which was used to examine perceptions of the stability of the existing system. If people perceived the current system to be intractable, they would not believe that people would be able to change it. Again, consistent with the predictions made by social identity theory, results from the first study in Chapter Two, Chapter Three, and Chapter Four all showed that perceptions of efficacy (i.e., a strong indicator that the existing social system is unstable) correlated positively with collective action intentions, support and behaviour. Once again, the only exception to these results was the second study in Chapter Two, where efficacy was not significantly associated with ethnic group-based collective action intentions. A potential reason for this inconsistency is that both studies included in Chapter Two used a limited, single-item measure of efficacy which can reduce the reliability of the variable.

Overall, the results of this thesis support the predictions made by social identity theory regarding the conditions which are most likely to lead to collective action (Tajfel, 1978; Turner & Brown, 1978). However, the thesis also demonstrated the relevance and importance of identity content with regards to perceptions of group permeability, legitimacy and stability. In all three studies that included a measure of identity content, the effect size of identity content was larger than the effect size of the measure of legitimacy, suggesting that identity content has more practical significance to the collective action outcomes than perceptions of legitimacy do. Similarly, the effect sizes of identity content were larger than those for perceptions of stability in the second study of Chapter Two and Chapter Four, though not for Chapter Three. Lastly, Chapter Four had the only viable proxy measure of group permeability, and in this instance, the effect size of identity content on the outcome was stronger than perceptions of the permeability of group boundaries. While these results do not contradict social identity theory's assertions regarding predictors of collective action, they do suggest that some aspects of identity content may have more practical relevance.

Social identity theory argues that groups comprise of a collection of individuals who share i) the belief that they belong to the group, ii) an emotional attachment to the group identity, and iii) a common evaluation of the group. Furthermore, the theory predicts that belonging to a low status group will result in low self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). With this definition of a group, social identity theory often measures strength of group identification. It does not, however, take into consideration the *content* of that identity. While social identity theory has been a generative framework for understanding diverse phenomena, overlooking the value and impact of group identity content may explain some of the inconsistencies which have been noted.

For example, the results of the second study in Chapter Two of this thesis demonstrate that individual group members do *not* always share a common evaluation of the group. This

study measured the extent to which group members valued the cultural and historical significance of their ethnic group identity. That some participants valued this aspect of their identity more highly than others suggests that not all group members share a common evaluation of the group. Similarly, that women differentially agree with overtly negative (hostile sexism), and paternalistic (benevolent sexism) opinions of their group (Chapter Three) indicates that not all group members share a common evaluation of their group. Internalised homophobia measures the extent to which an LGBTQIA+ individual perceives having a minority sexual identity as a positive or negative thing. Within-group differences in internalised homophobia may indicate that, not only do LGBTQIA+ individuals lack a common evaluation of the group, but that emotional attachment to the group also varies. These identity content factors all independently, and significantly predict collective action. However, this impact would be overlooked if social identity theory's assumptions about the underlying commonalities of group composition and membership were strictly adhered to.

Social identity theory predicts that belonging to a low status group should result in low self-esteem (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). However, in contrast to the theory, having a marginalised social identity does not always engender low self-esteem, but is instead associated with high individual self-esteem (Crocker & Luhtanen, 1990; Crocker et al., 1994; Crocker & Major, 1989; Rosenberg, 1979). The identity content of low status, marginalised groups can help explain these inconsistencies. None of the studies included in this thesis measured self-esteem explicitly, however, all of the measures of identity content that were included have been shown to have a strong and significant relationship with self-esteem in previous research. That is, individuals who more highly value their cultural ethnic identity exhibit higher levels of self-esteem than those who do not (Hoersting & Jenkins, 2011; Tsai et al., 2001; Osborne & Taylor, 2010). Women who more strongly self-objectify have lower levels of self-esteem than those who do not (Murnen et al., 2003; Strelan et al., 2003), and

higher levels of internalised homophobia are associated with low self-esteem (Blais et al., 2014; Herek et al., 1998; Peterson & Gerrity, 2006). These identity content factors, and group members' differential endorsement of them, could partially explain why some marginalised group members, contrary to theory, indicate high levels of self-esteem.

In sum, the studies included in this thesis generally provided support for the assumptions of social identity theory. However, they also revealed some inconsistencies which call into question the way social identity theory conceptualises what constitutes a group (specifically, common evaluations of the group). These inconsistencies related to the content of marginalised groups' identities, reveal the importance of this concept to understanding individual differences within group identities. Group identity is not as simple as identifying with a group. Indeed, Pehrson et al. (2009) argue that social identity processes are not, and should not be, treated as independent from identity content. That the content of a group's identity needs to be considered as it provides a more nuanced and dynamic understanding of group relations and behaviours. Individuals value and evaluate their group identity differently via their personal endorsement of aspects of the group's identity content. This, in turn, results in within-group variation regarding the valence of identifying with a group and subsequently impacts collective action intentions and behaviour.

**Social identity model of collective action.** The original SIMCA outlined three factors; group identification, efficacy and injustice, which independently and reliably predict collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). Critically, empirical research has demonstrated generally consistent support for the SIMCA across a wide variety of contexts, countries, and cultures (Cakal et al., 2011; Sabucedo et al., 2018; Tabri & Conway, 2011). However, the model has been criticised for only acknowledging intergroup factors while overlooking system-level ones, specifically, system justification (Jost, Becker, et al., 2017). Jost and colleagues, (2017) argued that social system-level factors were an important

consideration because much of what constitutes collective action occurs within a social setting. This social context, they note, should influence the extent to which individuals are motivated to reject or protect the status quo. All four empirical studies included in this thesis used the SIMCA as a foundation, and included a measure of system justification as recommended by Jost, Becker, et al. (2017). This was done to account for system factors, and the societal context, while the SIMCA itself accounts for intergroup factors.

Overall, the studies presented in this thesis mostly demonstrate the generalisability and reliability of the SIMCA. That is, in-group identification, efficacy and injustice all independently, and mostly significantly predicted, the collective action outcomes in a way the model would expect. Indeed, the results of study one in Chapter Two, and Chapter Three were entirely consistent with the SIMCA in that all three factors of the model positively, and significantly, predicted their respective collective action outcomes. However, the results presented in Study 2 of Chapter Two, and Chapter Four did not entirely corroborate the SIMCA. Efficacy was not significantly associated with ethnic group-based collective action intentions in Study 2 of Chapter Two. In Chapter Four, group identification was, surprisingly, significantly *negatively* associated with the collective action behavioural outcome. Furthermore, discrimination (i.e., injustice) did not significantly predict collective action independently. The positive impact of discrimination on collective action that the SIMCA predicts was only significant for those with low levels of internalised homophobia. Indeed, when effect size is also taken into consideration, the only study included in this thesis that produced results entirely consistent with the predictions made by the SIMCA was Study 1 in Chapter Two. Notably, this was the only study that contained participants who were an advantaged group (i.e., the ethnic majority), and those participants made up the majority of the sample. Identity content had a larger effect size than in-group identification, efficacy, and injustice in Study 2 of Chapter Two (Māori), and in Chapter Four (sexual minorities). While,

in Chapter Three (women), identity content had a larger effect on the collective action outcome than injustice. These results all demonstrate that identity content is a strong, unique predictor of collective action for marginalised groups. Furthermore, the results highlight the importance of group-specific identity content in predicting collective action outcomes as these effects emerged even when the most widely acknowledged correlates of collective action were accounted for, suggesting that a ‘one size fits all’ model in fact *does not* fit marginalised groups.

In their updated version of the SIMCA, Jost, Becker, et al. (2017) argued that, in addition to the intergroup relational factors included in the original SIMCA, societal factors (specifically, system justification) were equally important to take into consideration when predicting collective action. This is because collective action, by and large, takes place within the social sphere. I argue that the results presented in this thesis demonstrate that intrapersonal factors, specifically, identity content, also make an important contribution in predicting collective action. Indeed, while collective action may generally take place in the social sphere, the decision to take part in collective action is largely an individual one. Identity content, when measured alongside the other SIMCA factors and system justification, can provide a broader, more detailed picture of what is going on, and more importantly, *why* it is going on. That is, the addition of identity content to the model parses out individual differences and nuances which would be missed in a purely intergroup / social model. For example, if identity content had not been included, it would be assumed that, as predicted by the SIMCA, discrimination positively predicted collective action for LGBTQIA+ individuals. That this effect only occurred for individuals who had low levels of internalised homophobia – something which has immense practical implications – would have been overlooked. Similarly, injustice significantly predicted ethnic group-based collective action intentions for Māori, a result consistent with the SIMCA. However, the inclusion of identity content

revealed that perceptions of injustice were only a significant predictor for those who less strongly valued their cultural and historical ethnic identity. Those participants who highly valued their ethnic identity were equally supportive of collective action regardless of their perceptions of injustice.

Each of the studies accounted for in-group identification, efficacy and injustice, as well as the status legitimising effect of system justification. However, group-specific identity content emerged as an independent and significant predictor of collective action intentions, support or behaviour in each study. Additionally, all three studies which included a measure of identity content illustrated that differential endorsement of that identity content significantly impacts collective action support, intentions and behaviours. This is something that would go unrecognised in the SIMCA which is a more generalised predictive model that does not consider intrapersonal factors such as group-specific identity content. This point is perhaps best elucidated by looking at Study 1 in Chapter Two. This study included both advantaged and marginalised participants, and was focused solely on how these intergroup relational factors predicted the collective action outcome. The results of this study were entirely consistent with the SIMCA – in-group identification even had the largest effect size as would be expected based on theory. This study did not include a measure of identity content, which is likely why the results were so direct and clear. However, because of this lack of intrapersonal consideration, valuable gradations relating to the three SIMCA factors, and system justification was likely lost.

In sum, while all the studies included in this thesis generally supported the SIMCA, they also demonstrated that identity content provides additional important information regarding collective action outcomes. The inclusion of identity content revealed nuanced information about how the meaning of an identity impacts the variables included in the SIMCA, which subsequently also impact predictions regarding collective action. Identity

content is primarily an intrapersonal factor. However, because much of what constitutes marginalised groups' identity content is determined by dominant, out-group others and then reinforced in society, there is an element of intergroup relations and social context to identity content as well. This makes it an incredibly valuable and important predictor of collective action, as it is influenced by multiple sources which relate to collective action.

**System justification.** Recent research integrating system justification into the SIMCA has suggested that enhanced system justifying beliefs suppress perceptions of injustice and in-group identification for marginalised social identities (Jost, Becker, et al., 2017; Osborne, Jost, et al., 2019). Additionally, Osborne, Jost, et al. (2019) found that system justification was negatively associated with collective action that challenges the current system, and positively associated with collective action that supports the current system for both high and low status groups. These findings were mediated by group identification, group-based injustice and anger, and system-based dissatisfaction and anger.

The results of the studies presented in this thesis, particularly the results of Study 2 in Chapter Two, contradict the findings of Osborne, Jost and colleagues (2019). The results of this study show that when members of marginalised groups highly value important aspects of their identity, the legitimising effect of system justification is significantly alleviated. That is, individuals are *more* motivated to engage in collective action aimed at addressing inequality regardless of how highly they endorse system justifying beliefs. However, the palliative effect of system justification does apply to individuals who do not value their historical and cultural ethnic identity as strongly. In this instance, system justifying beliefs significantly moderated the relationship between group-based injustice and collective action. That is, participants who held lower value for their ethnic identity and highly endorsed system justifying beliefs were less likely to support system challenging collective action than those similarly low in identity content who were also low in system justification. This suggests that



highly valuing an aspect of their group's identity may overcome the ostensibly ameliorating effect of system justification.

The correlations presented in Chapter Two Study 1 also show that system justification was negatively associated with belonging to a minority (as opposed to the majority) ethnic group, and ethnic-group identification was higher for the ethnic minority group. Chapter Three shows that, for women, system justification and gender in-group identification were positively correlated. The same observation can be made in Chapter Four where, for the LGBTQIA+ community, system justification was positively correlated with in-group identification, and, surprisingly, with perceptions of sexual identity-based discrimination (injustice). Though incongruent with system justification theory, that perceptions of the system as unfair are positively associated with in-group identification is consistent with the work of Ellemers et al. (1993) and Wright (1997). Furthermore, for both Māori (Study 2, Chapter Two), and women (Chapter Three), perceptions of injustice, group identification and identity content all had a larger effect size on collective action than system justification. However, none of the studies included in this thesis contained a measure of affect which may have impacted these discrepancies. Nonetheless, these results demonstrate that identity content is associated with system justification, which would be expected as much of marginalised groups' identity content is ascribed to them by dominant out-group others who are invested in maintaining the status quo (Herek, 2004, 2007; Herek et al., 2015). However, these associations do not always occur in a manner anticipated by system justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994), indicating that it is also an independent construct which could provide valuable insights into when, and how system justification impacts marginalised individuals' participation in collective action.

Indeed, many forms of identity content may themselves be considered system justifying ideologies, as endorsement of them functions to maintain the status quo in a

manner similar to system justification. This is because marginalised groups' identity content is primarily made up of generally negative stereotypes imposed upon them by dominant out-group others. Thus, these stereotypes which make up marginalised group' identity content legitimise status-based differences. This idea is supported somewhat by correlations in Chapter Two, Study 2 and Chapters Three and Four. That is, system justification correlated negatively with valuing the historical and cultural importance of one's ethnic identity, and correlated positively with internalised homophobia. Self-objectification (i.e., women's patriarchally dictated (Bartky, 1990) internalisation of gender norms (Henley, 1977; Lerner, 1983) regarding how women should look which leads them to view the value of their body not by its functionality, but instead in terms of its attractiveness to out-group (male) others; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), was also negatively, though not significantly, correlated with gender-based system justification.

Measures of system justification assess people's perception that the existing social structure is fair and legitimate (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2004). As such, system justification is a critical predictor of collective action because individuals who perceive the system as fair are more likely to want to retain the status quo, thus they will not participate in collective action (Badaan et al., 2018; Jost & Hunyady, 2005; Osborne & Sibley, 2013). However, system justification is a broad measure which seeks to determine how satisfied people are with society *overall*. It is not directed at any particular group, and therefore assesses general satisfaction or dissatisfaction regarding the fairness and legitimacy of the existing social structure. This assessment is then applied to various social issues that affect marginalised groups on the assumption that their (dis)satisfaction with the status quo reflects the specific context being examined. There are exceptions to this trend, however. For example, Jost and Kay (2005) adapted the original (Kay & Jost, 2003) system justification items so that they would specifically measure gender-based system justification (i.e.,

‘Everyone has a fair shot at wealth and happiness’ became ‘Everyone (male or female) has a fair shot at wealth and happiness’. ‘Society is set up so that people get what they deserve’ became ‘Society is set up so that men and women get what they deserve’; Jost & Kay, 2005, p. 501). Similar adaptations have been made for ethnic minority groups (e.g., ‘Everyone in New Zealand has a fair shot at wealth and happiness, regardless of ethnicity or race’; Bahamondes et al., 2019, p. 1395), though at the time of writing, I could not find an adaptation for the LGBTQIA+ community despite system justification being used increasingly in research on this group (e.g., Bahamondes-Correa, 2016; Blenner, 2015). However, even these adaptations remain very broad in that they still measure satisfaction with the socio-structural system as a whole, despite invoking an intergroup comparison between the marginalised group and the advantaged out-group. While a comparison between groups is valuable in research examining marginalised groups, these adapted measures still may not necessarily be relevant to specific aspects of the social context being targeted by the research as the results of this thesis demonstrate. Including situationally relevant identity content alongside system justification serves to provide a more detailed understanding of the impact legitimisation of the existing social system has on collective action. Indeed, inclusion of identity content would provide the benefit of measuring legitimisation on a structural, intergroup, and individual level, thereby covering all of the relevant bases of societal inequality (for a similar argument, see Sengupta et al., 2015).

**Collective action.** Many scholars have remarked that the *content* of group identity (i.e., identity content) is an important factor to consider in order to better understand the contribution of group identity to collective action intentions and engagement (Reynolds et al., 2012; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). However, identity content has been largely neglected in the collective action literature – often assumed, but rarely explicitly measured. Becker and Wagner (2009) demonstrated how identity content,

which they operationalised as gender-role preference, moderated the relationship between in-group identification and collective action for women. Specifically, they showed that women who highly identified with their gender and had internalised progressive (as opposed to traditional) identity content relating to gender roles were more likely to support, and participate in, collective action on behalf of women. However, when women did not strongly identify with their in-group, gender role identity content had no effect on collective action. In other words, identity content specific to the group makes an important contribution to collective action research.

The three empirical studies included in this thesis operationalised identity content as (a) valuing the historical and cultural significance of one's ethnic identity, (b) self-objectification, and (c) internalised homophobia make similar important contributions. In all instances, identity content significantly and differentially predicted collective action intentions, support or behaviour. That is, the results of these studies showed that responses to injustice, prejudice<sup>19</sup> and discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, gender, and sexual identity (respectively) are not unidimensional. Instead, responses are significantly affected and shaped by endorsement of group-specific identity content. Measures of injustice are considered to be a reliable and effective predictors of collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes, et al., 2008). That identity content impacts its predictive ability, revealing that the effect of injustice on collective action will only emerge under certain identity content conditions, is both practically and theoretically important.

Finally, a particularly important and novel contribution this thesis makes to the collective action literature is that each study measured a different facet of collective action. Namely, the current thesis assessed collective action intentions (Chapter Two), support

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<sup>19</sup>Ambivalent sexism is commonly used as a measure of discrimination / prejudice to predict collective action on behalf of women (e.g., Becker & Wright, 2011; Chamberlin, 2019; Ellemers & Baretto, 2009; Glick & Raberg, 2018).

(Chapter Three), and actual behaviour (Chapter Four). That there was a great degree of consistency across the results for all outcomes indicates that the observed effects of identity content are reasonably robust.

In sum, the results of the studies included in this thesis provide unequivocal support for the supposition that identity content is a relevant and important factor to consider in collective action research. Because identity content is often overlooked, this thesis makes a substantial contribution to the collective action literature. Taken together, these studies provide novel findings regarding the import of identity content to collective action. These findings also provide avenues for practical applications and future research directions which I will discuss in the following section. In addition, I will discuss limitations to the studies presented in this thesis.

### *Practical implications*

**Fostering optimism and combatting stereotypes.** The studies presented in this thesis demonstrate that identity content has a significant impact on whether marginalised individuals will pursue collective action on behalf of their group. One reason for this may be the way in which identity content is associated with optimism, which subsequently determines the strategies marginalised individuals employ to cope with discrimination. Indeed, both internalised homophobia (Kaysen et al., 2014; Moe et al., 2008) and self-objectification (Cash, 2004; Williams et al., 2004) correlate negatively with optimism, while valuing the distinctiveness associated with being Māori correlates with an improved social outlook (Houkamau, 2006, 2010). Therefore, approaches aimed at fostering and bolstering optimism may influence the way marginalised individuals think about their identity content. A more positive view of their identity content should then increase collective action, as suggested by the results of the studies in this thesis where those lower in internalised

homophobia and self-objectification, and those who more highly valued their ethnic identity were more likely to support and engage in collective action on behalf of their group.

Optimism is dispositional, and reflects a tendency to think more positively about the present, and the future (Wrosch & Scheier, 2003). Individuals who view their identity content as positive are likely to be more optimistic about themselves, their identity, and their group identity. As a result, it is possible that they more highly value, and perceive a better future for their group (Becker & Wagner, 2009; Górska & Bilewicz, 2015). Indeed, Dricu et al. (2020) found that individuals displayed a strong social optimism bias (i.e., the expectation that the future will hold more desirable outcomes) for their in-group. Thus, these individuals would be more likely to take action on behalf of their group. Furthermore, optimism is related to engagement-focused coping strategies (i.e., actively addressing a problem) such as participating in collective action. Optimism also dissuades disengagement-focused coping such as withdrawal or denial (Solberg Nes & Segerstrom, 2006). For example, Kaiser and Miller (2004) found that women who were dispositionally more optimistic expected that confronting discrimination would result in a positive outcome. This subsequently led to an increased likelihood that they would confront discrimination. Similarly, a qualitative analysis conducted by Dogan et al. (2021) found that Black individuals who viewed the film *Black Panther* (2018), which contains positive portrayals and stereotypes of Black people, experienced increased feelings of hope for the future with respect to how Black people are regarded in society. In turn, these feelings of hope increased support for, and suggestions of, collectivism as a form of resistance to racial prejudice.

Much of the negative identity content ascribed to marginalised individuals is based on stereotypes (Herek, 2009b; Link & Phelan, 2001; Simon & Hamilton, 1994). As such,

widespread, popular programmes and targeted campaigns which focus on combating negative stereotypes should alter these perceptions. This, in turn, should lead to marginalised individuals developing a more positive approach to their identity. Subsequently, this should encourage collective action, as marginalised individuals begin to see themselves as equal to advantaged out-groups, and worthy of more than their marginalised status provides. Indeed, Deutschmann and Steinvall (2020) argue that raising awareness is the first, critical step needed to combat stereotypes. They note several programmes which have been effective in raising awareness such as encouraging stereotype replacement, and exposure to counter-stereotypic images (Devine et al., 2012). However, these programmes are expensive and time consuming. Nevertheless, one particularly effective approach towards altering stereotypes is via film and television (FisherKeller, 2002, 2011; Way & Rogers, 2015). Adams-Bass et al. (2014) outline how media portrayals of stereotypes highly influence the identity development of marginalised adolescents. The valence of the stereotypes people are exposed to does, however, impact whether the media's influence is positive or negative. For example, Bond (2016) exposed female children aged between six and nine to either gender stereotypical STEM television characters, or gender counter-stereotypical STEM television characters. Their results revealed that girls exposed to gender stereotypical characters expressed a greater preference for a 'traditional' female career when they grew up, and when asked to draw a picture of a scientist, they almost exclusively drew a man. Conversely, positive stereotype portrayals can promote strong, positive racial identity development (Dogan et al., 2021), which then increases consideration of, and participation in, strategies to combat racism.

Another consideration regarding stereotypes and the way that they function, under certain conditions, to enhance out-group favouritism among marginalised individuals (e.g., Jost, 2020), is that the shifting social, cultural, and political climate itself may reduce this effect. For example, a recent study conducted by Degner et al. (2021) found that, in contrast

to studies which employed a similar methodology over two decades prior (i.e., Jost, 2001; Jost & Burgess, 2000), marginalised participants were more likely to attribute their lower status to systematic factors and perceived stigmatisation than to negative stereotypes about their group.



## **Limitations and Future Directions**

As with all research, there are some limitations which must be noted that may impact the implications and generalisability of the findings included in this thesis<sup>20</sup>. First, the data used for all of the studies included came from western, educated, industrialised, rich and democratic (WEIRD) countries (Henrich et al., 2010). Structural disadvantage is considered to be more difficult to overcome than incidental disadvantage, however, people should perceive structural disadvantage as easier to overcome in countries where the government, and / or societal structure appears more open to change (Kaiser et al., 2013). That is, when the existing social structure is seen as less stable (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986). Therefore, it is unlikely that the findings included here would be replicated in more authoritarian countries, or ones where citizens perceive the socio-structural system as intractable (for an historical review of Human Rights activism under military dictatorships in Chile, Uruguay and Argentina, see Loveman, 1998). It is especially unlikely that these results would be found in countries with strict laws and social mores regarding the behaviour of women, and those where minority sexual identities are illegal. The risk attached to collective action in these environments is much higher, and would have a significant impact on the outcome over and above any of the variables included in these analyses.

Despite the heightened risks involved with protesting outside of democratic nations, research on collective action in repressive contexts has identified some key predictors of participation. For example, religiosity and social networking strongly predict collective action participation in the high-risk context of post-Soviet Central Asia (Achilov, 2016). Likewise, Kitts (2000) found social networks crucial to collective action in risky contexts. However, the importance of social networks was not solely in predicting participation, but

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<sup>20</sup> Limitations specific to each study are outlined in those chapters and will not be covered here. This section relates to limitations of the thesis as a whole.

also in allowing individuals to discreetly discover how many other people were going to participate in a planned event. The likelihood of engaging in collective action increased as the size of prospective number of participants increased, presumably due to the rise in anonymity achieved by larger crowds. The concept of ‘safety in numbers’ also predicted collective action for the repressed women of the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa (Bonnin, 2000), as did the ability to separate one’s private and public sphere. This cognitive separation allowed women to create psychological boundaries between the home – where they would act in a manner consistent with that which was traditionally expected of them, and protest spaces where they felt comfortable expressing their dissatisfaction with their circumstances. Additional predictors of collective action under repressive, high-risk circumstances include increased anger towards the heightened risk involved, political efficacy, and identity consolidation efficacy (Ayanian & Tausch, 2016) – that is, the belief that participating in collective action will affirm, confirm, and strengthen the collective identity of the oppressed group (Saab et al., 2015).

Another limitation of these results is that all the samples used in this thesis were self-selected. As such, care must be taken when attempting to generalise the results. Random samples, which are demographically representative of the population, are preferable, albeit costly to attain. Especially when research has a more narrow and specific focus – such as is the case for the studies in this thesis. Representative samples are often expensive endeavours organised by a government or other institution such as the General Social Survey (Burt, 1984), or the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (Sibley, 2009). Surveys such as these generally measure a wide variety of variables, including demographics, well-being, attitudes, and ideologies. However, in order to prevent survey fatigue, truncated versions of scales are often used reducing reliability. Furthermore, despite the fact that they are representative of the broader population, these surveys do not include specific variables – such as internalised

homophobia – which are required for studies examining marginalised and diverse populations with specific identity-driven hypotheses.

Participation in all the studies included in this thesis was conditional on the participant being 18 years old or older. This decision was made based on the requirements of the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (UAHPEC). The UAHPEC requires parental consent, along with participant consent for minors. The datasets I collected for Chapters Three and Four were obtained via online survey – one in the U.S, one in New Zealand – and participants were anonymous. Obtaining parental consent was an impossibility in these instances, so the minimum age limit was protective and functional. However, young people have always been, and are becoming increasingly more, involved in collective action. This is particularly true of marginalised youths, for whom taking action provides them with a positive, and proactive outlet against the socio-political inequalities, and structural discriminations which constrain their lives (Diemer, 2012; Diemer et al., 2021; Hope & Spencer, 2017; Seider et al., 2022). Indeed, research has shown that marginalised young people who engage in action for social change have a higher grade point average by the end of high school (Seider et al., 2022), greater occupational attainment (Rapa et al., 2018), increased likelihood of voting (Diemer & Li, 2011), positive mental health outcomes (Frost et al., 2019), and greater organisational (Clay, 2012) and leadership skills (Serrano, 2020).

Despite these benefits, it is unlikely that the findings included in this thesis would translate directly to similarly marginalised individuals who are minors. Identity development is a lifelong process. However, young people in particular have more fluid identities. That is, they are more changeable, and that change happens more frequently (for a review see Branje et al., 2021). Furthermore, adolescents are more susceptible to the influence of social norms, and are particularly swayed by those endorsed by majority groups (Pinho et al., 2021). Thus,

only including participants who were 18 years or older likely resulted in more stable and temporally consistent findings. Future research looking into generational effects of identity content on collective action, or longitudinal research examining identity content shifts and the impact this has for social movement participation in marginalised youths, would be a very valuable addition to the literature.

The studies included in this thesis empirically demonstrate that identity content makes a unique and valuable contribution to the study of collective action for marginalised groups. However, only three different identity content concepts were examined. There are many other facets of marginalised groups' identity content that would likely impact collective action behaviour. Some of these identities are positive, whereas others are negative. Some are ascribed to them by dominant out-group others, whereas others are not. Each would all have a unique impact on collective action. Considering how neglected the topic of identity content is in the literature, these different forms of identity content should be considered in future research.

It is also important to acknowledge that individuals who identify with more than one marginalised group experience identity-based stigma at the intersection of their identities (e.g., Collins et al., 2008; Crenshaw, 1989, 1997; Meyer et al., 2008). The multiple jeopardy hypothesis argues that oppression and discrimination have a multiplicative effect for individuals with two or more marginalised identities (King, 1988). Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach (2008) suggested that having multiple marginalised, subordinate identities can render an individual invisible when compared to those who only have one marginalised identity. The reason for this is that they are not considered to be a prototypical member of any of their identity groups, which has serious implications for in-group identification, and therefore, collective action.

Theories of intersectionality purport that multiple, interlocking identities are often evaluated by both in- and out-group others in terms of their relative power, privilege and socio-cultural relevance. These evaluations then impact the way an individual with more than one marginalised identity is accepted and treated. Furthermore, these experiences shape that individual's experiences and the formation of their collective identity. That is, the salience of, and importance they place on, each marginalised identity (for reviews see Parent et al., 2013; Shields, 2008). Thus, the identity content of individuals with multiple marginalised identities may be even more strongly imposed on them by others – that is, by people both within their groups, and by advantaged others. If that is the case, this could result in very different reactions to, and internalisations of identity content, which, subsequently, would impact collective action support and behaviour. This would be particularly likely if an individual feels as though their identities are at war with one another, or they feel more accepted by one marginalised group over others with which they identify.

Future experimental research could explore this important topic. For example, baseline measures of group identification for each of the participants' marginalised identities could be acquired, along with other relevant variables including identity content and the extent to which they support, intend to participate in, or have participated in collective action on behalf of each group. Researchers could then experimentally manipulate the salience of one marginalised identity and its associated identity content. Following this, participants would then be presented or confronted with three flyers advertising an upcoming collective action event all of which are occurring at the same date and time. One on behalf of a neutral cause (e.g., the environment), the other two on behalf of one of the participants' marginalised identities. If the participant elects to take a flyer at all, and which flyer they take, would be the outcome variables.

While the studies included in this thesis, and the thesis overall, have some limitations, the results still provide valuable insights across a range of disadvantaged groups. Particularly in the areas of collective action, group-identification, and identity content. The findings are novel and provide knowledge which could inform avenues for practical intervention, as well as future research directions.

***A note of consideration: Imposing world views. Who decides what is ‘right’?***

Research on collective action generally frames it as positive and progressive. Social movements for a better world. Peaceful, harmonious, non-violent (Górska et al., 2017). Indeed, an overwhelming majority of the literature (why, one could even call it the *dominant*<sup>21</sup> literature) examines what would be considered liberal or left-wing goals towards equal rights that have an assumed foundation in morality (Duarte et al., 2015). The problem with this emphasis is that there is no unbiased, value-free, objective notion of what is ‘better’ or ‘right’ (Gergen, 1973). Some individuals are just as likely to engage in collective action to maintain the status quo as others are to oppose it (e.g., Górska et al., 2022; Mikołajczak et al., 2022). Furthermore, they believe that they are right to do so. Berger and Luckmann (1966) argued that within the social construction process of reality and its maintenance, individuals *are* able to, and often *do*, differentiate people into significant, important and better versus insignificant, unimportant, and inferior categories. They use the example of organised religion to illustrate this point by describing how a non-Catholic spouse would serve as a threat to the faith of a Catholic, thus the Catholic church disapproving of interfaith marriage is logical.

The fact is that a lot of people do believe, many without (conscious) power-based agendas, that women should be subservient to men (Pevey et al., 1996), sexual minorities are deviant (Cochran, 2020), and that other ethnic or cultural groups are less than (Deshpande,

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<sup>21</sup> “Isn’t it ironic, don’t you think?” (Morissette, 1996).

2010; Falk & Tilley, 2017). These justifications are often upheld on the basis of religious or cultural beliefs. Equal rights for all, and diminishing harm to vulnerable groups is a worthy goal, and one I personally endorse. However, there are many individuals and groups who would argue that caution must be exercised else action and intervention could be seen to border on cultural imperialism. That is, imposing<sup>22</sup> values, practices and beliefs upon others via domination or force (for a review see Tomlinson, 2001).

The question then becomes, if and when it is acceptable to protest against inequality and suffering. In many ways, it appears that out-group others perceive distress and abuse in gradients. When the harm is thought to be too extreme, then they consider it unconscionable not to intervene. An example of this is the outrage and vehement opposition against female genital circumcision, while male circumcision remains a relatively acceptable practice for those for whom it is considered a cultural, or religious right (Earp, 2015; Lunde et al., 2020). The harm done in the latter instance is subjectively considered to be less. Another example is that it is *hopefully* unlikely that anyone would actively endorse the reinstatement of slavery. However, many people do not have a problem with the institutional slavery that exists within the U.S prison system (e.g., see Alexander, 2010). Again, in the latter instance the harm subjectively appears to be less.

All things considered, the cultural relativism of allowable forms of collective action is an incredibly murky and difficult area to navigate. I do not have, nor will I pretend to have, an answer, let alone *the* answer. A popular phrase within the zeitgeist refers to ‘being on the right side of history’ when there is a conflict or social movement that captures national or global attention (e.g., apartheid, women’s suffrage, legalisation of same-sex marriage). We, as individuals, look to our conscience and choose our side – we believe we are right. Then, the world does change. Incrementally, but it does. Yes, we believe we are right, but the truth

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<sup>22</sup> “A little too ironic. Yeah, I really do think.” (Morissette, 1996).

is that we simply do not know. Collectively, the majority of people now consider the divine right of Kings, slavery, the disenfranchisement of women, laws which denoted them as the property of their father or husband, and the criminalisation of homosexuality as archaic and absurd. Maybe we even arrogantly wonder why people put up with such notions at all?

However, we are unable to know what aspects of our society will be contemplated in this same way a century, or two, or five from now. Will there be social science classes and PhD theses devoted to the inherent and circularly destructive nature of democracy? The irrational, ludicrous and exclusionary division of the earth's population into separate countries? The worldwide blind barbarianism that led to environmental collapse? Corporate capitalism? We do not know what is right. We can only act in a manner consistent with our conscience.

***A note on ethical considerations: Research and marginalised populations***

From the experience of designing and conducting research collaboratively with policy makers and other individuals who work in applied contexts, Skinner and Roche (2021), noted that, within the changing socio-cultural and political climate, traditional quantitative research methods are encountering increasing challenges with respect to privacy, identity, and participant well-being concerns. Particularly, they refer to the relatively recent inclusion of marginalised populations as the focus of scientific research, and discuss the emerging discourse surrounding the importance of asking the 'right' questions.

What constitutes the 'right' questions has historically never been a fixed concept in science. Instead, it is one which shifted as new research paradigms were introduced (Kuhn, 2012). However, with the recent uptake in social, cultural, and political movements – particularly among previously marginalised identities – it is not necessarily changing research paradigms which are denoting what the 'right' questions are. Instead, it is those movements and groups which are informing and contesting the 'rightness' of questions in a number of research domains (e.g., Agénor, 2020; Campbell, 2020). This change in ownership and



stewardship does not, however, equate to universal agreement even within populations. For example, Skinner and Roche (2021) found that some involved and affected parties considered asking participants to divulge their gender as intrusive, while others did not. However, no such contention arose with respect to asking participants to disclose their ethnic identity. They also noted that there was great debate surrounding the appropriateness of asking questions related to past drug and alcohol abuse, depression, and physical health. One reason why asking the ‘right’ questions in the ‘right’ way is of such importance is the potential harm which could incur from having members of stigmatised groups complete survey measures which remind them of their stigmatised status. Of specific, long-standing concern within the research community is the possibility of re-traumatising participants (e.g., Brabin & Berah, 1995; Park & Blumberg, 2002; Walker et al., 1997; Weinreb et al., 2010). However, as the anthropologist Lévi-Strauss (1983) noted, the role of science is not to give the right answers, but to ask the right questions. Here, he was not referring to the framing or phrasing of the questions, but instead to the social importance of the questions, and the benefit asking them will provide to individuals and to society.

Extensive research on the potential for inducing harm or re-traumatising participants has found that the benefit far outweighs the cost (e.g., Edwards et al., 2007), and that participants experiencing and reporting distress is rare (e.g., Park & Blumberg, 2002). Becker-Blease and Freyd (2007) found that a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy surrounding potentially sensitive questions actually reinforces feelings of shame in vulnerable populations. Additionally, they noted that both ethics committees and researchers will often overestimate the potential risk and harm, while underestimating the benefits to participants. As a result, they argued that treating marginalised and stigmatised individuals as overly vulnerable and weak is, itself, unethical and damaging. Notably, that it is patronising, condescending and potentially denigrating. Survivors, and stigmatised participants

themselves, reinforce this view. In a cross-sectional study of adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse, Lee et al. (2012) found that over half of the participants reported feelings of relief at actually, *finally* being asked about their experiences, and expressed hope that their answers would improve public understanding and response. None of their participants reported feeling offended or unduly traumatised. Similarly, while a small portion of participants in Walker et al's., (1997) study of female survivors of physical and sexual abuse did report experiencing greater distress than they had anticipated, they all commented that, had they known that they would experience distress beforehand, they would still have completed the survey. The primary reason given for this was that they perceived that the aims of the work were important. Likewise, Cromer et al. (2006) found that survey questions which specifically related to trauma caused participants relatively little distress. In fact, those questions were perceived by participants as being of greater importance, and were given a greater cost-benefit rating compared to other forms of psychological research.

This acknowledgment of the vital importance of asking sensitive questions with respect to the larger social benefits (e.g., policy making, resource distribution) is a recurring theme in research which seeks to understand and address the potential harm survey and interview questions can have on participants. Black and Black (2007) note that asking helps to create and provide solutions, while not asking actually plays into those social forces which perpetuate trauma, marginalisation and stigma. Similarly, Skinner and Roche (2021) argue that asking marginalised populations potentially difficult questions is necessary in order to inform, and create programs and policies which support them. They further observe that *not* asking questions and collecting information on vulnerable groups has the unintended consequence of silencing and further marginalising those populations.

In sum, great care must be taken when asking vulnerable or marginalised populations questions which may remind them of their stigmatised social status and re-traumatise them.

However, reports of harm and distress are rare. Further, when distress is reported, participants indicate that they believe the benefits outweigh this cost. Applying a ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ approach to potentially sensitive questions is far more damaging than the questions themselves due to the unintended consequences of further silencing marginalised groups, and perpetuating trauma and stigmatisation. Finally, survivors of trauma, stigmatised individuals and researchers alike all note that, despite the potential for distress, asking difficult questions is a necessary and important step to improve the circumstances of vulnerable populations.

*A closing note.*

I belong to many identity groups. Some structural, some incidental. Some marginalised, some advantaged. Throughout the process of writing this thesis, I made every effort to be impartial – though I recognise and acknowledge that that is simply not possible (see also Crosby & Bearman, 2006). However unconsciously done, my own personal experiences and biases have impacted the conceptualisation, construction and content of this thesis. I know that I felt more passion, interest and even anger when researching and writing some of my studies more than others. I also know that I felt more invested in the outcomes of some of my studies more than others. I felt sympathy for all of the groups included in this thesis, and how their experiences breach the principles of social justice. However, I must acknowledge that I empathised with, and have a personal investment in, the social realities of some groups more than others because of my own identities.

I invite and encourage everyone who read this thesis to consider if, and how their own identit(y/ies) affected the way they read, interpreted, and responded to its content. I ask this of you now instead of asking it of you at the beginning, because I believe that, in this instance, reacting first and reflecting after will provide more insight into the implicit nature of identity-orientated, internalised, socio-structural, power-based bias.

## **Conclusion**

Socio-structural inequality and discrimination against marginalised groups are an entrenched and enduring feature of all hierarchically organised societies. Inequality and discrimination have deleterious consequences for marginalised individuals' psychological well-being, and access to essential material and social resources. These socio-structural iniquities require redress, as they insidiously affect every aspect of the lives of those they target. Collective action is arguably the most effective method of promoting marginalised group interests and bringing about social change. However, marginalised individuals often do not recognise these injustices, or do not respond to them by participating in social movements for the betterment of their group. Social identity theory proposes that participation in collective action is more likely if individuals perceive the existing social structure as illegitimate and unstable, in conjunction with low group permeability. The SIMCA outlines three factors which impact collective action behaviour: perceptions of injustice, perceptions of efficacy, and the strength of in-group identification. It has been noted that individuals' identity content likely impacts how and when people will participate in collective action. Yet despite this assertion, identity content has been largely neglected in the collective action literature. This thesis sought to begin to rectify this oversight.

Identity content is generally grounded in stereotypes, and is typically imposed upon marginalised groups by advantaged out-group others. Ascribed identity content serves the function of legitimising status-based differences between groups, allowing dominant groups to maintain their place in the socio-structural power hierarchy. Using the SIMCA as a framework and incorporating insights from both social identity and system justification theory, the present thesis aimed to empirically examine the impact of identity content on marginalised groups' collective action intentions, support and behaviour on behalf of their group. To achieve this aim, unique psychological motivators, and barriers to collective action

specific to the identity content of each of the marginalised groups included was measured and assessed. I assessed identity content by operationalising it as the extent to which marginalised group members either acknowledge the iniquity of, endorse, or internalise aspects of their group identity. The identity content concepts I measured were also ones which have individual, societal and political implications.

Results of the included studies demonstrated the importance of identity content. Positive perceptions of ethnic group identity content counteracted the predicted palliative effect of system justification on collective action in Chapter Two. Chapter Three demonstrated how negative identity content regarding body image (self-objectification) differentially moderated the relationship between hostile sexism and collective action and benevolent sexism and collective action. Lastly, Chapter Four showed that LGBTQIA+ individuals who had internalised negative homophobic identity content were less likely to participate in collective action when they perceived high levels of discrimination than those who had not. Taken together, the novel findings included in this thesis have important both theoretical and practical implications, and provide some of the first empirical support of the importance and relevance of identity content to collective action.

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