

People engage in political activism in order to protest the situation that they find unacceptable. However, in most cases social change desired by activists will not happen if they are unable to convince other people to support their ideas. Sometimes the influence of activists is in line with their intentions as when they inspire others to join their protest. However, when activists' actions are met with reprehension among those who have initially sympathized with their cause or when they mobilize their opponents to act instead, the cause is likely to fail. Given the diversity of these reactions, it is important to understand the mechanisms responsible for both intended and unintended effects of political activists on their social environment.

The goal of the proposed project is to examine the social impact of political activists. Specifically, I will compare the effects of extreme and moderate political actions, which are defined in three ways in the project. First, political extremism will be defined in the context of *goals* activists advocate for. With this regard, extreme activists fight for big and revolutionary ideas while moderate activists propose small and incremental changes to the status quo. Second, extremism can be operationalized with regard to the *means* activists use to achieve their goals. Here, extreme activists are those who are willing to make large sacrifices for their cause (e.g., hunger strike), while moderates engage in less costly and demanding actions (e.g., signing petitions). Finally, extremism will be defined as willingness to *use violence* for the cause and it will be contrasted with moderate behavior that is restricted to peaceful means.

The project will address not only a question of what influence extreme (vs. moderate) activists have but it will also examine psychological mechanisms that could account for those effects. In line with previous theorizing I assume that political behaviors are motivated, which means that they depend on whether a cause is perceived as desirable (i.e., high value) and whether it is assumed to be attainable (i.e., high expectancy). I hypothesize that in comparison with moderates extremists might signal greater commitment to the cause and as a consequence greater value might be ascribed to the cause by the observers. If that is true, under influence of extreme activists, people might start supporting the cause because they become convinced that it is an important and right thing to do. However, at the same time, extreme goals and actions might suggest that the cause is very demanding and it will be difficult to attain. If the expectancy is lowered people might reduce their support for the cause advocated by extreme activists. In short, two paths of influence of activists will be investigated, one through the value of the cause and the other one through the expectancy of the cause attainment. I will also test the moderating role of initial opinions about the cause.

The project will investigate those ideas using a variety of methods, samples, and social contexts. In the first set of studies consisting of interviews, focus groups, experimental work, and content-analysis I will examine the social effects of advocating for radical vs. incremental changes. In the second line of studies extremism is defined as engagement in sacrificial actions for the cause. A series of field studies and experiments will examine if large sacrifices made by activists for the cause induce a sense of great value but possibly of lower expectancy. Finally, the third part of the project will examine the effects of extremism defined as the use of violence for the cause.

To sum up, qualitative, cross-sectional, longitudinal, experimental, and field studies as well as simulations will test the proposed model in the context of diverse political causes, including causes that are highly relevant in the contemporary world (e.g., gender equality, climate change). The outcome of this project will be a comprehensive model of effects that extreme vs. moderate activists have on the social environment that intend to influence.