

EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM WHEN FACED WITH IDENTITY  
THREAT

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## **Abstract**

### **EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM WHEN FACED WITH IDENTITY THREAT**

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The current research is closely bound to a number of critical social issues that are becoming increasingly prevalent, such as homegrown terrorism enacted by Right wing extremist groups in the United States, through its focus on the development of attitudes toward moderate and extremist activism. This study examines the impact of an extremist, ingroup faction by manipulating identity threat and minority or majority influence. The current research examined these effects by measuring evaluations of moderate and extremist activist groups among members of the Democratic Party in the United States ( $N = 391$ ) who were recruited from MTurk. Participants were randomly assigned to evaluate one of two types of activist groups as well as randomly assigned to perceive high or low levels of identity threat and to perceive minority or majority support for the activist group they were evaluating. Based on previous literature regarding extremism, minority influence, and identity threat, it was hypothesized that when identity threat was high, evaluation of activist groups would be more positive than when identity threat was low. Additionally, it was hypothesized that evaluation of activist groups would be more positive when under minority influence as well as that activist group evaluation would be more positive in the moderate activism condition than in the extremist activist condition. Lastly, it was hypothesized that while participants assigned to the minority and extremist

activism condition would typically report more negative attitudes toward the activist group under low identity threat, under high identity threat participants in the minority and extremist activist condition would report more positive attitudes toward the activist group. The hypotheses were partially supported, such that those experiencing high identity threat evaluated the extremist activist group more favorably than those in the low identity threat condition. This finding and the lack of other predicted findings will be discussed in terms of theoretical and methodological implications.

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### **Introduction**

Daniel Byman's (2019) article, "Right-Wingers are America's Deadliest Terrorists," sheds light on the often overlooked issue of domestic terrorism in America by emphasizing that since 9/11, Right-Wing Terrorism has been responsible for more deaths on American soil than Jihadi terrorism has. While the phenomenon of homegrown terrorism can be difficult to fathom, especially when the severity of its aftermath surpasses that of terrorism committed by foreign entities, social psychological mechanisms are key in beginning to understand the driving forces that foster acts of extremist behavior. Some of the most common movements that right-wing extremists are affiliated with include white supremacist groups, anti-abortion extremist groups, religious groups, and anti-immigrant extremist groups.

A common thread among these groups is that their causes are deeply rooted in opposing progressivism and promoting efforts to conserve oppressive traditions such as segregation or denying a woman the right to reproductive choice. With many social movements on the rise to combat instances of oppression such as these, progressive ideology is becoming more and more common, posing a threat to the core values of the right-wing extremist groups and thus the individual identities of right-wing extremists. It is this sense of threat that makes individual group members more likely to act on behalf of the group. Identity threat is a social psychological phenomenon that is defined as any event that challenges the core attitudes and beliefs of a group's collective identity (Bartel & Wiesenfeld, 2013). Whereas identity threat likely plays a role in driving group members to evaluate extremist activism more favorably than moderate activism, there are

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also many other contextual factors at play that are still not completely understood in this framework, such as the effects of minority and majority influence. While the numerical majority typically has greater influence on public attitudes and behavior than the numerical minority does, under certain conditions, such as consistency, the minority has the ability to exert substantial influence (Crano & Chen, 1998). The current study seeks to explore if majority influence or minority influence is more impactful in the development of attitudes toward different means of activism. It is particularly pertinent to gain insight on how these contextual factors interact with one another to either strengthen or inhibit positive attitudes toward extremist activism because there are a multitude of factors that impact attitudes toward activism.

Domestic terrorism, specifically committed by right-wing extremist groups, is an increasingly significant issue that is being driven by ingroup members positively evaluating extremist activism as an effective strategy to propagate group messages. To address this issue, it is crucial to understand what makes extreme strategies of promoting their messages so appealing to right-wing extremist groups. The answer to understanding why this type of activism occurs lies within the situational factors in which the activism unfolds. The proposed research will specifically address the question of whether higher levels of identity threat as opposed to lower levels of identity threat increase the likelihood that group members will have more positive attitudes toward extremist activism as opposed to moderate activism as a means for promoting values and beliefs. Additionally, the current study aims to address how perceived numerical minority or majority support for one type of activism over another will impact individual attitudes

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toward the different means of activism. Social identity is a major component in understanding the development of attitudes toward types of activism because one's social identity is a source of information about the self and serves as a means of determining one's values which leads people to defend their social identity and values as it is a way of indirectly defending their sense of self.

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### **Literature Review**

#### **Social Identity and Self-Categorization**

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) proposes that people construct their personal identity and self-esteem based on the characteristics and status of the groups to which they belong. The more strongly that an individual identifies with a group, the more the individual will utilize that particular group to gather information about the self. The process of gathering information about the self entails both evaluating the ingroup to understand the features of the self that are present in the ingroup as well as evaluating the outgroup to understand features of the self that are absent from the outgroup. In other words, people establish who they are based on information about the ingroup and establish who they are not based on information about the outgroup (Tajfel, 1972).

The group prototype is an ideal set of attributes and features that cognitively define a group, and prototypicality (e.g., the extent to which someone approximates their ingroup prototype) is essentially a measure of how closely a group member fits the prototype. The prototype is constructed using the meta contrast principle which is defined as comparison of the ingroup and the outgroup to develop a prototype that maximizes intergroup differences and minimizes intragroup differences (Turner et al., 1987). The prototype is essential because individuals want to feel positively about oneself, but also want to develop an understanding of their surrounding world. The prototype provides this by aiding ingroup members in understanding who the group is and, in turn, who the group member is as an individual (Tajfel, 1969). The social identity process is driven by self-categorization, the process of individuals developing cognitive representations of

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themselves, because the group prototype is an indicator of the attributes and features that an individual ingroup member should have. This leads ingroup members to engage in the tendency to adopt those specific traits, which is known as depersonalizing to the group; so, rather than being seen as unique individuals, they view themselves and other ingroup members in terms of the prototype. (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987).

Hogg and Reid (2006) further explore the function of the prototype in defining a group by emphasizing the role that prototypes play within groups through a social identity lens. Hogg and Reid suggest that group norms operate as category defining prototypes of a group that emphasize similarities within the ingroup and differences between groups. Because, when embedded in a social context, group norms essentially help to create optimal distinctiveness among groups (by giving the group a sense of cohesion within, yet setting the group apart from outgroups) group members conceptualize group norms as prototypes and allow them to govern attitudes and behavior (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Through mechanisms of social identity and self- categorization, when group memberships are salient, ingroup members allow the prototype and the norms of that group to influence how they think, act and feel.

Hogg, Turner and Davidson (1990) conducted a study that addressed the issue of polarized group norms as they pertain to the social frames in which they are presented which added to the literature by addressing the consensus component that underlies group norms and depersonalization. In this study a socially desirable recommendation presented to participants was manipulated on three levels (risky, cautious and neutral) and the frame of reference was also manipulated on those same three levels among participants whose

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goal was to come to a group consensus. Hogg et al. (1990) hypothesized that the manipulation of the frame of reference would polarize the norm of the ingroup toward more cautionary in the risky outgroup reference and toward more risky in the cautious outgroup reference (i.e., polarize away from the outgroup). Secondly they hypothesized participants' posttest opinions would converge with their estimated group consensus. The results supported both hypotheses suggesting support for social categorization theory of group polarization because the participants conformed to what they perceived the group norm to be when the norm was polarized through a salient frame of reference.

These findings were further demonstrated in a political context by Gaffney et al. (2014) in a study in which participants were presented with an extreme, pro-normative message. Results indicated that conservative participants who were primed with uncertainty expressed views that aligned further to the right by indicating more support for extreme messages presented by the Tea Party. The results demonstrate that the original effect is magnified under uncertainty, indicating the ability of minority groups to polarize prototypes in circumstances of uncertainty. These findings have implications for the proposed research because the manipulation of group consensus (either in support of or in opposition of certain activist groups) as well as the manipulation of identity threat, which should induce self-conceptual uncertainty in the threatening condition, can be expected to influence how participants will evaluate activist groups.

Bartel and Wiesenfeld (2013) explore the effects of prototype ambiguity within groups, proposing that prototype ambiguity is the result of situations where a threat is

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posed to a group's collective identity. Identity threat essentially challenges the dignity of the group as a systematic entity with distinctive features. In a general sense, identity threat can pose a risk to the cohesion of a group as well as the status of the group, which can lead to a lack of distinction surrounding the group's prototype. Bartel and Wiesenfeld (2013) suggest that prototype ambiguity (i.e., when the prototype is not clearly defined) can derail regular group functioning by throwing off member coordination, the use of resources within the group, and limiting the effectiveness of the group. Groups combat these effects of identity threat and prototype ambiguity by redefining the prototype to bind the group together more firmly, increasing entitativity and increasing the distinctiveness and desirability of membership within the group (Bartel & Wiesenfeld, 2013). Whereas previous work examines general strategies of combating identity threat and prototypicality ambiguity, thus far, the role that collective activism may play in reestablishing entitativity and status are overlooked.

While identity threat and prototypicality ambiguity are important to consider as factors that may drive collective action, threat to personal control is also influential as this has also been shown to foster strong group identification. Goode, Keefer, Branscombe and Molina (2017) explored the role that group identification plays in reducing threat to personal control by means of endorsing external systems that offer a general sense of meaning and order. The results yielded support that group-based threat undermines personal control and that this increases identification to the threatened group. This work also showed that people will increase identification and adherence to norms of the group that is experiencing the threat rather than simply joining and strongly



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identifying with a new group that is not under threat.

The role that group identification plays in the development of personal identity is an explanatory factor in why threatening group identity has personal ramifications for individual group members as well as to the group as a whole entity. Because there is evidence that group members' level of identification increases under identity threat as a means to regain a sense of personal and collective control, it is safe to assume that group members consequently become more certain of and committed to attitudes and beliefs propagated by the group. In turn, group members are likely more willing to engage in action and support action that promotes those attitudes and beliefs. When attitudes are more certain they are consequently more durable and more predictive of behavior (Tormala, 2016). It is important to understand that identity threat can increase group identification, however it is necessary to investigate how this increased identification translates to the behaviors of group members and how these behaviors are impacted by both minority and majority influence.

### **Minority Influence**

Given that extremist activism is a key component of the proposed research, minority influence is of particular importance because extremist groups are typically minority (i.e., status, power, numerical) groups. As Moscovici (1976) suggested, only minority groups can initiate true social change. Social change produced as a result of minority influence has been seen numerous times throughout history and has demonstrated that minority influence can exert change with examples ranging from the Civil Rights Movement to Right-Wing Extremism. This indicates that the message being

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propagated by the minority group is not necessarily the critical factor, rather it is the circumstances in which the message is being processed that should be examined to explain social change exerted by minority groups.

The numerical majority have power to act on public behavior more so than those who are in the numerical minority because the assumption is typically made that whatever the minority does must be bad because there are few people who are doing it (Moscovici, 1980). General assumptions regarding the influence of majorities and minorities include that majorities and minorities are always exerting influence on one another. This constant influence from the majority leads to compliance of attitudes and behaviors in public settings, and the consistent minority influence leads to belief maintenance in private settings. All attempts of influence, whether coming from a majority or minority source, create conflict leading to a need for uncertainty reduction. In general, the more strongly a person holds their attitudes and beliefs, the more conflict will be created under influence that is contradictory to attitudes and beliefs, which means that the individual will have to defend their beliefs even more to reduce uncertainty. While both the majority and the minority have the ability to arouse conflict, the difference is where the conflict occurs. Generally, information from a majority source is processed passively while a message from a minority source stands out regardless of message strength. While people actively seek to fit in with the majority and thus passively accept its message, the minority stands out, therefore, when receiving a minority message people will typically be curious to understand why the minority holds the views that they do, leading to deeper level processing. This difference in levels of

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processing is important because it has implications for how messages from a majority or a minority source impact attitudes and behavior. Messages from a majority source that are processed passively will lead to a public change but will likely not be upheld in a private setting or for long term. Messages from a minority source, however, that are processed on a deeper level, using more mental effort, will result in attitudes and beliefs that are long term and that the person is more invested in (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).

In terms of resolutions of conflict induced by majority and minority influence, when the source of conflict is a majority message, the easiest route to conflict resolution is to change public behavior. When facing conflict induced by a minority, the easiest route is to change internal worldviews because most people do not want to identify with minorities behaviorally and publicly (Moscovici, 1980). Moscovici (1980) proposed that minority influence is marked by specific operations which include that conversion occurs when the minority message is consistent, the change that occurs is real and internal, we are often unaware that the change is occurring, more intense conflict will result in stronger conversion, a rigid minority message is more likely to result in indirect rather than direct attitude change, and the perception of the conversion is more pronounced when the minority influence is no longer present.

The context in which minority influence occurs is further demonstrated in an experiment conducted by Moscovici et al. (1969) in which there were four groups of participants that were given the task of identifying the name of the color that was presented. Each group had two confederates that were instructed to purposely report seeing the incorrect color. Following this, a second trial was run in which participants

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reported what color was being presented individually. Results demonstrated that when participants responded in private the minority was more influential. Furthermore, the greater effort that participants made to resist the minority message in a public setting, the more they adopted the minority view in private. Notably, these results did not occur when the minority message was inconsistent. The results indicate that under the influence of consistent minority messages, there will be deep enough message processing due to the receivers of the message wanting to understand the minority message that it will result in private attitude/belief change.

The results of Moscovici et al.'s (1969) work on the importance of consistency of the minority message was also supported by a study conducted by Bazarova, Walther, and McLeod (2012) that sought to investigate the effects of minority influence among virtual groups. This study also considered geographical location of minority members as well as the consistency of the message being presented by minority members. The results show that minority members have the most influence on majority group members' opinions when the minority message is remote and consistent compared to when it is collocated and consistent.

Although there is support for Moscovici's work, Nemeth and Wachtler (1973) conducted an experiment that resulted in contradictory findings to those of Moscovici. The experiment entailed small groups of people rating their preferences for a set of Italian or German paintings. A confederate that participants were led to believe was German, expressed bias for the German paintings on all 19 pairs of paintings. Following the confederate's influence, a group discussion about the paintings was held and then the

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participants rated the paintings again, individually. There were no differences in private or public evaluations of the paintings, indicating that participants held the same attitudes about the paintings in private as they did in public. This demonstrates that actual conversion occurred rather than just compliance because the influence of the German critic on participants' attitudes remained consistent in both public and private settings. The differing findings between Moscovici's (1969) work and the work of Nemeth and Wachtler (1973) suggests that there could potentially be an unexplored variable that moderates the relationship between minority influence and private/public attitude change.

An example of an additional variable that may play a role in how minority and majority messages are processed is means of expression of consensus, which was explored by Gardikiotis, Martin and Hewstone (2005). The results of this study demonstrated that when consensus was expressed with descriptors such as large and small or minority and majority, the larger faction of the group produced the most influence among group members. Furthermore, when larger factions of the group presented messages, it produced non-systematic processing of messages.

While more immediate effects can be seen from majority influence, the notion that these effects are derived from non-systemic processing is very valuable considering that minority influence is thought to have less of an immediate effect, but more of an indirect and lasting effect.

Crano and Chen (1998) add to the literature on minority and majority influence by addressing the role that the leniency contract plays in the differentiation between the types of attitude change influenced by the majority versus the minority. The leniency

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contract proposes that people elaborate minority messages that originate from the ingroup without counterargument or derogation, and while direct attitude change does not occur, this offsets the balance of interconnected attitudes regarding the minority message which leads to indirect attitude change on a related attitude. This indirect change on peripheral attitudes can later develop into focal attitude change that is long lasting. In contrast, attitude change influenced by the majority is public and focal, but not long term. Whereas Crano and Chen's (1998) findings are more in align with the findings of Moscovici (1969), they also take into consideration how long the effects of both minority and majority influence can be seen after influence is exerted (whether for long term or short term), as well as if attitude change is achieved through a direct or indirect route.

Crano and Chen's (1998) findings are supported by Clark and Maass (1988) who made a major contribution to the literature on minority and majority influence by conducting a study with the intent to investigate the difference between influence that stems from ingroup and outgroup minority sources as well as to assess how perceived credibility of the source impacts minority influence. The results of this study demonstrate that group members tend to seek out majority messages publicly and minority messages more privately, and that ingroup minorities have a greater influence than outgroup minorities do, which is consistent with Crano and Chen's assertion that ingroup minority messages are not elaborated with counterargument or derogation. Furthermore, this research indicates that ingroup minority sources were perceived as more credible than outgroup minority sources, and that ingroup minority sources were also more influential. Thus, ingroup minorities are likely influential because of their perceived credibility.

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Crano and Chen (1998) take a social identity theory approach to speculating why ingroup minorities seem to have more influential ability than outgroup minorities, essentially reasoning that ingroup members have a greater motivation for attitudes to align because we validate our attitudes through comparison to similar others. However, this contradicts other findings in the literature regarding minority influence, as it has also been supported that outgroup minority members are more influential than ingroup minorities (Phillips, 2003). The proposed research will further clarify this contradiction by addressing variables such as identity threat that may affect when participants are more likely to be influenced by an ingroup or outgroup minority. Ultimately, further exploring the effects of prototype threat as well as minority influence will allow for a more thorough understanding of the development of extremist activism among groups as threat and minority influence are concepts that are closely tied to extremist groups.

### **Extremism**

Kruglanski et al. (2013) proposed the quest for significance model which states that promoting a cause by means of extreme behavior is more likely to occur under conditions that induce a search for significance and social recognition. The quest for significance can be manifested in two different forms; the first being the quest for individual significance which has its roots in personal experiences. The second is the quest for collective significance which is rooted in the desire to advance the status of one's group. While there are associations between both types of quest for significance and extremism, Jasko et al. (2019) conducted four studies to test if belonging to a radical versus a nonradical social context possibly moderates effects of quest for significance on

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extremism. The four studies were conducted in three different cultural settings, which included Sri Lanka, Morocco, and Indonesia. These three locations were chosen as they were identified as being radical contexts on the basis that participants in these areas already belonged to extremist groups or on the basis of the area having a reputation for recruitment on behalf of terrorist organizations. Each study compared the responses of participants from these areas and across studies, results suggested that radical social contexts strengthened the relationship between quest for significance and support for extremism and violence. This relationship was especially strong when the quest for significance was on behalf of the group.

Kruglanski et al. (2019) also focus on the quest for significance by exploring the role that it plays in the development of extremism in their paper which addresses the cognitive foundations of violent extremism. The authors consider extremism as developing from an imbalance in motivations in which one particular need supersedes the others, causing behavior to become less regulated in the pursuit of meeting that one particular need. In situations of violent extremism, the need that has surpassed all others is the quest for significance and the behavior that is no longer being regulated as it typically would be, is manifested in extremism which is being used as means to obtain significance.

Kruglanski et al. (2019) propose that the cognitive mechanisms that drive this process are learning and inference, knowledge activation, selective attention, and inhibition. The cognitive mechanism of learning and inference refers to an individual learning to associate violence and extremism with gaining significance. Knowledge



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activation is the process of identifying extremist behavior as an effective means of attaining significance. This aspect of the development of extremism is related to identity threat because in the absence of threat, more moderate means of fulfilling the quest for significance would suffice, however, when a threat is posed that need to attain significance becomes more dire which leads extremist means to be perceived as both appropriate and necessary. Once the need is identified and extremism is subsequently identified as the best means of attainment, selective attention occurs which is the cognitive process of all attention and affect being directed toward attaining significance. Selective attention is counterbalanced with inhibition, as it is just as crucial to avoid affect that is related to secondary goals as it is to focus on the primary goal. While the cognition that activates extremist behavior is very important, it is also crucial to identify the contextual factors that create this imbalance and foster the quest for significance above all other needs.

Hogg, Meehan, and Farquharson, (2010) emphasize the contextual factor of self-uncertainty in support for extremist groups, hypothesizing that when people feel uncertain about their self-relevant beliefs, practices and values, self-uncertainty increases the likelihood that one will identify with a radical group and strengthens identification with the radical group. Additionally, they hypothesized that this would either have no effect on or weaken identification with moderate groups. The study was conducted with Australian students, who preferred to identify with moderate groups, so the context-specific hypothesis was that preference for moderate groups would disappear altogether under uncertainty. This hypothesis was supported by a laboratory experiment in which

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self-uncertainty and group radicalism were manipulated. Results demonstrated that the preference to identify with a moderate group over a radical group disappeared under uncertainty because uncertainty strengthened identification with the radical group. These findings are significant because they support that extremist group membership offers individuals a sense of certainty.

The role of uncertainty is further explored by Hogg, Kruglanski, and van den Bos (2013) who make the case that humans have a strong, natural tendency to avoid and reduce their uncertainty, and this tendency is associated with and may even directly lead to extremism. This association between uncertainty reduction and extremism is based on the clarity and unambiguousness that extremism offers. Additionally, extremism often offers a sense of approval and affirmation in promoting one's own uncertainty reduction through radical and assertive actions despite these actions being aggressive and antisocial. Hogg, Kruglanski, and van den Bos (2013) emphasize that these actions are an effective way of reducing uncertainty by grounding one's beliefs, attitudes, and values in consensus and repeated exposure to similar others who are in agreement and reinforce these values and attitudes. By immersing oneself in this consensus and following this uncertainty-reducing strategy, people often attempt to avoid any alternative views that may contradict their own, and when they do encounter opposition, they react strongly by devaluing and discrediting others often leading to aggressive and antisocial behaviors enacted on behalf of maintaining one's own certainty. While uncertainty is a primary contextual factor that fosters extremism, individuals' evaluations of social systems is another crucial aspect in how extremism develops.

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Bal and van den Bos (2017) examine the psychological process of radicalization and propose a model that evaluates what happens when people stop accepting the status quo and, instead, start to look to alternative social systems and unconventional views as a better option. Bal and van den Bos (2017) make the case that emotional and behavioral system rejection are important in understanding the development of radicalization. The model proposes that perceptions of injustice are key to the development of extremism. Essentially perceptions of injustice can lead individuals to reject the dominant social system. However, when there is no alternative system available, people can only show emotional system rejection. On the other hand, when an alternative system is available, rather than simply emotional system rejection, we see behavioral system rejection, and the result is notably higher levels of extremism. This model ultimately identifies the conditions under which people transition from system acceptance or emotional system rejection to active, behavioral rejection of the societal system, creating a situation that fosters extremism.

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### **Overview of the Current Study**

The purpose of this experiment was to combine the theoretical perspectives of minority influence and social identity by studying the contextual factors that interact with identity threat on evaluations of moderate and extremist activism. Specifically, this research aimed to examine the effectiveness of an extremist, ingroup faction by manipulating identity threat and minority or majority influence. The current research examined evaluations of moderate and extremist activist groups among the members of the Democratic Party in the United States. Participants (a national sample of Democrats) were randomly assigned to evaluate one of two types of activist groups (extreme vs. moderate), that they were told had a majority of the Party's support or a minority of the Party's support. In addition, participants were randomly assigned to conditions of high or low identity threat. I hypothesized the following: Hypothesis 1 predicted a main effect for identity threat stating that when identity threat was high, evaluation of activist groups would be more positive than when identity threat was low. Hypothesis 2 predicted a main effect for support stating that under majority influence, evaluation of activist groups would be more positive than when under minority influence. Hypothesis 3 predicted a main effect for the activist group variable stating that activist group evaluation would be more positive in the moderate activism condition than in the extremist activist condition. Hypothesis 4 predicted an interaction between all three independent variables in which participants assigned to the minority and extremist activism condition would typically report more negative attitudes toward the activist group under low identity threat, and under high identity threat participants in the minority and extremist activist condition

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would report more positive attitudes toward the activist group. This prediction is consistent with the current literature given that high identity threat has been demonstrated to lessen identification with moderate groups and strengthen identification with radical groups (Hogg, Meehan & Farquharson, 2010) as well as that processing of a minority message leads to long-lasting, private attitude change which indicates that participants would report more positive evaluations of the extremist activist group as opposed to short-lasting, public attitude change that results from majority influence (Moscovici, 1980).

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### **Method**

#### **Design**

This experiment employed a 2 x 2 x 2 factorial, between subjects, experimental design. The independent variables are activist group type (moderate or extremist activist group), ingroup support (minority or majority support), and identity threat (high or low identity threat). The primary dependent variable is attitude toward the activist group. Participants were asked to evaluate an activist group in the United States that is advocating for environmental policy.

#### **Participants**

A convenience sample of Amazon Mechanical Turk workers was recruited to participate in the current study. Workers chose to participate in the current study by using MTurk's online marketplace. Participants who did not identify as members of the Democratic Party were excluded from participating in the study. Participant age range was restricted to 18 years old to 40 years old. The sample included 391 participants. An a priori power analysis and sensitivity analysis were performed using the SuperPower package in R version 4.0.2 and indicated that obtaining at least 350 participants would yield a power of .95 for the three way interaction regarding the primary hypothesis. Participants who consented to be in the study were compensated with .50 cents.

#### **Procedures**

##### **Pre-screening/Demographics procedure.**

Participants were able to participate in the study at any location at any time using MTurk. Upon beginning participation, participants were presented with an informed

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consent form to read and indicated their willingness to participate in the study by electronically signing the consent form. Participants then completed a demographics/pre-screening questionnaire which was used to generate descriptive statistics describing the sample and to determine participants' eligibility to participate. This questionnaire contained a series of questions requesting that participants indicate their gender, race, age and political affiliation. Any participants who did not meet the political party affiliation and age criteria were thanked for their time and informed that they could not participate in the study.

### **Group Identification Prime 1.**

After confirming that participants considered themselves members of the Democratic Party, they were prompted to write a brief explanation of why being a Democrat is important to them.

### **Environmental Attitude Prime.**

Participants were then presented with and instructed to read a brief description of how environmental policy has become a partisan issue and is a core value of the Democratic Party.

### **Environmental Attitude Measure.**

Participants then completed a questionnaire that assessed attitudes toward preserving the environment. Environmental attitudes were measured to allow participants to be primed for strong group identification with the Democratic Party with similar environmental attitudes as the basis of this strengthened group identification.

### **Group Identification Prime 2.**

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Following completion of the environmental attitude measure participants were told that, *“Based on your responses, it has been determined that your environmental views align with 92% of Democratic Party members.”*

### **Group Identification Measure.**

Participants completed a questionnaire that assessed their level of group identification to the Democratic Party. Group identification was measured because it was expected that the high threat prime would be more effective on participants that identified more strongly with the Democratic Party.

### **Identity Threat Manipulation.**

Participants were randomly assigned to the high identity threat condition or the low identity threat condition. Those assigned to the high identity threat condition were given a prompt to read which stated: *“Although a key component of the Democratic Party’s platform includes advocating for environmental policy and a majority of Democratic Party members express environmental concern, Pew (2021) conducted a longitudinal study which found that since the 2016 election many previously conservative millennials have shifted their views to align with the platform of the Democratic Party with the exception of views regarding environmental policy. Recent data suggests that the influence of millennials who have switched over to the Democratic Party, but do not agree with environmental policy, will have significant adverse effects on the party’s efficacy in enacting environmental change. Based on current trends seen in the data, it is projected that by the year 2024, environmental policy will no longer be a core value of the Democratic Party’s platform. Experts estimate that approximately less than 30% of*



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*Democrats will consider environmental issues a priority if there is a continuation in current trends.*” This prompt was expected to induce identity threat, as it posed a risk that concern for environmental protection would no longer be prototypical of the Democratic Party.

Participants assigned to the low identity threat condition were provided a prompt to read which stated that: *“Although a key component of the Democratic Party’s platform includes advocating for environmental policy and a majority of Democratic Party members express environmental concern, Pew (2021) conducted a longitudinal study which found that since the 2016 election there have been some previously conservative millennials who have shifted their views to align with the platform of the Democratic Party with the exception of views regarding environmental policy. Recent data suggests that the influence of millennials who have switched over to the Democratic Party is unlikely to impact the party’s efficacy in enacting environmental change. Based on current trends seen in the data, it is projected that environmental policy will remain a core value of the Democratic Party’s platform despite some new members who oppose environmental policies.”* This prompt was expected to induce minimal identity threat as it posed little risk that concern for environmental protection will no longer be prototypical of Democratic Party members.

### **Identity Threat Manipulation Check.**

A manipulation check was performed in the form of a questionnaire that assessed the level of threat participants perceived to their identity as a member of the Democratic Party.

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### **Activist Group.**

Participants were randomly assigned to either the moderate activist condition or to the extremist activist condition. Participants assigned to the extremist activist condition received information about a new environmental activist group in the U.S. whose platform involves utilizing vandalism and scare tactics to promote its message about the necessity to preserve the environment. Participants assigned to the moderate activist condition were given information about a new environmental activist group whose platform involves creating educational content and recruiting petition signatures to promote its message about the necessity to preserve the environment.

### **Minority/Majority Support.**

Participants were randomly assigned to the minority condition or to the majority condition with approximately half of participants in each condition. Participants in the minority condition were told that a minority of Democratic Party members are in support of the platform and tactics that are being promoted by the activist group they received information about. Participants assigned to the majority condition were told that a majority of Democratic Party members are in support of the platform and tactics being promoted by the activist group they received information about.

### **Activist Group/Group Support Manipulation.**

Participants assigned to the extremist activist condition and majority support condition were presented with the following: *“In order to combat the influence of new members of the Democratic Party who oppose environmental policy, a new environmental activist group called The Democratic Millennials for the Environment has*

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*been formed. This group was founded on the ideal that their message of environmental conservation must be spread at all costs. Their platform includes organizing public events and protests that often encourage and lead to acts of vandalism and disruption such as graffiti, arson and blocking public roads. The Democratic Millennials for the Environment have also been known to use a tactic called “doxing” in which they intimidate anti- environmentalists by publishing their private information on the internet in order to embarrass them, build support against them and threaten them. Recent data indicates that 83% of Democratic Party members are in support of this group (Pew, 2021). We would like to know what you think about this group’s efforts to enact environmental change. Please rate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements.”*

Participants assigned to the extremist activist condition and the minority support condition were presented with the following: *“In order to combat the influence of new members of the Democratic Party who oppose environmental policy, a new environmental activist group called The Democratic Millennials for the Environment has been formed. This group was founded on the ideal that their message of environmental conservation must be spread at all costs. Their platform includes organizing public events and protests that often encourage and lead to acts of vandalism and disruption such as graffiti, arson and blocking public roads. The Democratic Millennials for the Environment have also been known to use a tactic called “doxing” in which they intimidate anti- environmentalists by publishing their private information on the internet in order to embarrass them, build support against them and threaten them. Recent data*

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*indicates that 33% of Democratic Party members are in support of this group (Pew, 2021). We would like to know what you think about this group's efforts to enact environmental change. Please rate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements."*

Participants assigned to the moderate activist condition and the majority support condition were presented with the following: *"In order to combat the influence of new members of the Democratic Party who oppose environmental policy, a new environmental activist group called the Democratic Millennials for the Environment has been formed. This group was founded on the ideal that their message of environmental conservation should be spread through outreach, education and communication. Their platform includes organizing public events, creating websites, writing articles, and posting educational videos. Recent data indicates that 83% of Democratic Party members are in support of this group (Pew, 2021). We would like to know what you think about this group's efforts to enact environmental change. Please rate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements."*

Participants assigned to the moderate activist condition and the minority support condition were presented with the following: *"In order to combat the influence of new members of the Democratic Party who oppose environmental policy, a new environmental activist group called the Democratic Millennials for the Environment has been formed. This group was founded on the ideal that their message of environmental conservation should be spread through outreach, education and communication. Their platform includes organizing public events, creating websites, writing articles, and*

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*posting educational videos. Recent data indicates that 33% of Democratic Party members are in support of this group (Pew, 2021). We would like to know what you think about this group's efforts to enact environmental change. Please rate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements."*

### **Extremism Measure.**

Participants indicated how extreme they perceived the activist group that they were presented on a sliding scale from 0 – 100.

### **Activist Group Evaluation.**

Participants completed a questionnaire that assessed how positively or negatively they felt toward the activist group that was presented to them.

### **Collective Action.**

Participants completed a questionnaire that assessed their willingness to engage in collective action on behalf of the activist group they evaluated.

### **Consensus.**

Participants completed a questionnaire that assessed their perception of consensus among the Democratic Party regarding attitudes toward the activist group they evaluated. The consensus measure served as a manipulation check for the group support manipulation.

### **Debriefing.**

Once participants had completed the questionnaire they were debriefed. Participants were explained the study's true purpose, given an opportunity to re-consent to the use of their data and thanked for their time.

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### Measures

#### **Pre-screening/Demographics Questionnaire.**

This questionnaire included two questions: “*What political party do you most identify with?*” Response options included: “*The Democratic Party,*” “*The Republican Party,*” and “*Other*”. The second question was open ended, and participants were asked to type in their age in years. The demographics questionnaire included forced choice questions assessing participants’ race and gender identity. The question regarding race read: “*Please indicate your race.*” Response options included, “*White,*” “*Black,*” “*Latinx,*” “*Asian,*” “*Pacific Islander,*” “*Native American/American Indian,*” and “*Multiracial.*” The question regarding gender identity read: “*Please indicate your gender identity.*” Response options included: “*Male,*” “*Female,*” and “*Nonbinary*”.

#### **Environmental Attitudes Measure.**

Environmental attitudes was operationalized as a participant’s positive or negative evaluation of making an effort to preserve the natural state of the environment. The brief version of the Environmental Attitudes Inventory (Milfont and Duckitt, 2010) which includes twenty-four items for participants to rate on a seven-point scale was used. Items included statements such as, “*protecting the environment is more important than protecting peoples’ jobs,*” and “*whenever possible, I try to save natural resources.*” ( $\alpha = 0.87$ )

#### **Group Identification Measure.**

Group identification was operationalized as how important group membership as a member of the Democratic Party is to the participant’s identity and how prototypical the

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participant feels they are of Democratic Party members. Group identification was measured for possible exploratory use because it was expected that the high threat prime would be more effective on participants that identified more strongly with the Democratic Party. A nine-item group identification scale (Hogg & Hardie, 1991) was administered to participants. Participants rated items on a seven-point Likert scale regarding how strongly they identify as a Democratic Party member. Items included statements such as “*being a member of this group is important to me,*” and “*I am similar to other group members.*” ( $\alpha = 0.82$ )

### **Identity Threat Manipulation Check.**

Identity threat was measured to serve as a manipulation check for the identity threat manipulation using a three item Likert scale adapted from Jetten et al. (1997) including items such as, “*Formerly Republican Millennials who have recently joined the Democratic Party threaten the Democratic Party's platform*”, which participants rated on a seven-point Likert scale from “*Strongly Disagree*” to “*Strongly Agree*”. ( $\alpha = 0.37$ ). This scale has low reliability, which may explain why the identity threat manipulation check was not significant.

### **Extremism Measure.**

Extremism was operationalized as how radical participants perceived the platform, attitudes and behaviors of the activist group. Extremism was measured by asking participants, “*Approximately what percentage of Americans do you think would be willing to engage in the actions proposed by this group to advocate for the environment?*” Participants indicated their answers on a sliding scale from 0 – 100, with

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0 being the most extreme and 100 being the least extreme.

### **Activist Group Evaluation.**

Activist group evaluation was operationalized as how negative or positive participants' attitudes toward the activist groups are. Activist group evaluation was measured on the following nine item semantic differential: "*How do you feel about this activist group?*" (Ranges from "*completely bad*" to "*completely good*"). "*How negatively or positively do you feel about the action this activist group wants to take?*" (Ranges from "*completely negative*" to "*completely positive*"). "*How favorable/unfavorable do you feel about the activist group's message?*" (Ranges from "*completely unfavorable*" to "*completely favorable*"). "*How for/against supporting this activist group are you?*" (Ranges from "*completely against*" to "*completely for*"). Scores were obtained by combining the numerical values of each response; higher total values were indicative of greater levels of positive group activist evaluation. ( $\alpha = 0.81$ ).

### **Collective Action Measure.**

Collective action was operationalized as the participants' willingness to engage in action on behalf of the activist group's cause. Collective action was measured using an eight item semantic differential consisting of statements such as: "*I am ready to engage in a protest or rally to support the interests of the Democratic Millennials for the Environment*", and "*I am willing to take part in a signature campaign to support the interests of the Democratic Millennials for the Environment*", which participants will rate on a seven-point Likert scale from "*Strongly Agree*" to "*Strongly Disagree*". ( $\alpha = 0.73$ ).

### **Consensus Measure.**



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Consensus was operationalized at the perceived agreement among the Democratic Party regarding attitudes toward the activist group. Consensus was measured by a two-item semantic differential including the statements: "*In general, most Democrats agree with supporting the Democratic Millennials for the Environment*" and "*In general, Democrats have a high level of consensus about supporting the Democratic Millennials for the Environment,*" which participants will rate on a seven-point Likert scale from "*Strongly Agree*" to "*Strongly Disagree*" ( $\alpha = 0.38$ ). This scale is unreliable, likely due to a lack of clarity that was presumed with regard to the second item. For this reason, only the first item was used to conduct a manipulation check for the group support manipulation.

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### **Data Analytic Results**

#### **Preliminary Analysis**

All data was collected through Qualtrics, a web-based survey tool. Raw data was cleaned and checked by conducting an initial exploratory analysis, visualizing data and cleaning any errors using tools in R version 4.0.2., a free data analytic software. An inspection of univariate statistics was conducted to check for reasonable means and standard deviations as well as univariate outliers. Data was checked for skewness and kurtosis. Screening for normality was performed in the assumption of ANOVA. Violations of assumptions were noted and transformations were performed without improvement of assumption violation; ultimately robust ANOVAs were used to test hypotheses. Random assignment was checked for by visualizing demographics. Factorial ANOVAs were used to test all hypotheses to determine the presence of a significant difference between group means. A factorial ANOVA was chosen to test all hypotheses because one, continuous dependent variable was measured and there were multiple discrete independent variables measured without covariates. The goal of the factorial ANOVA analysis was to determine the significance of mean group differences. Data is visualized in appropriate tables and figures.

#### **Hypotheses Tested**

##### **H1.**

A factorial ANOVA assessed Hypothesis 1, which predicted a main effect for identity threat, stating that when identity threat is high, evaluation of activist groups will be more positive than when identity threat is low. The ANOVA analysis assessed means

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in terms of differences between groups; it was expected that the high identity threat group would have higher means of positive evaluation of activist groups.

### **H2.**

A factorial ANOVA was used to test Hypothesis 2 which predicted a main effect for group support, stating that under majority support, evaluation of activist groups would be more positive than when under minority influence. The ANOVA analysis assessed means in terms of differences between groups; it was expected that the majority influence group would have higher means of positive evaluation of activist groups than means of the minority influence group.

### **H3.**

A factorial ANOVA was used to test Hypothesis 3 which predicted a main effect for activism group, stating that evaluation will be more positive for moderate activist groups than for extremist activist groups. The ANOVA analysis assessed means in terms of differences between groups; it was expected that the moderate activist group would have higher means of positive evaluation than the extremist activist group.

### **H4.**

A factorial ANOVA was used to test Hypothesis 4 which predicted a three-way interaction between all three independent variables, stating that under high identity threat participants in the minority and extremist activist condition would report more positive attitudes toward the activist group. The ANOVA assessed means in terms of differences between groups; it was expected that under high identity threat, participants in the minority support and extremist activist conditions would have higher means of positive

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evaluation than when under low identity threat.

### **Data Screening**

An initial sample of 401 Democrat responses was obtained. Data from 171 participants was removed due to an error in survey flow which resulted in these 171 participants not receiving the activist group and group support manipulations, leaving 230 participants with usable data. It is of note that while these 230 participants received the activist group and group support manipulations, they did not receive the activist group manipulation check. An additional 161 Democrat responses were collected, all of which received the activist group and group support manipulation as well as the activist group manipulation check. This resulted in an overall sample of 230 Democrat responses from the first batch of data collection and 161 Democrat responses from the second batch of data collection (*Total N = 391*).

### **Manipulation Checks**

An independent sample t-test was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the extremism manipulation. Results indicate that whereas participants in the extremist condition reported marginally more extremism ( $M = 48.5$ ,  $SD = 29.3$ ) than those in the moderate condition ( $M = 40.8$ ,  $SD = 21.1$ ), this finding is not reliable and only approaches significance ( $t(159) = 1.92$ ,  $p = 0.06$ ,  $95\%CI[-0.24, 15.6]$ ,  $d = 0.30$ ). Descriptive statistics also indicate that participants rated behaviors used to describe actions of the extremist activist group as more extreme ( $M = 42.89$ ,  $SD = 33.4$ ), than they rated behaviors used to describe the actions of the moderate activist group ( $M = 58.2$ ,  $SD = 24.7$ ), indicating that because participants perceived the actions of each activist group

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as intended, there may have been a lack of clarity with regard to the extremism measurement pertaining to the activist group itself . An independent sample t-test was also conducted to assess the effectiveness of the group support manipulation and indicated that there was no significant difference in perceived support between the majority group ( $M = 3.37$ ,  $SD = 1.8$ ), and the minority group ( $M = 3.28$ ,  $SD = 1.9$ ), ( $t(389) = 0.466$ ,  $p = 0.64$ ,  $95\%CI [-0.27, 0.45]$ ,  $d = 0.05$ ). A final manipulation check was performed for the identity threat manipulation using an independent samples t-test which indicated that there is no significant difference in perceived threat between participants in the high threat condition ( $M = 4.6$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ) and participants in the low threat condition ( $M = 4.8$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ), ( $t(389) = 1.47$ ,  $p = 0.14$ ,  $95\%CI [- 0.06, 0.40]$ ,  $d = 0.15$ ).

### **Activist Group Evaluation**

#### **Assumptions.**

Visualization of a qq-plot and histogram indicated that Activist Group Evaluation was negatively skewed and kurtotic. This diagnosis was confirmed by assessing confidence intervals around the distributions skew,  $99\%CI [-0.43, -0.06]$  and kurt,  $99\%CI [-0.81, -0.31]$ . Square-root, log, and inverse transformations were implemented without visual improvement of distribution on qq-plots and histograms nor evidence of improvement in confidence intervals around the distributions skew and kurt. For this reason, a robust ANOVA was implemented to test hypotheses.

#### **ANOVA Model.**

A robust 2 X 2 X 2 ANOVA was run to test Hypotheses 1, 2, 3, and 4 regarding

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the relationships between activist group evaluation, group extremism, group support and identity threat. Results indicated that there was no main effect for group support,  $F(1,383) = .19, p = .670, \eta_p^2 < .001$ . There was also no significant main effect for activist group,  $F(1,383) = 1.11, p = 0.30, \eta_p^2 = .002$ . Additionally, there was no significant main effect for identity threat,  $F(1, 383) = .82, p = 0.37, \eta_p^2 = .003$ . Results also indicated that there was no significant three- way interaction between group support, activist group and identity threat,  $F(1,383) = 1.20, p = 0.276, \eta_p^2 = .005$ . Results are qualified by a significant two-way interaction between activist group and identity threat,  $F(1,383) = 4.65, p = 0.03, \eta_p^2 = .008$ . A simple effects test clarifies the interaction effect. Of the participants in the extremist condition, participants in the high threat condition ( $M = 5.5$ ) evaluated the activist group more positively than participants in the low threat condition ( $M = 4.9$ ),  $F(1, 383) = 4.1, p = 0.04$ . Of participants in the moderate condition, there was no significant difference between activist group evaluation between those in the high threat condition ( $M = 5.3$ ) and this in the low threat condition ( $M = 5.5$ ),  $F(1, 383) = 0.2, p = 0.63$ .

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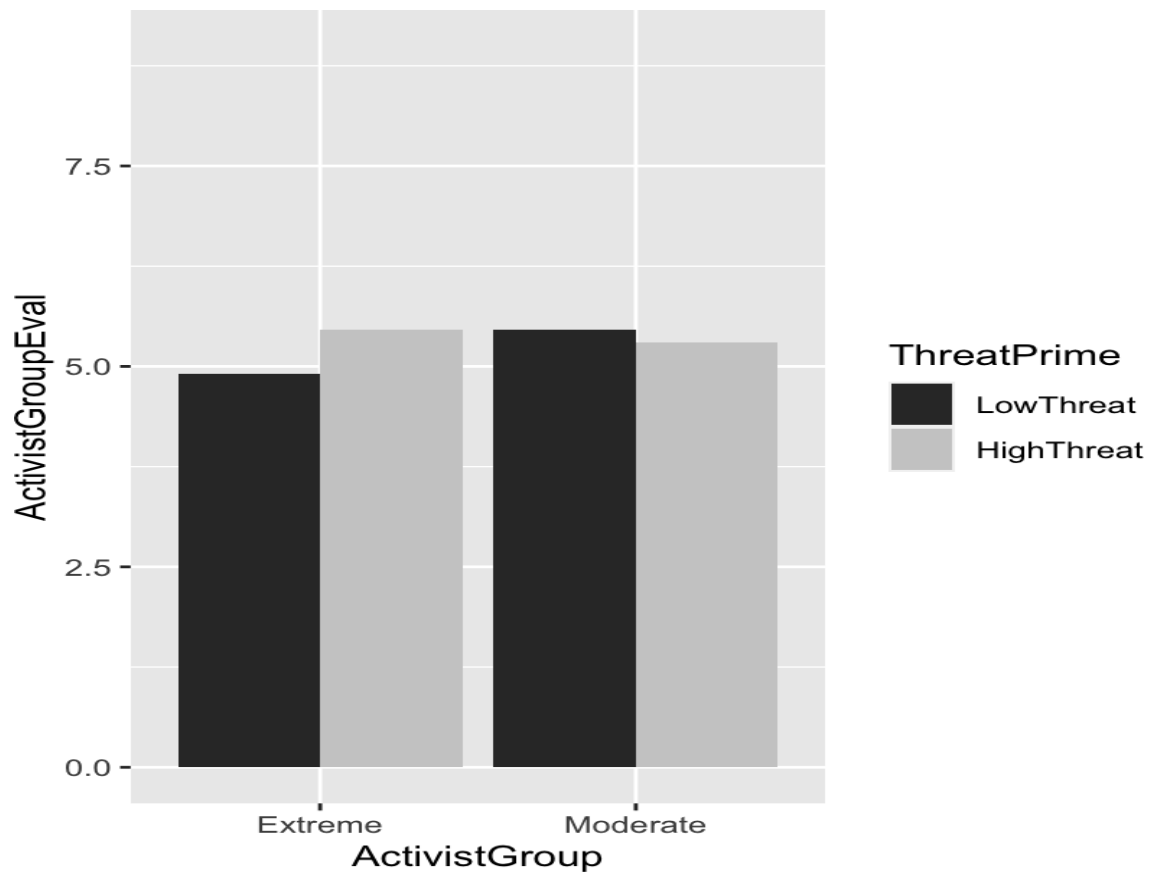


Figure 1

Activist Group Evaluation by Activist Group and Threat Condition

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*Table 1**Anova results with activist group evaluation as the dependent variable*

| Independent Variable                                | Sum of Squares | <i>df</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> | $\eta_p^2$ |
|---|----------------|-----------|----------|----------|------------|
| Group Support                                       | 1.0            | 1         | 0.19     | 0.670    | <.001      |
| Activist Group                                      | 2.9            | 1         | 1.11     | 0.300    | 0.002      |
| Threat Prime  | 4.1            | 1         | 0.82     | 0.366    | 0.003      |
| Group Support X<br>Activist Group                   | 3.0            | 1         | 0.35     | 0.554    | 0.002      |
| Group Support X<br>Threat Prime                     | 3.1            | 1         | 0.25     | 0.617    | 0.002      |
| Activist Group X<br>Threat Prime                    | 11.0           | 1         | 4.65     | 0.033    | 0.008      |
| Group Support X<br>Activist Group X<br>Threat Prime | 6.7            | 1         | 1.20     | 0.276    | 0.005      |
| Residuals   | 1338.6         | 383       |          |          |            |



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### Discussion

While the hypotheses of the current study were not fully supported, some results were partially consistent with the proposed hypotheses, demonstrating potentially meaningful contributions to the theoretical development of the literature regarding the relationship between minority influence, identity threat and extremist activism. Results indicate that contrary to the proposed hypotheses, there were no main effects for activist group, group support, or identity threat on activist group evaluation. Additionally, there was no significant three-way interaction between all three of the independent variables. However, there was a significant two-way interaction between activist group and identity threat wherein participants in the extremist activist condition reported significantly more positive activist group evaluations, but only in the high threat condition. Although it was predicted that participants assigned to the minority and extremist activism condition would report more negative attitudes toward the activist group under low identity threat and more positive evaluations of the activist group under high identity threat, this prediction was only partially supported as this effect was seen among participants assigned to the extremist activist group regardless of group support assignment.

A probable explanation as to why this effect is seen in the extremist activist condition, but does not interact with the minority/majority source variable, may be that participants integrate the concept of an extremist group with the concept of a minority group given that extremist groups are typically numeric minority groups. This conceptual integration may have prevented differences between the extremist activist group that is supported by a majority and the extremist activist group that is supported by a minority

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from being seen because participants likely assumed extremism to be synonymous with minority support. Additionally, the methodological presentation of information pertaining to the activist group that participants evaluated may have played a role in this lack of effect in the minority group condition.

Specifically, participants were given information about the activist group's moderate or extremist status and whether the group was supported by a minority or a majority of Democrats in the same block of text that was primarily concentrated on describing the group's moderate or extremist behaviors. It is probable that this method of presentation caused the information pertaining to minority or majority support to be lost in translation and more easily integrated with information regarding the groups moderate or extremist status. A potential future direction would be to implement similar manipulations, but present information about the minority/majority support and the moderate/extremist status of the group separately to allow each piece of information to be processed independently of the other and on a deeper level. A conceptual differentiation between the extremist groups and minority groups may also clarify the presence of potential main effects of the activist group variable and the group support variable on activist group evaluation.

A potential main effect for identity threat should also be further examined in this context given that a manipulation check for the identity threat manipulation indicated that the manipulation was ineffective. There are several potential reasons why the identity threat manipulation was not successful in the current study, one being the current political climate. It is probable that because the survey for this study was administered shortly

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after Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden won the United States Presidency, participants found the purported trends regarding threats to the Democratic Party's platform were less believable and therefore less threatening. Additionally, although participants were primed for environmental policy to be a salient aspect of the Democratic Party's platform, in the current political climate several issues including policies to prevent the spread of Covid-19, police brutality/racial injustices, and the attack on women's reproductive rights have been at the forefront of the Democratic agenda possibly superseding environmental policy for the time being leading the threat manipulation in the current study to be perceived as less threatening. A replication of this threat manipulation using a different Democratic value such as mask wearing amidst the Covid- 19 pandemic or abortion rights would be interesting and potentially valuable in further exploring the effects of threat on activist group evaluation.

Although there were no significant main effects nor a significant three-way interaction, the significant two-way interaction between activist group and identity threat suggests that people are motivated under identity threat to develop more positive attitudes toward extremist groups and this can potentially be extended to minority groups given the close relationship between extremist groups and minority groups. This finding supports the work of Hogg, Meehan, and Farquharson, (2010) who found that under uncertainty, identification with extremist groups increases. Additionally, this finding is consistent with previous work which demonstrated that ingroup members have a tendency to polarize toward more extreme group norms under conditions of uncertainty (Hogg et al., 1990, Gaffney et al., 2014). In the current study under high identity threat, which should

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induce uncertainty, the extremist group was evaluated more positively than when in the low threat condition which supports previous findings regarding the effect of uncertainty on extremism and the polarization of group norms. It would be considerably beneficial for future replications to measure uncertainty as well as identity threat because although uncertainty is not being directly manipulated, this would further demonstrate the relationship between identity threat and uncertainty. This would also establish if uncertainty is elicited even when a threat is not necessarily perceived, but rather participants may report higher levels of uncertainty about whether information poses a potential threat or not. Higher levels of uncertainty without higher levels of perceived threat could offer a potential explanation as to why the identity threat manipulation appears to be ineffective, but there is still a significant two- way interaction seen.

While results of the current research did not fully support the proposed hypotheses, the significant interaction between the activist group variable and the identity threat variable offers support for previous work in the relevant literature as well as lays the groundwork for further exploration of the relationship between the variables involved. The next logical steps in this area of study are to further explore the relationship between uncertainty and identity threat as well as how these variables affect activist group evaluation both independently and dependently. Additionally, methodological enhancements should be implemented to clarify the activist group variable from the group support variable to allow for further exploration of how majority support and minority support impact evaluation of activist groups. Our understanding of the development of group activism is incomplete without further exploration of how these

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variables interact with one another to either foster or attenuate positive evaluations of moderate and extremist activism. Further work in this area has significant implications in not only observing the process of evaluation development toward group activism, but in understanding how and why this process is occurring as well as under what situational factors. In deepening our grasp of the developmental process of attitudes toward different approaches to activism, further research has potential to assist in the development of interventions that could prevent the development of extremist groups and aid in hindering the negative consequences of extremist activism, such as terrorism, by demonstrating the factors that foster positive evaluations of extremism. Furthermore, future research may have implications in social interventions that can foster positive evaluations of healthier means of group activism that are more beneficial to group members and society as a whole.

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## EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM

**Appendices***Appendix A*

## Group Identification Prime I

In this study, we are examining Democrats' responses to the Democratic Party platform. We are very interested in your views as a Democrat. In addition, we would like your opinion regarding some activism within the Democratic Party. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible.

Please briefly describe why being a member of the Democratic Party is important to you.

## EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM

*Appendix B*

## Democratic Party Platform Prompt

Environmental policy was previously a bipartisan issue, however over the last few decades environmental concern has become a unique aspect of the Democratic Party. Recent data indicates that while **86% of Democratic Party members** believe that the federal government should be doing more to combat climate change, only **32% of Republican Party members** agree. The current **platform of the Democratic Party** emphasizes transitioning to **clean energy, fighting global warming and protecting the environment** in general. As a member of the Democratic Party we would like to know your views on the environment. Please rate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements.

## EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM

*Appendix C*

## Environmental Attitudes Measure

Milfont &amp; Duckitt (2010).

Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following statements regarding your views on the environment. We are using your responses to automatically calculate how our Democratic participants feel about the environment. We will show you these results on the next page. You are the **1,108** Democrat to respond to this!

1. I really like going on trips into the countryside, for example to forests or fields.
2. I think spending time in nature is boring.
3. Governments should control the rate at which raw materials are used to ensure that they last as long as possible.
4. I am opposed to governments controlling and regulating the way raw materials are used in order to try and make them last longer.
5. I would like to join and actively participate in an environmentalist group.
6. I would NOT get involved in an environmentalist organization.
7. One of the most important reasons to keep lakes and rivers clean is so that people have a place to enjoy water sports.
8. We need to keep rivers and lakes clean in order to protect the environment, and NOT as places for people to enjoy water sports.
9. Modern science will NOT be able to solve our environmental problems.
10. Modern science will solve our environmental problems.

## EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM

11. Humans are severely abusing the environment.
12. I do not believe that the environment has been severely abused by humans.
13. I'd prefer a garden that is wild and natural to a well-groomed and ordered one.
14. I'd much prefer a garden that is well groomed and ordered to a wild and natural one.
15. I am NOT the kind of person who makes efforts to conserve natural resources.
16. Whenever possible, I try to save natural resources.
17. Human beings were created or evolved to dominate the rest of nature.
18. I DO NOT believe humans were created or evolved to dominate the rest of nature.
19. Protecting peoples' jobs is more important than protecting the environment.
20. Protecting the environment is more important than protecting peoples' jobs.
21. It makes me sad to see forests cleared for agriculture.
22. It does NOT make me sad to see natural environments destroyed.
23. Families should be encouraged to limit themselves to two children or less.
24. A married couple should have as many children as they wish, as long as they can adequately provide for them.

## EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM

*Appendix D*

## Group Identification Prime II

Based on your responses to the previous items, your environmental attitudes align with roughly **92%** of Democratic Party members. We would like to know what you think about the Democratic Party's platform as a whole.



## EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM

*Appendix E*

## Group Identification Measure

## Group Identification Measure Hogg &amp; Hardie (1991)

Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following statements about the Democratic Party.

1. I would stand up for the Democratic Party if it were criticized.
2. I identify with being a member of the Democratic Party.
3. I feel that I belong as a member of The Democratic Party.
4. Being a member of the Democratic Party is important to me.
5. In general, I feel like a member of the Democratic Party.
6. I fit in well as a member of the Democratic Party.
7. I am similar to other members of the Democratic Party.
8. I identify strongly with being a member of the Democratic Party.
9. My overall impression of the Democratic Party is favorable.

## EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM

*Appendix F*

## Threat Prime

## High Threat Prime

Although a key component of the Democratic Party's platform includes advocating for environmental policy and a majority of Democratic Party members express environmental concern, the Pew Research Center (2021) conducted a longitudinal study which found that since the 2016 election **many previously Republican millennials have shifted their views** to align with the platform of the Democratic Party **with the exception of views regarding environmental policy**. Recent data suggests that the influence of millennials who have switched over to the Democratic Party, but do not agree with environmental policy, will have **significant adverse effects** on the party's efficacy in enacting environmental change. Based on current trends seen in the data, it is projected that **by the year 2024**, environmental policy will no longer be a core value of the Democratic Party's platform. Experts estimate that approximately **less than 30%** of Democrats will consider environmental issues a priority if there is a continuation in current trends.

## Low Threat Prime

Although a key component of the **Democratic Party's platform** includes advocating for environmental policy and a majority of Democratic Party members express environmental concern, the Pew Research Center (2021) found that since the 2016 election some **previously Republican millennials** have shifted their views to align with the platform of the Democratic Party **with the exception of views regarding**

## EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM

**environmental policy.** Recent data suggests that the influence of millennials who have switched over to the Democratic Party, but do not agree with environmental policy, is **unlikely to impact the party's efficacy** in enacting environmental change. Based on current trends seen in the data, it is projected that **environmental policy will continue to be a core value** of the Democratic Party's platform into the year **2024**. Experts estimate that approximately **86%** of Democrats will consider environmental issues a priority if there is a continuation in current trends.

## EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM

*Appendix G*

## Identity Threat Manipulation Check

Jetten et al. (1997)

Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements about the impact of **formerly Republican Millennials** joining the **Democratic Party** on the **identity and values of the Democratic Party**.

1. The Democratic identity is secure.
2. The inclusion of formerly Republican Millennials into the Democratic Party threatens Democratic values.
3. Formerly Republican Millennials who have recently joined the Democratic Party threaten the Democratic Party's platform.

## EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM

*Appendix H*

## Activist/Group Support Manipulation

## Extreme/Majority

In order to combat the influence of new members of the Democratic Party who oppose environmental policy, a new environmental activist group called **The Democratic Millennials for the Environment** has been formed. This group was founded on the ideal that **their message of environmental conservation must be spread at all costs**. Their platform includes organizing public events and protests that often **encourage and lead to acts of vandalism and disruption such as graffiti, arson and blocking public roads**. The Democratic Millennials for the Environment have also been known to use a tactic called “doxing” in which they intimidate anti- environmentalists by publishing their private information on the internet in order to **embarrass them, build support against them and threaten them**. Recent data indicates that **83% of Democratic Party members are in support of this group** (Pew Research Center, 2021). We would like to know that you think about this group’s efforts to enact environmental change.

Please rate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements.

## Extreme/Minority

In order to combat the influence of new members of the Democratic Party who oppose environmental policy, a new environmental activist group called **The Democratic Millennials for the Environment** has been formed. This group was founded on the ideal that **their message of environmental conservation must be spread at all costs**. Their platform includes organizing public events and protests that often **encourage and lead to**

## EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM

**acts of vandalism and disruption such as graffiti, arson and blocking public roads.**

The Democratic Millennials for the Environment have also been known to use a tactic called “doxing” in which they intimidate anti-environmentalists by publishing their private information on the internet in order to **embarrass them, build support against them and threaten them.** Recent data indicates that **33% of Democratic Party members are in support of this group** (Pew Research Center, 2021). We would like to know that you think about this group’s efforts to enact environmental change.

Please rate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements.

Moderate/Majority

In order to combat the influence of new members of the Democratic Party who oppose environmental policy, a new environmental activist group called **The Democratic Millennials for the Environment** has been formed. This group was founded on the ideal that their message of environmental conservation should be spread through **outreach, education and communication.** Their platform includes creating websites, writing articles, and posting educational videos. Recent data indicates that **83% of Democratic Party members are in support of this group** (Pew Research Center, 2021). We would like to know what you think about this group’s efforts to enact environmental change.

Please rate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements.

Moderate/Minority

In order to combat the influence of new members of the Democratic Party who oppose environmental policy, a new environmental activist group called **The Democratic Millennials for the Environment** has been formed. This group was founded on the ideal

## EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM

that their message of environmental conservation should be spread through **outreach, education and communication**. Their platform includes creating websites, writing articles, and posting educational videos. Recent data indicates that **33% of Democratic Party members are in support of this group** (Pew Research Center, 2021). We would like to know that you think about this group's efforts to enact environmental change. Please rate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements.

## EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM

*Appendix I*

## Activist Group Evaluation

Please answer the following questions about **your views** about **The Democratic Millennials for the Environment**.

1. How do you feel about this activist group?

Very Bad Bad Somewhat Bad Neither Good nor Bad Somewhat Good Good Very Good

2. How negatively or positively do you feel about the action this activist group is taking?

|                  |                      |                         |                      |                  |
|------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Very<br>Negative | Somewhat<br>Negative | Neither<br>Positive nor | Somewhat<br>Positive | Very<br>Positive |
|------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|------------------|

3. How favorable/unfavorable do you feel about the activist group's message?

|                     |             |          |   |                       |           |                   |
|---------------------|-------------|----------|---|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------|
| Very<br>unfavorable | Unfavorable | Somewhat | Neither<br>Favorable nor<br>Unfavorable | Somewhat<br>Favorable | Favorable | Very<br>Favorable |
|---------------------|-------------|----------|---|-----------------------|-----------|-------------------|

4. How for/against supporting this activist group are you?

|                     |         |                     |                            |                 |     |                 |
|---------------------|---------|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|-----|-----------------|
| Strongly<br>Against | Against | Somewhat<br>Against | Neither For nor<br>Against | Somewhat<br>For | For | Strongly<br>For |
|---------------------|---------|---------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|-----|-----------------|



## EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM

*Appendix J*

## Collective Action

Indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with the following statements about **your willingness to engage in the following actions to support the interests of The Democratic Millennials for the Environment.**

1. I am ready to engage in a protest or rally to support the interests of the Democratic Millennials for the Environment.
2. I would vote for candidates that support the interests of the Democratic Millennials for the Environment.
3. I am willing to take part in a signature campaign to support the interests of the Democratic Millennials for the Environment.
4. I believe that action must be taken to support the interests of the Democratic Millennials for the Environment.
5. I would be willing to use whatever means necessary to support the interests of the Democratic Millennials for the Environment.
6. I would be willing to overthrow the U.S. government to support the interests of the Democratic Millennials for the Environment.
7. If it came to it, I would be willing to engage in physical violence to support the interests of the Democratic Millennials for the Environment.
8. I support other Democrats who are willing to engage in violence to support the interests of the Democratic Millennials for the Environment.

## EVALUATIONS OF GROUP ACTIVISM

*Appendix K*

## Consensus

Please indicate the extent to which you disagree or agree with each of the following statements about **the level of consensus among Democrats with regards to supporting The Democratic Millennials for the Environment.**

1. In general, most Democrats agree with supporting the Democratic Millennials for the Environment
2. In general, Democrats have a high level of consensus about supporting the Democratic Millennials for the Environment.