Presidential Address

Identity Politics and Politicized Identities: Identity Processes and the Dynamics of Protest

P. G. Klandermans
VU-University

Over the last decades, the concept of identity has become increasingly central in the social psychology of protest. Collective identity, politicized collective identity, dual identity, and multiple identities are concepts that help to understand and describe the social psychological dynamics of protest. In this article, I theorize about identity processes in the context of protest participation: how group identification establishes the link between social identity and collective identity, how multiple identities and dual identities influence protest participation, and how collective identity politicizes and radicalizes. I will illustrate my argument with results from research into collective action participation among farmers in the Netherlands and Spain, Turkish, and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands and New York, South African citizens, and participants in street demonstrations conducted by my research group at VU-University.

KEY WORDS: collective identity, group identification, social movements, dual identity, protest participation, radicalization

Two years ago, the Dutch government proposed to cut back on financial support of the disabled. Within weeks, a mass demonstration of disabled citizens and their caregivers took place in The Hague—the seat of the country’s government—to protest against the austerity measures. Identity politics had bred politicized identities. Politics is about the distribution of goods and bads in society. The allocation process almost inevitably turns into identity politics even if governments painstakingly try not to advantage or disadvantage the one group over the other. But, frequently governments fail to secure equality in society or deliberately establish and maintain inequality. Think of the Blacks under the apartheid’s regime in South Africa, Arabic citizens in Israel, or immigrants in the Netherlands. Identity politics makes collective identities salient, contributes to their politicization and radicalization, and triggers political protest.

Identity processes play a crucial role in the dynamics of protest (van Stekelenburg, 2013)—as antecedents, mediators, moderators, or consequences. Yet, identity did not always feature prominently in the social or political psychology of protest, if only, because social psychologists did not pay much attention to political protest to begin with. This has now changed—a small but growing contingent of social psychologists is involved in studies of protest behavior, and in their models, the concept of identity occupies a central place (Azzi, Chryssochoou, Klandermans, & Simon, 2011; Iyer & van Zomeren, 2009; Stryker, Owens, & White, 2000; van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2007 for overviews).
Decades earlier, students of social movements had incorporated the concept of collective identity in their theoretical frameworks (see Klandermans, Kriesi, & Tarrow, 1988). The weakness of the social-movement literature on identity and contention, though, was that the discussion remained predominantly theoretical and qualitative if at all empirical. Collective identity was declared to be important but very little was said about why and how it was important. Few seemed to bother about evidence. Indeed, in those days there was not even agreement on what exactly collective identity would be like, let alone how it could be observed. Basic questions such as how collective identity is formed, becomes salient, or politicized were neither phrased nor answered (see also Stryker, 2000). Perhaps social-movement scholars didn’t bother too much because they tend to study contention when it takes place and when collective identities are already formed and politicized.

Some 15 years ago, I began to explore the role of identity in political protest. Coming from a social-psychological background, I was familiar with the work of Tajfel and his collaborators on social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). At first, I assumed that the social movement and social-psychological literatures were addressing the same phenomenon and only employing different labels, until I figured out that this wasn’t the case (Klandermans & de Weerd, 2000). Collective identity in the social-movement literature is a group characteristic in the Durkheimian sense. Someone who sets out to study that type of collective identity may look for such phenomena as the group’s symbols, its rituals, beliefs, and the values its members share (cf. Taylor & Whittier, 1992). Groups differ in terms of their collective identity. The difference may be qualitative, for example, being an ethnic group rather than a gender group, or quantitative, that is a difference in the strength of collective identity (Lofland, 1995). Social identity in the social-psychological literature is a characteristic of a person. It is that part of a person’s self-image that is derived from the groups of which he or she is a member. Social identity supposedly has cognitive, evaluative, and affective components that are measured at the individual level (Drury, Reicher, & Stott, 1999; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Simon, 1999). Individuals differ in terms of social identity, again both qualitatively (the kind of groups with which they identify) and quantitatively (the strength of their identification with those groups). I use the term “collective identity” to refer to an identity shared by members of a group or category. Collective identity becomes politically relevant when people who share a specific identity take part in political action on behalf of that collective.

Note that identity is not the only factor in the dynamics of protest participation. Elsewhere (Klandermans, 2003), I have argued that identity is one of the three fundamental reasons why people participate in political protest. The two other reasons are instrumentality and ideology. People may want to take part in political protest because they want to change their circumstances (instrumental motives), to act as a member of their group (identity motive), or to express their views and feelings (ideological motive). Social movements may supply the opportunity to fulfil these demands and the more they do, the more movement participation turns into a satisfying experience.

In this article, I elaborate on the relationship between identification and participation in political protest and dwell on some unresolved issues in the protest and identity literature. First, I discuss the concept of politicized collective identity, positioning it within the identity framework. Second, I deal with sequence and causality. What comes first, identification or participation? As I will show, there is evidence confirming both causal directions. Third, I deal with the fact that individuals have multiple identities. I am male, I am a citizen of Amsterdam, I am a university professor, I am a supporter of a green party, etc. These many identities do not necessarily work in the same direction. Once a protest movement gains momentum, it tends to divide a society into movement allies and opponents. As a consequence, individuals might come under cross pressure when groups they identify with end up at opposite sides of the controversy. Most of the time, however, people are embedded in homogeneous social networks and structures that encourage or discourage participation in collective action. Finally, I will discuss the radicalization of politicized collective identity. Radicalization stems from a failure of the state to absorb the demands of frustrated, marginalized groups. The group’s collective identity is
Politicized; the group has attempted to influence the state but failed. If then the group’s identity is threatened by the majority or repressive authorities, the group radicalizes.

**Politicized Collective Identity**

Simon (1999) describes “identity” as a place in society. People occupy many different places. They are student, unemployed, housewife, soccer player, politician, farmer, and so on. Some of those places are exclusive, occupied only by a small number of people. The members of a soccer team are an example. Others are inclusive, encompassing large numbers of people, such as “Europeans.” Some places are mutually exclusive, such as male-female, or employed-unemployed; some are nested, for example, Dutch versus European; and some are crosscutting, such as female and student.

**Personal, social, and collective identity.** The roles and positions a person occupies form his personal identity. At the same time, every place a person occupies is shared with other people. I am not the only professor of social psychology, nor the only Dutch or the only European. I share these identities with other people—a fact that turns them into social and collective identities at the same time. Social identity concerns the socially constructed cognitions of an individual about his membership in one or more groups. Collective identity concerns cognitions shared by members of a single group about the group of which they are a member. Indeed, while social identity is a characteristic of an individual and involves more than one group, collective identity is a characteristic of a group and involves more than one individual. In sum, then, although they are related, social identity and collective identity are concepts at different levels of analysis.

**Identity strength.** Self-categorization theory proposes that people are more prepared to employ a social category in their self-definition the more they identify with that category. Identification with a group makes people more prepared to act as a member of that group (Turner, 1999). This assertion refers to identity strength. In her review of social identity theory, Huddy (2001) observes that social identity literature tends to neglect that real-world identities vary in strength. But, she argues, identifying more or less strongly with a group may make a real difference especially in political contexts. Moreover, she suggests, strong identities are less affected by context. Following this reasoning, we may expect that strong identities make it more likely that people act on behalf of their group.

Group identification connects social and collective identity. It is akin to commitment to the group. Group identification can be assessed in all kinds of ways, but any operationalization of group identification will refer somehow to what it means to an individual to belong to the group in point and will thus implicitly or explicitly refer to the pride and significance of being a member of the group, to the symbols, the values, the fate shared by the group members. On the one hand, identification with a group is a building block of someone’s social identity. As a rule, someone’s social identity is construed from identification with various groups. On the other hand, no collective identity can be construed without individual members who identify with the group involved.

Salient collective identity. Most of the time collective identities remain latent. Self-categorization theory hypothesizes that depending on contextual circumstances, an individual may act as a unique person, that is, display his personal identity or as a member of a specific group display one of his collective identities (Turner, 1999; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Self-categorization theory has focused on when and how a particular social identity becomes shared and outlines this process through an analysis of social identity salience. When a social identity becomes salient, there will be a shared collective identity and an increase in the strength of group

---

1 Burke (2004) and Stryker (2000) distinguish role identity in addition to person and social identity. “Person identity” refers to the unique characteristics of a person, while “role identity” and “social identity” are shared with other people (role occupants and group members).

2 Nation and religious community are examples of groups that tend to generate high levels of identification.
identification. The process that affects one’s own social identity will affect other’s social identity salience leading to a shared collective identity because these processes are tied to the same reality. This is not always a matter of free choice. Circumstances may force a collective identity into awareness whether people like it or not, as the Yugoslavian and South African histories have illustrated dramatically. But also in less extreme circumstances, collective identities can be imposed. For example, Mannerini, Roccuto, Fedi, and Rovere (2009) show how plans to construct a high-speed train in a Northern Italian valley turns being an inhabitant of that valley from a latent into a highly salient collective identity that rapidly politicized.

**Politicized collective identity.** Simon and Klandermans (2001) hold that when people become involved in political protest on behalf of a group, the collective identity of that group politicizes. They define politicized collective identity as that form of collective identity that underlies group members’ willingness to “engage, as a mindful and self-conscious collective (or as representatives thereof), in . . . a power struggle knowing that it is the wider, more inclusive societal context in which this struggle takes place and needs to be orchestrated accordingly” (p. 323).

Collective identity politicizes when it becomes the focus of a struggle for power. Social groups are often involved in power struggles in that they try to establish, change, or defend a power structure. Politicized collective identity is not an on/off phenomenon. Instead, politicization of collective identity and the underlying power struggle unfold as a sequence of politicizing events which gradually transform the group’s relationship to its social environment. Typically, this process begins with the awareness of shared grievances. Next, a political actor is blamed for the group’s predicament, and claims for compensation are leveled against that actor. Unless appropriate compensation is granted, the power struggle continues. If in the course of this struggle the group seeks to win the support of third parties such as more powerful authorities (e.g., the national government) or the general public collective, identity fully politicizes. The attempt to involve these parties in the power struggle inevitably turns the issue into a matter of public or general interest. This final step also results in a transformation of the group’s relationship to its social environment because involving a third party implies recognition of society or the larger community (e.g., the city, region, country, or the European Union) as a more inclusive ingroup. Politicized collective identity thus implies a cognitive restructuring of the social environment into opponents and (potential) allies; this involves also strategic reformulation of the conflict issue such that it appeals to potential allies as well.

Under those circumstances, **dual identities**—that is, simultaneous identification with a subordinate and superordinate entity—develop. Indeed, politicized collective identities are dual identities. Societal groups are embedded in the same superordinate political entity (e.g., the nation-state or society at large); identification with this entity or its inhabitants comes into play as a consequence of the process of politicization. Recent research by Simon (2011) suggests that holding a dual identity directs people to moderate action. When identification with a superordinate entity declines, discontent more likely results in radical action.

**Causality**

**The Problem**

Among the unresolved matters regarding identity and protest participation is the issue of causality. Does identification precede participation, or does participation precede identification? To determine this, it is important to distinguish between the processes of consensus mobilization and action mobilization, two mechanisms that are crucial in the emergence of collective action. Consensus mobilization concerns the dissemination of the social movement’s viewpoints; action mobilization concerns the transformation of sympathizers into participants. Identification processes play an important role in both mechanisms. The research in the next sections demonstrates
that identification significantly influences processes of consensus mobilization and subsequently that in the context of action, mobilization identification and participation mutually reinforce one another.

Identification and Consensus Mobilization

Various actors disseminate diverging views. Competing movement organizations, countermovement organizations, and opponents all try to convince people. The claims that move social-movement organizations forward are by definition controversial. As a consequence, various actors disseminate diverging views (Goldstone, 2004; Klandermans, 1992). We assumed that people are more inclined to subscribe to an actor’s viewpoint the more they identify with that actor. In other words, calls for action are more likely to resonate among people who identify with the organizer of that action. In a comparison of two competing demonstrations in Amsterdam, we collected evidence corroborating this assertion.

On Saturday, 2 October 2004, more than 300,000 people gathered on two different squares of Amsterdam in two separate demonstrations to protest against the government’s austerity plans. The largest of the two demonstrations (250,000 participants) was organized by the labor unions, the smaller (50,000 participants) by “Keer het Tij” (Turn the Tide, TtT), an anti-neoliberalism alliance. The two demonstrations were three kilometers apart on two different locations in Amsterdam at exactly the same time against the same budget cuts proposed by the government, but they were staged by different organizers who emphasized different aspects of the policies proposed by the government.

It all began with the decline of the economy. The Dutch government had announced a comprehensive package of austerity measures (inter alia plans to reduce early retirement rights). The government, employers’ organization, and the unions failed to reach an agreement regarding the early retirement rights; the consultations broke down, and the government announced that it would put its own plans through. The labor movement declared that in order to reclaim its position at the negotiation table, it had no choice but to mobilize for collective action. TtT came from a different angle. It opposed what it defined as a harsh right-wing climate in the country and antisocial government policies.

At the heart of every protest are grievances. Although they do not provide sufficient reason for people to take part in protest activities (e.g., McCarthy & Zald, 1976), grievances are the fuel of the motivational engine. The more people feel that the interests of the group and/or the principles that the group values are threatened, the stronger is their motivation to take part in protest to defend their interests and principles. Interests and principles are linked to instrumental and ideological motivation. Instrumental motivation refers to participation as an instrument to improve the situation of one’s group. Efficacy, that is the belief that collective action will be effective, is a crucial element of instrumental motivation. Ideological motivation refers to participation in defense of principles and values that have been violated. We assumed that instrumental motives were more likely to resonate with campaigns that emphasize the violation of interests, while ideological motivation was more likely to resonate with campaigns that emphasize the violation of principles. Significant in the context of this article, I assume that appeals and motives resonate especially among people who identify with organizations that stage demonstrations. The more individual members of a social-movement organization identify with that organization, the more likely their motives resonate with the frames provided by that organization. Group identification is an awareness of similarity, ingroup identity, and shared fate with others who belong to the same category (Brewer & Silver, 2000). It has pervasive effects on what people feel, think, and do (Terry & Hogg, 1996). The more people identify with a social-movement organization, the more individual orientations, values, and beliefs become congruent with those of the social-movement organization.

The labor unions were utterly frustrated by the fact that the government had announced it would proceed without further consultation. As far as the unions were concerned, their goal was getting
access to the deliberations once more. Turn the Tide’s campaign was broader and more ideological than that of the labor unions, mobilizing against neo-liberal policies and conservative politics. Thus characterized, we presume that the campaign of the labor unions will be more about interests and that of TT about principles. Therefore, we expect the participants in the union demonstration—especially those who identify with the organizers—to be more instrumentally motivated. Similarly, we expect the participants in the TT demonstration—especially those who identify with the organizers—to be more ideologically motivated. This is exactly what we found in a survey among participants in the two demonstrations.

Figure 1 depicts the interaction of demonstration and identification. The interactions tell us that the participants in the two demonstrations must be distinguished from those who identify strongly with the organizations that staged the demonstration and those who identify weakly. For those who identified strongly, the appeals issued by the organizers resonated with instrumental motives for the union demonstration and ideological motives for the TT demonstration. As a consequence, participants in the TT demonstration who identified strongly with organizations staging that event were highly ideologically motivated (Panel a), and in fact, among these participants, high levels of identification reduced the instrumental motivation. In contrast, participants in the union demonstration who identified strongly with the union were highly instrumentally motivated (Panel b & c).

Indeed, identification with an organization makes people susceptible to the frames and interpretations propagated by that organization. Thus, through its influence on the effects of persuasive communication, identification indirectly impacts protest participation.

Identification and Action Mobilization

Next to influencing consensus mobilization, identification influences action mobilization. More specifically, I refer to the determination and the timing of people’s decisions to take part in collective action. The reasoning is the following. The stronger people’s identification with the organizers and the other participants, the more they are determined to participate, the earlier they hear about the event, and the earlier they decide to take part in the collective action. Indeed, this is what our research among participants in street demonstrations reveals.

Between 2009 and 2012, we surveyed some 13,000 participants in 60 street demonstrations in seven European countries (Belgium, Great Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland). Twenty-two were ritual parades such as May Day Parades, Climate Change Marches, and Gay Prides; 38 were various protest demonstrations. Of those 38, 19 were protests against austerity measures, and 19 were various other demonstrations. We asked participants how determined they were to take part in the demonstration (on a 5-point scale from “not very” to “very much”) and when they had made a firm decision to participate (“the day of the demonstration”; “a few weeks before the demonstration”; “over a month ago”). One-third of the participants (32.5%) were firmly decided “over a month ago”; 29.9% were decided “a few weeks before”; 30.9% decided “a few days before”; 30.9% decided “over a month ago”; 30.9% decided “a few days before”; and 8.7% decided the very day of the demonstration. As we expected, decision time is related to the firmness of the decision to take part (Pearson correlation: .44): the more determined people were to take part in the demonstration, the earlier they made a firm decision to participate.

Participants in ritual parades decided earlier to take part than participants in protests against austerity measures, and participants in austerity protests decide earlier than participants in non-austerity protests. This is partly due to the fact that participants in parades and antiausterity protests are more embedded in organizers networks, while participants who are more embedded in organizers

3 We distributed questionnaires at the demonstration. In the Turn the Tide demonstration, 209 participants turned in the questionnaires (42%), and 233 participants in the union demonstration turned them in (47%).
networks identify more with the organizers and other participants. Note that participants who are embedded in organizer networks identify with the organizers and other participants more than those who are not embedded (Table 1). Note also that participants who are not embedded in organizer networks identify more with other participants than with organizers.

Figure 1. Interaction of demonstration and identity.
Relevant for our discussion, embeddedness and identification are predictors of decision time (Table 2). People who are embedded in organizer networks decide earlier (Model 1), and embeddedness people who identify with organizers and other participants decide earlier as well (Model 2). The interaction of embeddedness and identification did not contribute significantly to the equation.

In sum, identification with the organizers and the other participants influences people’s motivation and determination to participate in collective action. It makes the framing of the organizers resonate with people’s motivational configuration, makes them determined to participate, and makes them decide to take part early.

### Table 1. Decision Time and Embeddedness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Protest</th>
<th>Ritual Parade</th>
<th>Austerity Demonstrations</th>
<th>Nonausterity Demonstrations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Decision time (mean)</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded in organizer networks</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 2. Embeddedness, Identification, and Decision Time: Standardized Regression Coefficients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Embeddedness</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with organizers</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identification with participants</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 11,422

Relevant for our discussion, embeddedness and identification are predictors of decision time (Table 2). People who are embedded in organizer networks decide earlier (Model 1), and embeddedness people who identify with organizers and other participants decide earlier as well (Model 2). The interaction of embeddedness and identification did not contribute significantly to the equation.

In sum, identification with the organizers and the other participants influences people’s motivation and determination to participate in collective action. It makes the framing of the organizers resonate with people’s motivational configuration, makes them determined to participate, and makes them decide to take part early.

### From Identity to Participation to Identity

The basic assumption regarding identity and participation in political protest is fairly straightforward. The more someone identifies with a group, the higher the chances are that he or she will take part in collective action on behalf of that group. The available evidence overwhelmingly supports this assumption (de Weerd, 1999; de Weerd & Klandermans, 1999; Kelly, 1993; Kelly & Breilinger, 1996; Kelly & Kelly, 1992; Klandermans & de Weerd, 2000; Klandermans, Roefs, & Olivier, 2001; Simon, 2011; Simon et al., 1998; Stürmer, 2000). An example is Stürmer and Simon’s (2009) study of student protest in Germany against plans to introduce tuition fees at German universities. These authors report that the data replicate earlier findings with regard to the gay movement and fat-acceptance movement. The study demonstrates that in addition to instrumental motives, identity motives account for the students’ readiness to take part in protest actions. The authors interpret identification with the movement as a sign of politicization and thus view their findings as a confirmation of the role of the politicization of collective identity.

Coming from the opposite direction, Reicher and his colleagues (Drury, Reicher, & Stott, 1999; Reicher, 1984, 1996) report on how collective action establishes and strengthens collective identity.
These authors have demonstrated repeatedly that participation in collective action reinforces identification with the group. In a more recent article, Drury and Reicher (2009) elaborate on the empowering experience collective action can be and the impact it has on identification and future action participation. Drawing on field studies of crowd events, Drury and Reicher (2009) note how police action creates a strong unified crowd out of an initially fragmented collectivity. Crowd members then sense their strength which led them to challenge the police, thus developing events from sporadic skirmishing into generalized conflict.

As most studies are correlational, they demonstrate that high levels of identification go together with high levels of participation, but they do not allow for conclusions about causality. The few studies that employed longitudinal or experimental designs are better suited to test causal relations, but they are inconclusive. For instance, whereas Simon et al.’s (1998) findings suggest that collective identity stimulates collective action participation, De Weerd and Klandermans (1999) did not find such a direct link between identification and participation; they did find that group identification affects action preparedness which in turn affects action participation. In any event, both studies suggest that identification comes first and then participation.

A further complication relates to the fact that action participation presupposes some opportunity to act. In the absence of such opportunities, it is impossible for identification to translate into action, but identification might still reflect in high levels of action preparedness. In fact, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) have emphasized that cognitive variables such as beliefs and attitudes influence behavior intentions and that the extent to which such intentions translate into actual behavior depends on contextual factors such as freedom and opportunity to act. All this suggests a more complicated model than the simple direct link between identification and collective action participation with which I began this section. In a study among farmers in the Netherlands and Spain, we employed a panel design which made it possible to test a more complex model.

In the winter of 1993/94, the winter of 1995, and the fall of 1995, we interviewed three times 167 Dutch farmers and 248 Galician farmers. During those two years, several agricultural measures to be taken by the national governments or the European Union were imminent, varying in impact on the agricultural sector. The study was designed to investigate farmers’ responses to these measures. We had chosen the Netherlands and Galicia because they are similar as far as agricultural products are concerned but opposites as far as agricultural development is concerned. In both countries, the same kind of farmers were involved, mainly from dairy, arable and mixed farms, but on modern and large farms in the Netherlands and old-fashioned and small farms in Galicia. Agriculture in the Netherlands more than in Spain has been the subject of political intervention and regulation. In response, farmers in the Netherlands early on established professional organizations that evolved into a powerful agricultural lobby. Agriculture became one of the best organized sectors of the Dutch economy. The establishment of the European Community has only added to the situation. Dutch and European politics turned farmers in the Netherlands into a group with common interests and opponents. Spain and certainly Galicia were less successful. Moreover, Spain entered the European Community more than 20 years later than the Netherlands, and as a consequence, farmers in Spain are much weaker organized than those in the Netherlands. Therefore, we expect a stronger sense of collective identity among Dutch farmers than among Galician farmers. On the other hand, farmers’ organizations in Spain are much more politicized than their counterparts in the Netherlands. Spanish farmers’ organizations are branches of political parties whereas Dutch farmers’ organizations are professional organizations of which almost any farmer is a member. Thus, there are fewer members of farmers’ organizations in Spain than in the Netherlands, but those in Spain who are members are expected to be more politicized than their Dutch counterparts. This is what our data seem to tell us (Table 3).

4 Galicia is the most northwestern province of Spain.
Dutch farmers identify more with other farmers (main effect country: \( F = 64.98, \text{df} = 1, p < .0001 \)) and are more often a member of a farmers’ organization (main effect country: \( F = 524.57, \text{df} = 1, p < .0001 \)) than Galician farmers. Altogether, these findings suggest that in the Netherlands, identification with farmers is stronger than in Galicia. In line with our theoretical reasoning, action preparedness (main effect country: \( F = 11.21, \text{df} = 1, p = .001 \)) and participation (chi-squares 1993/4: 92.04, 1995-1: 12.44, 1995-2: 31.25, with \( \text{df} = 1 \) all \( p \)'s < .0001) are higher among Dutch farmers. Overall, this pattern is fairly stable over time.

Although in line with our expectations, these results do not necessarily prove that it is identity processes that generate the differences in protest preparedness and participation. In order to solve that matter, we ran a series of cross-lagged regression analyses exploiting our longitudinal design. Table 4 presents the cross-lagged beta’s resulting from these analyses. Preparedness to participate in collective action and actual participation at T3 are regressed on identification and membership of identity organizations at T1 (Panel a and c), indicating whether identification at T1 predicts preparedness to participate and actual participation at T3. Subsequently, preparedness to participate and actual participation at T1 are regressed at identification and membership of identity organizations at T3 (Panel b and d), indicating whether action preparedness and actual participation at T1 predict identification at T3.

The results show that identification fares better as a predictor of action preparedness (beta = .20) than action preparedness as a predictor of identification (beta = .06). On the other hand, actual participation fares better as a predictor of identification (.17) than identification as a predictor of participation (.03). The same pattern was found for membership of identity organizations, although it was less pronounced (.22 versus .18 and .27 versus .39). Indeed, the variance in action preparedness explained by identification (.11) is almost three times higher than that of the variance in identification explained action preparedness (.04). The variance of identification explained by actual participation is almost three times higher than that of actual participation explained by identification (.22 versus .08).
Conclusion

Group identification appears to foster action participation, be it by impacting on the effects of persuasive communication, on the firmness and timing of the decision to participate, on action preparedness, or the translation of action preparedness into action participation. In its turn, action participation strengthens group identification. Indeed, group identification, action preparedness, and action participation seem to function as a recurrent, self-reinforcing mechanism. All this suggests that high levels of identification generate the preparedness to participate in collective action on behalf of the group. If such action is actually staged, chances are high that preparedness is transformed into action. Participation in its turn reinforces strength of identification. This hinges at the possibility that identity strength and movement participation are of a recursive nature. Social-movement literature has forwarded this as a theoretical idea but thus far provided very little in terms of empirical support. In fact, our findings suggest a synthesis of the two causal patterns we encountered in the literature—from identity to participation and conversely from participation to identity. Note that the transformation of action preparedness into action participation functions as the link between the two identity processes. In others words, only if the opportunity to act is offered so that participation can actually take place does the strengthening of identity occur.

Multiple Identities

The Problem

Individuals occupy many different places in society and thus have multiple identities. They share these identities with other people so that each identity at the same time is a collective identity. As some identities are associated with organizational memberships, someone’s social identity is also reflected in his or her social embeddedness. Farmers are members of farmer’s organizations, workers are members of labor unions or professional associations, migrants are members of cultural organizations, students of student associations, and so on. Some of those identities are more important for an individual than others, and membership of identity organizations signifies the salience of an identity for the individual. Not always are people’s identities in sync. Indeed, the groups people identify with may end at opposite sides of a controversy. This happened, for instance, in the Netherlands, to people who at the same time were against the deployment of cruise missiles and supporters of the Christian Democratic Party that was in favor of deployment. Under the cross pressure they experienced, they ended up choosing the side most of their friends chose (Oegema & Klandermans, 1994). If most of their friends stood by their party, they refrained from supporting the cruise missile protests; if their friends supported the protests, they supported it as well.

The literature on identification and participation tends to neglect the simultaneous existence of various identities (but see Kurtz, 2002). As a consequence, little is known about the impact of such multiple identities. In the following, I will first compare collective action driven by single and multiple identities, and then I will concentrate on a specific type of multiple identity, namely dual identity. Together, the evidence reveals that the working of identity, especially multiple identity, is complex and far from clear.

Single and Multiple Identity Protest

The fact that individuals have multiple identities raises the question of why specific identities become the rallying points of protest movements. Shared grievances is part of the answer. The awareness that grievances are shared makes a collective identity salient. Attempts to mobilize those who share the same identity in order to redress the grievances further increase the salience of the
collective identity. Protest movements in reaction to a sudden imposed grievance are illustrations in point (Walsh, 1981). Grievances may concern single identities or multiple identities. Single-identity protests are reactions to identity politics that (are deemed to) disadvantage a specific group—be it women, migrants, farmers, or religious or ethnic communities. Multi-identity protests react to general political issues that affect a broad range of citizens—for instance, environmental issues, peace and war, or global justice. Identity and issues politics are contextual matters that make different identities salient. People are becoming aware or made aware of the fate they share. Movement organizations and organizers try to mobilize the people affected. In doing so, they make people aware of the identity they share. As identity and issue politics vary between nations and over time, we will find different protest events in different countries and at different points in time. However, if identity or issue politics coincide, we may find comparable protest events in different countries (cf. Walgrave & Rucht, 2010).

Protest events do not originate in a vacuum. Organizers must first build mobilizing structures and then employ these structures to reach potential participants (Boekkooi, Klandermans, & van Stekelenburg, 2011). These authors demonstrate that the composition of the mobilizing structure influences the composition of the demonstrating crowd. Organized identities more likely than unorganized identities become the rallying point of political protest if those identities are threatened one way or another. Farmers in our protest study who were members of farmers’ organizations were more likely to take part in a farmers’ protest than farmers who were not members of such organizations. Citizens who are members of multiple organizations are more likely to participate in multiple identity protests (Bennett, Givens, & Breunig, 2010). These authors coin the phrase “complex political identification” for individuals involved in several social and political organizations at the same time. Obviously, mobilizing structures may or may not fit with the social embeddedness of would-be participants. I started this section by linking identity with social embeddedness. Let me give two illustrations of how this link influences protest participation—one example of a single-identity protest and one of a multi-identity protest.

The first example concerns participation in political protest by Turkish immigrants in New York and Turkish and Moroccan immigrants in the Netherlands (Klandermans et al., 2008). Roughly two-thirds (62%) of our respondents were members of civil society organizations such as political parties, religious organizations, cultural organizations, women’s organizations, educational organizations, trade unions, residents committees, neighborhood committees, sports organizations, and youth organizations. In follow-up questions, we assessed whether it concerned organizations exclusively for immigrants or organizations for citizens in general; 21% of our respondents were members of exclusively ethnic organizations, that is to say embedded in identity organizations. Table 5 presents figures that demonstrate the impact of general social embeddedness and embeddedness in identity organizations on protest participation.

Table 5. Social Embeddedness and Protest Participation by Immigrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Past Participation in Protest</th>
<th>Pearson r Unfairness × Participation</th>
<th>Pearson r Efficacy × Participation</th>
<th>Pearson r Political Discussion × Efficacy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No membership</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>.04ns</td>
<td>.09ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership cso’s</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership identity org.</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 306

Using snowball sampling, we approached 126 Turkish immigrants and 80 Moroccans in the Netherlands and 100 Turkish immigrants in New York.
Clearly, protest participation increases with social embeddedness (Column 1). Immigrants who are involved in civil-society organizations did participate more frequently in political protest than those who are less involved in politics—the more so if it concerns identity organizations. The remaining three columns suggest reasons why this is the case. In the first place, discontent is more likely to be translated into protest participation among those who are organizationally embedded, especially in migrant organizations (Column 2). Secondly, perceived unfairness is correlated stronger with collective action participation among people who are members of civil-society organizations, again especially migrant organizations. The reason why this is the case is suggested by the figures in Columns 3 and 4. First, people who are embedded in civil-society organizations, especially exclusively migrant organization, feel more efficacious (Column 3). This is presumably so because in those organizations, they discuss and learn about politics (Column 4).

The second example comes from a study of the world-wide demonstrations against the war in Iraq on February 15, 2003 (Walgrave & Rucht, 2010). The protests against the war in Iraq are typical examples of multi-identity protests in response to issue politics. A broad scala of identities all leaning to the left of the political spectrum was triggered by the issue. Therefore, we expected that participants would share a leftist political identity and be embedded in networks of the left, and this is what we found (Table 6). A comparison of left-right self-placement of participants in the demonstration with that of the general population revealed that large proportions of the left of the political spectrum were overrepresented (+). On the other hand, the right-wing of the political landscape was clearly underrepresented (−). In other words, social embeddedness in organizations and networks of the left, including a leftist political identity, made protest participation more likely; embeddedness in networks of the right and a rightist political identity made participation in the demonstration less likely.

### Dual Identity

A special example of the dynamics of multiple identities are dual identities, that is, the going together of superordinate identities such as national identity and subgroup identities such as ethnicity, class, religion, or gender. Any nation is a conglomerate of many different population groups. The political common sense seems to be that identification with a subgroup and identification with the nation are mutually exclusive. Be this as it may, throughout history, governments have tried to foster national identification and to suppress expressions of subgroup identification. For instance, in Franco’s Spain, every sign of regional identification was brutally suppressed (Johnston, 1991). Protest groups are easily blamed for being disloyal, unpatriotic, and forsaking the national identity, as the fate of many protest movements on the African continent and the peace movements in the United States and Europe during the Cold War illustrated. This is true even more so for immigrants. Immigrants occupy a delicate position in their “host” societies. They are expected to assimilate into the host culture, and failure to do so is considered a sign of a lack of loyalty. Immigrants’ loyalty to the country of residence is placed under even more doubt if they engage in protest. However, history

---

Table 6. Mobilization Deficit: Over- Versus Underrepresentation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>U.K.</th>
<th>Spain</th>
<th>Italy</th>
<th>Netherlands</th>
<th>Switzerland</th>
<th>Belgium</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Left</td>
<td>+24</td>
<td>+23</td>
<td>+43</td>
<td>+22</td>
<td>+34</td>
<td>+30</td>
<td>+25</td>
<td>+30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>−6</td>
<td>−13</td>
<td>+12</td>
<td>−21</td>
<td>+7</td>
<td>+9</td>
<td>−2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right</td>
<td>−27</td>
<td>−17</td>
<td>−28</td>
<td>−34</td>
<td>−13</td>
<td>−37</td>
<td>−34</td>
<td>−28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>1116</td>
<td>448</td>
<td>1002</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>629</td>
<td>503</td>
<td>769</td>
<td>5661</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6 Walgrave and Rucht (2010) surveyed 5,661 demonstrators in eight countries (United States, United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, and Switzerland).
has demonstrated time and again that the suppression of subgroup identity reinforces rather than weakens subgroup identification (Zegeye, Liebenberg, & Houston, n.d.). This suggests that national identity and subgroup identities are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but rather they are made mutually exclusive through identity politics which suppresses subgroup identities in favor of national identity.

Political protest presupposes some subgroup identity. After all, some subgroup in society is aggrieved. Therefore, the interplay of national identity and subgroup identity is an important aspect of any theory of collective identity and political protest. The question I want to address here is how national identity and subgroup identity are related to political protest. We know that subgroup identification fosters participation in political protest on behalf of the subgroup but doesn’t that weaken national identification? Alternatively, does a strong national identity make it unlikely for people to be prepared to participate in collective action on behalf of some subgroup? In trying to answer these questions, I will draw on recent social psychological research on dual identity (Brown, 2000; González & Brown, 2003; Huo et al., 1996; Klandermans et al., 2001, 2008; Simon, 2011). This research starts from the distinction between subordinate and superordinate identities. The available evidence suggests that subordinate and superordinate identities are far from mutually exclusive. To the contrary, a combination of sub- and superordinate identity seems to contribute to the stability of a political system. Indeed, intergroup hostility seems to decline if groups are allowed to nourish both sub- and superordinate identities. González and Brown (2003; see also Brown, 2000) have shown that a dual identity, that is, a strong superordinate identity in combination with a strong subgroup identity, reduces the likelihood of conflicts between subgroups. Huo et al. (1996) demonstrate that a sufficiently high level of superordinate identification makes it possible for authorities to maintain cohesion within an ethnic diverse community. But studies such as those of González and Brown (2003) emphasize that superordinate identity only has this effect if people can maintain their subgroup identity as well. These studies show that enforcing people to forsake their subgroup identity in favor of a superordinate identity backfires and generates separation rather than integration.

It is not always easy to decide what social psychological mechanisms are at work here. I suggest as a possible mechanism that a strong national identity makes it possible for people to look at subgroups in a different way and to accept that subgroups in a society are treated differentially. Indeed, Americans who identify with “Americans” in addition to being “White” take a more positive stand towards affirmative action (Smith & Tyler, 1996). And for East Germans, the awareness that “we are all Germans” made it easier to accept the differences between East and West Germany (Mummendey, Klink, Mielke, Wenzel, & Blanz, 1999). Tyler, Boeckmann, Smith, and Huo (1997) argue that this is so because superordinate identity changes the relationship between subgroups and authorities. These authors hold that the absence of superordinate identification makes that relationship solely instrumental—what are authorities doing for my group. Superordinate identity makes it possible for people to accept disadvantages done to their subgroup in the interest of the larger community. People trust authorities to make sure that next time their group will benefit. This implies that superordinate identity and trust in authorities are intimately related. But superordinate identity should not undermine subgroup identity, dual-identity research seems to warn. All this suggests that there is no reason to assume that national identity and subgroup identities are mutually exclusive. What is more, dual identities seem to be beneficial to a political system. Let me conclude this section with two examples from our own research—a study among South African citizens7 and a study among migrants in the Netherlands and New York mentioned previously.

South Africa’s population is composed of many different population groups. Since the dismantling of apartheid, South Africa attempts to build a rainbow nation with which people of all walks of

---

7 Between 1994 and 2000, we interviewed yearly separate samples of over 2,100 South African citizens. The interviews contained questions about political attitudes and behavior.
life can identify. This raises the question of whether subgroup identities compete with national identity. Between these two types of identities, individual citizens can take four different positions: they can develop a strong subgroup identity but no national identity; a strong national identity and no subgroup identity; or a dual identity. Of course, they can also develop neither identity. Immigrants are in a comparable position: they might identify solely with their country of origin or with the country of immigration; they might identify with both or with neither country (Table 7). Berry (1984) labeled these four forms of cultural adaptation separation, assimilation, integration, and marginalization, respectively. In both studies, we assessed whether our respondents identified with a sub-and/or superordinated entity—subgroup and nation in South Africa and home country and country of immigration for the immigrants. A glance at Table 7 suggests that in both cases the two identities are far from mutually exclusive. Indeed, subordinated and supraordinated identification correlated at .23. One-third of the South African citizens and about a quarter of the immigrants we interviewed displayed dual identities.

But what about political attitudes and behavior? Did subgroup identity and national identity interact in their influence on political attitudes and behaviour, and if so, did the two reinforce or undermine one another? In order to answer this question in the South African context, we compared the four groups on two variables regarding people’s relation to politics, namely trust in government and people’s preparedness to take part in peaceful collective action. The results in Table 8 confirm our expectations. Trust in government and action preparedness were the highest among those respondents who displayed a dual identity. Interestingly, the figures for trust in government show that those with a dual identity stand out. This suggests that at least as far as trust in government is concerned, it is the combination of subgroup and national identity that made the difference. Similarly, note that action preparedness was the highest among those with a dual identity.

Similar results were found in the migrants’ study. We assumed that dual identity would be associated with more satisfaction with one’s situation. In order to test this assumption, we compared those who displayed a dual identity with those who did not in terms of distributive and

---

**Table 7. National Identity and Subgroup Identity: Percentages**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>South Africa 2000</th>
<th>Migrants NL/NY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No strong subgroup identity/no strong national identity</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong subgroup identity/no strong national identity</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No strong subgroup identity/strong national identity</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong subgroup identity/strong national identity</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 8. Dual Identity and Politics: South Africa**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Trust in Government**</th>
<th>Prepared to Participate in Peaceful Action**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No strong subgroup identity/no strong national identity</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong subgroup identity/no strong national identity</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No strong subgroup identity/strong national identity</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong subgroup identity/strong national identity</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*F/df 3 = 79.88, p < .001. **F/df 3 = 39.81, p < .001.

---

8 In the migrants study, we asked our respondents whether they “feel connected” and “liked to be seen as” [American, Netherlander, Turk, Moroccan]. This was turned into identity scales from 1 (“no identification”) to 5 (“strong identification”). In the South African study, we asked “how close one feels to [group]” to be answered on a 5-point scale from 1 (“not close”) to 5 (“extremely close”) and “Being a South African, is it an important part of how I see myself” (do not agree, agree, strongly agree).
procedural-fairness judgments. Respondents who displayed a dual identity judged the way the government of the country of residence treated them—individually and as a group—as fairer than those who did not display a dual identity (eta’s ranging between .13 and .20; p’s between .022 and .001). As hypothesized, dual identity comes with more satisfaction about the way government treats people. As a consequence, identity, especially ethnic identity, was negatively related to protest participation, albeit modestly (Pearson r = −.13). This negative correlation implies that respondents who identified more with their ethnic group participated less in collective action. We also checked whether immigrants with a dual identity were more or less likely to take part in collective action, but no such relationship was found. However, dual identity moderates the relationship between fairness judgments and action participation: The positive relationship between perceived unfairness and participation is only found among immigrants who display a dual identity (Pearson r = .23, p < .01 among those who display a dual identity versus .09, n.s. among those who do not). In other words, immigrants with a dual identity are more satisfied with their situation, but if they feel treated unfairly, they were more likely to engage in collective action than people who felt treated unfairly but do not display a dual identity. No such effects were found for national or ethnic identity.

Thus, national identity and subgroup identity are not mutually exclusive. In fact, we found a moderate, positive correlation which argues against all those who assume that protestors are less loyal to the larger community. Dual identity—a combination of strong national and strong subgroup identity—fostered trust in government and preparedness to take part in peaceful action in South Africa and among immigrants satisfaction with their situation and action preparedness among those who were dissatisfied.

**Conclusion**

Individuals have multiple identities, identities that reflect in how they are socially embedded. Identity or issue politics make identities salient. Depending on the interaction with opponents and allies, a collective identity politicizes. Politicization of collective identity, supposedly, intensifies the impact of collective identity on action preparedness. Politicization of collective identity implies that the involvement of the wider social and political environment is sought. Such efforts, I hold, require some commitment to or identification with that environment. Why bother to change a nation if one feels no commitment to it whatsoever? Simon (2010) thus argues that politicized collective identity is dual identity. Indeed, politicized collective identity presupposes some level of identification with a superordinate entity, that is, the nation. This is why South Africans were more likely to participate in collective action if they display a dual identity and why immigrants if they are aggrieved have more frequently participated in collective action when they have a dual identity.

Sidanius, Feshbach, Levin, and Pratto (1997) and Staerklé, Sidanius, Green, and Molina (2005) hold that among majority groups in a society, subordinated and superordinated identification are more likely to correlate positively than among minority groups. In other words, dual identification is more likely among majority groups than among minority groups. This is corroborated by data from studies among majority and minority students in the United States and Israel. We tried to replicate this in our South Africa study with mixed results. A complicating matter in the South African context is that it is not always clear what is the majority and what the minority. Be that as it may, taking the Blacks as the majority and the Whites, coloureds, and Asians in that order as minorities, indeed less Whites than Black South Africans displayed a dual identity (28% versus 38%); and coloureds and Asians even less so (25% and 15%). However, correlations between sub- and supraordinated identification did not corroborate Sidanius et al.’s (1997) proposition. Among both Blacks and Whites, we found positive correlations of .20; among coloureds and Asians of .30 and .12, respectively. But, I was interested in collective action participation among people who do display a dual identity, be it majority or minority. Of those people, I would expect that they are more likely to be
satisfied and less likely to take part in collective action. And, I maintain that if they are dissatisfied, both majority and minority groups are more likely to take part in collective action if they display a dual identity.

In addition to its presence as dual identity, politicized collective identity is also manifest in membership of identity organizations. Remember that in a previous section I reported that for participants in street demonstrations, farmers as well as migrants had higher levels of protest participation among members of identity organizations than among nonmembers. In that section, it was also reported that among migrants, members of identity organizations more frequently discussed politics than other migrants.

**Radicalization**

*The Problem*

Simon and his team (cf. Simon, 2010) conceptualize radicalization as the process that turns a dual identity into a separatist identity—a more exclusive form of collective identification lacking the pacifying effect of superordinate identification. Radicalization—often driven by a failure of the state to absorb the demands of frustrated, marginalized groups—facilitates disruptive forms of political engagement including violent action. In this final section, I show how real-world events radicalize people depending on processes of identification.

*How World Events Radicalize Identities*

Over the last few decades, the world has witnessed many examples of radical identity politics. Extreme-right groups and parties openly express and disseminate xenophobic ideas in Western European countries such as Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Italy, Norway, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. In the United States, Christian fundamentalists, militias, and extreme-right groups employ radical tactics. At the other end of the ideological spectrum, far-left groups like the antiglobalization movement, the “Black Block,” or radical environmentalists and animal-rights groups engaged in radical actions. But undoubtedly, from a Western perspective, all this is overshadowed by Muslim activism, be it the attack of the World Trade Center in New York, the trains in Madrid, the subway in London, or the murder of Theo van Gogh in the Netherlands.

People do not radicalize on their own but as part of a group in which a collective identity is embedded. Some members of the group take an activist route to promote or prevent change. Their interactions with their opponents intensify, while their ideas and beliefs sharpen. Indeed, radicalization is conceived of as a process of identity transformation. Nobody is born radical; radical political actions result from processes of radicalization. Nested in the process of radicalization are two related processes, namely politicization and polarization. Politicization I discussed already, but a few words on polarization. I conceive of polarization as an instance of movement-countermovement dynamics in which the two antipodes tend to “keep each other alive” (Meyer & Staggenborg, 1996). The two sides reinforce each other, identifying themselves in opposition to each other and regarding the others as the main target of their collective actions. When groups polarize, a sharp distinction between “us” and “them” evolves. Both groups assert that what “we” stand for is threatened by “them,” tribute is paid to the ingroup’s symbols and values, and the out-group is derogated. Radicalization and intergroup conflict are interpreted as collective processes.

As a rule, the social-movement sector is internally fragmented along radical and moderate lines over what constitutes appropriate means and desirable ends (Tarrow, 1998). Such fragmentation might lead groups to break away seeking more radical goals and actions. By breaking away, radicalizing group members turn their back to the society at large and to their fellow-activists. This
implies a “double marginalization,” both from society and the movement (della Porta, 1995, p. 107). Such double marginalization results in material, social, and psychological isolation explaining the group’s deviation from the “normal” perception of reality. Because of their isolation, group members come into significant contact only with others who share their worldview and emotions. No deviance of the group norm is accepted, and the degree of freedom declines to nearly zero.

Identity processes play a crucial role in polarization. Research demonstrates that threats from countermovements can shape a movement’s collective identity (Einwohner, 2002). First of all, the presence of powerful opponents makes identities more salient for activists (van Dyke, 2003). Secondly, polarization implies a split in terms of friends and foes. Polarization, finally, also induces a strategic reformulation of “who we are.”

Groups may also radicalize in processes of mutual confrontation. If in the heat of the confrontation people feel that their identity is threatened, this spurs identification processes that in turn reinforce the confrontation. Social categorization makes people more aware of their group membership which strengthens their identification. Due to processes of self-enhancement, group members attempt to “repair” their threatened self-esteem through ingroup favouritism and out-group derogation. By portraying “us” as good and “them” as evil, the debate radicalizes; the groups drift apart and polarize. In case of a protracted intergroup conflict, each new incident will start off the whole process—threatened identity, attempts to repair, in-group favouritism, and out-group derogation—over and again. Hence, from incident to incident, group identification becomes stronger and ideas and feelings become more radical. This cyclical mechanism radicalizes the debate and widens the cleavage between groups.

These days processes of radicalization can be observed at the Internet (Twitter, blogs, text messages, Facebook). We studied the exchanges at two web forums in the Netherlands—a Moroccan (Marokko.NL) and an ethnic Dutch (NL.politiek). At both networks, participants react to “real-world events” and to each other.9 Figure 2 relates the amount of participation on the forums to identity relevant events between October 2003 and April 2006, the period under study. The amount of participation in both forums is expressed as the number of words in the postings about immigration and integration. Obviously, the online discussion shows a strong response to the three major events during this period.

After an event, the degree of participation on both sites increases strongly: by 55% for the ethnic Dutch, and as much as 98% for the Moroccans. Also, the number of participants boosts, 43% increase for NL.politiek, but especially for Marokko.NL (86%). In the four weeks after an event, the number of negative expressions increases on average with 27%. On Marokko.NL, debaters mention ethnic Dutch as out-group 33% more often, and they also refer to Muslims as an ingroup more often (24%). On NL.politiek, debaters reference to Muslims as an out-group increases with 19%, whereas reference to ethnic Dutch as an ingroup decreases with 31%. In times of an intergroup conflict, positive ingroup and negative out-group identification differ for dominant and subordinate groups. Whereas group members of the dominant ethnic Dutch group display more out-group derogation than ingroup favouritism, members of the subordinate Muslim group display both more ingroup favouritism and out-group derogation.

Emotions are straightforwardly measured by counting how frequent emotion words (including synonyms and variants) are mentioned. Obviously, severe intergroup incidents result in increased mentioning of fear, anger, and hate on the web forums. Normally, in periods without incidents, the three emotions are about equally often mentioned on both forums, although fear prevails more on the forum of the ethnic Dutch. After an incident, the number of emotions mentioned raises much stronger on Marokko.NL (24%) than on NL.politiek (9%). On Marokko.NL fear raises only slightly (9%)

9 From October 2003 to April 2006, we collected 40,051 postings of NL.politiek and 17,768 of Marocco.NL. At NL.politiek, we counted more than 40,000 participants, at Marokko.NL over 89,000.
after incidents, but anger (26%) and especially hate (39%) increase strongly. Fear does not only prevail more on NL.politiek, it also increases more after incidents (17%) than anger (1%) and hate (11%).

Conclusion

Obviously, devastating events such as the attacks in Madrid and London or the murder of Theo van Gogh are the talk of the town as well as in the “virtual cafés.” After an incident, debaters clearly feel the urge to express their view: participation on the web forums increases and for the Moroccan forum even doubles. People “talk” much more in terms of the conflicting groups—Muslims, Jews, Moroccans, ethnic Dutch, and so on—which enhances their inclination to define themselves as a member of one of these groups—“I as Muslim”; “I as Dutch.” Incidents bring group membership forcefully to the psychological foreground, such that Dutch Muslims and ethnic Dutch feel their group identity threatened. Consequently, group members reveal the urge to defend or “repair” their threatened group identity, and the debates boil down to a few stereotypical characteristics fueled by strong emotional loadings to differentiate between the liked ingroup and the hated out-group. The result: further polarization and radicalization.

Coda

Identity processes occupy a central place in psychological and sociological theory and research of political-protest participation either as antecedents, mediators, moderators, or consequences. As identities are always shared with other people, they are individual and collective at the same time. Yet without identification, collective identities would be irrelevant. There is no politicization of collective identity without identification. However, people have many different identities at the same time.
That raises the question of why a specific identity becomes the focal identity in a specific protest event. Shared grievances are at the root of political protest and thus of the politicization of collective identity. Organizers interpret grievances, translate them into claims addressed at authorities, create mobilizing structures, and seize opportunities to protest. Indeed, collective identity and group identification are factors needed for protest to emerge, but appealing opportunities to participate and effective mobilization are needed as well. Grievance interpretation, identity formation, and politicization are taking place within social networks. That is why social embeddedness in such networks is crucial in processes of politicization and mobilization. Politicization of collective identity takes place when grievances are turned into claims and citizens begin to campaign and mobilize to win support for their cause. In the process of politicization, the social environment changes into allies and opponents.

A special form of multiple identities which is relevant in this context is dual identity. Politicized identity is a form of dual identity—identification with a subgroup (ethnicity, class, gender, religion, and so on) combined with national identification. Citizens who display a dual identity are more satisfied with their situation, but if they are dissatisfied, they are more likely to engage in collective action. Politicization can lead to radicalization, when authorities fail to respond to the grievances and claims forwarded or choose to repress or because the relation between opponents becomes more tense. When under such circumstances the moderating force of superordinate identification fades, it is just the subordinate identification that is left—a force that easily leads to separation and radicalization.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article is a revised version of the Presidential Address read at the 35th Annual Meeting of the International Society of Political Psychology, July 8, 2012, Chicago, IL. Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to P.G. Klandermans, VU University, Dept. of Sociology, de Boelelaan 1081, 1081HV, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. E-mail: p.g.klandermans@vu.nl

REFERENCES


