

# **Interaction effects of just-world beliefs and group identification processes on collective action tendencies**

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### **Abstract**

The common ingroup identity model has been a guiding framework for the improvement of intergroup relations. Recent studies however have shown that intergroup harmony can have adverse effects on collective action intentions. The present article extends the research on collective action by investigating the influence of just-world beliefs. It was argued that just-world beliefs moderate the negative effects of a common ingroup identity representation on collective action intentions among majority group members. Results indicated no significant interaction effects between the two factors on collective action intentions. Problematic outcomes of the interaction between a common identity and just-world beliefs could however be indicated. Implications for future research on intergroup relations and collective action intentions are discussed.

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### 1. Introduction

Collective efforts towards social change have recently seen a significant rebirth with for example the revolutions in the Arab world or the occupy movement in the centers of the western world. The dynamics of social changes have been of interest to a broad spectrum of social sciences ranging from sociology to psychology for a reasonably long time. Research however has so far mainly focused on the psychological determinants that motivate minority group members to join collective action (Huntsinger, Sinclair & Swim, 2008). The present paper therefore aims at addressing the lack of research on the determinants that motivate majority group members to join collective action. To investigate these determinants, the present paper will combine insights from the common ingroup identity model (Gaetner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman & Rust, 1993) which is derived from the social identity tradition (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), and just-world theory (Lerner, 1980).

The study specifically aims at extending the research that showed that intergroup harmony is not always beneficial, but can even have adverse effects on collective action intentions (Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, Pratto, 2009). It is expected that just-world beliefs play an important role that in the decision whether or not majority group members engage in collective action on behalf of a minority, especially if majority group members share a common identity with a victimized group. Contrary to intuition it is expected that under strong just-world-beliefs, a common identity representation compared to a subgroup identity will prevent majority group members to engage in efforts towards social change. Furthermore it is assumed that under high levels of just-world beliefs, a common identity with a victimized group will result in significantly higher levels of victim blaming compared to salient subgroup identities.

### **Categorization Processes**

Studies investigating social categorization processes have a long and rich tradition in the field of psychology. Classic studies like the ones conducted by Allport (1954) have consistently demonstrated the tendency of people to categorize others into an "Us and "Them" or ingroup or /

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outgroup schema (Tajfel, Flament, Billig & Bundy, 1971). From such basic categorization processes follow a number of biases that affect a broad spectrum of psychological processes like cognition, affect, social perception and behavioral intentions (Dovidio, Gaertner & Saguy, 2007). Broadly speaking, these biases often lead to a systematic distortion in favor of the ingroup members (Brewer, 1999). Typical observations of this categorization process include the fact that people experience more positive affect toward other members of the group (Otten & Moskowitz, 2000), have better memory for positive information about ingroup members (Howard & Rothbart, 1980) or the belief that members of the group share one's values more than outgroup members (Robbins & Krueger, 2005). The downside of this ingroup favoritism is the outgroup deterioration tendency that leads people for example to remember less positive information about outgroup members (Howard et al., 1980). These distortions contribute to the perpetuation of racial biases due to the stereotypical manner with which people belonging to an outgroup are perceived and categorized (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005). A successful approach to combat these distortions has been the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner et al., 1993). The model integrates the findings the social categorization approach (Brewer, 1979; Brown & Turner, 1981; Tajifel & Turner, 1979). The common ingroup model proposes that intergroup prejudice can be reduced by extending the ingroup favoritism tendencies to the outgroup members by means of cognitive recategorization. That is, by transforming "the cognitive representation of the memberships from two groups to one group" (Gaernter et al., 1993, p. 2). The basic idea is to extend to the positive outcomes of ingroup favoritism to larger numbers of perceivers through a shared, common identity. Results show that leading members of different groups to conceive of themselves as one common group has positive outcomes on a considerable large range of dimensions. Most notably positive forms of actual behavior like self-disclosure and helping as well as improved intergroup attitudes (Dovidio, Gaertner, Validzic, Matoka, Johnson & Frazier, 1997; Nier, Gaertner, Dovidio, Banker & Ward, 2001).

Generally speaking, leading members of different subgroups to conceive of themselves as one common group has proven to be an effective way of improving intergroup relations. Although it

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is apparent that the common ingroup identity model has the potential to be a useful tool in the effort to improve intergroup attitudes, problems have arisen in the context of social change (Saguy et al., 2009). The study conducted by Saguy and colleagues (2009) for example showed that commonality-focused contact leads to less attention to existing group inequalities and thereby reduces support for collective action among minority group members. The present article will further investigate the consequences of a common ingroup representation on intentions for collective action, specifically among majority group members.

### **Addressing the lack of research on majority group member's willingness to join collective action**

When it comes to collective action tendencies it is important to note that most of the research in the field has been directed at understanding under which circumstances minority group members will engage in collective action towards social change. Much less is understood about the factors and processes that motivate majority group members to join collective action on behalf of a minority (Huntsinger et al., 2008). It has become apparent that support from a majority group often leads to more successful outcomes in the efforts for social equality since majority groups are often more powerful (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Smith & Tyler, 1996) and in they are in addition perceived as more persuasive to the ingroup because they act against their objective self-interest (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999; Smith & Tyler, 1996). That is why an understanding of the factors that facilitate or constrain collective action intentions among majority group members could be a valuable asset in the effort towards social equality.

### **Indications for problematic outcomes of intergroup harmony**

Although there is a general lack of research on majority members, others have begun to identify the factors that either facilitate or prevent collective action intentions. There are studies that indicate that there is often a discrepancy between attitudes and behavior, the principle-implementation gap (Dixon, Durrheim, Tredoux, 2007). Dixon and colleagues (2007) for example show

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that the public acceptance of race segregation has declined considerable. Resistances to actual policies that target racial discrimination on the other hand remain high. The study conducted by Dixon and colleagues (Durrheim & Dixon, 2004) found that among majority group members commitment to equality was “rather a principle than a reality” (p.120) indicating that actual behavior aimed at changing the status quo is often lacking among majority group members. What prevents majority group members psychologically from participating in collective action is not fully understood at the present moment but there are indications that intergroup harmony which would normally considered to be a preferable state of affairs, could impede collective action towards social change.

Results show that in some cases, a common ingroup identity can have adverse effects when it comes to collective action for a given minority (e.g., Crisp, Stone & Hall, 2006; Crisp, Walsh, & Hewstone, 2006; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000; Ufkes, Otten, Van der Zee, Giebels & Dovidio, 2012). For minority as well as majority group members, a common identity undermines collective action tendencies through reduction of awareness of existing group-based disparities (Saguy et al., 2009). Recognition of existing disparities has shown to be an important precondition of collective action (van Zomeren, Postmes & Spears, 2008). The “blurring’ of existing disparities mainly occurs through the reduction of salient subgroup identities (Gaertner, Dovidio, 2012). Recent studies by Ufkes, Calcagno, Glasford and Dovidio (2013) show that the awareness of existing disparities between groups is an important precondition for collective action to occur through anger. For minority as well as majority group members, recognition of structural inequality in combination with a feeling of discontent about this disadvantage are necessary steps toward behavior aimed at changing the status quo (van Zomeren et al., 2008; Wright & Lubensky, 2009). The present paper extends the current research on the consequences of a common identity on collective action intentions by exploring the influence of just-world beliefs. It is assumed that salient just-world beliefs moderate the negative effects of a common ingroup representation (e.g., less awareness of group-based disparities and lower levels of collective action intentions). It is expected that salient just-world beliefs in combination with the perception of a common ingroup which implies that no structural differences exist, make the

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tendency to attribute the reason for perceived grievances onto the victim more likely compared to a subgroup identity condition. In turn, this should lead to lower levels of collective action intentions among majority group members because the victim in a common identity is held responsible for the misfortune and not structural inequalities.

### **Interaction between a common identity and the BJW on collective action intentions**

The belief-in-a-just-world (BJW) introduced by Lerner (1965) over 40 years ago has proven to be one of the most stable and cross-culturally generalizable concepts in the field of social psychology. The basic proposition of the theory is that people have the tendency to assume that good things happen to good people and bad things to bad people. Just-world theory states that the perception of the status quo as fair and legitimate is necessary in order to be able to maintain the feeling of living in an environment that one can control (Lerner, 1980). Studies have shown that this “distortion” of reality provides an important ego-protective function that helps individuals to sustain mentally healthy (Dalbert, 2001). These findings (e.g., BJW as a healthy coping mechanism) explain why people engage in seemingly irrational strategies (for example derogation of innocent victims) to maintain their perception of a world that is fundamentally just. BJW therefore constitutes an innate tendency of people which has beneficial effects for mental health.

Apart from the healthy aspects of the BJW however, other more problematic consequences have been recognized. Campbell, Carr and MacLachlan (2001) for example showed that BJW was related to individual/dispositional attributions for third world poverty. As Mulford and colleagues (1996) note is victim blaming essentially internal attribution because “individuals who suffer are held responsible for their own predicaments” (p. 1324). This is also relevant in the context of collective action because it requires an attribution for the disadvantage to external factors (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). These findings suggest that an investigation of the influence BJW in the context of collective action seems worthwhile because social change often is concerned with changing the status quo that discriminates minorities (e.g., victims). If majority group members endorse just-world

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beliefs, then it seems rather unlikely that they will engage in collective action because they judge the situation in a way that makes such action seem unnecessary. As Furnham (2001) notes: "The rather diverse literature seems to suggest that BJW scores are associated with right wing socio-political beliefs and less political activity" (p. 810). In this paper it is assumed that the tendency to attribute perceived suffering onto the victim that is a consequence of maintaining the BJW should be made more easily if a common group representation is endorsed at the same time. That is, the "blurring" of existing disparities that is the outcome of intergroup harmony on the one side, and the tendency to attribute the reason for the perceived disparities onto the victimized group on the other side, should result in significantly lower levels of collective action intentions compared to a subgroup representation. We therefore hypothesize that this interaction will negatively affect collective action intentions among majority group members compared to subgroup identities because the subgroup identity condition will be more aware of the existing differences and will therefore be less inclined to make an internal attribution. As a result, the subgroup condition therefore should be more motivated to engage in social change.

### **Ingroup victim as a higher threat to the need to maintain the BJW**

Another indication for the potentially adverse effects of a common identity and just-world-beliefs on collective action intentions come from studies conducted by Correia, Vala and Aguiar (2004). The study investigated the influence of the just-world beliefs on the group level. The paper predicted and found that sharing an identity with an innocent victim lead to more victim derogation compared to an outgroup victim (Correia et al. 2004). Due to the conceptual proximity of an ingroup victim and the nature of the common ingroup approach (which aims at including the former outgroup member in a higher order category), it seems reasonable to suspect that a common ingroup representation (which includes the victim) under high levels of BJW thinking will also result in significantly higher levels of victim blaming compared to a subgroup condition. Studies have shown that the more similar victims are to observers (as in the common ingroup approach), the more

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threatening acknowledging injustice toward the victim was (Yamauchi & Dalbert, 1994). This finding is in line with the notion of the BJW as a coping mechanism in which victim derogation constitutes a form of ego-protection whereby the blame is put on the victim which makes the observer “more comfortable and secure in his own situation” (Lerner, 1980). The Yamauchi and Dalbert study (1994) also confirmed that a victim that is part of one’s own social world threatens the need for maintaining the BJW more than an outgroup victim. It is therefore expected that the interaction between a common ingroup representation and salient just-world beliefs should produce higher levels of victim blaming compared to salient subgroup identities.

In summary, for the current paper we predicted that the interaction between a common ingroup representation and just-world beliefs will produce negative effects on collective action tendencies among majority members through two different (although related) mechanisms. The first assumption is that the joint effect of lower levels of awareness of existing disparities and the internal attribution tendency which results from endorsement of the just-world hypothesis should result in lower levels of collective action intentions compared to a subgroup condition. According to theory it is furthermore assumed that under low levels of just-world beliefs, participants in the subgroup condition will show the most intentions to engage in collective action compared to the other conditions. It is assumed that they will be most aware of existing disparities and are to a lesser extent inclined to attribute the suffering onto the victimized group due to the lack of just-world beliefs. The second, related assumption is that under high levels of just-world beliefs, a common identity with a victimized group will lead to higher levels of victim blaming compared to the subgroup condition. The subgroup identity condition under low levels of just-world thinking should, as with collective action intentions, show the overall lowest levels of victim derogation. In order to test the assumptions participants (majority group members) received either a common or a subgroup identity manipulation. Afterwards half of the sample received either a just-world affirmation or a control treatment. Subsequently participants were confronted with an essay which stated that minority group members do not have the same chances on the job market despite equal qualifications (e.g.,

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innocent victim situation). We used different indicators of collective action intentions as dependent variables (e.g., Efficacy, Social Support, Recognition of General Inequality, Politicized Identity) based on van Zomeren and colleagues (2008). If the proposed assumption should be true, efforts towards collective action build on the common ingroup approach need to be sensitive with regard to the interaction effects between a common identity representation and just-world thinking.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Participants

Eighty-five German participants took part in an online questionnaire voluntarily. The sample comprised of 41 males and 44 females aged between 19 and 65 ( $M= 31.92$ ;  $SD= 12.97$ ).

### 2.2 Design

The study employed a 2 (group categorization: common vs. subgroup) x 2 (just-world affirmation: affirmation vs. control) design. Each participant was randomly assigned to a condition. Each identity condition comprised of forty participants ( $N(\text{common})=20$ ,  $N(\text{Sub})=20$ ). The just-world condition consisted of eighteen participants in the affirmation and twenty-one participants in the control condition. The uneven distribution was a result of precocious dropout.

### 2.3 Procedure & Measures

Participants read a short essay titled "Intergroup relations in Germany". The text in each condition was comparable, except for specific sections designed to emphasize the different identity conditions. The text for the common ingroup condition and the subgroup identity condition were based on manipulations from Glasford and Dovidio (2011). The text for the common ingroup emphasized that an essential component of long-term well-being in Germany is "thinking about our common identity as Germans, without emphasizing racial/ethnic identities. In the subgroup identity condition, the emphasis was placed on the importance of different group memberships (Guerra,

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Monteiro, Riek, Maia, Gaertner & Dovidio, 2010), stating that “unique racial/ethnic identities are an essential component of long-term well-being”.

Success of manipulations was checked with four items stating for example “I view groups residing in Germany as having one common identity”; “I view citizens and immigrants in Germany as a part of different groups” based on Glaford (2011); there was a significant Pearson correlation between the two common identity items,  $r(80) = .246, p = 0.028$ ; and also for the subgroup items,  $r(80) = .262, p = 0.09$

Next, the participants in the just-world affirmation condition were presented with items confirming just-world beliefs and asked to rate the importance of these items to them ranging from 1 (most important) to 11 (least important). Items read for example: “Basically the world is just” or “In the end, good wins above evil”. Participants in the just world condition then wrote a short essay why the item they chose as most important is central to the world. Participants in the control conditions skipped this part of the study.

Next, just-world beliefs in the affirmation conditions were further confirmed. Participants had to rate statements on the thinking and writing process with Likert-scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). Statements read for example: “It was easy writing this paragraph” or “Writing this paragraph made me aware that people generally get what they deserve” (based on Stroebe).

Participants in the control conditions answered questions concerning their thinking process. Questions read for example: “I’ve just been thinking about how unjust and unfair the world is” or “I find it difficult to formulate my thoughts at this point in time”. Answers were assessed with Likert-scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much).

Afterwards, BJW of all conditions was assessed with eight items (e.g., I feel that people get what they deserve”) which had to be rated from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much);  $\alpha = .88$

Then, recognition of general equality was assessed with three items (e.g., ‘Being a German

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gives you an advantage to succeed in today's German society", based on Saguy, Tausch & Dovidio (2009);  $\alpha=.60$ . Appraisal of general inequality was assessed with eight items. The legitimacy section of the items was assessed with four items (e.g., "It seems unreasonable to me that immigrants are disadvantaged", Weber, Mummendey & Waldzus, 2002);  $\alpha=.76$ .

All participants next read an essay on how immigrants are facing greater challenges on the job market despite equal qualifications (e.g., innocent victim situation) compared to German applicants and how the pro-NRW movement tries to prevent an initiative aimed at changing the solicitation procedure in order to restore fairness. The essay made clear that the pro-NRW plans to prevent the Equal Chances Initiative would negatively affect equality between Germans and migrants (Based on Ufkes et al., 2013).

After finishing reading the essay, all conditions completed the dependent measures which were measured with Likert-scales ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much). Participants were told to answer the dependent measures with their respective identity (common or sub) in mind.

Participants' appraisal of the scenario was assessed with eight items. The legitimacy section of the item was assessed with four items ("It seems unreasonable to me that immigrants cannot apply anonymously", based on Weber, Mummendey & Waldzus, 2002);  $\alpha=.93$ . The pervasiveness section of the item was assessed with four items ("It seems to me that many immigrants can apply anonymously", adapted from Iyer & Ryan, 2009);  $\alpha=.79$ .

Efficacy was measured with eleven items. Group efficacy section of the item was measured with three items ("I think that as a group, we can support the Equal Chances Initiative", van Zomeren et al., 2004);  $\alpha=.92$ . Participative part of the efficacy item was assessed with three items ("I think as an individual I could make a contribution so that together we can support the Equal Chances Initiative", Zomeren et al., 2004);  $\alpha=.89$ . Individual efficacy was measured with five items ("I think that as an individual, I can support the Equal Chances Initiative, van Zomeren et al., 2004);  $\alpha=.93$ .

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Social support was measured with eight items. Pro/opinion support section of the item was assessed with four items (“I think many people are in support of anonymous applications for immigrants” and “I think the average person is in support of anonymous applications for immigrants”)  $\alpha=.81$ . Contra/ opinion support was measured with four items (“I think many people want to do something to prevent anonymous applications for immigrants” and “I think the average person wants to do something to prevent anonymous applications for immigrants);  $\alpha=.78$

Victim blaming was assessed with three items (e.g., “Immigrants have inherent weaknesses”) based on Mulford, Lee, Sapp, 1996;  $\alpha=.70$ . Society blame was measured with three items (e.g., “Federal government doesn’t help them enough”) based on Mulford, Lee, Sapp, 1996;  $\alpha=.72$ .

General change motivation was measured with two items (“Right now, I have a strong motivation to change disparities between groups” and “At this moment, I am extremely motivated to change disparities between groups”, based on Glasford & Dovidio, 2011; Saguy, Dovidio & Pratto, 2008);  $\alpha=.96$ .

## 3. Results

### 3.1 Effects of the manipulations

First, the success of the identity manipulation was assessed. A two-way ANOVA was performed to account for differences of the identity condition on the identity manipulation item. Results indicated a significant main effect of the identity condition on the identity item,  $F(1,76) = 3.975, p=.038$ . The results show that the participants in the respective identity conditions identified the corresponding items correctly.

Next, we examined the effect of the just-world manipulation on the BJW scores. A two-way ANOVA was performed to account for differences between the affirmation and control condition. Results indicated marginal main effect of the just-world condition,  $F(1,76) = 0.05, p=0.069$  on BJW scores. Further analysis showed that the scores were higher for the affirmation condition ( $M=2.95$ ,

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$SD=1.12$ ) than for the control condition ( $M=2.25$ ,  $SD=0.91$ ) indicating that the intended just-world affirmation was marginally successful. The identity factor had no significant effect on BJW scores,  $F(1, 76)=.05$ ,  $p=0.832$ . The interaction between the factors was also not significant,  $F(1, 76)=.06$ ,  $p=0.797$ .

### 3.2 Awareness of inequalities

A two-way ANOVA was performed to examine the effects of identity and affirmation conditions on recognition of general inequality. The analysis indicated no main effect of the identity condition on recognition of general inequality,  $F(1, 76)=2.01$ ,  $p=0.161$ . Further analysis showed however that the subgroup identity condition ( $M=5.01$ ,  $SD=1.12$ ) scored marginally higher on recognition of general inequality compared to the common ingroup condition ( $M=4.71$ ,  $SD=1.26$ ). The difference however did not reach significant levels,  $F(1, 79)=1.13$ ,  $p=.272$ .

There was furthermore a significant main effect of the just-world condition,  $F(1,76) = 4.004$ ,  $p=0.048$ . Contrary to our expectations, the just-world affirmation conditions ( $M= 5.11$ ,  $SD=1.03$ ) were more aware of existing differences compared to the just-world control conditions ( $M=4.73$ ,  $SD=1.33$ ). We had expected that participants who were primed with just-world beliefs would be more inclined to make individual attributions and not external attributions for inequalities which should have caused lower levels of recognition of general inequality. The results however suggest that just-world beliefs contribute to the recognition of general inequality.

### 3.3 Concrete action tendencies

#### Group Efficacy

We found no significant main effect of the identity condition on group efficacy,  $F(1,74) = .91$ ,  $p=0.343$  and also no significant main effect of the just-world condition,  $F(1,74) = .032$ ,  $p=0.859$ . There were also no significant interaction effects of the identity and the just-world condition on group efficacy,  $F(1, 74) = .63$ ,  $p=.427$ . According to our expectations there should have been a significant

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interaction effect between the identity and the just-world condition. These findings therefore do not support our predictions.

### Participative Efficacy

Next we investigated the effects of identity and just-world conditions on participative efficacy with a two-way ANOVA. There was no significant main effect of the identity condition,  $F(1, 78) = 2.21$ ,  $p = 0.141$  and also no main effect of just-world condition  $F(1, 78) = .003$ ,  $p = 0.953$ . The interaction of the identity and just-world condition was also not significant,  $F(1, 78) = 1.02$ ,  $p = 0.317$ . These findings do not support our assumption that just-world beliefs will moderate the willingness for collective action. Contrast analysis however revealed the subgroup identity condition ( $M = 4.69$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ) under low just-beliefs felt marginally more able to make a contribution compared to the other conditions,  $t(74) = -1.59$ ,  $p = 0.058$ . The common ingroup representation under low levels of just-world beliefs ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 1.61$ ) on the other hand felt least able to contribute to collective action compared to the other conditions,  $t(74) = 1.36$ ,  $p = 0.089$ .

### Individual Efficacy

A two-way ANOVA was executed to account for the effects of the identity condition on individual efficacy. Analysis showed no significant main effect of identity,  $F(1, 74) = 1.59$ ,  $p = 0.210$ . Then we accounted for main effects of the just-world condition. There was no main effect of the just-world condition,  $F(1, 74) = 0.28$ ,  $p = .592$ , and also no significant interaction effect,  $F(1, 74) = 0.69$ ,  $p = 0.410$ . These findings do not support our assumption according to which there should have been a significant difference between the identity conditions under high just-world beliefs.

### Social Support

A two-way ANOVA was performed to account for main and interaction effects of the identity and the just-world condition on social support. There was marginal main effect of the identity on social support  $F(1, 76) = 3.56$ ,  $p = 0.063$ . The subgroup identity condition ( $M = 3.98$ ,  $SD = 1.61$ ) scored

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marginally higher on support for social change compared to the common identity condition ( $M=3.47$ ,  $SD=1.09$ ). These findings are in line with earlier findings that showed that a common identity can have adverse effects on collective action tendencies (Ufkes et al., 2013). Same analysis further showed no significant main effect of the just-world factor,  $F(1, 76)=0.08$ ,  $p=0.775$ , and also no significant interaction effect,  $F(1, 76)=.28$ ,  $p=0.599$ . According to our assumptions there should have been a significant interaction effect between the identity and the just-world condition on support for social change.

### General Change motivation

Next we analyzed main and interaction effects of identity and just-world condition on general change motivation. Results showed neither a main effect of the factor identity,  $F(1, 75)=1.15$ ,  $p=0.285$ ; nor a main effect for the just-world condition,  $F(1, 75)=1.63$ ,  $p=.456$ . There was also no significant interaction effect,  $F(1, 75)=.046$ ,  $p=0.831$ . These findings do not support our proposed interaction between just-world beliefs and group identity representation. The overall low mean scores ( $M=3.75$ ,  $SD=1.67$ ) on the general change motivation item give an indication of the intention-implementation gap (Dixon et al., 2007). Our assumptions that just-world factor would moderate the effect of a common identity condition compared to a subgroup condition were however not confirmed.

### Politicized Identity

A two-way ANOVA was performed to assess the influence of the identity condition and just-world condition on politicized identity. The results indicated a marginal main effect of the identity condition,  $F(1, 74)=2.34$ ,  $p=.127$ . Participants in the common identity condition were less strongly identified ( $M=3.92$ ,  $SD=1.62$ ) with the Equal Chances initiative compared to the subgroup condition ( $M=4.41$ ,  $SD=1.25$ ). These results are in line with earlier research which found that a common identity impedes collective action intentions. The just-world condition showed no significant main effect on politicized identity,  $F(1, 74)=.39$ ,  $p=.536$ . The interaction furthermore was also not significant,  $F(1,$

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74)=.92,  $p=0.341$ . The assumed interaction between the identity condition and the just-world condition could therefore not be confirmed.

### 3.4 Victim blaming tendencies

Next, we tested the main and interaction effects of the identity and just-world conditions on victim blaming and society blaming. Two-way analysis of variance indicated a significant main effect of the identity condition,  $F(1, 76)=5.12$ ,  $p=0.027$  on the victim blaming item. Participants in the common ingroup condition ( $M=1.61$ ,  $SD=0.09$ ) derogated the victim more than in the subgroup conditions ( $M=1.32$ ,  $SD=0.09$ ). These results replicate findings from earlier studies which found that an ingroup victim got more derogated compared to an outgroup victim. The just-world condition showed no significant main effect on victim blaming,  $F(1, 76)=2.49$ ,  $p=0.119$ . The interaction between the identity and just-world conditions also did not reach significant levels,  $F(1, 76)=.51$ ,  $p=0.478$ . However, contrast analysis revealed that the common identity condition under high levels of just-world beliefs engaged significantly more in victim blaming compared to the other conditions,  $t(76)=-2.74$ ,  $p=0.004$ . Another contrast analysis showed that, as predicated, the subgroup identity condition under low levels of just-world thinking engaged significantly less in victim blaming compared to the other conditions,  $t(76)=1.93$ ,  $p=0.0285$ . These findings are in line with our assumptions that a common identity with salient just-world beliefs will produce significantly higher levels of victim blaming compared to a subgroup representation.

A two-way ANOVA examining the effects of identity and just-world condition on society blaming found neither significant main effects of the identity condition,  $F(1, 76)=0.71$ ,  $p=0.199$ , and also no main effect of the just-world condition,  $F(1, 76)=.718$ ,  $p=0.399$ . There was furthermore no significant interaction effect,  $F(1, 76)=.002$ ,  $p=0.960$ . These findings contradict our assumptions that the subgroup identity condition under high levels of just-world beliefs would make more external attributions (e.g., society blaming) compared to the common identity condition.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Main findings

The main purpose of this study was to investigate whether just-world beliefs would moderate the negative effects of a common identity representation on support for social change among majority group members. The results of the collective action items do not support this hypothesis. The scores on the respective items (e.g., Group Efficacy, Participative Efficacy, Individual Efficacy, Social Support, General Change motivation and Politicized Identity) did not differ significantly between the common and the subgroup identity under high just-world beliefs. There was also no significant difference between the identity conditions if just-world beliefs were absent. According to theory it was expected that participants under salient just-world beliefs in the common ingroup condition would show significantly lower levels of collective action intentions compared to the subgroup conditions. We had expected that this difference would not be obtained if just-world beliefs were absent. It therefore seems that the suggested relation between a common identity and just-world beliefs is not as direct as we had expected.

The results concerning the victim blaming tendencies on the other hand were confirmed by the obtained results. It was argued that under high just-world beliefs, the common ingroup condition would significantly derogate the victimized group more strongly than the subgroup identity condition. We found that the common ingroup condition did in fact engaged significantly more in victim derogation compared to the subgroup condition under high just-world beliefs. These results show that an ingroup victim seems to pose a higher threat to maintain the BJW which leads to higher levels of victim derogation. The results provide a direct assessment of the expected victim blaming tendencies which were argued to be higher in a common ingroup condition than in the subgroup condition. While the collective action items tested the individual attribution tendencies only indirectly through measurements of social change motivation across identity conditions, the victim blaming items offer a more direct measurement. According to our expectations, the motivation to

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engage in collective action should also have been affected by the interaction between a common ingroup representation and just-world thinking. The obtained results are therefore somewhat mixed. On the one hand did the results from the collective action items not reach significant levels for the proposed interaction, whereas the assessment of the victim blaming tendencies did in fact confirm our assumptions.

There are several possible explanations for the results. Lerner (1980) suggested that observers when confronted with an innocent victim that threatens the BJW, several strategies to handle the threat are available. When confronted with an innocent victim, observers can use two different strategies to handle the injustice and the threat to their BJW posed by this injustice. Rational strategies on the one hand involve the acceptance of the occurred injustice (rather than denying it) and engaging in behavior that compensates for the occurred injustice (e.g., helping the victim). Irrational strategies involve denying injustice has occurred (e.g., victim deserves the faith). The pattern of results suggest that the common ingroup condition did in fact was more threatened in their BJW and used more irrational strategies (e.g., victim derogation) than the subgroup conditions (as the victim blaming scores indicate) as expected. The subgroup condition however might have been not so much threatened in their BJW due to the fact that the victim was not part of their own social world and had therefore no sufficient reason to engage in rational nor in irrational strategies. As Lerner and Miller (1978, p. 1031) note: "To witness and admit to injustices in other environments does not threaten people very much because these events have little relevance for their own fates". This might explain the absence of interaction effects of the identity and the just-world condition because common identity condition did in fact derogate the victim (and low motivation for collective action accordingly), but the subgroup condition on the other hand was also not sufficiently motivated to engage in collective action.

The literature on collective action suggests multiple factors that prevent or facilitate collective action. To account for all of the factors and their interactions was beyond the scope of this

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study. It seems clear however that under a common identity condition, participants that endorse just-world beliefs are more inclined to attribute the reason for the suffering onto the victim. It can be argued that this will impede collective action intentions in spite of the fact that the present study could not find a straight relation of the interaction between a common identity and just-world beliefs on collective action intentions.

It should furthermore be noted that we could extend findings from earlier studies to majority group members to some extent. The study conducted by Ufkes and colleagues (2013) found that among minority group members a focus on a common identity compared to a dual or subgroup identity resulted in lower levels of motivation for collective action. For Participative Efficacy, Social Support and Politicized Identity we found marginal effects of the identity conditions. Consistently, the common ingroup condition showed the lowest levels of collective action tendencies. Although the results did not always reach significant levels there seems to be enough evidence to suggest that a common identity can impede collective action intentions among majority group members as well.

### **4.2 Limitations and Future Research**

The present study provided insights from which future research might benefit. First of all it seems questionable whether the identity manipulation had succeeded as intended. A shortcoming of the present study was that the identity manipulation was based on a translated essay that was originally used in an American context. The common identity in the identity manipulation essay from Glasford and Dovidio (2011) was operationalized as “having a common identity as Americans”. This manipulation was for the present study translated into “having a common identity as Germans”. Unlike in an American context where a superordinate identity as “Americans” has a very positive connotation (e.g., a set of universal values), a German identity might have a more problematic loading due to the national-socialistic past with which it is associated, especially with regards towards minorities. This rather negative association could pose resistance tendencies among German participants for this type of superordinate identity. Future research should therefore avoid this

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problem by implementing a European identity which has the positive connotation of an all-including category and can avoid possible negative associations and according resistance to this type of common identity, especially in a German context.

It seems furthermore reasonable to expect that an indirect measurement of victim blaming could have provided even stronger results due to the susceptibility of the item to social-desirability bias. It has been recognized that the BJW acts as an unconscious process (Lerner, 1980). Comparable to the concept of “aversive racism” (Gaernter et al., 2005) people do not recognize that they are prejudiced or in the case of just-world thinking engage in victim derogation. That is why explicit measurements often do not assess the true degree to which such beliefs are operating. A promising solution for this problem has been developed by Hafer (2002) who used a modified stroop-task for an implicit measurement of victim blaming. This implicit assessment could potentially deliver stronger results because it can directly tap into the unconscious nature of the process whereas explicit measurements are prone to social-desirability bias and the fact that people themselves cannot indicate the degree to which they engage in victim derogation because they themselves are not aware of it. Another shortcoming of the present study was however that no direct assessment of threat to the BJW posed by the ingroup victim was included. We therefore can only indirectly (through victim blaming scores) conclude that the common identity with a victimized group poses a higher threat to the BJW. Future research therefore should consider a direct measurement of the threat posed by an ingroup victim in order to clarify the relation.

Another basic shortcoming of the present study was the voluntary nature of the questionnaire. The sample comprised exclusively of participants that had no personal gain from participating. The problem with extensively long questionnaires is that a substantial amount of participants loses interest at a given point. In our study hundred-forty-four participants began the study while only eighty-five completed the entire questionnaire. Especially in experiments like this one that requires the study to be completed continuously in order to keep the necessary

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manipulations salient, more controllable circumstances are especially desirable. Future research should therefore consider using participants under laboratory conditions where the circumstances are more controllable or employing participants that receive compensation for their attendance.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

The results from the present study suggest that a common or a subgroup identity condition do not have a significant interaction with just-world beliefs on collective action intentions. The just-world factor overall did not have a significant influence on the scores. The identity condition alone did however produce marginal effects on collective action intentions for majority group members as well indicating that intergroup harmony can have adverse effects on collective action intentions among majority group members as well.

The victim blaming tendencies on the other hand were in fact stronger under a common identity condition compared to subgroup identity condition. It therefore seems clear that a common ingroup identity can lead to higher levels of victim blaming which very likely influence collective action tendencies since attribution towards external factors for injustice is as Simon and colleagues (2001) note an essential precondition for social change. Although the exact interplay between the relevant determinants could not be clarified entirely, it seems evident that just-world beliefs are a major obstacle in efforts towards social change. Future research in this direction therefore seems necessary and reasonable.

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## 7. Appendix

Table 1: Scale Means, Standard Deviations, and Inter-Scale correlations

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.
1. Recognition Inequality	4.86(1.26)	.162	.124	.218	.190	.336	-.145	.218
2. Group Efficacy	5.28(1.36)	.792	.828	.302	.263	-.119	.058	
3. Participative Efficacy	4.24(1.65)	.193	.351	.168	-.008	.125		
4. Individual Efficacy	4.24(1.48)	.259	.320	0.04	.109			
5. Social Support	3.57(1.23)	.214	-.165	.034				
6. General Change Motivation	3.76(1.69)	-.142	.281					
7. Victim Blaming	1.47(.59)	-.05						
8. Society Blaming	3.39(.77)							

