

Collective action intentions:

The role of empowerment and identity politicization

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Abstract

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Though studies of collective action date back to at least the 1890's, in recent years there have been a number of developments in the social identity and collective action literatures clarifying how and why collective action emerges. Bandura's concepts of self-efficacy and collective efficacy (1977, 1997) have been discussed as potential antecedents of both collective action and politicized identity. However, advances within the social identity approach indicate that efficacy does not encompass the emotional aspects of being successful, and that empowerment may be a more inclusive way to understand willingness to engage in future protest. Empowerment has not yet clearly been shown as either an antecedent or consequence of collective action, and although the literature suggests feelings of empowerment endure long after the action is completed, questions of what role it plays in politicization and continuation of collective action have yet to be fully explored. The current works seek to better examine the link between empowerment and politicization of identity following the Gezi Park protests in Turkey in 2013. Two studies examined the relationship between empowerment and politicized identity. The first study showed that efficacy had an effect on identification as a protester, such that those who perceived the protests to be effective had higher levels of identification as a protester. There was no significant relationship found between efficacy and later joining a group or organization. Study two sought to better understand the processes that influence politicization and organization through semi-structured interviews. Interviews indicated that the Gezi Park protests allowed for participants to

be in close contact with a variety of different organizations. It also gave them empowerment experiences through conflict with police but also through the park occupation. Participants cited a desire to continue empowerment experiences through their new groups.



Dedication

For everyone who went to Gezi that first day, and everyone that came in the following days. If you hadn't made me feel I needed to be there, I would never be where I am now. It turns out it was never just about the trees. It was with you that I learned what it was all about. I am grateful.

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Ji bo hemû kesen kû roja pêşî û rojên din çûyîn Gezîyê. We li min nedabûyan zanîn kû divê ez li wir bûyam, ez ê tu car ne li wî cîyî bûma cîyê kû îro ez lê me. Derket holê kû ne tiştek bi tene ji bo daran bû. Bi saya serê we min mesele nas kir. Ez minetdar im.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Even at the height of protest movements, participants in these actions typically represent only a small minority of a broader disadvantaged or discontented group. Actors tend to choose very different strategies to highlight their plight. Hunger strikes, rallies, petitions, demonstrations and acts of vandalism all seek to protest an existing or anticipated state of affairs, but use very different means to do so (Thomas & Louis, 2013). From Ukraine to Greece, Egypt to the United States, the visibility of social movements enlisting a variety of strategies has attracted wide interest from researchers, the media, and the general public alike, asking how and why people engage in collective action.

One of the recent large-scale social movements to make global headlines was the Gezi Park protests in May and June, 2013. The Taksim Project, one of many ongoing urban renewal projects in Istanbul, aimed to redevelop one of central Istanbul's last green spaces, Gezi Park, as well as the surrounding Taksim Square area. On May 28, 2013, a small number of people began gathering in Gezi Park when bulldozers arrived to start cutting down trees. Police responded with what was considered by many to be excessive force over the following days, and many people – in total estimates between 2.5 and 3.5 million – took to the streets in cities across the country in solidarity as well as to raise their voices regarding plans for the park. Very quickly, the Gezi Park protests became a space to express frustration and opposition to the Justice and Development Party's (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) recent social and economic policies, and in many cases to the party itself.

In order to understand who the protestors were, why they were there, and what they wanted, KONDA (2013) researchers conducted a study with 4,411 participants in Gezi Park

during the first week of June. Of those participants, 93.6% stated they came to Gezi Park as a “simple citizen,” whereas only 6.4% of the participants said they were part of an organization or political party; close to half of all participants had never participated in a protest before.

When asked why they attended the protests, participants cited such reasons as restrictions to freedom, opposition to the policies of the AKP government, reaction against the words of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and opposing the destruction of Gezi Park. These freedom and police force issues were the principle focus of the demands, across the board, of the protestors. What was most notable anecdotally, however, was the feeling of togetherness, humor, and joy and that came out of the protests, sparking questions about how and why participants, especially those who had never engaged in protest before, felt the way they did, despite violent opposition from the state.

The emotions and behaviors exhibited during the protests can be understood using a social identity approach. In explaining how group behavior takes particular directions, social identity theory stresses the active construction of social norms or standards for group behavior (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1991; 1999; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; also see Abrams & Hogg, 2010; Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Hogg, 2006). Norms are intricately connected to identity because they define the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral meaning of the identity. Thus, decisions to mobilize are responsive to group norms about who “we” are, and what “we” do.

Participating in protest gives actors the opportunity to actualize their identities (Drury & Reicher, 1999), which can boost efficacy (Cocking & Drury, 2004) and a sense of psychological empowerment (Drury & Reicher, 2000, 2005). Drury and Reicher (2005) described the feelings of joy and empowerment that arise from having participated in crowd events, and documented

the important psychological transformation it brought, such that people were more likely to get involved again in the future.

Below, I give a brief history of the way perceptions of collective action have changed and evolved, and how current perspectives describe antecedents of collective action. I focus more specifically on the issue of efficacy and how it has been interpreted in the social identity literature as empowerment. I discuss how empowerment can be both an antecedent and a consequence of collective action, as well as how this construct can relate to a politicization of identity in a relational context.

The Gezi Park protests in context

The Gezi Park protests started on May 28, 2013, initially to contest urban development plans to Gezi Park and the surrounding Taksim area. The protests occurred at the end of a month full of civil discontent. On May 1, 2013, demonstrators attempted to make their way to Taksim Square to commemorate May Day. Taksim Square has for years been an important venue for political protest. On May 1, 1977, 36 left-wing demonstrators were killed by unidentified, allegedly right-wing gunmen, in what has since been referred to as the Taksim Square Massacre. This event led to Taksim being closed on subsequent May Day celebrations. The AKP government reopened the square for celebrations in 2010 but closed it again in 2013 citing safety concerns due to construction, though many questioned whether it had more to do with increasing discontent with AKP policies. Half of the city's police force were deployed and roads and bridges around the city were closed to prevent demonstrators from reaching the square. Important commemorations for socialists on May 5th, again in Taksim, were also met with police resistance.

Increased restrictions on freedom of speech, the press, internet and television content that

had been ongoing since 2011 attracted criticism of the AKP, who had previously been viewed as much more democratic. Other events, including the Reyhanlı bombing¹ on May 11th, started to put into question the authority and legitimacy of the AKP government in terms of both its domestic and foreign policy. Environmental issues surrounding the AKP's ongoing urban renewal projects around the country had, especially since 2012, also become a great focus of concern. Construction has been a major driver for the Turkish economy, but with little to no local consultation and with allegations of corruption, concerns about the safety and legal practices of construction came into light.

One of the AKP's urban renewal projects involves reshaping Taksim. Part of pedestrianizing Taksim involved plans to remove Gezi Park, one of the few remaining green spaces in the center of the European side of Istanbul and replacing it with an Ottoman-era military barracks. On May 28, 2013, roughly 50 environmentalists camped out in Gezi Park in order to prevent its demolition. Images of police using tear gas to disperse protesters and burning their tents spread quickly through the media and brought attention to the protests in Gezi. The size of the protests grew until May 31st, when, after an early morning police raid, thousands began to gather in Taksim to protest. Over 1,000 protesters marched on foot from the Asian side to the European side of Istanbul to join protesters in Taksim and neighboring Beşiktaş. On June 1st, protests spread to Ankara and Izmir, where protesters assembled to show solidarity with those in Istanbul but, after being met with police resistance in their own right, became centers of occupation as well.

On June 3rd, protests died down in Taksim and Beşiktaş after protests reclaimed the park.

¹ 53 people were killed in Reyhanlı, Hatay on May 11, 2013 after two car bombs exploded in what is called the deadliest single terror attack on Turkish soil. The Turkish government implemented blanket censorship of all media, resulting in criticism and suspicion of the government's knowledge or role in the event.

The frontrunners in the protests in Beşiktaş were the Beşiktaş football club's diehard fan group Carşı, who called a truce with police. Though this truce brought a calm to Taksim, clashes with police continued in other neighborhoods in Istanbul, as well as other cities around Turkey, most notably Ankara and Antakya. The park and surrounding Taksim remained an occupied space until June 11th, when police entered Taksim Square in the harshest crackdown since the movement's start. Though they did not enter the park, police remained in the square over the next few days. On June 15th, police entered Gezi Park and cleared out the protesters, in lieu of then Prime Minister Erdoğan's meeting in another part of Istanbul, which many viewed as a show of strength. After the Gezi Park protests, an increase in protest and demonstration participation was seen, with protests occurring on and off every weekend through the summer of 2013.

Early understandings of collective action

The birth of the industrial revolution in Europe and North America in the late 18th century placed the concept of the crowd (or the masses) at the forefront of society and popular consciousness. Both fascinating and frightening, for many, crowds represented an end to perceived stability and the birth of a reign of anarchy, and quickly became a thriving area of research (Reicher, 2004).

Gustave Le Bon remains one of the most influential early researchers of crowd dynamics. His seminal work on the crowd was published in 1895 and has managed to sway the understanding of mass politics throughout the 20th century, influencing a number of noted demagogues, including Goebbels, Hitler, and Mussolini (Reicher, 2004). Le Bon's observations of the crowd were as a primitive, base, and ghastly group of people – a characterization most

likely intended to discredit the working class, and socialist thought in particular. Le Bon saw the crowd as submerging the rationality and self-consciousness of its members (McDougall, 1921).

According to Le Bon, individuals lose all sense of self when they become part of the crowd, and become lost in a “spiral of contagion.” He stated that rational thought of the individual was taken over by the “collective mind” wherein “the sentiments and ideas of all the persons in the gathering take one and the same direction, and their conscious personality vanishes” (Le Bon, 1908, p. 23-24). Though Le Bon goes into great detail about the makings of the crowd and the behavior that ensues, he does *not* take account of the context in which a crowd forms, or the factors or external forces (e.g., police presence, the presence of observers) that impact the crowd (Acar & Uluğ, 2014).

Pioneering social psychologist William McDougall went on to address human behavior as a function of group character. McDougall (1921) described what he called the principles of collective psychology, wherein basic human drives, as natural inherited instincts, form the basis of human conduct. He described traits and characteristics that transcend the level of the individual and create collective identity.

While McDougall was the first social psychologist to address issues of a collective self, Le Bon’s ideas of anonymity in the crowd were developed in social psychology through the concept of deindividuation, which was based on the idea of a loss of, or lack of ‘individuation’ – understood as the loss of personal identity (Fromm, 1941). Echoing Le Bon, Zimbardo (1969) argued that the antecedents of deindividuation were anonymity, large group size, diffusion of responsibility, and the presence of co-acting others. According to Zimbardo, these factors lead to reduction of self-consciousness, resulting in “a weakening of controls based on guilt, shame, fear, and commitment” (Zimbardo, 1969, p. 259), with the potential to increase some violent

behaviors. As will be discussed, later research would re-examine the concept of deindividuation through a social identity perspective (Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995), framing changes in behavior as a shift from personal to social identity, rather than a loss of self.

Emergent norms and social identity perspectives

Although the study of deindividuation is over a century old, one only needs to read popular accounts of the 2011 London riots or the 2014 protests in Ferguson, Missouri for modern depictions of an abnormal self in the crowd (see Reicher & Stott, 2012, for a review and critique of accounts of the London riots). Communication scholars have shown that media representations of peaceful protests often present protest as irrational and unruly (e.g., McLeod, 1995; McLeod & Detenber, 1999). While the notion of a mindless crowd still has some popular appeal, other theorists have claimed that crowd behavior should not be understood as a lack of personal sense of self but as a shift in understanding of the self from the individual to the group level.

Emergent norm theory proposed that collective behavior is a form of group behavior (Turner, 1974; Turner & Killian, 1987). In contrast to Le Bon, Turner and Killian did *not* assume some abnormality in crowd behavior. Rather, they assumed that some existing group process functioned to generate purpose and order within the crowd. The emergent norm approach explains the pattern of expression in crowds as based on social norms. Because the crowd lacks formal organization, the creation of the norm is reliant on the specific situation – hence emergent norm.

Norm formation within a crowd involves interaction and communication among crowd members who, in attempts to understand their situation, create rules and justifications for their intended actions (Postmes, Haslam, & Swaab, 2005; Postmes, Spears, Lee, & Novak, 2005). The

emerging norms also map out limits to crowd emotion and behavior, which, contrary to Le Bon's perspective, account for the fact that there is no ever-increasing spiral of contagion. The individual crowd member only accepts a group frame of reference when he or she is accountable to other group members. As with other types of groups, there is a motivation for social reinforcement and approval. Therefore, this kind of influence within the crowd is considered to be purely normative.

If the crowd is defined as a social group, it follows that the same processes of social categorization and identification will determine crowd action. Crowd members, while identifying with the crowd, infer not just what is normal for an ideal and typical group member but also what the limits of group behavior are (Turner, 1982). This is why in some instances, though violence may occur, it is directed toward specific targets (e.g., police) and is selective and patterned (Feagin & Hahn, 1973; Fogelson, 1971; Stephenson, 1979; Uluğ & Acar, 2014).

The social identity theory of intergroup relations and social identity theory of the group (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1985; 1991; 1999; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; also see Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Abrams & Hogg, 2010; Hogg, 2006) proposed the concept of social identity, which can be understood as the part of the self-concept derived from our membership in social groups. Social identity is multiple and part of a complex system, rather than a single unit. Personal identity, which refers to those characteristics that make an individual unique, is distinct from social identity. Whereas personal identity defines "I" in terms of individuality and unique characteristics compared to others, social identity defines in terms of "we," meaning members of a social category in relation to other social categories. Social categories are integrally connected with ideological traditions. Constructs of religion, political ideology, nation, or gender cannot be properly understood outside of such traditions.

Unlike the traditional deindividuation perspective, which depends on the assumptions that the personal self is the basis of rational action and that the group serves to impede the operation of selfhood, the social identity/deindividuation (SIDE) model (Reicher, Spears, & Postmes, 1995) proposes that individuals do not lose all sense of self, but rather experience a shift from the personal to social level of identification. Within the confines of this approach, social identity, rather than personal identity, is salient, meaning that a process of depersonalization *rather* than deindividuation occurs. That is, rather than a loss of identity in the group, as deindividuation posits, there is a switch of identity in the group from personal to social, and behavior in the group will be regulated by reference to group standards and will thus reflect the group's normative attributes.

The importance of identity to an individual cannot be overstated. If a social identity is central enough, it can be more important even than an individual's survival (e.g., a patriotic desire to fight for one's country; Reicher, 2004). As mentioned, a social identity defines individual category members in ideological terms. In contrast to Le Bon's analysis of the crowd in isolation, Turner's (1982, 1991; Turner et al., 1987) position that self-categorization is the psychological basis for group behavior necessitates appreciation of context. When it comes to group behavior, individuals define themselves along the basis of the behavior of other group members. People engage in self-stereotyping based on the relevant identity in a particular context, and perform the behavior that is expected for those group members in that situation. That is, context determines what becomes the most salient identity, which then defines the set of norms according to which individuals behave.

Though the importance of context was touched upon in the SIDE model, it is effectively the central focus of the elaborated social identity model (ESIM) of crowds (Drury & Reicher,

2000; Reicher, 1996a, 1996b, 2001; Stott & Reicher, 1998), wherein social identity is understood as a representation of self in group relations as well as the actions that are considered proper and possible in that social position. Beyond the SIDE model's description of shift in identity, the ESIM places emphasis on the fact that crowd events are fundamentally intergroup encounters and examines identity development as a function of intergroup dynamics (cf. Di Giacomo, 1980). But in order to do so, Reicher (1996) suggests that three conceptual areas of the social identity tradition need to be addressed.

First, Reicher suggests that social identity should be viewed as a process, something that is fluid rather than stagnant. As self-categorization theory proposes that group salience and stereotypes are a function of relations of similarity and difference between contextually available categories, so should identity. It is suggested that social identity be regarded as tied to action in the world – therefore, they are open to change, just as the context within which they occur also changes.

Second, the context in which any group acts is constituted at least partially by other groups. This is particularly transparent in crowd events. The understandings and actions of one group - say, the police perceptions that the crowd as a whole is dangerous and hence the decision to employ riot shields - form the material reality the other group faces and frames their own understandings and actions; in turn forming the context for the first group (Drury & Reicher, 2000). This means, therefore, that categorization and context are not mutually exclusive.

Third, the relationship between identity, intention, and consequence is explicitly addressed. Within the social identity tradition, little is said on this issue and it is seemingly implied that identity processes create intentions that are automatically instantiated (Conдор, 1994). Whatever the intentions of one group, their acts may be reinterpreted by the other group

which then reacts in unanticipated ways and creates new contexts within which the original group subsequently exists (Drury & Reicher, 2000).

The link between action and identity is not simply perceptual, however. As has been seen, it also has normative and practical dimensions. If authorities are perceived to act illegitimately (e.g., through excessive force), then protesters feel they have a responsibility to oppose them (legitimizing conflict). The relationship between action and identity is therefore a reciprocal one. Just as identity changes as a result of new actions in new relations, so a changed identity results in a new set of possibilities and imperatives for action (Drury & Reicher, 2000).

According to Reicher (1984, 1996b), irrationalist explanations deny that crowds (and group processes) have any coherent basis and imply that the group is inherently subversive of self-hood. In contrast, the social identity tradition clearly shows that group processes operate in ways that are largely structured and meaningful to the participants involved, and that group processes involve a redefinition of the self at the group level (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1985; 1991; 1999). People immersed in groups act in ways that are responsive to social or group standards, but that these are nevertheless still controlled and meaningful. So, individuals in a crowd will not simply do “anything,” rather they follow the behavior of those individuals who are perceived to be category members. The question, therefore, is not just “what do we do in this situation?” but rather “what is appropriate as a group member in this particular situation?” This is especially relevant in the Gezi Park context, where, during the protests, a normative behavior set was created, referred to as the “Gezi Spirit” (*Gezi Ruhü*). People carrying the Gezi Spirit are colloquially understood to embody the spirit of the protests, a notion that continues to be recognized even after the protests have ended.

CHAPTER TWO

Antecedents of collective action

Social identification has been shown to foster protest participation in the context of South African peace protests, Dutch farmers, and the elderly (Klandermans, 2002). Similarly, identifying as a woman predicts action to promote equality for fellow women (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995). Other research indicates that participating in collective action is derived from a sense of inner obligation stemming from identity (Stürmer & Simon, 2004) and affirms one's identity as a supporter of change (Simon, Trotschel, & Dahne, 2008).

In addition to identity, a number of factors have been shown as precursors to engagement in collective action. Simon & Klandermans (2001) point to the need for group members to be aware of their shared group membership, their common enemy or opponent, as well as the wider societal conflict of the power struggle. They state that feeling aggrieved, an awareness that the grievance is shared (with other group members), and the designation of an external enemy are necessary first steps in engaging in a power struggle on behalf of a group. It is then important to feel that engaging in protest will be efficacious in redressing grievances (addressed more fully below; Klandermans 1984, 1997).

A meta-analysis by van Zomeren, Postmes, and Spears (2008) of 180 studies of collective action attempted to integrate perspectives of antecedents for collective action. Where the SIDE model focuses on how the self relates to the crowd, the proposed social identity model of collective action (SIMCA) focuses on the necessary antecedents to crowd formation. The SIMCA describes perceived injustice, perceived efficacy, and identity as predictive elements of collective action, showing that perceptions of illegitimacy (injustice) indeed function to create a sense of need for collective action. One can have a relevant social identity for a particular

collective action. However, perceived injustice based on that identity and efficacy, the belief collective action will be successful, are also necessary for that person to engage in action. This is most true when an identity has become politicized, or embedded in a meaningful sociopolitical context (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; van Zomeren et al., 2008).

Social cognition and efficacy and its adaptation to collective action

Feeling efficacious was first described through social cognitive theory, which extends the conception of agentic causality to collective agency exercised through a shared sense of efficacy (Bandura, 1997). People pool their knowledge, competencies and resources, provide mutual support, form alliances and work together to solve problems and improve the quality of their lives (Fernández-Ballesteros, Díez Nicolás, Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Bandura, 2002). Agency focuses on the individual's exertion of influence over his or her own functioning and the course of events that develop from his or her actions (Bandura, 2006; 2008; 2012). Personal agency allows people to influence those things they can control directly. Self-efficacy is considered a central mechanism of agency. Bandura (1997) defined self-efficacy as the "belief in one's capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3).

According to Bandura, the most influential antecedent of self-efficacy for a given task is one's own previous experience in the same or a similar situation (Chen et al., 2002). The greater one's self-efficacy, the more likely one is to engage and persist in task-related behavior (Bandura, 1997; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). Individuals who maintain high levels of self-efficacy are more likely to allocate task-related effort and persist in the face of difficulties, and therefore perform better, than are individuals with lower self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997; 2012; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998).

When unity is needed to achieve a goal, personal efficacy mutates into collective efficacy. Collective efficacy is defined as “a group’s shared belief in its conjoint capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given levels of attainments” (Bandura, 1997, p. 477). Collective efficacy requires people with diverse self-interests and different abilities to come together for a common purpose. The more that group performance depends on interdependent effort, the greater the contribution of collective efficacy to group productivity (Stajkovic, Lee, & Nyberg, 2009).

Self- and collective efficacy both involve beliefs regarding ability to accomplish particular tasks, though the referent of self-efficacy is the self, whereas the referent of collective efficacy is the individuals working together toward a common goal. Unlike individual efficacy, collective efficacy involves interactive and coordinative social dynamics (Bandura, 2000; 2001).

For both self- and collective efficacy, however, important elements include outcome expectancy (a person’s estimate that a given behavior will lead to certain outcomes) and efficacy expectation (that a person can successfully execute the behavior required to produce the outcomes). Efficacy expectations are especially important in determining how much effort will be expended and how long individuals will persist when faced with obstacles or adverse experiences; the stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the more active the efforts (Bandura, 1977). Both personal and collective efficacy have been discussed as potential antecedents to collective action, and oftentimes as consequences as well (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). The question of how efficacy as a cognitive concept translates into collective action has been questioned and instead interpreted within the social identity tradition as empowerment (Drury & Reicher, 2005).

Efficacy as empowerment

The efficacy beliefs that Bandura (1977, 1982) describes as necessary for one to be effective in some action can also encourage the same or similar action in the future (Cocking & Drury, 2004). As described above, social movement theorists, as noted by Klandermans (1992), generally agree that an important antecedent for protest is the belief among participants that grievances can be addressed through collective action. Cocking and Drury (2004) further this notion and state that self-efficacy exists on a continuum. While some level of efficacy may be necessary to act in the first place, collective action serves to further augment feelings of efficacy.

Social movement theories have increasingly focused on efficacy or empowerment processes; that is, how participants construct definitions of themselves as effective collective actors (e.g. Klandermans, 1997; Melucci, 1989, 1995). Bandura (1997) finds the concept of empowerment too vague to be useful. Yet it is used in the social identity tradition not only because it is a term that those involved in social movements themselves use, but also because it captures emotional aspects of experience that efficacy does not.

Empowerment can be defined as a social-psychological state of confidence in one's ability to challenge existing relations of domination (Drury & Reicher, 2005). If the feeling of empowerment endures beyond the collective action itself, it has the ability to affect participants' personal lives and motivate involvement in further collective action. To the extent that people feel able to participate in collective actions such as protests, demonstrations and other social movement events, then there is the possibility that social change may occur as a result.

Where the social identity approach suggests that the self or identity can be collective as well as personal (Cocking & Drury, 2004; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994), each representing a psychologically valid level of self-categorization, Bandura's account posits a single unitary self. The significance of this theoretical difference lies in what counts as a

successful achievement.

Self-efficacy implies that the definition of success is given by a unitary and unvarying definition of self. The social identity approach, on the other hand, would suggest that what counts as successful achievement can only be understood with reference to a particular identity; and, since identities can vary both across time and within individuals and groups, definitions of success might also vary, along with the emotional and practical implications that follow from such definitions. In this account, social change occurs not only where social movements have power but where individual members of a social movement are subjectively empowered; through their identification with the movement they are part of.

Thus Bandura (e.g., 1995) states that performance accomplishments or “mastery experiences” provide “the most authentic evidence of whether one can muster whatever it takes to succeed” (p. 3). But while Bandura’s account of mastery experiences defines successful achievement in terms of the individual, it is the social identity that is the locus of empowerment, rather than *just* the personal self (Drury & Reicher, 2005). Because of the relationship between empowerment and social identity, collective action can centralize or even transform an existing social identity.

Politicization of identity

While social identification affects empowerment and collective action, it is also possible for empowerment and collective action to affect one’s social identities. Groups exist in systems with asymmetrical power distribution (Ng, 1982; Sachdev & Bourhis, 1985, 1991; Uluğ & Acar, 2014), and in protesting power imbalances, group members may experience a politicization of their social identities. A politicized social identity can be understood as a form of collective identity that underlies group members’ explicit motivations to engage in a power struggle

(Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Group members intentionally engage, as a mindful and self-conscious collective, in such a power struggle, acknowledging the wider societal context in which this struggle takes is orchestrated. To borrow from Marxian terminology, it is politicized collective identity that turns the social group from “a group of itself” into “a group of and for itself” in the political arena (Esser, 1993).

Klandermans and colleagues (Johnston & Klandermans, 1995; Simon & Klandermans, 2001) also suggest that there are two specific categories of consequences of politicized collective identity. One type of consequence includes new perspectives on reasoning about the social world, described as consciousness-raising. The other category includes beliefs that, even if one's group was ultimately unsuccessful in persuading society to side with their group instead of an opposing group, having forced society to take sides confers recognition as a social agent on group members (e.g., “we made a difference”). As seen with empowerment, it is not an objective change that is important, but the one that occurs within the individual.

Continuing collective action: the function of politicized identity and empowerment

A politicized identity still requires the intergroup context of collective action to help define and describe how individuals relate to one another. The ESIM suggests that these consequences of legitimization of opposition and the related formation of a single unitary self-category within a crowd are themselves the conditions for an emergent sense of collective empowerment among participants. As well as showing the antecedents, experience, and immediate consequences of empowerment within episodes of collective action, recent studies also noted examples of participants referring to a feeling of empowerment that endured after the immediate experience of the event (Drury & Reicher, 1999; Stott & Drury, 1999).

Similar to the findings of Simon and Klandermans (2001), whether protesters see the

event as an “objective” victory is not the most important factor. Rather, the important issue is whether or not such a victory entailed participants acting in a way that served to bring the world into line with their social identity (self-imposition). Drury and Reicher (2005) posit that the notion of empowerment through self-imposition is allied to Marx’s theory of labor (Marx, 1844/1975). They refer to the process of self-imposition above as one of collective self-objectification (CSO). To collectively self-objectify means to be a subject – and being a subject rather than an object of others’ actions is a definition of empowerment or agency (Deprét & Fiske, 1993). The precondition for CSO is ongoing relations of unequal power between social groups. CSO requires, even if only temporarily, the overturning, disrupting or disturbing these relations (Drury & Reicher, 2005). As an explanation for empowerment, it refers to the actions of groups in resistance who challenge the status quo, rather than those of dominant groups whose actions serve to reproduce the status quo.

The ESIM, like Simon and Klandermans’s (2001) and other constructionist accounts of collective action, suggests that newly empowered definitions of self emerge from conflictual interactions between groups. The ESIM posits two features of intergroup dynamics which are necessary for a change towards empowerment among participants in collective action: first, asymmetry in the stereotypes held of each other by movement participants and such external forces as the police (della Porta, 1998, 1999; della Porta & Reiter, 1998; Waddington, 1991); and, second, an (initial) asymmetry of power relations. Where these two conditions hold, two consequences follow.

The first consequence is that the outgroup’s perception may become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Groups that are treated as oppositional come to see themselves as such and act in oppositional ways. The second is that relationships within and between groups transform. In the

context of a protest (Reicher, 1984), new “moderate” crowd members, faced with police who view them as dangerous and oppositional, come to see the police as illegitimate opposition to their own “legitimate” activities. Where such out-group action is experienced by crowd participants as not only illegitimate (thereby legitimizing crowd action against it) but also indiscriminate (i.e., as an action against everyone in the crowd), previously disparate crowd members see themselves in a common category with even more radical elements in the crowd who they may have previously felt distant from.

Therefore, formation of a single large self-category, along with the feeling of consensus and the expectations of mutual in-group support that are thereby engendered, is what empowers members of the in-group to actively oppose the out-group. It is the combination of participating in protest and the context of police conflict, that gives rise to feelings of empowerment and the potential for a politicized identity. These elements together could potentially predict willingness to engage in future protest.

I have thus far described a number of theoretical perspectives on collective action. There has been an evolution of perspectives of protest over time, leading to the establishment of the importance of group dynamics in the understanding of social engagement in the service of collective action. Social identity theory provides an important framework for the crowd as a social group, one that is subject to the conditions of any other form of group, including normative standards of behavior, ingroup and outgroup dynamics, and the creation, continuation, and termination of that group.

Also important to note is the change in understanding of what is considered effective protest. The social cognitive tradition’s view of efficacy is in line with antecedents to collective action. However, what is brought to the forefront through the social identity tradition is not only

the feeling that an individual (or an individual in a collective) is effective, but that the emotional consequences of efficaciousness continue well beyond the initial protest, and that the relationship between identification, participation, and efficacy are not linear, but that each can continue to affect the others over time (Cocking & Drury, 2004; Drury & Reicher, 2005).

Creating a storyline around the protest experience, including the presence of a visible outgroup such as police, the relationships and interactions between protesters, and the outcome of the protest – both through “objective” change and through “subjective” individual change, can help establish whether empowerment was experienced. Having done so, and questioning the understanding of social identity before and after said protest, one can then attempt to understand if this particular protest, through an empowerment experience, has subsequently changed or politicized identity, and led to an increase in activism later on. Doing so can begin to address the questions mentioned above, and further extend understandings of engagement, politicization, and empowerment in the existing collective action literature.

Overview of the studies

Empowerment has been shown to play a role in willingness to engage in future protest, but how long that willingness lasts and the forms it takes has not been adequately explored. This dissertation reports two studies examining the role of empowerment through collective action in creating and maintaining new politicized identities. The Gezi Park protests serve as an excellent context in which to examine these issues. Beyond Gezi, these studies can also be used to understand basic processes of social mobilization more broadly. Specifically, the aim of these two studies taken together is to examine (1) the role played by feelings of empowerment during the Gezi Park protests in subsequent participation in collective action, (2) whether feelings of empowerment would carry over to new group memberships post-Gezi, and (3) whether or not the

norms focused on during the protests – labeled “Gezi Spirit” – would transfer to define the normative practices of new groups that individuals might joined. As cited above, this question comes from the idea that collective action creates group norms and that these group norms are the basis for behavior in a crowd (Reicher, 1984; 1996b). Asking to what degree participants feel the characteristics of the two overlap will test this notion.

As described, empowerment can be defined as a social psychological state of confidence in one’s ability to challenge existing relations of domination (Drury & Reicher, 2005). If the feeling of empowerment endures beyond the collective action itself, participants’ personal lives can be affected, and motivate involvement in further collective action. By asking participants about their experiences in the protests, I hope to create a timeline relating to the events and experiences that triggered participants’ desire to continue participation in collective action, especially through new group membership. I do so with a mixed methods design, wherein I will establish a general framework describing participant experiences followed by a detailed analysis of particular participants and the way empowerment shaped their later group memberships.

Study One is a quantitative survey designed to gain a general understanding of participants’ experiences and identification processes during and after the protests. The focus is on understanding how efficacy, identification, and the Gezi Spirit relate to future engagement. Study Two is a qualitative analysis of data obtained through semi-structured interviews. Questions for the interviews were determined in part by the outcomes of Study One. Study One was open to any participant in the Gezi protests, while Study Two was limited to participants who later joined a political party or organization as a result of their experiences at Gezi.

CHAPTER THREE

STUDY ONE

Study 1 was an online survey of individuals who participated in the Gezi Park protests. Questions assessed feelings of efficacy, identification with fellow protesters, and whether or not the participants had subsequently joined a political party or organization. The purpose of the study was to investigate the process of engaging in future organization; with a focus on concepts such as normative behavior at Gezi (labeled “Gezi Spirit”) and in the subsequent organization, the relationship between perceived efficacy and identification, and the impact of participation in the protests on future engagement.

Though previous research (Klandermans, 2002; van Zomeren et al., 2008) has addressed the importance of both efficacy and identification to engagement in collective action, no known research to date has investigated the relationship between these constructs and *future* engagement in the form of organization. As such, the current study focuses on the way future engagement can come about. Based on previous research, two hypotheses were derived:

Hypothesis 1. Participants who perceived protests to be efficacious would be more likely to believe the Gezi Spirit exists, would be more likely to join a new group, would be more likely to say that the Gezi Park protests had an important role in their decision to join the new group, and would be more likely to see overlap between the Gezi Spirit and their new organization.

Hypothesis 2. Participants high in protester identification would be more likely to believe the Gezi Spirit exists, would be more likely to join a new group, would be more likely to say that the Gezi Park protests had an important role in their decision to join the new group, and would be more likely to see overlap between the Gezi Spirit and their new organization.

Method

Participants and design

Participants ($N = 303$; 110 males, with a mean age of 28.98) were recruited through social media (e.g., Facebook or Twitter) or through personal contacts to participate in an online survey based on experiences during the Gezi Park protests. Participant inclusion criteria were that they were 18 years of age or older, were residents of Turkey, and participated in the Gezi Park protests. Questions based on existing scales were translated into Turkish and back-translated into English to ensure that meaning was preserved.

Procedure

After clicking on the link, participants were routed to the online survey. Upon following the link provided in recruitment materials, participants were routed to the initial page of the online study. This informed consent page told participants again they would be participating in a study about their involvement in the Gezi Park protests. Due to the sensitive nature of protests, care was taken in this section to ensure participants that the research was completely anonymous, and that their answers would never be identifiable.

At this point, if they chose to continue with the study, they clicked through, providing their informed consent. Participants were asked questions regarding the protests, including how they first heard about them, their location and reason for the protest. These questions were designed to increase the salience of the protest events as they continued to answer questions.

Participants were then asked whether they believed the Gezi Park protests were effective (Yes/No). They then received three protester identification measures based on group identification items adapted from Hains, Hogg, and Duck (1997) and other social identity studies (e.g., Grant & Hogg, 2012; Hains, Hogg, & Duck, 1997; Hogg & Hains, 1996; Hogg, Hains, & Mason, 1998). Items were “How much do you feel a sense of belonging with other protesters?”

“How much were other protesters similar to you?” and “How happy are you to be a protester?” (1 *not at all*, 9 *very much*), and were averaged to create the protester group identification scale, ($\alpha = .87$).

Table 1
Means and standard deviations of key variables

<i>Source</i>	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	2	3	4	5	6
1. Protester ID (3 items)	.79	6.64	1.63	.29**	.78***	.31**	.19**	.26**
2. Perceived efficacy	-	0.83	0.37	-	.37***	.24**	.34**	.28**
3. Importance of participation	-	7.85	1.84	-	-	.29**	.29**	.26**
4. Influence in joining a new group	-	7.04	2.19	-	-	-	-.03	.77***
5. Is there such a thing as the Gezi Spirit?	-	0.81	0.40	-	-	-	-	.01
6. New group and Gezi Spirit overlap	-	7.11	1.63	-	-	-	-	-

Note. Perceived efficacy (0 = Not effective, 1 = Effective), Is there such a thing as the Gezi Spirit? (0 = No, 1 = Yes); Importance of Gezi Park protests in joining new group and To what degree do the principles of your new group overlap with the Gezi Spirit only includes participants who indicated they joined a new group after the protests. Other items include all participants. * $p < .10$; ** $p < .05$; *** $p < .001$.

In addition to group identification measures, participants were asked first whether or not they believed the Gezi Spirit exists, and second, to describe how they believed an individual with the Gezi Spirit should behave.

Participants were then asked whether or not they had joined a political group or organization after the Gezi Park protests, followed by a question asking whether the protests played a role in their decision to organize, and to what degree they felt the Gezi Spirit overlapped with the principles of their new group. These questions were asked in part to determine whether

the Gezi Spirit, which governed norms of behavior during the protests, played a role in participant organization. While all other questions were answered by all participants, these questions were limited to those who answered that they had in fact joined an organization after Gezi. They were also used to help determine what areas of politicization and organization could be more deeply addressed in Study 2. Finally, participants were asked their age and gender. No other identifying material was gathered from them. A full list of questions can be found in the appendix.

Results

Before engaging in primary analyses, all variables were checked for assumptions of normality and outliers. No outliers were identified, and variables met all assumptions for the planned analyses.

There were two predictor variables (perceived efficacy and protester identity), two background variables (age and gender), and four outcome variables: existence of a Gezi Spirit, joining a political organization, the impact of Gezi in joining the new organization, and the overlap of the new group with the Gezi Spirit. Although strongly correlated, these variables are theoretically distinct and were therefore analyzed separately. Data were analyzed through hierarchical multiple regression. For dichotomous outcomes, binomial logistic regression was used. Protester identity was mean centered and interaction terms were calculated. Reliabilities, means, SDs, and inter-correlation of all relevant variables can be found in Table 1.

Belief in the Gezi Spirit

Binomial logistic regression was computed using composite, centered scores of protester identification as well as perceived efficacy to predict the odds ratio pertaining to whether or not participants believed in the Gezi Spirit. As predicted, the more strongly people identified as a

protester, the greater the odds that they would report belief in the Gezi Spirit. For every point higher in protester identification, the odds of believing in the Gezi Spirit increased by a factor of 1.67, Wald $\chi^2(1) = 18.31$, $p < .001$. The model explained 27.7% (Nagelkerke R^2) of the variance in belief in the Gezi Spirit.

Joining a group after Gezi

Binomial logistic regression was performed using composite, centered scores of protester identification as well as perceived efficacy to predict the odds ratio pertaining to whether or not participants went on to join a new political organization after Gezi. No significant effects were found.

The Gezi Spirit and overlap with the new organization

Hierarchical linear regression was employed to predict the overlap of the Gezi Spirit with the new organization. At Step 1, age and gender were entered into the model. At Step 2, main effects for the predictor variables perceived efficacy and protester identification were entered into the model. Perceived efficacy was not significant, $p = .26$. Protester identification was significant, $F(5, 24) = 3.03$, $p = .05$. On average, higher ratings on protester identification were related to higher ratings on overlap, such that those who scored 1 point higher scored on protester identification scored about .46 points higher on overlap, $t(24) = 2.06$, $p = .05$.

Interaction terms were not significant.

Gezi and its importance in joining the new organization

At Step 1, age and gender were entered into the model. Gender was significantly associated with overlap, $p = .02$. At Step 2, main effects for the predictor variables perceived efficacy and protester identification were entered into the model. Efficacy was not significant, $p = .78$. Protester identification was significant, $F(5, 23) = 10.29$, $p < .001$. On average, higher

ratings on protester identification were related to higher ratings on importance, such that those who scored 1 point higher on protester identification scored about .89 points higher on importance, $t(23) = 4.41$, $p < .001$. Interaction terms were not significant.

Discussion

Study 1 examined the relationship between perceived efficacy, protester identification, and decisions to organize post-Gezi. Results indicated that there was no significant relationship between perceived efficacy and subsequent organization. Previous research has discussed the importance of perceived efficacy in predicting engagement in protest in the future, however it has not directly addressed the issue of organization through joining a political party or group. Klandermans (1997) and van Zomeren, Postmes, and Spears (2008) point out that efficacy is an important antecedent to collective action. It has, however, been studied to what extent efficacy effects can be long-lasting.

A parallel line of research using the ESIM (Drury & Reicher, 2000; Reicher 1996a, 1996b, 2001; Stott & Reicher, 1998) also underlines the importance of efficacy, but sees it as part of empowerment. Where efficacy is understood as belief in an ability to execute a course of action, empowerment refers more to the confidence in one's ability to challenge existing relations of domination. As such, perceptions of empowerment and perceptions of efficacy can be understood and measured differently. The effects of empowerment are theorized to be long-lasting.

Protester identification had a significant relationship with belief in the Gezi Spirit. The more strongly protesters identified with the protest group the more strongly they believed in the Gezi Spirit. Protester identification also significantly determined the importance of Gezi in joining a new organization, as well as the degree of overlap between the Gezi Spirit and the new

organization. As norms dictate how we behave when part of a social group, and as the social group taken into account is that of Gezi protester, it makes sense that increased identification would be related to existence and maintenance of those norms. It follows then, that the normative behavior that is so important to being a protester would be perceived as highly important and overlapping if the participant joins a new group.

Study 1 provides a framework for in-depth interviews conducted in Study 2. Study 1 allows a larger-scale investigation of questions of efficacy, continued protest, and the importance of identification as a protester. This is especially important considering the large number of participants in the Gezi Park protests. Reaching all of them for interviews is not especially feasible, but having basic information about their perceptions of identification and whether or not they have subsequently joined organizations (on a larger scale) is invaluable information. Thus, Study 2 focused more on empowerment experiences than perceived efficacy, in decisions to organize, but also examined the importance of the Gezi Spirit in choosing and relating to the new organization.

CHAPTER FOUR

STUDY TWO

Where Study 1 consisted of a larger-scale understanding of the connection between issues of efficacy, identity, and organization, Study 2 consists of in-depth interviews designed to explore those constructs in a more multi-faceted way. Interview research has been used frequently in collective action research (e.g., Cocking & Drury, 2004; Drury, Cocking, Beale, Hanson, & Rapley, 2005; Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; Klandermans, Sabucedo, Rodriguez, & De Weerd, 2002) and is considered an advantageous method for a number of reasons.

Interview allows for the exploration of issues that a structured survey or field observation would not be able to provide. They also allow for an understanding of complexities of cause and effect often neglected in other forms of data collection (Blee & Taylor, 2002). Study 2 interviews were conducted with individuals who participated in the Gezi Park protests as individuals and later made the decision to join a political group or organization. Questions focused on feelings of empowerment, normative behavior during the protests, and joining a political party or organization post-Gezi. Study 2 also explores the relationship between the Gezi Spirit and the principles of the group that individuals subsequently joined.

Method

Participants and design

Tape-recorded interviews with 25 participants were carried out. Participant inclusion criteria were that they are 18 years of age or older, are residents of Turkey, participated in the Gezi Park protests and subsequently joined a political group, party, or organization. Fourteen participants were male, 11 female. Ages ranged from 18 to 35, with most (22) participants under the age of 30. The length of the individual interviews ranged from 22 minutes to 86 minutes, with an average of approximately 35 minutes. Participants were initially recruited via social media (e.g., Facebook or Twitter) and through personal contacts. A snowball method was used to reach further participants. According to Blee & Taylor (2002), interview sampling in social movement research can rely on snowball sampling so long as attempts are made to follow the principles of similarity (e.g., the similarity of interpretations of accounts) and dissimilarity (e.g., very different characteristics or different circumstances). As such, attempts were made to reach members of a variety of organizations with varying principles.

Participants included members of the Student Collective (2), Viva la VİDA (solidarity platform -2), the Communist Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi*, TKP -3), the Social Democracy Party (*Sosyal Demokrasi Partisi*, SDP -2), Anticapitalist Muslims (2), Occupy CHP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, the People's Republican Party -1), Revolutionary Anarchist Activity (*Devrimci Anarşist Faaliyet*, DAF -1), Workers' Democracy Party (*İşçi Demokrasisi Partisi*, IDP -1), Federation of Idea Clubs (*Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu*, FKF -1), the People's Democracy Party (*Halkın Demokrasi Partisi*, HDP -2), Revolutionary Muslims (1), Union of Progressive Communication and Call Center Workers (*Devrimci İletişim ve Çağrı Merkezi Çalışanları Sendikası*, Dev II -3), Revolutionary Youth (*Devrimci Gençlik*, Dev-Genç -1),

Istanbul Feminist Collective (*İstanbul Feminist Kolektif*, İFK -1), Socialist Party of Refoundation (*Sosyalist Yeniden Kuruluş Partisi*, SYKP -1), and New Renaissance (*Nor Zartonk*, -1). Please see appendix C for further information about each organization. Participants read a consent form describing the purpose of the study. Consent was confirmed after the participant read the form and ticked the checkbox at the bottom of the page. Names were not recorded to preserve anonymity. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher verbatim. Interviews were conducted in places designated by the participant, generally in a public space such as a café or an office. A full list of interview questions can be found in Appendix B.

Analysis

Interview questions led analysis, and were focused on using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). The core principle taken from the IPA approach is that of drawing out patterns of meaning in the text. In IPA, identification of themes is neither the bottom-up approach of Grounded Theory nor the top-down approach of Content Analysis, but somewhere in between. That is, the researcher attempts to capture concepts and categories employed by participants, yet approaches the subject with certain research questions in mind. These research questions are the basis for the analytic decisions made to structure the themes.

Interview questions had three main focuses: the first was on the effectiveness of the protests themselves, the second focused on ways the individual felt empowered during the protests and how they maintain empowerment feelings with their new groups, and the third was on the overlap between the Gezi Spirit and the principles of the new group. Seven main questions guided the analysis of the data: 1) Did you feel that the Gezi Park protests were effective? If so, at what point did you feel a sense that the protests were effective? 2) Was there a

time you felt empowered by your actions? Could you give an example of a time you felt empowered? 3) Did you have any encounters with the police? If so, did these encounters contribute to your feelings of empowerment? 4) Did you feel the protests were successful? If yes, did this contribute to your feelings of empowerment? 5) Is there such a thing as the “Gezi Spirit?” If so, how do you believe a person with the Gezi Spirit should behave? 6) What are the principle beliefs of your group? How much do the principle beliefs of your group overlap with the Gezi Spirit? 7) Has there been a time when you felt empowered with your new group? Could you give an example of a time you felt empowered with your new group?

Procedurally, analysis involved first reading through transcriptions of interviews, underlining and making note of any references (of any length, from phrase to paragraph) relevant to the questions specified above. Extracts were then copied and grouped in terms of those questions before being analyzed individually based on the relation of each piece of text to its narrative and interactional context. As a qualitative analysis, the aim was to identify the presence of issues relevant to politicization and organization. Together, the pieces of interpretation should form a coherent whole. Illustrative quotes allow the reader to judge whether this coherence has been achieved.

Reliability of the analysis was assessed through the standard approach of inter-rater reliability (Graziano & Raulin, 2004; Guest et al., 2012). An independent judge was trained with the analytic scheme through presenting examples of coded text and talking her through the nature of the analysis and rationale for the coding categories. The coding scheme comprised the research questions above. The categories were mutually exclusive, in that in no instance should one piece of material be able to be assigned to more than one coding category. Ten percent of material presented as given chunks (phrases, sentences, paragraphs) was jumbled up and given to

the judge along with the coding categories, and she was asked to place these chunks under the correct headings. Next, an agreement rate was calculated by presenting the judge with another 10% of the material, again as given chunks (phrases, sentences, paragraphs). Blind to the analysts own codings, the judge had to assign material to the given coding categories. For each judge, the total number of observations agreed upon was divided by the number of chunks presented. This produced an AR score of 86% with the original analysis, an acceptable level of reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Results

Efficacy and politicization

There were a number of reasons cited by participants for joining an organization during or after the Gezi protests. Most participants (23) cited that they had already had an interest in politics and were potentially interested in organizing, but either felt that protests were ineffective or that joining a group was not necessary or had not come across a group they felt best represented them. Importantly, participants cited Gezi as an opportunity to get to know existing groups, how they function, and how best as an individual they might fit into a particular group or existing structure.

During the Gezi protests, I took a look at which organization was saying what, how they were interpreting [events]...For example, the Gezi protests, for a person who is really interested in organizing, it was one of the greatest means to evaluate those organizations. It was the best way to see the best, the most correct policies, and was the greatest means to see the different organizations and figure out how to organize. (Dev II -2)

Another participant had a similar view, and also stated that if he had not participated and come across the variety of groups that he had, he may never have organized in the first place.

If I hadn't seen this side [of the groups I like], if I continued to see only the other side [of the groups I don't like] my thinking would still be the same. I would still not want to organize. Since I saw this side, I was able to say "OK, this means there's a method of organizing that fits my way of thinking." (TKP -1)

As participants felt previously that protests were ineffective, it is unsurprising that many of them were participating in a protest for the first time. The same participant in particular recalls the way he felt about protest participation.

And it was my first protest; I mean it was the first one I attended, I never found them really effective before because it didn't really fit my style, I guess really I should say having a march somewhere etc., it just wasn't really my thing. (TKP -1)

When asked about the effectiveness of Gezi, participants referred more to the changes they experienced as an individual than political changes that occurred as a result of Gezi. In the aftermath of Gezi, Prime Minister Erdoğan and the AKP administration started to stake a claim in the park, and stated that they had had no intention of demolishing it in the first place. In doing so, they managed to satisfy their own voting base that the reasons protesters took to the streets were illegitimate. This may additionally have been a tactic to satisfy the protesters as well, and prevent them from engaging in future protest. As one participant mentioned, the protests were effective despite immediate changes within the government, but because the relationship between the AKP government and their opposition changed.

This is why I think the protests worked. And after the protests, the AKP saw that if they do something, these protesters could take to the streets again. I think this fear was serious enough for them. And people took to the streets again anyway. (İFK)

No immediate major changes in the administration occurred, and though participants referenced this lack of change, they focused instead on the changes that occurred within the protesters themselves. First and foremost, participants mentioned that the protests changed the way individuals thought about politics.

It had a really positive effect on me; I became a more politicized person...Of course it caused a kind of politicization. I follow the news more than before. I'm not insensitive [to what's going on around me]. (VIDA -2)

This increased politicization was mentioned by many (21) participants. In addition to it being a forum for meeting new organizations, as mentioned above, participants stated that Gezi also functioned as a means for individuals to realize the importance of organizing.

Gezi had a really big effect, because really, the Gezi events created a space to organize, and it really spread to many other areas [of our lives]. (Dev II -1)

Some felt they did not fit into any of those existing structures and created their own. Three participants were members of a newly formed union. They discussed how, before Gezi, they had felt the need to organize with others at work, but weren't sure how to go about it.

The Union for Progressive Communication Workers was an idea that came about with Gezi, and it was something we talked about a lot at the forums. Especially at the Abbasağa and Yoğurtçu Park White Collar Workers forums, we talked about it a lot. I mean, how to form the union, how it should be, how to carry the [Gezi] Spirit to the workplace, we talked about all these things quite a lot. (Dev II -3)

Like the union, many new organizations were created after the Gezi Park protests. As time went on, coalitions among leftist parties formed, also calling on the Gezi Spirit as the reason to do so (e.g., The Left Front, United June Movement). The Gezi Party, the Left Front, and the United

June Movement all specifically reference the Gezi Spirit and a lack of existing political organizations that represented their needs. Some described a need to bring the Gezi Spirit to their own political parties, and saw Gezi as a means to bring about change to an existing, albeit stagnant, organization.

As Occupy CHP, our essential mission is to change the CHP...at the same time we want to win new people [to CHP], and bring about a new understanding of politics...The Gezi movement, the Gezi Spirit, the people who have become dedicated to that spirit have been put into politics. I can say this easily because I am also one of those people. And these people, they lead the way... in order to get rid of the old political perspectives in Turkey. (Occupy CHP)

It is important to note here that most participants remarked on the importance of organizing. They described an interest in politics and involvement prior to Gezi, but had not or could not find a group or capacity within which they could do so. It was not until their experience in the protests that participants made the jump from having an interest in politics to actually organizing. As mentioned above, one of the reasons they were able to do so was the ability to see, meet with, and evaluate different organizations that were all in the park. At the same time, though, were the experiences those participants had with those particular groups during the initial conflicts with police and later during the occupation of the park.

Police conflict experiences

Especially for those participants who had not participated in a protest before, the Gezi Park protests functioned as the first real contact with police in the capacity as a protester.

And that day, despite it being my first protest, that first fascist attack in the Taksim events you know, it was in Tophane, and at the very front of that attack was me. (TKP -1)

Contact with police functioned as a way to see oneself less as an individual and more as part of the crowd. A number of participants described the importance of mere presence at the protest. Despite working against an overwhelming force, they stated that simply being present was important.

People there really experienced huge conflicts. When you go, you can't do anything. They throw gas, you run back. You stop. They throw gas, you run back. Then you stop again. They throw gas, you run back. TOMAs² get you wet. Some people are in the front, some are in the back, and you are continuously switching off. But you can't discount any person that was there. We can't say any person there was unimportant. If we did, only 50 people would have showed up and all 50 would have been arrested. That's why, yes, everyone was really important. (SYKP)

As previously discussed by Drury and Reicher (2000; 2005; 2009), newly empowered definitions of self can emerge from conflictual interactions between groups, in particular between protesters and police. According to Drury and Reicher (2005), groups that are treated by the police as oppositional come to perceive themselves and act in oppositional ways, and active opposition to the police becomes legitimized. Confrontation with the police was described by protesters generally as conflict or violence between protesters and police.

On Friday when those last attacks happened we got there really angry, I fought with police for the first time there...I mean seriously the gas that I ate there, maybe from 50-100 meters away and I got gas directly in my face. (AKM -1)

In particular, those interactions with police are expected to create new relationships within the crowd and also new types of interactions with the police. Gezi demonstrated that

² *Tophumsal Olaylara Müdahale Aracı*, Intervention Vehicle to Social Events – an armored water cannon designed for riot control by the Turkish National Police and Turkish Gendarmerie.

people who had not previously had experience in police conflict quickly learned how to do so. The same participant described learning how to engage in conflict with police as the protests continued.

So we went and we learned how to do things, like that we wear construction gloves and catch the tear gas capsules and throw them back, you tie a rag around your face, police come back with the TOMA but we started throwing stones because the first night if we had thrown stones maybe that TOMA wouldn't have been able to get in but we didn't do anything at first and the TOMA practically ran us over. When we throw stones they start to back down and the crowd got bigger, and slowly the police started to go back and we started to go forward and in the end the police left. (AKM -1)

Reicher and colleagues (2000; 2005) go on to suggest that this kind of transformation in relationships and crowd dynamics can create change that lasts beyond the initial protest, one that changes or expands the idea of the ingroup (i.e., other protesters) and the outgroup not just as police, but also as representatives of the state or government.

He [police] started kicking me with that thing in his hand. In that moment, I said to myself, the police are supposed to protect the people but this never really happened. They [government] have a clear position and the ones that defend that bureaucratic position are the police. I experienced this myself. And now there is the AKP government. And these police are the AKP's police. (TKP -2)

Another participant made a similar observation, stating that the protests functioned as a means for people to learn about the police and their relationship with them.

It was effective in this way: people became more knowledgeable. I mean at least they saw oppression. At least they saw the way the police behave, they know who gives the orders to shoot, they know what Tayyip [Erdoğan] does. (Dev-Genç)

When the police are perceived as representatives of an oppositional and illegitimate power, the interaction changes to one wherein conflict at protests is not against the police as individuals but as representatives of that power. And as such, anyone who engages against the police can be viewed as ingroup, and engagement in subsequent protest and involvement in collective action may continue.

That's why in every protest space I go, in every space where I may speak, I can feel this oppression, this violence, this terror that is created by the state, that is created by the state's law enforcement. I mean, I feel this both as an individual and inside the organization, in that concord of the organization I feel it, and those barricades that were built against the police, I mean the ones made in Taksim today during the Gezi Park protests, the barricades that were made in Taksim were actually made against this [state] with an anger, with self preservation, with resistance. Or for example today the stone-throwing children in Kurdistan, those kids who create a line of resistance are against this attack, this violence. (DAF)

Empowerment experiences at Gezi based on police conflict

As mentioned above, Drury and Reicher (2000; 2005; 2009) refer to empowerment as experiences that occur when in opposition to police as representatives of authority.

Empowerment is an outcome of collective action if and when such action is successful in the sense that it serves to realize participants' social identity (and hence their definition of legitimate practice) in the world, over against the power of dominant outgroups (in the case of Gezi, police,

government, state). All participants except for one cited direct conflict experiences with police. A particularly good example of overcoming the rule of law was summarized by one of the participants.

In the beginning, in the first few days people were saying “Oh, don’t throw stones, oh, there shouldn’t be violence, don’t swear, oh, don’t do this, don’t do that.” ...Finally at one point I had had enough...The first day I threw a stone [at the police] was the day I said “Yes, I am really doing something right.” ...There were three or four thousand people at Akaretler hill, with a barricade in front; they were a little ways behind the barricade. The police are continuously throwing gas [bombs], continuously throwing gas, and these [protesters] were just standing there. There was one person out front just continuously throwing rocks at the police. I looked back, and then I looked ahead again, there were maybe at most 10-15 police. Is this it? Is this what a peaceful protest is? Standing there and eating gas? Or is this showing some kind of response? It didn’t make any sense to me. My friend and I started breaking up pieces from the sidewalk. We used them to make little stones. We were in constant conflict with the police for almost an hour. This was for me the most right thing to do, and after that I was constantly active in conflict [with police]. (Revolutionary Muslim)

The issue of legitimacy was brought up multiple times. As cited by the participant above, questions about the ethical nature of reacting to police with violence were discussed. All participants stated in one way or another that engaging in conflict with police was legitimate. Interestingly, one participant discussed issues of legitimacy with police, and encouraged her belief that participating in the protests was indeed legitimate.

And then the more police used violence against me at Gezi, the more I wanted to go...I tried to approach and talk with the police in a more humanist way. I said, “Why are you doing this? Do you know what our demands are here?” I tried to explain that to them. And the police said to me, “You are traitors to your country.” I said, “I love my country, that’s not my problem at all.” (TKP -2)

Participants discussed more generally the feeling that they “needed” to participate, or needed to be there with other protesters.

Across from you is this overwhelmingly organized power, the armed forces. Despite not having anything, you resist them for days. It’s exhausting. Both mentally and physically it’s exhausting. But every day you go there, like it’s the start of your work shift, you go there, I mean you leave home in the morning and stay there until 12, 1 at night. If you say what did you do there, nothing that passed the time. But just being there, it meant everything. It changed the police’s tactics; it changed everything. (SYKP)

Empowerment through occupation

It is also important to note, however, that the Gezi Park protests involved a few days of continuous conflict with police (May 31-June 2) with some conflict continuing in neighboring Beşiktaş, which then, after pushing the police force outside of the Taksim area, protesters maintained a presence in the park through an occupation that lasted until June 15-16 after police entered the park in the early morning hours of June 15. I would argue, therefore, that though police were one example of a representative of the state, and overcoming them through direct conflict was indeed an empowerment experience, occupying the park and living communally was in and of itself a method of empowerment. That is, living in a mode outside of the one proscribed by authority was also perceived as an empowerment experience.

During the day on one side [of the park] are the people doing yoga, on the other side are people praying and the atheists that have made a human barricade around them...for example why does this make me feel empowered, because it was something that showed we could come together. (HDP -1)

Participants also discussed the ways they felt empowered, not through direct police conflict, but by their positive influence for others during the occupation.

...if I had extra of anything I gave it to the person next to me. I took extra vinegar [for tear gas]. I mean, I don't know, I would make food at home and take it with me. I would take extra trash bags. I mean, little things. Little things always made a big difference there... I don't know, I could take blankets for the people sleeping in the park. I mean if I couldn't do something I could make sure someone else could. That's why everyone's support, the solidarity of all the people there, I mean I don't know, the mothers that went there hand in hand³, even if one mother wasn't there we were missing one person. That's why it was so important for each person to be there. (Nor Zartonk)

The sentiment of “sen yoksan bir kişi eksigiz” (if you aren't here we are missing one person) was very palpable during the interviews. This statement went on to become a slogan to encourage later protest participation, and was noted in various forms throughout the interviews. Participants often noted the importance of their role simply by being present, and that this feeling itself could produce empowerment.

What could I do as an individual? I think the same thing that anyone could do. I was able to drag the people next to me away from the gas. Or cause some small damage to the

³ Prime Minister Erdoğan made a statement to the protesters, telling them to “take their mothers and leave” the park, an expression similar to “take your things and go,” in English. In response, protesters invited their mothers to come to the park. The participant is referring to an event where the mothers formed a human chain between protesters and police.

TOMA that don't really affect it but satisfied [me]. But, this was the way to change the perspective of the police and maybe scare them, and this was the biggest reward. I did this, everyone did this. (SYKP)

Anecdotally, the use of humor and creativity was seen throughout and since the protests.

Participants also mentioned the importance of combatting violence through nonviolent resistance in the form of humor, especially in graffiti and slogans used.

It's really an interesting group, I mean I don't know, are other groups like this but ours...our generation makes jokes and the worst thing, we're being beaten and shot, and even at that time, everyone's shouting slogans. (AKM -1)

Some participants, when asked for specific empowerment experiences, stated that they could not name any one experience but rather stated that everything they experienced there was empowering.

I did so many empowering things that I still miss living in the park. I was so proud of myself then, maybe it was the time in my life where I felt the most proud, actually I got a tattoo so that I could carry around that thing that gave me so much pride. For me, being there from the beginning – I mean with the police intervention – until the end, it was really valuable for me. (SDP -1)

Participants discussed that, beyond the “rush” they experienced during conflict with the police was the importance of gaining an ideological understanding of what kind of changes needed to be made, and why they were protesting in the first place. One particular participant discussed the difference between those who participated in later protest for the “rush” and those who had politicized.

People developed an adrenaline addiction. I mean, “I have to go to every protest, I have to do everything,” but for example that person doesn’t organize, that person doesn’t really understand the ideology behind that protest. I mean people have to research things a bit more. Because if you ask me, the thing that made Gezi what it was, was those kids who read to the police, the ones who passed the police barricade and read War and Peace to the police. I should also say this, I wasn’t one of those people who said the Gezi Spirit was completely peaceful, don’t throw stones at the police and stuff. If you ask me in a conflict it’s completely legitimate. (HDP -1)

That is, the thing that made Gezi “Gezi” was not the conflict itself, but the ideology behind it. Going beyond Gezi, participants described the way their experiences during the protests impacted their joining a new group.

On feeling empowered with the new group

Empowerment experiences, as also described by Drury and Reicher (2005; 2009) can go on to impact protesters’ willingness to engage in future protest. They noted that participants described empowerment experiences that continued after their initial engagement in protest, and posited that experiences of empowerment may be consequential for the subsequent success of social movements. This was manifested in participants in different ways. For some participants, this meant engaging in conflict with the police again in street protests as they had at Gezi, though this time through their new organization.

Last May Day at the protests they had closed Taksim again and people mostly marched from Beşiktaş. The goal of getting to Taksim, the struggle against the police there, the collective protest exhibited there, these all together embodied the struggle as a whole for me. (Student Collective -2)

For others, their willingness to engage manifested in other forms. As mentioned above, participants saw a difference between a desire to simply engage in conflict with police and a desire to make a change. One participant stated that Gezi resulted in a desire to continue engaging in collective action through other organizations.

I said to myself “what can I do? I can’t do it with stones or with weapons. I’ll go to my school, I’ll write for a magazine, what kind of education or training can I get, what can I study?” That’s what I said. I trained myself by going to forums and other things at school...And for this you start with yourself and add yourself somewhere, it could be a party or a union, you add yourself somewhere and sit across from people and talk to them. That’s what I did after Gezi, until I organized. In this way a kind of knowledge develops, and you really want to do something. Because there’s something wrong and against that wrong you are not as strong as the state, but you are a person. So what can you do? You can talk, write, read, explain the things you’ve read to others. That’s what I thought and that’s how I organized. (TKP -2)

Though some also described police conflict in their empowerment experiences with their new group, most described a variety of different types of ways they felt impactful and purposeful, and maybe more importantly, felt a sense of closeness and togetherness with their new group.

I am with my comrades shoulder to shoulder when we combat [with police]. That’s how I’m useful. It couldn’t really be any other way. Our camaraderie, friendship, organization, nothing about it is physical, it’s not solid or physical. It is only spiritual. We are together in spirit. It’s like we are with our families. We are all in a family; we are together as one. That’s why I’m useful. (Dev-Genç)

All participants described empowerment experiences with the new group, albeit in different forms. While some described a sense of closeness creating empowerment, others described direct police conflict with the new group as the continuation of empowerment experiences they first had at Gezi. In the next section, the Gezi Spirit and its connection to choosing the new group is discussed.

On the Gezi Spirit

Though never officially ‘defined,’ the Gezi Spirit was used – and continues to be used – to reference solidarity experiences from the park protests and subsequent occupation. When asked how a person who embodied the Gezi Spirit should behave, participants from all different groups had highly overlapping descriptions. The most often repeated descriptions referred to the Gezi Spirit as: anti-authority, liberal (pursuing freedom), collective, helpful, and non-discriminatory. These were the main descriptions across the board. One participant described the Gezi Spirit and the feeling of togetherness it exemplified as the reason that protesters were able to stand together.

As a spirit, I mean, this is what formed: knowing what it meant to be together, a spirit was formed; or maybe instead of thinking “oh, if I go there [to the protests] will something happen to me?” Before Gezi, that’s how it was. For example it was like that at May Day you remember, but after the Gezi Spirit, people got used to fighting, or got used to the tear gas capsules. People developed an immunity; now, we don’t burn anymore (VIDA -1)

To a lesser degree but also mentioned more than once is that the Gezi Spirit in particular meant being against the AKP, and more generally being against a capitalist system.

I mean, how people should behave...if we want to create a free lifestyle, if we want to resist for this, especially among the oppressed, we have to get rid of the selfishness, competition and greed in the lifestyle presented to us in the existing state system, in the existing capitalist system. That's why we think that sharing and solidarity are so important. (DAF)

On the Gezi Spirit and the new group

When asked to what degree the characteristics of the Gezi Spirit overlaps with the defining principles of their new group, participants' responses skewed positive, such that their responses ranged from "considerably overlap" to "completely overlap." This response is especially interesting as the description of the defining principles of the groups varied greatly. As mentioned above, the Gezi Spirit was generally described very similarly across the board. However when it came to descriptions of one's own group, they varied quite a bit.

Knowing that you belong to God, that existing property belongs to God, that God is the authority of that property. (AKM -1)

Patriotism, modernism, enlightenment, being for the public, liberalism, equality, anti-imperialist, anti-capitalist (TKP -2)

Anarchism starts by destroying the authority within ourselves, that's why we don't use any relationships that have an authority. We make our decisions through direct democracy. (DAF)

Our fight continues with the legacy of Mahir...we have Marxists, Leninist thought processes, that's our theory. (Dev-Genç)

Despite differing descriptions of the principles of their own groups, when asked to what degree these principles overlapped with the Gezi Spirit, overlap was stated as being quite high.

It overlaps a lot, it really really overlaps. Actually I believe that I keep the Gezi Spirit alive [through my group], I hope that it will continue that way. (SYKP)

Some participants specifically described the Gezi Spirit as the reason they joined the group they did. The new group, as far as it represents the Gezi Spirit as understood by the participant, was the reason for feeling a sense of belonging to the new group.

The Gezi Spirit wouldn't be my spirit if it didn't have these guiding principles. That's why I loved Gezi, and Nor Zartonk contains those principles. That's why I loved Gezi and why I feel I belong in Gezi and at Nor Zartonk. (Nor Zartonk)

Another participant described a similar experience.

For example when I sit in the grass and talk with other VIDA members, I get a lot of Gezi flashbacks. I mean, I don't know, when there's a problem, everyone drops everything to say "OK what do we do, we share the duties and make our move based on that." At those times I really feel like I am experiencing Gezi all over again. (VIDA -1)

Interestingly, one participant made the connection between the Gezi Spirit, his new group, and the other protesters at Gezi. Rather than viewing them all under the umbrella of the overarching identity the Gezi Spirit provided, he used it as a way to understand the participants at Gezi in terms of another group identity as a Muslim.

Who was there? Socialists were there. What are socialists working toward these days? Under the name of socialism...they organize for just wages, the economy, and then they organize because of the massacre of the environment. When we look at the things they do, maybe they keep themselves at a distance from religion, but they are doing things in line with Islam, and they are not aware of it. This guy says he is an atheist, and he comes there and says "you can't cut down this tree." Buddy, you are reading a verse from the

Qur'an, and you're not even aware of it, you ass! You're a believer and you don't even know it...I think that anyone who really considers themselves religious needed to be at Gezi Park...the response made there, it was an Islamic response, it was a response in line with religion. Probably if the prophet Muhammad were alive today, he would have been at the barricades at Gezi Park. (Revolutionary Muslim)

Empowerment and the future of engagement after Gezi

In discussing empowerment experiences, participants discussed their own particular experiences, but also discussed the importance of Gezi in creating a general change in the political landscape.

If there are currently many people like me, with a certain kind of opposing view and trying to find a place for themselves, [Gezi] showed them a path. It became a keystone for the future. Many new paths opened up for people who stepped on this keystone. A lot of areas for struggle opened up for them, they were able to choose from a lot of different organizations, forums were formed, Votes and Beyond was formed, I mean a lot of structures were built. People started thinking about where in the struggle they could join and where they would go. They needed a certain kind of ideological proficiency for this, it led people to start reading books, making intellectual accumulations, it led them to talk and discuss, it really had an affect on a large area. (TKP -1)

Gezi was perceived by participants as creating a larger social change. Rather than focusing on the immediate gains of the protest, they described the way Gezi would impact the future.

Gezi completely changed today, and planted the seeds for tomorrow. I mean there are unorganized, uneducated and scattered groups but in these groups are people who are not

going to forget their experiences. I mean, sooner or later peace will win, because the world is heading in that direction. (AKM -1)

After that in the end in a metropolis like Istanbul people who had never been able to come together came together, and it was something that had a real effect. I think actually when, in the future, this spirit can come back to life, it will form a bedrock for coalition. (SDP -2)

Participants referred specifically to the way the Gezi Spirit would survive in the future. Most discussed the continuation of the Gezi Spirit in terms of their own groups, as mentioned above. Others have tried to find the Gezi Spirit through new groups, or call on participation based on those groups (i.e., United June Movement, mentioned above). But in general, participants described a belief that the same or similar protest experience they had during Gezi could be realized again in the future.

Discussion

As mentioned above, interview questions had three main focuses: on the effectiveness of the protests themselves, on ways the individual felt empowered during the protests and how they maintain empowerment feelings with their new groups, and on the overlap between the Gezi Spirit and the principles of the new group. Questions were meant to investigate the way the protests functioned to bring about change as a whole, how individual empowerment experiences brought about change within the individual, and whether or not the “spirit” of the protest was maintained through the new group.

In asking participants about the effectiveness of the protests, the focus of participant responses was not on the immediate gains of the protests. At the time, the immediate goal was to preserve the park as a park. Over the course of the occupation, a series of demands was made by

the Taksim Solidarity platform. In addition to the preservation of the park, protesters demanded prosecution for police who used violence against demonstrators, an end to the sale of public spaces across the country, a more ethical media, and recognition of other urban renewal issues, including the construction of a third airport and third bridge across the Bosphorus in Istanbul, hydro-electric power plants across the country, and construction in the Atatürk Forest Farm outside the capitol, Ankara. Of these demands, only the first, the preservation of the park, has been achieved. A few police complicit in the deaths of some protesters have ongoing trials, but no sweeping reforms have been made nor has anyone been convicted, and construction of the third airport and third bridge are ongoing.

Though participants recognized that only one of the many demands had been achieved, they still felt that the protests had been hugely successful. Their focus, rather than on the concrete demands at the time, was on the change experienced in people's awareness of ongoing struggles and the increased politicization after the protests. That is, they saw the legacy of the protests as the reason it was efficacious, rather than the immediate reason for the protest itself.

Empowerment experiences during the protests were in line with expectations of the ESIM. Participants who engaged in conflict with police felt they overcame them in some way, and found this to be an empowering experience. Beyond the understanding of traditional protest was the occupation of the park. Though not directly described through the ESIM, the park occupation and solidarity experiences during the occupation also contributed to empowerment experiences. Participants cited their presence in the park, and the engagement between occupiers therein to be empowering. If understood as the aftermath or the outcome of police conflict, and the maintenance of power over the powers that be, the occupation and activities during the occupation are also in line with empowerment experiences as described through the ESIM.

Questions regarding the Gezi Spirit and the principles of the new group were asked to understand whether the overarching identity created during the protests influenced the way the new group was chosen. Participants described the Gezi Spirit similarly across groups. Their descriptions of their own groups varied quite a bit, but when asked to what degree the Gezi Spirit overlapped with the principles of the new group, responses were that the overlap was quite high. It seems the connection they made to the Gezi Spirit had a significant impact in the way participants chose their new groups.



CHAPTER FIVE

GENERAL DISCUSSION

There has been an evolution of perspectives on protest over time, leading to an acknowledgement of the importance of group dynamics in the understanding of social engagement in the service of collective action. Social identity theory (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1985; 1991; 1999; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987; also see Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Abrams & Hogg, 2010; Hogg, 2006) provides an important framework for understanding the crowd as a social group; a group that is subject to the conditions of any other form of group, including normative standards of behavior, ingroup and outgroup dynamics, and the creation, continuation, and termination of that group.

The focus of this research has been to understand the impact of empowerment on the politicization of identity. Through a mixed method design, I have examined the experiences of protesters during the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul to understand what led the protestors to feel empowered and what role those empowerment experiences played 1) in impacting participants' decisions to join political parties or organizations after the protests ended and 2) maintaining participation in collective action through these new groups and identities. Understanding the relationships between protesters, outgroups such as the police, and “objective” and “subjective” outcomes of the protest help establish whether or not empowerment was experienced, in what situations, and how it subsequently impacts or changes identity.

Efficacy and identification

Efficacy beliefs described by Bandura (1997; 1982) are expected to encourage the same or similar action in the future. Social movement theorists generally agree that an important antecedent for protest is the belief among participants that grievances can be addressed through

collective action. It is through feelings of efficacy that willingness to engage in future protest comes about (van Zomeren et al., 2004; 2008; 2010). The extent to which feelings of efficacy can influence identification is an important factor in understanding future engagement as well. Antecedents to collective action, as described by van Zomeren et al. (2008), list both identification and efficacy as two of three factors. The third, a sense of injustice, is only as important as the identification level of the individual. As injustice can only be experienced so much as the group or identity against which there is an injustice being committed, the role of identity seems at the forefront of importance.

Through study 1, participants who perceived the protests as efficacious also indicated significantly greater identification as a protester. The recognition of both efficacy and the subsequent identification indicates that the identification may have the ability to foster willingness to engage in future protest. Study 1 also examined the role of efficacy in determining whether an individual would then go on to join a new group or organization after the protests. Though this relationship was not significant, it only begs the question of what processes occurred to encourage the participants who did go on to join a group or organization.

Social movement theorists focus more on the concept of empowerment rather than efficacy (e.g., Drury & Reicher, 2005), as it is a term used by the population at hand and also captures emotional aspects of experience efficacy does not. Bandura's account of self defines it as unitary, while the social identity approach suggests that self or identity can be collective as well as personal (Cocking & Drury, 2004; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994), representing psychologically valid levels of self-categorization. The important theoretical difference lies in what counts as successful achievement. Bandura's self-efficacy implies that there is a definition of success based on a unitary and unvarying definition of self. The social

identity approach on the other hand suggests that what counts as successful achievement can only be understood with reference to a particular identity. Since identities can vary both across time and within individuals and groups, definitions of success may also vary, along with the emotional and practical implications that follow from such definitions. Therefore, social change occurs not only where social movements have power but where individual members are subjectively empowered through their identification with the movement they are part of (i.e., their identification as a protester). But while Bandura's account of mastery experiences defines successful achievement in terms of the individual, it is the social identity that is the locus of empowerment, rather than *just* the personal self (Drury & Reicher, 2005). Because of the relationship between empowerment and social identity, collective action can centralize or even transform an existing social identity.

In order to better understand the relationship between empowerment experiences during protest and the subsequent centralization or transformation of social identities that may then occur, a more in-depth analysis must be conducted. And because of the nature of empowerment, it is better studied through in-depth interviews rather than through survey.

Empowerment experiences and politicization processes manifested through organization

Though politicization may occur independent of the creation of new social identity categories, conducting interviews with individuals who had created new social identities after their experiences in the protests seemed the most concrete way to observe the created identity – through the new political group, party or organization the participant had joined – and the efficacy and empowerment experiences that brought them to that point. Subjective views of efficacy of the protests were described in terms of their ability to politicize individuals, rather than the more objective changes that occurred (i.e., the preservation of Gezi Park as a park).

Participants described a number of reasons that Gezi allowed them to organize. First and foremost, the protests provided them a space to meet and speak with members of organizations in a way they never had before. For a number of interviewees, Gezi was their first experience in a protest, and the first time many of them engaged in conflict with police. In line with the ESIM, protesters experienced conflict with police. Participants described this as a new way to understand other protesters present. As described in ESIM, new understandings of the group (protesters at Gezi) formed as individuals began working together in conflict against police. Particular descriptions of ‘besting’ the police or causing the police to leave the Taksim area increased perceptions that the behavior protesters engaged in was legitimate.

Beyond direct police conflict, I have stated that engagement in the occupation of the park was another form of empowerment, albeit not one that came about through direct police conflict. As described above, group members intentionally engage, as a mindful and self-conscious collective, in a power struggle with police, acknowledging the wider societal context in which this struggle takes is orchestrated. Understanding this struggle, and understanding more so that the outgroup actors in the struggle (i.e., police) are representatives of the outgroup in a greater sense (i.e., the AKP government, or the state as a whole), leads to participants’ presence in the park occupation as another form of empowerment based on engagement in a power struggle. That is, beyond conflict with police, the simple presence and participation in the daily activities of an occupied park, one that the government has actively attempted to take back, and one that functions outside the expected behavior of the state (e.g., communal living, lack of exchange of money, lack of hierarchy in decision-making) is an important empowerment experience on par with direct conflict with police. It is a supportive argument for the ESIM, one that indicates that forms of struggle against the powers that be go beyond the actors in the street.

Also important in understanding the new groups chosen by participants was questions about their understanding of the Gezi Spirit and the overlap it had with the principles of the new group. In study 1, participants who had subsequently joined a group indicated the Gezi Park protests played an important role in their decision to join a group. This idea was explored further by asking participants about the Gezi Spirit. Participants from a variety of different groups described the Gezi Spirit in very similar ways. Most of the language used between all 25 participants overlapped greatly. When it came to describing their own groups, language focused on the ideological principles of the group, and different perspectives can be explicitly seen. However, when asked to what degree the two constructs overlapped, participants described a great degree of overlap between the two; some said there was complete overlap. Participants described meeting with and discussing ideology with a number of different groups, though in the end, the importance and relevance of the Gezi Park protests to their decision was also brought up.

Limitations and future research

Especially for research in collective action, interview research allows for an understanding of complexities of cause and effect often neglected in other forms of data collection (Blee & Taylor, 2002). It is, however, only a single step in understanding the functions behind politicization. Particular issues, such as the lack of member checking in study 2, could be considered a limitation of this study. Continued exploration of constructs of empowerment through a variety of events – not just in Istanbul, but to the numerous other protests and movements that have subsequently occurred – maybe provide an understanding of how well these constructs generalize to other situations.

Protests are often seen as isolated events, and can be viewed in a singular fashion (i.e., a march or a sit-down). I believe that viewing protest in different ways will encourage an understanding of what it means to engage in empowerment. A march may provide the most direct contact between protesters and police, but is not the only way in which a power struggle can occur. As events in Ferguson, Spain, the Ukraine, and Egypt can attest to, a protest is not a singular event but is rather part of a greater social movement. Understanding the way constructs of empowerment and politicization function outside a single protest and function within the movement is an important next step in research.

Almost two years have passed since the Gezi Park protests started in May of 2013. Since the protests ended, a political party (the Gezi Party) and a number of leftist coalitions (e.g., The Leftist Front – *Sol Cephe*, United June Movement – *Birleşik Haziran Hareketi*) have formed. All have called upon the Gezi Spirit as a means to get people involved and organized. Though these provide some indication, research into how long politicization effects endure, and how much they affect future protest have yet to be fully addressed.

Observing the effects of an initial protest over the course of time, and questioning participants' subsequent engagement in protest (or lack thereof) is necessary to provide answers to these questions. The current research also addresses to a limited extent how much empowerment can generalize. Future research can focus on this aspect and examine questions related to future collective action. If for example one participates in an environmental protest, experiences a sense of empowerment, and wants to continue participating in protest, will the context be specific to environmental protest, or will it generalize to other types of protest, or even other types of collective action (e.g., making posters, giving speeches, signing petitions)? Understanding the degree to which empowerment can impact identity and willingness to engage

in a variety of types of collective action can speak more broadly to the ways that collective action behavior begins and is maintained. Addressing questions of generalizability and endurance over time will add to the research I have conducted.

Implications

Since the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011, more and more attention has been focused on grassroots uprisings occurring globally. As these events continue, questions of how and why they start, and how individuals start to “locate” themselves within those movements becomes increasingly important. As discussed above, experiences during a protest can reflect onto other parts of their lives. The way they view their own world can start to change. Those who they initially viewed as outgroup can now be seen as ingroup, and questions of who or what structures of authority are created to “support” the ingroup such as police, suddenly become representatives of the outgroup. When this change occurs, it cannot be easily put aside. Understanding the experiences that create those changes within the individual can lead to a better understanding of how social movements start and continue. Understanding how politicization and organization comes about and is sustained will have a profound effect on how states and the public interact, how one may achieve lasting social change based on those interactions.

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Appendix A

Study 1

How did you first learn about the Gezi Park protests?

- ☐ Social media
- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Through a student organization
- ☐ Through a political party
- ☐ Other. Please specify: _____

In your own opinion, were the protests effective?

- a. Yes
- b. No

How important is it to you to have participated in the Gezi Park protests?
Not at all Very much

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

In thinking about the other protesters at the Gezi Park protests:

How much did you feel a sense of belonging with other protesters?
Not at all Very much

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

How much were other protesters similar to you?
Not at all Very much

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

How happy are you to be a protester?
Not at all Very much

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Is there such a thing as the “Gezi Spirit?”

- a. Yes
- b. No

If so, how do you believe a person with the Gezi Spirit behaves?

Did you join an organization or group after the Gezi Park protests?

- a. Yes, I joined _____.

- b. No, I was already part of an organization.
- c. No, I was not a member and am still not a member of an organization.
- d. No, I was a member of _____ but now I am not.

If you joined a new group: How important were the Gezi Park protests in your decision to join this group?

Not at all Very much

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

How much do the principle beliefs of your group overlap with the Gezi Spirit?

Not at all Very much

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Demographics:

What is your age?

What is your sex?

_____ Male _____ Female _____ I prefer not to answer

I believe the ideals of the current government (AKP) are a good reflection of my ideals.

Not at all Very much

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

Appendix B

Study 2

1. Tell me about your experience in the Gezi Park protests. How did you decide to participate?
2. Is there such a thing as the “Gezi Spirit?” If so, how do you believe a person with the Gezi Spirit should behave?
3. Have you experienced injustice leading up to the protests?
 - Have you experienced injustice during the protests?
 - In your mind, was there a shared grievance at Gezi? If so, what was it/were they?
4. Did you feel that the Gezi Park protests were effective? If so, at what point did you feel a sense that the protests were effective?
5. Was there a time you felt empowered by your actions? Could you give an example of a time you felt empowered?
6. Were there police present? Did they have an effect on how you felt? (Did their action contribute to your feelings of empowerment?)
7. Did you feel the protests were successful? Did this contribute to your feelings of empowerment?

In thinking about your current group/organization:

8. Did you consider other groups before _____? Did you have any connection to this group beforehand?
9. What are the principle beliefs of your group?
10. How much do the principle beliefs of your group overlap with the Gezi Spirit?
11. How did you come to join this group? What is it about this group that fit your needs?
12. Has there been a time when you felt empowered with your new group? Could you give an example of a time you felt empowered with your new group?

Appendix C

Participant Groups in Study 2

Anticapitalist Muslims – founded in 2012, the group states that as followers of Islam, there are two major things to bear in mind: everything is God's, and that there is no authority but God. Therefore, God possesses all creatures. Capitalism is viewed as in opposition to the core beliefs of Islam, and the neoliberal politics and Islamist position of the AKP are seen to be incompatible.

The Communist Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi*, TKP), - founded in 2001 but claims ties to the original communist party in Turkey, founded in 1920. Following internal strife, in part due to positions on post-Gezi action, the TKP split in two in 2014. They became The People's Communist Party (*Halkın Komünist Partisi*, HTKP) and the Communist Party (*Komünist Parti*, KP). All participants in the current study are now members of HTKP.

Federation of Idea Clubs (*Fikir Kulüpleri Federasyonu*, FKF) – Formed March 2013, attempts to increase scientific and cultural development in universities, as well as maintain a position on important current events. FKF shares a name with a leftist political youth organization of the 1960's, though with no official ties to that organization.

Istanbul Feminist Collective – a socialist feminist group active since 2007.

New Renaissance (*Nor Zartonk*) – a participatory, libertarian platform working for the intellectual development of the peoples of Turkey, starting with the Armenian community.

Occupy CHP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, the People's Republican Party) – the Republican People's Party is a Kemalist and social-democratic party. It is the oldest party in Turkey and currently the main opposition party in parliament. The Occupy CHP movement started in 2014 in order to get a younger generation involved in politics.

People's Democracy Party (*Halkın Demokrasi Partisi*, HDP) – pro-Kurdish left-wing political party known for its strong support for minority rights. They have a 10% quota for LGBT individuals and 50% quota for women in their electoral lists. The party was formed in 2013 out of a platform consisting of a number of left wing parties, feminist groups, LGBT groups, trade unions, and other organizations.

Revolutionary Anarchist Activity (*Devrimci Anarşist Faaliyet*, DAF) – one of two main anarchist groups in Turkey. DAF has been active since 2010.

Revolutionary Muslims – cite themselves to be closely connected and with similar values to the Anticapitalist Muslims.

Revolutionary Youth (*Devrimci Gençlik*, Dev-Genç) – Founded in 1965 within the FKF, is a Turkish Marxist-Leninist organization that is legally banned since 1971.

Socialist Party of Refoundation (*Sosyalist Yeniden Kuruluş Partisi*, SYKP) – a Marxist-Leninist and socialist feminist political party founded in 2013.

Student Collectives (*Öğrenci Kolektifleri*), - a democratic organization developed in 2011 dealing primarily with problems at universities. The student collective has a political position but is independent of political parties.

Union of Progressive Communication and Call Center Workers (*Devrimci İletişim ve Çağrı Merkezi Çalışanları Sendikası*, Dev II) – formed in 2013 and part of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey, one of four major national trade union centers in the country. DEV II focuses on the rights and needs of workers in the communications industry.

Viva la VIDA (Vakıf Üniversiteleri İletişim ve Dayanışma Ağı) – A solidarity network established specifically for foundation universities. The organization holds that foundation universities are public spaces, and are against their corporatization.

Socialist Democracy Party (*Sosyalist Demokrasi Partisi*, SDP) – pro-Kurdish socialist party founded in 2002. It is one of many parties connected to the People's Democracy Party (HDP).

Workers' Democracy Party (*İşçi Demokrasisi Partisi*, IDP) – Trotskyist party formed in 2014.