Destructive intergroup behaviour (DIB): Collective action taken with the proximal intent of harming an outgroup.

Research question: when will group members endorse DIB, that is, see DIB as justified and acceptable?

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Ingroup identification predicts support for most forms of collective action (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). We hypothesized that the effect of identification on DIB endorsement is mediated through 2 pathways:

1. Ingroup projection – when the standards that define the ingroup are also used to define the standards of the superordinate category (Wenzel et al., 2008). Ingroup projection leads us to hold outgroups to the same standards as members of the ingroup. Outgroup violations of projected standards violate both ingroup and superordinate standards, and thus may be especially likely to be seen as deserving of punishment (Walzdus et al., 2012).

Pathway 1: DIB endorsement is more likely when an outgroup is perceived to have violated a projected ingroup standard.

2. Absolute thinking – when group standards are seen as absolute moral standards. Absolute moral standards are seen as essential requirements of the moral community and have clearly defined thresholds for performance (Kessler et al., 2010). Any violation of absolute standards, no matter how small, represents a moral offense (Opotow, 1990) and elicits moral outrage that may subsequently legitimize DIB (Wenzel et al., 2012).

Pathway 2: DIB endorsement is more likely when an outgroup is perceived to violate an absolute standard

DISCUSSION: POTENTIAL IMPORTANCE OF GROUP STATUS?

When the ingroup has relatively equal or high status, group members are more likely to engage in projection. In these instances, DIB against an outgroup may be justified when the outgroup violates a projected ingroup standard (Pathway 1).

For ingroups with relatively low status, group members are less likely (or able) to engage in projection. Instead, outgroup actions that violate an absolute standard elicit moral outrage which may subsequently legitimize DIB (Pathway 2).

The highest levels of DIB endorsement may result when both Pathways 1 and 2 are active; when outgroup actions are seen to violate an absolute standard that has also been projected onto the superordinate category.

REFERENCES


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Participants: self-identified Republicans & Democrats (N=208)

Methods: Data was collected just prior to 2016 Presidential election.

1. Completed measures of identification with their political party and Americans, as well as ingroup projection.
2. Read a report ostensibly describing how the opposing political party had violated election standards.
3. Completed measures of endorsement of DIB against the opposing political party.

Results: Hayes (2017) PROCESS model 4; correlational

F (3, 204) = 7.08, p < 0.001, R² = 0.09; coefficients are unstandardized (7-point scales)
*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

Results: Hayes (2017) PROCESS model 6; correlational

F (6, 71) = 3.34, p < 0.01, R² = 0.22; coefficients are unstandardized (7-point scales)
*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01