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The legitimising role of subjective power in right-wing motivated collective action

Volume 1 of 2

by

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I hereby declare that this thesis has not been and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Carina Hörst

“[Donald Trump] has shown us that the majority of everyday Americans support our sort of message.”

Matthew Heimbach

(founder of the US-based neo-Nazi hate group
Traditional Worker Party (2015 - 18))

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Context statement

This thesis has been prepared in the format of a series of papers and a book chapter for publication, with the exception of the Introduction (Chapter 1), the first part of Chapter 2 (2.1), and the General Discussion (Chapter 6). Chapter 1 provides an overview of the rationale of this work, a literature review of the main topics addressed in the empirical chapters, as well as an overview of the empirical chapters, including the research questions and study designs deployed. In the first part of Chapter 2, I discuss the issue of researcher position and epistemology in the context of my work. Chapter 6 discusses the main findings, the overall contributions to the wider literature and the practical contributions as well as the limitations of the empirical and conceptual work. Chapter 6 further provides an outlook on future research, as well as a conclusion.

Chapter 2.2 and the empirical Chapters 3 and 4 are largely, albeit not entirely, identical to the corresponding published papers. The corresponding paper to Chapter 2.2 was accepted for publication as a book chapter. The original submission was prepared in Harvard citation style and written in American English. The corresponding paper to Chapter 3 was submitted as a registered report to and published in *Analysis of Social Issues and Public Policy (ASAP)*, and the corresponding paper to Chapter 4 was published in the *Journal of Social and Political Psychology (JSPP)*. Both publications were prepared following APA 6 citation and formatting style.

This thesis follows APA 7 (American Psychological Association (APA), 2023) and is written in British English. I, therefore, undertook minor adjustments in order for Chapter 2.2 to be written in British English and Chapters 2.2, 3, and 4 to follow APA 7. The three chapters, furthermore, provide some updated references, and Chapter 3 improved the clarity and consistency of expression of the corresponding paper, where

necessary. The substance and meaning of the original submission remain the same; no methodological or analytical changes were made. The corresponding paper to Chapter 5 has been published as a pre-print (PsyArXiv). Apart from re-indexing references to supplementary material or tables and figures and minor adjustments and updates to expressions and references, Chapter 5 is identical to this paper.

For each of the four aforementioned papers, the original reference is provided at the beginning of the corresponding chapter. A bibliography for all references used throughout Volume 1 of this thesis is provided at the end of this volume. Where applicable, Volume 2 provides a bibliography of references at the end of each appendix. Where I refer to another (empirical) chapter in this thesis, I refer to the corresponding chapter title.

All four publications have been authored by myself and my supervisor Professor John Drury. I am the lead author of all four publications, which means that I was solely responsible for the conception, data collection and analysis and that I provided the first and the final draft.

Finally, throughout my thesis, I use words that refer to “race”. I thereby strongly distance myself from any narratives that discuss this in a biological or phenotypical way and instead refer to the identities and intergroup relations behind the construct of race.

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My deepest gratitude goes to my supervisor Professor John Drury without whom this work would not have been possible. I had the honour to be guided and taught by Professor Drury since my master's studies and the privilege to work with him on projects outside of my PhD research since. I want to thank Professor Drury for his faith in me, patience (to “explain this all over again, please”), and for contributing to my politicisation as a researcher and individual. Professor Drury is truly interested in his students achieving their best possible, even if that means pushing them (me) out of their comfort zone. I would be lying if I said that studying hate crimes and the far-right was an easy ride. I have lost count of the times I got lost in the literature, self-doubts, and despair about the state of the world, but I am truly grateful for Professor Drury meeting me where I was every single time and bringing me back on track if needed. It was a true honour to be supervised by Professor Drury during my master's studies and PhD, and I hope that our paths cross again in the future.

This work would also not have been possible without my dear partner, who went above and beyond to support (and endure) me throughout this PhD journey. I am forever grateful and promise to keep the laptop shut more often now.

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Of course, the entire (extended) Crowds and Identities family has played an important part in my academic journey. Possibly one of the (few) good things about the global pandemic was that I was able to meet so many incredible researchers and people. I am grateful for all of their guidance. Special thanks go to Klara Jurstakova, with whom I worked closely for two years before meeting her in person for the first time. Klara not only helped me organise and hold our monthly research group meetings, but she also reminded me about how important work-life balance is and that – yes – it is ok to take a break. Of course, I want to express my deepest gratitude also to Dr Sara Vestergren, who not only listened to my concerns and anxieties and helped me overcome these but who has also provided me with a truly once-in-a-lifetime research possibility. I want to thank Dr Anne Templeton for her compassion and advice when exploring alternative ways to overcome my “R-xiety”, as well as Dr Mete Uysal for his statistical advice and for always making me laugh. Thanks also go to Dr Patricio Saavedra for his patience in teaching me statistics – first as my lecturer and then as a dear colleague. In fact, Patricio submitted his own thesis the day I started my PhD journey; now it's on me (can you believe it). I could not have navigated this journey without Sanjeedah Choudhury, who has not only been a steady help in navigating the depths of admin (... paying bills) and providing critical feedback on my writing but whom I admire and deeply respect for always being authentic and not holding back (but also for always bringing fun to the table - even if nobody would guess so based on our legendary Crowds and Identities selfies). Finally, I want to thank both Jamie Chan and Yue Ting Woo for being the best conference buddies imaginable (I cannot wait for the next ... presentation), as well as all the old and new friends that accompanied me along the way.

All of the above have been important companions on my journey and in realising that learning, failure and success inevitably all go together.

I wish the old and new generation of Crowds and Identities scholars all the best for their future.

I further want to thank the anonymous peer reviewer and Dr Rikki Sargent for providing valuable feedback and suggestions on the conceptualisation and drafts of Study 1, as well as Dr Christopher Aberson, who edited the submission.

I am particularly grateful to the Ethics of Researching the Far-right network for providing a platform for interdisciplinary exchange and advice. These have been invaluable not only for shaping my approach to Study 2 but also for learning from the community more broadly. I am honoured for having been trusted with providing a chapter for their forthcoming book. I specifically want to say thank you to Dr Aurelien Mondon for giving valuable advice and to Antonia Vaughan, Dr Joan Braune, and Dr Megan Tinsley for reviewing my contribution.

Again, I want to thank the members and associates of the Crowds and Identities research group and four anonymous peer reviewers for their feedback on an earlier and the current version of Study 2, and Dr Inari Sakki for her assistance and constructive feedback when editing the final submission.

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Special thanks go to my parents for letting me pursue my wanderlust and for supporting me unconditionally on my (PhD) journey. Of course, I cannot leave my grandpa unacknowledged (who turned a 100 during the write-up of this thesis!); this is

also for you, Opa. I also want to say thank you to my partner's family (including support dogs), who have taken me in as one of their own (not only during the pandemic) and from whom I learned that "having a bit of craic" helps with increasing productivity and even overcoming self-doubts (who would have known).

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University of Sussex

Carina Hörst

Doctor of Philosophy in Psychology

Summary

The legitimising role of subjective power in right-wing motivated collective action

After the Brexit referendum and Trump's electoral victory in 2016, hate crimes in the US and UK and US far-right street mobilisation temporarily increased. My thesis investigates these changes in right-wing action, arguing that the perception of power is critical.

Right-wing action is commonly explained based on perceived group-based injustice and anger, whilst its increase was attributed to a change in social norms. I suggest that examining changes in right-wing action requires a novel approach considering the perception of shared social norms and power.

Study 1 examines election effects on social norms, meta-perception and empowerment among voters in the US Presidential Election 2020. A two-wave panel study shows that participants' perception of social norms was influenced by party membership but not by the election. Since an unexpected defeat was associated with disempowerment among Republicans, the 2020 election may have had a negative effect on the perception of power.

Consequently, study 2 explores the occurrence of and differences in empowerment among attendees of the Capitol insurrection (2021) and the "Unite the Right" rally (2017). A thematic analysis of video data finds that attendees of the latter discuss group-based injustices; however, their sense of empowerment dominated the rally. Conversely, attendees of the Capitol insurrection mainly expressed anger about perceived injustice, whilst some indicators show they felt empowered by entering the Capitol building.

The ability to occupy public spaces is important to demonstrate power. Study 3 suggests, and experimentally confirms, that far-right sympathisers' support intentions for the corresponding movement decrease if it is seen as less legitimate, influenced by perceiving it as unable to organise in public due to counter-action. Thus, anti-racist counter-action may have contributed to the decrease in right-wing action by undermining the enactment of right-wing identity – and, therefore, the subjective perception of power.

Chapter 1 – Rationale and overview of research

1.1 Introduction

In 2016, a small majority of UK voters supported the UK's withdrawal from the European Union (EU) as a member state. In the same year, the Electoral College in the US elected Donald Trump as US President (e.g., Beckwith, 2023; The Electoral Commission, 2022). The electoral campaigns in both countries were hugely concerned with the issue of immigration (and the restriction thereof; e.g., Ipsos, 2016). Because of that, they were widely understood as xenophobic (e.g., Burnett, 2017; Simons, 2016; Stewart & Mason, 2016; Winter, 2017), yet also appealed to those that held corresponding values and attitudes (e.g., Lyons, 2016; Posner & Neiwert, 2016a). Of course, the reasons to support Brexit or Trump were heterogeneous. Not everyone who did was motivated by xenophobia, racism, or white supremacy (Reicher & Haslam, 2016, 2017). My thesis is concerned with the minority of individuals that engaged in xenophobic, racist, or white supremacist activity after the electoral events were unexpectedly successful: Racial and religiously aggravated crimes (hate crimes) spiked in both countries (Carr et al., 2020; Devine, 2018, 2021; Home Office, 2017; National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), 2016; M. L. Williams et al., 2022), and, particularly the US far-right, whose supporters celebrated the victory of Trump (Neiwert, 2019; Piggott, 2016), grew in numbers and street mobilisation (e.g., Miller & Graves, 2020). My doctoral thesis in social-psychological research suggests and examines processes that can explain the temporary *changes* (i.e., the in parts, sharp and sudden, increases and decreases) in right-wing action-taking and argues that the perception of power plays a critical role.

1.1.1 The context: The Brexit referendum and the Trump election

The decision for the UK to leave the EU (“Brexit”) was conducted as a public referendum on June 23rd, 2016. Voters were asked to decide between remaining (“Remain”) or leaving (“Leave”) the EU. Anyone with British, Irish, or Commonwealth citizenship who qualified for voting and Irish and Commonwealth citizens who were eligible to vote in Gibraltar (UK Parliament, 2023) was eligible to cast a vote. With a small lead, voters who wished to leave (51.9%) outnumbered those who wanted to remain in the EU (48.1%) (The Electoral Commission, 2022). Some Conservative political strategists founded the official Leave campaign (“Vote Leave”) as a cross-party initiative which was predominantly concerned with economic factors (Why vote Leave, 2016). However, a parallel campaign (“Leave.EU”; Internet Archive, n.d.) strongly focused on the alleged lack of self-determination in immigration policies. As Burnett (2017) puts it, “the EU referendum, of course, did not create racism. Rather, the campaign drew on and fed into existing forms of racism [...]” (p. 88). It was, therein, strongly influenced by the Euro-sceptic, radical right party UKIP (UK Independence Party), leading Leave.EU. With the referendum taking place one year after the alleged European “migrant crisis”, UKIP’s objective was (and still is) to “end mass migration” (UKIP, 2023). Before the referendum, it, therefore, pushed for a narrative that portrayed the UK as not in control of doing so. This was mainly cultivated and popularised by then-party leader Nigel Farage who also described Brexit as the result of the working class’s frustration with mainstream politics (Farage, 2016).

The 2016 Presidential election in the United States of America on November 8th, 2016, marked the election of prior real estate mogul Donald Trump as the 45th US President (The White House, n.d.). In the election, Trump competed against the

Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton (e.g., Beckwith, 2023). According to the United States Government (2023), every US citizen who was above the age of 18 could cast a vote in the Presidential Election. However, this popular vote does not directly elect the US President. Instead, the so-called electors (Electoral College) elect the next US President. In 2016, the popular and Electoral College vote mismatched: Whilst Clinton had won 15,658,117 votes by popular vote compared to Trump, who had received 12,139,590 votes, Trump was elected by 58 Republican electors (compared to 55 Democrats electors that had voted for Clinton)¹. From the onset of his electoral campaign, Trump made outward racist remarks, mainly directed at Mexican and Muslim immigrants and communities (e.g., Lopez, 2020), which also included promising to continue building “a great wall” along the US-Mexican border (Time, 2016) and to ban Muslims from entering the USA (Johnson & Sullivan, 2015).

1.1.2 The increase in right-wing action after the Brexit referendum and the Trump election

The unexpected outcome of the controversial agenda of leaving the EU was followed by a spike in racial and religiously motivated aggravated crimes (Home Office, 2017; National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC), 2016). The attacks happened openly at work, on public transport, or in local neighbourhoods (cf. National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC), 2016; Walters et al., 2016). The National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) requested enhanced data collection of weekly² data between June 16th and August 25th which showed that hate crimes reported to police forces in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland had increased by 28% (National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC), 2016), 76% of which were race, and 7% were religious hate crimes. Against a

¹ This was due to Popular Votes in Texas and Pennsylvania (National Archives, 2020).

² Commonly this data is collected quarterly (National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC), 2016).

commonly robust share of around 33% of hate crimes that classify as “violence against the person” (Home Office, 2016, 2017), the NPCC’s analysis found that 63% of hate crimes now constituted violence against the person offences. The annual report of the Home Office (Home Office, 2017), featuring data from police authorities in England and Wales, suggested that compared to July 2015, between April and July 2016, the level of offences in race and religious hate crimes was 44% higher. Twenty-seven per cent of such constituted increases in race, and 35% increases in religious hate crimes. A comparison between aggravated crimes (i.e., crimes motivated by race or religion; Home Office, 2017) and non-aggravated crimes showed a genuine rise in aggravated crimes (i.e., hate crimes).

However, the Home Office (2017) further stated that this increase was the partial result of improved hate crime recording techniques on the part of the police. Conservative news outlets in the UK subsequently referring to this statement claimed that, therefore, the spike in hate crimes was not due to Brexit (Adams, 2016; Goodenough, 2017; Wallace, 2016; cf. Burnett, 2017; cf. Devine, 2018, cf. 2021; cf. M. L. Williams et al., 2022). As a response, scholars from economics and criminology replicated the Home Office’s analysis using more elaborate statistical analyses³. They found that the Brexit referendum *did* result in a genuine increase in race and religious hate crimes of between 14.7 and 29% (Carr et al., 2020; Devine, 2018, 2021; M. L.

³ Devine (2018, 2021) used the same dataset as the Home Office (2017). Quasi-experimental analysis (time series intervention models) controlling for terror attacks and the salience of immigration through the media revealed that hate crimes increased by 19–23%. Carr et al. (2020) used quarterly data from the Community Safety Partnership and monthly UK Police Force level data, covering the time between 2007 and 2017. The authors controlled for demographic and economic factors as well as changes in racial composition. Using a quasi-experimental design (difference-in-difference models, event study strategies and synthetic control analysis), the authors found that hate crimes increased by 15–25% between July and September 2016. Of this, race and religion hate crimes increased by 14.7 %. Carr et al. (2020) further showed that hate crimes increased by 17% in areas that had voted for “Leave”, while the increase in areas that had voted for “Remain” was lower (11%). This was confirmed by M. L. Williams et al. (2022) who used monthly data collected from the Home Office, Police Scotland and the Police Service of Northern Ireland between April 2012 and September 2017. Controlling for demographic issues, panel autoregression models revealed an increase of race and religious hate crimes by 29% in England and Wales.

Williams et al., 2022). They further found that areas that voted to leave the EU (and whose populations were wealthier; Dorling, 2016) showed a stronger increase in hate crimes than those that voted to remain in the EU (Carr et al., 2020; M. L. Williams et al., 2022). Further, there were significant increases in hate crimes in England and Wales (Carr et al., 2020; Devine, 2018, 2021; Home Office, 2017; M. L. Williams et al., 2022), where a majority had voted to leave the EU, but no significant increases in Scotland and Northern Ireland, where a majority had voted to remain in the EU (M. L. Williams et al., 2022).

A few months later, the US Presidential Election also unexpectedly turned out to favour the controversial candidate: Trump. In a parallel manner to the UK, the US witnessed sharp and sudden spikes in anti-immigrant and Islamophobic hate crimes (e.g., Edwards & Rushin, 2018; Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), 2016; Feinberg et al., 2022; Miller & Werner-Winslow, 2016; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016a, 2022; A. Williams, 2018). The FBI (2016) reported that 1,776 law enforcement agencies reported 6,121 hate crimes which constituted an increase of 5% compared to the previous year⁴. However, contributions to the Hate Crime Statistics Program and referrals under the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) programme are voluntary (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2022). The US-based human rights advocacy organisation Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) collected hate crime incidents from the news, social media, and direct reports to the Centre. It counted 201 incidents of harassment and intimidation (including vandalism) associated with the election outcome

⁴ Out of 6,063 single-bias incidents, 57.5% were motivated by race/ ethnicity/ ancestry bias and 21% by religious bias. Out of 4,229 single bias hate crimes, 50.2% were anti-Black or African American bias. Out of 1,538 offences, 54.2% were anti-Semitic and 24.8% Islamophobic. Out of 7,321 hate crime offences, 28.8% constituted intimidation and 26.1% destruction/ damage/ vandalism. Among these hate crimes were 64.5% crimes against the person and 34.4% crimes against property.

on November 11th alone (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016a). This number increased to 437 incidents on November 15th (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016b), 867 on November 18th (Miller & Werner-Winslow, 2016), and 1,094 on December 16th (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2016c). As in the UK, most incidents occurred in public spaces and 32% were directed against immigrants, 23% against Black people, and 6% against Muslims. Flyers with white supremacist content were distributed in some public spaces and stated, “Are you sick of anti-white propaganda in college? YOU ARE NOT ALONE” (Miller & Werner-Winslow, 2016). Other anecdotal evidence reported about graffiti on public buildings in the form of swastikas framed by the slogan “Make American White Again”, thereby referring to Trump’s election campaign slogan (“Make America Great Again” MAGA) and connecting it explicitly with white-supremacist and fascist narratives (e.g., Bacon, 2016).

Scholars from economics, law and political science found that the Trump election had resulted in an increase of 2,048 additional hate crimes (Edwards & Rushin, 2018). Areas that had voted for Trump (Edwards & Rushin, 2018) and counties that had previously hosted Trump rallies saw a significant increase in hate crimes (Feinberg et al., 2022)⁵. As in the case of Brexit, voting for Trump was strongly influenced by votes from middle-class (and not working-class) communities (Igielnik & Kochhar, 2016).

⁵ Edwards and Rushin (2018) used quarterly FBI hate crime data covering the time from 1992 to 2017. Using time series and panel regression and controlling for seasonality, terror attacks, police misconduct, and demographic issues, they found that Trump’s election led to 0.13 additional hate crimes per county per quarter (which corresponded to 410 additional hate crimes nationally per quarter) or 2,048 additional hate crimes since Trump’s election. They further found that the effect of the 2016 US Presidential election on hate crimes was 33 times larger than the effect of terror attacks. Feinberg et al. (2022) used data from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) Center on Extremism on hate incidents between January and December 2016. Controlling for state and county-level variables (e.g., violent crime, partisanship), logit analyses revealed that counties that had hosted a Trump rally showed an incident rate ratio 1,701 times higher than counties that had not hosted Trump rallies. This constituted a 70.1 % increase in the number of hate incidents.

In the US, it was not just hate crimes that increased after the Trump election; white supremacists, too, were reportedly “electrified” by the newly elected President (Beirich & Buchanan, 2018, para. 1) and celebrated his victory (Piggott, 2016). The number of hate groups rose from 784 in 2014/15 to 954 in 2016/17 (Beirich, 2019)⁶. In the years before 2015, hate groups operated mainly online or on small-scale and fractured offline gatherings and events (Belew, 2018; Neiwert, 2019). This changed when Trump announced to run for the presidency. Far-right mobilisations became more public, more frequent, and more violent. Trump rallies provided invaluable opportunities for the far-right to rally for mutual beliefs and against opponents (cf. Miller & Graves, 2020). However, between 2016 and 2017, the far-right also held its own violent rallies nationwide⁷. One hundred and twenty-five major mobilisations were counted between 2016 and 2018, with 74 of them taking place in 2017 (Miller & Graves, 2020). The infamous Charlottesville (VA) “Unite the Right” rallies (May and August 2017) marked the peak of that (for an overview, see: Miller & Graves, 2020). The main rally in August showcased unprecedented unification and attendance among the US-based far-right. It received particular attention also because after the Charlottesville City Council had cancelled the rally, one attendee deliberately drove his car into a crowd of counter-protesters, seriously injuring many and killing one of them (Burke & Sotomayor, 2018).

⁶ This number increased to 1,020 in 2017/18 (Beirich, 2019). Beirich and Buchanan (2018) elaborated that in 2017 armed militias grew the strongest from 165 to 273 (65%), followed by anti-immigrant groups (from 14 to 22: 57%), Islamophobic groups (from 101 to 114: 13%), and by anti-government Patriot movements (from 623 to 689: 10%). From 2016 to 2017, Potok (2017) explains that it was particularly Islamophobic hate groups which saw a significant increase in numbers from 34 (2015) to 101 (2016), an increase of 197%.

⁷ In Anaheim (CA) in February 2016, members of the Ku Klux Klan held a rally which led to the non-lethal stabbing of three counter-protesters (Queally, 2016). The neo-Nazi group Traditionalist Worker Party and the Golden State Skinheads jointly held a rally in Sacramento (CA) in June 2016 at which several counter-protesters were stabbed (Ulloa et al., 2016). A series of pro-Trump rallies and protests in Berkeley (CA) throughout March and April 2017 were attended by around 100 individuals from a wide range of hate groups (Bauer, 2017).

In the early Trump era, one far-right network was particularly prevalent in the US (J. Thompson & Hawley, 2020): The “alt-right” (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.a). Until the Charlottesville rallies, it encompassed a predominantly online network of far-right groups and ideologies whose convictions centred on identifying as “white victims” of cultural diversity, inclusivity, and equality. The alt-right celebrated Trump as their “hero” (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.a, para. 23) and was also the main organiser behind the “Unite the Right” rally.

In the UK, the dynamics of the far-right were somewhat different. Although the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (M. Smith & Colliver, 2016) reported increased online followership of Islamophobic groups such as Britain First, Aryan Revolution UK, and the English Defence League (EDL) in 2016 following both Jo Cox’s murder⁸ and the Brexit campaign, and some indicators showing that Trump’s presidency also affected the British far-right (Bilefsky & Castle, 2017), Hope not hate, a UK-based anti-racist organisation monitoring the British far-right, maintained that far-right groups remained a minority and did not increase in size (Collins, 2016). Instead, the organisation argued, mainstream (politics and media) had adopted and amplified far-right narratives (see also: Mondon & Winter, 2019, 2020; Wodak, 2021).

1.1.3 After the rise, the decline in right-wing action

After their substantial increase in 2016, hate crimes in the UK and the US, as well as US far-right street mobilisation, eventually declined again. Home Office data (Home Office, 2017) showed that hate crimes peaked in July 2016 and fell to pre-referendum levels by January 2017. Devine’s (2018, 2021) statistical models predicting

⁸ Labour MP and Brexit opponent Jo Cox was murdered in public in Yorkshire a week before the Brexit referendum. During the murder, the attacker allegedly shouted “Britain first, this is for Britain, Britain will always come first” which linked Cox’s murder with the referendum and the hate group of the same name (Cobain, 2016).

the number of post-referendum hate crimes were most accurate when they were based on the assumption that increased levels of hate crimes lasted for eight days to two weeks. According to these models, this indicated that hate crimes started to decline again after that time. M. L. Williams et al. (2022) suggested a slightly longer duration; the authors showed that seasonally adjusted racially and religiously aggravated crimes were still significantly increased a month after the referendum (but not two to three months later).

US data is less elaborate, but there, too, was a reported decline in hate crimes around December 2016 (Miller & Werner-Winslow, 2016; A. Williams, 2018). Similarly, large-scale public US far-right street mobilisation eventually declined. After Charlottesville, the alt-right retreated to the internet and off the streets (Miller & Graves, 2020). In November 2018, Richard Spencer – the originator of the term and central figure behind the alt-right – officially declared the Trump movement over (Miller & Graves, 2020).

1.1.4 Researching the “Brexit effect” and “Trump effect”

In popular terms, the spikes in hate crimes and hate incidents in the UK and US and the “emboldened” US far-right (Foran, 2017; Mudde, 2021; Posner & Neiwert, 2016b) have been referred to as the “Brexit effect” and “Trump effect”, respectively (Edwards & Rushin, 2018; Giani & Méon, 2021; Potok, 2017; E. Rhodes, 2018). Throughout section 1.2.1 (“Defining the scope”), I explain how, despite differences, I understand all three phenomena (i.e., spikes in hate crimes in the US and the UK and increased far-right street mobilisation in the US) as right-wing motivated collective action. On the one hand, among other factors, collective action scholars commonly explain participation in (right-wing) collective action as based on collective grievances (i.e., perceived group-based injustice and related emotions such as anger; e.g., J. C.

Becker et al., 2011; Louis et al., 2007; Outten et al., 2018; Pauwels & Heylen, 2020; J. Rhodes, 2010; Shepherd et al., 2018; Tausch et al., 2011; van Zomeren et al., 2008, 2012). On the other hand, scholars from political science, law, or criminology attributed the Brexit and Trump effects specifically to a change in general social norms, which now allowed for the open expression of prejudices and hostility (Bursztyn et al., 2017; Carr et al., 2020; Crandall et al., 2018; Giani & Méon, 2021; M. L. Williams et al., 2022). In turn, in my thesis, I argue that the Brexit and Trump effects have specific characteristics which require a new explanation which goes beyond both of the above approaches (i.e., traditional collective action emphasis on grievances and a narrative of changing social norms): 1. Action-taking (i.e., hate crimes and far-right street mobilisation) temporarily *changed* (i.e., increased (in parts, sharply and suddenly) and declined again); and 2. This change occurred in contexts of perceived ingroup-relevant victories, not (just) grievances. This requires a (social-psychological) examination which, on the one hand, can explain the perception of social norms (specifically, *whose* social norms might have been affected by the Brexit referendum and the Trump election) and changes in action-taking. Consequently, my doctoral thesis suggests and examines processes by which racially and religiously aggravated crimes in the UK and the US after the Brexit referendum and the Trump election, and US-based far-right mobilisation in the same context (in parts, sharply and suddenly) increased (RQ1), as well as eventually declined again (RQ2). My thesis argues that subjective power and legitimacy are closely connected in the way that, on the one hand, the achievement of electoral power (here, the victorious Brexit and Trump campaigns) supposedly signalled a xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist minority that their values and actions are widely supported and understood as legitimate which increased the likelihood of the corresponding enactment. On the other hand, the enactment increased the likelihood that

a third-party audience would perceive the actors and actions as more legitimate. The latter offers an approach within which *undermining* such enactment may also help to explain a decline in activity (i.e., de-legitimising effects). Explaining temporal changes in right-wing motivated activity is important, considering that hate crimes and far-right mobilisation have detrimental consequences for target groups (e.g., immigrants and Muslims; cf. Paterson et al., 2018) and parliamentary democracy (e.g., Heinrich Böll Stiftung Brussels European Union, 2015; Miller-Idriss, 2021; Mudde, 2019, 2022). My thesis is, therefore, embedded in an anti-racist framework (see 2.1 “Researcher position and epistemology”).

Over the following sections, I first elaborate on the scope of my thesis by outlining the commonalities between hate crimes and far-right mobilisation in the context of the Brexit referendum and the Trump election (see 1.2.1 “Defining the scope”). Next, I review literature from collective action research about the factors that have been established as explaining participation in (right-wing) collective action (see 1.2.2, “Participation in (right-wing) collective action”). In section 1.2.3 (“The Brexit referendum and Trump election as trigger events? – The close connection between power and legitimacy (RQ1)”), I first review the literature concerned with the effect of “trigger events” on hate crimes because some scholars have classified the Brexit referendum and the Trump election as such events. I then outline why I understand this classification as requiring further elaboration and how a focus on perceptions of social norms is more helpful to answer RQ1 (see subsection 1.2.3, “The Brexit referendum and Trump election as “trigger events”, and social norms meta-perception”). Subsequently, I explain how I extended existing research and theory to fully address RQ1 (see subsection 1.2.3, “The close connection between power and legitimacy”) and

RQ2 (see. 1.2.4, “Undermining power is de-legitimising (RQ2)”). Finally, I provide an overview of the chapters (see 1.2, “Overview of the chapters”), an explanation of my methodological approach (see Chapter 2 “, Researcher position, epistemology, and ethical considerations”), my empirical chapters (see Chapter 3 – 5), and an overall discussion (see Chapter 6 “Discussion”).

1.2 Literature review

1.2.1 Defining the scope

In the introduction, I stated that my thesis suggests and examines processes by which racially and religiously aggravated crimes in the UK and the US after the Brexit referendum and the Trump election, and US-based far-right mobilisation in the same context (in parts, sharply and suddenly) temporarily changed. I, thereby, indicated that I would treat these phenomena as a single subject of investigation. In the following, I first more closely elaborate on the concepts of “hate crime” and “far-right” (and far-right street mobilisation, accordingly) and acknowledge where the two differ. Subsequently, I outline the commonalities of hate crimes and far-right street mobilisation in light of my thesis, allowing me to discuss them jointly.

Defining hate crimes and the far-right. The UK Crown Prosecution Service (CPS; 2022a) in the UK defines hate crimes as

any criminal offence which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility or prejudice, based on a person's disability or perceived disability; race or perceived race; or religion or perceived religion; or sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation or transgender identity or perceived transgender identity. (Hate crime section)

Consequently, hate crimes can capture a range of activities and victim identities (“strands”). My thesis is, thereby, concerned with racially and religiously aggravated

crimes (or “Racist and Religious Hate Crimes”, RRHC; CPS, 2022b) against the person and property. The CPS definition further points out that hate crimes can be prosecuted based on perceptions⁹ concerning the alleged (ethnic or religious) membership of the victim. Thus, a victim may be attacked based on the perpetrator’s assumption that they are “deviant” in nationality, ethnicity, or religion. In other words, individuals may be attacked based on the perception that they are of a different nationality than “British” or “American”, different ethnicity than “white”, or of a different religion than “Christianity”¹⁰. The US Hate Crime Statistics Act (28 U.S.C. § 534), whilst equally acknowledging the protected identity strands, does not explicitly constitute a perception-based approach (e.g., Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), n.d.). However, individual US states may adopt such an approach (e.g., *Section 485.05 Hate Crimes*, 2020).

In the UK, incidents that are motivated by prejudicial bias against the protected identity strands but do not constitute a crime (e.g., shouting insults) can be flagged as a non-crime hate incident (NCHI; College of Policing, 2020). The College of Policing (2014) further clarifies that:

race means any group defined by race, colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin, including countries within the UK, and Gypsy or Irish Travellers. [...] Policy and legislation takes a ‘human rights’ approach and covers majority as well as minority groups. (p. 30)

⁹ Pursuing a perception-based approach also allows for the victim or any other person who witnessed the attack to identify the incident as hate-motivated. This enables victims of hate incidents or crimes to become a credible source of information. This was recommended by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) to foster trust in prosecuting authorities and reduce (further) stigmatisation (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), 2007).

¹⁰ Of course, there are more categories than these examples.

Consequently, people of white ethnicities can be victims of RRHC, too¹¹.

The term “far-right” has a long history of ambiguity regarding what it comprises (Mayer, 2021). One of the most agreed upon and recent definitions distinguishes between two subgroups: The extreme right and the radical right (e.g., Mudde, 2019). The extreme right “rejects the essence of democracy, that is, popular sovereignty and majority rule.” In contrast, the “radical right accepts the essence of democracy but opposes fundamental elements of liberal democracy, most notably, minority rights, the rule of law, and separation of powers.” (Mudde, 2019, p. 7). According to Mudde, although the two subgroups jointly form “the” far-right, they are not necessarily in accordance with one another. This can result in mutual recriminations regarding being too extreme or not extreme enough, respectively. These disagreements may be due to different organisational structures the far-right can take. Mudde (2019) distinguishes between political parties, social movement organisations, and subcultures. Whilst political parties take part in the electoral process and are, therefore, categorised as “radical right” (examples are UKIP in the UK, Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) in Germany, Swedish Democrats in Sweden, or Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India), social movement organisations and subcultures can be either, and they are not mutually exclusive. On the one hand, the alt-right (see “Introduction”), may, thereby, be classified as a social movement organisation due to its origin in the right-wing think tank the National Policy Institute, led by Richard Spencer (Southern Poverty Law

¹¹ In the US (New York), a case of a Black man assaulting a white woman in 2016 caught the media’s attention (Bess, 2016) after it was prosecuted as a hate crime. This was based on the attacker’s declaration of having “cut her because she was white”. The legislation of (racially and religiously motivated) hate crimes was initially introduced to counter the historical origins of prejudice (e.g., colonialism, segregation, and slavery) and contemporary structural power asymmetries by which people of colour remain unproportionally affected. However, the above case illustrates that processing hate crimes may not always be uncontroversial.

Center, n.d.b). On the other hand, it is a pan-institutional network of various far-right groups centring on a white victim identity (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.a), which classifies it also as a subculture (Mudde, 2019).

Despite differences in organisation and agendas among the far-right and ongoing discussion about how to best describe the far-right (cf. Mayer, 2021), anti-egalitarian, nativist¹², and authoritarian elements are discussed as overarching features (cf. Aasland & Jupskås, 2021). Thus, common “enemies” of far-right groups and agendas are immigrants and ethnic minorities, as well as left-wing politicians (understood as fostering cultural diversity and equality, e.g., Winter, 2000). Far-right groups, dominated by (white, cis, and heterosexual) men, are further embedded in an ideology which incorporates toxic masculinity and misogyny (e.g., Doerer, 2022; Kisić et al., 2021; Mudde, 2019; Phelan et al., 2023).

Pirò and Castelli Gattinara (2018) argued that the far-right, including both radical right-wing parties and extreme right grassroots movements, should be understood as *one* movement. The diversification of strands, the researchers suggested, may be strategic and serve one common purpose (i.e., advocating an anti-“elite”, nativist and authoritarian agenda). In fact, historically, fascist parties in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy gained a significant share of their political power by occupying the streets. As *Gauleiter* (“district leader”) Joseph Goebbels famously said: “Anyone who can conquer the street can also conquer the masses” (as cited in Reichard, 2007, p. 186). Ground troops in Germany (*Strumabteilung*, SA (“assault division”)) and Italy (Fascist *squadristi* (“armed squads”)) staged public marches, celebrations of political leaders, parades, or night-time torchlit processions to intimidate political opponents and

¹² Nativism holds that countries rightfully belong to those who are allegedly “native” to them and should be closed to those “alien” to it. Nativism, therefore, connects nationalism with xenophobia (i.e., racism, anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia; (Mudde, 2019).

terrorise citizens into compliance (Reichard, 2007). Thus, the street has been a strategically important space for the far-right to demonstrate its power to political opponents and citizens (as well as to their ingroup; cf. Virchow, 2007). Whilst in Italy, this marked everyday business in many regions, in Germany, this was particularly the case in the context of (successful) elections. Fast-forwarding to 2017, it is difficult not to recognise the resemblance of elements of the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally with Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy (e.g., the infamous Tikki torch march, which was accompanied by anti-Semitic chants, or the intimidation of counter-protesters) as described above. The rally, thereby, also marked one of the most impactful examples of far-right mobilisation in recent US history¹³ in which the street became a space to develop a sense of power and make political demands. The unprecedented extent of unification and mobilisation of shared goals across usually heterogenous far-right hate groups and movements makes it even more crucial to ask how this was possible and what role the immediate context played.

Based on the aforementioned, it becomes apparent that there are differences between RRHC and (street mobilisation of) the far-right: Logistically, hate crimes can be undertaken spontaneously and by a lone individual (but see “Hate crimes as a collective action” in the following subsection), whereas far-right rallies and gatherings require (strategic) planning and organisation (I return to this point in section 1.2.4, “Undermining power is de-legitimising (RQ2)”). Legally, hate crimes are criminal undertakings, whereas far-right street mobilisation – per se – is not. Even when, for example, marches cross criminal thresholds and feature verbal or physical attacks on politicians or counter-protesters, they do not automatically classify as hate crimes

¹³ In a Western context, this is certainly surpassed by the Capitol insurrection which will be discussed in later sections.

(Aasland & Jupskås, 2021; Home Office, 2017). Psychologically, hate crimes can, further, be conducted by members of groups that constitute a traditional enemy of the far-right, such as anti-Semitic hate crimes conducted by Islamist fundamentalists (but see von Kumborg, 2021 for an elaboration on the connection between extremism on the part of the far-right and Islamism).

While considering these differences is important, in the following, I outline the commonalities between RRHC and far-right street mobilisation, which I argue, in light of my thesis, allow me to discuss RRHC and far-street mobilisation jointly.

Hate crimes as a collective action. The collectivity in far-right and hate group membership and far-right street mobilisation accordingly is obvious. However, it may be counterintuitive at first to understand hate crimes in such terms. Levin and McDevitt (1993) suggested a typology of hate crime motivation (founded on interviews conducted in the US with authorities, victims, and perpetrators), which indicated that all hate crimes were motivated by bigotry. This typology clustered hate crimes into three overarching categories (“thrill-seeking”, “defensive”, and “mission”)¹⁴. According to Levin and McDevitt (1993), thrill-seeking hate crimes are attacks based on “the thrill of making someone else suffer” (p. 65), defensive hate crimes are motivated by the perpetrators’ perception of threat and their intention to protect their immediate environment and resources from “intruders”, and mission hate crimes are based on the intention to eliminate those that are perceived as evil or somehow inferior. The typology was later expanded by a fourth hate crime category (“retaliatory”) by which perpetrators acted in response to (real or perceived) prior crimes.

¹⁴ Mapping hate crimes by perpetrator and attack characteristics is unsurprisingly not without controversy. On the one hand, the borders between hate crime categories are not always clear and Walters et al. (2016) explain that these can, in fact, overlap.

Indications for collectivity in hate crimes, following this hate crime motivation typology, are that defensive hate crimes are understood as directed against those “considered to be outsiders or intruders” (McDevitt et al., 2002, p. 308) to the perpetrator’s neighbourhood and that mission hate crime perpetrators pursue an ideology of “rid[ding] the world of evil” (p. 309) which not rarely included joining a hate group. Furthermore, determining the culpability of individuals during the prosecution of a hate crime is often aggravated by dynamics that involve different roles of individuals in the group which the typology neatly lays out (i.e., the leader, the “fellow traveller”, the “unwilling participant”, and the “hero”). This aligns with Walters’ et al. (2016) emphasis on the influence of peers as a relevant motivation to engage in bias-motivated activities. Although Levin and McDevitt (1993) and McDevitt et al. (2002) established that the majority of hate crimes are motivated by adolescents that show thrill-seeking behavioural intentions, Pauwels and Heylen (2020) illustrated that thrill-seeking behaviour and exposure to racist peers were associated with political violence only indirectly via right-wing extremist beliefs. Since thrill-seeking can incorporate a range of behaviour (including prosocial ones; e.g., Maples-Keller et al., 2016), it might not directly translate into political violence. Instead, it may increase the likelihood of approaching a group with extreme beliefs and norms, shaping the individual’s beliefs and actions accordingly (Bilewicz & Soral, 2020; Crandall et al., 2002; Terry & Hogg, 1996). This may be enhanced when the individual is new to the group (Brown & Pehrson, 2020; Postmes & Smith, 2009).

Thus, even though as few people as one lone individual can conduct hate crimes, it is essential to recognise that hate crimes are the result of the salience of group membership by which the perpetrators perceive “the victim[s] was somehow different” (p. 307) from themselves and their group. Consequently, the number of individuals

involved should not matter to recognise collectivity (cf. Saavedra & Drury, 2022; Wright et al., 1990) and understand hate crimes as a group-based activity, or at least the result of collective influence (Craig, 2002; Walters et al., 2016). This aligns with the notion that prejudice is not an erroneous pre-disposition but socialised and mobilised in a *group* of relevance to the individual (e.g., Klandermans & Mayer, 2006; Reicher et al., 2008; Reicher, 2012; Reicher & Ulusahin, 2020). Hate crimes might, thereby, be the closest connected to far-right activity in cases where the perpetrators have devoted their life to hatred (“mission” hate motivation) which, according to McDevitt et al. (2002), included joining an “organized hate group” (p. 309). This aligns with Klandermans and Mayer’s (2006) argument that individuals’ participation in right-wing extremism resulted from the influence of a relevant extreme right social movement and the broader societal context. Since far-right groups are comprised of, and their activity and hate crimes are predominantly conducted by or on behalf of fellow white individuals (McDevitt et al., 2002; Miller-Idriss, n.d.; Walters & Krasodonski-Jones, 2019), this suggests an underlying mutual ideology. In section 1.2.2 (“Participation in (right-wing) collective action”), I further elaborate on this point. For now, it is relevant to consider that RRHC and far-right activity (e.g., street mobilisation) share similar beliefs and acting with, within, or (perceiving to act) on behalf of a relevant group.

Coinciding temporary changes in occurrence and similarity of national context. Alongside the shared collective element in RRHC and far-right street mobilisation, in the context of the Brexit referendum and the Trump election, two more features, I argue, allow me to examine RRHC and (US-based) far-right street mobilisation together: The national contexts themselves and timing.

On the one hand, I have indicated in the introduction (see 1.1.1, “The context: The Brexit referendum and the Trump election”) that the national contexts (i.e., the

Brexit referendum and the Trump election) are similar, particularly regarding the campaign themes (e.g., racism and incitement against political elites) cultivated by Farage in the UK and Trump in the US and amplifying far-right narratives (Mondon & Winter, 2017, 2019). Both events were political, and their outcomes were unexpected considering psephological accounts that predicted the opposite (e.g., Ballotpedia, n.d.; Cokelaere, 2016; Jennings & Fisher, 2016; Mercer et al., 2016). On the other hand, both RRHC in the UK and the US and the far-right street mobilisation in the US changed in their occurrence in a way that they first extraordinarily increased and then decreased again. The changes occurred within the same period and similar national contexts (see above). Thus, RRHC and US-based far-right street mobilisation showed coinciding temporal changes in collective action in similar national contexts.

Based on the discussed commonalities, heretofore, I refer to RRHC and far-right street mobilisation in the context of the Brexit referendum and Trump election jointly as “right-wing *collective* action” (or “right-wing motivated collective action”). The collective element, in conjunction with the temporal changes in collective action in similar contexts, I argue, requires a framework which is not only concerned with collective action but also with the appraisal of social norms and can further explain changes in collective action. All of which is the focus of the following three sections (1.2.2, “Participation in (right-wing) collective action”, 1.2.3, “The Brexit referendum and Trump election as ‘trigger events’? – The close connection between power and legitimacy (RQ1)”, and 1.2.4, “Undermining power is de-legitimising (RQ2)”), starting with a review of the factors that explain general participation in (right-wing) collective action.

1.2.2 Participation in (right-wing) collective action

In section 1.2.1 (“Defining the scope”), I established that RRHC and far-right (street) mobilisation both incorporate acting with, within or (perceiving to act) on behalf of a group. In this section, I review research on factors that predict *when* an individual “is acting as a representative of the group, and the action is directed at improving the condition of the entire group” (Wright et al., 1990, p. 995). Van Zomeren’s et al. (2008) widely cited meta-analysis reviewed three overarching factors that robustly predicted such *collective action*: Identity, perceived injustice, and efficacy. By focusing on these factors in my thesis, I align with what Thomas and Osborne (2022) refer to as the first “phase of [collective action] research [that] focused almost exclusively on the structurally aggrieved and sought to establish the conditions under which members of the disadvantaged group would themselves engage in collective action” (p. 986). However, it is not only the “structurally aggrieved” but also those that *perceive* to be (structurally) aggrieved for which these factors can explain participation in *right-wing* collective action, too. Nonetheless, in this context, it is necessary to discuss the role of ideology (Choma et al., 2020; Jost et al., 2017; Osborne et al., 2019), which I will do whilst explaining that I understand ideology as an identity content and as group-based.

I acknowledge that more factors may explain participation in (right-wing) collective action – for example, positive emotions and morality – and I briefly discuss these two and their relevance to my thesis at the end of this section.

Identity. When thinking of “identity”, one may think about what makes a person tick and what differentiates them from others, or what makes them unique. In social psychological terms, this is understood as *personal* identity. In contrast but not in conflict with this, social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) states that a person can also define themselves through the groups they (perceive to) belong to. These

groups may be based on demographic characteristics (e.g., nationality, ethnicity) or attitudes, shaping so-called “opinion-based groups” (McGarty et al., 2011). Personal and social identities co-exist within an individual, and self-categorisation theory (SCT; Turner et al., 1987; Turner & Reynolds, 2012) explains how with varying contexts, a person can shift along a personal-social axis. For example, whilst a person may identify as a daughter, friend, or romantic partner in an interpersonal context A, in context B, they may shift to understanding themselves as a member of the social category (i.e., group) of Germans, men, LGBTQ+ community etc. In other words, people can “de-personalise” (or “de-socialise”, respectively). As I will discuss later (see section 1.2.3 “The Brexit referendum and Trump election as “trigger events”? – The close connection between power and legitimacy (RQ1)”), this process relies on how much a social identity is (made) salient. For now, it is important to understand that once a person identifies in terms of their social identity, they will also evaluate their group's social positioning, and this evaluation can be positive or negative. Since a person's social identity is part of their self-concept, groups can be an important source and tool to regulate their self-esteem – or in other words, to maintain or gain a positive social identity. Groups are also tied to emotional significance in the way that a person attributes value to the groups they belong to (Tajfel, 2010). Importantly, the information conveyed by, and emotions experienced from holding specific social identities are evaluated in relation to an “other”. Identifying oneself as a member of a specific social category can be accompanied by an awareness of an asymmetry in status (high vs low-status groups¹⁵; also see the following subsection “Perceived injustice”) and possibly

¹⁵ The terms “low/ high status”, “(dis)advantaged” or “majority/ minority group” are used interchangeably here. This classification may be somewhat ambiguous in places since the references can vary with context. However, overall, I refer to the contrast between groups that have generally more power (e.g., societal status, societal influence) and those that are (still) struggling to reach the same or higher level of acceptance and influence.

power (e.g., access to career opportunities). According to SIT, if one's social position is evaluated negatively (i.e., group members found themselves to be in the low-status group), group members can engage in several strategies to restore a positive social identity. One of them is to engage in collective action.

The likelihood for collective action to occur increases when group members perceive the boundaries between the high and their low-status group to be impermeable (i.e., intergroup boundaries are understood as restricting the possibility for members of societally lower-status groups individually to join higher-status groups), unstable (i.e., intergroup boundaries are perceived as no longer able to hold up), and illegitimate (i.e., intergroup boundaries are perceived as unfair). These factors thereby signal that the intergroup relations should ("impermeability" and "illegitimacy") and can ("instability") change. Thus, only when individuals identify in terms of their social identity (in contrast to their personal identity), it is possible to act with or on behalf of the ingroup (van Zomeren et al., 2008; Wright et al., 1990). The strength with which an individual identifies with a relevant group (group identification¹⁶), thereby determines the extent to which they are likely to undergo a shift along the personal-social axis identity and to engage in collective action, respectively (Turner et al., 1987). This is why SIT and SCT are jointly understood as a social identity approach (Reicher et al., 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987; Turner & Reynolds, 2012) to collective action taking.

The role of identification in a context of collective action was also established empirically. In their widely cited meta-analysis on the factors explaining participation in collective action, Van Zomeren et al. (2008) found that the average correlation with collective action from the 182 reviewed independent samples was one of moderate

¹⁶ Whilst "social identity" refers to their understanding of the relevant (in)group's social reality, social "identification" is understood as individuals' level of affiliation with a group, (van Zomeren et al., 2008, p. 505).

strength ($r = .38$). Social identification thereby predicted collective action taking against group-based perceived disadvantages that had newly arisen and that were specific (incidental disadvantages) as well as long-standing discrimination (structural disadvantages) (see also the next two subsections). The authors further considered that identity can be “political”, meaning that identity can also be defined in terms of a broader societal context of power struggle in which group members engage on behalf of their ingroup (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; van Stekelenburg et al., 2010; van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2010, 2017). This is often the case when individuals are part of an existing social movement or network. Van Zomeren et al. (2008) found that a politicised identity was a stronger predictor for participation in collective action than social identification. A prominent example is the distinction between engaging in collective action based on a social identity of being a woman vs being a feminist (e.g., Mikołajczak, Iyer & Becker, 2022).

Van Zomeren et al. (2008) further introduced and tested their social identity model of collective action (SIMCA). SIMCA’s premise rests on the assumption that three overarching factors jointly (as well as individually) explain participation in collective action: Identity, perceived injustice, and (group) efficacy. Identity was therein understood as bridging perceived injustice and group efficacy, and as the next (sub)sections will show, identity, therefore, also lays out the socio-structural context within which engagement in collective action can be legitimised.

Perceived injustice. An objective disadvantage is not a necessary condition for collective action. As indicated above (“Identity”), as a group, the *perception* of being disadvantaged or mistreated relative to a relevant outgroup makes collective action more likely (Runciman, 1966; J. H. Smith et al., 2011; van Zomeren et al., 2008); in other words, it is the comparison with, and appraisal of disadvantage in relation to an

outgroup and not necessarily the ingroup's objective societal position that motivates group members to engage in collective action. Indeed, van Zomeren et al. (2008) found that perceived injustice was a robust predictor for collective action ($r_{avg.} = .35$). The perception of injustice is, therefore, informed by an individual's social identity (van Zomeren et al., 2004, 2008; Wright et al., 1990). Specifically, identity informs how individuals are societally positioned and which injustices (i.e., disadvantages) are ingroup-relevant, increasing the likelihood of mobilising collective action (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This is why in the SIMCA, the perception of injustice was conceptualised as predicting collective action directly as well as indirectly via identity. The authors found that the perception of injustice was particularly predictive of incidental (vs structural) disadvantage, possibly because structural disadvantages are, on the one hand, more ingrained into group members' self-understandings, and on the other hand, harder to change. Van Zomeren et al. (2008) could further confirm that it was thereby affective injustice (vs non-affective injustice) that motivated collective action. In other words, it is not enough for individuals to understand that they may be disadvantaged (compared to another group), but they also need to be angry about it (also see: J. C. Becker et al., 2011). Anger incorporates a strong "approach" motivation (e.g., Harmon-Jones, 2003), and, therefore, increases the likelihood of action (vs non-action). This is in line with intergroup emotion theory (IET; Mackie et al., 2000; E. R. Smith, 1993) which explains that with increasing identification with a group, emotions are also experienced (more strongly) on its behalf.

Efficacy. Finally, another approach to collective action derives from the question of perceived ability. In contrast to solely identifying with a group and the group-based perception of injustice compared to another group, group members also need to perceive that their actions can have an effect. Initially, this was linked to the

assumption that collective action is based on a rational evaluation of available resources (e.g., material resources, people), as well as on subjective expectations regarding the costs and benefits of participation in collective action (Gamson, 1975; Klandermans, 1984). However, whilst rationality-based approaches to collective action neglected the factor of emotionality in collective action, more recently, emotionality and efficacy are no longer understood to predict collective action in isolation, but in parallel or even in an intertwined manner (Drury & Reicher, 2009; van Zomeren et al. 2004, 2012).

Furthermore, nowadays, efficacy in collective action has mostly been associated with group efficacy, i.e., the belief that one's (in)group can collectively achieve a group-relevant goal (Bandura, 1997). In van Zomeren et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis, group efficacy was shown to be a reliable predictor of collective action ($r_{avg.} = .34$). The perception of the group's efficacy can, thereby, be strengthened (and generated) through the exchange with others as well as “acting in and on the social world” (Simon & Klandermans, 2001, p. 327) accordingly. According to Simon and Klandermans (2001), this fostered a sense of agency – or, in other words, “collective power or strength” (Drury & Reicher, 2005; Mummendey et al., 1999; Tausch et al., 2011; van Zomeren et al., 2004, 2008, 2012). The authors further suggested that this process politicises identity, illustrating a strong connection between the perception of efficacy and a politicised identity. This is why – as with the perception of injustice – identity shapes the evaluation of the group's ability to achieve an ingroup-relevant goal. Consequently, in the SIMCA, group efficacy identity was conceptualised and empirically shown to predict collective action directly, as well as indirectly via identity efficacy. However, here again, this was mostly so when the perceived disadvantage was incidental (vs structural; see above “Perceived injustice”).

Identity, perceived injustice, and efficacy in right-wing motivated collective action. What Thomas and Osborne (2022) describe as the “third phase” (p. 985) of collective action research concerns collective action undertaken by members of an advantaged group *for* the advantaged ingroup. Although this is in contrast to the origins of collective action research (initially focussed on explaining how members of oppressed groups find ways of living with or countering oppression; e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the sociological emphasis on objective status, one of the grounding pillars of social psychology as a discipline was, in fact, the quest to explain oppression itself (Asch, 1956; Lewin & Lippitt, 1938; Moscovici et al., 1969; Tajfel, 1970; Tajfel et al., 1971). Further, returning to the definition of collective action as “directed at improving the condition of the entire group” (Wright et al., 1990, p. 995), for members of an advantaged group, improving the ingroup’s condition may constitute protecting the status quo¹⁷. Thus, one argument that justified studying such activity through the lens of collective action was subjective perception. In other words, from a (social) psychological point of view, what constitutes unequal or unfair treatment is a subjective evaluation. In line with relative deprivation theory (Runciman, 1966; J. H. Smith et al., 2011), individuals can perceive themselves to be disadvantaged compared to another group even if they, objectively speaking, are not structurally disadvantaged at all. When examining far-right extremists, Klandermans and Mayer (2006), for example, observed that “[extremists] perceived or suspected illegitimate equality between the indigenous and alien minorities [...] and construe this condition as a shared grievance for themselves” (p. 246; cf. Hoerst & Drury, 2023). The researchers further explained that, as in any other movement, “the belief that the situation can be changed at affordable cost” and individuals’ perceptions about having “the resources and [...] opportunities to

¹⁷ In other instances, this may also incorporate aiming to “challenge” the status quo. I will come back to this in 6.4.2 (“Future studies”).

make an impact” (p. 8) played a critical role in the assessment as to whether engage in corresponding action or not. Thus, the factors of perceived injustice and group efficacy seem to apply to collective action on the part of advantaged groups as well (the factor of efficacy in a context where the identity of those engaging in collective action and those in power are perceived to align will be further examined in the next section 1.2.3 “The Brexit referendum and Trump election as “trigger events”? – The close connection between power and legitimacy (RQ1)”). Indeed, Thomas et al. (2020) tested the applicability of the SIMCA to disadvantaged and advantaged groups. In a longitudinal design, the researchers demonstrated a generally good fit of the model for both groups¹⁸. In this way, the emphasis on the subjective perception over the objective status may also soothe sociologists’ attested poor fit of applying social movement frameworks to “movements of privileged groups” (e.g., Blee & Creasap, 2010, p. 271).

Some scholars have advocated for the integration of political ideology or individual-based pre-existing ideological beliefs in the study of collective action as a factor that determines intergroup differences in the goals of and ways how collective action is enacted (J. C. Becker, 2020; Choma et al., 2020; Jost et al., 2017; Osborne et al., 2019). In fact, the strong emphasis in far-right ideology on threats to the (white) ingroup (see 1.2.1, “Defining hate crimes and far-right activity”) is a critical motivator to engage in RRHC and far-right activity (Leander et al., 2020; Louis et al., 2007; Miller-Idriss, n.d.; Outten et al., 2018; Pauwels & Heylen, 2020; J. Rhodes, 2010;

¹⁸ Thomas et al. (2020) did observe that an increase in political efficacy over time was associated with a decrease in collective action intention among members of the advantaged group. The researchers suggested that an increase in the beliefs to be able to change intergroup relations in one’s favour may result in a decrease in collective action intentions due to (sedative) system justification beliefs. Whilst Drury and Reicher (2009) had already suggested that a lack of action may also be the result of the experience of collective disempowerment (e.g., manifested in a lack of support from fellow protesters), Thomas et al. (2020) acknowledged the possibility that beliefs about the ability to collectively achieve a goal may be different from (individual-centred) beliefs about the ability to influence politics (which was assessed in their study).

Shepherd et al., 2018; Walters et al., 2016; White & Crandall, 2017). Strong identification with the relevant ingroup can thereby amplify the perceptions of threats and increase the likelihood of “white backlashes” (see Brown, 2010; J. Rhodes, 2010). In my thesis, I understand such ideological influence in terms of social identity content. As outlined before when discussing the bridging function of identity in the SIMCA, identity shapes the perception of both injustice and efficacy and marks the socio-structural context within which a group may engage in corresponding collective action (Drury & Reicher, 2005; Mummendey et al., 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Tausch et al., 2011; van Zomeren et al., 2004, 2008, 2012). Further, the salience of social identity allows for understanding oneself and others as members of the same group and understanding that some do *not* belong to that group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As elaborated in the previous “Identity” subsection, once individuals identify in terms of their social identities, they will seek a positive evaluation of that group (i.e., a positive social identity), often achieved by differentiating between groups (i.e., between the ingroup and an *outgroup*). However, seeking favourable outcomes or treatments for the ingroup is not automatically accompanied by seeking *unfavourable* treatments for the outgroup but rather depends on the dimension of comparison and the relevant collective identity *content* (Badea et al., 2021; Crandall et al., 2002; Golec de Zavala et al., 2020; Postmes & Smith, 2009; Reicher et al., 2010). A collective identity marks the shared understanding of the values, norms, and worldviews of the relevant identity (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2017), and elements of it can, therefore, be incorporated into an individual’s social identity. A group’s collective identity might be one of prosociality which categorically dismisses hostility towards others (and may foster solidarity-based action), whilst another one’s identity might revolve around promoting the corresponding ingroup’s superiority over others (Reicher et al., 2010), which

categorically discriminates against relevant outgroups. Klandermans and Mayer (2006), for example, established that one of the motives for participating in right-wing extremism was “the expression of identification with a group” (p. 8). Other intergroup differentiations might arise from specific topics (i.e., opinion-based groups; McGarty et al., 2011), for example, embodied by affiliation with hate groups (Bliuc et al., 2019), or positionality towards socio-political issues. In the case of Brexit, for example, its categories (Leave vs Remain) have transformed into the identities of “Leavers” and “Remainers” (Brusenbauch Meislová, 2022; Montagu, 2018), and results from the YouGov-Cambridge Globalism survey suggested that Remainers and Leavers were divided over what qualified as being “truly” British. Leavers, but not Remainers, based this on fluidity in the English language and parental UK nationality (Clarke et al., 2019). Therefore, the (in)group is a critical medium through which information is conveyed about who is – and who is not included in the group and could (at least potentially) constitute a threat to the ingroup. Postmes and Smith (2009) argued that the perception of threat (on the part of the advantaged group) was, however, not a “natural” (p. 771) precursor of outgroup hostility. This is in line with the argument that this depends on identity content. Consequently, whilst members of an advantaged group may *feel* threatened, the question is why the identity content is one of victimhood in the first place.

Alongside explaining collective action based on individuals’ perceptions and experiences of group-based grievances (and threats, respectively), the mobilisation of collective action is also strategic. Klein et al. (2007) argued that the expression of social identity can, on the one side, strengthen identity among group members (or those who wish to join) and, on the other side, persuade an external audience to support the acting

group. Thus, intergroup differences in collective action may also be explained based on the goals of mobilisation. The group prescribes who “we” are (and who “we” are not, respectively) and how “we” should act accordingly (I elaborate more in-depth on the process by which this occurs in section 1.2.3, “The Brexit referendum and Trump election as ‘trigger events’? – The close connection between power and legitimacy (RQ1)”). Thus, ideological beliefs such as social dominance orientation (SDO) might instead be anchored in group membership and internalised over time and with varying degrees rather than being individual-based and pre-existing (cf. Turner & Reynolds, 2003). The strategic element of identity performance is relevant here since group leaders can serve as “identity entrepreneurs” and adjust social identity content where strategically beneficial (Haslam et al., 2020; Turner et al., 1987).

The question of why an identity content of victimhood is pursued in the first place can be answered by the notion that competition for victimhood can establish who the (alleged) “real” victim is, hence, who can justify violence as self-defence (Noor et al., 2017) and mobilise others in support of it accordingly. Leaders can foster and legitimise the experience of group-based anger about a threat to the ingroup, thereby legitimising the act of (violently) countering the alleged threat as a virtuous duty (Reicher et al., 2008). In other words, “leaders mobilize prejudice, and followers are mobilized to be prejudiced” (Reicher, 2012, p. 40; also see: Durrheim, 2020). Consequently, ideology can be understood as yet another manifestation of identity content: In a right-wing context, the collective identity is commonly construed in a way that portrays the ingroup as threatened to be “left behind” (Mondon & Winter, 2019), “replaced” (Ekman, 2022), “denied to speak freely” (White & Crandall, 2017), or “denied its greatness despite being entitled to special treatment” (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009; Golec de Zavala & Lantos, 2020). In the context of Brexit, Golec de Zavala et al.

(2017), for example, correlationally established that British collective narcissism (i.e., the belief in the nation's greatness which allegedly was unacknowledged and under threat) – as a defensive construal of ingroup identification (Cichocka, 2016) – predicted voting for Leave. The authors further showed that this was explained by perceiving immigration as a threat to British identity. Using American collective narcissism as a predictor, Hamer found that it predicted support for Islamophobic hate crimes (Dyduch-Hazar, 2019), whilst Federico and Golec de Zavala (2018) illustrated a correlational association between American collective narcissism and support for Trump in the 2016 Presidential election. It is not surprising then, that in much right-wing motivated action, a (white) victim identity is a fundamental part of the ideology (Klandermans & Mayer, 2006). In fact, both qualitative and quantitative empirical research has shown that repeated exposure to hate speech increases the willingness to engage in hostile action accordingly (Bilewicz & Soral, 2020) and that a (white) victim identity marked a critical factor for participation in right-wing extremism since it provided a way to make sense of the social world (Klandermans & Mayer, 2006).

Other factors that explain participation in (right-wing) collective action. As outlined at the beginning of this section, I acknowledge that factors other than identity, perceived injustice, and efficacy (and ideology) can predict participation in collective action. Here, I briefly discuss two of them: Positive emotions and morality.

Positive emotions. Common approaches in collective action literature emphasise the role of accompanying anger. This is intuitive also because anger has been established as an approach emotion (e.g., Harmon-Jones, 2003), which explains the active turn towards another group (e.g., Mackie et al., 2000). However, this is not to say that other emotions do not play a role in collective action. Motivated by examining the influence of (perceived) achievement, Tausch and Becker (2013) examined whether the

nature of the outcome of collective action (i.e., whether it was perceived as successful or unsuccessful) determined the emotional state and influenced further collective action intentions. Longitudinally, the authors showed that unsuccessful action led to feelings of anger which predicted further action-taking. This is in line with common collective action approaches already elaborated above (see above, “Identity” and “Perceived injustice”). However, the authors also showed that successful action led to feelings of pride which, too, increased collective action intention. Specifically, they found that pride affected collective action intention via the perception that the group was collectively able to achieve its goal (group efficacy). This implies that pride may have an important role in shaping perceptions about the ingroup, which could affect the intention to engage in mere collective action in the future. These findings also align with research on the influence of economic conditions and support for outgroup hostility. The so-called “v-curve” relationship between economic conditions and support for outgroup hostility (e.g., Jetten, 2019; Postmes & Smith, 2009) describes that both relative deprivation (see “Perceived injustice”) and relative gratification (i.e., satisfaction with economic conditions) predicted support for outgroup hostility. Postmes and Smith (2009), thereby, showed that feeling economically satisfied predicted outgroup hostility even stronger than relative deprivation. The argument that wealth fostered prejudices further matches findings that hate crimes in wealthier areas that had voted for Leave in the Brexit referendum witnessed more substantial increases in hate crimes compared to areas that had voted for Remain (see, “Introduction”; Carr et al., 2020; M. L. Williams et al., 2022). Consequently, emotions connected to ingroup-relevant defeat and success can lead to further action (IET; Mackie et al., 2000; E. R. Smith, 1993). I return to the role of positive emotions in collective action and

perception of success in subsection 1.2.3 (“The close connection between power and legitimacy”).

Morality. SIMCA (van Zomeren et al., 2008) has been extended since it was first established. For example, it considers the dynamic processes that can occur in the context of participating in collective action (van Zomeren et al., 2012). The most recent extension concerns the inclusion of morality (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; Pauls et al., 2022; van Zomeren et al., 2018). According to Agostini and van Zomeren (2021), in the so-called “dual-chamber model of collective action”, a politicised identity and morality built the protester’s “beating heart” (p. 667), which provided the perception of injustice and group efficacy with the necessary “oxygen”. In the model, identity and morality are conceptually and statistically allowed to correlate since, according to the authors, morality shapes social identity. It, therefore, connected “who ‘we’ are [with] what ‘we’ stand for” (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; van Zomeren et al., 2018). Importantly, morality was added to SIMCA because, according to the authors, otherwise socially advantaged group members’ solidarity and engagement in collective action in favour of a disadvantaged group were not explicable (understood as the “second wave” of collective action research; Thomas & Osborne, 2022).

As I have already indicated in the context of strategic mobilisation of collective action (see subsection “Identity, perceived injustice, and efficacy in right-wing collective action”), morality is relevant in a right-wing context (e.g., Reicher et al., 2008; Uysal et al., 2023). However, *prima facie*, it is difficult to argue that morality was employed to mobilise on behalf of the outgroup in such a context. That is because the collective identity has already been construed in a way that makes the outgroup responsible for the detriment of the ingroup. Morality in a right-wing context, therefore, rather serves to mobilise the ingroup *against* the outgroup by glorifying the necessity of

fighting the (alleged) outgroup threat (see 1.2.2, “Identity, perceived injustice, and efficacy in right-wing collective action”). Thus, whilst acknowledging that a moralised identity can play an important role in right-wing collective action, I suggest that a victimised identity (i.e., the interaction between identity and perceptions of injustices (see 1.2.2, “Identity, perceived injustice, and efficacy in right-wing collective action”) is a more helpful framework under which to discuss the changes in right-wing collective action in the context of the Brexit referendum and the Trump election in my thesis. As I elaborate in subsection “The close connection between power and legitimacy” (see 1.2.3, “The Brexit referendum and the Trump election as ‘trigger events’? – The close connection between power and legitimacy (RQ1)”), this is not least because this framework can help explain why the actors of RRHC and far-right street mobilisation in the context of the Brexit referendum and the Trump election may have felt empowered – with empowerment requiring that those concerned experienced relative powerlessness prior.

In this section, I have reviewed research about three overarching factors that have been shown to explain participation in (right-wing) collect. In the next section, I elaborate on the factors that can help explain *changes* in collective action.

1.2.3 The Brexit referendum and Trump election as “trigger events”? – The close connection between power and legitimacy (RQ1)

In the previous section, I reviewed research on the factors that explain participation in (right-wing) collective action. These provide the basis for the forthcoming discussion on *changes* in collective action. In this section, I first describe why “trigger events” are particularly relevant to my thesis, the role social norms play,

and how individuals come to perceive sharing a social identity with others. In this context, I introduce a key model that has explained changes in collective action. Finally, I elaborate on how I extended the model's approach to empowerment processes and experiences in light of my thesis.

The Brexit referendum and Trump election as “trigger events”, and social norms meta-perception. Strongly increased frequencies of hate crimes are often preceded by unexpected and discrete events that allegedly “triggered” retaliatory behaviour (N. Hall, 2014). Due to the subsequent increase in hate crimes, terror attacks (e.g., 9/11; Dunbar, 2022), the Covid-19 pandemic (Dunbar, 2022; Schumann & Moore, 2022), and also some trial verdicts (King & Sutton, 2013) have consequently been characterised as trigger events. King and Sutton (2013), thereby, assessed that not every event led to retaliatory attacks. The researchers developed the hypothesis that the potential for a trigger event required the affected (in)group to be bereaved due to a clearly defined responsible outgroup which had also received substantial public attention.

Due to the sharp and sudden increases in hate crimes after the Brexit referendum and the Trump election in 2016, scholars from economics, criminology, and sociology examined whether these events, too, qualified as a trigger (Carr et al., 2020; Devine, 2018, 2021; Dunbar, 2022; Feinberg et al., 2022; Giani & Méon, 2021; M. L. Williams et al., 2022). Notably, despite identity-relevant differences between Remainers (the group which “lost” in the referendum outcome) and Leavers (the group who “caused” the referendum outcome), after the Brexit referendum (Brusenbauch Meislová, 2022; Montagu, 2018), Remainers did not engage in retaliatory action against Leavers (Devine, 2018, 2021). Instead, those that were attacked were individuals not perceived to be “truly” British by those expressing to be in strong favour of Brexit (e.g., Burnett,

2017; Carr et al., 2020; M. L. Williams et al., 2022) and Trump, respectively (e.g., Edwards & Rushin, 2018). Although M. L. Williams et al. (2022) explained that this reaction was based on perceptions of threat (i.e., that hate crime perpetrators felt threatened by immigrants), the outcome of the Brexit referendum and the US Presidential election, respectively, were not threatening to xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups; on the contrary, they were perceived as in line with the actors' values and goals (Lyons, 2016; Posner & Neiwert, 2016a) and celebrated among them (Piggott, 2016).

Thus, classifying the Brexit referendum and the Trump election as trigger events may need to be revised. In fact, some scholars who had speculated on this possibility also acknowledged that a threat narrative was not entirely suitable (Devine, 2018, 2021; M. L. Williams et al., 2022). Instead, they argued, the events had changed general social norms. Based on the outcomes of their quasi-experimental design studies using the Trump election as a natural experimental manipulation, Giani and Méon (2021), for example, argued that instead of the election changing attitudes towards greater hostility, the election had made the expression of existing racial biases more acceptable. The researchers also suggested that this change in social norms was “global”. Crandall et al. (2018) demonstrated that this was the case for targeted (but not for non-targeted) groups, emphasising the role of hostile speech on individuals' intention to engage in hostility (Bilewicz & Soral, 2020). In the context of the Brexit referendum, Carr et al. (2020) argued that the referendum updated social norms in a way that private xenophobic sentiments were now made public, which affected particularly areas that had voted for Leave (see 1.1, “The increase in right-wing action after the Brexit referendum and the Trump election”). In line with this, M. L. Williams (2022)

concluded that individuals in areas which were already more prejudiced against minorities now felt that expressing such prejudices was justified.

Generally, referring to the Trump election and the Brexit referendum as triggers affecting general social norms appears reasonable. This is also because the turnout of voters in the 2016 US Presidential Election (61.4 %; Krogstad & Lopez, 2017)) and registered voters, of which a majority voted in favour of Brexit, was substantial (72 %; The Electoral Commission, 2023). However, I suggest that this approach may require some adjustments: Most critical in the context of my thesis, I argue, is that instead of a general change in social norms, it is more likely that the actors and perpetrators of RRHC and far-right street mobilisation, i.e., individuals who already held xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist values, now believed that others would share *their* norms (Drury et al., 2016). As Burstzyn et al. (2017) outlined; the US Presidential election “did not casually make [...] participants more xenophobic, but instead made the already more-intolerant ones more comfortable about publicly expressing their views” (p. 3; cf. Hoerst & Drury, 2021).

Further, and sometimes overlooked, is that only a small majority of eligible UK voters decided to vote for the UK to leave the EU (with more Leave than Remain voters regretting their vote quickly afterwards; e.g., Dearden, 2016). In the case of the Trump election, the turnout of voters was furthermore mainly explained by a large number of white voters (65.3%), whilst the number of Black voters (59.6%) had actually fallen compared to previous years (Krogstad & Lopez, 2017). Further, Trump did not win the popular vote (see 1.1, “National context: The Brexit referendum and the Trump election”). In line with report and survey data that showed that among the UK and US public, attitudes toward immigration were overall positive (e.g., Abrams et al., 2018;

Ford & Lowles, 2016) and positive affect for white supremacist movements being generally low (J. Thompson & Hawley, 2020), this speaks against the idea that the Brexit referendum and the Trump election had changed general social norms.

In 1.2.2 (“Identity, perceived injustice, and efficacy in right-wing collective action”), I mentioned that the ingroup prescribes who “we” are and what “we” should do. However, I have not yet elaborated on the process by which this occurs. Critical for this is categorising oneself as part of a group which entails shifting from understanding oneself in terms of one’s personal identity (e.g., “I”) to understanding oneself in terms of one’s social identity (e.g., “we”) – a process referred to as depersonalisation (e.g., Turner, 2010; Turner & Reynolds, 2012). This shift can occur due to recognising similarities and differences among people in a specific context (comparative fit) and prescribing known characteristics to these similarities and differences accordingly (normative fit) (e.g., Turner et al., 1994; Turner & Reynolds, 2012). Once individuals identify in terms of their social identity, they may understand others as like themselves. This *shared* social identity allows for assuming an extent of consensus among people in the same group aided by perceiving the group as united and in agreement with one another. At this point, not only other group members but also oneself may be stereotyped in line with the characteristics of the group (e.g., Haslam et al., 1997; Turner & Reynolds, 2012). For example, should the group be concerned with environmental awareness and protection, one may assume that fellow group members hold positive attitudes towards environmentally friendly diets or are more likely to engage in actions that foster the awareness of climate change. Importantly, stereotyping oneself entails being now also more inclined to conform to environmental diets or climate change activism accordingly. This can also be applied to a right-wing context:

Should an individual identify with a group concerned with anti-immigration, they might assume that their fellow group members hold negative attitudes toward immigrants and refugees and are more likely to engage in activities directed against this target group, which makes the individual more likely to conform accordingly. Thus, SCT understands social influence as deriving from the ingroup. Particularly in situations of uncertainty, the individual is understood to be influenced by a reference group (i.e., referent informational influence (RII); e.g., Abrams et al., 1990; Hogg, 2007; Turner et al., 1987; Turner & Reynolds, 2012). Thus, in times of upheaval and/ or when an individual is new to a group, individuals will be influenced and guided by what they believe are the most prototypical values and norms of their (new) group.

An election, as an indicator of public opinion, can produce such salience of social identity and influence the perception of social norms accordingly (e.g., Bursztyn et al., 2017; Crandall et al., 2018; Portelinha & Elchereth, 2016; Syfers et al., 2022). The winning party or candidate of an election (even if previously understood as marginal; Portelinha & Elchereth, 2016) can convey a picture of a majority consensus (Syfers et al., 2022). Consequently, a supporter of a victorious party or candidate may perceive that a majority voted for the same party/ candidate and thus to share a social identity, values, and norms with this majority accordingly. Therefore, after the Brexit and Trump campaigns, which echoed far-right narratives, were unexpectedly successful, it is likely that, instead of the events affecting general social norms, the perception of xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups altered (cf. Haslam et al., 1997; Spears & Manstead, 1990) towards thinking that a majority now approved of their (xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist) social norms, values, and beliefs.

In social cognition studies, the belief that others share one's beliefs has been described as a social norms misperception, specifically, as perceiving a false consensus

(e.g., Luzsa & Mayr, 2021; Ross et al., 1977). Whilst the term “false consensus” initially – and as indicated above – referred to individually produced cognitive errors, the false consensus effect has also been shown to be influenced by the social context (Krueger & Zeiger, 1993; Spears & Manstead, 1990). This is crucial because I suggest that after the victorious Brexit campaign and Trump’s election, their supporters perceived many more others to now share their social identity and norms, indicating a false consensus based on social information. Categorising not just oneself but also others as belonging to the same group and perceiving that others shared one’s social identity (and values and social norms accordingly) has also been referred to as meta-perceptions in social identity and social representation studies (cf. Elcheroth et al., 2011; Neville & Reicher, 2011). Therefore, instead of *misperceiving* social norms (i.e., referring to cognitive errors), I suggest the perception of others sharing one’s values and social norms after a victorious election result might be better described as social norms *meta*-perception. In other words, instead of xenophobia, racism, and white supremacy generally becoming more normative after the Brexit referendum and the Trump election, it is more likely that due to the success of the campaigns that matched the already existing xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist social norms of xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups, a majority (of fellow white voters) was now perceived as sharing these norms.

Before concluding this subsection, I briefly want to return to Giani and Méon’s (2021) suggestion that the presumed change in general social norms was a “global racist contagion” (p. 1). The researchers found that outside of the US and compared to before the Trump election, self-reported racial biases significantly increased after the Trump

election¹⁹. Giani and Méon (2021) concluded that instead of changes in private attitudes, participants' willingness to reveal these after the Trump election had changed, which, according to the researchers, suggested a "shift in norms towards greater acceptance of racially biased attitudes" (p. 12). The researchers concluded their work by speculating about the possible underlying mechanisms of such "contagion". The term "contagion" has been criticised as reflecting "primitive" rather than functional motives of engaging in behaviour, and, therefore, rejected among social identity scholars. Instead, spread of behaviour has been explained, for example, on the basis of perceiving to share a social identity (see Drury et al., 2020 for an overview). I, therefore, suggest that this approach can also aid in explaining the underlying mechanism of the "global racist contagion" derived from the Trump election (Giani & Méon, 2021, p. 1). Specifically, instead of "contagious" behaviour, I suggest that the relevant individuals assessed in Giani and Méon's (2021) study shared a social identity whose content was based on and informed by (white) victimhood. After the successful Trump election (and the Brexit referendum, respectively) – in line with the above-explained social norms meta-perception – I suggest the corresponding participants perceived (more) others to now share their xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist values and norms, which allowed them to express these openly. The following subsection is concerned with how I understand the link between perception and enactment to occur.

The close connection between power and legitimacy. Perceiving others to share one's norms and goals does neither necessarily nor automatically translate into action. In this section, I explain how I understand social norms meta-perception to translate into substantial changes in collective action in the context of the Brexit

¹⁹ The researchers used the European Social Survey (ESS) featuring data from 13 "developed" countries at the time of the Trump election. Making use of the election in a quasi-experimental design, the researchers found that compared to before the Trump election, after the election, participants showed a 2.3% (statistically significant) increase in self-reported racial biases in public policies.

referendum and the Trump election. For that, I first briefly discuss how collective action scholars have defined and developed the understanding of subjective power in the context of social change. Subsequently, I introduce a model concerned with the psychological and emotional transformation among protesters during an ongoing intergroup conflict. Finally, I explain how I have integrated and extended the model's elaboration on collective psychological empowerment into my research.

The question of who is in power dominates situations of intergroup conflict (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Consequently, individuals that perceive being collectively disadvantaged in an ingroup-relevant matter will seek to influence intergroup and power relations to change their position (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In section 1.1.2 ("Participation in (right-wing) collective action"), I explained that group efficacy – the belief that one's group can collectively achieve a group-relevant goal (Bandura, 1997) – has been understood as actors' perception of their power (i.e., subjective power) (e.g., Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Tausch et al., 2011; van Zomeren et al., 2004, 2012). However, group efficacy refers to specific domains or concerns and has predominantly been treated as an antecedent of collective action, not as a consequence of it (Drury et al., 2015). Although dynamic approaches that explain participation in collective action (e.g., Tausch & Becker, 2013; van Zomeren et al., 2012) consider the value of knowing about the ingroup's ability as an informative indicator for emotional states and collective action intention, an explanation as to how this process works often seemed neglected (Drury et al., 2015).

The elaborated social identity model (ESIM; e.g., Drury & Reicher, 1999; Reicher, 1984, 1996; Stott & Drury, 2000) of crowd behaviour offers one approach that can explain the process of change in subjective collective power. The model was

developed based on the recurring observation made during ongoing intergroup conflict (commonly during protests with the conflict unfolding between protesters and the police): The crowd of protesters often constituted a heterogeneous group at the beginning of the protest; however, in some conflict situations, eventually, they united and engaged in counter-action against police that sought to control and coerce the crowd. ESIM postulates that the opposing groups (i.e., protesters and police) have different understandings of each other and themselves. Specifically, whilst protesters understood themselves as heterogeneous (i.e., as a majority of moderate and peaceful protesters and a minority of radical protesters), common police practice encouraged an understanding of perceiving the crowd as a whole as disorderly and, thus, potentially dangerous. This asymmetry in categorical representation and normativity of behaviour was further mirrored in asymmetries of power: The police have the necessary means (e.g., armoury) and legal permission to use it against the protesters, if necessary, whilst protesters are commonly neither armed nor officially “authorised” to engage in physical action against the police²⁰. Importantly, ESIM outlines how by treating a heterogeneous crowd as one (dangerous one), protesters could perceive indiscriminate police treatment as illegitimate. This led to a self-fulfilling prophecy regarding the perception of legitimate action against such treatment on the part of the protesters. In other words, being treated as radicals, moderate protesters would eventually understand themselves in respective terms, i.e., based on a changing context, categorise themselves as “radical” protesters (cf. Haslam et al., 1997; Turner et al., 1987; Turner & Reynolds, 2012) and act accordingly. This new social identity was built upon the perception of sharing a

²⁰ Often, police practices are biased towards heavy handling of the crowd based on the (false) perception that the crowd is always dangerous (Drury & Reicher, 2000; Maguire et al., 2020; Stott & Reicher, 1998). In a US context, Dunbar (2022) further describes how police training often incorporates socialisation towards normalising the use of lethal force. Disproportionally applied against people of colour, this results in hate crimes on the part of the police itself.

common fate (here, being treated indiscriminately) with fellow (radical) protesters. According to the researchers, this fostered the perception of unity among an initially heterogeneous group. In this way, group boundaries broaden among some groups (i.e., protesters) and close between others (i.e., protesters and police). Being united then allowed for a perception of consensus about what constituted ingroup-normative action. Accordingly, previously rejected means (e.g., the use of violence) can then be supported (e.g., Saavedra & Drury, 2019). Furthermore, having a consensus over who “we” are and what constitutes legitimate practice, individuals may expect support from their fellow ingroup members when attempting to engage in action that is in accordance with the consensus. This increases the likelihood that ingroup-normative and relevant goals are achieved.

The ESIM is a model of key relevance to answering my research questions because it offers a detailed model of collective empowerment. The researchers define collective empowerment as the “positive social-psychological transformation, related to a sense of being able to (re)shape the social world, that takes place for members of subordinated groups who overturn (or at least challenge) existing relations of dominance” (Drury & Reicher, 2009, p. 708). ESIM’s collective empowerment model emphasises that, on the one hand, the process of perceiving unity, consensus, and expectations of support and, on the other, the experience of realising one’s social identity over a (previously powerful) opponent are both empowering (Drury & Reicher, 2009). ESIM’s explanation of collective empowerment has identified specific conditions under which the experience of empowerment is likely. Firstly, in line with SCT (Haslam et al., 1997; Turner et al., 1987; Turner & Reynolds, 2012), identities vary with context. Unsurprisingly then, it is contexts that change power relations (i.e.,

transfer power from the previously dominant outgroup to the previously subordinate ingroup) that are empowering. Secondly, ESIM explains that actions which require a collective effort to *erupt* existing power relations are empowering. Thus, it is not “everyday actions” but out-of-the-ordinary ones that require a collective effort that are empowering. Thirdly, ESIM explains that situations in which the ingroup can realise its own definition of legitimate action are empowering. Thus, according to ESIM, actions and successes that are identity-relevant, identity-congruent, and that enact an individual’s social identity over a previously dominant outgroup are empowering – a phenomenon that Drury and Reicher (2005) coined collective self-objectification (CSO). CSO is associated with joy, enthusiasm, exhilaration, and confidence and motivates further action. In line with Tausch and Becker’s (2013) later work on the role of positive emotions in collective action intention (see 1.2.2, “Positive emotions”), through a “positive cycle of radicalization” (Drury & Reicher, 2009, p. 721), the process and experience of empowerment can be the outcome of, and antecedent for further collective action taking.

Scholars from political sciences and criminology argued that after the Trump election and the Brexit referendum, respectively, the identity of hate crime perpetrators had been validated by the unexpected electoral outcomes (Carr et al., 2020; Devine, 2018, 2021; Dunbar, 2022; Edwards & Rushin, 2018). Further, according to McDevitt et al. (2002, p. 305)

when hate crimes go unaddressed, we as a society send a message to offenders that this behavior is acceptable and possibly even appreciated. This reinforces the behavior and empowers the perpetrators to continue and in many cases to escalate their attack.

Thus, a model concerned with identity change in the context of power relations may aid in illuminating this phenomenon from a social-psychological perspective. Whilst ESIM has primarily been concerned with “proximal” empowerment, i.e., the empowerment that derived from ongoing, face-to-face intergroup conflict in crowds, I suggest that it can also help to explain a process and experience of empowerment that derives “distally”, i.e., from the appraisal of an electoral event, especially if the event is successful. Previous research on intragroup processes in hate groups (here, Stormfront Downunder; Bliuc et al., 2019, 2020) established that ingroup-relevant “offline”²¹ events strongly influenced increased cohesion among members of the group online. Consequently, an electoral success whose campaign had been perceived to match the values of xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups and which was unexpectedly successful and erupted existing relations of power should be particularly relevant and important for those individuals and groups. Specifically, I suggest that the victorious outcomes of the Brexit referendum and the Trump election, whose campaigns were perceived as matching the social norms, values and goals of a group that otherwise understood itself as a victim (i.e., powerless), led to a new perception of unity, consensus, and, therefore, to expectations of support among this group. This is by extending the ingroup boundaries to incorporating a (white) majority understood as having voted in favour of Brexit and Trump allegedly because of their xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist agendas. Thus, this majority was perceived as sharing a social identity accordingly and consequently as approving its norms (see “The

²¹ Bliuc et al. (2019, 2020) examined changes in intragroup processes (cohesion) among the online community associated with the far-right hate site Stormfront Downunder. Whilst the researchers tracked the community’s online behaviour over a lengthy period, of particular interest was the community’s reaction to an “offline” local intergroup conflict; the 2005 Cronulla (Sydney) Race Riot. The riot developed after groups of white Australians and Australians with a Muslim background altercation.

Brexit referendum and Trump election as ‘trigger events’, and social norms meta-perception” in the same section).

Thus, where ESIM understands the legitimacy of the ingroup’s actions to develop as a response to the outgroup’s *il*legitimacy, in the case of the Trump election and the Brexit referendum, xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups might have perceived the events as legitimising the ingroup’s values and actions (Drury et al., 2016) due to assumed majority consensus (cf. Syfers et al., 2022). This *false* consensus provides the basis for the perception of support among xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups for ingroup-normative action against an outgroup that was pre-determined by ingroup norms and reinforced by the electoral campaigns (e.g., immigrants, Muslims, mainstream politicians, and the media). It is, thereby, not any majority perceived as supporting the ingroup, but one that constitutes powerful people such as UK politicians and the newly elected US President. This might have fostered a sense of having allies in these highest positions.

Klandermans and Mayer (2006) argued that so-called multi-organisational fields (e.g., whether a country showed signs of institutional or societal allies or opponents to right-wing extremist movements) determined whether a right-wing movement might be able to establish itself in society. Thus, the (non-) existence of such a field may contribute to the perception of efficacy among the corresponding actors. While a perception of a shared social identity and expectations of support may have already been empowering (cf. Drury et al., 2005) and made (further) action-taking more likely (cf. Tausch & Becker, 2013), the US far-right was also energised by the successful Trump election (Beirich & Buchanan, 2018; Piggott, 2016; Potok, 2017). For example, Richard Spencer, at a conference of the National Policy Institute, ended his speech with “Hail Trump. Hail our people. Hail victory” (Lombroso & Appelbaum, 2016). In this sense,

the unexpected but successful electoral outcomes of the 2016 US Presidential election and the Brexit referendum constituted substantial and highly ingroup-congruent eruptions to existing power relations (Giani & Méon, 2021; M. L. Williams et al., 2022) which realised a xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist identity into social reality, thereby empowering the (victim) identity of right-wing activists.

Returning to the beginning of this section and the notion of classifying the Brexit referendum and the election of Trump as president as trigger events then; whilst King and Sutton's (2013) approach to classifying triggers may not hold in these contexts, yet they could be seen as unexpected, positive and "catalysing" triggers (cf. Dunbar, 2022) for those individuals whose identity aligned with the political events and that were now validated.

In this section, I introduced the concept of trigger events and explained that some scholars had explored whether the Brexit referendum and the Trump election would classify as such. I explained that this classification may need to be revised and that instead, the role of social norms, as pointed out by the same scholars, was a more promising path to understanding the subsequent increases in hostile collective action. However, instead of Brexit and the Trump election having changed general social norms, I argued that it is more likely that after the unexpectedly successful outcomes of the electoral campaigns, xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups perceived others to share their (already existing) social norms. Finally, I have elaborated on how I understand social norms meta-perception to translate into changes in collective action by extending the ESIM model of collective empowerment to an electoral context which may be seen as an unexpected, positive, and catalysing trigger for those that engage in such action. The overall conclusion of this section, then, is that

subjective power and legitimacy in the context of the enactment of xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist values and goals are closely connected.

– However, what happens when this power is contested?

1.2.4 Undermining power is de-legitimising (RQ2)

In the previous section, I argued that xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups were empowered by the Trump election and Brexit referendum, which increased the likelihood of enacting their worldview. However, in the introduction, I also explained that hate crimes that occurred after the Brexit referendum and the Trump election eventually declined again and also that after the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally, the alt-right retreated to the internet and off the streets (Carr et al., 2020; Devine, 2018, 2021; Home Office, 2017; Miller & Graves, 2020; Miller & Werner-Winslow, 2016; J. Thompson & Hawley, 2020; A. Williams, 2018; M. L. Williams et al., 2022). All of this happened during the period of Brexit and Trump’s presidency. Thus, how can the two be reconciled? In this section, I now turn to RQ2, i.e., why right-wing collective action after the Brexit referendum and the Trump election eventually declined again. I, thereby, first elaborate on the impact of identity enactment on perceived legitimacy and support intentions from a third-party audience. This provides the basis for discussing how *undermining* identity enactment may de-legitimise the actors in the eyes of third parties and reduce support for them accordingly. This, I argue, may contribute to an explanation as to why hostile collective action in the context of the Brexit referendum and the Trump election declined again.

The intergroup effect of identity enactment. In 1.2.3 subsection “The close connection between power and legitimacy”, I argued that the Trump election and Brexit referendum empowered xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups, which increased the likelihood of enacting their worldview. This enactment

may, in turn, increase the likelihood that others who are not (fully or yet) aligned, for example, bystanders or the general public, are more accepting of the actions and even support them (Klein et al., 2007). Previous research has shown how the perceived efficacy of a protest or movement was associated with (stronger) intentions to support it (e.g., Orazani & Leidner, 2019; Saab et al., 2016; Thomas & Louis, 2014). A crucial element therein might be its perceived organisational *ability* – or efficacy – to do so (i.e., the ability to hold rallies and take over public spaces; Selvanathan & Lickel, 2019b; Vo, 2020). Beirich and Buchanan (2018), for example, discussed how after the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally, nine per cent of consulted participants in a survey approved of white supremacist views²². The potential link that connects perceived efficacy and support intentions may be found in the perceived legitimacy of the actors (or movements and systems). A correlational study (Jiménez-Moya et al., 2019) namely showed that the higher participants perceived the efficacy of a social movement to be, the higher they perceived it also as legitimate. Thus, while for the ingroup, (in)group efficacy is a crucial factor for (further) participation in collective action (see 1.2.2, “Efficacy” and 1.2.3, “The close connection between power and legitimacy”), for a third party, *attributed* power – here, attributed efficacy – may be critical for perceiving a group (or a system) as legitimate and potentially worth of support (Jiménez-Moya et al., 2019). Jiménez-Moya et al. (2019) further showed that identification with a relevant movement predicted the perception of its legitimacy (indirectly via perceived efficacy), suggesting that the connection between perceived efficacy and legitimacy was influenced by identification.

Although Reicher and Haslam (2006) investigated a slightly different research question and target group in their BBC Prison study that sought to re-examine the

²² Since the survey was cross-sectional, this cannot convey information about whether the percentage was potentially even higher before the rally though.

Stanford Prison Experiment (SPE; Haney et al., 1973), hence, examine group processes, conformity and tyranny, their findings appear relevant, too, here. The researchers observed that a communal system that participants had suggested themselves mid-experiment (instead of the initially planned and installed “guards vs prisoners” system²³) had proven inefficacious and was challenged by other participants. The new system that was suggested instead resembled an autocratic system. The researchers found that accepting this new system was less determined by whether participants would openly approve of it. Instead, Reicher and Haslam (2006) concluded that participants “were less opposed to it than they had been previously and [were] less repulsed by the idea of a strong social order in which someone else assumed responsibility for making the system work” (p. 22). In other words, the inability of the existing communal and the prospect of a new functioning albeit tyrannical system changed participants’ position towards accepting the latter and rejecting the former²⁴. Does this mean the extent of identification with a system in question (Jiménez-Moya et al., 2019) is irrelevant? A potential reconciliation between Reicher and Haslam (2006) and Jiménez-Moya et al.’s (2019) findings might be found in the former’s conclusion about participants’ authoritarianism scores (i.e., approval of the tyrannical system). The average score of authoritarianism of participants that would eventually suggest the tyrannical system did not significantly vary over time (i.e., from the pre-test to day 8 of the experiment) but stayed at the same (increased) level. In contrast, among participants who would, at the end of the experiment, generally support the communal system but

²³ As in the original SPE study, participants were recruited for an experiment supposed to take place over days in which participants were placed in the context of a prison and randomly assigned to fulfil the role as “guard” or “prisoner”. The BBC Prison study specifically sought to re-evaluate the notion that in the SPE the sheer allocation to groups would foster the expression of hostile outgroup behaviour.

²⁴ Note that due to adherence to ethical protocols, the researchers could not actually test whether the suggested tyrannical system would establish itself and be sustainable.

eventually accept the tyrannical system, the average level of authoritarianism had increased over time²⁵. Thus, individuals of the former group might have always supported a system that generally matched their values, whilst individuals of the latter group only seemed to accept the tyrannical system because it provided the prospect of efficacy (which the communal system did not). More generally then, whilst low identifiers may never support a relevant group or system (because it mismatches their values and worldviews), high identifiers may always support it (because it matches their values and worldviews) (cf. Ellemers et al., 2002; Spears, 2021), but it may be particularly those with moderate identification that may be persuadable the most in either direction (cf. Drury & Reicher, 2000; Saavedra & Drury, 2019; also see: Hogg, 2007; Reicher & Haslam, 2006) for example, by the organisational efficacy, they attribute to a specific group or system.

On the one hand, downplaying the radical elements of a movement to appeal to a broader public is not a unique phenomenon on the part of the right-wing context (Klein et al., 2007). However, the latter is infamous for suppressing and tailoring its radical narratives and appearance (Billig, 1979, 1988; Conti, 2017; Polakow-Suransky, 2016) to recruit new members for their (inherently radical) causes (e.g., Fisher, 2021; Hansen & Olsen, 2022; Virchow, 2007). Specifically, those that appear the most persuadable (i.e., express a moderate identification²⁶) are targeted. On the other hand, the fact that

²⁵ Participants' score of authoritarianism, thereby, approached but – at least by the time the experiment was halted – did not exceed the average level of the participants that had suggested the tyrannical system.

²⁶ Of course, whether an individual already somewhat identifies with a right-wing group or agenda in question, is not always immediately identifiable. However, some communities are closer aligned with right-wing values than others, and may, therefore, be easier to approach on the part of the far-right. In the context of Covid-19, for example, anti-lockdown protests were attended by heterogeneous crowds including members of the far-right as well as alternative lifestyle groups (e.g., anthroposophical communities; see Habermann & Zech, 2022 for an overview). The latter are inherently opposed to vaccinations (e.g., Byström et al., 2014) and, therefore, provided an easier-to-mobilise group considering that the far-right strategically used the Covid-19 pandemic to recruit and mobilise for its cause (e.g., Ariza, 2020). This was also evident in anti-vaccination attitudes more broadly. Carpentras, et al. (2022), for example, showed that those undecided about vaccination were attitudinally closer positioned to vaccination opponents than to supporters.

after the Brexit referendum and the Trump election, such self-suppression was reduced might be another indicator that xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups felt particularly confident that they would appeal to others by revealing their undisguised xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist identity.

Undermining identity enactment. How can these insights and conclusions about attributed efficacy and legitimacy to actors and groups aid in understanding the decline in right-wing collective action seen towards the end of 2016 and 2017/18, respectively? If the perceived efficacy of actors and groups can lead to perceiving the same as (more) legitimate, undermining efficacy should result in the opposite.

In subsection 1.2.3 (“The close connection between power and legitimacy”), I have introduced the ESIM and three conditions that its model of collective empowerment suggests foster the occurrence of empowerment (i.e., the actions require a collective effort, erupt existing power relations, and change power relations, realising the ingroup’s definition of legitimacy into practice). A fourth condition is that the collective self-objectification (CSO) of the ingroup can endure only as long as power relations remain in favour of the ingroup, hence, as long as the (previously superior) outgroup has not re-asserted its power (yet) (Drury et al., 2005; Drury & Reicher, 2005).

Translated to the above argument, when the enactment of the (in)group’s identity is undermined, an outgroup may have either re-installed or contested this enactment, which may lead to disempowerment. In fact, on the part of the ingroup, it has been shown that collective action is experienced as disempowering if the action is understood as unsuccessful, i.e., if it was identity-*incongruent* (Drury et al., 2005; Evripidou & Drury, 2013). Some have argued that the alt-right’s withdrawal off the streets after the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” was due to legal and reputational damages after persisting violence at the rally, including one attendee, severely injuring several and

killing one counter-protester (J. Thompson & Hawley, 2020). While this is not unimportant, a different notion about the movement's fragmentation due to internal disagreements (for an overview, see J. Thompson & Hawley, 2020) points to the experience of disunity among protesters. The experience of disunity has been shown to have a disempowering effect on those involved in the action in the first place (Drury et al., 2005).

However, what about the effect on an audience? The irony of the alt-right experiencing to be disunited should not be lost on us since the official rally objective was to *unite* the right. Thus, referring back to Reicher and Haslam's (2006) observations about the acceptance of tyrannical systems if they proved (more) efficacious compared to another system (see 1.2.3 subsection, "The close connection between power and legitimacy"), a movement that appears to be disunited, and therefore, be potentially attributed with lesser organisational efficacy, should also be viewed as less legitimate and, hence, receive less approval (also see Jiménez-Moya et al., 2019). Using nationally representative data, Thompson and Hawley (2020) showed that affect for the alt-right between 2016 and 2017 had initially marginally increased (from 30.49 to 31.43 on a feeling thermometer from 0 – 100, with 100 indicating the strongest sympathy), between 2017 and 2018 (i.e., the time the alt-right started to disperse) this affect declined again (from 31.43 to 27.41), and even fell below the starting level²⁷. Thus, the perception of efficacy and its impact on legitimacy may account for support on the part of an audience. But what interferes with the perception of (less) efficacy? Intragroup fragmentation – and its effect on an audience – may be a function of intergroup

²⁷ Considering that all levels revolved around 30 on a 0 to 100 scale (with 100 indicating the strongest sympathy), the average affect for the alt-right was low (see subsection 1.2.3, "The Brexit referendum and Trump election as "trigger events", and social norms meta-perception"). However, here the focus lies on the change in affect which increased with the alt-right gaining public attention, and which decreased after the alt-right started to disperse.

relations. Counter-movements are crucial in “neutralizing, confronting or discrediting its corresponding movement” (Klandermans & Mayer, 2006, p. 38). In ESIM terms, disruption by counter-movements may prevent the corresponding movements from self-realising their values and beliefs (cf. Drury & Reicher, 2005). Anti-fascist and anti-racist counter-movements commonly seek to “turn meetings and demonstrations of the extreme right into a continuous risk to public order, which frequently makes the authorities decide to ban meetings and demonstrations altogether” (Klandermans & Mayer, 2006, p. 38). Counter-protesters, thereby, pursue a strategy of “no platform”, i.e., actively countering or denying fascists and racist actors literally – and figurately – any space (E. Smith, 2020)²⁸. A critical historical example is the “Battle of Cable Street”. In October 1936, over 100,000 British anti-fascist counter-protestors physically denied Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists (BUF) party the space to pursue their planned march through an East London area highly populated by the Jewish community. As a result of this, the police called the march off (New Historical Express, 2020).

In the context of the Brexit referendum and the Trump election, it was not only hate crimes which peaked but also counter campaigns. Using monthly Twitter data, Carr et al. (2020) found that the use of hashtags such as “#postrefracism” (PostRefRacism, 2017) and “#safetypin” (The Guardian, 2016) – both online and offline counter campaigns to xenophobia and Islamophobia – also spiked in July 2016 after the Brexit referendum and again in November after the Trump election. At the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally, a substantial number of counter-protesters opposed rally

²⁸ The opposite of legitimacy is to not being taken seriously. Thus, whilst the (anti-fascist and anti-racist) “no platform” strategy commonly focuses on literally denying right-wing actors space, sometimes this incorporates the use of humour, specifically mocking the opponent, which has been shown to have a de-legitimising effect (A. B. Becker, 2012, 2014a; Demasi & Tileagă, 2021; Hiller, 1983; Obadare, 2009; Teune, 2007; Zeller, 2020).

attendees and violent clashes between the two groups eventually led to the cancellation of the rally on the part of the city council. At a free-speech rally in Boston just one week after the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally, 40,000 to 45,000 counter-protesters strongly outnumbered protesters (30 to 40). The rally was called off early (e.g., Miller & Graves, 2020; Swasey, 2017). Thus, whilst the electoral power of Brexit and Trump’s presidency remained intact, it was the efficacy of xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist action (i.e., subjective power) that was contested and undermined (cf. Klandermans & Mayer, 2006; Reicher, 2012). Therefore, active counter-action may have played a crucial de-legitimising role after the Brexit referendum and the Trump election (Drury et al., 2016). For the xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist ingroup, the active challenge to identity enactment may affect its members’ perception of acting on behalf of an alleged majority which has a disempowering effect (cf. Drury & Reicher, 2005; Reicher & Haslam, 2006). For an audience, disruption may signal lower organisational efficacy of the corresponding movement, resulting in reduced perceived legitimacy, approval and support. Therefore, I suggest that this may provide an answer to RQ2, hence, contribute to explaining the process by which right-wing collective action after the Brexit referendum and the Trump election eventually declined again.

1.3 Overview of the chapters

Figure 1 provides an overview of the thematical connections between the individual empirical studies of my thesis.

In Chapter 2 of my thesis, I elaborate on how I approached studying subjective power empirically in xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups. In the first part of the chapter, I explain how my position as a politically left-oriented researcher, immigrant in the UK, and woman influenced my empirical approach. Specifically, I explain why I decided against face-to-face engagement with participants

and why a mixed-methods approach drawing on secondary data was particularly helpful in dealing with this. In the second part of Chapter 2, I discuss in-depth the methodological and ethical challenges I faced in Study 2 (see Chapter 4), in which I studied the experience of power among attendees of two US-based far-right rallies. I chose to discuss this before presenting Study 2 because these methodological and ethical challenges were representative of my PhD project overall. They further shaped the characteristics and order of the individual studies within the broader project.

In Chapter 3, I provide an empirical examination of the question of whether elections influence social norms meta-perception (in Study 1 discussed as “social norms misperception”) and the experience of empowerment among a general (voter) population (Study 1). The empirical approach makes use of some literature concerned with the false consensus effect (Krueger & Zeiger, 1993; Luzsa & Mayr, 2021; Ross et al., 1977; Spears & Manstead, 1990). However, the study further refers to research that established a connection between public events of ingroup relevance and intragroup dynamics (e.g., Bliuc et al., 2019, 2020), elections as perceived indicators of public opinion and as influencing the perception of social norms (e.g., Bursztyn et al., 2017; Crandall et al., 2018; Portelinha & Elcheroth, 2016; Syfers et al., 2022), and examined the occurrence of collective empowerment through realising identity over a previously dominant outgroup (Drury & Reicher, 1999, 2000, 2005).

I explain that for this research, I made use of the US Presidential Election in 2020 to sample US voters (Democrats and Republican voters)²⁹. The election was next after the Trump election in 2016 (apart from the 2018 US mid-term elections), and Trump sought to become re-elected as President. A two-wave panel study showed null

²⁹ The main study was preceded by a cross-sectional pilot study examining a simplified version of the research question in the context of the UK General Election 2019. The election was also the next after the Brexit referendum and sought to “get Brexit done”. The pilot study is presented in Appendix 1.

results for election effects on social norms meta-perception (i.e., from before to after the election) but robust between-group effects for the perception of the prevalence of xenophobic social norms. Republicans, thereby, perceived significantly higher agreement from “the wider American public” for their racist remarks than Democrats perceived disagreement for their own disapproval of racist remarks from the same reference group³⁰. Study 1 indicated that participants’ meta-perception of social norms was influenced by party membership but not by the election. Since there was also some evidence for an association between an unexpected electoral defeat with the experience of less empowerment after the election (compared to before) among Republicans, I conclude that the 2020 election may have had a reversed effect on the perception of power than the 2016 election may have had.

In Study 2 (Chapter 4) then, I explain how I qualitatively explored the occurrence of and differences in the experiences of empowerment among attendees of the Capitol insurrection (2021), which took place in light of the US Presidential election 2020 (i.e., ingroup-relevant defeat), and the “Unite the Right” rally (2017), which took place in the summer after Trump’s inauguration (i.e., ingroup-relevant victory). I explain that I made use of secondary video data (YouTube and Parler) from the two rallies, which allowed me to examine parts of the xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups that my thesis is concerned with indirectly, i.e., without personal engagement (see above and Chapter 2, “Examining far-right empowerment experiences using YouTube and Parler data: Managing researcher safety, and ethical and methodological requirements”). Analysing data from these two events

³⁰ In Study 1, Republicans rather approved, and Democrats clearly disapproved of racist remarks. Since the underlying hypothesis was concerned with the meta-perception of social norms *for xenophobia*, I contrasted how much agreement from “the wider American public” with their own approval Republicans estimated, with Democrats’ estimation of *disagreement* from “the wider American public” with their own disapproval. In this way, I could assess the perception of the prevalence of xenophobia within the wider public among both voter groups.

provided unique insights into the experience of power as a motivation to hold and attend the events (Drury & Reicher, 2005). Since the events took place in opposite social contexts (i.e., ingroup-relevant victory vs ingroup-relevant defeat), Study 2 further considered whether experiences of power would elicit such motivation alongside perceptions of group-based injustices (in Study 2, generally discussed as collective grievances) and related emotions of anger – a common factor that predicts the participation in collective action (e.g., van Zomeren et al., 2008 see 1.1.2, “Participation in (right-wing) collective action”). I explain that while accounts of perceptions of group-based injustices and anger existed at the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally, it was particularly the sense of empowerment that dominated the event. In contrast, at the Capitol insurrection, group-based injustice and anger were predominant, but here too, I found some indicators of the experience of empowerment.

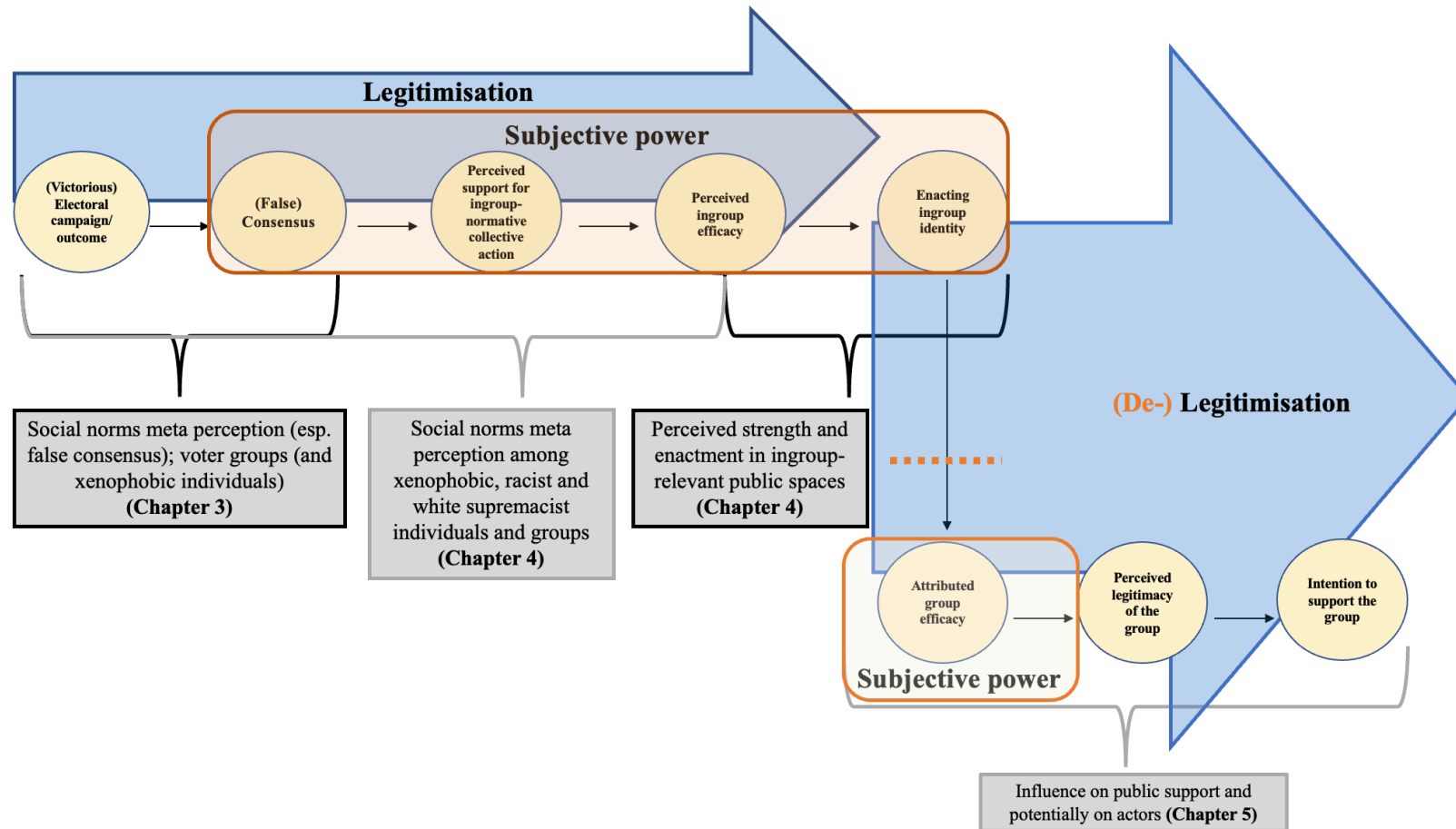
The ability to occupy public spaces has historically been important for the far-right to demonstrate power, and Study 2 (Chapter 4) seemed to reflect that. Thus, whilst Chapters 3 and 4 are concerned with the factors that underlie the (in part, sharp and sudden) increases in right-wing motivated collective action (RQ1), Chapter 5 (“Disrupting a (far-right) mobilisation discourages bystander support by decreasing perceived organisational efficacy and legitimacy”) presents empirical findings from Study 3 that was concerned with the factors that may aid in explaining the process of decreasing action (RQ2). To do so, I present correlational and experimental research using vignettes that examined whether a (un)disrupted far-right street mobilisation would be associated with support intentions from bystanders for a (radical right) movement explained by perceptions of organisational and political (in)efficacy (as well as perceptions of competence) and (il)legitimacy. This investigation experimentally extends previous research on progressive social movements that established an

association between perceptions of efficacy and support intentions from participants for social movements (e.g., Orazani & Leidner, 2019; Saab et al., 2016; Thomas & Louis, 2014), and associations between perceived efficacy, legitimacy, and support intentions among non-participants (Jiménez-Moya et al., 2019). Study 3 argues that organisational (in)efficacy may influence support intentions for a radical right agenda (cf. Reicher & Haslam, 2006) and demonstrates this experimentally and correlationally in a serial process by which (anti-racist) disruption (vs no disruption) to mobilisation is associated with lesser support intentions explained by the perception of (organisational) (in)efficacy and legitimacy. The extent to which individuals identified with the movement played an essential role since these effects were stronger for those high(er) in identification. The investigation indicates that a social movement perceived as inefficacious in its undertakings (here, mobilisation) is also perceived as illegitimate, influencing the intention to support the movement. Thus, anti-racist counter-action may have contributed to the decrease in right-wing action by undermining the enactment of right-wing identity – and, therefore, the perception of power.

Finally, in Chapter 6, I discuss my empirical findings' theoretical and practical implications (Chapters 3 – 5) and their limitations. I further make recommendations for further research and practice and conclude this thesis.

Figure 1

Overview of legitimacy (here illustrated as a process) and subjective power as discussed in this thesis (individual foci of empirical chapters are emphasised)



Chapter 2 - Researcher position, epistemology, and ethical considerations

In the following, I explain my position as a researcher and how it has informed my methodological approach to studying subjective power among xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups. I illustrate why a mixed-methods approach was particularly useful and which methods I applied in each study. Subsequently, I use Study 2 to discuss in-depth the methodological and ethical challenges I faced examining the experience of power among attendees of two US-based far-right events.

2.1 Researcher position and epistemology

Positionality statements are common in qualitative research because by engaging with research participants directly, the researcher's identity can potentially influence participants' response to the research (Uluğ et al., 2021). However, this influence does neither start nor end there nor does this only apply to qualitative research (Brezna et al., 2022; Leys et al., 2019). A researcher's identity determines the choice of the subject; it determines the feasibility and selection of methods for studying the subject, and it determines what the empirical findings are used for or at least are recommended for.

It was my identity as a (white, German) immigrant in the UK that made me concern myself with the issue of Brexit. This, together with my politically left positioning and anti-racist convictions, motivated me to contribute to countering anti-immigrant hate crimes. I sought to do so by studying what underlies their sharp and sudden increases after Brexit (and, as illustrated in the "Introduction", also after the Trump election in the US) and their declines. The occurrence of both strong increases in hate crimes and far-right mobilisation in the US then extended the scope of my thesis. I developed the argument that the experience of empowerment (and the lack thereof,

respectively) can explain the increase (and decrease, respectively) in action-taking (see 1.2.3, “The Brexit referendum and the Trump election as trigger events? – The close connection between power and legitimacy (RQ1)”); and 1.2.4, “Undermining power is de-legitimising (RQ2)”).

Previously, studying the experience of collective empowerment had been done by engaging with the group of interest directly via observational methods (e.g., ethnography) or on-site and follow-up interviews (Drury & Reicher, 1999; Stott & Drury, 2000). The ESIM and its approach to collective empowerment has been applied in contexts of environmental issues and resentment of regressive government policies. Thus, the match between the researchers’ and the group of interest’ identities (Drury & Stott, 2001) established the trust and authenticity needed for this direct engagement (Vestergren & Drury, 2020). In some cases, the researcher(s) even became “part of the protest” (Drury & Reicher, 2000, p. 583).

However, direct engagement with hate crime offenders is rare (but see: Blazak, 2009; Levin & McDevitt, 1993) and research on hate crimes is commonly conducted using secondary data by analysing crime figures that are either publicly available or obtained through freedom of information (FOI) requests (Carr et al., 2020; Devine, 2018, 2021; Metropolitan Police, 2023; M. L. Williams et al., 2022). Consequently, these datasets are anonymous and aggregated. Research on the far-right, in contrast, has been undertaken in various ways, including through online and quantitative methods and through direct engagement, e.g., interviews or ethnography (see Ashe et al., 2020 for an overview). And engaging in research featuring a direct examination of the far-right as a woman is, of course, far from impossible (e.g., Damhuis & de Jonge, 2022; Pilkington, 2016; Thorleifsson, 2019). However, by gaining intelligence about what empowers xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals, it was always my

intention to learn about and make recommendations for how to *disempower* these. This constituted a potential barrier to accessing the relevant individuals. Further, I did not feel to be in a position to engage in such examinations due to my identity as an immigrant in the UK *and* a woman, as well as my methodological background in quantitative research up until the onset of my PhD project. The first two aspects constituted vulnerabilities when aiming to directly analyse individuals embedded in an environment marked by a misogynistic and xenophobic ideology.

However, quantitative research – being based on a-priori assumptions – is restrictive considering the *exploration* of perceptions and experiences. The reliance on quantitative methods has also been criticised as restricting the insights into the far-right, particularly their members (Damhuis & de Jonge, 2022).

To reconcile my wish to not engage with xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups directly but still gain valuable data, I decided upon a mixed-methods approach. This approach allowed me to explore perceptions and experiences of parts of the group of xenophobic, racist, and white-supremacist and individuals that were of relevance for my thesis remotely via the use of secondary archive material, and the deployment of surveys³¹. Specifically, Study 1 (Chapter 3) and 3 (Chapter 5) were quantitative studies. In Study 1, I sampled from a general population of US voters before and after an election. The study was preceded by a cross-sectional survey study recruiting UK voters. I examined all participants for the meta-perception of social norms and the experience of power before and after the electoral elections (the General Election 2019 in the UK and the US Presidential Election 2020 in the US). The main study was conducted as a two-wave panel study. In Study 3, I sampled from a general UK population in three related but independent studies. I examined participants

³¹ It was assumed that xenophobic individuals would be among the participants that took part in Study 1 and Study 3.

for the impact of (un)disrupted radical right mobilisation on participants' intentions to support the corresponding (far-right) movement via perceptions of efficacy and legitimacy. Two of the studies in Study 3 were conducted by applying experimental and correlational designs. The pilot study was correlational only. Study 1 and 3, therefore, featured several comparable sub-studies, increasing the likelihood of finding replicable, hence, robust results.

Study 2 (Chapter 4) was a qualitative study. I sampled data from two US-based far-right rallies using publicly available videos (YouTube, Parler³²). I conducted a codebook thematic analysis of secondary video data. Since the focus lay on perceptions and experiences of subjective power, the choice of data was justified by seeking to obtain “interview-like” data (cf. Drury & Reicher, 1999; Stott & Drury, 2000). At the time of planning this study, the Washington D.C. Capitol insurrection happened, and it appeared useful for my research to compare the extent of subjective power at two events that were comparable yet that took place in opposite social contexts (i.e., ingroup-relevant victory vs ingroup-relevant defeat). Analysing two opposite contexts then provided insights that were significant for both overarching research questions of my thesis (see 1.2.3, “The Brexit referendum and Trump election as trigger events? – The close connection between power and legitimacy (RQ1)”, 1.2.4, “Undermining power is de-legitimising (RQ2)).

³² The investigate journalism platform ProPublica published videos that attendees of the Capitol insurrection had previously uploaded to Parler. I obtained the data from ProPublica (Groeger et al., 2021).

2.2 “Examining far-right empowerment experiences using YouTube and Parler data: Managing researcher safety, and ethical and methodological requirements”

Original citation

(Hoerst & Drury, in press)

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Early career researchers (ECRs) like myself are establishing new ways of understanding the ethics of researching the far-right. In this chapter, I discuss how I consulted UK and European ethical and legal guidelines concerning best practices for investigating two major far-right rallies in the United States. The aim, thereby, was to investigate the occurrence of collective psychological empowerment as a key psychological underpinning of far-right mobilisation in the context of ingroup-relevant victories. By doing so, I outline the difficulties of researching empowerment experiences among rally attendees whose identity is incompatible with that of the researcher and further discuss the challenges that ECRs can face when they study hateful content and pursue an academic career in this domain. Subsequently, I discuss one way to establish credibility by reconciling methodological and ethical requirements.

2.2.1 Collective psychological empowerment as a (complimentary) explanation for increased far-right mobilisation

With the onset of Donald Trump's campaign for the 2016 US presidential election, organised far-right street mobilisation found renewed traction (e.g., Beirich & Buchanan, 2018). Scholars commonly explain collective action, among others, in terms of protestors' perceived ability to change their disadvantaged situation and their anger about this (see van Zomeren et al., 2008 for a review), and far-right mobilisation as based on grievances over a threatened status quo (e.g., Castelli Gattinara et al., 2022; see also: Jetten, 2019). However, since Trump's victory marked a success and reason for celebration among the far right (Piggott, 2016), it may be difficult to explain increased mobilisation using these explanations alone. I suggest that the social identity model of collective psychological empowerment (Drury & Reicher, 2005, 2009) can account for such victorious contexts. It describes the subjective and positive experience of power transformation resulting from successful collective action over a previously

dominant outgroup (commonly, police forces during ongoing crowd conflicts) which can motivate further action. Since the basis of empowerment is the perception of support for ingroup-normative action, I sought to examine whether empowerment can also derive from electoral events and thereby aid in explaining the notion that the far-right was “emboldened” by Donald Trump’s 2016 electoral campaign and victory (e.g., Potok, 2017).

One rally infamously stood out in this context due to the unprecedented unification among hate groups it involved: The 2017 Charlottesville, (VA) “Unite the Right” rally. Considering that the rally context was one of affirmation of white nationalism and denigration of other identities, it provided promising ground to examine the occurrence of empowerment. However, it appeared useful to compare participants’ experiences at a rally in a context of success with one in the shadow of defeat (Hoerst & Drury, 2023). I chose the 2021 Washington, D.C., Capitol insurrection for the latter. Overall, I found that in Charlottesville, attendees arrived already feeling empowered and (initially) interpreted the rally as a success (J. Thompson & Hawley, 2020). By contrast, at the Capitol, insurrection empowerment may have instead been associated with attendees’ perception of high numbers of fellow attendees joining the cause. In both cases, the fact that attendees could mobilise freely and (at least temporarily) occupy public spaces of relevance seemed to send an encouraging message to attendees and the wider social movement. This should put further emphasis on de-platforming and public disavowal of far-right agendas.

2.2.2 Researcher safety and research feasibility

Before conducting the above study, I faced several ethical and methodological challenges. Collective psychological empowerment has been studied predominantly through direct interaction with research subjects, i.e., ethnography at protests and

conducting interviews (e.g., Drury et al., 2005; Drury & Reicher, 1999, 2005). This was, among other reasons, possible because of the alignment between researchers' and protesters' identities and values, for example, regarding environmental and societal issues (Drury & Stott, 2011). However, research on far-right movements, while trying to understand the underlying dynamics (and perhaps even its members), should also try to dismantle them. In my case, understanding what empowers far-right movements ought to help to *disempower* them. Thus, far from siding with the movement, my position to counteract far-right movements challenged me and other researchers studying the far-right to gain access and accurate data (Vestergren & Drury, 2020). This is aggravated by the fact that we, as researchers, are not exempt from being targets of hate, while some are more vulnerable than others.

I do not intend to downplay the detrimental impact active interaction may have on men and/ or established researchers based on being viewed as the outgroup, ranging from – at best – research subjects' refusal to cooperate with the “parasite” researcher (Drury & Stott, 2001, p. 62), to – at worst – physical harm or distress. Yet, with far-right scenes being dominated by white men and far-right ideology being strongly intertwined with misogyny (e.g., Doerer, 2022; Kisić et al., 2021; Mudde, 2019; Phelan et al., 2023), they pose a particular risk to anyone and any researcher that is viewed as an outgroup based on presumed personal characteristics such as gender, religion, or ethnicity (Franzke et al., 2019; Social Research Association (SRA), 2001). Therefore, these researchers are particularly vulnerable to abuse when aiming to engage with the far-right directly. The vulnerability is exacerbated when the researchers are ECRs who are commonly disproportionately affected by precarity (Conway, 2021) and still need to establish themselves. If applying the best-suited methodology is not possible (as in my case), this may be disadvantageous for the researchers' credibility and the research since

it may be deprived of sufficient informative value. However, more than one method is commonly acceptable, and researchers may decide to make some compromises and use online surveys or online ethnography instead. In terms of safety, though, this does not prevent them from facing hatred. The reasons for the latter are twofold: First, researchers' "business cards" are their publications, which are often accompanied by an active off- and online promotion. However, public presence may attract attention from unwanted sources; research subjects may start threatening the researcher online, ranging from harassment to doxing (Conway, 2021; Marwick et al., 2016). Second, in the case of qualitative research, online material may worsen the impact on researchers' mental health due to exposure to sometimes uncontrollable content (Dickson-Swift et al., 2008).

Thus, the question is how ECRs can navigate these challenges while achieving credibility. As a (white) woman and PhD student, the fact that I could be attacked based on gender discouraged me from researching collective psychological empowerment among far-right movements like previous researchers have done with other movements. Instead, I decided to make the compromise and shifted online. And social media appeared to be a fruitful alternative for me.

The Capitol insurrection has been strongly associated with a right-wing "Twitteresque" platform called Parler (Munn, 2021). Due to its lack of censoring, Parler was popular among several far-right groups (Aliapoulios et al., 2021; Munn, 2021). The number of members grew strongly between October 2018 and December 2020, with a spike in activity beginning at the Capitol insurrection, and hashtags like "#trump2020", "#stopthesteal," or "#electionfraud" were among the highest-rated 20 on Parler.

As Parler's provider Amazon Web Services (AWS), judged the degree to which users celebrated violence after the insurrection as incompatible with their Terms and Conditions (e.g., BBC News, 2021), they decided to take the entire platform down. Because of Parler's alleged role in the event, though, it offered a unique source of data on how participants had organised it. As such, de-platforming risked losing this information. Before Parler was taken down, more than 56.7 terabytes of material from the platform were acquired, which made up 99% of the entire platform, including videos³³. The data was subsequently made available for prosecution and research purposes (Nally, 2021) and still serves US authorities in prosecuting attendees of the insurrection and many researchers in examining the event.

While researchers previously investigating empowerment in collective action engaged directly with their research subjects, I was inspired by the availability of video material on sites like ProPublica (an independent journalism platform which featured a video-based chronology based on the Parler data; Groeger et al., 2021), as well as on YouTube. I decided to qualitatively examine secondary data in the form of video material³⁴ featuring "interview-like" coverages. I mostly used YouTube videos for the Charlottesville rally case, and for the Capitol insurrection case, I used ProPublica's chronology alongside YouTube videos.

Gaining some access to data from the subject of investigation, I now found myself confronted with methodological requirements of qualitative research on the one hand and ethical ones on the other, whose clash posed some challenges to the scientific rigour of my study.

³³ I adopt Munn's (2021) argument that the data acquisition was not made by "hacking" but by a legal web scrape and in the public interest.

³⁴ In the case of the Capitol Insurrection, I initially considered working with text material (Booeshaghi, 2021). However, I decided against it due to a preliminary inspection of 5% of the data finding that the data predominantly featured narratives of mobilisation rather than empowerment (cf. "preparatory media"; Munn, 2021, para. 3).

2.2.3 (Reconciling) methodological requirements and ethics principles for internet-mediated research

Qualitative researchers are required to equip their result sections with so-called data extracts –short unedited snippets of participants’ statements – supposed to assess the accuracy of the data, support the findings, and provide transparency (Eldh et al., 2020). The British Psychological Society (BPS; Hewson et al., 2021) states that respect for individuals and communities' autonomy, privacy, and dignity are key considerations in psychological research. Although the publication of data extracts needs to be assessed in this light, this requirement can be easily met by providing participants with all necessary information regarding the study and gaining their informed consent before participating. Remote acquisition of research data (what the BPS coins “internet-mediated research”) is no exception. However, the BPS rightfully points out that sometimes participants may not be aware of being research subjects, such as (in my case) working with YouTube and Parler video material. This raised the question of how I could meet the ethical requirements of gaining informed consent from research subjects in a design that deliberately sought to avoid direct interaction with participants. Since the ethical concern here was with the protection of personal data – i.e., anything that could personally identify a participant, specifically, so-called “special category personal data”, which contains sensitive information such as identity or attitudes – this concerned the “public vs private” debate which mandates different treatment of data depending on whether it is classified as public or private (e.g., Sugiura et al., 2017). The BPS (2021) states that researchers may continue their observations without informed consent in spaces where the research subjects are likely to expect to be observed by strangers, which was certainly true for the two rallies since both took place in public. However, the fact that I had to rely on secondary data put me in an ethical grey area.

Throughout the following subsections, I, therefore, discuss contemporary guidance on this matter, why it was insufficient in my case of studying empowerment among far-right rally attendees, and how I reconciled ethical and methodological issues to the best of my capabilities. I divide this discussion into “how to collect data” and “how to present data”.

How to collect data. Even though 99% of the data from Parler is now available to the public, ethically speaking, not everything that is in (or has made it into) the public domain can automatically be used for research without obtaining informed consent from the research subjects in the UK (Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO), 2021; The University of Sheffield, n.d.; Townsend & Wallace, 2016). Townsend and Wallace (2016) argue that the starting point for this debate lies in users’ engagement with and understanding of the Terms of Services/ Terms of Conditions of the platforms they use – or rather the lack thereof (M. L. Williams et al., 2017).

In my case, it was neither preferred to obtain informed consent from far-right rally attendees since I would make myself visible to them (cf. Fuchs, 2018), nor was it feasible to reach out to a “forum moderator”³⁵ as suggested by the BPS (Universities UK, 2019) and the University of Sheffield (n.d.). And this became even more challenging in the case of YouTube data, where recordings may appear online without the person featured in the video even owning an account.

The UK Concordat to Support Research Integrity (Universities UK, 2019) provides national guidance on good research practices and how to control these. It advocates for the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research at UK universities. Among others, this is sought to be achieved through promoting

³⁵ There is no content moderation on Parler (Masnick, 2020), nor are YouTube content moderators comparable to forum moderators who may constitute a gateway to a specific community.

appropriate up-to-date ethical frameworks (commitment 2). I suggest that a recent call for ethics committees to provide the necessary expertise when dealing with ethical approval applications for research on terrorism (Morrison et al., 2021) could be seen as one measure to meet this commitment. Sufficient expertise among the ethics boards, Morrison et al. (2021) suggest, can thereby be achieved by collaborating with the researcher(s). In fact, in collaboration with my university's ethics committee and legal counsel, I justified the choice of my methods on the grounds of researcher safety, as well as the necessity of undertaking the study in the first place on it being "in the public interest" (Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), 2021; The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH), 2019). The latter was explained by the insights the study could provide (i.e., what empowered rally attendees), and hence, what could be done to counteract far-right extremism as a major threat to democracy. Gaining ethical approval was successful even over and above potential copyright concerns stemming from using individuals' statements (Hewson et al., 2021).

How to present data. Having established my study on utilitarian grounds as serving the public interest allowed me to collect data without gaining informed consent from research subjects. However, this did not free me from the responsibility to respect their privacy and confidentiality when presenting my findings. The EU law on data protection and privacy, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), views all de-identified data as no longer personal (Data Protection Act 2018, 2023, Part 6, 171, (2) (a))³⁶. Deriving from this, where it is not possible to obtain informed consent, quotes should be omitted or paraphrased (Hewson et al., 2021). Noteworthy, Townsend and Wallace (2016) suggest paraphrasing as a means to protect the researcher. However,

³⁶ The UK implementation of the EU GDPR is the Data Protection Act 2018.

they also acknowledge that it is not always helpful when working qualitatively. In line with that, I was concerned that a study based only on paraphrased statements would neither provide information about who said what nor allow the readers to fully grasp the empowerment experience³⁷ among rally attendees and, therefore, the impact the US elections had on them.

A solution came from my approach to collecting *interview-like* data; hence, I gathered videos mainly showing attendees being interviewed by on-site journalists or activists, particularly in the case of the Charlottesville rally due to the dominance of YouTube videos (and for the Capitol insurrection where data was collected from YouTube). The NESH (2019, p. 11) states that “persons who are interviewed and/or referred to in [“edited media”] must take into account that the published information might be used for research purposes”. This led me to use the answer to whether attendees were aware of being recorded at the time of the interview and/ or could foresee that the interview would be made public as a decision criterion to include or exclude direct quotes of interviewees. I thereby used the undisguised presence of cameras and/ or interviewers using their microphones to interview attendees and/ or introducing themselves as journalists as indicators of such awareness.

However, I found it important to emphasise and mention it when a statement was from a person of influence in the scene (i.e., a hate group leader, main organiser etc.) who intends to reach a wider audience (cf. Townsend & Wallace, 2016). Thus, whenever the criterion of awareness was met, and/ or the research subject was a “public figure” (cf. The University of Sheffield, n.d.), I decided that the data was eligible to be

³⁷ This is not to confuse with giving research subjects “a voice,” as remarked by Kaufmann (2019), who noted that paraphrasing (through potential distortion of first accounts) may disempower a group that feels already left behind.

quoted directly. Where this was not the case (i.e., to a large extent with Parler video data), I refrained from doing so and paraphrased the data instead.

2.2.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I introduced my work on researching the experience of collective psychological empowerment among far-right rally attendees. I discussed the difficulty of studying this phenomenon and asked how ECRs can achieve credibility when the methodology of choice seems unfeasible and public visibility could risk researcher safety. I have outlined that working with secondary data bypassed some of these issues and how this caused new issues regarding tensions between methodological and ethical requirements. I hope to have shown one way how this can be reconciled and how a researcher working with far-right material can establish credibility while protecting their mental and physical health as best as possible.

Chapter 3 – Study 1: “Social Norms Misperception Among Voters in the 2020 US Presidential Election”

Original citation:

(Hoerst & Drury, 2021)

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(Please note that the corresponding paper was submitted as a registered report, and the stage 1 manuscript was further submitted before the 2020 US Presidential election had taken place. The stage 1 submission can be found on the OSF project site <https://osf.io/kzsf7>)

3.1 Abstract

We aim to explain the dynamics that enable sharp and sudden changes in right-wing motivated collective action, such as spikes in hate crimes. For that, we examined the underlying social-psychological processes, which we argue are empowerment processes amongst xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups who see themselves as “victims” and their position strengthened by majority support from the public for their actions. Building on previous research, we investigated the role that social norm misperception (false consensus and pluralistic ignorance) plays following elections to explore this as a possible, generally occurring mechanism. In a two-wave panel study, we surveyed Democrat and Republican supporters on social norms misperception, as well as collective empowerment and xenophobic behavioural intentions. While we could replicate and strengthen some of our arguments and establish robust group-dependent effects for social norms misperception and illustrate that an unexpected election outcome led to disempowerment amongst Republicans, we found null effects for changes in social norms misperception and behavioural intentions. We suggest that this contributes to understanding social norms misperception as anchored with group membership and as potentially less directly influenced by external factors than feelings of joy and group efficacy (collective empowerment). Practical implications of group differences regarding post-election collective actions are discussed.

Keywords: social norms misperception, election, group differences, collective empowerment, collective narcissism

3.2 Introduction

3.2.1 Events of socio-political importance and subsequent spikes in hate crime

The Southern Poverty Law Center (2016b) recorded over 400 racist incidents immediately after the 2016 presidential election of Donald Trump in the US. In New York, 34% of all reported hate crimes throughout the year were reported around the 8th of November –election day (Farivar, 2017). Swastikas were sprayed on walls in public spaces, one of them framed by “Make America White Again” (e.g., Bacon, 2016), a distorted reference to Trump’s infamous election slogan. The far-right increased its street mobilisation, reaching a peak at the Charlottesville, VA, “Unite the Right” rally in 2017.

In the UK, between April and July 2016, racist and religiously motivated hate crimes (RRHC) were 44% higher than the previous year (Home Office, 2017). In contrast to a typically witnessed proportion of around 33% in “violence against the person” offences, the National Police Chiefs Council reported that after the referendum, 63% of recorded offences were categorised as such (National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC), 2016). This indicates that the stark increase in hate was mainly related to violent attacks against individuals, especially immigrants and those presumed to be not “truly British” (Clarke et al., 2019, point 7/13). Three years later, following the UK General Election and the victory of the Conservative Party, whose campaign sought to “get Brexit done”, immigrants not only see themselves confronted with the introduction of a controversial “points-based immigration system” aiming to keep “lower-skilled workers” and immigrants that “do not speak English” out (Home Office, 2020), but they also faced increased verbal abuse (e.g., BBC News, 2020a, “Happy Brexit Day”).

While predictors, motivations, and types of hate crimes have widely been addressed in research (Walters et al., 2016; Walters & Krasodonski-Jones, 2019), this primarily focused on its patterns, however not on the dynamics that enable *spikes* in hate crimes, for example, after elections, or any other public events. We aim to close this gap by examining the underlying social-psychological processes behind this, which we see as reflected in empowerment processes that have consequences for the behaviour of racist groups who see themselves as “victims” and their position strengthened by a shift to the right by the electorate. In the current study, we, therefore, investigate the role of social norm misperception following elections among general voters as a possible, generally occurring mechanism. We applied a two-wave survey (i.e., collected data before and after the US election) and elaborate on their theoretical underpinnings in the following.

3.2.2 The role of social norms (perception)

Traits and individual attitudes have been a recurrent focal point in the discussion around the motivation behind hate attacks (e.g., Santos et al., 2019; Žemojtel-Piotrowska et al., 2020; Zmigrod & Goldenberg, 2020). The question that derives from this argument then considering the above examples is: “Have people’s attitudes become more racist?” However, it is crucial not to overlook that racism goes beyond individual prejudices. Explanations for racist attacks based on individualism alone should be taken with caution since they may easily neglect structural issues. Thus, we argue that we should also consider the social context when investigating hate motivation. Our study focuses on social norms since they determine what is socially accepted and punished (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004).

In identifying social norms, individuals are influenced by their “beliefs about shared beliefs” (Elcheroth et al., 2011, p. 740), hence, by how they perceive their

surroundings to think. In this way, increasing awareness of the thoughts others might have can drive social and political behaviour so that it becomes a reflection of what people think *other people* think. Following the 2016 US election, Crandall et al. (2018), for example, examined whether Trump's unexpected victory evoked a norm shift towards prejudice, given his racist electoral campaigning. The researchers found that the acceptability of prejudice had indeed increased towards targeted groups, with no effect on untargeted groups. This indicated that social norm perception (including norms and values around other groups) may be selective and vulnerable to external events.

3.2.3 Social norm misperception

Research has repeatedly shown that when instructed to compare their own opinion to the opinion of others, people often show patterns that social cognition scholars have referred to as social norms *misperception* (Berkowitz, 2004; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Perkins et al., 2011; Prentice & Miller, 1993). “Misperception”, perhaps counterintuitively, does thereby not necessarily mean “wrong” but can reflect a mismatch that arises when the perceptions of two entities are compared. For example, Henry et al. (2013) found that school students estimated their peers to be more supportive of aggression than themselves – a phenomenon described as pluralistic ignorance (PI). PI, in this way, reflects mismatching actual³⁸ (attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of group members) and perceived ingroup norms (assumption of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours of other group members, cf. Prentice & Miller, 1993). PI is group-based, and individuals' own norms are measured in the context of perceived norms from a meaningful ingroup (Sargent & Newman, 2021).

³⁸ We argue that trying to base our own study on “actual” norms is problematic since our focus is on the *subjective* evaluation of norms. We assess “own comfort” (instead of “actual norms”) in this study to capture the level to which people feel comfortable as an indicator of norm perception (cf. Prentice & Miller, 1993).

Social norms misperception is, however, not entirely disconnected from individual attitudes: While PI effects can occur amongst individuals that do not need to hold extreme opinions (Bjerring et al., 2014), another form of misperception – false consensus (FC), typically occurs in the context of controversial topics (van der Pligt et al., 1982), and, more importantly, predominantly amongst people holding minority opinions and that are engaged in less socially desirable behaviour (G. S. Sanders & Mullen, 1983). FC thereby refers to the process by which people (mis)perceive others to share their own (extreme or controversial) attitudes, beliefs, and actions (Ross et al., 1977). The literature is somewhat inconsistent about how to measure FC: Since FC is considered individual-based (cf. Sargent & Newman, 2021), some scholars see the FC effect as existent when own approval and perceived approval from others are associated (Luzsa & Mayr, 2021), while others follow the “traditional” measurement by comparing the strength of agreement perception between opposing stances (between-group measurement; cf. Bauman & Geher, 2002; Ross et al., 1977; Watt & Larkin, 2010). Watts and Larkin (2010), for example, “operationalized [false consensus] as existing when individuals rate the incidence of their own opinions and behaviors in the wider community more highly than those who do not share those opinions and behaviors.” They further explain that they did so by using a “t test to determine whether participants with negative attitudes [...] would estimate more agreement for their views than those with positive attitudes [...] would estimate disagreement” (p. 720). In this way, the researcher found that individuals who held stronger prejudices against indigenous Australians perceived a higher percentage of Australians to agree with them (consensus estimation) than non-prejudiced individuals. Some criticism regarding the traditional way of measuring FC had, however, been expressed by Krueger and Zeigler (1993) (who also provided some practical guidance for using FC in regressions). The

researchers saw the “true false consensus effect” as existent when actual consensus is subtracted from the perceived agreement.

While Berkowitz (2004) argues that the phenomenon of false consensus serves to “maintain an individual’s denial that his or her attitudes or behaviour are problematic or unusual” (p. 7), we want to remind the reader about the importance of social context as outlined in the previous section. In the next section, we, therefore, discuss how social context might interact with social norms misperception.

3.2.4 Social norm misperception and group membership

It was initially proposed that cognitive estimation errors caused social norms misperception effects (Ross et al., 1977). However, as we have already mentioned, misperception does not necessarily mean wrong. Social-psychological processes seem to be involved in the way that a strong social knowledge – that is, “information about the opinions or behaviours of a reference group [,] can influence individuals’ perceptions of group norms” (Tankard & Paluck, 2016, p. 189; see also; Spears & Manstead, 1990). The reference group could thereby be based on predisposed characteristics (e.g., sex, nationality) or be an opinion-based entity (McGarty et al., 2011). Psychological groups connect individuals that share the same preferences and values and, thus, the same social identity. Bliuc et al. (2019; see also, 2020), for example, found that identity-relevant local “offline” intergroup conflict had significant consequences for the collective identity of the “online” community “Stormfront Downunder”. Among others, the researchers observed that after the conflict (compared to before), ingroup norms about group boundaries shifted towards increased inclusiveness of ideologically (and ethnically) similar others and exclusion of identity-relevant outgroups (here, Muslims), whilst outward anti-Muslim positioning was enhanced.

In a broader political context, Federico (2020) argued that people's traditional values and their preference for uncertainty avoidance and cognitive closure make them more likely to be supporters of conservative parties, while progressive values and preferences for openness and uncertainty tolerance make them more likely to be supporters of parties that are liberal. The more strongly people identify with an ingroup, the more likely they are to endorse the rhetoric used by its leaders, its norms, and its policies (e.g., Haslam et al., 2020; Turner & Reynolds, 2012). We consequently assumed that individuals who hold xenophobic, racist, or white supremacist values and attitudes would support a conservative party. In the British political context, an individual's stance and the influence of a party whose shift rightwards has created a hostile environment for immigrants and for those not perceived as a "true" member of the British ingroup (Mondon & Winter, 2020), we assumed, might lead to the perception that xenophobic norms are widely supported, especially following an event that, presumably, reinforces one's values: An electoral victory in favour of hostile anti-immigrant policies.

In the US political landscape, Lührmann et al. (2020) found that the Republican Party increasingly resembles an autocratic party. This has been particularly evident under Trump's presidency since his "election [...] has come to represent both the mainstreaming of the far and extreme right and the radicalisation of the mainstream" (Mondon & Winter, 2020, p. 59). In 2016, Trump was particularly popular for his racist campaign amongst neo-Nazi movements, for example, the alt-right (e.g., Neiwert, 2020). But support in 2016 not only came from the fringe: A profiling study of the alt-right (Forscher & Kteily, 2020) has shown that alt-right-Trump-voters and non-alt-right-Trump-voters strongly overlapped in many areas. Among it were social dominance orientation (SDO), nationalism, support for a ban on Muslims entering the US, building

“a wall” between the US-Mexico border, and opposition to the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. In all these areas, both alt-right Trump and non-alt-right Trump voters³⁹ coherently and significantly differed from non-Trump voters. Finally, in 2020, Trump refused to condemn the white supremacist group Proud Boys and, instead, told them to “stand back and by”, which was celebrated as an encouraging sign among the group as a response (e.g., DeCook, 2020). Thus, like in our UK sample, we assumed that Trump supporters’ norms perception might similarly be influenced by how their pre-existing attitudes and identification with the Republican Party, i.e., their group membership, have shaped their realities.

3.2.5 Why misperception matters

Why should we be concerned about how individuals (mis)perceive social norms and how their group membership fosters that? The behavioural consequences of social norms misperception have been demonstrated in, for example, drinking behaviour, punitive parenting styles, violence, as well as in the expression of prejudice (e.g., Crandall et al., 2002; Ganz et al., 2020; Henry et al., 2013; Prentice & Miller, 1993; Watt & Larkin, 2010). This is significant considering that “[o]verestimations of anti-social [...], and underestimations of pro-social [...] norms can increase and decrease such behaviours, respectively” (Ganz et al., 2020, p. 3).

Although not explicitly testing perceptions of social norms, Bursztyn et al. (2017) experimentally showed that after Donald Trump had been nominated as president, individuals were more willing to donate openly to anti-immigration organisations than before. Importantly, Bursztyn et al. (2017) argue that “[the outcome]

³⁹ Although support for Trump before the 2020 Presidential election seemed to decline, it was still strongly driven by Christian nationalism. Amongst white Christians, religious conservatism, and the willingness to confront white privilege as well as the awareness of it were negatively correlated (Todd et al., 2014). Individuals’ own prejudice and endorsement of Christian nationalism lowered their hate crime perception (i.e., the motivation behind it was seen as justified due to perceived white victimhood, instead of caused by hatred of others and prejudice; Leander et al., 2020).

did not casually make [...] participants more xenophobic, but instead made the already more-intolerant ones more comfortable about publicly expressing their views” (p. 3). This aligns with recent findings arguing that pre-existing hostile attitudes and repeated exposure to hate speech increased hostility expression, support for harsh immigration treatment, and physical violence (Bilewicz & Soral, 2020).

Individuals that engage in misbehaviour typically do so in a highly visible and “loud” way. They are described as “advocates of the [presumed] truth” (Berkowitz, 2004, p. 8). This, we argue (and discuss below), might have contributed to the stark increase in public hate-motivated attacks after the recent election events since it may have distorted the picture of reality a “silent majority” holds. In their study following the 2012 French presidential election, Portelinha and Elcheroth (2016) refer to this as the *spiral of silence*. Marine Le Pen gained a significant proportion of the electorate in this election. The researchers observed that the perception of agreement with the xenophobic agenda of the formerly marginalised Front National amongst other school peers had increased in those previously willing to speak out against it. In this experimental study, which took place in a real-life social context, the researchers illustrated how counter-actions against xenophobic attacks could be undermined (e.g., Nelson et al., 2011)⁴⁰.

3.2.6 Collective psychological empowerment of a (perceived) victim identity

One answer as to how social norms (mis)perceptions are transferred into actions, we argue, is through collective empowerment processes that relate to the ingroup,

⁴⁰ In the pilot study, we witnessed PI effects for comfort with violence, which display a similar effect; Labour Party voters consistently estimated “the wider British people” to be significantly more comfortable with violence than themselves in four out of four cases (in contrast to Conservative Party voters that only showed a significant difference in two out of four cases). Along with a lower ingroup identification as “British” amongst Labour Party voters (compared to Conservative Party voters), this could indicate that they perceived a greater detachment from “the British people” and which could similarly undermine counter-actions.

specifically, to one that views itself as disadvantaged (and as a minority in terms of its opinions). The empowerment model we build on in this study derives from the elaborated social identity model (ESIM; Drury & Reicher, 1999; Reicher, 1984, 1996; Stott & Drury, 2000) of crowd behaviour embedded in collective action research. Drury and Reicher (2009), thereby, defined collective psychological empowerment in this context as that “positive social-psychological transformation, related to a sense of being able to (re)shape the social world, that takes place for members of subordinated groups who overturn (or at least challenge) existing relations of dominance” (p. 708). In other words, a subordinated group understands that it now has the power to improve a situation in its favour, which is the basis of (new) identity-realising actions (in particular against outgroups), a process known as collective self-objectification (CSO; Drury & Reicher, 2005). The realisation of one’s ingroup values over an opponent and, with it, a novel sense of collective efficacy is experienced positively. This is grounded in the perception of a new consensus for shared goals and the expectation that other ingroup members will support one in enacting ingroup norms and values (J. C. Becker et al., 2011; Drury et al., 2003; Drury & Reicher, 2005). While the endurance of collective empowerment depends on maintaining the aspired change in social relations, a defeat can lead to disempowerment and reduce the likelihood of further action (J. C. Becker & Tausch, 2015; Drury & Reicher, 2005).

We argue that this framework can help explain processes underlying the sharp and sudden rise in hate crimes after the recent elections, which are carried out by perpetrators that think their group is disadvantaged. In contrast to the focus in previous work on progressive social change movements aiming to achieve equality and fairness, the concern here is with people that belong to the (white) majority, not a genuinely subordinated group. Denial of structural inequalities and claiming victimhood for

themselves, on the one hand, justify retaliatory actions and reframes xenophobic violence as “self-defence” (Noor et al., 2017). On the other hand, this contributes to keeping an impermeability of ingroup and intergroup boundaries which serves to limit the upward mobility of people in socially disadvantaged groups (cf. Jetten, 2019; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In line with this, it makes sense that although support for xenophobia has long been linked to times of crisis, this can also arise in economic prosperity. Jetten (2019) argues that a v-curve function of wealth better describes anti-immigration sentiments: While immigration, pictured as a threat to national employment, security, and health care, particularly concerning groups with a low socio-economic status (SES) background, fuels xenophobia during uncertain times, it is the threat to cultural values and traditions, hence, to the status and “order”, that motivates wealthy and prestigious groups to oppose immigration, and which can occur during prosperous times. Mols and Jetten (2017) coined this phenomenon the wealth paradox.

Thus, by perceiving the “white race” as threatened by marginalised groups (i.e., Blacks, Muslims, immigrants, refugees etc), we propose that after the 2016 electoral events in the UK and US, a minority of individuals became empowered to commit RRHC or engage in hate speech through a false consensus assumption that these crimes were socially acceptable, caused by perceiving the wider (white) public as sharing and supporting their xenophobic views and actions. In perceiving the election result as an endorsement of their views, xenophobic whites might have seen their ingroup extended and expected support for actions hostile to anyone that was not a “true” member of the ethnic ingroup. In this way, the election outcomes in 2016 and 2019 could have served to realise xenophobes’ social identity, accompanied by a joyful feeling, in turn increasing the likelihood of further xenophobic actions. In contrast, perceiving a majority as increasingly xenophobic (when it is in contrast to one’s own

views; cf. PI effects) might have led to perceived powerlessness amongst the defeated camps (i.e., Remain, Clinton, and Labour voters) regarding counteractions.

Both 2016 election events in the UK and the US were highly unanticipated and sparked an unprecedented number of xenophobic outrages. This calls attention to the unexpectedness factor, which, in collective action terms, could be viewed as the equivalent of a novel change in social relations (see above) and explain the sudden and sharp shift in feelings of support and empowerment. Novelty, in either a favourable or unfavourable direction, might lead to significantly stronger reactions compared to having an outcome expected.

3.2.7 A model of collective psychological empowerment for perceived “victim” identities

We have described the general empowerment process, yet only a minority of xenophobes commit hate crimes. A social identity approach would suggest that for identity-related empowerment, a shared social identity and the strength of identification with the relevant social category moderate these processes by providing the basis for any potential empowerment processes (Neville & Reicher, 2011; Reicher, 2004; Turner et al., 1987; Turner & Reynolds, 2012). While we believe that we can apply the collective psychological empowerment model to the group of hate crime perpetrators, the mentioned moderators might not be specific enough. An American study (Dyduch-Hazar, 2019) showed that individuals high in collective narcissism not only expressed schadenfreude towards Muslim victims of hate crimes but also supported the perpetrators. Like its individual-level counterpart (individual narcissism), collective narcissism is invested in image protection, constant validation seeking, and susceptibility to perceiving the ingroup as under attack. Unlike individual narcissism, the subject of collective narcissism is the (in)group (Golec de Zavala et al., 2009).

Collective narcissism is also associated with feelings of being disadvantaged and negative outgroup attitudes (Dyduch-Hazar et al., 2019; Marchlewska et al., 2020). This is important since the more an individual is invested in the ingroup, the stronger the influence of such (xenophobic) rhetoric, whilst the behavioural consequences (e.g., engaging in hate speech) may interact with pre-existing societal and individual prejudices (Bilewicz & Soral, 2020). Interestingly, the previously mentioned profiling study of the alt-right (Forscher & Kteily, 2020) found that non-alt-right-Trump voters and alt-right-Trump voters only differed in how the latter strongly supported white collective action. In line with this, while collective narcissism can be applied to any psychological group, it has mainly been studied in the context of politics. For example, the research team around Golec de Zavala has established collective narcissism as the best predictor for Trump support in the US and the Leave vote in the UK (Federico & Golec de Zavala, 2018; Golec de Zavala et al., 2017). Thus, by defining a narrow social identity, collective narcissism might serve as a moderator when we examine the impact an unexpected (vs expected) election outcome has on FC effects and intentions to support xenophobia publicly.

Similar to accounting for non-narcissistic self-esteem in research on individual narcissism, collective narcissism, as defensive ingroup positivity, has a non-narcissistic counterpart – ingroup satisfaction, a secure form of ingroup positivity. The two concepts share the positive evaluation of the ingroup; however, while narcissistic ingroup positivity can lead to outgroup hostility, ingroup satisfaction is associated with pro-sociality and can even lead to outgroup solidarity (Cichocka, 2016; Dyduch-Hazar et al., 2019; Marchlewska et al., 2020). It is, therefore, important not to blur the unique contributions and to investigate the “pure” concept of collective narcissism. While a direct measurement for ingroup positivity has yet to be found, traditionally, the shared

variance of ingroup investment – comprising satisfaction, centrality, and solidarity with the ingroup, is partialled out (cf. Marchlewska et al., 2020). We adopt this approach, however, focus on assessing the residual form of collective narcissism only (referred to as “collective narcissism (net secure ingroup identification)”).

3.3 Pilot study

A pilot study following the 2019 UK General Election investigated voter groups (Conservative Party and Labour Party voters) and highly xenophobic individuals that were assumed to be amongst those groups. The study gives us some confidence to continue examining social norms misperception differences between groups (see Appendix 1 for detailed information about the pilot study). Group-dependent social norms misperception patterns (see above), along with findings that showed that Conservative Party voters and xenophobes scored higher on collective narcissism and collective empowerment (the latter was directly associated with the UK General Election result) indicates that the group differences in social norm misperception might not be random but connected to the outcome of the election.

3.4 Aims

While the current study aims to build on previous examinations of election effects on social norm perception (Bursztyn et al., 2017; Crandall et al., 2018; Portelinha & Elchereth, 2016), it is the first, to our knowledge, that combines social norms *misperception*, collective empowerment, behavioural intentions, and collective narcissism, in a cross-sectional panel design. Through measurements at two points in time – before and after the election – our study aims to illuminate election effects on public opinion more clearly. In this way, we are confident to contribute and further the examination of how hostile intergroup conflicts can arise and how xenophobia becomes empowered – or disempowered.

3.5 The present study

By surveying voter groups (Democrat and Republican supporters) before and after the US presidential election 2020, our study examines the impact an (unexpected) electoral outcome has on social norms misperception of xenophobia, collective psychological empowerment, approval for violence and racist remarks, and on the willingness to express xenophobic hostility amongst voter groups publicly. The latter was examined amongst Republican Party voters exclusively. Our pilot study showed that Conservative Party voters and highly xenophobic individuals scored significantly higher on collective narcissism than Labour Party supporters and non-xenophobic individuals. Building on this, we test for the possibility of a moderating effect of collective narcissism (in the case of a Republican victory). The study has been approved by the University of Sussex Sciences & Technology C-REC committee, certificate no. [ER/CH527/9] (see Appendix 2.1, Figure App. 2.1: 1).

3.6 Hypotheses

Hypotheses H1 and H2 serve to replicate the findings that we established in our pilot study, aiming to broaden our findings to another sample and population with a superior (panel) design.

3.6.1 *Social norms misperception of xenophobia*

H1) FC: (Time 1) Republican supporters will show significantly higher approval than Democrat supporters for xenophobic statements and agreement estimation from “the wider American public”.

H2) PI: (Time 1) Democrat supporters will perceive “the average American” to be significantly more comfortable with violence than themselves, while Republican supporters will not perceive the average American to be significantly more comfortable with violence than themselves.

H3) FC: Republican supporters whose expectations at time 1 do not match the election outcome, will show i) a significant increase in agreement estimation from the ‘wider American public’ for xenophobic statements if the Republican Party wins the election; ii) a significant decrease in agreement estimation from the “wider American public” for xenophobic statements if the Republican Party loses the election, at time 2.

H4) PI: Democrat supporters whose expectations at time 1 do not match the election outcome, will show i) a significant increase in perceived comfort with violence of “the average American” if the Democratic Party loses the election; ii) a significant decrease in perceived comfort with violence of “the average American” if the Democratic Party wins the election at time 2.

3.6.2 Collective empowerment

H5) Voters whose expectations at time 1 do not match the election outcome, will show i) significantly higher collective empowerment (group efficacy & joy at success) if their party wins the election; ii) significantly lower collective empowerment (group efficacy & joy at success) if their party loses the election, at time 2.

3.6.3 Behavioural intention

H6) Republican Party voters whose expectations at time 1 do not match the election outcome, will show i) significantly higher behavioural intentions to a) sign a petition promoting xenophobic views; b) donate their participation reward to support this petition; c) publicly share that they supported it if their party wins the election; ii) significantly lower behavioural intentions to a) sign the petition; b) donate their participation reward to support this petition; c) publicly share that they supported it if their party loses the election, at time 2.

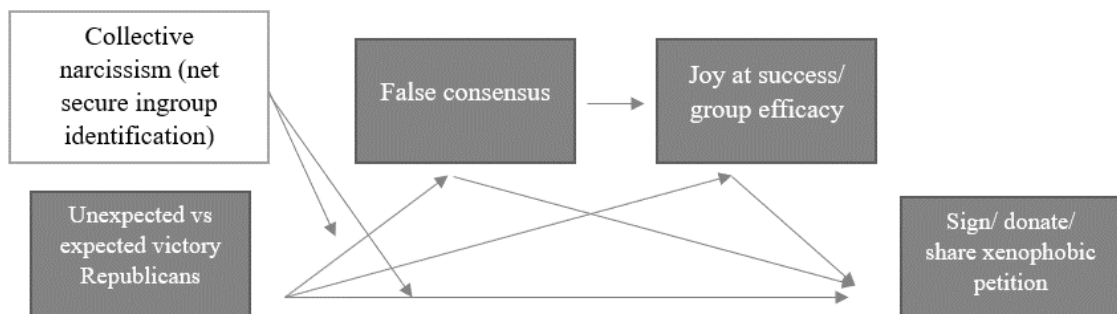
3.6.4 Mediation and moderation

H7: An unexpected vs expected electoral victory for the Republican Party will positively predict behavioural intentions, mediated by FC and collective empowerment (group efficacy & joy at success), whereby the direct path on behavioural intentions and the indirect path on FC are moderated by collective narcissism (net secure ingroup identification), see Figure 2.

H7a: FC positively predicts collective empowerment (group efficacy & joy at success).

Figure 2

Conceptual model for hypotheses 7 and 7a: The effect an unexpected vs expected victory of the Republican Party (established by comparing time 1 expectations of Republicans with the actual election result) has on subsequent behavioural intentions, false consensus, and collective empowerment (joy at success and group efficacy)



3.7 Method

3.7.1 Statistical power and intended sample size

Our pilot study gave us some confidence to analyse group-based differences in social norm perception in light of electoral effects; however, it did not allow us to calculate a sample size for the present study. The pilot study was conducted at a one-time point; thus, it would only allow us to use it as a template for H1 and H2. Instead, we used Crandall et al. (2018) as a template paper for estimating the sample size since the researchers used a similar (albeit not completely comparable) pre-/post design in a matching domain. Considering potential attrition, we aimed to sample 200 participants.

Participants were recruited online on Prolific (2023a) using the custom screening tool for nationality and political affiliation. In this way, we aimed to sample US Americans, split half between those affiliated with the Democratic and those with the Republican Party, and of 18 years of age or above (see Appendix 2.2 for sensitivity analyses).

3.7.2 Participants

After assessing our exclusion criteria (see Appendix 2.3), we established a total of $N = 139$ participants for both times whose data was used for further data analyses. Eighty-one women participated, 57 men and one participant identified as non-binary. Most participants ($N = 113$) identified as “White or European American”. Eighty-seven participants supported the Democratic Party, and 52 supported the Republican Party. In the Democrat sample, there were more women than men (57 vs 29), while the support for the Republican Party was relatively equally distributed (24 vs 28).

3.7.3 Measures

Predictor variables.

Vote. To investigate whether party affiliation, as stated on Prolific (2023a), aligned with party support as reported in our study, a single item at each time point assessed i) participants' party support at time 1, and ii) their actual vote at time 2, respectively (t1: “Which party are you planning to support in the US presidential election 2020?”; t2: “Which party did you vote for in the US presidential election 2020?”). Participants had the option to say: “I did not vote.” The items were created for the study (see Appendix 2.3 for further information).

(Un)Expectedness of outcome. A single item created for the study asked participants at time 1 to what extent they expect the party they supported to win the election (“How likely is it that the party you are voting for will win the election?”). This was then compared to the actual outcome of the election (see below).

Outcome variables.

Collective empowerment. Items measuring joy at success (time 1 and 2, e.g., “The US presidential election 2020 makes me feel joyful.”) and group efficacy (time 1 and 2, e.g., “Thinking about the US presidential election 2020, I believe that we Americans can change society.”) served as proxy measures for collective empowerment. Item wording was based on items previously used by Drury et al. (2018, study 1 and 2, see Appendix 2.4 for further information about the item wording). The variables were measured on a 7-point Likert scale with 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree”.

Pluralistic ignorance. Comfort with violence, although relating to two different entities (own vs perceived in others), was assessed in a single measure, i.e., by comparing participants’ own comfort with violence with their perceived comfort with violence *in others*. To do so, we paired two items each for two types of violence (e.g., “How comfortable do you feel with carrying a weapon if you lived in a diverse neighborhood?” compared to “How comfortable does the average American feel with carrying a weapon if they lived in a diverse neighborhood?”). The item wording was based on items by Funk et al. (2003), Prentice and Miller (1993), and Ganz et al. (2020). Both variables were assessed on a 7-point Likert scale with 1 = “very uncomfortable” to 7 = “very comfortable”.

False consensus. In our pilot study, we found that particularly those items that mirrored previously ongoing social issues showed the most apparent differences between groups. In the current study, we captured support for xenophobic violence and anti-immigration and anti-Black sentiments (e.g., the killing of Breonna Taylor and George Floyd, the shooting of Jacob Blake in 2020 and the BLM movement). Approval for a xenophobic statement was paired with the estimated percentage of “the wider American public” that agreed/disagreed with the participant (e.g., “Social policies such

as affirmative action discriminate unfairly against White people.” compared to “Please estimate the percentage of people amongst the wider American public that agree/disagree with you.”). The item wording was based on items by Watt and Larkin (2010). Approval was assessed on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = “strongly agree” to 7 = “strongly disagree”. Estimated agreement and disagreement were assessed continuously from 0 – 100%.

Behavioural intention. Participants were presented with a fictitious petition promoting a xenophobic ideology as a proxy for hate crimes. The researchers created the petition using Gimp 2.10.20 (GIMP, n.d.) (see Appendix 2.5b, Figure App. 2.5b: 1). Participants were asked whether they would sign it. When they indicated to do so, they were asked how much of their participation reward (“£0.84”/ per survey, which equalled \$1.09) they would donate to support this petition and whether they would publicly share their support for it. When they stated they would not sign this petition, they were automatically forwarded to the next item in the questionnaire. The idea was inspired by Bursztyn et al. (2017) and the wording by information about the American Freedom Party (n.d.) and by Hochschild (2018). Willingness to sign the petition was assessed with a dichotomous scale (“Yes”/“No”), and the willingness to share one’s support was assessed on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = “strongly agree” to 7 = “strongly disagree”, whilst the donation was assessed on a continuous scale from £0 to £0.84.

Moderators.

Collective narcissism. National (“American”) collective narcissism was assessed with the 5-item Collective Narcissism Scale (e.g., “Americans deserve special treatment.”, (e.g., “Americans deserve special treatment.”, Golec de Zavala et al., 2009, 2013) with 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree”, $\alpha = 0.84$.

Xenophobia. Xenophobia was measured with four items taken from the *Racial Tolerance* assessment (Ipsos, 2020, e.g., “To be truly American you have to be white.”) The measurement was assessed on a 4-point Likert scale from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 4 = “strongly agree”. Three items were reversely worded and recoded so that higher expression reflects higher xenophobia, $\alpha = 0.77$ (see Appendix 2.4 for further information about the xenophobia scale).

Covariates.

Secure ingroup identification. Secure ingroup identification was assessed through “group-level self-investment” comprising the subscales satisfaction (e.g., “I am glad to be American.”, $\alpha = 0.95$), centrality (e.g., “I often think about the fact that I am American.”, $\alpha = 0.85$), and solidarity (e.g., “I feel committed to Americans.”, $\alpha = 0.91$) with the ingroup by using the Social Identification Scale (Leach et al., 2008). It was assessed on a 7-point Likert scale with 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree”, $\alpha_{\text{total}} = 0.96$.

Social desirability. Although the surveys were entirely anonymous, we prepared for the possibility that participants would want to present themselves favourably due to the sensitivity of the topics. We used the “impression management” subscale of the BIDR-16 (Hart et al., 2015, e.g., “I sometimes tell lies if I have to.”, with 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree”) to assess and control for social desirability.

COVID-19. The global pandemic elicited different interpretations and behaviours amongst the US electorate (e.g., Bavel et al., 2020; Farias & Pilati, n.d.). While some have construed the Asian community as responsible for the outbreak of the virus (Motta et al., 2020; Tessler et al., 2020), it was socially disadvantaged communities as a whole that eventually suffered most, not only from COVID-19 but also from shaming and blaming (Ruiz et al., 2020; The Covid Tracking Project, 2023;

The Independent Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE), 2020). To account for this influence, we used two items taken from Kachanoff et al. (2020) Realistic and Symbolic Threat of COVID-19 Scale (“How much of a threat, if any, is the coronavirus outbreak for a) symbolic threat: American values and traditions; and b) realistic threat: The health of the U.S. population as a whole?”). The variables were assessed on a 4- Likert scale from 1 = “No threat at all” to 4 = “Major threat”.

Other measures.

Awareness of the election. We asked participants on a 4-point Likert scale (from 1 = “Not at all closely” to 4 = “Very closely”) to what extent they followed the news coverage on the 2020 US presidential election (“How much have you followed the news about the US presidential election 2020?”), inspired by Pew Research Center (2016).

Distractors. To conceal the real purpose of the study, distractor items were added to the empowerment, PI, and FC items (e.g., “I welcome it that the US presidential election 2020 takes place on a weekday.”).

Careless responding. To avoid careless responding, two questions were added, one of which asked the participant to leave the question unanswered, and the other assessed participants’ honest opinion on whether we should use their answers in our study (“It is vital to our study that we only include responses from people that devoted their full attention to this study. Otherwise, years of effort could be wasted. In your honest opinion, should we use your data in our analysis in this study?”), see Appendix 2.3 and 2.4 for further information on careless responding.

Demographics. Demographics comprised age, identified gender and ethnicity, educational level, annual income before taxes, and employment status. Demographics, vote, expectedness at the beginning, behavioural intention, and careless responses (as to whether participants suggest using their data) at the end of the survey were presented in

a set order across participants. All remaining measures were presented in a randomised order using Qualtrics (2023) randomisation. The items for collective narcissism, xenophobia, secure ingroup identification, social desirability, and collective empowerment were additionally randomised each within their blocks (see Appendix 2.5a and b for an overview of all main measures).

3.7.4 Procedure

The study was created using Qualtrics (2023) and conducted over two waves. Data for time 1 was collected on October 5, 2020, thus, about a month before the 2020 US presidential election. We only invited those participants to time 2 survey that had completed survey one. Data collection for wave 2 took place between November 17 – 23, 2020; see Appendix 2.6 for further information on the procedure.

3.7.5 Confirmatory factor analysis

Confirmatory factor analyses were used to assess the construct validity for the following scales: Collective narcissism, xenophobia, and group-level self-investment (secure ingroup identification). We thereby used the results of the comparative fit indices (CFI), which can fall between 0 and 1, with values greater than 0.90 considered good fitting models, and the root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) with values equal to or less 0.08 indicating a good model fit. All three scales showed good model fits (collective narcissism: CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.02; xenophobia: CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.02; group-level self-investment: CFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.07). Due to its two-item-only structure, we could not calculate the CFI for the empowerment concepts joy at success and group efficacy. Instead, we calculated Spearman inter-item correlations ($r_{joy} = 0.69$, $r_{efficacy} = 0.65$) (see Appendix 2.4 for further information about validity and reliability testing).

3.8 Results

3.8.1 Preparatory steps

The statistical analyses were conducted using R 4.0.2 (R-Project, n.d.). All reversed items were re-coded before the analyses. Preliminary steps included dummy coding of the variables party support (Democrats/ Republicans), (un)expectedness of outcome (expected/ unexpected)⁴¹, gender (identified as woman/ identified as man), and petition signing (yes/ no). Furthermore, in line with Hart et al. (2015), we transformed our social desirability measure in the way that the individual items were dummy coded to 0 (= 5 and below) and 1 (= 6 and above), with the final measure reflecting the sum of the individual eight-item values (i.e., min. 0 to max. 8). To deal with possible violations to test assumptions, we chose non-parametric (e.g., Spearman correlation) and robust (e.g., 10,000 bootstraps) measures in later analyses (see Appendix 2.7 for further information on preparatory steps).

3.8.2 Descriptive statistical analyses and intercorrelations

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and intercorrelation matrix (based on scores from t1 and t2), as well as results from partial and biserial correlation analyses. Voting Republican and unexpectedness of the outcome were significantly associated with own comfort and approval, however, not with the perception of others in this regard. Nor was voting Republican and unexpectedness of the outcome associated with empowerment (joy at success or group efficacy). While joy at success was significantly associated with the perception of harsh measures against immigrants and refugees, as well as petition signing, group efficacy was only significantly related to the former.

⁴¹ Expected electoral victory was assessed by scoring 1 = “*Extremely likely*” to 3 = “*Slightly likely*”; and expected defeat by scoring 5 = “*Slightly unlikely*” to 7 = “*Extremely unlikely*”. Estimated electoral victory, followed by an actual victory, and estimated electoral defeat, followed by an actual defeat were categorised as “*expected*”; in contrast, an estimated electoral victory, followed by an actual defeat, and estimated electoral defeat, followed by an actual win, was categorised as “*unexpected*”.

Both collective narcissism and xenophobia were significantly associated with petition signing. No correlation reached a value close to $r = 0.80$, which excluded the possibility of multicollinearity. Results from a Chi-square test of association furthermore revealed a significant association between vote and unexpectedness ($X^2 (1, N = 252) = 178.19, p < .001$); party support significantly influenced whether the outcome was perceived as expected or unexpected: Republicans perceived the outcome as unexpected rather than expected. Furthermore, party support significantly influenced whether the petition was signed or not ($X^2 (1, N = 278) = 9.71, p = .002$): While the majority across parties decided not to sign, signing the petition was observed more often among Republicans. Finally, unexpectedness influenced petition signing ($X^2 (1, N = 252) = 5.49, p = .02$): While the majority decided not to sign the petition, to whom the election outcome came unexpectedly signed the petition more often than those who expected the outcome.

Table 1*Descriptive statistic and Spearman intercorrelations matrix (scores from t1 and t2)*

		Mean	SD	Min	Max	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1	Vote	-	-	-	-	1.00															
2	Unexpectedness	-	-	-	-	-	1.00														
3	Collective Narcissism	3.09	1.29	1	6.8	0.556*** (0.142*)	0.408*** (-0.03)	1.000													
4	Secure Ingroup Identification	4.68	1.48	1	7	0.693*** (0.512***)	0.607*** (0.493***)	0.697***	1.000												
5	Xenophobia	1.29	0.46	1	3.3	0.309***	0.291***	0.497*** (0.336***)	0.396*** -0.080	1.000											
6	Joy at Success	3.59	1.82	1	7	0.012	0.003	0.227*** (0.116*)	0.210*** -0.074	0.089	1.000										
7	Group Efficacy	4.99	1.39	1	7	-0.015	0.038	0.176** -0.002	0.250*** (0.181**)	0.014		1.000									
8	Carrying weapon Own Comfort	3.48	2.14	1	7	0.491***	0.461***	0.466*** (0.204***)	0.484*** (0.251***)	0.032 0.374***	0.043	1.000									
9	Carrying weapon Perceived Comfort	4.52	1.45	1	7	0.076	0.165*	0.105 (0.160**)	-0.015 (-0.123*)	0.082	0.100	0.081	0.191**	1.000							

10	Self-protection	4.42	1.88	1	7	0.480***	0.478***	0.459***	0.599***	0.102	0.145*	0.191**	1.000								
	Own Comfort									0.413***		0.622***									
								-0.072	(0.439***)												
11	Self-protection	5.1	1.4	1	7	0.089	0.157*	0.121*	0.160**	0.175**	0.032	0.149*	0.108					1.000			
	Perceived													0.474***	0.417***						
	Comfort							-0.013	-0.107												
12	Harsh measures	2.66	1.74	1	7	0.592***	0.540***	0.505***	0.500***		0.033	-0.057		0.107					1.000		
	Own approval										0.511***			0.464***		0.487***	0.132*				
								(0.252***)	(0.240***)												
13	Harsh measures	57.8	15.1	9	95	0.148*	0.123	0.182**	0.203***	0.138*	0.191**		0.195**	-0.075			0.051	0.113	1.000		
	Perceived											0.208***				0.245***					
	Agreement							-0.058	-0.108												
14	Affirmative	3.69	1.99	1	7	0.580***	0.494***	0.528***	0.531***		-0.022	-0.092		0.043			0.069	0.561***	0.148*	1.000	
	action										0.399***			0.454***		0.377***					
	Own approval							(0.260***)	(0.269***)												
15	Affirmative	56.6	17	10	100	0.221***	0.244***	0.198***	0.284***		0.143*	0.151*	0.138*	-0.064			0.060	0.254***		0.179**	1.000
	action										0.215***					0.228***			0.384***		
	Perceived							0.000	(0.208***)												
	Agreement																				
16	Petition signing	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.345***	0.293***	0.277***	0.136*	0.085	0.258***	0.102	0.271***	0.161*	0.251***	0.186*	0.226***	0.074	1.000
								(0.206***)	(0.078)												

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Values in brackets represent results from partial correlation controlled for secure ingroup identification and collective narcissism, respectively. Values in bold are based on biserial correlation.

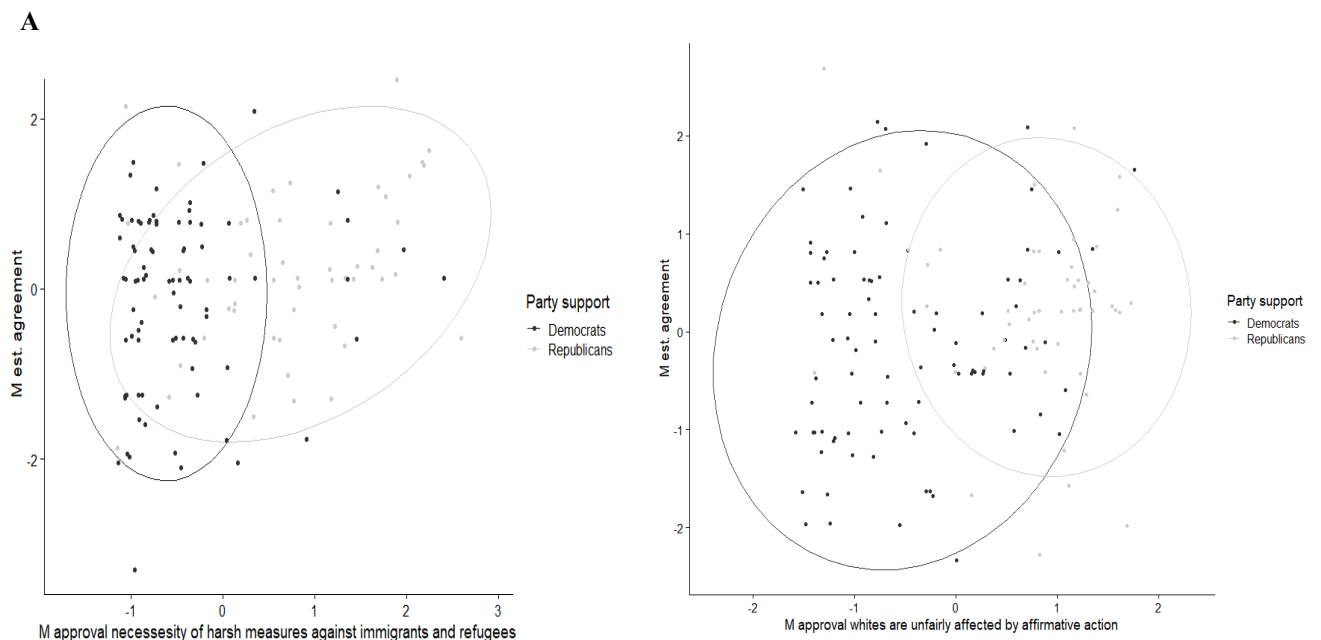
3.8.3 Hypotheses examinations

Hypothesis 1)⁴². We predicted that at time 1, Republican supporters showed significantly higher approval than Democrat supporters for xenophobic statements and agreement estimation from “the wider American public”. To approach this, we first examined within effects (cf. Luzsa & Mayr, 2021; Sargent & Newman, 2021) by plotting and calculating the correlation between own approval and estimated agreement per party, followed by examining between-group effects (cf. Watt & Larkin, 2010).

The strength of association between approval for the necessity of harsh measures against immigrants and refugees and estimated agreement was stronger (and significant) for Republicans ($r = .30, p = .03$) than for Democrats ($r = .07, p = .51$), Figure 3A.

Figure 3

Correlation between own approval for harsh measures against immigrants and refugees (A), own approval for the perception that white people are unfairly affected by affirmative action (B) and estimated agreement from the wider public by party support

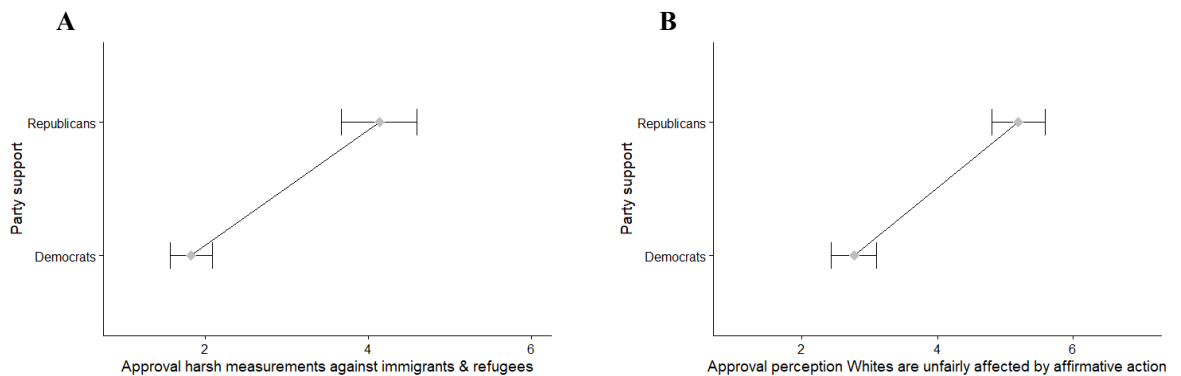


⁴²

See Supplementary Material, Appendix 2.9 for further information on these analyses.

Figure 4

Approval for harsh measurements against immigrants and refugees by party support (A), and for the perception that white people are unfairly affected by affirmative action (B). Error bars represent 95% CI.



As expected, at time 1, Republican supporters expressed significantly greater approval for the necessity of harsh measures against immigrants and refugees ($M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.70$) than Democrat supporters ($M = 1.83$, $SD = 1.23$), $t(83.02) = -8.52$, $p < .001$, $r = .68$, (see Figure 4A). Thus, Democrats were rather dismissive of the statement so that the agreement estimation reflects their estimated agreement from others with their own *dismissal*. To account for that, we examined the group differences in agreement among Republicans ($M = 61.6$, $SD = 13.5$) and disagreement perception among Democrats ($M = 43.4$, $SD = 14.9$), which was significant, $t(51) = 9.67$, $p < .001$, $r = .80$.

As Figure 3B indicates, neither correlation (Republicans: $r = -.17$, $p = .23$; Democrats: $r = .14$, $p = .20$) between own approval for the perception that white people are unfairly affected by affirmative action was significant. However, Republicans showed a significantly stronger approval ($M = 5.19$, $SD = 1.44$) than Democrat supporters ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.60$), $t(116.55) = -9.18$, $p < .001$, $r = .65$, (Figure 4B) and we, therefore, again compared Republicans' agreement estimation ($M = 60.6$, $SD = 15.0$) with Democrats' disagreement estimation ($M = 45.6$, $SD = 16.5$), which was significant, $t(51) = 7.22$, $p < .001$, $r = .71$. Thus, while the within-group results are

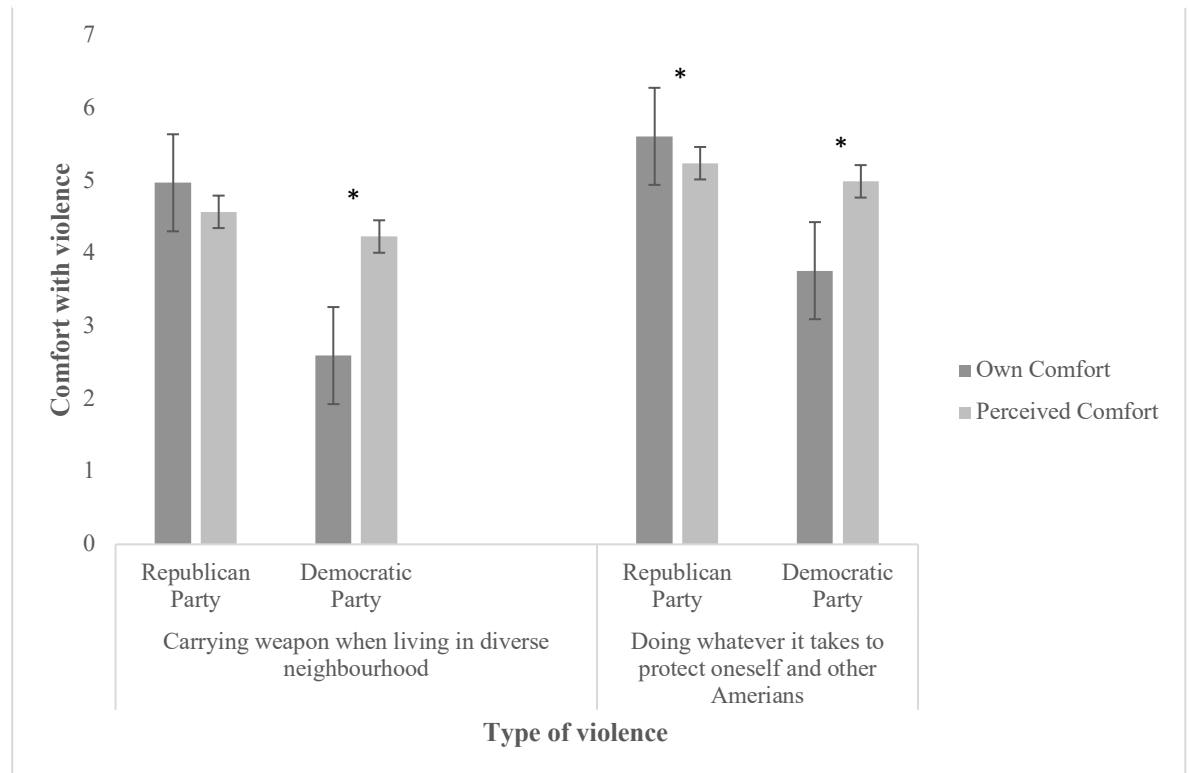
inconsistent, we illustrated that the *difference* in the perception of public approval (and disapproval, respectively) for one's opinion, i.e., the perception of the prevalence of xenophobia between groups was significant, with Republicans scoring significantly higher.

Hypothesis 2). We predicted that at time 1, Democrat supporters perceived “the average American” to be significantly more comfortable with violence than themselves. In contrast, Republican supporters perceived the average American not to be significantly more comfortable with violence than themselves. Democrat supporters perceived the “American people” to be significantly more comfortable with carrying a weapon if they lived in a diverse neighbourhood ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.59$), than themselves ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.83$), $t(86) = -8.39$, $p < .001$, $r = .67$, as well as to be significantly more comfortable with doing whatever it takes to protect themselves and other Americans ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 1.46$), than themselves ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 1.80$), $t(86) = -6.39$, $p < .001$, $r = .57$. In contrast, we did not find a significant difference between own and perceived comfort for being comfortable with carrying a weapon if living in a diverse neighbourhood amongst Republican Party supporters (perceived comfort: $M = 4.58$, $SD = 1.35$; own comfort: $M = 4.98$, $SD = 1.87$, $t(51) = 1.55$, $p = .13$, $r = .21$); however, Republicans expressed significantly higher own comfort ($M = 5.62$, $SD = 1.31$) for doing whatever it takes to protect oneself and other Americans than they perceived “the average American” to be ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.27$), $t(51) = 2.00$, $p = .05$, $r = .27$. While the latter does deviate from our hypotheses, we did not observe Republican supporters to perceive others to be *more* comfortable than themselves, which is in contrast to

Democrats (see Figure 5). Thus, we can partially reject the null hypothesis in H2 and replicate the findings from our pilot study (see Appendix 1.1).

Figure 5

Own comfort vs perceived comfort for violence split by party support (error bars represent 1x SEM)



Hypothesis 3)⁴³. We predicted that Republican supporters whose expectations at time 1 did not match the election outcome showed a significant decrease in agreement estimation from the “wider American public” for xenophobic statements if the Republican Party lost the election at time 2. Although Republican supporters for whom the election outcome came unexpectedly ($N = 44$), on average, estimated greater agreement for the necessity of harsh measures against immigrants and refugees at time 1 ($M = 63.40$, $SD = 13.20$) than at time 2 ($M = 61.40$, $SD = 14.20$), this difference was not significant $t(43) = 0.98$, $p = .34$, $r = .15$. Similarly, Republican supporters, on average,

⁴³

See Appendix 2.9 for further information on these analyses.

estimated almost the same level of agreement at time 2 for the perception that whites are unfairly affected by affirmative actions ($M = 62.68$, $SD = 16.01$) than at time 1 ($M = 62.41$, $SD = 13.76$), $t(43) = -0.10$, $p = .92$, $r = .02$. Figure 6A and B and Table 2 illustrate the change in agreement estimation (Republicans) and disagreement estimation (Democrats). The gap between Republicans' agreement perception and Democrats' disagreement remained stable, with Republicans perceiving stronger agreement from the wider public (i.e., higher prevalence of xenophobia) than Democrats perceived disagreement. Overall, we cannot reject the null hypotheses for either agreement estimation changes among Republicans from before to after the election.

Table 2

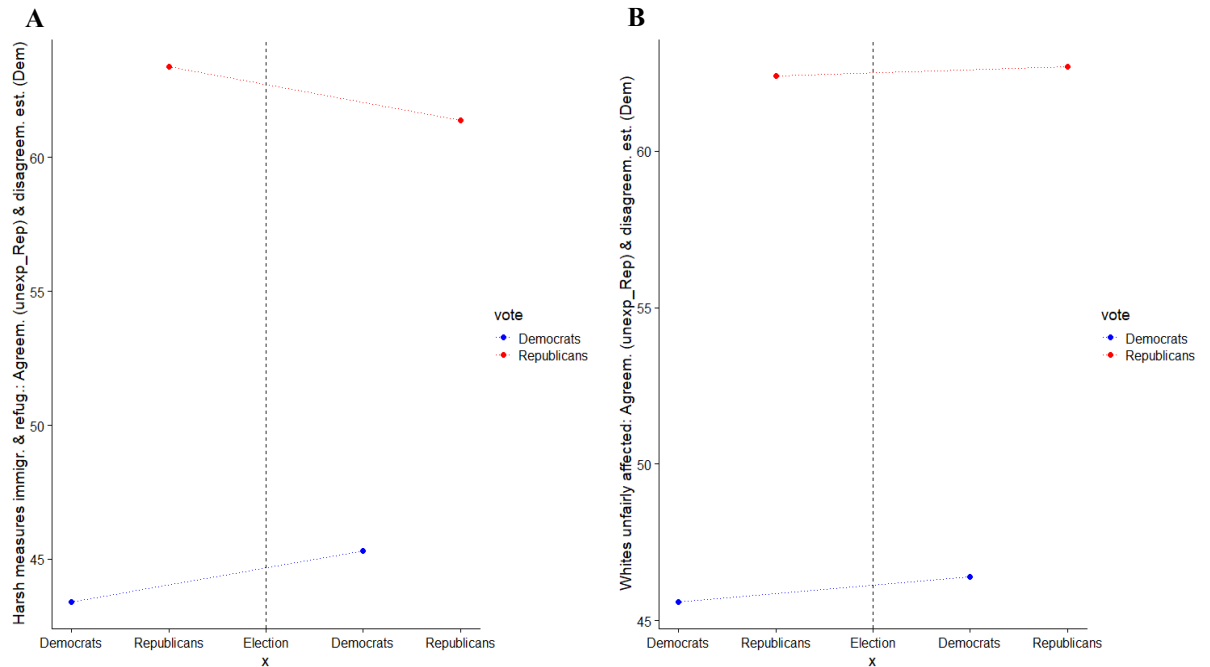
Change and difference in estimation (Democrats: Disagreement; Republicans: Agreement) from before to after the election by party support.

Time (relative to election)	Party support	Statement	Estimation		Δ Before - after
			M	SD	
Before	Republicans	Harsh measures against immigrants and refugees.	63.4	13.2	20
Before	Democrats	Harsh measures against immigrants and refugees.	43.4	14.9	
After	Republicans	Harsh measures against immigrants and refugees.	61.4	14.2	16.1
After	Democrats	Harsh measures against immigrants and refugees.	45.3	15.9	
Before	Republicans	White people are unfairly affected by affirmative action.	62.4	13.8	16.8
Before	Democrats	White people are unfairly affected by affirmative action.	45.6	16.5	
After	Republicans	White people are unfairly affected by affirmative action.	62.7	16	16.3
After	Democrats	White people are unfairly affected by affirmative action.	46.4	16.6	

Note. Based on $N = 44$ Republicans (to whom the election outcome came unexpectedly), and on $N = 87$ Democrats.

Figure 6

Change in agreement estimation among Republicans to whom the election outcome came unexpectedly, and disagreement estimation among Democrats for harsh measures against immigrants and refugees (A) and the perception that white people are unfairly affected (B).



Exploratory analyses⁴⁴

We could not test hypotheses 4 to 7 as stated. Considering only those Democrats to whom the election outcome came unexpectedly (cf. H4 and H5) resulted in a sample size of four. We consequently dropped the unexpectedness factor and considered all Democrats ($N = 87$). For H6, the sample size was too small to conduct meaningful analyses for all three behavioural measures. We, therefore, focused on petition signing and report descriptive statistics for the other behavioural measures in the Appendix 2.9. Since the Republican Party was not declared victorious, we could not analyse expected vs unexpected victory amongst its supporters (H7/ H7a) and present alternative analyses instead. Finally, the level of xenophobia was much lower than expected (based on the

⁴⁴

See Appendix 2.9 for further information on these analyses.

pilot study), so we could not investigate a subgroup of highly xenophobic individuals (with a xenophobia score higher than five).

Hypothesis 4). We predicted that Democrat supporters whose expectations at time 1 did not match the election outcome showed a significant decrease in perceived comfort with violence of “the average American” if the Democratic Party won the election at time 2. Using data from all Democrats ($N = 87$) showed that they perceived significantly greater comfort in others for carrying a weapon if living in a diverse neighbourhood at time 2 ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 1.43$) than at time 1 ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 1.59$), $t(86) = -2.02$, $p = .05$, $r = .21$; however, since the difference was small, this direction was against our hypothesis. There was no significant difference in the perception of comfort in others with doing whatever it takes to protect oneself and other Americans at time 1 ($M = 5.00$, $SD = 1.46$), compared to time 2 ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.47$), $t(86) = 0.21$, $p = .83$, $r = .02$. Overall, we cannot reject the null hypotheses for either violence comfort perception changes over time.

Hypothesis 5). We predicted that voters whose expectations at time 1 did not match the election outcome showed i) significantly higher collective empowerment (group efficacy & joy at success) if their party won the election; or ii) significantly lower collective empowerment if their party lost the election at time 2. As expected, Republicans to whom the election outcome was unexpected, expressed significantly lower joy at success and group efficacy at time 2 (joy at success: $M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.68$; group efficacy: $M = 4.72$, $SD = 1.68$) than at time 1 (joy at success: $M = 4.10$, $SD = 1.72$, $t(43) = 2.82$, $p = .01$, $r = .40$; group efficacy: $M = 5.40$, $SD = 1.25$), $t(43) = 2.84$, $p = .01$, $r = .40$). Using data from all Democrats ($N = 87$), we observed that they expressed significantly greater joy at success and group efficacy at time 2 (joy at success: $M = 4.61$, $SD = 1.63$; group efficacy: $M = 5.36$, $SD = 1.17$) than at time 1 (joy

at success: $M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.50$, $t(86) = -12.05$, $p < .001$, $r = .88$; group efficacy: $M = 4.70$, $SD = 1.40$, $t(86) = -3.87$, $p < .001$, $r = .51$). Thus, we can only partially reject the null hypotheses; those whose party lost the election unexpectedly also reported a decrease in joy and group efficacy.

Hypothesis 6). We predicted that Republican Party voters whose expectations at time 1 did not match the election outcome showed significantly lower behavioural intentions to a) sign a xenophobically worded petition; b) donate their participation reward to support this petition; c) publicly share that they supported it if their party lost the election, at time 2. Table 3 provides an overview of the distribution of willingness to sign from before to after the election. At time 1, six Republicans who expected their party to win the election indicated they would sign the petition. Amongst these participants, four participants indicated they would sign again at time 2. While this trend would align with our hypothesis, three further Republican supporters that had previously not indicated to sign the petition were willing to do so at time 2. The results from a Chi-square test on time (before vs after the election) and the willingness to sign the petition (yes vs no) showed that the relationship between these variables was not significant, $p = 1$. Because of the low number of people that indicated to sign the petition, we could not conduct any further analyses based on that. Overall, we cannot reject the null hypothesis.

Table 3

Descriptive statistics for petition signing among Republicans to whom the election outcome came unexpectedly, grouped by time and willingness to sign.

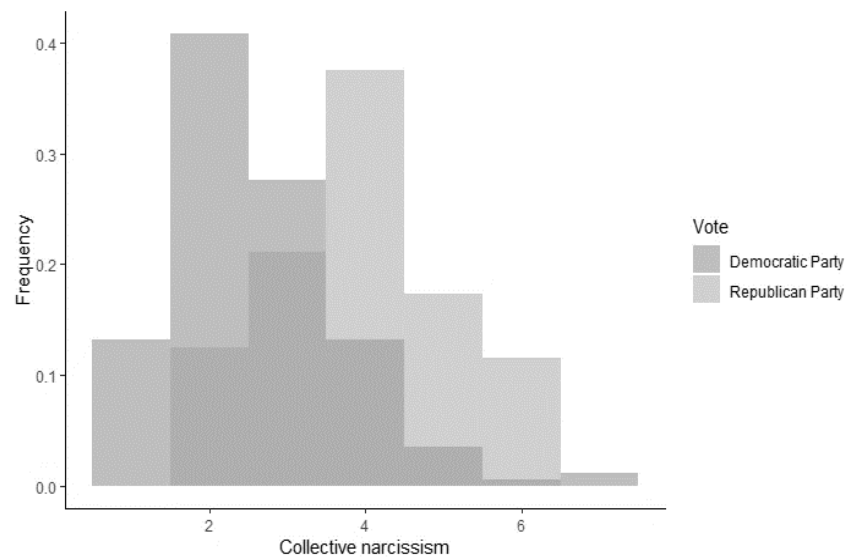
Time	Willingness to sign	N	Percentage
1	No	38	43.18
1	Yes	6	6.82
2	No	37	42.05
2	Yes	7	7.95

Hypotheses 7 and 7a). We predicted that in the case of an unexpected vs expected electoral victory for the Republican Party, this would positively predict behavioural intentions, mediated by FC and collective empowerment (group efficacy & joy at success), whereby the direct path and the indirect path on FC would be moderated by collective narcissism (net secure ingroup identification), as well as that false consensus would positively predict collective empowerment (cf. Figure 2). Since the Republican Party was not declared the victorious party in the presidential election, we could not conduct this analysis. Alternatively, based on previous research (e.g., Federico & Golec de Zavala, 2018) and our pilot study, we investigated group differences in the expression of collective narcissism. To consider the factor of time, we conducted a 2 (vote: Republicans vs Democrats) x 2 (time: before vs after the election) repeated measures ANOVA on collective narcissism. The results revealed that there was a significant main effect for party support ($F(1,137) = 62.38, p < .001, \eta^2_p = 0.31$). At the same time, the within-participant variability across time was non-significant (i.e., the interaction effect between ID and time was non-significant, $F(1, 138) = 0.52, p = .47, \eta^2_p = 0.00$). The latter, we believe, illustrates the stability of collective narcissism over time. Subsequent independent t-tests (based on grand means) showed that Republican supporters expressed significantly higher collective narcissism ($M = 3.99, SD = 1.09$) than Democrats ($M = 2.56, SD = 1.10$), $t(218.07) = -10.54, p < .001, r = .58$

(see Figure 7). Having established a significant difference in collective narcissism amongst party supporters, we explored the initially proposed model by conducting single regressions for the separate associations. We used data from all Republican supporters ($N = 52$) at time 2 and controlled for their t1 answers. First, we tested

Figure 7

Collective narcissism by party support



whether collective narcissism (net secure ingroup identification) would predict false consensus and petition signing. To use Republicans' estimated agreement for this analysis most efficiently, in line with the "true false consensus" score calculation (cf. Bauman & Geher, 2002; Krueger & Zeiger, 1993), we calculated actual consensus for both statements based on the percentage of people who approved the statements (by scoring 4 or higher) across both parties. Subsequently, we subtracted the actual consensus from Republicans' agreement estimation per point in time to create what we treated as an elaborated agreement estimation. At this point, we think it is informative to reveal that Republicans, on average, not only consistently estimated a higher percentage of agreement compared to the sample overall (t1: harsh measures against immigrants and refugees, $M_{Republicans} = 61.6\%$, $SD_{Republicans} = 13.5$ vs $M_{overall} = 58.5\%$, $SD_{overall} = 14.6$; white people are unfairly affected by affirmative action, $M_{Republicans} = 60.6\%$,

$SD_{Republicans} = 15.0$ vs $M_{overall} = 56.7\%$, $SD_{overall} = 16.1$; t2: harsh measures, $M_{Republicans} = 61.2\%$, $SD_{Republicans} = 14.3$ vs $M_{overall} = 57.1\%$, $SD_{overall} = 15.6$; unfair treatment, $M_{Republicans} = 61.2\%$, $SD_{Republicans} = 16.6$ vs $M_{overall} = 56.5\%$, $SD_{overall} = 17.9$), but also compared to the number of participants that actually approved of the racist remarks (harsh measures: 24.5% of the sample at t1, and 26.6% of the sample at t2 agreed; unfair treatment: 51.8% of the sample at t1 and 50.4% of the sample at t2 agreed).

Regarding the predictions, we did not find collective narcissism to significantly predict either of these elaborated agreement estimations ($B = -0.09$, $p = .52$, $CI = [-0.10; 0.41]$; $B = 0.06$, $p = .71$, $CI [-0.24; 0.35]$), but its prediction of petition signing was marginally significant ($B = 1.04$, $p = .09$, $OR = 2.84$, $CI [0.96; 11.40]$). We then investigated whether either elaborated agreement estimation would predict joy at success, group efficacy (collective empowerment), and petition signing. None of these regressions turned significant. Finally, we investigated whether joy at success and group efficacy would predict petition signing. While group efficacy did not significantly predict hostile behaviour ($B = 0.12$, $p = .78$, $OR = 1.12$, $CI [0.52; 2.85]$), the prediction of joy at success on petition signing was of marginal significance ($B = 0.79$, $p = .09$, $OR = 2.19$, $CI [0.93; 5.97]$) (see Appendix 2.8 for further conclusions).

3.9 Discussion

Our study aimed to extend previous research on social norms perceptions in the context of electoral events (e.g., Bursztyl et al., 2017; Crandall et al., 2018; Portelinho & Elcherath, 2016) by investigating the occurrence of social norms misperception, based on group comparisons, before and after the US Presidential Election 2020. In a two-wave panel study, we surveyed Democrat and Republican Party supporters on social norms misperception – operationalised as false consensus and pluralistic ignorance, as well as on collective empowerment and xenophobic behavioural

intentions. We sought to shed light on the impact an (unexpected) electoral outcome could have on the aforementioned variables. A particular focus was on Republican Party supporters in the event of an electoral win for their party. Furthermore, we aimed to explore the moderating role of collective narcissism in this case (see Figure 2).

Hypotheses H1 and H2 sought to strengthen our argument made in the pilot study, namely that we would find an FC effect for xenophobic statements when comparing Republicans and Democrats supporters and a mismatch between own and perceived comfort with violence (PI) in Democrats (but not Republicans). While the occurrence of false consensus effects within groups was inconsistent, we successfully replicated previous findings, namely that the *difference* in perception of public approval between Democrats and Republicans was significant and skewed towards stronger agreement perception amongst Republicans (H1). We also successfully replicated the occurrence of a mismatch between own and perceived social norms amongst Democrats, with no such mismatches found amongst Republicans (H2). Finally, we found partial support for the notion that an unexpected election outcome would lead to either an empowering or disempowering effect, depending on whether one's party won or lost the election (H5).

However, we could not find support for our main hypothesis, namely that electoral processes would have a significant impact on agreement/ disagreement estimation amongst Republicans (H3). Instead, these plateaued with a slight trend towards decreased agreement perception amongst Republicans after the election (and increased disagreement perception amongst Democrats) for harsh measures against immigrants and refugees and a slight increase in agreement and disagreement perception amongst both party supporters regarding affirmative action unfairly affecting white people.

We also could not support our hypothesis that perceived comfort with violence in others amongst Democrats (H4) would decrease from before to after the election (in case of a Democrat victory). Furthermore, although we witnessed a decrease in petition signing intention amongst those Republicans that initially indicated to do so (H6), overall, we recorded an increase in the total number after the election. The overall conceptual model (Figure 2) and H7 and H7a were designed to explain the effects of an (unexpected vs expected) electoral victory for the Republican Party. Since the Republicans did not win the election, exploring this model as we intended to was not possible. Instead, we observed that Republicans expressed collective narcissism to a significantly greater extent than Democrats, which is in line with previous research (Federico & Golec de Zavala, 2018) and our pilot study. Subsequently, we found that amongst Republicans, collective narcissism and joy at success predicted petition signing (however, marginally), while all remaining regressions were found to be non-significant. Finally, xenophobia was much lower than expected, so we could not investigate a subgroup of highly xenophobic individuals.

3.9.1 Social norms misperception and group membership

Although we witnessed a low level of xenophobia in our sample, we found high approval for the xenophobic statements amongst Republicans. Interestingly, those showing sympathy for the notion that whites were unfairly affected by affirmative action (and for harsh treatment of immigrants and refugees, though to a weaker extent) also expected over 60% of the US population to agree with them in this regard which equals to around 200M people. That (shockingly high) number does not come unexpectedly since participants in the pilot study that were in favour of harsh measures against immigrants and refugees in the UK also expected 64% of the British population (around 43M people) to agree with them.

We outlined earlier that we should consider that racism is characterised by a combination of prejudice and power. People do not automatically express their prejudices but look for signals around them, for instance, for social norms – a process, as we explained, that is influenced by the perception of how people’s surrounding might think (Elcheroth et al., 2011; Neville & Reicher, 2011). This, we argued, is particularly guided by social psychological processes such as belonging to a group that connects individuals that share the same preferences and values, thus the same social identity (e.g., Bliuc et al., 2019, 2020; McGarty et al., 2011). We, furthermore, argued that perceiving xenophobic norms as widely supported (or not), might be particularly affected by events that reinforce one’s own and the group’s values. While in the UK the case was clear (the Conservative Party officially won the General Election 2019), in the US, this was somewhat ambiguous: Against psephological predictions, the gap in votes for Biden and Trump on election day was relatively small. Absentee votes were counted in some states over weeks after election day, which was used by Trump to claim that an electoral win had been stolen from him. This not just sparked pro-Trump street protests and violence (e.g., nationwide riots to “stop the steal”, leading up to a peak in the storm of the Capitol on January 6; e.g., Barry & Frenkel, 2021) but we suggest that this may have also influenced participants’ perception of the political landscape, and more importantly, of public opinion – after all, around 74M voters supported Trump. Thus, the current study examining the US context, although somewhat unclear, replicates the dynamics seen in our pilot study.

This is further reinforced by the (replicated) findings that Democrat supporters rated “the average American” to be more approving of violent behaviour than themselves (observed as a general phenomenon since even those that were optimistic about a Democrat victory perceived “the average American” to be more comfortable

with violence than themselves (see Appendix 2.9). This was in contrast to Republicans, for whom we did not find such effects, and who were consistently more comfortable with violent behaviour. Again, this was a pattern comparable to what we found in the pilot study in which Labour Party supporters saw “the average British person” to be more comfortable with violent behaviour than themselves, while we only witnessed this amongst Conservatives in two out of four cases. Thus, we have not only successfully replicated the findings from our pilot study and found robust patterns for social norms misperception – false consensus and pluralistic ignorance, across two countries and four groups of party supporters, but we have also contributed to understanding social norms misperception as associated with and different across group membership.

3.9.2 Change in social norms misperception and unexpectedness of the outcome

Nonetheless, we need to respond to the fact that neither social norms misperception changed from before to after the election in our study. This, at first sight, seems to contradict previous research establishing social norms as malleable and prone to influence (Bursztyn et al., 2017; Crandall et al., 2018; Portelinho & Elcheroth, 2016). Thus, the question arises whether the observed null effects in the current study occurred despite or perhaps because of the ambiguity of the outcome. Several factors could underlie this: First, the impact of previous studies was established in the context of investigating the consequences of the 2016 election, which had introduced a significant novelty to the political landscape. In contrast, at the time of data collection for this study, Trump had already been president for four years as the 2020 Presidential election happened. This could explain why social norms misperception rather plateaued. Second, the tight gap between Biden and Trump after election day allowed Republicans to construct the notion that a victory had been “stolen” from them and to ignite retaliatory action. This, most likely, affected Republicans’ as well as Democrats’ perceptions of

social norms in the way that the immediate situation was not dissimilar to before election day. Both factors complement the notion that social norms misperception is associated with group membership (see above); a group persistently exposed to the reinforcement of its values (here, xenophobia) might express these more solidly over time and relatively unaffected by external factors such as an election. A leader constructing the situation in the ingroup's favour might keep this perception further alive. Thus, the situation after the 2020 US Presidential election might have been different than after the 2016 US Presidential election, which officially introduced Trumpism for the first time.

3.9.3 Change in empowerment and unexpectedness of the outcome

Novelty (either in one's favour or against one's expectations) also plays a vital role in empowerment processes and disempowerment, respectively (Drury & Reicher, 2005). Our model had initially been formulated to test the effects of an unexpected *victory*. Here we must not forget that, in the current study, those Republicans to whom the election outcome (i.e., the fact that their party was confronted with potential defeat) came unexpectedly had initially expected their party to win. In contrast to social norms misperceptions, we observed that these supporters showed a significant drop in empowerment, which is important considering that joy at success (as part of the empowerment experience) predicted the hostile behaviour proxy.

3.9.4 The role of collective narcissism

Another aim of our study was to test the role of collective narcissism as a moderator of the effect an unexpected (vs expected) outcome and agreement estimation may have on behavioural intentions. While we believed the overall framework to translate well to empowerment processes amongst hate crime perpetrators, we proposed narrowing the moderator to a defensive form of ingroup identity and suggested that

collective narcissism might serve as such identity content. However, due to the defeat of the Republican Party, we could not test this, and it remains somewhat unanswered whether collective narcissism would qualify as a moderator on agreement perception (also due to lacking predictive influence on elaborated agreement estimation – in line with the “true false consensus effect” – in the current study). Thus, a situation which meets our model’s assumptions (i.e., electoral victory) might, therefore, aid in establishing a more precise answer. However, the fact that we found collective narcissism to predict joy at success (as part of the empowerment experience) and the decision as to whether to sign a petition reflecting a “white victim” narrative corresponds to the denial of structural inequalities and justifications of xenophobic violence as “self-defence” (Jetten, 2019; J. Rhodes, 2010). We believe this is also in line with what Armaly and Enders (2021) refer to as “self-defined egocentric victimhood”. This, the researchers found, justified claiming deserved but withheld attention and, more importantly, superiority and was also established to relate to collective narcissism.

3.10 Limitations

We acknowledge the arbitrariness of studying “real-world” phenomena as they happen. This refers particularly to the time the data for the second wave was collected. As mentioned above, we think that the ambiguity of the election outcome at the time we collected the data and claims of electoral fraud could have influenced participants’ perceptions. Integrating measures in our survey that assess participants’ interpretation of victory (and defeat) could have aided in avoiding ambiguity. The election outcome also prevented us from conducting the analysis that could have revealed the consequences of social norms misperception and empowerment more clearly. The current study further lacked some statistical power (see Appendix 2.2), which was particularly evident in the

small number of participants i) that indicated to sign the petition (and subsequently qualified as potentially expressing public and financial support for the petition), and ii) to whom a Democrats victory came unexpectedly. This has limited our ability to conduct meaningful analyses and restricted conclusive statements. Finally, we cannot assert causality since our study is correlational. However, this also means that the null effects we observed could be due to the reasons outlined above rather than an actual missing impact of socio-political events. This study should, therefore, not be taken as counterevidence of the effect of such events on public perceptions.

3.11 Practical implications

Perceived illegitimacy can lead to anger which in turn can motivate collective action (Drury & Reicher, 2005; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; van Zomeren et al., 2008), Trump's rhetoric of betrayal, fraud, and a stolen election, therefore not surprisingly, fuelled retaliatory street action amongst angry Trump supporters including extreme right-wing groups as a response (e.g., Baird & Sacks, 2020; Barry & Frenkel, 2021). Our study contributes to understanding social norms as anchored in group membership and manifested over time. Therefore, Republicans need to acknowledge Biden's victory in the US Presidential Election 2020 since the perception of "defeat" and "majority agreement" might be skewed by group membership. We further recommend that Trump's defeat must be widely and actively promoted by public figures that can cross group boundaries. Our results further showed that the experience of defeat was associated with the experience of disempowerment. Considering that elements of this experience (joy at success) were predictive of proxies of hostile behaviour, ambiguity and defeat may contribute to containing such behavioural intentions.

3.12 Future studies

As mentioned, our model was intended to test the effects of an unexpected right-wing victory. Situations for which it was initially formulated can provide a better test of its usefulness. Similar studies conducted later could address the differences between the (non-)impact of the election on social norms, misperception and empowerment. This may also answer whether the differences between voter groups are still as significant. We think future studies might do well examining the enactment of identity of Trump supporters that could have arisen from these differences.

3.10 Conclusion

Our study set out to extend previous research on social norms perception in the context of events of socio-political importance. We measured social norms misperception amongst Democrats and Republicans before and after the 2020 US presidential election. We were particularly interested in change in the beforementioned, as well as in empowerment and xenophobic behaviour. While we could not establish significant effects of the election on social norms misperception, and behaviour, we did find that it affected the experience of empowerment. We believe that our results are not in contrast to previous research but rather show the consequences of group membership and xenophobic rhetoric over time (of a presidency).

Chapter 4 – Study 2: “The role of subjective power dynamics in far-right collective action: The ‘Unite the Right’ rally and the Capitol insurrection”

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(Hoerst & Drury, 2023)

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4.1 Abstract

Far-right collective action has previously been explained in terms of collective grievances. However, this does not adequately explain mobilisations after ingroup-relevant successes. Based on the broader collective action literature, we suggest that analysing experiences of subjective power before and during collective action may significantly complement existing explanations of far-right mobilisations. We used secondary data (predominantly videos from YouTube and ProPublica) from the 2017 Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally and the 2021 Washington Capitol insurrection to qualitatively examine the extent to which attendees reported experiencing collective psychological empowerment alongside perceiving collective grievances. The events were connected by the effort to unify the far-right yet shaped by different immediate contexts. We find that at Charlottesville, attendees arrived already feeling empowered and gained further empowerment from the rally itself. While the Capitol insurrection seemed to be driven by collective grievances, there were some indicators of empowerment experiences mainly deriving from the event itself. Our analysis has implications for disempowering far-right collective action.

Keywords: Collective action, election, collective empowerment, collective grievances, thematic analysis, Parler, YouTube, Charlottesville Unite the Right, Capitol insurrection, far-right

4.2 Introduction

In recent years, the far-right has repeatedly been referred to as “emboldened” (e.g., Foran, 2017; Posner & Neiwert, 2016b; Potok, 2017), evident in increased (violent) street mobilisations. Several accounts point toward the unexpected victory of Donald Trump in the US 2016 presidential election as one source of such emboldenment (e.g., Edwards & Rushin, 2018; Giani & Méon, 2021). Here, we approach this phenomenon empirically by addressing the question of whether and to what extent *collective psychological empowerment* – a concept derived from collective action research – can help explain far-right mobilisation in the context of Trump’s presidency.

Commonly, collective action scholars emphasise the predictive role of perceived collective grievances (e.g., group-based injustices) and related anger in (right-wing) collective action (e.g., J. C. Becker et al., 2011; J. C. Becker & Tausch, 2015; Louis et al., 2007; Outten et al., 2018; Shepherd et al., 2018; van Zomeren et al., 2004, 2008). However, Trump’s electoral victory constituted a reason for celebration among the far right (Piggott, 2016). Yet far-right mobilisations increased in the period following his successful election (e.g., Miller & Graves, 2020). To explain this, we qualitatively investigated video material from the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally (2017) and the Washington Capitol insurrection (2021) for the occurrence of distal (i.e. deriving from the election result) and proximal (i.e., deriving from the event itself) empowerment experiences (Drury & Reicher, 1999, 2000, 2005, 2009) among attendees *alongside* perceptions of collective grievances.

4.2.1 Predictors of (far-right) collective action

We treat far-right extremism (to which we count corresponding mobilisations) as a social movement (Klandermans & Mayer, 2006). This allowed us to apply

frameworks from collective action research. These have established three overarching integrative and predictive factors: Identity (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987; Turner & Reynolds, 2012; van Zomeren et al., 2008), collective grievances (e.g., J. C. Becker et al., 2011; Mackie et al., 2000; Runciman, 1966; J. H. Smith et al., 2011; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; van Zomeren et al., 2008; Wright et al., 1990), and group efficacy (e.g., Bandura, 1997; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; van Zomeren et al., 2004, 2008, 2012).

In line with the social identity approach (Tajfel, 2010; Turner et al., 1987), identification with the relevant group mobilises people on the group's behalf (e.g., van Zomeren et al., 2008; Wright et al., 1990), particularly if the collective identity is politicised (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). This equally applies to far-right extremism (Klandermans & Mayer, 2006). The reason why identification enhances mobilisation is that it informs about where a group is positioned in the social world. Societal relations perceived as illegitimate and unstable can legitimise action-taking because awareness of a disadvantaged position can invoke collective grievances (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; van Zomeren et al., 2004; Wright et al., 1990). However, it is the resultant group-based anger that leads individuals to take to the streets (Mackie et al., 2000; van Zomeren et al., 2004, 2008).

Crucially, in line with relative deprivation theory (Runciman, 1966; J. H. Smith et al., 2011), those that are not objectively disadvantaged can nonetheless *feel* disadvantaged. When examining far-right extremists across Western Europe, Klandermans and Meyer (2006) observed that “[extremists] perceived or suspect illegitimate equality between the indigenous and alien minorities [...] and construe this condition as a shared grievance for themselves” (p. 246). Thus, the far-right's collective identity needs to be oriented towards a social reality that portrays the ingroup as the “real”

victim (e.g., Noor et al., 2017; Reicher & Ulusahin, 2020). Consequently, mobilising against an alleged threat becomes a necessary and virtuous duty (Reicher et al., 2008). Using the Capitol insurrection as an example, Haslam et al. (2022) showed that this was an interdependent cycle between leader and followers.

However, to engage in collective action, a group also needs to perceive that it *can* act. Group efficacy describes the belief that one's group can solve a problem (cf. Bandura, 1997). It has been shown conceptually and empirically to predict collective action intentions (e.g., Simon & Klandermans, 2001; van Zomeren et al., 2008, 2012) and is understood as a goal-specific element of the power beliefs of actors (in contrast to empowerment, which describes a broader experience among people in some collective action, as we will discuss below). In the context of far-right extremism, paralleling findings from collective action research, Klandermans and Meyer (2006) established three factors that motivated action-taking: Identity (see above "identification with the relevant group"), ideology (i.e., a way of meaning-making and expressing one's views), and instrumentality as the belief that one can change a specific environment.

4.2.2 Dynamics in (far-right) collective action

While what we have discussed so far illustrates how (distal) collective grievances can mobilise action-taking, (proximal) perceptions occurring *during* ongoing crowd conflict can legitimise actions too. Examining intergroup contexts involving (riot) police, scholars (e.g., Drury & Reicher, 1999; Stott & Drury, 2000) showed how outgroup action (e.g., police treatment) can foster the acceptance of violent means among protesters (and non-participants; Saavedra & Drury, 2019). By treating (initial) "moderate" protesters with illegitimate force during a protest, the outgroup can legitimise action-taking based on self-defence or retaliation. The elaborated social identity model (ESIM; e.g., Drury & Reicher, 1999, 2000; Reicher, 1984, 1996) of

crowd behaviour describes this temporal process by which protesters' identity and perception of power relations can be transformed as a function of outgroup treatment.

Collective empowerment. Central to ESIM is the transformative power shift among participants, evident in participants' understanding of themselves as being able to (at least temporarily) change societal structures which are perceived as unstable and vulnerable (Drury & Reicher, 2009). The ESIM empowerment model discusses collective empowerment on the one hand as a process and on the other as an experience. As a process, the basis of empowerment is a shared social identity among protesters. In conflictual crowd events, this can arise from (perceived) common fate, for example, from being treated indiscriminately by police who have the power to enact this discrimination on protesters. If participants perceive unity among protesters, values, norms, and goals can align and result in a perceived consensus, and so in expectations of support from fellow protesters for ingroup-normative action. While success deriving from such action can be a moral one, the experience of empowerment requires (unexpected and/ or extraordinary) material success, i.e., success that realises the collective identity over a relevant outgroup (Drury & Reicher, 2005). Conceptualised as "collective self-objectification" (CSO), any achievement in line with the social identity would be experienced as such empowering success. For example, if an anti-racism counterprotest led a far-right movement to abandon their march, the result is identity-relevant (i.e., fighting back against the far-right) and identity-realising for the counter-protesters (i.e., actually preventing the march).

While empowerment can be described as a process, it is also a lived experience. We previously discussed the role of group efficacy in collective action. Collective empowerment involves the cognition about efficacy but embeds it in a broader experience marked by positive emotions (e.g., joy and excitement), which results from

the transformation of intergroup and power relations (cf. societal instability; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and thus from the transformation of the self. Elsewhere (e.g., Tausch & Becker, 2013; van Zomeren, 2021), positive emotions (e.g., pride) have been shown to increase the likelihood of engaging in future collective action. Thus, empowerment can be the consequence of collective action but also inspire the uptake of future action.

We suggest that the ESIM empowerment model is useful to understand far-right crowd empowerment (i.e., empowerment arising from ongoing intergroup conflicts), as well as to investigate the psychological dynamics that underlie an "emboldened" far-right after an election victory (i.e., empowerment distally derived from an election outcome). This phenomenon will be discussed in the next section.

4.3 The current study

The “emboldened far-right thesis” is a claim about empowerment processes among the far-right after Donald Trump’s victory in the 2016 US presidential election (e.g., Foran, 2017; Posner & Neiwert, 2016b; Potok, 2017). It suggests that empowerment can arise from an election result as an indicator of public opinion. If the thesis is correct, according to the ESIM empowerment model, the sudden change in existing relations may be interpreted among the far-right as an indicator of a “wider public” now sharing and supporting their values and goals, and actions (e.g., Crandall et al., 2018; Portelinha & Elchereth, 2016; Syfers et al., 2022). The phenomenon is yet to be examined empirically as a factor in far-right mobilisation. The current study aimed to close this gap by explaining the underlying psychological dynamics of an emboldened far-right in electoral contexts. We examined two far-right events that stood out regarding efforts, attendance, and extent of unification: The Charlottesville, Virginia “Unite the Right” rally (August 11-12th, 2017) and the Capitol insurrection, Washington, D.C. (January 6th, 2021).

The Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally attracted an estimated 500-1,500 people and assembled an until then unprecedented number of hate groups and sympathisers. The official aim was to protest the Charlottesville City Council’s plans to remove a Confederate statue. Pictures from the first night gained considerable international attention showing attendees marching with Tikki torches while openly shouting anti-Semitic and nationalist slogans used in Nazi Germany. The march ended with attendees encircling and threatening counter-protesters. Police forces under-responded in intervening and separating the two groups throughout the rally (Maguire et al., 2020; A. C. Thompson, 2017). The permission for the rally was revoked the next day after the City Council judged the threat of repeated violence as too severe. Shortly after that, a rally attendee deliberately drove his car into a crowd of counter-protesters, injuring many and killing one of them.

Although after the “Unite the Right” rally, the movement had initially fractured, three years later, some of the same actors and groups that had previously attended and organised the rally made another attempt to unify the far-right (Hughes & Miller-Idriss, 2021). On January 6, 2021, Trump supporters attended the departing president’s speech in Washington D.C. in which Trump urged his supporters to stop the certification of Joe Biden’s victory in the US 2020 election after he claimed that the election victory was “stolen” due to voter fraud. A proportion of Trump supporters and a variety of different hate groups (Program on Extremism, 2021) forcibly entered the Capitol building. Eventually, Capitol police were able to take back control and clear the area. During the insurrection, five people died (four of them rioters), and several police officers were injured or suffered from racial abuse (Felton, 2021).

Located at opposite ends of Trump's presidency, we suggested that these events may provide fertile ground for answering our research question of whether and to what extent the experience of empowerment contributes to far-right collective action alongside the perception of collective grievances and why collective action can take place in the context of success as well as injustice. Indicators of empowerment would comprise beliefs and experiences in line with the ESIM empowerment model (Drury & Reicher, 2005, 2009), i.e., unity, consensus, perceived support, success that is identity-realising (CSO), group efficacy, perceived societal instability, and positive emotions such as joy, excitement, as well as pride (J. C. Becker et al., 2011; Tausch & Becker, 2013; van Zomeren, 2021). Given that the "Unite the Right" rally and Capitol insurrection were crowd events, we expected to find proximal experiences of empowerment. However, since we understand the "Unite the Right" rally as an event that followed an identity-affirmative election result (i.e., ingroup-relevant success), we also expected that the data would reveal evidence of distal experiences of the above. In comparison with the rally, we expected to find more evidence for grievances at the Capitol insurrection, considering that the event took place in the light of (political) loss (i.e., ingroup-relevant defeat). Indicators of such would include perceptions and experiences of group-based injustices (e.g., illegitimacies, threats, victimhood) as well as related anger. However, we also investigated whether there, too, were experiences of empowerment, given the possibility that participants may have seen aspects of the event as successful (e.g., managing to enter the Capitol Building).

4.3.1 Studying (far-right) collective action

Researchers previously examining collective empowerment engaged in ethnography or interviews with protesters (e.g., Drury & Reicher, 1999; Stott & Drury, 2000). The compatibility between the researchers' and the protest(er)s' identity allowed

for direct and open engagement (Drury & Stott, 2011). However, investigating far-right collective action (as left-wing-oriented researchers) posed challenges to us regarding target group accessibility, our safety, and ethics. We, therefore, decided to undertake a thematic analysis of secondary data featuring “interview-like” material. This predominantly encompassed videos from YouTube and ProPublica. The latter is an investigative journalism platform which published over 500 videos from Parler (Groeger et al., 2021), the social media platform that played a crucial role in organising the Capitol insurrection (e.g., Munn, 2021).

4.3.2 Search strategy and sources

We used YouTube and ProPublica to collect data. The first author created a new account on the former to minimise the influence of previous search history on video suggestions. We also used Google and considered the Television and Radio Index for Learning and Teaching (TRILT) as an additional source. Our inclusion criteria comprised exhaustive search strings to gather data. We conducted non-probability sampling since we collected data from pre-selected events. We first used YouTube and Google search interchangeably by adding the feature “site:YouTube.com” to the string “Charlottesville (OR Charlottesville rally) + interview + attend*” (August 2017 – July 2018) and to our Google entry. We followed the same procedures in the Capitol case using the string “Capitol (OR Capitol riot) + interview + attend*” (January 2021 – June 2021) and searched for relevant videos on ProPublica. To cross-check this search, we used the same strings on YouTube, followed by looking up people directly that were either known as attending the events or that were found to potentially provide valuable insights regardless of their attendance (e.g., hate group leaders, formers, on-site journalists etc.). We also considered “suggested” and “related videos”.

4.3.3 Search results

Due to de-platforming efforts undertaken by platform providers and our requirement to collect interview-like material, our dataset was determined by availability (cf. Braun & Clarke, 2021a). Thus, while the number of items returning from the queries was substantial, many were unsuitable for our investigation. In total, we found 33 items (predominantly video clips) for the Charlottesville case and 66 items for the Capitol case that were judged as both suitable and potentially relevant. These items were then subject to subsequent reviews (see “Analytic procedure”). The items varied within and between the two events in number (i.e., 33 vs 66), length (from seconds to minutes-long recordings), and content (from naturally occurring interactions, interviews, to crowd footage). The final datasets contained data from “primary research subjects” – internally defined as members or sympathisers of a hate group and/ or rally attendees –, “experts” – defined as not being a direct member or sympathiser of a hate group but able to provide insider accounts – and “crowd footage”. In the case of the Charlottesville dataset, we analysed 69 excerpts ($M_{\text{words/ excerpt}} = 46.35$), covering 16 primary research subjects (including one crowd footage) and five experts. The latter included testimony from an on-site counter-protester, an on-site journalist, a conservative political commentator, and two former neo-Nazis (the latter three did not attend the rally). The final dataset for the Capitol case contained 72 excerpts ($M_{\text{words/ excerpt}} = 25.88$) covering 44⁴⁵ primary research subjects.

4.3.4 Analytic procedure

While collecting potentially relevant material, we assigned each item to “Charlottesville rally 2017” or “Capitol insurrection 2021”. In line with procedures

⁴⁵ We found three written items for which we cannot say whether the authors were already considered in our primary research subjects or not, as the items were not attributed. We, therefore, did not increase the number of subjects.

from video analysis (cf. Heath et al., 2010), we engaged in a preliminary review in which determined sub-categories per case, i.e., “primary research subjects”, “experts”, and “crowd footage” – from now on collectively referred to as “research subjects” – to which we assigned each item. Because an item could contain statements from several research subjects, it could be assigned to more than one sub-category. While a small minority of data was already textual, where the item was a video (which was predominantly the case), we conducted substantive reviews by determining specific fragments featuring the previously established research subject⁴⁶. Finally, we decided which fragments were most relevant and transcribed these. We first read through all fragments and highlighted interesting parts, which could range from a half-sentence to an entire paragraph. The relevant information contained in fragments was treated as an “excerpt” and was copied and clustered according to our research question into separate documents (commentaries) to analyse them in the context of the rallies.

Generally, we treated the utterances as accounts of experiences, i.e., what research subjects said they perceived and experienced was understood as actually perceived and experienced. Thus, in some utterances, people reported their experiences. In other utterances, however, they were much more obviously seeking to mobilise others (sometimes strategically, cf. Durrheim, 2020; Haslam et al., 2020; Klein et al., 2007; Postmes & Smith, 2009; Reicher, 2012; Reicher et al., 2008). We, therefore, suggest that the method we applied can be best understood as “contextualist” or “critical realist” (cf. Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013). For the coding, we used a codebook thematic analysis (TA) inspired by (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021b) with codes that we expected to find in the data. Our codebook (see Appendix 3.2 and 3.3; also available on OSF:

⁴⁶ We could not always establish a person’s name – for example, when the identity was unknown. Therefore, the categories “unknown identity” or “identity kept anonymously” – sometimes replaced a specific name.

https://osf.io/4evqm/?view_only=85e1df15248842589f71a96c89b8a573) contained definitions and examples of the individual elements discussed in the context of empowerment and collective grievances concepts (see sections “Predictors of (far-right) collective action” and “Dynamics in (far-right) collective action”). Our analysis featured some inductive coding. Codes identified through inductive coding (e.g., “feeling outnumbered”, “feeling robbed”) were merged to eventually form a broader subordinate theme. However, deductive coding dominated the analysis, which meant that we applied the pre-determined codes from our codebook (e.g., “consensus”) to our data. Thus, empowerment and collective grievances served as superordinate themes and the individual elements of “empowerment” and “collective grievances” (i.e., “consensus”, “anger”, etc.) were the subordinated themes. While it could be that in one excerpt, we would identify more than one subordinate theme, we did not use overlapping parts of the same excerpt to identify two themes. In other words, one text passage (which could be a whole paragraph or half a sentence) was only used for one subordinate theme at the time. The initial coding was conducted by the first author. To ensure the stability of coding, this was a repeated process (e.g., Curtis & Curtis, 2011) and was cross-checked by the second author. We decided together whether the content was understood in the same way and whether the label (i.e., subordinate theme) was most suitable.

This study was approved by the University of Sussex Sciences & Technology C-REC committee, certificate no. [ER/CH527/10] (see Appendix 3.1, Figure App. 3.1: 1). Ethical clearance was contingent on not publishing direct citations of anyone who at the time was not aware of being recorded and/ or could not foresee that their data (e.g., a video) would be made public (cf. The National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH), 2019). In practice, this meant that we here only cite research subjects that either gave a public interview, spoke to a journalist, and/

or spoke to a journalist's camera. We made exceptions where the research subject was a public figure (Fuchs, 2018; The University of Sheffield, n.d.; Townsend & Wallace, 2016). Where individuals were not aware of being recorded or could not foresee that their data would be published, we paraphrase the statements (cf. Hewson et al., 2021).

4.4 Analysis

The focus of the analysis was to explore the occurrence of perceived proximal and distal empowerment as a motivator for collective action at two far-right events alongside the perception of collective grievances. Table 4 provides an overview of themes. The analysis is structured to discuss these by the event. We will first discuss the "Unite the Right" rally and then the Capitol insurrection. Presented excerpts were either the most representative of the corpus or the ones we were allowed to present here (see "ethical approval").

Table 4

Overview of superordinate themes and subordinate themes by event

Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme
<i>"Unite the Right" rally</i>	
Collective grievances	Group-based injustice (<i>N</i> = 11) Anger (<i>N</i> = 1)
Empowerment	Distal perceived instability (<i>N</i> = 2) Proximal group efficacy (<i>N</i> = 3) Proximal excitement and pride (<i>N</i> = 8) Proximal perceived unity (<i>N</i> = 3) Distal perceived consensus (<i>N</i> = 1) Distal and proximal perceived support (<i>N</i> = 9) Proximal perceived success (identity-realising/ CSO) (<i>N</i> = 9)

<i>Capitol Insurrection</i>	
Collective grievances	Group-based injustice ($N = 29$) Anger ($N = 4$)
Empowerment	Proximal excitement and pride ($N = 8$) Distal perceived consensus ($N = 3$) Proximal perceived support ($N = 3$)

Note. “Unite the Right” rally: $N_{\text{total}} = 21$; Capitol Insurrection: $N_{\text{total}} = 44$

4.4.1 Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally

Collective grievances.

Group-based injustice. Accounts from eleven research subjects showed a victim identity in the form of group-based injustice both before and during the rally. Speakers said they perceived their (white) ingroup as threatened to be outnumbered and “replaced” due to immigration and globalisation, as controlled by “*the Jews*” or as discriminated against for being white. Linked to this, we found that at the rally, research subjects felt suppressed in their views or unfairly treated. Consequently, research subjects expressed a demand for an “*ethnostate*” and a “*white homeland*”. One explained that they saw this demand as neglected by mainstream politics, which motivated their attendance at the rally:

1: “My reason for going down to Charlottesville over the weekend was to demonstrate. It was to show solidarity for a cause which has not been talked about in the mainstream media, which the American people never got to vote on – and that is the fundamental transformation of the composition of our country.” [Research subject 8]

Thus, we found that research subjects’ victim identity was not just present before and during the rally but also seemed to motivate participation.

Anger. Our dataset did not include direct quotes from “primary research subjects” (see “Search results”) expressing anger motivating the rally. However, a counter-protester (research subject 13) who was among the crowd that was encircled by rally attendees after the Tikki torch march made crucial observations of angry behaviour:

2: You could feel how angry they were, but also how happy they were. You know to be doing this to, to be intimidating people like this and this happy rage [...] They were cheering. They were running through the streets, yelling at people and they walked away, and they got away with it. They're coming in here the next day, ready to do more. [Research subject 13]

Importantly, their comment also draws attention to widespread excitement – that is, evidence of empowerment – existing alongside this anger.

Empowerment.

Distal perceived instability. Two research subjects stated that Trump’s electoral victory would allow for an alternative world in which they could realise their “*ideas*” (i.e., values and goals). The then-leader of the hate group Traditionalist Worker Party and rally attendee Matthew Heimbach explained that Trump had “*opened up a door*”, and it was now time for the movement to go through. This was echoed by Richard Spencer (self-proclaimed leader of the alt-right movement), who perceived societal relations as changing in favour of the alt-right:

3: “I would never say that “Richard Spencer has through rational argumentation convinced millions of Americans to vote for Donald Trump” or “created the Alt-right through rational... I've, I've convinced each and every person” I am riding a wave, too. We’re all riding a wave. This is social change that we're experiencing, and it is collective. And we feel it. I want to get these ideas out in the world.” [Richard Spencer]

Although this extract seems to indicate excitement on the part of the speaker, we suggest it predominantly illustrates the unique experience of “social change” in favour of the ingroup (which may be associated with excitement).

Proximal group efficacy. During the rally, three research subjects – among them Heimbach – reported perceiving their group as being able to achieve its aims:

4: “The radical left just understood, if the nationalist community can come together, stand together, and fight together, that we are going to be unstoppable.” [Matthew Heimbach]

The extract also illustrates how this sense of group efficacy was established in relation to their opponents (“*the radical left*”). Since the “Unite the Right” rally was accompanied by recurring violent clashes between rally attendees and counter-protesters, with a police force widely understood as standing by rather than intervening (e.g., A. C. Thompson, 2017), being “*unstoppable*” may also refer to external weaknesses to literally stop attendees. Since this could also have contributed to a perception of instability, it is not surprising that this elicited some excitement.

Proximal excitement and pride. Eight research subjects appeared to feel excited about the rally. Research subjects explained that they joined it to “*have fun*” (research subject 17) or to be “*loud and proud*” (research subject 18). Interestingly, research subject 13 (see “Anger”) observed the protesters to be in a “*happy rage*”. We suggest that this indicated a sense of excitement among protesters deriving from imposing themselves on the counter-protesters, also expressed in references to group size (see “Distal and proximal perceived support”).

Proximal perceived unity. Divisions between hate groups due to disagreements and different ideologies are not uncommon (cf. Hughes & Miller-Idriss, 2021). Thus, an event such as the rally aiming to “unite” is significant. One activity that was viewed as helping the rally’s objective was the Tikki torch march, at which rally attendees

collectively chanted anti-Semitic slurs (“*Jews will not replace us*”) and Nazi-Germany slogans (“*Blood and soil*”):

5: “For instance, last night at the torch walk, there were hundreds and hundreds of us. People realize they're not atomized individuals; they are part of a larger whole.” [Robert Ray, writer for the Daily Stormer and rally attendee]

The speaker’s sense of unity is evidenced by the reference to being “*part of a larger whole*”: People were no longer seen as scattered (“*atomized*”) but as an entity.

Distal perceived consensus. Heimbach stated before the rally that he perceived a “*majority*” to approve of his group’s values. In the months leading up to the rally, he argued that Trump spoke for the “*white working class*”, “*middle America*”, and “*everyday Americans*”:

6: “[Donald Trump] has shown us that the majority of everyday Americans support our sort of message.” [Matthew Heimbach]

Importantly, the reference to Trump and majority categories creates a link between the election outcome and an understanding of consensus among a broader reference group (“white Americans”) for far-right values and aims.

Distal and proximal perceived support. Four research subjects said they felt the white supremacy movement was growing and becoming explicit because President Trump was viewed as supporting its members. Although these accounts came from “experts” (see “Analytic Procedure”), research subjects 15 and 16 were both former neo-Nazis, and their statements, therefore, provide unique insider judgements:

7. “I think that the movement now is much, much bigger than it is, because it has become normalized. It’s infected the average American, who normally, you know, would only say things like that behind closed doors or to people that they trusted, now feel very emboldened because of the words and the actions and the policies of the president, that they feel they have a commander-in-chief who gets them, who understands their ideology and is willing to stand up for them and fight for them.” [Research subject 15]

Previous research on empowerment (Drury et al., 2005) found that references to “numbers” in the context of crowd events (i.e., group size, turnout etc.) were associated with confidence and expectation of support. Among far-right rallies in the US, Charlottesville was one of the biggest. We found similar references among four research subjects, for example, in the form of references to high turnout (“*We outnumber you! We outnumber you!*”, research subject 21) and numerical superiority over counter-protesters (see “Proximal excitement and pride”).

Proximal perceived identity-realising success (CSO). References to numbers were also made in the context of describing the growth of the movement as a success:

8. “[...] just even going back since I’ve been involved in this movement, it used to be a rally of 50 guys was very successful. Now rallying 1015 hundred people on the streets. Our movement is growing [...].”
[Matthew Heimbach]

Heimbach further expressed understanding the event as a “*stunning victory*” that had “*achieved all of [their] objectives*”. Since the official objective was to “unite the right”, the success conveyed here is identity-relevant and, therefore, possibly empowering. However, the rally also featured violence against opponents. Christopher Cantwell (co-organiser of the rally) described the success of the rally as moral rather than material:

9: “We knew that we were going to meet a lot of resistance, ehm the fact that nobody on our side died, I, I’d go ahead and call that points for us. The fact that none of our people killed anybody unjustly, I think is a plus for us and I think that we showed eh we showed our rivals that we won’t be cowed.” [Christopher Cantwell]

Nonetheless, the extract incorporates the perception of having shown to the “*rivals*” (i.e., outgroup) that the ingroup was courageous and would not withdraw. Relatedly, nine research subjects said that they had enacted their collective identity successfully

over the outgroup (i.e., on-site counter-protesters and those allegedly working against the interests of whites).

Overall, research subjects' accounts evidenced experiences of both collective grievances and empowerment (distal and proximal) before and during the rally. However, empowerment (before and during the event) was found to be particularly evident, and there was some evidence that empowerment before the rally may have had some influence on participation in the event.

4.4.2 The Capitol Insurrection

Collective grievances.

Group-based injustice. Twenty-nine research subjects based action-taking on manifestations of group-based injustice (e.g., “*voter fraud*”, “*a stolen country*”, “*corruption*”). Their strong conviction was mirrored in their belief in righteousness since the situation was described as “*wrong*” (research subject 4). Trump’s right-wing populist rhetoric picturing “the American people” as victims was evident in these accounts since all accounts were derived from Americans and were, therefore, self-relevant. Most referred to alleged “*voter fraud*”:

10: “We came to protest because the House and the Senate were going to be voting on getting the Electoral College certified and we thought that they should listen to the voter fraud allegations and do an investigation and look into it.” [Research subject 8]

Other research subjects based their attendance on a perceived lack of institutional support, which left them with “no other choice”. Others expressed that the US government had “betrayed” them. Interestingly, at the beginning of the event, research subjects pictured the “traitors” as politicians who turned against Trump. Throughout the insurrection, the perception of betrayal also included references to Capitol police. This

was presumably due to protesters experiencing resistance from them when trying to enter the building. Some research subjects' accounts indicated a sense of surprise in response to that, evidenced by describing the resistance as an attack on "*their own people*" while protesters were portrayed as having unconditionally supported "*Blue Lives Matter*" (research subject 25). The perceived indiscriminate treatment from Capitol police also led one research subject to compare themselves with the persecuted Jewish community in a famous Second World War movie (research subject 18).

Anger. Four research subjects expressed being angry. Research subject 34 reported seeing anger in others, too, suggesting that it was viewed as shared:

11: Interviewer

"Do you think people are angry today?"

Research subject 34

"Absolutely. People are angry and you can feel it. You can feel the rage, the madness."

Empowerment.

Proximal excitement and pride. Eight research subjects said that they experienced excitement or pride. The sources of excitement were diverse. While some linked the experience to Trump's speech or being in Washington, others drew the connection to "*moving forward*" as a movement and acting together:

12: I'm proud that the Patriots came out today to show their support for our president because he is, Donald Trump is our president. [Research subject 44]

In another case, Enrique Tarrio – the then chairman of the Proud Boys – told a news reporter that he was excited about intimidating the government:

13: I was celebrating, and I'll tell you, I'll celebrate the moment that the government does fear their people. [Enrique Tarrio]

Distal perceived consensus. Three research subjects expressed that they acted on behalf of a broader reference group, and their perception of consensus was connected

to their intention to act upon it. For example, research subject 36, who was marching up Capitol Hill, said to do so on behalf of “*the American people*”, while research subject 18 declared that “*the United States of America*” would not give in to oppression, reflecting their belief that the country had voted for Trump.

Proximal perceived support. Three research subjects referred to high numbers of rally attendees. While experts estimated the crowd at the Capitol insurrection to consist of approximately 10,000 people (Doig, 2021), the estimate made by participants was up to 400 times bigger. As in the previous section on distal perceived consensus, one research subject who referred to numbers and collective anger also referred to their intention to take over the Capitol building:

14: Make no mistake, we have the guns, and we are now in the streets. [...] We are gonna clean this place out, one way or another. You look down there [the Capitol building]. I have 1,000,000 plus people [censored by YouTube] angry, very, very angry people. [Research subject 33]

Overall, we found that at the Capitol insurrection, research subjects reported experiencing some distal empowerment but mainly proximal empowerment through the rally itself. However, the motivation to participate in collective action seemed to be grounded predominantly in the perception of group grievances.

4.5 Discussion

In this study, we have examined the “emboldened far-right thesis”, in which the far-right is understood as “emboldened” by Trump’s electoral victory in 2016 (e.g., Foran, 2017; Posner & Neiwert, 2016b; Potok, 2017). We aimed to show that collective empowerment (Drury & Reicher, 2005, 2009) may aid in explaining the underlying psychological dynamics of this phenomenon alongside common approaches to (far-right) collective action focusing on collective grievances. Further, collective empowerment had previously been examined in the dynamics of crowd events (i.e.,

proximally) and referred to participants' experience of feeling more powerful. Here, we have suggested that it may also operate as a state of confidence resulting from an unexpected election result in favour of the ingroup (i.e., distally). We applied both approaches to data from two US-based far-right crowd events that framed Trump's presidency and that were connected by efforts to unite the far-right, yet that were shaped by opposing immediate contexts: Identity-relevant success following Trump's 2016 election victory (Charlottesville "Unite the Right" rally) vs his defeat in 2020 (the Washington DC Capitol insurrection).

Overall, we found that at Charlottesville, distal and proximal empowerment were predominant, whereby the former seemed to be crucial for the motivation to attend the rally. At the Capitol insurrection, collective grievances seemed to motivate the event; however, there was some evidence of distal and proximal empowerment, too.

4.5.1 Collective grievances at the "Unite the Right" rally vs the Capitol riot

In line with previous research (e.g., J. C. Becker et al., 2011; J. C. Becker & Tausch, 2015; Louis et al., 2007; Outten et al., 2018; Shepherd et al., 2018; van Zomeren et al., 2004, 2008) we found indicators of action-taking based on the perception of collective grievances. Although we had data from more research subjects at the Capitol insurrection than for Charlottesville, we suggest that finding fewer accounts of collective grievances and anger at Charlottesville is meaningful and not necessarily due to the data. The rally happened in August 2017, shortly after Trump had been elected and inaugurated as US president. This had been celebrated by the far-right (Piggott, 2016) due to the nationalist and xenophobic values he had embodied during his campaign. Thus, despite the immediate context of protesting the removal of a Confederate statue, the "Unite the Right" rally took place in an identity-affirmative context. We were, therefore, not surprised to find fewer accounts of grievances among

research subjects. In contrast, the Capitol insurrection was preceded by Trump's right-wing populist narrative that the 2020 election had been "stolen" (Haslam et al., 2022). This narrative seemed to resonate with research subjects since we found accounts of anger and injustice conveying a strong "victim" identity, as well as the conviction that protesting against the alleged steal was the "right thing" to do (cf. Reicher et al., 2008; van Zomeren et al., 2018). The category of "traitors" (i.e., initially only politicians that had turned against Trump) also incorporated Capitol police. Research subjects' accounts showed that this was the result of their surprise at facing unexpected resistance from a group formerly understood as part of the ingroup.

4.5.2 Empowerment at the "Unite the Right" rally vs the Capitol insurrection

We argued that if the "emboldened far-right" hypothesis was correct, far-right views of public opinion would be associated with an enhanced sense of unity, consensus, and expectations of support for ingroup-normative action. Before the "Unite the Right" rally, research subjects expressed that they saw Trump's victory as changing society in favour of the alt-right and that a majority of US society (as well as Trump himself) supported their aims. At the rally itself, research subjects seemed to be excited about attending it. A perception of unity among rally attendees derived from the Tikki torch march at which attendees openly shouted anti-Semitic slurs and Nazi-Germany slogans. Support from fellow protesters was evidenced by references to high numbers present, particularly regarding numerical superiority over on-site counter-protesters. Considering that some of these accounts were found among impactful far-right political figures, the reference to numbers may also have been rhetorical and strategic (Durrheim, 2020; Reicher, 2012; see also: Klein et al., 2007). For example, Matthew Heimbach refers to consensus among "*the [American] white working class*", which is an important ingroup category for the movement since its social identity is constructed through an

understanding of representing a majority. At the rally itself, referring to numbers (e.g., high turnout) may have established the perception of movement potential, i.e., support from (large numbers of) fellow rally attendees for ingroup-normative action (e.g., attacking counter-protesters).

Controlling public spaces has historically been important for far-right actors (Pirrò & Castelli Gattinara, 2018; Reichard, 2007). Previous research on empowerment in collective action has shown that occupying (public) spaces of identity relevance can elicit the feeling of enacting one's group's values (Drury & Reicher, 2005). In line with this, some research subjects experienced the rally as an identity-relevant success, either by achieving its goal or by demonstrating the strength and presence of the ingroup to an outgroup. Despite the decline and fragmentation of the alt-right movement after the "Unite the Right" rally (J. Thompson & Hawley, 2020), we conclude that leading up to the rally and during the rally, research subjects showed indicators of distal empowerment deriving from Trump's electoral victory, and perceived themselves as strong and united against their opponents as a result of the event. In contrast, we found fewer accounts of empowerment when investigating the Capitol insurrection. Nonetheless, some research subjects expressed perceiving consensus among a broader reference group for coming to the Capitol, and some based their intention to "storm" it on this consensus or on the perception of a high turnout of protesters (although, here, too, references to numbers may have been strategic). We further know from previous research on crowd conflict (Drury & Reicher, 2000, 2005; Stott & Drury, 2000) that the experience of illegitimate action from police forces can lead to feeling legitimised to undertake (violent) counteraction and empowered to do so. For some research subjects, the unexpected resistance of Capitol Police may have contributed to feeling legitimised and empowered to overcome barriers that sought to keep protesters out of the Capitol.

Finally, we found that the insurrection was accompanied by feelings of joy and pride regarding being in Washington DC, showing ingroup strength and moving forward as a movement. Overall, we find fewer indicators of distal empowerment than at Charlottesville – which is not surprising considering that the immediate context was one of alleged illegitimacy – and instead, indicators that protesters felt supported and able to occupy a federal building deriving from the event itself (i.e., proximal empowerment).

4.5.3 The generalisability of empowerment experiences

Collective empowerment has initially been researched among “subordinate groups who overturn [...] existing relations of dominance” (Drury & Reicher, 2009, p. 708). And yet, in this study, we found evidence of it among groups that campaign against equality and whose members are societally and politically advantaged. Thus, the experience of empowerment seems to be generic. Consequently, although we applied the empowerment model to US-based far-right groups, we would predict that the empowerment experience is substantially similar across different contexts, i.e., groups and other nations. However, we argue that the manifestation of empowerment is dependent on social norms. In other words, while empowerment may be generic, behavioural outcomes (what people do when they feel empowered) are not. They are contingent on the identity of the group that is empowered (e.g., Badea et al., 2021; Crandall et al., 2002). For example, three major militia groups (the Proud Boys, the Three Percenters and the Oath Keepers) were reportedly present at the Capitol insurrection (Program on Extremism, 2021). In the US, distrust in government has a longstanding history among militia groups (cf. Miller-Idriss, 2022; Neiwert, 2019). Recently, there have been increasing attempts to accelerate the collapse of liberal democracy (Beauchamp, 2019). Thus, the behavioural outcomes (i.e., targeting US

politicians and storming the Capitol building) are in line with the identities of these groups.

4.6 Wider implications

The current study found that Trump's victory and his political messaging were linked to perceiving society as changing in favour of the far-right. It further illustrated that perceived consensus for (ingroup) values and aims and support expectations from others (including from the US President) seemed to motivate action-taking. To counteract this, we advocate for an unambiguous disavowal of far-right agendas and narratives among politicians which leaves no room for double meanings (Lytvynenko & Miller, 2020; Wang, 2017). This has often been a way how Trump conveyed his approval of white supremacist aims. By avoiding this, perceptions and interpretations among the far-right of support and consensus could be undermined. We also advocate for active resistance to open mobilisation (not just from counter-protesters but also from authorities). This can actively undermine the far-right from gaining (literal) ground and putting their identity into practice. This may also be important for perceptions of the legitimacy of radical groups and agendas among the public. Previous research found that among non-participants, the perceived efficacy of a movement predicted its legitimacy (Jiménez-Moya et al., 2019). Thus, a powerful presence on the streets may lead others to perceive a political group as credible which may foster its growth. After the Charlottesville rally, pollsters found that nine per cent of Americans approved of white-supremacist views (Beirich & Buchanan, 2018), and after the Capitol Insurrection, 45% of Republicans were found to approve of storming the Capitol (L. Sanders et al., 2021). Although both polls were cross-sectional and therefore cannot determine whether approval was higher after the events than before, it shows how

crucial it is to combat far-right street mobilisation. Open (unchallenged) mobilisation can empower its attendees and influence others.

4.7 Strengths and limitations

One advantage of the design of this study is that most of the statements by research subjects were contemporaneous rather than post hoc. We have some confidence in our data and conclusions since we found themes recurring across various sources. We further believe that our codebook provides a useful analytical tool for other scholars to identify these socio-psychological constructs. However, there are limitations: The “emboldened far-right thesis” assumes causality. Although we have shown that empowerment was a crucial experience among research subjects, we cannot claim causality with these data, and we suggest that future research may examine this further, perhaps through experimental designs. Further, data collection may have been biased by platform algorithms and by the first author alone deciding which items were potentially relevant. The (physical and attitudinal) position of the camera operator further determined what we saw, and excerpts were often short. Our sample may only represent some opinions. Applying a codebook TA further meant that we paid attention to already-known themes while other emerging material was given less focus. Research subjects’ statements might have also been influenced by the presence of the media (i.e., interviewers). Thus, some statements could have been given *because* of talking to the media, for example, to avoid legal prosecution or reputational damage. A discursive re-analysis of our dataset may, therefore, be a valuable complement to this study.

4.8 Conclusion

This study offered a first step towards the empirical investigation of the “emboldened far-right thesis” by applying the collective empowerment concept. We qualitatively investigated two US-based far-right rallies – the 2017 Charlottesville

“Unite the Rally” and the 2021 Capitol insurrection – for the experience of collective empowerment alongside common approaches to collective action focusing on the perceptions of collective grievances among the far-right. Overall, we found that at the “Unite the Right” rally, research subjects’ accounts showed indicators of proximal (i.e., deriving from the rally) as well as distal (i.e., deriving from Trump’s electoral victory) empowerment. In contrast, the Capitol insurrection seemed to be motivated by collective grievances. However, here too, we found some (albeit less) indicators of distal empowerment as well as some proximal empowerment deriving from support perceptions and possibly also from conflict with Capitol police. The fact that attendees of both events were able to mobilise freely and (at least temporarily) occupy public spaces of relevance may have crucial consequences for public approval of such actions and their actors.

With our study, we contributed to the question of what enables far-right mobilisation. To *disempower* mobilisation, insights from our study suggest that we must not only consider perceptions of grievances when we explain far-right collective action but also developments occurring before and during the events that may be empowering.

4.9 Data availability statement

Due to the nature of this research, participants did not explicitly agree for their data to be shared publicly. Supporting raw data is not available. However, the first author generated a de-identified and numeric overview of the data, which is available on OSF: https://osf.io/4evqm/?view_only=85e1df15248842589f71a96c89b8a573.

4.10 Supplementary Materials

The codebooks for the analysis are available in Appendix 3.2 and 3.3

- Codebook (empowerment)
- Codebook (collective grievances)

Chapter 5 – Study 3: “Disrupting a (far-right) mobilisation discourages bystander support by decreasing perceived organisational efficacy and legitimacy.”

Original citation:

(Hoerst & Drury, 2023)

Hoerst, C., & Drury, J. (2023). *Disrupting a (far-right) mobilisation discourages bystander support by decreasing perceived organisational efficacy and legitimacy*. PsyArXiv. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/xedvs>

5.1 Abstract

The far-right recruits from the public with detrimental consequences for target groups and democracy. Therefore, undermining mobilisation and public support is crucial. Previous research suggests that perceptions of movement or system efficacy are associated with corresponding support. This suggests a novel hypothesis about how disruptive protests might reduce support for far-right movements by reducing perceived efficacy and legitimacy. In a pilot study and two pre-registered experiments using vignette designs, we present evidence for a serial process by which disruption (counter-protest) to the mobilisation of a far-right social movement is associated with a reduction in support intentions among moderate and high identifiers via reduced perceived efficacy and legitimacy. In Experiment 1, we introduced participants to a bogus far-right social movement which campaigned for stricter treatment of refugees. We found that disruption (vs none) was associated with a decrease in support intention among participants via perceiving the group as less organisationally efficacious and legitimate. There was some evidence that among high identifiers, the direct effect of witnessing disruption was associated with an increase in support intention, further emphasising the importance of the mediators. In Experiment 2, we used a neutral movement to test for generality and found the same indirect serial effects. However, since we found no significant direct effects here, the (increasingly rhetorically inflated) issue of asylum policies may explain the significant direct effect in Experiment 1. We also examined whether mockery aimed at decreasing legitimacy would have an even stronger effect but found no evidence for that. Practical implications of our findings for societies where counter-protest is often punished are discussed.

Keywords. Far-right mobilisation; bystanders; support intention; counterprotest; mockery; collective action

5.2 Introduction

The likelihood of social change is higher when its advocates gain public support (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). While collective action scholars have predominantly focused on progressive social change, the far-right recruits among the public as well (Klandermans & Mayer, 2006; Pirrò & Castelli Gattinara, 2018). The far-right is notoriously creative in tailoring its narratives to and hiding its extremist core from the public (e.g., Billig, 1979, 1988; Conti, 2017; Polakow-Suransky, 2016; also see: Klein et al., 2007). When far-right activists are then also able to protest effectively, this might motivate the public to support the actors rather than because of explicit endorsement of xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist values (cf. Reicher & Haslam, 2006). In this paper, we focus on mobilisation and propose and test a serial process by which a decrease in support intention for a (far-right) movement is associated with disruption to the movement's mobilisation (operationalised as counter-protest) via the perception of organisational inability and illegitimacy. We also compare disruptions with and without mockery aimed at undermining legitimacy.

5.2.1 *How perceived efficacy translates into support intentions*

Protesters' belief about their ability to shape intergroup relations can empower and motivate further action-taking (J. C. Becker & Tausch, 2015; Drury & Reicher, 2000, 2005; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Tausch et al., 2011; van Zomeren et al., 2004, 2008, 2012). In the same way, non-participants' perceptions of a social movement can be affected by "empowering narratives" informing them about a movement's capacity to achieve a goal (Bliuc & Chidley, 2022). Thomas and Louis (2014)

demonstrated that perceiving protesters as efficacious promoted support for future actions among bystanders. Saab et al. (2015) showed that protest and actors' performance (i.e., identity consolidation efficacy) and perceived political efficacy influenced bystanders' support. While learning about efficacious protest can influence bystanders, Jiménez-Moya et al. (2019) cross-sectional survey suggested that the link between the two might lie in legitimising the social movement itself. To understand how it comes to be seen as legitimate and, thus, supported, it might be important to consider how well the group is seen to be able to achieve its goals (i.e., identity consolidation efficacy and political efficacy, cf. Jiménez-Moya et al., 2019; Orazani & Leidner, 2019), and organise its protest well (i.e., organisational efficacy; Selvanathan & Lickel, 2019b; Vo, 2020).

These insights from research focussing on (support for) progressive social movements might also apply to a far-right context. Historians and social scientists emphasise the role of public spaces of relevance in building and demonstrating the power of fascist movements and influencing public opinion (e.g., Pirrò & Castelli Gattinara, 2018; Reichard, 2007). Beirich and Buchanan (2018) discussed how immediately after the Charlottesville, Virginia (US) "Unite the Rally" rally –one of the biggest far-right rallies in years (Anti-Defamation League (ADL), 2017) – nine per cent of Americans approved of white-supremacist views⁴⁷. Castelli Gattinara et al. (2022) further found that far-right mobilisation occurred more often when their actors were more in the public eye (Klein et al., 2007). This potentially suggests a cycle of efficacious (high-scale) far-right mobilisation influencing perceptions of legitimacy among the public, making a mobilisation in public more likely.

⁴⁷ As stated elsewhere in my thesis, since the survey was cross-sectional, this cannot convey information about whether the percentage was potentially even higher before the rally though.

5.2.2 The role of identification in perceiving an actor to be efficacious and legitimate

The interpretation of social reality is informed by identification with a social category (Abrams et al., 1990; Ellemers et al., 2002; Turner et al., 1987). Jiménez-Moya et al. (2019) showed that the perceived efficacy of a movement was predicted by identifying with it, and Evripidou and Drury (2013, as cited in Drury et al., 2015) showed that successful (vs unsuccessful) protest was attributed greater efficacy among high (but not low) identifiers. Thus, the potential serial effect by which perceived efficacy may influence perceptions of legitimacy, in turn informing support intentions, may be moderated by (high) identification. However, van Zomeren et al. (2012) argued that group efficacy had a stronger influence on the decision to undertake collective action when group identity was less relevant. Whilst examining the factors that may contribute to explaining oppression and tyranny, Reicher and Haslam (2006) observed that among some participants, their approval of an authoritarian system was determined by the extent to which it was perceived as efficacious compared to another system perceived as inefficacious. Thus, individuals who may have just learned about a movement (or system) and are not strongly ideologically pre-dispositioned (Reimer et al., 2022) may potentially show greater uncertainty as to whether to support the movement (cf. Abrams et al., 1990; Hogg, 2007; Spears, 2021). Alongside explicit endorsement of far-right or white supremacist values (which may motivate some to support a movement or system in line with these) then, the inability of alternatives may be informative for the perception of (il)legitimacy of options and may be important specifically for those uncertain whether to support the corresponding mobilising actors (cf. Reicher & Haslam, 2006).

Consequently, while low identifiers may never support a far-right movement, high identifiers may unconditionally support it, whilst moderate identifiers may only do

so if they perceive the actors or movement as efficacious and legitimate. This perception then may be shaped by external factors such as disruptions to the mobilisation. In other words, those with moderate identification may be the most influenced by external factors, such as disruptions.

5.2.3 Disrupting protest

Anti-fascist battles and student mobilisations aiming at disrupting far-right mobilisations date back to the 1930s. The strategy of “no-platforming” (E. Smith, 2020) nowadays is most notable in counter-protests or attempts to disinvite controversial speakers from universities. Research on the empowerment processes among protesters provides some insights into the potential underlying psychological dynamics (Drury et al., 2005). Counter movements might play a crucial role in de-legitimising right-wing extremism (Klandermans & Mayer, 2006) because when they engage in active disruption of far-right protest, they prevent (or at least disrupt) the actors from putting their values and beliefs into practice. Protesters who see their protest as disorganised or unable to change identity-relevant issues can experience a sense of disempowerment (Drury & Reicher, 2005; Evripidou and Drury, 2013, as cited in Drury et al., 2015). These insights may also aid in affecting bystanders’ perceptions of a (right-wing) movement’s ability to enact their identity.

A mobilisation that is (un)disrupted may equally evoke meta-perceptions (i.e., “meta-knowledge”; Elcherath et al., 2011), in other words, inform people about society’s (presumed) opinion about a social movement, specifically, about how agentic society may view it (cf. Neville & Reicher, 2011). In social cognition research, stereotypical agency has been described as competence (cf. Stereotype content model, SCM; Fiske et al., 2002). Thus, an alternative reason to perceived efficacy for

bystanders to support a group (or not) may be the stereotypic competence of a relevant movement (also subsequently affecting its legitimacy).

5.2.4 Using mockery to disrupt protest

“Tactical frivolity” (Zeller, 2020) that mocks a target can damage its legitimacy (e.g., Demasi & Tileagă, 2021; Obadare, 2009; Zeller, 2020). Therefore, humour has a longstanding tradition of opposing unpopular political decisions or politicians (A. B. Becker, 2012, 2014b; Demasi & Tileagă, 2021; Hiller, 1983; Teune, 2007). In the context of far-right mobilisation, anti-racist campaigners have used mockery as a tactic. For example, the “English Disco Lovers”, whose initials mimic and mock the “English Defence League”, turned up at the latter’s rallies dressed in 70s Disco style clothes. In 2013, not only did this serve to counter members of an English Defence League rally in Brighton (UK), but it also inspired other protesters to join in the dancing and mocking (Regine, 2014). Thus, using mockery strategically may serve to fight back against the disparagement humour of the far-right (Ebner, 2019; Ferguson & Ford, 2008). A disruption that features mockery may, thereby, undermine the far-right’s efficacy and legitimacy (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Zeller, 2020) and seed doubts among those “at risk” to join a movement (Briggs & Feve, 2013). The latter may be of particular importance in the context of bystanders.

5.3 The current study

The current study aimed to test whether disruption to a mobilisation can influence the intention to support a (far-right) movement (RQ5.1). We did so by conducting two experimental vignette studies that introduced a bogus (neutral and radical right) movement to participants as well as different scenarios of disruption to the movement’s rally (i.e., no disruption, disruption due to shouting, disruption due to mockery). Previous research suggested that the perceived efficacy of a movement

influenced support intentions. We examined whether perceived organisational or political efficacy (as well as stereotypic competence) affected the perception of the bogus movement's legitimacy and support intentions and whether disruption affected this process (RQ5.2).

Since social identification affects the perception of reality, we wanted to know whether this process would vary as a function of social identification with the movement. Selvanathan and Lickel (2019b) described that “bystanders [...] are themselves not participants of collective action but instead are the targeted audiences that encounter or witness collective action organised by social movements” (p. 599). In our study, participants would have neither known nor engaged in any actions but would have just learned about the relevant movement and its actions (because it was fictitious). Our participants may, therefore, be conceptualised as “bystanders” according to the above definition. However, we go beyond merely understanding them as “standing by”; we tested participants' identification with the movement based on their “encounter” with it (i.e., the introduction), as well as their perceptions and support intentions after learning about the development of the movement's rally (i.e., experimental manipulation). Although the movement would have been new to participants, we were aware that pre-existing political beliefs could interfere with the extent to which participants may identify with the movement and their support intentions. Specifically, we assumed that particularly in a political-laden context, low identification would possibly coincide with an opposing political ideology. Consequently, we assumed that low identifiers would not support the movement under any circumstances and that hence, a disruption to a movement's mobilisation would not further affect their support intentions. In contrast, we assumed that whilst high identifiers would support it unconditionally regardless of the circumstances, moderate identifiers' support would be

affected by the impact of a (un)disrupted mobilisation (RQ5.3) the most, due to the strongest influence of by external factors, such as disruptions.

Finally, we sought to explore whether a disruption that featured mockery was particularly effective in reducing support intentions (RQ5.4). To examine our questions, we applied two experimental designs with two different movement identities (far-right, followed by a neutral one to test for generality) and allocated participants to different rally outcomes. A correlational pilot study designed to test assumptions preceded the experiments.

5.3.1 Method overview

Participants. We used Prolific (2023a) to recruit participants. We recruited British people who resided in the UK and identified as “white”. We recruited across political affiliations in a balanced manner. Participants needed to be between 18 and 65 years of age to participate (see Appendix 4.2 for detailed participant descriptions across all studies).

Measures. All survey items and vignettes are available in Appendix 4.3 and in the OSF project (<https://tinyurl.com/2zncc8bs>). In the following, we list the measures applied across all three studies.

Vignette and experimental manipulation. We provided participants with bogus online newspaper extracts featuring a brief description of a (fictitious) social movement. In the pilot study and Experiment 1, we used the same far-right movement, which suggested stricter treatment of refugees. In Experiment 2, we introduced a content-neutral movement advocating for changes in the way how blue-light services navigated through traffic. Each was followed by a bogus “continuation of the online newspaper”, which showed different outcomes of a rally the movement had organised (in the pilot study, only one of the undisrupted rally outcomes was displayed to participants). In

Experiments 1 and 2, participants were allocated to one of three scenarios: 1. The rally was undisrupted (control condition), 2. the rally was disrupted by counter-protesters (experimental condition 1), 3. the rally was disrupted by counter-protesters engaging in mockery (experimental condition 2). Participants in the pilot study saw all three counter-actions we had selected and classified as funny. We selected the one found the funniest for later use in the experiments.

Social identification. To assess participants' extent of identification with the social movement, we used two items to assess the extent of self-categorisation (cf. Doosje et al., 1995; Spears et al., 1997), for example, "I have a lot in common with the average [group] member.", assessed on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree, to 7 = strongly agree.

Perceived organisational efficacy. We measured perceived organisational efficacy with two items inspired by Vo (2020) (e.g., "I think that [group] is able to organise its events well.")⁴⁸. Both items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

Stereotype content – competence. We used two items from Fiske et al. (2002) to measure stereotype content, specifically, stereotypic competence (e.g., "As viewed by society, how competent are members of [movement]?"). This was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 = not at all to 5 = extremely.

Legitimacy. We used three items to measure the perceived legitimacy of the movement. The items (e.g., "[Group] is a socially relevant party/ movement.") were inspired by (Massey, 2001) and assessed on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

⁴⁸ We changed the wording in Experiment 1 to "I think that [movement] is able to organise its events well" instead of "I think that [movement]'s event was well organised." used in the pilot study and Experiment 2 (which was chronologically conducted before Experiment 1). For further adjustments, see Appendix 4.4.

Support intentions. We measured support intentions with one item constructed for the studies (“I would vote for [group]/ sign [group’s] petition.”) on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

Manipulation checks. We assessed whether participants perceived the three rally outcomes as differing regarding the extent to which the protesters were able to 1. freely express themselves and 2. hold a successful rally. We further asked participants whether they found the counter-action funny and whether they thought that others would find it funny. Both checks were measured on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree.

Screening validation. We checked the inclusion criteria by assessing the demographics applied by Prolific (2023a) during recruitment, including political ideology (i.e., centre, left, right and not affiliated). The latter was assessed since as a social identity it had been found to influence the evaluation of humour and collective action (see above, and A. B. Becker, 2021; Elcherath et al., 2011; Reimer et al., 2022; Selvanathan & Lickel, 2019b).

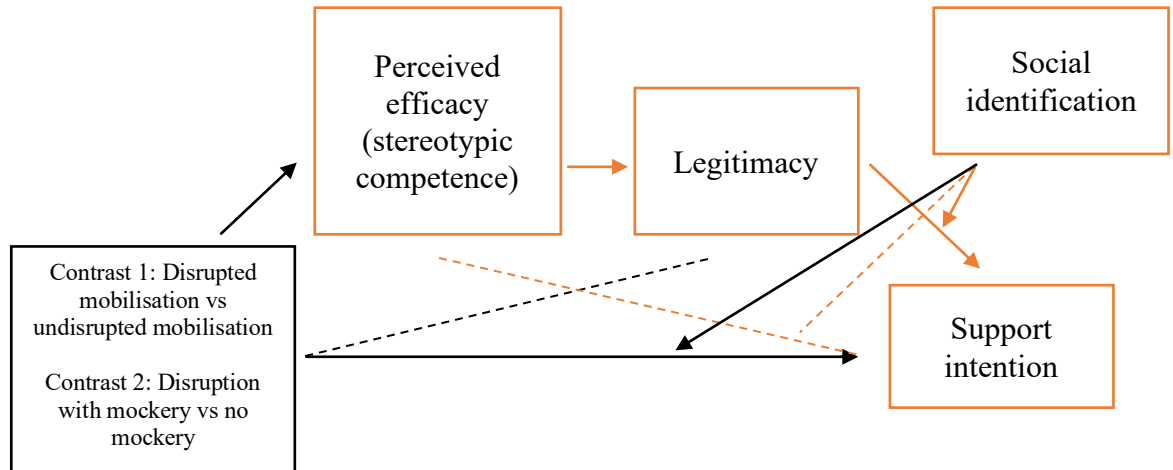
5.3.2 Design

All three studies were online studies and created on Qualtrics (2023). The pilot study was correlational, the two main studies were experiments. In the pilot study, perceived efficacy and stereotypic competence were the predictor variables, legitimacy was the mediator, support intention was the outcome, and social identification was the moderator of various pathways (see Figure 8). In Experiments 1 and 2, the contrasts “Disrupted mobilisation (experimental conditions)” vs “Undisrupted mobilisation (control condition)” and “Disruption featuring mockery (experimental condition 2) vs “No mockery (experimental condition 1)” were the predictors, perceived organisational

efficacy the first and legitimacy the second mediator. Social identification was used as moderator, and support intentions as the outcome.

Figure 8

Conceptual model as used in the pilot study, and in experiment 1 and 2



Note. The coloured boxes and arrows represent the process examined in the pilot study.

Although we expected negative indirect effects on support intentions via organisational efficacy/ political efficacy/ stereotypic competence and legitimacy each when applied as the only mediator, the dashed lines were generally of secondary relevance to our study.

Perceived efficacy incorporated organisational efficacy and political efficacy in the pilot study (see below), in the experiments, this was reduced to organisational efficacy only.

5.3.3 Procedure

In all three studies, participants received a link via Prolific (2023a) forwarding them to the online survey. We assessed the predictor, mediator, and moderator variables and checked the inclusion criteria and effectiveness of our manipulations after participants were introduced to the fictitious social movement and, in the experiments, allocated to one of three conditions. In the pilot study, participants saw all three vignettes to establish the extent to which the rallies were viewed as (un)disrupted. Participants' responses referred to the successful outcome of the rally, which would become the control condition in the experiments. Finally, we thanked, fully debriefed, and asked participants for renewed consent. Participants that took part in previous studies were excluded from partaking in subsequent ones.

5.3.4 Data analysis

We used R 4.1.2 for the data analysis and Hayes's PROCESS (2023) for R 4.0.1 for the mediation (model 4 in the pilot study and model 6 in the experiments) and moderation analysis (models 5, 7, and 14 in the pilot study, and model 89 in the experiments). The mediator(s) and moderator were mean-centred in the conditional process models. We used the median to detect uni- and multivariate outliers (Leys et al., 2013, 2019). We also investigated model-specific outliers (Cook's distance) in the experiments by recreating the regressions. The regressions were compared with robust regressions (see Appendix 4.12 and 4.13 for further information). In the experimental studies, we applied Helmert contrast coding for the three conditions, which is not only recommended when groups have an ordinal relationship but also helped to illustrate whether disruption of any kind (vs none) would influence support intentions (Hayes, 2022).

5.3.5 Ethical approval

All three studies were approved by the University of Sussex, Sciences & Technology C-REC, certificate no. ER/CH527/12 (pilot study), ER/CH527/14 (Experiment 1), ER/CH527/13 (Experiment 2) (see Appendix 4.1, Figures App. 4.1: 1 - 3).

5.3.6 Data availability statement

The data supporting this study's findings are openly available on Figshare (n.d.) (reference number: 10.25377/sussex.19779988). The survey and supplementary material are available in Appendix 4.3 and 4.2 – 4.15 and in the OSF project (<https://tinyurl.com/2zncc8bs>). Pre-registrations can be found on <https://tinyurl.com/vy4p55m4> (experiment 1) and <https://tinyurl.com/c8srdymj> (experiment 2), and R syntaxes on <https://tinyurl.com/uj57mv9k> (pilot study),

<https://tinyurl.com/2wz4u9hs> (experiment 1), and <https://tinyurl.com/4k728r2n> (experiment 2).

5.4 Pilot study

Since we identified very few similar studies, we conducted a pilot study which explored the relationships between the variables and whether perceived efficacy and stereotypic competence behaved similarly. It also assessed the experimental scenarios.

5.4.1 Method

Participants. An a priori power analysis (see Appendix 4.5) suggested a sample size of $N = 200$. The total participant number was $N = 198$ since two participants withdrew their consent after being debriefed.

Measures. Additional to all the above-outlined measures, we assessed whether social identification would be associated with approval for the movement's agenda ("I endorse [movement's] cause.", 7-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). We also assessed participants' perception of the group's political efficacy measured with three items (e.g., item "I think that [movement] can generate change in social policies"; 5-point Likert scale from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) adopted and adjusted from Jiménez-Moja et al. (2019), Orazani and Leidner (2019), Saab et al. (2015), and Vo (2020). Social identification ($r = .92$) and stereotypic competence ($r = .76$) showed a high inter-item correlation. Legitimacy ($\alpha = .83$), perceived organisational ($\alpha = .93$), and political efficacy ($\alpha = .84$) showed high reliability.

5.4.2 Results

For preparatory analyses (e.g., factor analyses and manipulation checks), see Appendix 4.6.

Descriptive statistics and intercorrelations. All variables showed normal distribution apart from social identification, which was positively skewed due to participants affiliated with the left (see Appendix 4.7, Table App. 4.7: 1 for a breakdown of variables per political affiliation). Table 5 provides an overview of the descriptive statistics and intercorrelations. All variables were positively and significantly correlated. The associations between stereotypic competence and perceived organisational efficacy with each legitimacy and support intention were almost identical. Appendix 4.8 further shows that the association between legitimacy and support intention was strongly affected by political affiliation (specifically those not affiliated, centre or right affiliated), which was reflected in social identification.

Table 5

Pilot study: Means (M), standard deviations (SD), and intercorrelations with confidence intervals of all variables

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Social identification	3.06	1.56	-						
2. Endorsement of cause	3.11	1.67	.89** [.86, .91]	-					
3. Stereotypic competence	3.20	0.74	.22** [.08, .35]	.23** [.09, .35]	-				
4. Perceived political efficacy	2.73	0.84	.28** [.14, .40]	.32** [.19, .44]	.47** [.35, .57]	-			
5. Perceived organisational efficacy	4.01	1.16	.21** [.07, .34]	.25** [.11, .37]	.56** [.45, .64]	.47** [.35, .57]	-		
6. Legitimacy	4.02	1.19	.59** [.49, .67]	.61** [.52, .69]	.45** [.33, .55]	.36** [.23, .48]	.48** [.36, .58]	-	
7. Support intention	2.55	1.65	.74** [.67, .80]	.76** [.70, .82]	.34** [.21, .46]	.46** [.34, .56]	.32** [.19, .44]	.60** [.50, .68]	-

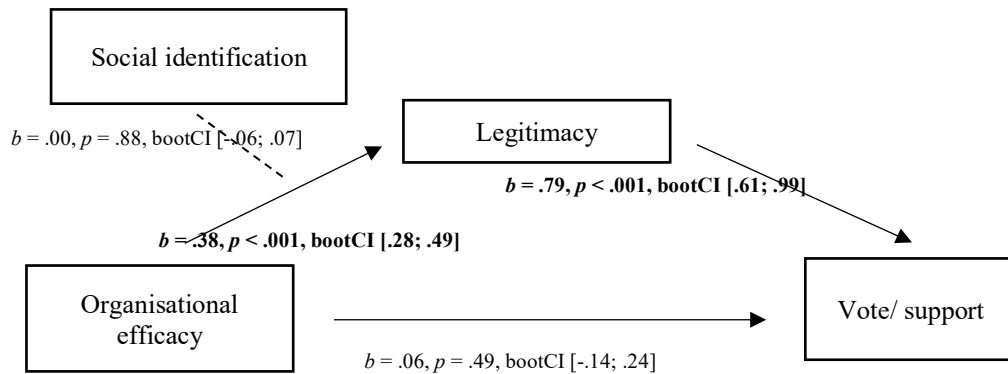
Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. * Indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$.

Path analyses. To test the suggested association between perceived efficacy (and stereotypic competence, respectively), legitimacy and support intention, we used Hayes's PROCESS (2023) model 4 for R 4.0.1 using bootstrapping with 5,000 iterations to obtain 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (CIs). The indirect effects on support intention via legitimacy (perceived organisational efficacy: $b = 0.39$, $\text{bootSE} = 0.07$, $\text{bootCI} [.26; .55]$; political efficacy: $b = 0.35$, $\text{bootSE} = 0.08$, $\text{bootCI} [.21; .51]$; stereotypic competence: $b = 0.56$, $\text{bootSE} = 0.10$, $\text{bootCI} [.37; .77]$), as well as the direct effect of perceived political efficacy on support intention ($b = 0.54$, $p < .001$, $\text{CI} [.32; .77]$), were significant. The direct effects of perceived organisational efficacy ($b = 0.06$, $p = .49$, $\text{CI} [-.12; .25]$) and stereotypic competence ($b = 0.21$, $p = .15$, $\text{CI} [-.08; .49]$) on support intentions were not, which indicated an indirect rather than a direct association between perceived organisational efficacy/ stereotypic competence and support intention.

In the next step, we explored the moderating effects of social identification (see Appendix 4.9, Figures App. 4.9: 1 -9), using Hayes's PROCESS (2023) models 5, 7 and 14. The mediators and moderator were mean-centred. Social identification significantly moderated the effect of legitimacy on support intentions (index of moderation = 0.07, $\text{bootSE} = 0.02$, $\text{bootCI} [.03; .12]$) as well as the direct effects of perceived efficacy / stereotypic competence on support intention (organisational efficacy: $F(1, 193) = 6.00$, $p = .015$; perceived political efficacy: $F(1, 193) = 16.31$, $p < .001$; stereotypic competence: $F(1, 193) = 7.49$, $p = .007$). It did not significantly moderate the effects of the predictors on legitimacy (perceived organisational efficacy: $F(1, 194) = 0.02$, $p = .88$; perceived political efficacy: $F(1, 194) = 0.06$, $p = .81$; stereotypic competence: $F(1, 194) = 0.01$, $p = .94$). Figures 9 – 11 illustrate these effects using organisational efficacy as an example.

Figure 9

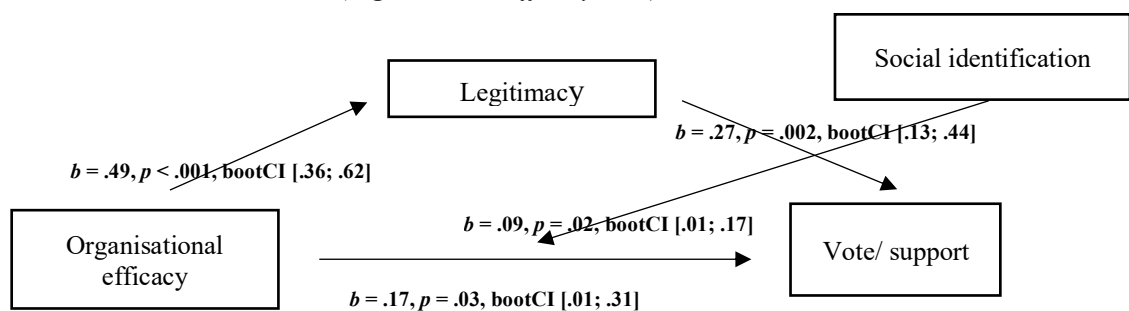
Moderated mediation model 7 (organisational efficacy = IV)



Note. Results from mediation analyses using bootstrap (5,000 repetitions). Values in bold and solid lines represent significant effects ($p < .05$), values not in bold and dashed lines represent non-significant effects ($p > .05$). Direct effect: $b = .06, p = .49, CI [-.12; .25]$; Conditional indirect effect: (low levels) $b = .30, bootSE = .09, bootCI [.14; .49]$; (moderate levels) $b = .31, bootSE = .06, bootCI [.20; .44]$; (high levels) $b = .32, bootSE = .07, bootCI [.19; .46]$. Index of moderated mediation = .00, bootSE = .03, bootCI [-.05; .06].

Figure 10

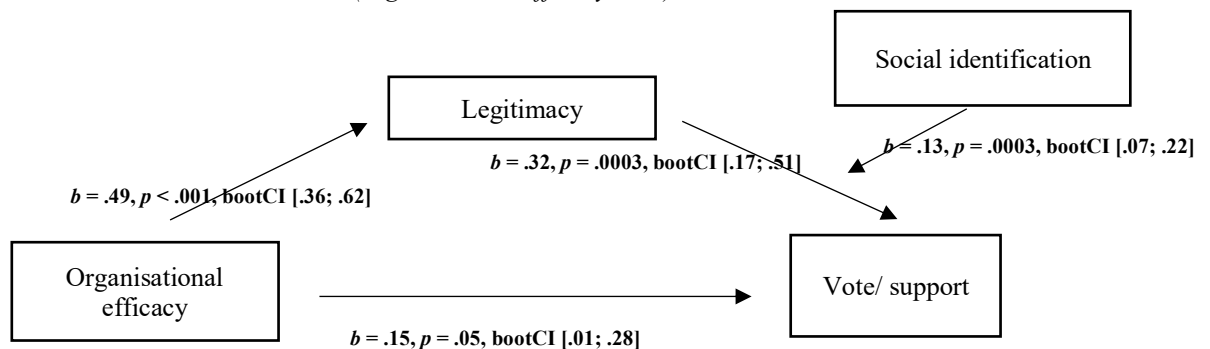
Moderated mediation model 5 (organisational efficacy = IV)



Note. Results from mediation analyses using bootstrap (5,000 repetitions). Values in bold and solid lines are significant ($p < .05$). Conditional direct effect: (low level) $b = -.03, p = .78, CI [-.23; .17]$; (moderate level) $b = .16, p = .03, CI [.01; .31]$; (high level) $b = .35, p = .002, CI [.13; .57]$. Indirect effect: $b = .13, bootSE = .04, bootCI [.06; .24]$

Figure 11

Moderated mediation model 14 (organisational efficacy = IV)



Note. Results from mediation analyses using bootstrap (5,000 repetitions). Values in bold and solid lines are significant ($p < .05$). Direct effect: $b = .15, p = .05, CI [.00; .29]$; Conditional indirect effect: (low levels) $b = .02, bootSE = .04, bootCI [-.05; .10]$; (moderate levels) $b = .16, bootSE = .05, bootCI [.08; .27]$; (high levels) $b = .29, bootSE = .08, bootCI [.16; .48]$. Index of moderated mediation = .07, bootSE = .02, bootCI [.03; .11].

Thus, the relationship between the predictors and legitimacy was independent of group identification, but the intention to support the group was not. Simple slopes revealed that for those one standard deviation below the mean of social identification, the effect of legitimacy on support intention had no impact ($b = 0.08, p = .33, CI [-.08; .25]$), but for those scoring average on social identification ($b = 0.30, p < .001, CI [.15; .45]$) and one standard deviation above the mean ($b = 0.52, p < .001, CI [.32; .72]$) it did. The same pattern was reflected in all direct effects. Johnson-Neymar analyses revealed that scores as low as between 1.79 and 3.10 on the social identification scale reached significant effects, which indicated a floor effect for low identifiers (see Appendix 4.10).

5.4.3 Discussion

The results from the pilot study were consistent with our suggestion that viewing the group as organisationally/ politically efficacious or stereotypically competent was associated with perceiving it as legitimate, in turn, being associated with supporting a (far-right) movement. Perceiving the movement as legitimate, resulting from viewing it as efficacious (organisationally or politically) or stereotypically competent, did not depend on identifying with it. Thus, anyone could judge a movement as legitimate based on it being viewed as efficacious or perceived to be regarded as competent by others. However, the intention to actively support the movement was associated with participants' social identification. We have thereby clarified that social identification and endorsing the movement's content were connected. We expected that different levels of identification would show differences in support intentions (i.e., low identifiers would never support the group, high identifiers unconditionally, and moderate identifiers would be the most influenced by disrupted protest and its effect on perceptions of organisational efficacy and legitimacy). The results from the pilot study

indicated that low identifiers did indeed not intend to support the movement. It was moderate and high identifiers that were affected by the perception of organisational/political efficacy, stereotypic competence, or legitimacy in their intention to support the group. Manipulating rally disruption – tested in Experiments 1 and 2 – would show whether the support among high identifiers was unaffected by rally disruption (i.e., unconditional).

Finally, perceived organisational efficacy and stereotypic competence showed an almost identical association with legitimacy and support intentions and behaved identically when applied as predictors. Consequently, in the following experiments, we focus solely on perceived organisational efficacy for brevity. Organisational efficacy, in our view, also reflects best the factor that the “no platform” strategy aims to undermine (compared to political efficacy).

5.5 Experiment 1

In a between-subjects design, we allocated participants to conditions with different outcomes of the movement’s rally. We predicted that witnessing any disruption (experimental conditions) compared to no disruption (control condition) would be associated with a decrease in support intentions *indirectly* via perceived organisational efficacy and legitimacy (Exp1H1a) as well as *directly* (Exp1H1b). Similarly, we predicted that witnessing a disruption featuring mockery compared to a disruption without mockery would be associated with a decrease in support intentions *indirectly* via perceived organisational efficacy and legitimacy (Exp1H2a), as well as *directly* (Exp1H2b).

Building on these hypotheses, we predicted that the association between legitimacy and support intention (Exp1H3a), as well as the association between witnessing any disruption compared to no disruption and support intention (Exp1H3b),

would depend on social identification. Similarly, in the context of mockery, we predicted that the association between legitimacy and support intention (Exp1H4a), as well as the association between witnessing a disruption featuring mockery compared to a disruption without mockery and support intention (Exp1H4b), would depend on social identification (see Appendix 4.4 (Experiment 1) for elaborations on slight derivations for the pre-registration).

5.5.1 Method

Participants. A priori power analyses suggested a sample size of $N = 432$ (see Appendix 4.5). The total sample size was $N = 429$ (439 participants started the survey, eight did not finish, and two participants did not give renewed consent after having been debriefed). Post-hoc sensitivity analyses showed that a one-way between-subjects ANOVA with 429 participants across three groups would be sensitive to effects of $h_p^2 = 0.02$, with 80% power ($\alpha = .05$).

Measures. Social identification ($r = .93$) and perceived organisational efficacy ($r = .91$) showed a high inter-item correlation. The legitimacy scale showed high reliability ($\alpha = .88$). We used filler items intended to disguise the real purpose of the study (e.g., “I think that choosing the capital as rally location was a good idea.”); see Appendix 4.11 for more details. The counter-protest scenario portrayed counter-protesters as playing trumpets and dancing – comparable to the actions by “English Disco Lovers” – which participants in the pilot study had rated as funny.

5.5.2 Results

Manipulation checks. There were statistically significant differences in the way participants perceived that the movement was free to express themselves ($H(2) = 59.56$, $p < .001$) and held a successful rally ($H(2) = 177.49$, $p < .001$) between the conditions. Those that witnessed no disruption had significantly higher scores (free expression: $M =$

5.42, $SD = 1.09$, $Med = 6$; successful rally: $M = 5.06$, $SD = 1.18$, $Med = 5$) than those that witnessed a disruption (free expression: $M = 4.19$, $SD = 1.56$, $Med = 5$; successful rally $M = 2.80$, $SD = 1.24$, $Med = 2$), $p < .001$, as well as those that witnessed a disruption featuring mockery (free expression: $M = 4.13$, $SD = 1.73$, $Med = 5$; successful rally: $M = 2.76$, $SD = 1.35$, $Med = 3$), $p < .001$. There was no statistically significant difference between the two experimental conditions (free expression: $p = .865$; successful rally: $p = .78$). Participants that were allocated to witness mockery did not find it particularly funny ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.68$), but estimated others to find it funnier than they did themselves ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.56$), $t(142) = -7.40$, $p < .001$.

Descriptive statistics and correlations. Tables 6 and 7 and Figure 12 provide the descriptive statistics and correlations across conditions and a breakdown by experimental condition for both experiments. A one-way between-subjects ANOVA showed that there were significant differences across conditions in perceived organisational efficacy ($F(2,426) = 50.47$, $p < .001$, $h_p^2 = 0.19$). Tukey HSD comparisons revealed that these were between the control condition ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 1.19$) and the experimental conditions ($M_{exp1} = 3.20$, $SD_{exp1} = 1.21$; $M_{exp2} = 3.10$, $SD_{exp2} = 1.31$), $p < .001$, but not between the two experimental conditions ($p = .76$). Unexpectedly, there were no significant differences between the conditions in legitimacy ($M_{undisrupted} = 4.31$, $SD_{undisrupted} = 1.35$; $M_{disrupted} = 4.07$, $SD_{disrupted} = 1.36$; $M_{disrupted_mockery} = 4.35$, $SD_{disrupted_mockery} = 1.38$) and support intentions ($M_{undisrupted} = 2.53$, $SD_{undisrupted} = 1.61$; $M_{disrupted} = 2.65$, $SD_{disrupted} = 1.78$; $M_{disrupted_mockery} = 2.87$, $SD_{disrupted_mockery} = 1.85$), $F(2,426) = 1.77$, $p = .17$, $h_p^2 = 0.00$ (legitimacy), $F(2, 426) = 1.38$, $p = .25$, $h_p^2 = 0.00$ (support intentions). All variables were positively and significantly correlated.

Table 6

Means (M), standard deviations (SD), and intercorrelations with confidence intervals of all variables across all experimental conditions

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4
Experiment 1						
1. Social identification	3.48	1.67	-			
2. Perceived organisational efficacy	3.57	1.38	.37** [.29, .45]	-		
3. Legitimacy	4.24	1.36	.69** [.63, .73]	.47** [.40, .54]	-	
4. Support intention	2.68	1.75	.80** [.76, .83]	.36** [.27, .44]	.69** [.64, .74]	-
Experiment 2						
1. Social identification	3.40	1.26	-			
2. Perceived organisational efficacy	3.66	1.51	.19** [.09, .29]			
3. Legitimacy	4.07	1.27	.51** [.43, .58]	.48** [.40, .56]	-	
4. Support intention	3.31	1.78	.62** [.55, .68]	.34** [.25, .43]	.71** [.65, .76]	-

Note. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation.

* Indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$.

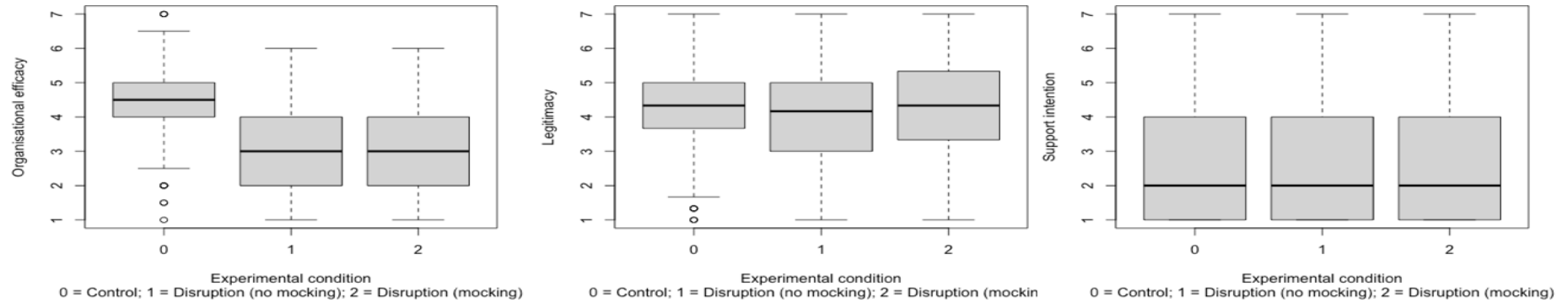
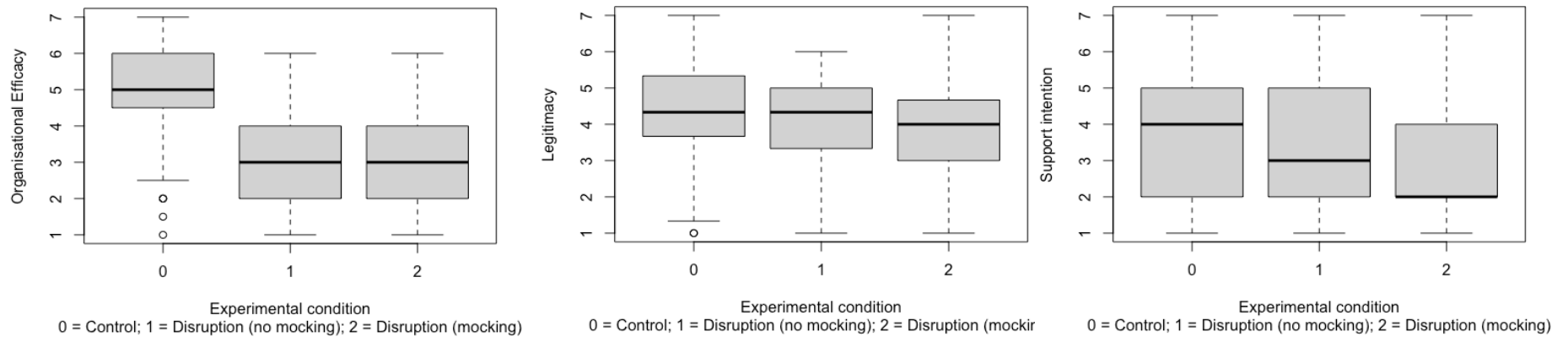
Table 7

Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) of all variables by experimental condition across both experiments

Variable	Condition		Experimental 1 (disruption)		Experimental 2 (disruption feat. mockery)	
	Control (no disruption)					
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Experiment 1						
Perceived organisational efficacy	4.43	1.19	3.20	1.22	3.10	1.31
Legitimacy	4.31	1.35	4.07	1.36	4.35	1.38
Support intention	2.53	1.61	2.65	1.78	2.87	1.85
Experiment 2						
Perceived organisational efficacy	4.90	1.12	3.00	1.22	3.09	1.33
Legitimacy	4.37	1.31	4.02	1.14	3.80	1.32
Support intention	3.57	1.86	3.40	1.78	2.96	1.66

Figure 12

Boxplots for organisational efficacy, legitimacy, and support intention per experimental condition across both experiments

Experiment 1**Experiment 2**

In the following, we first elaborate on the indirect and direct effects of witnessing any disruption (the experimental conditions were weighted as 0.333 each⁴⁹) vs no disruption (the control condition was weighted as -0.667) and of witnessing a disruption featuring mockery (experimental condition 2 was weighted as 0.5) vs a disruption with no mockery (experimental condition 1 was weighted as -0.5). This is followed by an elaboration on the conditional process analyses. Where the OLS regressions deviated from robust regressions, we report this (otherwise, see Appendix 4.12). Tables 8 to 10 present all secondary analyses across both experiments (Table 8 (Experiment 1) and Table 9 (Experiment 2) for all regression coefficients, and Table 10 for all total, direct, and indirect effects across experiments).

Indirect and direct effects. To test the suggested serial indirect and the direct effect of the predictors (i.e., witnessing any disruption vs no disruption and witnessing a disruption featuring mockery vs a disruption without mockery) on support intentions, we used Hayes's PROCESS (2023) model 6 for R 4.0.1 using bootstrapping with 10,000⁵⁰ iterations to obtain 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals.

Witnessing any disruption vs no disruption (Exp1H1a, b). The relative indirect effect of witnessing a disruption vs none on support intentions explained by perceived organisational efficacy and legitimacy was negative ($b = -0.60$, $\text{bootSE} = 0.08$, $\text{bootCI} [-.77; -.44]$). This was due to the negative effect of the manipulation on organisational efficacy which had a buffering impact on the overall indirect effect (i.e., the sign of the effect). Exp1H1a was, therefore, supported. In contrast, the relative direct effect of witnessing a disruption was significantly associated with an increase in support intentions⁵¹ ($b = 0.48$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = .001$, $CI [.20; .77]$). This was surprising and did

⁴⁹ The values were adopted from Hayes (2022).

⁵⁰ We increased the iterations from the pilot study to the two experimental studies to account for the additionally applied experimental design and the use of more complex models.

⁵¹ The standard error for this effect was large and the result, therefore, not as accurate.

not support Exp1H1b. Additionally, we found that witnessing a disruption compared to no disruption had a positive effect on support intentions via perceived legitimacy only ($b = 0.52$, $SE = 0.12$, $CI [.29; .74]$) which was strongest among high identifiers ($b = 0.35$, $bootSE = 0.09$, $bootCI [.19; .54]$). This was unexpected. However, our main argument referred particularly to the serial effect.

Table 8

Regression coefficients with bootstrapped standard errors (SE) and confidence intervals (CI) of all models (6 and 89). W, M1 and M2 in the bottom half were mean-centred (Experiment 1)

M1 (ORGANISATIONAL EFFICACY)						201					M2 (LEGITIMACY)					Y (SUPPORT)			
Antecedent		Coeff.	bootSE	bootCI	<i>p</i>		Coeff.	bootSE	bootCI	<i>p</i>		Coeff.	bootSE	bootCI	<i>p</i>				
X1 (control vs exp)	<i>a₁₁</i>	-1.276	0.124	[-1.522; -1.030]	< .001	<i>a₂₁</i>	0.623	0.138	[.353; 898]	< .001	<i>c'₁</i>	0.483	0.143	[.204; .766]	.001				
X2 (exp2 vs exp1)	<i>a₂₁</i>	-0.104	0.151	[-.396; .191]	.480	<i>a₂₂</i>	0.339	0.138	[.066; 607]	.015	<i>c'₂</i>	0.004	0.14	[-.271; .279]	.982				
M1						<i>d</i>	0.565	0.049	[.467; .661]	< .001	<i>b₁</i>	0.136	0.059	[.020; .254]	.018				
M2											<i>b₂</i>	0.828	0.051	[.729; .929]	< .001				
Constant	<i>i_{M1}</i>	3.575	0.059	[3.462; 3.692]	< .001	<i>i_{M2}</i>	2.224	0.192	[1.844; 2.602]	< .001	<i>i_Y</i>	-1.318	0.212	[-1.742; -0.910]	< .001				
<i>R</i> ² = 0.192						<i>R</i> ² = 0.272					<i>R</i> ² = 0.493								
<i>F</i> (2,426) = 1.541, <i>p</i> < .001						<i>F</i> (3,425) = 52.821, <i>p</i> < .001					<i>F</i> (4, 424) = 102.847 , <i>p</i> < .001								
X1 (control vs exp)											<i>c'₁</i>	0.267	0.117	[.039; .497]	.017				
X2 (exp2 vs exp1)											<i>c'₂</i>	-0.050	0.104	[-.251; .154]	.656				
M1											<i>b₁</i>	0.060	0.046	[-.030; .151]	.166				
M2											<i>b₂</i>	0.358	0.051	[.259; .457]	< '.001				
W (social identification)											<i>c'₃</i>	0.596	0.038	[.523; .670]	< '.001				
X1 x W											<i>c'₄</i>	0.151	0.070	[.017; .290]	.025				
X2 x W											<i>c'₅</i>	-0.049	0.057	[-.161; .064]	.471				
M1 x W											<i>b₃</i>	-0.000	0.025	[-.050; .047]	1				
M2 x W											<i>b₄</i>	0.121	0.023	[.076; .166]	< '.001				
Constant											<i>i_Y</i>	2.492	0.056	[2.384; 2.602]	< '.001				
<i>R</i> ² = 0.717																			
<i>F</i> (9, 419) = 117.749 , <i>p</i> < .001																			

Table 9

Regression coefficients with bootstrapped standard errors (SE) and confidence intervals (CI) of all models (6 and 89). W, M1 and M2 in the bottom half were mean-centred (Experiment 2)

Antecedent		M1 (ORGANISATIONAL EFFICACY)				203	M2 (LEGITIMACY)					Y (SUPPORT)			
		Coeff.	bootSE	bootCI	<i>p</i>		Coeff.	bootSE	bootCI	<i>p</i>		Coeff.	bootSE	bootCI	<i>p</i>
X1 (control vs exp)	<i>a₁₁</i>	-1.856	0.130	[-2.113; -1.598]	< .001	<i>a₂₁</i>	0.450	0.143	[.173; .733]	.003	<i>c'₁</i>	0.119	0.178	[-.233; .471]	.501
X2 (exp2 vs exp1)	<i>a₁₂</i>	0.089	0.166	[-.238; .416]	.576	<i>a₂₂</i>	-0.269	0.144	[-.550; .017]	.060	<i>c'₂</i>	-0.223	0.168	[-.548; .119]	.177
M1						<i>d</i>	0.492	0.046	[.401; .580]	< .001	<i>b₁</i>	0.033	0.063	[-.085; .159]	.597
M2											<i>b₂</i>	0.974	0.056	[.862; 1.082]	< .001
Constant	<i>i_{M1}</i>	3.659	0.063	[3.537; 3.786]	< .001	<i>i_{M2}</i>	2.264	0.180	[1.916; 2.623]	< .001	<i>i_Y</i>	-0.769	0.222	[-1.208; -0.33]	.002
		<i>R</i> ² = 0.341				<i>R</i> ² = 0.257				<i>R</i> ² = 0.503					
		<i>F</i> (2,357) = 92.256, <i>p</i> < .001				<i>F</i> (3,356) = 41.076, <i>p</i> < .001				<i>F</i> (4, 355) = 89.829 , <i>p</i> < .001					
X1 (control vs exp)											<i>c'₁</i>	-0.017	0.167	[-0.340; 0.314]	.913
X2 (exp2 vs exp1)											<i>c'₂</i>	-0.223	0.144	[-0.511; 0.058]	.131
M1											<i>b₁</i>	0.018	0.059	[-0.093; 0.136]	.749
M2											<i>b₂</i>	0.752	0.062	[0.632; 0.875]	< .001
W (social identification)											<i>c'₃</i>	0.490	0.062	[0.366; 0.613]	< .001
X1 x W											<i>c'₄</i>	-0.031	0.134	[-0.294; 0.231]	.806
X2 x W											<i>c'₅</i>	-0.114	0.109	[-0.328; 0.103]	.322
M1 x W											<i>b₃</i>	-0.056	0.043	[-0.140; 0.024]	.175
M2 x W											<i>b₄</i>	0.154	0.038	[0.086; 0.235]	.000
Constant											<i>i_Y</i>	3.201	0.071	[3.062; 3.341]	< .001
		<i>R</i> ² = 0.609								<i>R</i> ² = 0.609					
										<i>F</i> (9, 350) = 60.438 , <i>p</i> < .001					

Mediation effects		Path	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	CI
Relative direct X1		c'1	0.12	0.18	.501	[-.23; .46]
Relative direct X2		c'2	-0.22	0.16	.177	[-.55; .10]
Relative total X1		c1	-0.39	0.20	.047	[-.78; .00]
Relative total X2		c2	-0.44	0.23	.056	[-.89; .01]
			<i>b</i>	<i>bootSE</i>	<i>bootCI</i>	
Relative indirect		a11*d*b2	-0.89	0.11		[-1.12; -.68]
Relative indirect		a12*d*b2	.004	0.08		[-.12; .20]
Relative indirect		a11*b1	-0.06	0.12		[-.30; .16]
Relative indirect		a12*b1	0.00	0.01		[-.02; .04]
Relative indirect		a21*b2	0.44	0.14		[.17; .72]
Relative indirect		a22*b2	-0.26	0.14		[-.55; .02]
Moderation effects						
	Level W	Path	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>	CI
Relative conditional direct X1	-1SD	c'1	0.02	0.22	.921	[-.41; .46]
	Mean	c'1	-0.02	0.16	.913	[-.33; .29]
	+1SD	c'1	-0.06	0.23	.805	[-.51; .39]
Relative conditional direct X2	-1SD	c'2	-0.08	0.21	.706	[-.49; .33]
	Mean	c'2	-0.22	0.15	.131	[-.51; .07]
	+1SD	c'2	-0.37	0.21	.074	[-.77; .04]
			<i>b</i>	<i>bootSE</i>	<i>bootCI</i>	
Relative conditional indirect	-1SD	a11*d*b2	-0.51	0.09		[-.69; -.35]
	Mean	a11*d*b2	-0.69	0.10		[-.89; -.51]
	+1SD	a11*d*b2	-0.86	0.13		[-1.14; -.64]
Relative conditional indirect	-1SD	a12*d*b2	0.02	0.05		[-.07; .11]
	Mean	a12*d*b2	0.03	0.06		[-.09; .15]
	+1SD	a12*d*b2	0.04	0.08		[-.12; .19]
Relative conditional indirect	-1SD	a11*b1	-0.16	0.13		[-.44; .07]
	Mean	a11*b1	-0.03	0.11		[-.25; .18]
	+1SD	a11*b1	0.10	0.17		[-.22; .43]
Relative conditional indirect	-1SD	a12*b1	0.01	0.02		[-.03; .06]
	Mean	a12*b1	0.00	0.00		[-.02; .03]
	+1SD	a12*b1	-0.00	0.02		[-.05; .03]
Relative conditional indirect	-1SD	a21*b2	0.25	0.08		[.09; .42]
	Mean	a21*b2	0.34	0.11		[.12; .56]
	+1SD	a21*b2	0.43	0.14		[.16; .71]
Relative conditional indirect	-1SD	a22*b2	-0.15	0.09		[-.33; .01]
	Mean	a22*b2	-0.20	0.11		[-.43; .01]
	+1SD	a22*b2	-0.25	0.14		[-.55; .01]

Witnessing a disruption featuring mockery vs a disruption without mockery

(Exp1H2a, b). In the context of mockery, we found neither a significant relative indirect effect ($b = -0.05$, $SE = 0.07$, $CI = [-.19; .09]$), nor relative direct effect ($b = 0.00$, $SE = 0.15$, $p = .98$, $CI [-.29; .30]$). Exp1H2a and Exp1H2b were, therefore, not supported. Whilst we, here too, found a significant relative indirect positive effect on support intentions via perceived legitimacy ($b = 0.28$, $SE = 0.12$, $CI [.05; .51]$) which was strongest among high identifiers ($b = 0.19$, $bootSE = 0.08$, $bootCI [.04; .36]$), our main argument referred to the serial effect.

Conditional process analyses. To test whether social identification would moderate the direct and indirect effects, we used Hayes's PROCESS (2023) model 89 for R 4.0.1 using bootstrapping with 10,000 iterations to obtain 95% bias-corrected confidence (see Figure 13 and 17). The mediators and moderator were mean-centred.

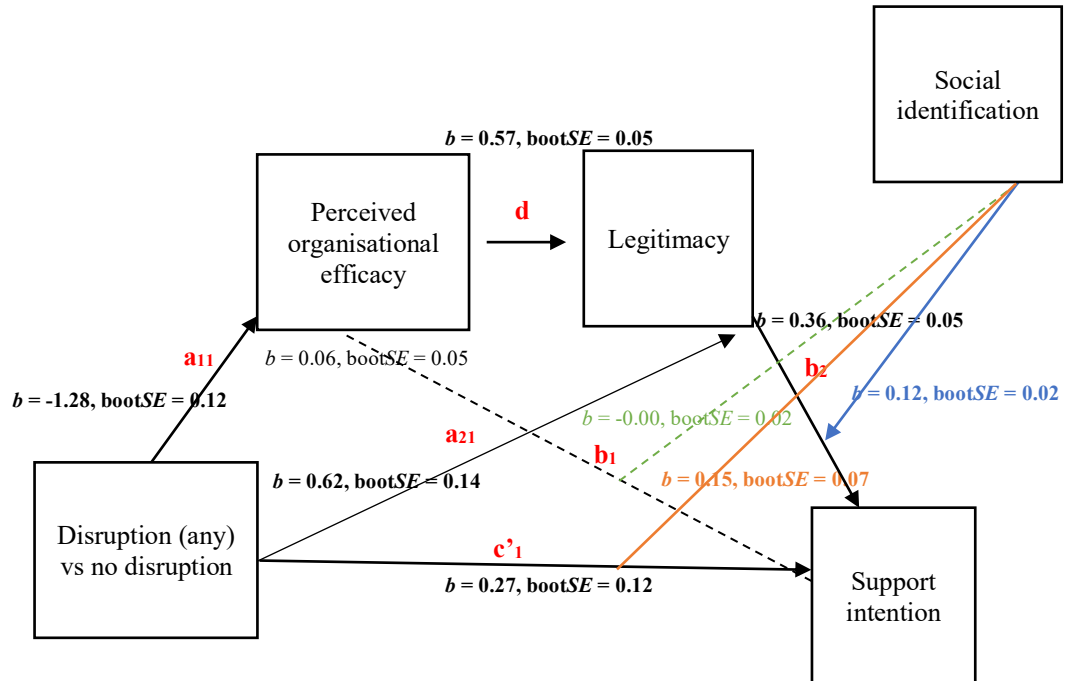
Witnessing any disruption vs no disruption –moderated indirect effect

(Exp1H3a). The relative conditional indirect effect of witnessing any disruption explained by perceived organisational efficacy and legitimacy depended on social identification (index of moderation = -0.09 , $bootSE = 0.02$, $bootCI [-.13; -.05]$). Exp1H3a was, therefore, supported. This effect was the strongest (negatively) among high identifiers ($b = -0.40$, $bootSE = 0.07$, $bootCI [-.56; -.27]$). This can be explained by the observation that the relationship between legitimacy and support intentions for high identifiers was the strongest (and positive) (see Figure 14), and who were, therefore, also the strongest negatively affected when the overall indirect effect on support intentions was negative (see “Witnessing any disruption vs no disruption.”, indirect effect). Results from a Johnson-Neyman analysis showed that the conditional effect of legitimacy on support intention reached significance at social identification levels above 1.53 (see Figure 15). This indicated that, apart from very low identifiers

showing a floor effect in support intention, all other levels were affected by the impact of legitimacy on support intention.

Figure 13

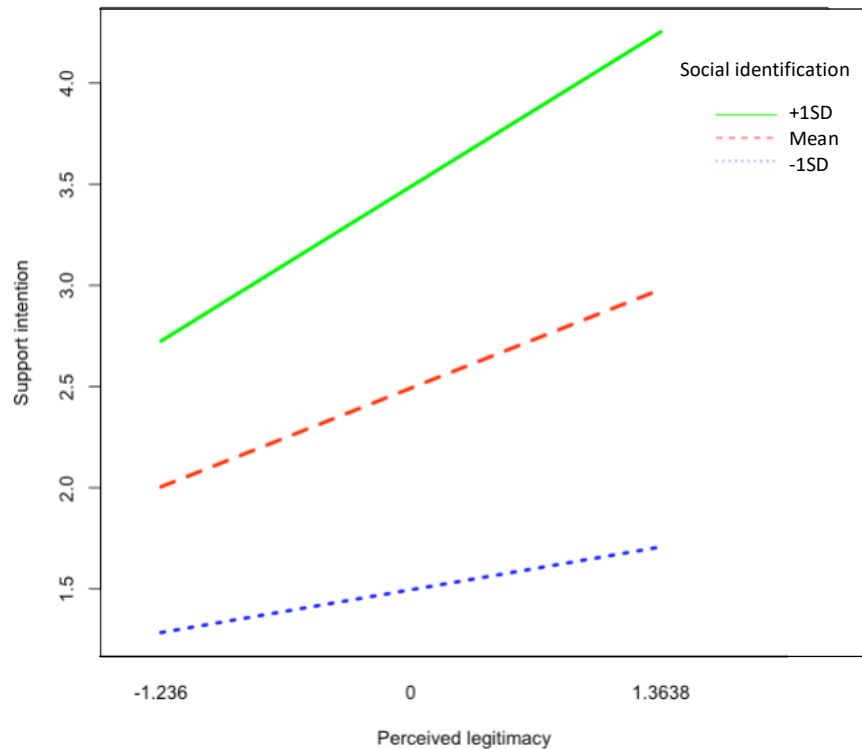
Experiment 1: The effect of witnessing any disruption (any) vs no disruption, Hayes model 89



Note. Results from mediation analyses using bootstrap (10,000 repetitions). Values in bold and solid lines represent significant effects ($p < .05$), values not in bold and dashed lines represent non-significant effects ($p > .05$). The labelled arrows refer to the effects presented in Table 10.

Figure 14

Experiment 1: Conditional effect of perceived legitimacy (mean-centred) on support intention



Witnessing any disruption vs no disruption –moderated direct effect

(Exp1H3b). The effect of witnessing any disruption vs no disruption significantly and positively interacted with social identification ($b = 0.15, p = .025, CI [.02; .29]$)⁵² when predicting support intentions. Thus, the increase in support intention when witnessing a disruption (see above, “Witnessing any disruption vs no disruption.”, direct effect), was stronger among those higher in social identification⁵³. Indeed, the relative conditional direct effects were significant among high ($b = 0.52, SE = 0.16, p = .001, CI [.21; .83]$) and moderate ($b = 0.27, SE = 0.11, p = .017, CI [.05; .49]$) but not low identifiers ($b =$

⁵² Robust regression analyses diminished the statistical significance of the relative direct effect and the interaction with social identification. We noticed that eight out of 13 outliers overlapped with influential cases previously established as driving the increase in support intention based on legitimacy perception and social identification (right affiliated). We did not exclude these outliers from further analyses since these cases appeared as particularly interesting due to the radical-right wing context of the rally.

⁵³ The standard errors for these effects were somewhat large and results may, therefore, not be as accurate.

0.01, $SE = 0.16$, $p = .93$, $CI [-.29; .32]$). However, as mentioned, the direct effect was positive, and we, therefore, rejected Exp1H3b.

Witnessing a disruption featuring mockery vs a disruption without mockery – moderated indirect effect (Exp1H4a). The relative conditional indirect effect of witnessing a disruption featuring mockery on support intention via perceived organisational efficacy and legitimacy (index of moderation = -0.01, bootSE = 0.01, bootCI [-.03; .01]) was not significant, which led us to reject Exp1H4a.

Witnessing a disruption featuring mockery vs a disruption without mockery – moderated direct effect (Exp1H4b). Finally, witnessing a disruption featuring mockery vs disruption without mockery did not significantly interact with social identification ($b = -0.05$, bootSE = 0.11, bootCI [-.16; .06]). Exp1H4b was, therefore, not supported. In other words, it made no difference on support intentions which disruption participants witnessed, as long as they witnessed one (cf. Figure 16).

Figure 15

Experiment 1: Output from Johnson-Neyman analyses (conditional effect of legitimacy on support intention dependent on social identification). The red and black dashed lines separate non-significant (below) from significant areas (above) of the scale

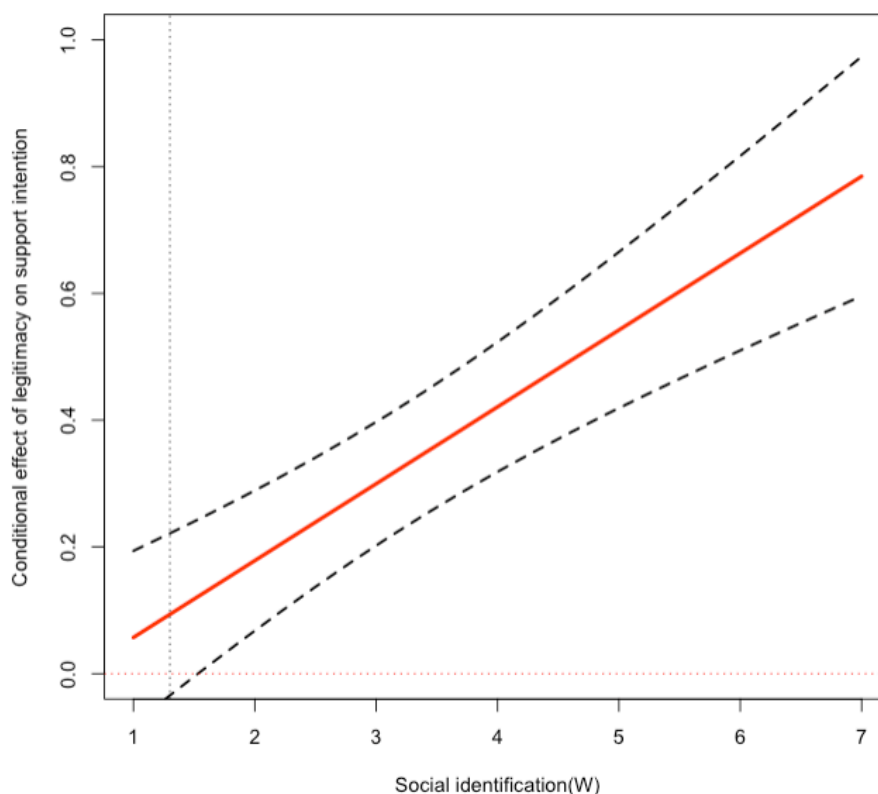
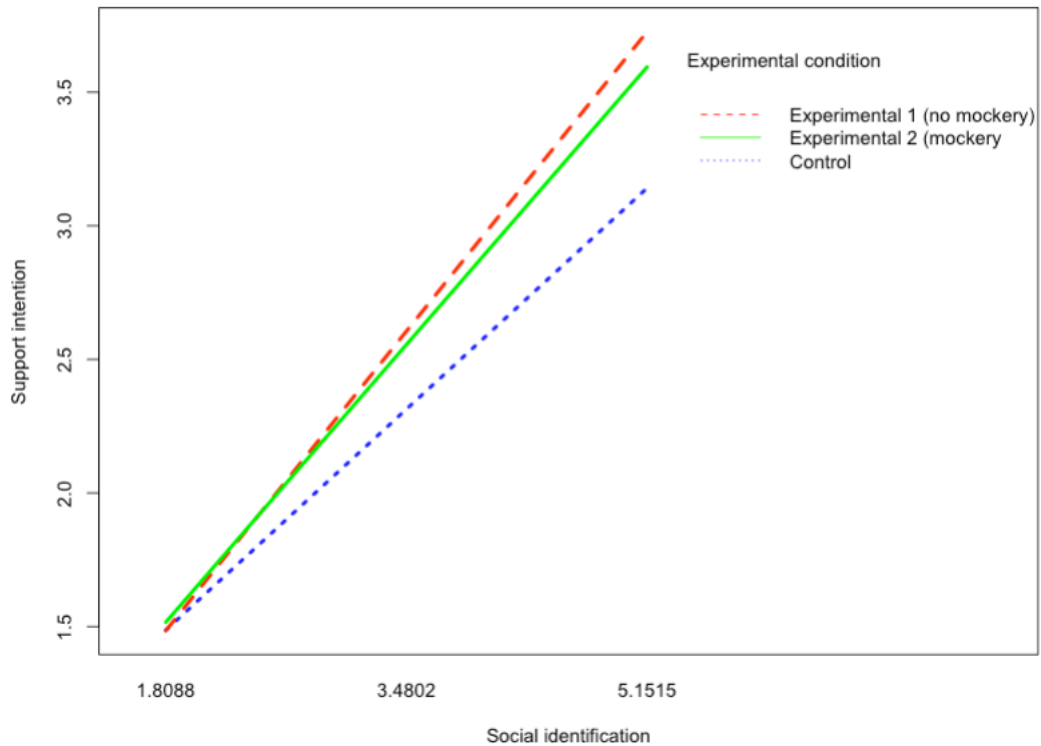
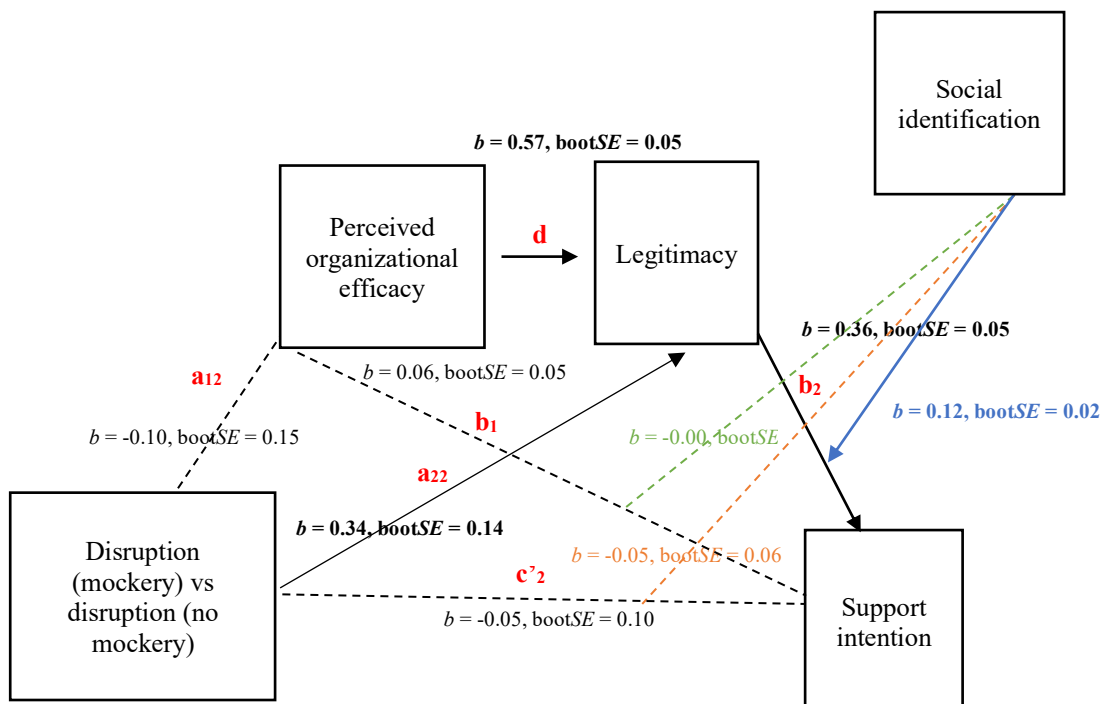


Figure 16

Experiment 1: The effect of social identification on support intentions as a function of experimental condition

**Figure 17**

Experiment 1: The effect of disruption featuring mockery vs disruption without mockery, Hayes model no. 89



5.5.3 Discussion

Experiment 1 examined how disruption to mobilisation (including mockery) can affect support intentions for a far-right street organisation. Perceived organisational efficacy, legitimacy, and support intentions were strongly related. Crucially, as expected, witnessing a disruption (compared to no disruption) was associated with a decrease in support intentions, mostly explained by the negative impact of disruption on perceived organisational efficacy. The direct association between witnessing a disruption (compared to no disruption) and support intentions went in the opposite direction than expected; witnessing a disruption seemed to increase the intention to support the far-right movement. We suggest this indicates that merely learning about disruption may be insufficient to reduce support intentions.

Although we had expected that mockery would have an extra impact of disruption per se, we found no significant effects that were in line with our expectations. This may have been the case because participants did not find the counter-action funny. Thus, in this study, to reduce support intentions, it did not seem to matter what kind of disruption took place as long as there was one.

The pilot study showed that the effects of perceived organisational efficacy and legitimacy on support intentions depended on social identification with the movement, with low identifiers not being affected at all. Building on this, Experiment 1 showed the direct and indirect effects of witnessing a disruption (compared to no disruption) on support intentions depended on social identification. Specifically, the relationships between witnessing a disruption (compared to no disruption) and support intentions, and between perceived legitimacy and support intentions were strongest (positive) among moderate and high identifiers with the movement. We suggest that the latter is also the reason why high identifiers showed the strongest decrease in support intentions in the

indirect effect which was overall negative due to the buffering effect of the manipulation on perceived organisational efficacy.

Overall, moderate *and* high identifiers were susceptible to the effects of disruption through the impact the latter had on attributions of organisational efficacy of the organisation.

5.6 Experiment 2

So far, we have been focusing on a movement whose identity was far-right, and our findings could have been particular to this ideology (and the approval or rejection thereof).

To put the generalisability of our model up to test, in Experiment 2, we repeated the design of Experiment 1 but stripped the fictitious movement off ideology and introduced a neutral movement identity to participants. The design and the hypotheses remained the same as in Experiment 1 (see Appendix 4.4 (Experiment 2) for elaborations on slight deviations from pre-registered hypotheses).

5.6.1 Method

Participants. Based on an a-priori power analysis, we sought a sample size of $N = 360^{54}$ (see Appendix 4.5), which matched the total sample size (365 participants started the study, but five participants did not complete it, all remaining 360 participants gave their consent after having been debriefed). Post-hoc sensitivity analyses for the experimental design showed that a one-way between-subjects ANOVA with 360 participants across three groups would be sensitive to effects of $h_p^2 = 0.03$, with 80% power ($\alpha = .05$).

⁵⁴ The presentation of experiments in this study is reversed to how they were conducted chronologically. Since “Experiment 1” was the central study, we recruited a higher sample for it compared to “Experiment 2”.

Measures. Social identification ($r = .91$) and perceived organisational efficacy ($r = .92$) showed a high inter-item correlation. The legitimacy scale showed high reliability ($\alpha = .87$).

5.6.2 Results

Manipulation checks. As in Experiment 1, there was a statistically significant difference between at least two conditions in the perception of free expression ($H(2) = 140.13, p < .001$) and of a successful rally ($H(2) = 197.15, p < .001$). Those that witnessed no disruption, thereby, again, showed higher scores in perceptions of free expression and a successful rally development ($M = 5.78, SD = 1.04, Med = 6$; successful rally: $M = 5.51, SD = 1.03, Med = 6$) than those that witnessed a disruption (free expression: $M = 3.43, SD = 1.59, Med = 3$; successful rally $M = 2.77, SD = 1.23, Med = 3$), $p < .001$, and those that witnessed the mockery (free expression: $M = 3.64, SD = 1.55, Med = 3.5$; successful rally: $M = 2.77, SD = 1.09, Med = 3$), $p < .001$. Also, there were again no statistically significant differences between the two experimental conditions (free expression: $p = .34$; successful rally: $p = .67$). Participants that were allocated to witness the mockery did not find it particularly funny ($M = 3.17, SD = 1.53$), but estimated others to find it funnier than they did ($M = 3.99, SD = 1.46$), $t(117) = -5.84, p < .001$.

Descriptive statistics. As expected, across all conditions, scores for all measures were highest when participants witnessed no disruption (see Tables 6 and 7 and Figure 9). Welch analysis of variance revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in perceived organisational efficacy between the conditions. Pairwise comparisons using Benjamini-Hochberg correction found that there were significant differences between witnessing no disruption ($M = 4.90, SD = 1.12$) and witnessing disruption – with and without mockery ($M_{exp1} = 2.99, SD_{exp1} = 1.22$; $M_{exp2} =$

3.08, $SD_{exp2} = 1.32$), $p < .001$, $h_p^2 = 0.34$. Analysis of variance and post-hoc pairwise comparisons revealed the difference in means between witnessing no disruption ($M = 4.37$, $SD = 1.31$) and witnessing disruption featuring mockery ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 1.31$) in legitimacy to be significantly different ($p = .001$, $h_p^2 = 0.03$). The same was true for support intention ($M_{control} = 3.57$, $SD_{control} = 1.86$; $M_{experimental2} = 2.96$, $SD_{experimental2} = 1.66$, $p = .024$, $h_p^2 = 0.02$). There were no significant differences between the two experimental conditions ($p = .84$), but those assigned to experimental condition 2 (i.e., that witnessed mockery) expressed lower legitimacy and support intentions than those assigned to experimental condition 1 (i.e., that witnessed a disruption without mockery) (legitimacy: $M_{exp1} = 4.02$, $SD_{exp1} = 1.14$; $M_{exp2} = 3.80$, $SD_{exp2} = 1.31$; support: $M_{exp1} = 3.40$, $SD_{exp1} = 1.78$; $M_{exp2} = 2.96$, $SD_{exp2} = 1.66$). All variables were positively and significantly associated (see Table 6).

In the following, we, again, first present the indirect and direct effects of witnessing any disruption (weighted as 0.333 each again) vs no disruption (-0.667) and of witnessing a disruption featuring mockery (0.05) vs a disruption with no mockery (-0.5). This is followed by the presentation of the conditional process analyses. All models were compared to robust regressions (see Appendix 4.13). We, again, used Hayes's PROCESS (2023) model 6 for R 4.0.1 using bootstrapping with 10,000 iterations to obtain 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals to test the indirect and direct effects.

Witnessing any disruption vs no disruption (Exp2H1a, b). As in Experiment 1, the relative indirect effect of witnessing a disruption vs none on support intentions explained by perceived organisational efficacy and legitimacy was negative ($b = -.89$, $bootSE = 0.11$, $bootCI [-1.12; -.68]$). This was again due to the buffering effect

(negative) of the manipulation on perceived organisational efficacy. Exp2H1a was supported. This time, we found that the relative direct effect of witnessing a disruption was not significantly associated with an increase in support intentions ($b = 0.12$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = .50$, $CI [-.23; .46]$), and we rejected Exp2H1b2. As in Experiment 1, we found that witnessing a disruption compared to no disruption had a positive effect on support intentions via perceived legitimacy ($b = 0.44$, $SE = 0.14$, $CI [.17; .72]$). This effect was strongest among high identifiers ($b = 0.43$, $bootSE = 0.14$, $bootCI [.16; .71]$).

Witnessing a disruption featuring mockery vs a disruption without mockery⁵⁵.

As in Experiment 1, neither the relative indirect effect of witnessing a disruption featuring mockery vs disruption without mockery ($b = 0.04$, $bootSE = 0.08$, $bootCI [-.12; .20]$) nor the relative direct effect on support intentions ($b = -0.22$, $SE = 0.16$, $p = .18$, $CI [-.55; .10]$) reached statistical significance.

Conditional process analyses. We, again, used Hayes's PROCESS (2023) model 89 for R 4.0.1 using bootstrapping with 10,000 iterations to obtain 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals in order to test the moderating function of social identification (see Figure 18, 19, and 20). The mediators and moderator were mean-centred.

Witnessing any disruption vs no disruption – moderated indirect effect

(Exp2H2a). As expected, the relative conditional indirect effect of witnessing a disruption explained by perceived organisational efficacy and legitimacy was, again, dependent on social identification (index of moderation = -0.14 , $bootSE = 0.04$, $bootCI [-.23; -.08]$). Though support intentions were negatively affected across all levels of

⁵⁵ Since “Experiment 2” was chronologically conducted before “Experiment 1”, the investigation of mockery was exploratory and not pre-registered. We, therefore, refrain from using hypothesis numbers for these cases here.

identification this time⁵⁶ (results from Johnson-Neymar analyses revealed no statistically significant transition points within the observed range of social identification), the relative conditional effect was, again, strongest (negatively) among high identifiers ($b = -0.86$, $\text{bootSE} = 0.13$, $\text{bootCI} [-1.14; -.64]$). Thus, Exp2H2a was supported.

Witnessing any disruption vs no disruption – moderated direct effect

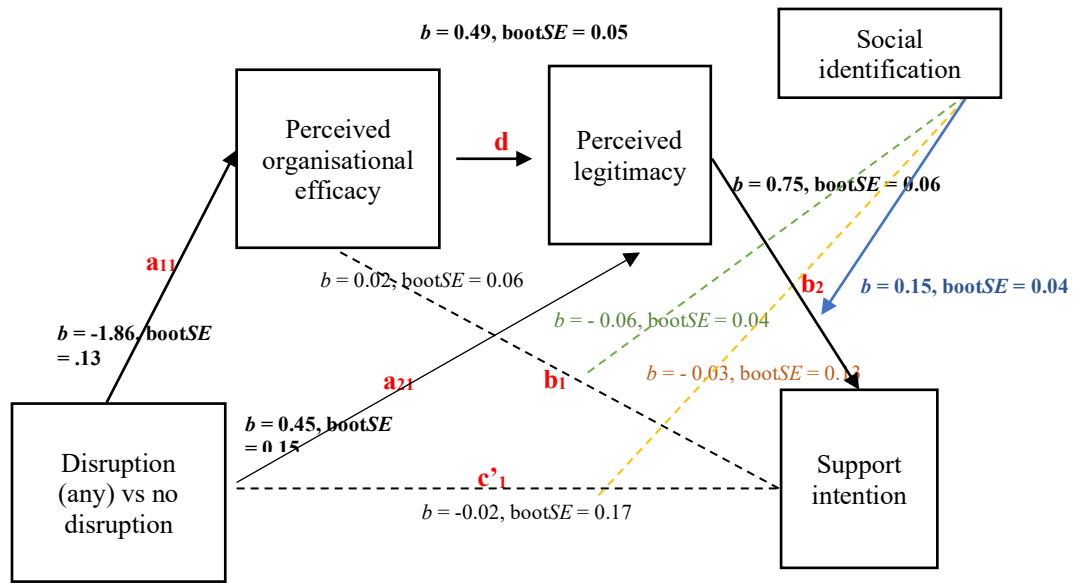
(Exp2H2b). In contrast to Experiment 1, witnessing any disruption compared to no disruption did not significantly interact with social identification ($b = -0.03$, $p = .81$, $\text{CI} [-.29; .23]$) when predicting support intentions; therefore, we reject Exp2H2b.

Witnessing a disruption featuring mockery vs a disruption without mockery – moderated indirect and direct effect. The relative conditional effect of witnessing a disruption featuring mockery compared to a disruption without mockery via perceived organisational efficacy and legitimacy was not significant (index of moderation: 0.01, $\text{bootSE} = 0.01$, $\text{bootCI} [-.02; .03]$), nor did witnessing a disruption featuring mockery vs disruption without mockery significantly interact with social identification ($b = -0.11$, $\text{bootSE} = 0.11$, $\text{bootCI} [-.32; .10]$).

⁵⁶ Initially (see pre-registration), and also because, chronologically, Experiment 2 took place before Experiment 1, we had speculated that, here too, low identifiers' support intentions may not be affected by this. However, this finding makes sense considering that the movement identity was neutral. Thus, Experiment 2 seemed to have been successful in removing any ideology from the identity content.

Figure 18

Experiment 2: The effect of witnessing any disruption vs no disruption, Hayes model 89



Note. Results from mediation analyses using bootstrap (10,000 repetitions). Values in bold and solid lines represent significant effects ($p < .05$), values not in bold and dashed lines represent non-significant effects ($p > .05$). The labelled arrows refer to the effects presented in Table 10.

Figure 19

Experiment 2: Conditional effect of perceived legitimacy on support intention

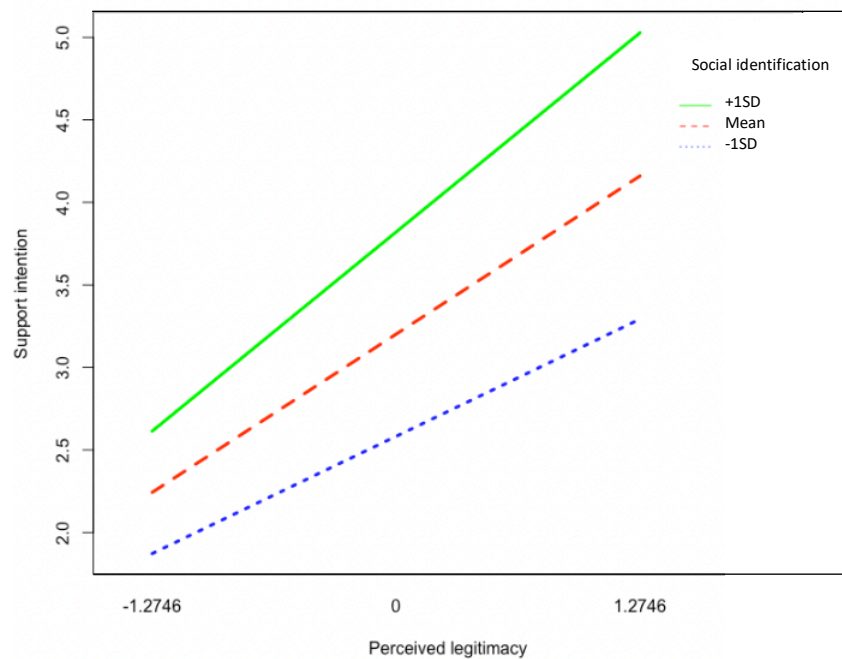
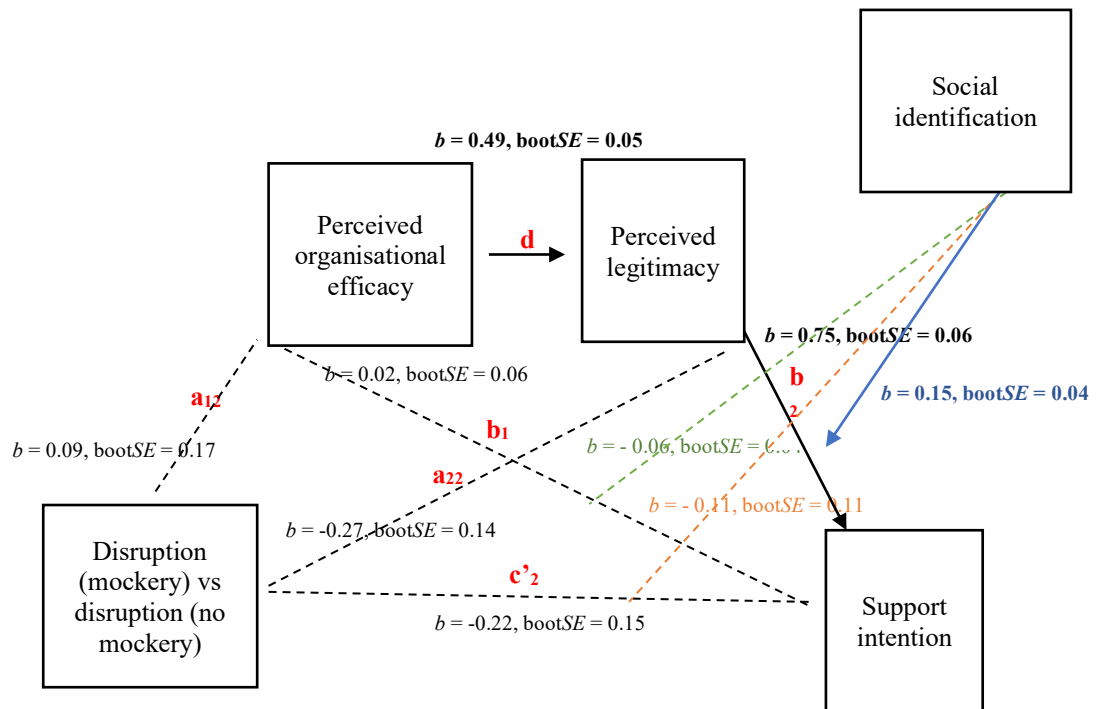


Figure 20

Experiment 2: The effect of disruption due to mockery vs disruption without mockery



Note. Results from mediation analyses using bootstrap (10,000 repetitions). Values in bold and solid lines represent significant effects ($p < .05$), values not in bold and dashed lines represent non-significant effects ($p > .05$). The labelled arrows refer to the effects presented in Table 10.

5.6.3 Discussion

Experiment 2 examined whether the processes evidenced in the pilot study and the results of Experiment 1 were generalisable or particular to right-wing politics. Since we found no floor effect among low identifiers this time, our goal to remove any ideology from the movement seemed to have worked (i.e., there was no strong ideological opposition to the movement as there was in Experiment 1). Removing far-right ideology from the movement in the vignette, we observed the same (serial) process as in Experiment 1: Disruption to mobilisation (compared to no disruption) was negatively associated with lower support intentions, due, again, to a buffering effect of the manipulation on perceived organisational efficacy. As in Experiment 1, the relationship between perceiving the movement as legitimate and support intentions was

stronger among moderate and high identifiers who were also the most (negatively) affected by the indirect effect. Thus, our proposed serial process seems to apply to a far-right as well as to a neutral context. It is, therefore, likely to be a general process. In contrast to Experiment 1, we neither found a positive nor significant direct effect of learning about disruption to mobilisation (compared to no disruption) on support intentions. On the one hand, this again supports our proposal that the process by which support intentions are affected is a serial one (not only in a far-right context but generally); on the other hand, this may indicate that *in* a far-right context (but not in a neutral one), merely learning about disruption can backfire. We will discuss this further below. As in Experiment 1, we found no indicators that mockery added any benefit to disruption. Again, this may have been due to participants not finding the counter-action very funny.

5.7 General Discussion

This study aimed to investigate whether and how disruption to mobilisation can lead bystanders to reduce their support for a far-right movement. We proposed a serial process by which disruption would reduce support intentions indirectly by reducing perceptions of efficacy, in turn, reducing perceptions of legitimacy, as well as directly. We also proposed that different levels of identification with the movement would result in different outcomes: While we assumed that low identifiers would never support a movement, i.e., regardless of perceived efficacy and legitimacy, and high identifiers would always support a movement, i.e., unconditional, and regardless of disruption (cf. Abrams et al., 1990; Ellemers et al., 2002; Terry & Hogg, 1996; Turner et al., 1987), we hypothesised that moderate identifiers would be most susceptible to factors that affect the perception of efficacy and legitimacy caused by disruption (cf. Hogg, 2007; Reicher & Haslam, 2006; Spears, 2021; Saavedra & Drury, 2019; Drury & Reicher, 2000).

Finally, we explored whether disruption via mockery had an even stronger (negative) impact on reducing support intentions than disruption alone.

We found that merely learning about disruption to mobilisation (RQ5.1) had either no (significant) impact on support intentions (Experiment 2) or increased support intentions (Experiment 1). However, in a preceding pilot study, we tested and confirmed our assumption that perceived efficacy (and stereotypic competence) would be associated with support intentions via perceiving the movement as legitimate. In the two experiments then, we consistently found that disruption to mobilisation was associated with decreased support intentions by perceiving the movement as less organisationally efficacious and legitimate (RQ5.2). Using a neutral movement identity in Experiment 2 and still finding the same indirect effects indicated that this process might apply in neutral as well as in a far-right context, i.e., it might be generalisable. Combined, we suggest that these results indicate that merely learning about disruption is insufficient to decrease support intentions (in fact, in a far-right context, it could increase them) and that perceiving a movement as less organisationally efficacious and legitimate are essential mechanisms to reduce support intentions. Thus, the perceived legitimacy of a movement is an important link between perceived efficacy and support intention. This has important implications for understanding effective counter-strategies to the far-right, for whom controlling the streets has been a historically important feature of their movement-building strategy.

We suggested that bystanders' levels of identification with the (far-right) movement play a moderating role in their intention to support it. In the pilot study, we established that, regardless of identification, anyone could judge a movement as

legitimate based on it being viewed as efficacious or perceived as competent by others. Whilst we need to acknowledge that across all three studies, average scores for perceived legitimacy were moderate (i.e., orbiting the scale mid-points), these findings demonstrate that a movement can be seen as credible (*because* it is able to mobilise or viewed as competent by others) even though individuals may not endorse the values that it is associated with (cf. Reicher & Haslam, 2006). Translated to far-right parties, this is particularly concerning, yet it helps to make sense of recent election results in which radical-right parties gained substantial electoral power (e.g., in Italy or Sweden). However, the impact of these key psychological variables on the intention to actively support a movement was a function of social identification. This was consistently the case for the indirect processes, i.e., the relationships between the predictors (perceived efficacy and stereotypic competence, in the pilot study, and witnessing a disruption vs no disruption in the experiments) and the outcome, support intentions (RQ5.3). In the pilot study and Experiment 1 (far-right movement identity), we found that low identifiers were unaffected by the indirect process, which was expected since low identification was informed by holding an opposing political ideology. Stripping the movement off its ideology (Experiment 2) removed this effect. The intention to support the movement was informed by perceiving it as legitimate, which was the strongest among moderate and high identifiers. This finding is in line with what is known about norm-behaviour interactions (J. R. Smith & Terry, 2003; Terry & Hogg, 1996). With increasing group identification, group-relevant norms become more salient and self-relevant, making behaviour (or behavioural intentions) accordingly more likely. For moderate and high identifiers, the relationship between disruption and intention to support the movement explained by organisational inability and illegitimacy was also the most negative. We suggest that this can be explained by reduced attributed

organisational efficacy when the rally was disrupted, which preceded legitimacy in our model. This indicates that support intention among high identifiers was conditional. This finding is in line with research examining sympathy for the US-based alt-right movement. Up until Trump's announcement to run for president, the alt-right had predominantly existed online but grew subsequently in the early Trump era and even organised the infamous "Unite the Right" rally (Southern Poverty Law Center, n.d.a). Using nationally representative data, Thompson and Hawley (2020) showed that affect for the movement increased marginally between 2016 and 2017 (from 30.49 to 31.43 on a feeling thermometer from 0 – 100, with 100 indicating the strongest sympathy). However, most importantly, the authors also showed that between 2017 and 2018, affect declined again (from 31.43 to 27.41). This is relevant for two reasons: First, between 2017 and 2018, the alt-right withdrew from major offline gatherings and rallies due to internal fragmentation and logistical disagreements, and second, the decline was the strongest for those to whom their white identity was "extremely important" (compared to those to whom it was "not at all important"). However, we acknowledge that the finding of conditional support in our study could also be characteristic of our sample, which we recruited from an online sample which might be biased (Prolific, 2023b): Social identification and support intention – *on average* – were low, and "high identifiers" in our samples may not correspond to far-right radicals or extremists in the "real world". However, even if that was the case, our study indicates that disruption to far-right mobilisation could reach a group of swing voters and supporters by affecting their support intentions (also see below).

Our study also revealed some surprising findings. In Experiment 1, instead of reducing support intentions, witnessing a disruption was associated with an increase in support intentions. Again, low identifiers were not affected by this, but moderate and

high identifiers were driving this finding. Thus, merely learning about disruption to a mobilisation one identifies (moderately to strongly) with seemed to heighten the intention to support it (cf. Ellemers et al., 2002; J. R. Smith & Terry, 2003; Terry & Hogg, 1996) in a far-right context. This is in line with research showing that with ingroup-relevant issues (as illegitimate or indiscriminate perceived), outgroup treatment or disillusionment can create (new) radicalised identities (Branscombe et al., 1999; Drury & Reicher, 2000; Maher et al., 2018; Nera et al., 2022). Facing resistance (here, disruption) can legitimise the use of specific means or an entity (i.e., a group, agenda etc.), evidenced by reactance (Castelli Gattinara et al., 2022; Munger, 2017; Nyhan et al., 2010). Castelli Gattinara et al. (2022), for example, indicated that the far-right mobilised more strongly in the context of counter-protest. Others argued that de-platforming far-right extremists online did not erase but only shifted the problem with actors migrating to even more radical platforms and pursuing even more aggressive recruitment (Ali et al., 2021). The reason why a challenged far-right (Experiment 1) but not a neutral movement (Experiment 2) sparked reactance among participants may be the relevance of an issue for an ingroup, as mentioned above. Asylum issues (e.g., the arrival of asylum seekers by boat) have repeatedly been rhetorically inflated by the UK government (e.g., Bland, 2020) and resulted in a shift towards authoritarianism (e.g., Ogden, 2022). It is likely, therefore, that those moderately or strongly identifying with a corresponding agenda as promoted by the bogus far-right social movement may have been, therefore, a) more salient and b) more identity-relevant for our participants. That these effects were mainly driven by high *and* moderate identifiers (i.e., higher identification levels) would align with this. The distance between those moderately identifying with a movement or agenda in question and high identifiers may further be closer than between the former and low identifiers. Recent findings from research on

this question, for example, showed that a group “undecided” whether to adhere to Covid-19 safety measures (i.e., vaccination; Carpentras et al., 2022) or to reject racist statements (Zick & Küpper, 2021) was attitudinally more aligned with those on the right. Therefore, if the goal is to reduce support for far-right actors, movements, or agendas from individuals that are located in these areas, our study has contributed to showing that “no-platforming” (E. Smith, 2020) works by targeting organisational efficacy, which can de-legitimise a movement.

Against our expectation that disruption featuring mockery would (negatively) affect support intentions even stronger due to its diminishing effect on credibility and legitimacy (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; Demasi & Tileagă, 2021; Obadare, 2009; Zeller, 2020), we found no evidence for this in our studies (RQ5.4). Overall, it made no difference to the intentions to support a movement if the disruption featured mockery or not (only that there was disruption). Manipulation checks showed that participants did not find the mocking counter-action particularly funny, which could have contributed to the null findings (cf. “Strengths, limitations, and future directions”).

5.8 Strengths, limitations, and future directions

Over three individual studies, we found consistent effects that allow for generalisability; disruption to mobilisation is associated with support intentions explained by perceiving a movement as less organisationally efficacious and legitimate. A pilot study had shown that perceived efficacy, legitimacy, and support intentions were closely related and had further established the ecological validity of the experimental manipulation that was used to affect these variables. The design in the two experiments allowed distinguishing between the consequences of (un)disrupted mobilisation and different kinds of disruption (albeit we found null effects for the latter). However, we acknowledge that the study is not without limitations.

Methodologically, the serial process was tested correlationally, and the order of the mediating variables in our serial model was not experimentally tested. Future studies may, therefore, experimentally or longitudinally explore the suggested serial process. We also witnessed large standard errors in the positive and significant direct effect of witnessing a disruption (compared to no disruption) on support intentions (Experiment 1) and for the interaction with social identification on the same effect. Thus, these results should be taken with caution. Importantly though, these were not part of the central part of our study – the serial process via perceived efficacy and legitimacy. Further, the measure for organisational efficacy was not fully validated. Finally, the aim of this study was to test the moderating effect of identification on support intentions. Since pre-existing political beliefs were expected (and found) to reflect the extent to which participants would identify with the bogus movement, we recruited participants from a broad political spectrum. However, due to these pre-existing political beliefs – and opposition – the question arises whether the broad recruitment then also constitutes a limitation. Further, if identification merely mirrors political ideology, a moderate location on the scale may not truthfully capture those that are uncertain about whether to support the movement, i.e., those “on the fence”. Although we used an identity-neutral movement in Experiment 2 to explore the “pure” effect of disruption, future studies may, therefore, also want to test the effect of disruption in a context in which a movement is affected that participants support (i.e., a movement that actually exists); a “natural” opposition to the movement, which risks affecting support intentions on grounds of political positioning, would then be void.

Conceptually, in our study, the effect of humorous counter-action on support intention could not be established. Manipulation checks showed that participants did not find the counter-action very funny. On the one hand, the source of mockery (i.e.,

ingroup vs outgroup) can determine whether something is considered funny or not (Platow et al., 2005), and since we did not assess whether participants identified with counter-protesters, we cannot say whether a potential disidentification with them may have played a role. On the other hand, our specific example of counter-protesters loudly making music and dancing during an ongoing rally may achieve a greater effect when witnessed in person rather than vicariously. Thus, future studies might explore the suggested process using different humorous actions or settings.

5.9 Practical implications

Currently, worldwide many societies prosecute (anti-racist) counter-protesters instead of acknowledging their potential to contribute to a regulation of far-right empowerment (Baur, 2022; Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy and Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, 2023; Home Office, 2022; Wood, 2020). There is a risk that by undermining counter-protest, authorities contribute to a climate in which the far-right can flourish, already evidenced by mainstream politics shifting towards the far-right (Mondon & Winter, 2020). The results from our study show that a counter-protest is a crucial tool of a healthy democracy by countering extreme mobilisations, and we strongly advocate against restrictions to counter-protest in this context. We suggest “no platform” works by undermining the target’s organisational efficacy (e.g., by creating disruption), which can affect the far-right’s credibility (Baumgartner & Morris, 2006; A. B. Becker, 2020, 2021).

5.8 Conclusion

Our study was the first to our knowledge that experimentally tested different contexts of counter-protest, including the use of mockery on bystanders’ support intention for a (far-right) movement. We showed that bystanders’ support intentions for a (far-right) movement were associated with disrupted mobilisation, explained by

viewing it as ineffectual and illegitimate. The effects of mockery were ambiguous and require further empirical exploration. The results of this study may serve to inform anti-racist activism and agendas.

Chapter 6 – General discussion

After the Brexit referendum and the Trump election in 2016, RRHC and US-based far-right street mobilisation, temporarily increased (Carr et al., 2020; Devine, 2018, 2021; Home Office, 2017; Miller & Graves, 2020; National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC), 2016; M. L. Williams et al., 2022). My thesis sought to investigate this change in right-wing motivated collective action, i.e., the increase (RQ1) followed by a decline in activity (RQ2). I argued that the "Brexit and Trump effects" required a novel approach that goes beyond the argument that increases in right-wing motivated activity were due to a general change in social norms (Bursztyn et al., 2017; Carr et al., 2020; Crandall et al., 2018; Giani & Méon, 2021; M. L. Williams et al., 2022), or to group-based grievances and related anger – a common factor explaining the participation in collective action (e.g., J. C. Becker et al., 2011; Louis et al., 2007; Outten et al., 2018; Pauwels & Heylen, 2020; J. Rhodes, 2010; Shepherd et al., 2018; Tausch et al., 2011; van Zomeren et al., 2008, 2012). The outcomes of the Brexit referendum and the Trump election namely were celebrated among the relevant actors (Piggott, 2016). The commonalities of RRHC and far-right street mobilisation regarding the belief to act on behalf of a reference group, the coinciding temporal increase of their occurrence, and the similarity of the national contexts, I argued, enabled me to make RRHC and far-right street mobilisation one subject of investigation in the context of my thesis. This allowed me to apply approaches that were concerned with changes in collective behaviour, as well as with perceptions of social norms and subjective power (Drury et al., 2005; Drury & Reicher, 1999, 2000, 2005, 2009). Specifically, the premise of my thesis was that power and legitimacy are closely connected in the way that, on the one hand, electoral power (here, the victorious Brexit and Trump campaigns) supposedly signalled to a xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist

minority that their values and actions are widely supported and understood as legitimate which would increase the likelihood of their enactment, respectively. A further premise was that the enactment would increase the likelihood that a third-party audience perceived the actors and their actions as more legitimate; this allowed for the assumption that if the enactment is contested, this may have a de-legitimising effect, providing a possible explanation for the decline in right-wing activity.

In this chapter, I first summarise and discuss the findings of the three empirical studies (Chapters 3 – 5) in relation to one another and to the premise of my thesis. I then discuss the theoretical and practical implications of my findings, as well as the strengths and limitations of my studies. Subsequently, I provide an outlook on possible future research avenues and conclude my thesis.

6.1 Summary of findings

6.1.1 The effect of the 2020 US Presidential election on social norms meta-perception and empowerment

In 2020, Trump sought to get re-elected as US President, this time against Democratic candidate Joe Biden. As with the election in 2016, the Democratic candidate led in the polls before the election (BBC News, 2020b). However, in contrast to 2016, Biden won the popular and the Electoral College vote (Andre et al., 2020). Study 1 used this background to survey US voters before and after the election for experiences of empowerment, social norms meta-perceptions for xenophobia (here, assessed as false consensus and pluralistic ignorance), as well as the moderating role of a defensive form of identity content (collective narcissism).

The findings revealed somewhat ambiguous results regarding the moderating role of collective narcissism: Whilst it did not predict false consensus perceptions, it did marginally predict a behavioural proxy for hateful discrimination reflecting a narrative

of white victimhood. However, this ambiguity might be explained by deploying a conceptual model that assumed an (unexpected vs expected) successful electoral outcome for the Republican Party, which was not the case (or was at least ambiguous at the time of data collection).

Study 1 did show that Democratic and Republican voters in Study 1 differed in the extent to which they approved of racist remarks (Republican voters expressed significantly higher approval than Democrats) and perceived the prevalence of social norms for xenophobia among "the wider American public". Democratic voters in Study 1 perceived a smaller prevalence of xenophobia⁵⁷ than Republican voters but perceived "the average American" to be significantly more comfortable with violence than themselves. Whilst this may appear contradictory at first, having originated in the realm of public health research, pluralistic ignorance generally refers to a pattern of overestimating (or underestimating, respectively) a majority to hold specific problematic attitudes or to show a corresponding behaviour accordingly (see Sargent & Newman, 2021 for an overview). Thus, the finding that Democratic voters in Study 1 would estimate "the average American" to be significantly more comfortable with violence is not too surprising. Even more interesting, then, is the finding that Republican voters in Study 1 expressed being equally comfortable or even (significantly) more comfortable with violence than "the average American". Thus, the appraisal of what counts as "problematic" or "normative" behaviour is contingent on who the judge is (cf. Abrams et al., 1990; Crandall et al., 2002; Ellemers et al., 2002). Among some groups (here, Republican voters), violence seemed to be considered

⁵⁷ As mentioned elsewhere in my thesis, I contrasted how much agreement participants perceived from "the wider American public" for their own approval of racist remarks. However, since Democrats' voters were rather dismissive of these remarks, I reversed this assessment to account for this and to understand the difference between Republicans' agreement estimation and Democrats' *disagreement* estimation. This showed that Democrats estimated a smaller share of fellow Americans to approve of racist remarks (i.e., to disagree with them) than Republicans did.

normative. These group-based differences in the (meta-) perception of social norms replicated between-subject effects observed in the pilot study for Study 1, in which I compared Labour and Conservative Party voters in the 2019 UK General election. Going beyond the pilot study's cross-sectional design, Study 1 sought to compare voters' responses before and after an election.

However, Study 1 suggested no significant election effects on social norms meta-perception (i.e., significant differences between pre-and post-assessment⁵⁸). Since the effect of elections on the perception of social norms had been robustly established elsewhere (Crandall et al., 2018; Portelinho & Elchereth, 2016; Syfers et al., 2022), I suggest that Study 1 should not be taken as counter-evidence of this causality. Instead, Study 1 seems to reflect the presence of a different social context in which there was no ingroup-relevant victory but rather a defeat⁵⁹ for Republican voters. This is supported by the finding that Republicans expressed significantly lower feelings of empowerment than before the election (and in contrast to Democrats voters who reported a significant increase in empowerment after the election compared to before). Consequently, without an (clear) electoral victory, for the *meta*-perception of social norms, there was little reason for Republican voters to perceive the wider public to be *more* agreeable towards one's group values and norms (here, xenophobia) after the election than before. Instead,

⁵⁸ I observed that Democrats felt significantly more comfortable with violence at time 2 compared to time 1 in one out of the two PI items. However, for this analysis, the difference was very small (and in the opposite direction than predicted), and I further had to drop the factor of unexpectedness (i.e., instead of only considering Democrat voters to whom the election outcome came unexpectedly, I had to consider all Democrat voters due to an otherwise very small sample size). The informative value of this finding is, therefore, compromised.

⁵⁹ One might argue that for some, the result might have been ambiguous rather than a clear defeat since Trump claimed electoral fraud and himself to be the “rightful” winner. This was also fostered by the 2020 election featuring an unprecedentedly high number of absentee voting (e.g., Mayes & Rabinowitz, 2020), who were twice as likely to vote for Biden than for Trump (e.g., Pew Research Center, 2020). With these votes not considered in the early days after the election, the gap between Biden and Trump at first appeared wider than later. The second wave of data collection for Study 1 took place November 17 – 23 2020, thus, relatively close to election day. Nonetheless, the outcome of the 2020 US Presidential election constituted a substantially different situation compared to the outcome of the 2016 election, which is of relevance here.

it is likely that – at least at the time of Study 1 – the persisting influence of "Trumpism" for the four years prior to the 2020 election had caused social norms (for xenophobia, and hence the perception of its prevalence) to be anchored in party membership rather than influenced by the election (indicated by the group-based differences). This assumption is supported by the finding that pre/ post effects slopes rather plateaued. Finally, considering that joy at success (one element of the empowerment measures in Study 1) significantly predicted a proxy for hostile behaviour, the found drop in empowerment could have critical repercussions for undermining such behaviour (see 6.1.3, "The de-legitimising function of undermining identity enactment.").

Overall, the 2020 US Presidential election might have, therefore, neither had a positive effect on subjective power among Republicans nor constituted a novelty like the 2016 US Presidential election introduced Trumpism.

6.1.2 Perceived power at the Unite the Right rally and the Capitol insurrection

Study 1 empirically illustrated that the experience of empowerment among Republican voters was lower after the election than before. The social context of the 2020 US Presidential election was substantially different to the 2016 election. The 2020 election was further marked by Trump's claim about betrayal, fraud, and a stolen election which fostered a picture of the illegitimacy of the election outcome. As elaborated in section 1.2.2 ("Participation in (right-wing) collective action"), the perception of illegitimacy can lead to anger about injustice and, thereby, motivate – and justify – collective action (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; van Zomeren et al., 2008). Therefore, not too surprisingly, this rhetoric fuelled retaliatory action amongst Trump supporters and hate groups (Baird & Sacks, 2020; Barry & Frenkel, 2021; Wagoner et al., 2021). Since the premise of my research concerned particularly a victorious electoral context, it seemed useful to compare these two contexts. Archival work allowed me to examine

two right-wing motivated events taking place in these two different electoral and social contexts; the Charlottesville, VA, "Unite the Right" rally (2017), taking place in the identity-affirming context of the 2016 election and the Washington, DC, Capitol insurrection (2021), taking place in the context of identity-relevant defeat after the 2020 election. In Study 2, I thematically analysed video data for the occurrence of and potential differences in empowerment among attendees alongside evidence of group-based injustice and anger based on common theoretical approaches to collective action. Study 2, therefore, also sought to empirically investigate the "emboldened far-right thesis" (e.g., Foran, 2017; Posner & Neiwert, 2016b; Potok, 2017), which assumes that xenophobic, racist, and white-supremacist individuals and groups were "emboldened" by the outcome of the 2016 US Presidential election. Study 2 revealed that although attendees of the Unite the Right rally discussed group-based injustices, it was their sense of empowerment that dominated the rally. Specifically, I found indicators of proximal (i.e., deriving from the rally) *as well as* distal (i.e., from Trump's electoral victory) empowerment. Conversely, attendees of the Capitol insurrection mainly expressed anger about perceived injustice. However, here too, I found some (albeit fewer) indicators of distal empowerment as well as some proximal empowerment deriving from support perceptions and possibly also from conflict with Capitol police (that were perceived by some as traitors) and by entering the Capitol building.

Thus, Study 2 – particularly the context of the Unite the Right rally – aligns with the argument that achieving (electoral) power legitimised xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups' values and worldviews and empowered them to participate in corresponding action (here, the rally) accordingly.

6.1.3 The de-legitimising function of undermining identity enactment

Whilst Study 2 indicated that the enactment of xenophobic, racist and white-supremacist values and worldviews was empowering for attendees of the Unite the Right rally (and to a smaller extent for those that were involved with the storm on the Capitol building), this enactment might also have a legitimising effect on a third-party audience. The fact that attendees of both rallies were able to at least temporarily mobilise freely and occupy public spaces of relevance may have had critical consequences for public approval of the action and actors. Section 1.2.4 ("Undermining power is de-legitimising (RQ2)") suggested that the sheer ability to enact a certain identity (here, one of xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist nature) may influence the intention to support the corresponding actors/ actions on the part of a third-party audience (Klein et al., 2007). Study 3 suggested and experimentally tested a novel hypothesis about how disruptive anti-racist counter-action might reduce such support intentions for (a fictitious) radical-right movement and its mobilisation by decreasing the perception of the actors'/ action's (organisational) efficacy and legitimacy. I found that merely learning about such a disruption had either no or even a positive effect on support intentions. This is critical because the intention to support was negatively influenced only in a serial process, including the perception of organisational efficacy and legitimacy. It is thereby important to consider that merely learning about disruption as well as observing disruption that featured mockery was associated with an increase of support intentions among sympathisers of the radical right (i.e., those with "moderate" or "high" identification), which may be explained by reactance and radicalisation processes (Ali et al., 2021; Castelli Gattinara et al., 2022; Munger, 2017; Nyhan et al., 2010). Crucially, the negative association with support intentions in the serial process

also had the most negative effect on those sympathisers' intentions (while opponents of the radical-right movement, i.e., those low in identification, were not affected).

The findings from Study 3 have important implications for understanding effective counter-strategies to the far-right for whom controlling the streets has been historically important, and might further provide one answer to RQ2, i.e., what explained the decrease in RRHC and far-right street mobilisation in the context of Brexit and the Trump election? The enactment of ingroup norms requires third-party approval, and the lack thereof can have a punitive effect on such enactment (Klein et al., 2007). Thus, while (electoral) power deriving from the victorious Brexit and Trump campaigns in 2016 may have had a legitimising effect on the actors of RRHC and far-right street mobilisation, challenging the actors' power (efficacy) may have a de-legitimising effect on the intention to support the actors among a third-party.

The results from Study 3 emphasise the importance of "no platform" tactics (E. Smith, 2020), seeking to deny far-right mobilisations any space. The onset of anti-racist counter-movements after the electoral events in 2016 and anti-racist counter-protests during several US far-right rallies throughout 2017 and 2018, respectively (Carr et al., 2020; Miller & Graves, 2020; Swasey, 2017, see 1.2.4, 'Undermining power is de-legitimising (RQ2)') may have affected attributed efficacy, perceived legitimacy of and support intentions for xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups from the public. Since the realisation of social change (here, enacting a social identity accordingly) is dependent on such support (Klein et al., 2007; Simon & Klandermans, 2001), this may provide one explanation as to why the frequency of RRHC declined again and why the US-based far-right eventually withdrew from rallies of the extent of Charlottesville.

Overall, investigating the 2020 US Presidential election illustrated that the 2016 (Brexit and) Trump effect constituted a special socio-political situation for xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups. The 2020 election seemed to foster a reduction of the perception of subjective power and legitimised action-taking on the grounds of perceptions of injustice and anger instead. Archival work allowed me "to go back in time" and compare the impact of the 2016 and 2020 Presidential elections on right-wing motivated collective action, which supported this notion. It further provided some support for my premise about the *unexpected* 2016 US Presidential election outcome preceding social norms meta-perceptions on the part of xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups and legitimising and empowering (mere) identity-realising action. Finally, undermining such enactment seemed to have a de-legitimising effect and reduced support intentions for the actors on the part of a third-party audience which may constitute one factor that can explain why such enactment decreased again.

6.2 Theoretical implications

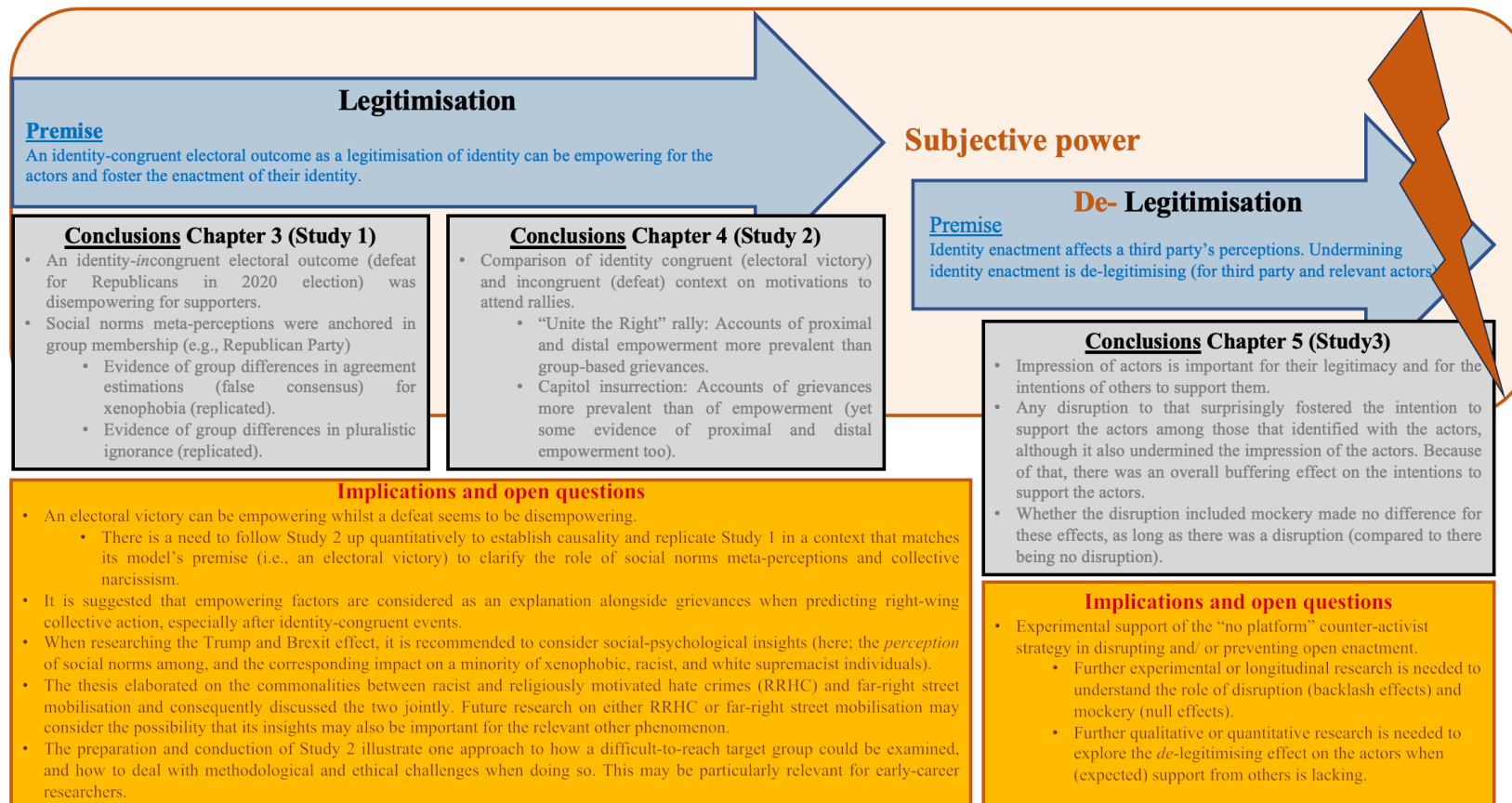
This subsection outlines the most critical implications of my research regarding the theoretical advances for the study of right-wing motivated collective action on the part of social psychology. Figure 21 provides an overview of how the conclusions from the empirical studies (Chapters 3 – 5), the theoretical and practical implications, and open questions map onto the premises of my thesis.

6.2.1 Researching the Brexit and Trump effects

My thesis builds on and extends approaches from scholars in economics, criminology, and political science that classified the Brexit referendum and the Trump election as trigger events, changing general social norms and allowing for the subsequent spikes in RRHC (Carr et al., 2020; Devine, 2018, 2021; Dunbar, 2022;

Figure 21

Overview of how the conclusions of the empirical chapters, the theoretical and practical implications, and open questions map onto the premise of this thesis



Feinberg et al., 2022; Giani & Méon, 2021; M. L. Williams et al., 2022). The Trump effect, thereby, also comprised the stimulating effect of the Trump election on the general US-based far-right, specifically the increase in street mobilisation (e.g., rallies) peaking in the "Unite the Right" rally in 2017. These approaches largely discussed RRHC and far-right activism as separate entities. In my thesis, I argued that some characteristics of the national events (i.e., Brexit and the election of Trump), the temporal coincidence of the activities' occurrence, and the activities themselves (i.e., acting with or on behalf of a meaningful reference group) allowed for discussing the two jointly when examining the social-psychological explanations for the (sharp and sudden) changes in right-wing motivated collective action. This also complements social-psychological work on the effects of Brexit or Trump, which predominantly operates in frameworks of populism, polarisation, or leadership (Federico & Golec de Zavala, 2018; Golec de Zavala et al., 2017; Golec de Zavala & Keenan, 2022; Haslam et al., 2022; Maher et al., 2018; Marchlewska et al., 2018; Reicher & Ulusahin, 2020; Uysal et al., 2022). Applying the social identity approach and theoretical and empirical insights from collective action research, I argued that power and legitimacy are closely connected. In contrast to populism studies (often focussing on the power and legitimacy of leaders), in my approach, I focussed on individuals and right-wing actors and the latter's identity enactment and its effect on a third-party audience. In this way, my approach elaborated and lent greater depth to the argument that classified the Brexit referendum and the Trump election as trigger events by explaining *whose* social norms were affected and why the spread of hate was not generically "contagious" but based on a shared social identity. Carr et al. (2020) pointed out that counter-action increased in conjunction with spikes in right-wing motivated collective action, which provided a first indication as to why the action decreased again. Social-psychological work had

explored the effect of the efficacy of collective action and the effect of an audience (e.g., Saab et al., 2015; Thomas & Louis, 2014). However, I argued and experimentally showed that the missing link to support intentions was the perceived legitimacy of the actors (cf. Jiménez-Moya et al., 2019). Thus, this extends work on the Brexit and Trump effect and social-psychological work on collective action.

6.2.2 Complementing research approaches to right-wing motivated collective action

One of the objectives of Study 2 was to address the fact that, commonly, research that seeks to explain participation in right-wing motivated collective action focuses on a narrative of perceived group-based grievances and related emotions such as anger (e.g., J. C. Becker et al., 2011; Louis et al., 2007; Outten et al., 2018; Pauwels & Heylen, 2020; J. Rhodes, 2010; Shepherd et al., 2018; Tausch et al., 2011; van Zomeren et al., 2008, 2012). Following this approach provides a critical explanation as to how a (even objectively not disadvantaged) collective identity can be construed in a way that individuals come to understand themselves and their group as victims. This approach can, therefore, be particularly useful in a right-wing context when examining recruitment strategies. However, a first indicator that this narrative may be limited to fully explain participation in right-wing motivated collective action after the Brexit referendum and Trump election was that the outcomes of the events neither posed a threat to nor were they rejected by the relevant actors – in contrast, the outcomes were celebrated (Piggott, 2016). By investigating not just general participation but particularly temporal changes in participation, I argued and empirically showed (Study 2) that alongside considering perceptions of threat, injustice, and emotions of anger, identity affirmation and corresponding experiences of empowerment and positive emotions should be equally considered as antecedents when examining right-wing motivated collective action. In this way, my research contributes to the field that seeks

to explain dynamics in collective action, including the effect of (distal) ingroup-relevant events, successes and subsequent collective action intentions and transformations of identity (Bliuc et al., 2019, 2020; Drury & Reicher, 1999, 2000, 2005, 2009; Tausch & Becker, 2013).

6.2.3 Extending the application of the ESIM model of empowerment

One model that dominates the discussion of identity transformation during ongoing conflict is the ESIM (Drury & Reicher, 1999; Reicher, 1984, 1996; Stott & Drury, 2000). ESIM has previously investigated crowd dynamics between protesters and police in the context of progressive movements, i.e., those concerned with fighting injustice and conflict between football fans and police. It, thereby, examined in-situ intergroup conflict and the experience of proximal empowerment, i.e., empowerment deriving from ongoing conflict situations. Due to its core focus on power relations and identity transitions (due to a perception of shared norms), ESIM's model of empowerment was central to my research. I argued and empirically showed (Studies 1 – 3) that its framework can also be applied to the electoral context of the Brexit referendum and the Trump election; hence, contexts in which the perception of shared social norms and the experience of empowerment may derive distally from the electoral events (rather than from ongoing intergroup relations). Thus, my research extended ESIM's model of empowerment in two ways: 1. I applied it to an electoral (distal) context and 2. to right-wing motivated collective action.

6.3 Practical implications

6.3.1 Researching right-wing motivated collective action

One of the most critical challenges I faced in my research project was accessibility to the phenomena of interest due to feasibility, ethical issues, and researcher safety (see Chapter 2, "Researcher position, epistemology, and ethical

considerations"). Commonly, relevant dynamics proposed by the ESIM model of empowerment were studied by engaging with the individuals and groups of interest directly. The lack thereof challenged the integrity of my research, which is particularly threatening when being in the position of an ECR (Conway, 2021). In fact, the challenges I faced are generalisable to an entire cohort of interdisciplinary (junior *and* senior) researchers (The Ethics of Researching the Far & Extreme Right [@EthExNetwork], n.d.).

Thus, Study 2 sought to "gain access" to a phenomenon that had already taken place (the Unite the Right rally 2017 and the Capitol insurrection 2021) and to individuals and groups to which I, as a woman, foreigner, and researcher, could have been perceived as "alien" (at best). Further, the nature of the phenomenon and individuals' and groups' worldviews and values kept me from engaging with them directly accordingly. The compromise that reconciled my position as a researcher, accessibility, feasibility, epistemology, and ethics was archival work. Thus, I shared my experiences from the preparations of conducting Study 2 and the archival approach to the study with other researchers concerned with extremism from the above network in the form of a book chapter. In this way, my work contributed to the wider call to reform the handling of ethics in extremism studies.

6.3.2 Predicting increases in right-wing motivated collective action and the role of direct action in countering these

Understanding when right-wing motivated collective action is likely to (sharply and suddenly) increase is not only important because such action can have detrimental consequences for those concerned by it (i.e., victims of hate crimes and corresponding communities, counter-protesters; e.g., Paterson et al., 2018; The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), 2021), but also because it seems to affect

public perceptions of its legitimacy as experimentally supported in Study 3 of my research. Thus, it should be in the legitimate interest of stakeholders (i.e., authorities, politicians, academia, the media, counter-movements, and the public) to predict, prevent, and effectively counter right-wing motivated collective action. However, although "white supremacists and other far-right-wing extremists are the most significant domestic terrorism threat facing the United States" (Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act of 2019, 2019, Sec. 2 (1)) and the far right is considered a threat to democracy (e.g., Heinrich Böll Stiftung Brussels European Union, 2015; Miller-Idriss, 2021; Mudde, 2022), there seems to be a reluctance (or denial) to recognise the contributions to this on the part of liberalism and liberal democracy itself. Mainstream politics have adopted far-right narratives and agendas (Mondon & Winter, 2020). The UK-wide "Prevent" programme that aims to "prevent" the first signs of radicalisation among students, for example, has disproportionately targeted the Muslim community by putting it under general suspicion (e.g., Nezirevic, 2022; The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015), whilst refugees are at risk of being deported to Rwanda (House of Commons Library, 2022). By doing so, the UK government undermines international law and contributes to the problematic treatment of asylum-seeking people (UNHCR, 2022). On an executive level, police forces have been shown to be embedded in a culture and socialisation of misogyny and racism (e.g., Dunbar, 2022; R. Hall, 2023; Independent Office for Police Conduct, 2022; Kopke, 2022). At the same time, the conviction rate is substantially low (R. Hall, 2023) and instead, the police are given more power to police crowds at protests (Home Office, 2022). In the US, the hate group Oath Keepers specifically targets police officers or veterans in their recruitment (Anti-Defamation League (ADL), 2015). Among those storming the Washington Capitol on January 6, 2021, for example, were members of the Oath Keepers – that were also

active police officers (Program on Extremism, 2021). Whilst these examples refer to state authorities, the impact of liberalism on right-wing narratives and agendas does not halt before academia or the scientific field more broadly. Mondon (2022), for example, argues that the striving for (alleged) scientific objectivity might explain why "whiteness becomes an unquestioned, invisible norm despite being core to the power structures currently in place, even though they are also central to far-right politics. As such, academia and far right studies reinforce this hegemonic status by lending credibility to the normality of whiteness through its absence in the discussion of (far-right) politics" (pp. 14, 15; see also: Bhambra, 2017; Mondon & Winter, 2017). Mondon (2022) concludes that more researchers framed their research objective under the umbrella of "populism" than outrightly referring to it as "racism" or "whiteness"⁶⁰, and thereby avoided to acknowledge systemic failures and academia's participation in it.

Thus, whilst one might be inclined to view liberalism and liberal democracy as inherently "good", the above only lists a handful of examples of why it should also be viewed as adaptable to and fostering systematic isms (e.g., racism). In fact, many of the progressions that societies in many countries nowadays enjoy (e.g., abolition of slavery, women's voter rights, same-sex marriage, a weekend!) were not achieved because, but despite mainstream liberalism (Mondon & Winter, 2020). Thus, "the lesson of history is that dominant groups hardly ever just give away their power. It is taken from them by the collective action of subordinated group members" (Reicher, 2012, p. 42). Not surprisingly then – yet profoundly regretful – is that worldwide many ("liberal") societies increasingly punish or at least undermine protest culture (Amnesty

⁶⁰ Mondon (2022) found that of the 2,543 articles he collected for his mixed methods study on the prevalence (or absence) of references to racism and whiteness in the field of far-right studies, 46.8% framed the research under "populism" (word stem "populis*"), whereas only a minority outrightly referred to racism or whiteness ("rac*" (11.2%), "racis*" (6.9%), "white*" (5.3%), "whiteness" (0.5%)).

International, 2023; Baur, 2022; Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy and Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP, 2023; Home Office, 2022; Wood, 2020). In undermining and restricting the right to protest lies a high risk of contributing to the establishment of right-wing actors and actions. In fact, in their comprehensive analysis of the mainstreaming of the far-right, Mondon and Winter (2020) explain how – what they coined – "liberal racism" fosters right-wing actors and action by platforming, *emboldening*, and *legitimizing* it. The adoption of far-right narratives has created a hostile environment for immigrants and refugees (Home Office, 2020; e.g., House of Commons Library, 2022; Nezirevic, 2022; The Muslim Council of Britain, 2015) and a breeding ground for right-wing actors and supporters to assume such majority support and to enact an alleged consensus accordingly. In my research, I addressed this and showed that socio-political contexts of political affirmation of far-right narratives and agendas can contribute to participation in right-wing motivated collective action. Study 2 of my research illustrated this in the context of the Trump election.

In the public eye, the so-called "lone wolf" narrative often directs attention to the individual vulnerabilities of radical actors (e.g., mental health; Noor et al., 2019) whilst an emphasis on contextual and structural influences or a "leaderless resistance" style of operating (Lindekilde et al., 2019, also see Chapter 1.2.1 subsection, "Hate crimes as a collective action") remain short. Further, since state-funded programmes often report *to* a government (HM Government, 2015), programmes to prevent and counter violent extremism (P/CVE) risk neglecting the impact of fuelling (i.e., identity-affirmative) rhetoric and policies on the part of mainstream politics *themselves*. It is further unhelpful that many of these programmes often lack transparency and systematic evidence of effectiveness (e.g., Lewis et al., 2020). My thesis should, therefore, be understood as an advocacy for P/CVE practices to consider the role of identity

affirmation on the part of mainstream politics, media as well as academic research. Further, Study 3 of my research showed that direct action is an effective means to decrease an audience's perception of the legitimacy of right-wing actors and actions, which, in turn, affects the support intention for these. Consequently, where protest is penalised or at least hampered on the part of (legislative and executive) authorities, the tool of active counter-action risks being missing from the toolbox of P/CVE practices. My thesis should, therefore, also be viewed as a strong proposal for the right of active anti-fascist and anti-racist protests.

6.4 Strengths, limitations, and future research

6.4.1 Strengths and limitations

Overall, the main strength of the empirical work conducted in my thesis is the deployment of mixed methods comprising cross-sectional surveys, a panel study, a thematic analysis of video data, and experiments that together allowed for exploratory and confirmatory analyses. Particularly critical and extensively discussed throughout my thesis was the archival work conducted in Study 2, which allowed me to overcome several challenges and provide critical insights. Further, two studies (Study 1 and 3) were preceded by pilot studies which fostered the ecological validity of the main studies. Study 3 further showed comparable trends over three related but independent studies. This provides the results with robustness. Conceptually, as I have illustrated in the previous section, my research builds on and extends existing accounts towards explaining temporal changes in right-wing motivated action, which can meaningfully complement existing research.

However, my research is, of course, not without limitations. In the following, I discuss the main ones of the empirical work (all limitations are discussed in detail in the corresponding chapters) as well as the limitations of the research project overall. Study

1 took place over two-time points, with the outcome of the election not being entirely clear at time 2 of data collection. As discussed in Chapter 3 ("Social Norms Misperception Among Voters in the 2020 US Presidential Election"), this ambiguity could have influenced the results⁶¹. The measure to establish the false consensus effect was not without controversy either because, in the literature, it had been understood and deployed in different ways. Due to attrition over the two points of data collection, Study 1 further suffered from a lack of statistical power. However, whilst the study was generally correlational in nature, the data collection over two-time points provided some insight into the impact of the election, which was the main objective of Study 1. The archival approach in Study 2 allowed me to investigate events that had passed and the experiences of those that attended. Whilst this provided valuable insights, some of the methodological disadvantages were the dependency on the freely available material. I further acknowledge that some accounts might have been expressed *because* of being recorded. Study 2 can further not attest causality, which the investigated "emboldened far-right thesis" assumes. Study 3 provided robust insights into the effect of disruption on perceptions of efficacy, legitimacy, and support intentions. However, whilst the impact of disruption was experimentally established, the order of the variables in the serial process was derived solely from theory.

For my overall research project, limitations need to be discussed regarding restricted accessibility, Western centrism, and the reference to electoral contexts. My research premise made the perception and experiences of xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist individuals and groups the subject of the discussion; however, I have not directly engaged with these. Further, the overall premise of my thesis concerned both

⁶¹ Whilst there were null effects for pre/ post effects of the election on the perception of social norms, which, one could argue, could be due to the methodology, I did observe an effect on the experience of empowerment. Therefore, it is unlikely that the method was inefficient but rather that the election affected the perception of social norms and empowerment differently.

temporal changes in RRHC after the Brexit referendum and the Trump election, as well as US-based street mobilisation. However, the empirical work of my thesis was predominantly concerned with the Trump election (Studies 1 and 2) and far-right street mobilisation (Studies 2 and 3). Thus, restricted accessibility (to individuals and groups, as well as to parts of the activity) and US-centrism urge the question of whether my findings are applicable to the initial premise and generalisable beyond.

Whilst the accessibility to the relevant individuals was indeed complicated (see Chapter 2, "Researcher position, epistemology, and ethical considerations"), in Studies 1 and 3, I had some access to individuals that approved of racist remarks (Study 1) or identified (moderately to highly) with a presented radical right movement (Study 3). Analysing videos of the Unite the Right rally and the Capitol insurrection furthermore provided me with in-situ statements and actions made *by* rally attendees. Importantly, some of these videos were made by the actors themselves. The topical alignment of these videos with other video sources (e.g., from news outlets), therefore, increases the ecological validity of my data overall.

In Study 1, the measures for pluralistic ignorance and false consensus (as a way to assess social-norm meta-perception for xenophobia) featured items that explicitly assessed (own and perceived) comfort with violence and approval of racist remarks⁶². Thus, my empirical work featured some proxies for hatred. However, the restricted availability to assess RRHC in my thesis is predominantly compensated by the fact that other right-wing collective action behaviour for which I gained data (i.e., far-right street mobilisation; Study 2 and 3) shares crucial commonalities with RRHC: In section 1.2.1 ("Defining the scope"), I explained that I would jointly discuss RRHC and far-right street mobilisation based on showing that not only do both activities share the element

⁶² The study further featured a proxy for behavioural hostile intentions. However, the (small) sample size did not allow me to engage in meaningful statistical analysis.

of acting with or on behalf of a meaningful reference group, but also showed coinciding temporal changes in the same or comparable national and structural contexts. Thus, I suggest that RRHC behaviour can be explained by the same processes that I examined regarding far-right street mobilisation.

The premise of my research and its empirical work is Western-centric in the way that I predominantly referred to two events that took place in the UK and the US, and the empirical research was conducted using participants from the corresponding countries, respectively. Therefore, replicating or building upon my work in different national contexts would be beneficial. However, there is no reason to assume that the suggested and examined dynamics regarding social norms meta-perception and empowerment should be fundamentally different in other (national) contexts. First, the link between elections and the perceptions of social norms has been made in other national contexts (Portelinha & Elcheroth, 2016). Second, previous work in the ESIM empowerment framework was furthermore concerned with contexts such as progressive social movement protests or football (Drury & Reicher, 2000, 2005; Stott et al., 2007). I, therefore, argue that the empowerment process and experience are universal, but the outcome of the action is contingent on the relevant (collective) identities and social norms that apply (e.g., Badea et al., 2021; Crandall et al., 2002; Golec de Zavala et al., 2019; Postmes & Smith, 2009).

Nonetheless, there are examples outside of an electoral context that appear particularly suitable to be examined under consideration of the insights of my thesis – for instance, the case of the recently overturned abortion rights in the US. "Pro-life" activists (an umbrella term for anti-abortion and anti-feminist movements aiming to make abortion from the early onset of pregnancy and even in exceptional circumstances illegal; e.g., Holland, 2023) have traditionally marched every January since 1973. In

1973, a landmark legal case in the US ruled that restrictions on abortion were unconstitutional (Roe v Wade; e.g., Roe v. Wade, n.d.). However, the case was overturned by the US Supreme Court in June 2022 (Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, 2022). As a response, pro-life activists (in and beyond the US) were described as celebrating and being "emboldened" by the Supreme Court's decision to harass patients outside of planned parenthood clinics (e.g., Beaty, 2022; Lonas, 2022; Vardy, 2022). Although the majority of US citizens do not support the court decision (Pew Research Center, 2022), among pro-life activists, the jurisdictional power of the Supreme Court decision – as the highest court in the US – may have legitimised corresponding action, i.e., undermining any action that sought to foster the right for abortion. The proximity of pro-life to far-right ideology, thereby, further emphasises the comparability to and potential suitability of my thesis (e.g., Samuels & Potts, 2022; The Guardian, 2022). Therefore, the approach suggested and empirically explored in my thesis is likely generalisable to other contexts, such as anti-abortion.

6.4.2 Future research

I concluded from Studies 1 and 2 of my research that the immediate socio-political context (i.e., ingroup-relevant victory vs defeat) of the Brexit referendum and Trump election in 2016 and the 2020 US Presidential election was different and that this could have affected the perceptions of legitimacy and experience of empowerment of individuals and groups that attended the Charlottesville Unite the Right rally and the Capitol insurrection differently. In fact, some have argued that the (US) far-right underwent a shift in strategy and activity since the alt-right era (i.e., early years of Trump's presidency) and the (initial) decline of large-scale far-right street mobilisation. Narratives and strategies turned more extreme and violent, aiming to "accelerate" the collapse of socio-political relations and democracy more broadly (Beauchamp, 2019;

Hughes & Miller-Idriss, 2021; Miller & Graves, 2020). These efforts climaxed in the Washington Capitol insurrection in early 2021, taking place shortly after the 2020 Presidential election.

Relatedly, collective action scholars have started to explore the possibility of right-wing collective action being concerned with demanding a change to the status quo rather than merely aiming to maintain it (e.g., Liekefett & Becker, 2022; Subašić et al., 2021; Thomas & Osborne, 2022)⁶³. This argument is built on the assumption that the system/ status quo/ intergroup relations are unjust or illegitimate (vs just), which increases the likelihood of opposing it accordingly (Jost et al., 2017; Osborne et al., 2019; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In my own work, I observed that collective action was motivated by the perception of group-based grievances and related emotions, such as anger in the context of the ingroup-relevant defeat of the 2020 US Presidential election (examined within the immediate context of the Capitol insurrection). This could be understood as perceiving the system as unjust. For some Trump supporters, his narrative of electoral fraud was identity-relevant and may have legitimised collective action based on perceptions of grievances and anger (Haslam et al., 2022; see also: Drury et al., 2020). Attending the event may have then been marked by aiming to achieve a radical change in socio-political relations (i.e., a change to the status quo) due to perceiving the government as illegitimate (Scrivens et al., 2020). For others, however, Trump's call for his supporters to come to Washington DC might have created a petri dish to pursue their own interests (Reicher et al., 2022). In 2018, Richard Spencer declared that the Trump movement was over due to a lack of trust in Trump's ability to authentically represent the ingroup's interests (Miller & Graves, 2020). Although white supremacist hate groups

⁶³ Of course, the lines between what counts as “status-quo maintaining” vs “status-quo challenging” collective action are somewhat blurry. National context and time can determine whether collective action could be considered as one kind or the other (Thomas & Osborne, 2022).

were present and strongly driving the violent occupation of the Washington Capitol building during the Capitol insurrection (Program on Extremism, 2021), instead of doing this on the grounds of hailing Trump, it is more likely that these groups were empowered by the weakness of a mutual enemy (i.e., the government; cf. Drury et al., 2020). This is supported by the finding that many did not attend Trump's speech at the beginning of the march but had already located themselves near the Capitol and tried to overcome the barriers (Roberts, 2021). Although Study 2 found the Capitol insurrection was predominantly marked by narratives of grievances and anger, there were indicators of proximal *and* distal empowerment, too. The latter was, thereby, characterised by the perception to act upon a consensus and, hence, to be supported. Consequently, even in situations where it may appear as if collective action is a function of perceptions of an unjust system and the intentions to change this, I suggest that future research should consider perceptions and experiences of support among the actors, too.

One way to obtain support for an ingroup-relevant goal is to influence a greater audience (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). I discussed in subsection 1.2.4 ("The intergroup effect of identity enactment") and showed in Study 3 that the (in)efficacious enactment of identity (e.g., a march, specific actions, or rally) of such also has consequences for an audience's perception of the legitimacy of the actors/ actions and intentions to support these. In the study, I also showed that these effects were stronger among those who sympathised and identified with the right-wing actors and agenda; however, the dynamics behind identification were not further discussed. It is important to understand why some come to support specific agendas or groups in order to prevent not only this but also decrease the possible legitimising effects of this support on the relevant right-wing actors.

It may be tempting to aggress against those that identify with a group, agenda, or policy if these lie at the attitudinally and ideologically opposite end. For example, Hillary Clinton, in the 2016 US Presidential campaign, referred to Trump supporters as "deplorables" (e.g., Jacobs, 2016) and individuals that did not adhere to Covid-19 safety measures during the global pandemic were called out as "covididiots" (with French President Emmanuel Macron singling out and intending to exclude those that were unvaccinated; BBC News, 2022).

However, referring to an outgroup as one (socially undesirable) entity when it may be a heterogeneous group at first can have unwanted consequences. The ESIM framework discusses how externally imposed homogeneity can eventually lead those concerned (a moderate majority) to share an identity with other group members (a radial minority) (Drury & Reicher, 2000). Imposing homogeneity on the part of mainstream politics may risk not taking the grievances of some (that may lie behind controversial political decisions or non-compliance with health and safety measures) seriously (Reicher & Haslam, 2017)⁶⁴.

Models that aim to foster participatory democracy may re-install perceptions of "collective agency" among citizens; hence, re-install perceptions of being taken seriously, by providing opportunities for (local) citizen-consulted political decision-making processes (Taylor et al., 2020, p. 6). However, it may be easy to fall prey here to the (liberal) notion that all it takes to prevent the experience of social exclusion is to meet the excluded individuals "somewhere in the middle" (Mondon & Smith, 2022). This is because "the middle" has already been pulled to the right (Mondon & Winter, 2020). On the other side of estrangement namely are right-wing recruitment strategies

⁶⁴ Of course, this discussion also concerns societal privileges and systemic inequalities. For example, during the Covid-19 pandemic, some individuals and communities were stigmatised for not adhering to lockdown or self-isolation regulations, neglecting that some simply had to leave the house for work (e.g., in low-paid sectors) or were not paid on sick days (e.g., Templeton et al., 2020).

that seek to amplify a politicised identity that incorporates societal discontent and/ or rejection of mainstream politics as illegitimate (e.g., Castelli Gattinara et al., 2022; Gootjes et al., 2021; Jørgensen et al., 2022; Mondon & Smith, 2022; cf. van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2017) or here, being indiscriminate. One way to do so is by mobilising and staging protests. The right's notorious interference with (increasingly local; e.g., Ryan, 2022) topics like immigration, LGBTQI+ or women's rights⁶⁵ (see Carter et al., 2023 for an overview) while disguising its extremist core, thereby increases the likelihood of eventually forcing even those who may be politically undecided or unconcerned with taking a position (cf. Simon & Klandermans, 2001) to pick a side. This makes individuals "on the fence" a particularly appealing target group for right-wing recruitment⁶⁶ and prone to migrate towards the right. A concerning pattern, thereby, shows that those allegedly "undecided" regarding whether to disagree or agree with policies regarding, for example, racism or health and safety, are attitudinally more similar to those at the right end of the spectrum (e.g., Carpentras et al., 2022; Zick & Küpper, 2021).

Nevertheless, in my thesis, I have discussed and empirically shown that it was those with moderate (and high) identification that were also persuaded the most by interventions that (either naturally or experimentally) influenced the extent to which a system or group was efficacious and, therefore, attributed with power (cf. Reicher & Haslam, 2006). Considering that the role of an audience, and hence, its extent of right-

⁶⁵ Mondon and Winter (2020) elaborate that this interference equally relates to actors supposedly mainstream or left-wing, which emphasises the authors' argument about the existence (and influence) of what they coined liberal racism.

⁶⁶ Other reasons for identifying with right-wing groups or values, as I mentioned elsewhere in my thesis, may lie in the fact that some groups are already attitudinally closer aligned with right-wing groups, and, therefore, their members are more likely to identify with and support right-wing agendas, too (e.g., during anti-lockdown protests; see Habermann & Zech, 2022 for an overview). I have further elaborated, in-depth, on how a social position of privilege makes it more likely to understand agendas in favour of a status quo of social inequality as ingroup-relevant, hence, worthy of support (see 1.2.2, "Participation in (right-wing) motivated collective action").

wing identification, may be a crucial further legitimising factor in the process of right-wing empowerment, as discussed in my thesis, the findings of Study 3 open doors for future research. There may be ways that can target and influence this group and thereby contribute to undermine right-wing empowerment. Future studies should consider this intervening potential by furthering the investigation of the role of those not (yet) involved in but susceptible to the (in)efficacious enactment of a victimised right-wing identity in the context of legitimisation and empowerment of right-wing motivated collective action. Mixed methods designs comprising semi-structured interviews, experimental studies, and robust evaluation (Lewis et al., 2020) would be suitable to explore the cycle of the effect of identity enactment and support intentions of an audience and the effect of an audience's support on identity enactment based on perceptions of acting upon majority agreement further.

6.5 Conclusions

What explains spikes in racially and religiously aggravated crimes (RRHC) in the UK and the US after the Brexit referendum and the Trump election and US-based far-right street mobilisation in the same context? My thesis sought to answer this from the discipline of social psychology, which had been missing in the current literature and practice to the best of my knowledge.

In short, I suggest that the close connection between perceiving external legitimisation of one's (xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist) social identity, values and actions and the experience of subjective power as a consequence, empowered identity-congruent action, i.e., RRHC and far-right mobilisation on the street (jointly referred to as "right-wing motivated collective action" in my thesis). In turn, contesting the open enactment of such social identity with active counter-action, I suggest, affects the perception of an audience and their intention to support the

corresponding actors, which may reduce the perception of external legitimisation, and, therefore, can help explain why RRHC and far-right street mobilisation eventually decreased again.

The Brexit campaign and Trump's electoral campaign were identity-relevant for a xenophobic, racist, and white supremacist minority, and its unexpected outcome may have affected the perception that a majority and individuals of high power now supported their social identity, values, and actions accordingly. Study 1 used a real-world example and explored whether voters in the 2020 US Presidential election may show indicators of such perceptions of experiences. However, the election reflected an ingroup-relevant defeat and comparing pre- and post-election data indicated that perceptions of social norms for xenophobia were anchored in (voter) group membership rather than affected by the election – a possible consequence of pre-existing "Trumpism" and internalisation of corresponding values over time. It further indicated that Republican voters felt disempowered after the election compared to before. I concluded that the study should not be viewed as counter-evidence for the (robust) premise that elections affect, what I later referred to as "social norms meta-perception" (i.e., the perception that ingroup norms and values are shared by others), but that the 2020 election was simply very different in its nature compared to the novelty and ingroup-relevant success the 2016 US Presidential election had presented. Study 2, therefore, compared these two points in time by qualitatively examining accounts of attendees of the 2017 Charlottesville, VA, "Unite the Right" rally (taking place in the summer after Trump's inauguration) and of the 2021 Washington DC Capitol insurrection (taking place shortly after Trump had lost the 2020 election). It thereby also examined to what extent perceptions of grievances and anger (commonly used to explain participation in (right-wing) collective action) were motivating the attendance

compared to experiences of (distal and proximal) empowerment. Its findings let me conclude that alongside common narratives of threat and grievances, collective action scholars, on the one hand, and practitioners (e.g., P/CVE), on the other, should consider the impact of identity affirmation on the part of mainstream(ed) politicians, hence, ingroup-relevant success and positive emotions when aiming to explain or counter (increases in) right-wing motivated collective action.

One tool I suggested that can further aid P/CVE practices is allowing for active anti-racist counter-action. Alongside increases in right-wing collective action, namely, anti-racist counter collective action and campaigns increased, too. Considering that my thesis not only sought to explain the increase in right-wing motivated action but also its decrease, Study 3 examined the impact of disruption ("no-platforming") to radical right protest on a bystander audience. The study's findings let me conclude that disruption can (negatively) affect perceptions of (organisational) efficacy and legitimacy as well as support intentions of such an audience. This could, in turn, have a (de-)legitimising effect on the actors' perception to act upon majority agreement, hence their experiences of empowerment. I, therefore, recommend that (liberal) societies acknowledge anti-racist counter-action as complementing the approach to counter and prevent right-wing activity rather than understanding it as yet another strand of extremism that needs to be suppressed.

I believe that my research has shown value for trying to improve studying right-wing extremism as an early-career researcher, furthering the research of right-wing motivated collective action, and providing some guidance for real-world considerations of preventing and intervening in the legitimising role of subjective power in right-wing motivated collective action.

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