Understanding Collective Action through Relationships: A Study on the Turkish 2013 Uprising (occupy Gezi)

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Introduction

A local protest in Istanbul led a massive uprising against the government in the summer of 2013 in Turkey. Almost 4 million people participated in the protests all over the country. The police brutally attacked the protests to repress them, leading to six protester deaths and many injuries (SOL Portal, 2013). Why do people engage in seemingly irrational behaviors like violence, in this case protest or the suppression of protest? The literature to date mostly suggests that this **group behavior** can be explained by the **strength of their identity**.

However, the strength of people's identities does not explain **when** identity strength is a sufficient motive to engage in such protests, and it also does not predict which side of a conflict people support.

In this research, we investigated people's motives to explain why they support either side in the Turkish Uprising. Specifically, we depart from a framework that suggests that people's moral motivations to engage in violence are **relationally motivated**. The moral motivations we analyze here are **unity** and **hierarchy** (Fiske, 2004; Rai & Fiske, 2011).

Unity is the moral motive that directs people to care and protect their group members, without need for reciprocity. Acting for group integrity and sacrifice for the group is morally acceptable and expected. This moral motive is specifically relevant for **Communal Sharing (CS) Relationships**.

Hierarchy organizes relationships around a linear hierarchy, expecting and showing respect to super-ordinates (with the expectation that super-ordinates provide protection and guidance). This moral motive is specifically relevant for **Authority Ranking (AR) Relationships**.

Supporting the uprising against Turkish government or opposing the protests can be accounted for people's preferences for relational models (i.e., CS and AR) to organize relationships with different social groups (protesting groups vs. government supporters).

In this study we would like to find out answers to the following questions:

1. Do general preferences for CS and AR relationships predict support for and engagement in the protests? (**RM Preference**)
2. Does the implementation of CS and AR towards specific groups (i.e., protesters, government, the family) relate to support for the protests? (**RM Implementation**)
3. Does group identification mediate the association between relational model preferences and support for and engagement in the protests? (**RM Preference Mediation**)
4. Does group identification mediate the association between CS implementations support for and engagement in the protests? (**RM Implementation Mediation**)

Method

Participants: 641 (62.4% women)

Online Survey Package:

-Circles in Relational Configuration Arrays (CIRCA; Thomsen, 2010; RM Preferences)

- Modes of Relationships Questionnaire (MORQ; Haslam & Fiske, 1999; **RM Implementations**)
- Collective Identity (e.g., "I feel commitment to protesters and people that attend in demonstrations"; rated on a 6-point scale from 1 "not at all" to 6 "too much"; questions asked towards either group)
- Attitudes towards Turkish Uprising (Six items, e.g., "I support protests and demonstrations"; rated on a scale from 1 "totally disagree" to 6 "totally agree")
- Did you participate in the protests in some way? ("Yes/No"; **engagement**)

Results

1. Support for the protests - Table 1 depicts:

- CS preferences positively predicted supporting the protests.
- AR preferences negatively predicted supporting the protests.
- AR implementation towards family relations negatively predicted support for the protests.
- CS implementation towards protesting groups was positively related to support for the protests, but CS with supporters of government was negatively related to support for the protests.

Table 3. Regression coefficients of relational models on support for the protests.

Variables	B (SE)	95 % CI
Model 1		
CS Preference	.07 (.02)	.03-.12
AR Preference	-.12 (.03)	-.17-.06
Adj. R2	.04*	
Model 2		
CS implementation in family	.05 (.03)	-.02-.11
AR implementation in family	-.10 (.03)	-.14-.05
Adj. R2	.02**	
Model 3		
CS with protesting groups	.38 (.03)	.33-.43
AR with protesting groups	-.04 (.03)	-.09-.01
Adj. R2	.28*	
Model 4		
CS with government supp.	-.35 (.03)	-.41-.28
AR with government supp.	.03 (.02)	-.01-.08
Adj. R2	.16*	

Note: Each model was tested separately. * $p < .001$, ** $p = .001$

2. Engagement in the protests - Table 2 depicts active engagement:

- Higher CS preferences were related to increased probability of engagement in the protests.
- Higher AR preference was related to decreased probability of engagement in the protests.
- Higher identification with protesters was related to increased probability of engagement in the protests.
- Greater CS implementation with protesting groups was related to increased probability of engagement in the protests.
- Greater CS implementation with government supporters was related to decreased probability of engagement in the protests.

Table 2. Effects of RM preferences, collective identity, and RM implementations on engaging in the protests

	χ^2 (N = 641)	B (SE)	p	Exp(B)	95% CI
Step 1.	9.09				
CS Preference		.18 (.09)	.04	1.20	1.01 - 1.43
AR Preference		-.26 (.11)	.02	.77	.61-.96
Step 2.	92.85				
Collective Identity with protesters		.89 (.10)	.00	2.44	1.99-2.99
Step 3.	21.04				
CS with Family		-.14 (.15)	.42	.86	.61-1.23
AR with Family		-.14 (.18)	.36	.87	.65-1.17
CS with Protesters		.57 (.18)	.001	1.76	1.25-2.49
AR with Protesters		-.26 (.19)	.16	.77	.53-1.11
CS with Gov. Supp.		-.29 (.16)	.07	.75	.55-1.03
AR with Gov. Supp.		.02 (.12)	.90	1.02	.80-1.30

Notes: CS = communal sharing, AR = authority ranking, Gov. Supp. = supporters of Turkish government

3. Mediation analyses

- Collective identity with protesters mediated the relationship between CS preferences and AR preferences with support for the protests (Figure 1).
- Higher CS preference was related to greater identification with protesters which in turn was related to higher support for the protests.
- Higher AR preference was related to lesser identification with protesters, which in turn was related to lesser support for the protests.

- Collective identity mediated the relationship between CS implementations and support for the protests (Figure 2)

- CS implementations with protesting groups were related to greater identification with them, which in turn was related to greater support for the protests.
- CS implementations with government supporters were negatively related to identification with them, which in turn was related to lesser support for the protests.

Conclusion

The results answered the question whether general preferred relational motives are related to support and engagement in the protests or not. Essentially, this research indicates why people would engage in so-called "moral violence" (Rai & Fiske, 2011).

Most notably, CS Preferences were related to greater support for the protests and to greater engagement in the protests, whereas AR preferences were related to lesser support for the protests and lesser engagement in the protests.

Less surprising was the split for CS, as greater CS with government supporters was related to lesser support for the protests (also less propensity to engage), but greater CS with supporters of protests was related to greater support. This merely confirms that CS with a particular group prompts the motivation for unity, to act in behalf of the group.

Interestingly enough, the preference for AR revealed a consistent root, as greater AR preference for homogenous groups and using AR motives in familial relations led to lesser support for the protests. The negative effect of AR relationships might reflect the moral fear of losing social order and status quo. Further, preferring AR in groups and using hierarchical motives in familial relations could be related to effects of ideological orientations as described in social dominance and right-wing authoritarianism (Thomsen, 2010).

The results revealed that communal sharing preference had an indirect effect on supporting collective action through collective identity. This result provided further support to the idea that people are ready and willing to act for identified group when they prefer communal sharing in their relationships (Rai & Fiske, 2011). If people use communal sharing motives to relate others they are more likely to take part in collective action when their groups had.

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