

## The Power of Political Déjà Vu: When Collective Action Becomes an Effort to Change the Future by Preventing the Return of the Past

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*This article examines the conditions under which political déjà vu (PDV), a perceived analogy between past and present societal-level traumatic events, can mobilize people to support system-changing collective action. We propose that individuals' perceptions of PDV can evolve both social identification with a group that sustains the victimized and disidentification with the perceived perpetrators. We further suggest that disidentification and identification can form two distinct psychological paths to collective action through the sequential effects of moral outrage and collective efficacy beliefs. We tested these ideas in a cross-sectional field study (N = 272) in the context of antigovernment protests over a missing activist in Argentina, a country with a legacy of enforced disappearances. The findings demonstrated that perceiving two events from different times as similar simultaneously predicted identifying as a supporter of the victimized and disidentifying with the perceived wrongdoer. Disidentification was found to predict collective action intentions through the sequential effect of collective efficacy beliefs and moral outrage, whereas the indirect effect of social identification was nonsignificant. Results provide an intriguing example of the effects of perceived PDV in social mobilization and extend our understanding of disidentification as a powerful predictor of collective action.*

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**KEY WORDS:** social injustice, collective action, historical victimization, disidentification, identification, collective efficacy

With the individual as with the group, the past is continually re-made, reconstructed as a function of present interests.

(Frederic Bartlett, 1932, p. 309)

On August 1, 2017, Argentine activist Santiago Maldonado went missing after police intervened to disperse an indigenous Mapuche protest in Patagonia in which he took part (Vivanco, 2017). The last that is known of Maldonado, as witnessed by local community members, is that he was captured by the federal border police. To many political observers this case recalled the mass forced disappearances that occurred under Argentina's military dictatorship between 1976 and 1983, even though the country now has a democratically elected government (e.g., Gofñi, 2017; Mander, 2017). The

military junta was infamous for carrying out a systematic campaign of repression against Argentine citizens who were labeled as dissidents, in which around 30,000 persons are believed to have disappeared after being seized by security forces (see, e.g., Cavallaro & Brewer, 2008).

The link between the Maldonado Case and *Los Desaparecidos* (translated from Spanish as “disappeared”) of the past is contentious. However, this historical analogy was heavily employed by some politicians, including Argentina’s (then) opposition leader Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who accused the government of Mauricio Macri of silencing social and political dissidents and spreading terror throughout civil society (Goñi, 2017; Pardo, 2017). On August 26, 2017, Kirchner, who was known for her ongoing support of social justice movements such as the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo (the movement of Argentine mothers who campaigned for their missing children), posted an emotional message in her official Twitter account, in which she alluded to the missing protester as her own son (Pardo, 2017). The politician said she could not see her “son’s face on a mural” referring to the omnipresent murals and graffiti, serving as emblems of Argentina’s “missing children” (Gleeson, 2013). A few days after, tens of thousands of Argentines took to the streets in cities across the country to demand the safe return of the missing activist (e.g., Krishnamoorthy, 2017). The demands on their posters were worded in the precisely same way as those 40 years ago when family members and activists struggled to find people who “disappeared” during Argentina’s Dirty War (Pardo, 2017). The large nation-wide social movement for Santiago Maldonado lasted for almost two months, before he was found dead in the Chubut river in Patagonia (Knipp, 2017). The present research is situated within this context; the aim is to explore whether perceiving the analogy between past and present societal-level dire events can mobilize people for system-changing collective action.

Although the social movement around the Maldonado case may be a unique case, the psychological processes that drive people’s political collective action in the context of repeated historical victimization may follow a similar pattern. Take, for instance, the rise of recent social movements like the “Black Lives Matter” (e.g., Leach & Allen, 2017) or Indigenous resistance movements (e.g., Droogendyk & Wright, 2017) that were seemingly conditioned and reinforced individuals’ entrenched, transgenerational, and often unresolved experiences of collective trauma and historical disadvantage of the ingroup. Reasoning by historical analogy—that is, viewing an association between present and past events—is a crucial aspect of real-world decision-making, especially when people connect present-day situations and past emotionally loaded traumatic experiences that led to personal losses and profound institutional changes (e.g., Ghilani et al., 2017).

Research in social and political psychology has shown that connecting collective memory of victimization to rhetorical processes can provide a useful lens through which to examine the questions of *when* and *how* recollections of past traumatic events can mobilize people for group defensive collective action (Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Billig, 1999; Condor, Tileaga, & Billig, 2013; Pilecki & Hammack, 2014; Tileagă, 2009). The study of social representations of history points to a growing understanding that shared representations of the past do not necessarily reflect some “pure” historical truth, but rather they amalgamate historical facts with myths and beliefs that are imperative in producing or maintaining the powerful relations between collective memory of trauma and current intergroup relations (e.g., Hirschberger, 2018; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). However, the idea that rhetorically connecting present-day experiences and circumstances to collective historic trauma can mobilize people to challenge the status quo has remained underexplored. The present research intends to address this gap.

This article builds on the literature on social representations of historical victimization (e.g., Liu & Hilton, 2005; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016) and social-identity-theory-based models of collective action (e.g., Thomas, Mavor, & McGarty, 2012; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008) extending the scope of inquiry to consider the psychological mechanisms behind the rise of bottom-up social movements through which the politics of memory can be used to demand societal change. More precisely, we are interested in the mobilizing effects of the process to which

we refer to as *political déjà vu* (PDV, where *déjà vu* is French for “already seen”). We define PDV as a perceived analogy between past and present societal-level events, which could be achieved by a deliberately constructed political rhetoric on historical ingroup victimization to mobilize individuals’ in defence of their group’s future. Here, we are interested in the conditions under which PDV can give the impetus for engagement in system-challenging collective action. We thus use the Maldonado Case as an example of a social movement aimed at challenging situated injustice in a context where political rhetoric is used to draw the parallel between present-day dire events and historical wrongs that remain unredressed.

Central to our idea is the view that narratives of one’s historical victimization cannot be dissociated from ideology (e.g., Billig, 1999; Hakoköngäs & Sakki, 2016; Wagoner, 2015). Such narratives function to promote a shared mindset that delineates group membership and provides a sense of group identity where the lines between “us” and “them” may otherwise be blurred (e.g., Liu & László, 2007; Páez & Liu, 2015; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). This kind of “us vs. them mentality” is needed to distinguish victims from perpetrators and point to a target for action—the outgroup who might not necessarily have been involved in the forerunning event (e.g., Lickel, Miller, Stenstrom, Denson, & Schmader, 2006). These rhetorically constructed recollections of past traumatic experiences can trigger collective memories of loss and suffering, but they also serve to evoke moral outrage and the sense of collective agency needed to reach, mobilize, and persuade the public *en masse* (e.g., Bar-Tal, Halperin, & de Rivera, 2007; Condor et al., 2013; Pilecki & Hammack, 2013; Singer, 1995).

In our attempt to identify the conditions under which individuals’ perceptions of PDV can lead them to engage in collective action, we rely on research testing the social identity perspective (Simon, & Klandermans, 2001; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). From the perspective of the social identity model of collective action (SIMCA: van Zomeren et al., 2008) and the encapsulated model of social identity in collective action (EMSICA: Thomas et al., 2012), PDV can be seen as a precondition of the engagement into collective action to the extent that individuals (1) affectively react to injustice, (2) believe in their group’s collective efficacy, and (3) define themselves in terms of social categories that sustain or oppose injustice-related cause and are hence willing to act on their behalf.

We thus argue that PDV may serve a dual function—the delineation of a victim-perpetrator dichotomy needed for social mobilization of politicized collective identities and, subsequently, triggering the collective experiences of moral outrage and resilient sense of group efficacy needed to translate the perceived historical recurrence into system-challenging collective action. First, building on the integrated research on group-identity processes and collective action (Becker & Tausch, 2014; Chayinska, Minescu, & McGarty, 2019; Thomas et al., 2012), we seek to explore whether PDV can produce group delineation through two mechanisms of self-categorization—(1) *social identification* with a group that stands for the victimized and their cause and (2) *disidentification* from a contextually relevant group associated with a wrongdoing. We argue that disidentification and social identification in response to the perceptions of PDV can represent different psychological states: Social identification concerns one’s self-defining relationship to the group that stands with a cause of the victim of unjust harm perpetrated by the adversary, whereas disidentification concerns one’s active rejection of the upheld self-defining relationship with the group seen as the aggressor (e.g., Becker & Tausch, 2014; Peetz, Gunn, & Wilson, 2010; de Vreeze, Matschke, & Cress, 2018).

Secondly, we suggest that disidentification may pave a distinct psychological path to collective action in addition to identification (the SIMCA and EMSICA classic identity mechanism). Theoretically, a self-defining relationship with the group that associates itself with the victimized is likely to produce feelings of fear, helplessness, and low self-efficacy (e.g., Bar-Tal et al., 2007; Bilali & Vollhardt, 2013; Branscombe, Warner, Klar, & Fernández, 2015; Schori-Eyal, Klar, Roccas, & McNeill, 2017). Those are normally seen as the psychological obstacles of collective action (e.g., van Zomeren et al., 2008). In contrary, disidentification as individuals’ collective sense of standing

*against* can evolve two action-related mechanisms: (1) feelings of moral outrage at the “aggressor” and (2) collective efficacy beliefs (i.e., people’s shared belief in their combined power to prevent the unfavorable events from reoccurring). Outrage and perceived collective efficacy have been shown to form two distinct pathways to collective action (e.g., Tausch et al., 2011; van Zomeren, Spears, Fischer, & Leach, 2004). Therefore, we expect that disidentification with the perceived perpetrators in the context of PDV can form a distinct psychological path, adding to the effects of social identification and explaining system-challenging collective action to the extent that people feel aggravated by outgroup and its misdeeds and believe that together they may achieve a desired social change.

### *Political Rhetoric, Historical Analogies, and Self-Categorization Processes*

Socially shared representations of history are undoubtedly tied to ideology (e.g., Liu & Hilton, 2005). Several studies have pointed to the importance of political leaders and high-profile opinion makers as entrepreneurs of identity who typically use social representations of history in their discourses with the aim of voter persuasion and mobilization (e.g., Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins, & Levine, 2006; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016). According to Reicher and Hopkins (1996), political speakers tend to deploy certain discursive and rhetorical strategies to create a “self-evident” relationship between specific socially sensitive or controversial issues and the historical context in which they occur with the aim of mobilizing individuals’ actions in support for or opposition to certain political projects. Such strategies include depicting oneself (i.e., a political speaker) as representing and acting on behalf of the “common people” against political antagonists to protect national interests in situations that entail a threat to the larger collective (e.g., Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Finlay, 2007; Rooyackers & Verkuyten, 2012). The use of a metaphorical language and hyperbolic, extreme-case formulations serve a further discursive purpose: to appeal to concrete group emotions such as moral outrage or resentment that lie at the heart of social mobilization (e.g., Mols & Jetten, 2014). The application of historical analogies to some current-day event can thus be understood as a form of ideological elaboration needed to maintain or reproduce intergroup conflict by reinforcing a dichotomous victim-perpetrator view of history, especially in the context where the distinction between these groups is not clear cut (Hammack & Pilecki, 2012; Liu & Hilton, 2005; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). In this sense, it seems that rhetorical recollection of traumatic memory can be strategically used to construct or intensify an “us vs. them mentality” heavily concentrated around the belief that the welfare of one’s own group is best served by the demise of its enemy (e.g., Ghilani et al., 2017; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Sakki & Pettersson, 2016).

How does this play out in collective action? Thomas and colleagues (2012) proposed that individuals’ shared (affective) appraisals of structural inequalities or incidental disadvantages may precede and inform self-categorization processes, making people define themselves as members of a social group that stands *for* the disadvantaged and their cause. Elaborating further on this model, Chayinska et al. (2019) have argued that a shared emergent identity related to a social injustice cause a priori expresses individuals’ sense of standing *against*—that is, collective denial, rejection, and a situation-specific decision to distance themselves from the negatively perceived social category. In line with the premises of social identity theory, these authors showed that disidentification as a politicized sense of standing against certain categories, in addition to social identification with the disadvantaged group, predicted protestors’ commitment to pursue social change.

Several studies have demonstrated that people’s subjective distancing and dissociation from the “offender” group, either experienced in response to the ingroup’s past crime (e.g., McGarty et al., 2005; Peetz et al., 2010) or current institutionalized disadvantages (e.g., Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003; Powell, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2005), led people to endorse prosocial action toward members of the victimized group and increased willingness to repair the harm. There are good reasons to believe that both mechanisms of self-categorization are driven by distinct psychological needs:

Social identification implies a perceived similarity and inclusion of other in the self, whereas disidentification is often generated by people's perceptions of normative incompatibility between their personal values and those of the respective social category (e.g., Becker & Tausch, 2014; Glasford, Pratto, & Dovidio, 2008; de Vreeze et al., 2018; see also Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Extending these ideas to situations evoking PDV, it is reasonable to assume that, when exposed to the narratives that compare some present-day tragic events with past cases of victimization, members of a society may engage with these historical analogies through self-categorization processes by affirming a self-defining relation to the group that stands with the victimized and their cause as well as rejecting a self-defining relation to the group seen as a perpetrator in that context. Further, we discuss the potential psychological mediators of this relationship.

### *The Role of Moral Outrage and Collective Efficacy Beliefs in the Context of PDV*

Contemporary social identity research highlights that the recollection of past traumatic events, such as wars and genocides, is an emotionally laden process (e.g., Licata & Klein, 2010; Rimé, Páez, Basabe, & Martínez, 2010; Shnabel & Nadler, 2008). Historical analogies between past and present troublesome events are likely to activate the distressing memories of loss and trauma and, sequentially, evoke the trauma-related collective emotions such as grief, fear, shame, and helpless anger (e.g., Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2001). Empirical evidence (e.g., Goodwin et al., 2001) suggests that by converting collective emotions of trauma such as grief into emotions of resistance such as righteous anger, people will be more inclined towards political action.

In the context of past and present transgressions, moral outrage was shown to be a particularly potent collective emotion able to shape hostile intergroup attitudes and punitive behaviors (e.g., Carlsmith, Darley, & Robinson, 2002; Russell & Giner-Sorolla, 2011). Several studies have found that people who experience moral outrage in response to criminal behavior and see the harm as an intentional conduct are more likely to perceive the offender as subhuman and not amenable to rehabilitation, which in turn affects their desire for severe forms of punishment (Bastian, Denson, & Haslam, 2013; Carlsmith et al., 2002). Perceptions of PDV may not merely trigger the feelings of moral outrage but also direct this collective emotion against the group accused in criminal acts. This idea generally aligns with the literature on collective action that views moral outrage as a powerful group emotion that stimulates people's willingness to take system-challenging collective action (e.g., Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2009; van Zomeren et al., 2008).

The research on the collective memory of historical victimization suggests that another key psychological component of resilience to trauma is a sense of collective efficacy (Bandura, 1997; Benight, 2004). Perceived efficacy refers to a sense of control, influence, strength, and agentic capability to change a group-related problem. Several studies provide compelling evidence suggesting that the memory of traumatic events (or the lack thereof) affects the choice of proactive coping strategies to the extent that people share the belief so that they can forestall detrimental results of past adversity and regain control over their own functioning (e.g., Muldoon et al., 2017; Rimé et al., 2010). Following this line of thought, it can be argued that collective efficacy beliefs can be a crucial identity resource needed to translate one's perception of PDV into collective action aimed to prevent a recurrent victimization.

Social identity models of collective action (Drury & Reicher, 2005; Tausch et al., 2011; Thomas et al., 2009; van Zomeren et al., 2008) generally agree upon the crucial role of collective efficacy beliefs in predicting system-challenging collective behavior. From that perspective, collective efficacy is a particularly important mobilizing element as it contains peoples' subjective expectation of whether they together as a group have the potential of transforming the situation and attaining social change. This means that the stronger the subjective sense of the group's efficacy, the more likely

people are to engage in collective action in the context of asymmetrical power relations between protesters and police (e.g., Drury & Reicher, 2005).

Previous research has shown that disidentification, in addition to identification, can evolve action-related mechanisms of outrage and efficacy, and, consequently, drive collective action (e.g., Chayinska et al., 2019). It thus appears reasonable to suggest that these mechanisms of self-categorization can form two distinct psychological paths to collective action through the sequential effects of moral outrage and collective efficacy beliefs. In particular, disidentification from a contextually relevant group associated with injustice and wrongdoings is likely to be bound up with the emotional reactions grounded in righteous anger and align with a sense of collective agency needed to produce people's intentions to engage in system-challenging collective action (e.g., Peetz et al., 2010; Powell et al., 2005). The current research, thus, seeks to examine whether there is an empirical basis for the proposition that the subjective experience of PDV can lead to system-challenging collective action through the self-categorical delineation of "us" (via social identification) and "not them" (via disidentification) comprising the sequential effects of outrage and efficacy.

### **The Current Study in Context**

In the current article, we address two focal questions: (1) whether PDV as a perceived analogy between past and present societal-level events bolsters a victim-perpetrator dichotomy that helps mobilize politically relevant social identities and (2) whether disidentification will be likely to form a distinct psychological path to system-challenging collective action in the context of historical victimization, in addition to social identification. First, we propose that individuals' perceptions of PDV will be likely to stimulate the delineation of group boundaries through two distinct processes of self-categorization: social identification with the group that sustains the victimized and their cause and disidentification from the group associated with wrongdoings (H1). Secondly, we hypothesize that disidentification and identification can mediate the effects of PDV on collective action through the sequential effects of moral outrage and collective efficacy, thus, forming two distinct pathways (H2).

We tested our hypotheses in the quasi-experimental study in the context of a general election, in which the political parties led by president Macri and his main opponent Kirchner were struggling for power. At that time, historical analogies were being made by Kirchner and others between the disappearance of Santiago Maldonado (2017) and Argentina's forced disappearance under the rule of the military government (1976–83).

If the theoretical model proposed here is correct, individuals who perceive that the situation surrounding the disappearance of the human rights activist as similar to the past forced disappearance will be more likely to categorize themselves as supporters of the political force that stood up for the victimized civil activists (i.e., the political opposition led by Kirchner) and disidentify from the supporters of the country's ruling government accused in the silencing of dissidents.

### **Method**

#### *Participants and Procedure*

Data were collected between October 3 and October 30, 2017, as political parties in Argentina contested midterm congressional elections (see Goñi, 2017). We collected data from a self-selected community sample using convenience sampling by posting the link of the questionnaire on Facebook in various groups, including groups with a clear focus on political debates surrounding the Maldonado

Case. The survey items<sup>1</sup> were presented in Spanish. In order to guarantee coherence and validity of the questions, all items were translated from English to Spanish and back using a standard translation-back-translation procedure (Brislin, 1970). Participants were required to be Argentine nationals aged 18 years and over.

We expected to achieve  $N = 200$  as the minimum sample size, as it has previously been recommended as a criterion for achieving adequate statistical power, minimal bias, and overall propriety of mediation models (e.g., Kline, 2011).

### *Participants*

Five hundred and twelve volunteers entered the survey; 116 withdrew from participation at the beginning of the survey and 124 after completing the social-demographic section. The final sample included 272 participants who completed all survey items. The sample ranged in age from 18 to 80 ( $M = 19.04$  years,  $SD = 16.48$ ) and comprised 49.5% men. In the sample, 41.9% were employed full-time, 21.2% of respondents were students, and 10.4% were retired. Socioeconomically, 27.3% described their income as lower than the monthly average wage of an Argentine family in October of 2017 (18,000,00 pesos), 33.1% as about average, and 33.8% as higher than average. Of the respondents, 15.7% were capital city residents, 30.3% were living in the capitals of provinces, 26% in cities with about 100,000 inhabitants, and 15.4% in towns with less than 30,000 inhabitants. Considerable community diversity was thus represented. Compared to the World Population Review and World Bank Data information for the Argentine population in 2017, the gender and socioeconomic balance were broadly representative. However, people under age 40 and residents of the Buenos Aires (54.8%) and Entre Rios (14.4%) provinces were disproportionately likely to complete the questionnaire.

### *Measures*

#### *Sociodemographics*

Participants indicated age, gender, current residence, educational level, employment status, and their support for the Argentinian political parties.

#### *Social Identification*

Two items were used to measure the extent to which participants identify themselves with the supporters of the political opposition movement led by Kirchner. These items were: "I identify myself as one of them," and "I am a supporter of the past government" ( $r = .83$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

#### *Social Disidentification*

Three items adapted from Becker and Tausch (2014) were used to disidentify from the supporters of the Macri's government. These items were: "I have nothing to do with the most of these people"; "I feel a distance between myself and this group"; and "I wish I had nothing to do with this group" ( $\alpha = .87$ ).

<sup>1</sup>The survey also included the measures of group identification with the supporters of the government, disidentification from the supporters of the political opposition, symbolic and egalitarian exclusion of the Mapuche from the Argentinian culture, hope, political inaction, political solidarity, and past participation in collective action. However, these measures were not relevant to this research. The items as well as raw anonymized data of the current study can be found on the lead author's account at the OSF.

### *Group-Based Outrage*

Outrage was assessed by asking participants: “How does the response of the government to the Maldonado case make you feel?” Participants were asked to indicate the degree to which they felt angry, frustrated, and outraged. The responses ranged from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*) ( $\alpha = .91$ ).

### *Collective Efficacy Beliefs*

We used four items adapted from the work of Iyer, Schmader, and Lickel (2007) to measure collective efficacy of people supporting the cause: “Human rights activists are able to maintain the protection of Mapuche ancestral lands”; “Human rights activists can successfully stand up for their rights against the government”; “Human rights activists can really influence the decisions of the government”; and “I think activists have already lost their fight for Mapuche’s rights” (reverse-coded);  $\alpha = .79$ ).

### *Perceived Political Déjà Vu*

To assess the extent to which the Maldonado case was perceived as similar to Argentine’s politically motivated disappearances “Los Desaparecidos,” we asked: “In your opinion, how similar is the Maldonado’s case to Enforced disappearance of (“Los Desaparecidos”) 1976–83?” Participants then were asked to indicate their agreement with the two ( $r = .77, p < .001$ ) statements: “It resembles what Argentina has already been through”; and “It has nothing in common with the past” (reverse-coded).

### *Social Attitudes Towards the Mapuche Land Conflict*

We also assessed participants’ attitudes towards the government’s policies with respect to the Mapuche eviction, the cause associated with Maldonado’s disappearance. For this, we adapted three items from Iyer et al. (2007): “The proposed eviction of Mapuche from business-occupied lands in Patagonia should be allowed to go ahead just the way it is” (reverse-coded); “The current government has not been fair towards the Mapuche over their claims to ancestral lands”; and “The government position over the land issue in Patagonia is unacceptable” ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

### *System-Challenging Collective Action*

Finally, we asked: “If the situation around the cause of Maldonado will not change, how likely is it that you will do each of the following in the future?” We used four items adapted from the paper by Odaž, Uluğ, and Solak (2016) to assess intentions to engage in the protest against the ruling government: “I will protest on social media such as Facebook and Twitter”; “I will add my name to email-signature campaigns”; “I will join protesters on the streets”; and “I will take part in a rally” ( $\alpha = .96$ ).

## **Results**

### *Analytic Strategy*

Data analysis comprised four steps. First, using SPSS version 24, we performed Little’s missing completely at random (MCAR) test. The preliminary analyses involved bivariate analysis to ensure there were no violations of the assumptions. Second, we computed multiple linear-regression analysis to explore the predictive power of the perceived PDV in relation to the action-oriented constructs



**Table 1.** Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations ( $N = 272$ )

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Social identification	–	.52	.55	.51	.56	.57	.62	2.17	1.62
2. Disidentification		–	.73	.54	.67	.51	.58	2.88	1.63
3. Moral outrage			–	.69	.77	.63	.73	2.83	1.81
4. Collective efficacy beliefs				–	.74	.63	.73	2.90	1.31
5. Social attitudes towards the Mapuche land conflict					–	.69	.76	3.18	1.67
6. Political déjà vu						–	.81	2.88	1.76
7. System-challenging collective action							–	2.84	1.83

Note. All correlations were statistically significant at  $p < .001$ .

(i.e., moral outrage and collective efficacy beliefs) as well as the context-relevant measure of social attitudes towards the Mapuche land conflict. Third, using MPlus software (version 7.4, Muthén & Muthén, 2007), we tested whether the six latent constructs of the model were empirically distinct and then conducted path analyses (Kline, 2011). At this step, we also controlled for the covariate effect of participants' age<sup>2</sup> as the older respondents can be more likely to remember the “enforced disappearance.” Finally, we examined an alternative model with social identification mediating the relationship between PDV and collective action when disidentification was excluded from the model. Data files and analyses are publicly available via the Open Science Framework (OSF).<sup>3</sup>

### Preliminary Analysis

The result of Little's MCAR test is consistent with the data being missing completely at random ( $\chi^2(62) = 63.10, p = .437$ ). Therefore, missing values related to the participants that withdrew from participation at the beginning of the survey ( $N = 240, 46.9\%$ ) were removed from the final analysis.

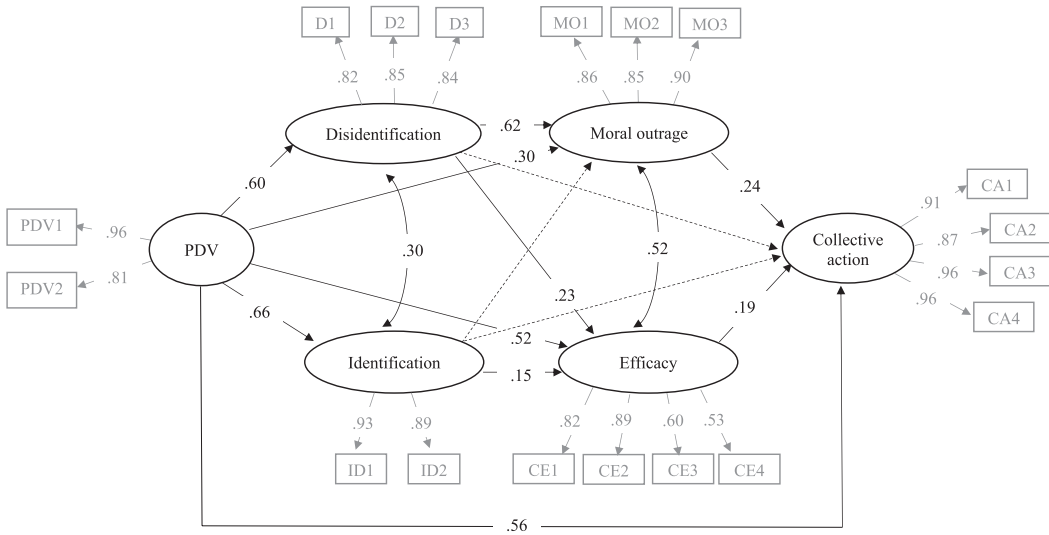
Descriptive statistics are reported in Table 1. As can be seen, all the variables in the present study were highly correlated with  $r$ s ranging from .51 to .81 ( $ps < .001$ ), showing associations in the expected direction. In specific, perceived PDV was significantly associated with higher scores on the scales measuring outrage, efficacy beliefs, and collective action. Table 1 shows that the sample was moderate on social attitudes towards the Mapuche land conflict. This context-relevant measure was found to be highly correlated with the other constructs in the study in the expected direction, meaning that the more participants perceived the government's actions in respect to the Mapuche eviction to be unjust, the more likely they were to perceive PDV, identify with the opposition, and experience moral outrage. Regression analyses also showed that PDV along with the other theoretically relevant variables contributed to predicting of collective action (see Table 2 in the online supporting information).

### Construct Validity

We performed confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and used the following quality indexes: chi-square test ( $\chi^2/df$ ), comparative fit index (CFI):  $\geq 0.95$ ; TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index):  $\geq 0.95$ ; root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA):  $\leq 0.07$ ; standardized root mean square residual (SRMR):

<sup>2</sup>Participants' age did not have a significant effect on collective action intentions ( $\beta = .026; p = .421$ ) nor it was significantly associated with the other constructs in the model, except for disidentification from the government ( $\beta = -.176; p = .001$ ), meaning that the older participants were less likely to disidentify from Macri.

<sup>3</sup>See [https://osf.io/x894a/?view\\_only=ec937a9129034eb0908efa3e2799d7eb](https://osf.io/x894a/?view_only=ec937a9129034eb0908efa3e2799d7eb)



**Figure 1.** Sequential mediation model with social identification, disidentification, moral outrage, and collective efficacy beliefs as mediators in the relationship between PDV and collective action. Note. Path coefficients are standardized estimates. All the coefficients represented by continuous arrows in the graphs are statistically significant, while the dashed lines indicate effects that are not statistically significant. PDV predicted collective action ( $R^2 = .84$ ) directly and indirectly through disidentification ( $R^2 = .36$ ) and collective efficacy beliefs ( $R^2 = .62$ ), whereas the effects of social identification ( $R^2 = .44$ ) and moral outrage ( $R^2 = .75$ ) were non-significant

$\geq 0.08$  (Bentler, 1990) to test construct validity of the proposed model. A CFA with six correlated latent constructs was fitted using the total sample. All the latent variables were specified as correlated exogenous constructs. The complete measurement model obtained an excellent fit,  $\chi^2(120, N = 272) = 286.026, p < .001, CFI = .962, TLI = .952, RMSEA = .071, SRMR = .029$ . The  $\lambda$  ranged between .53 and .96, all of which were statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ), suggesting that the indicators used adequately measured the corresponding concepts.

*Mediation Analyses*

As expected, the results of the path analysis revealed that higher PDV predicted higher intentions to engage in system-challenging collective action directly. This relationship was mediated by the sequential effects of disidentification, collective efficacy beliefs, and moral outrage. PDV was also found to predict collective action through the action-related constructs of efficacy and outrage. The total indirect effect explained 36% of the total effect. Although PDV was strongly and positively related to social identification, we observed that the latter had a nonsignificant indirect effect on collective action through outrage and efficacy (see Figure 1 for a visual presentation of the standardized estimates of direct effects, and see Table 3 in the online supporting information for the specific indirect effects).

*Alternative model*

Finally, we tested an alternative model based on the EMSICA causal order (e.g., Thomas et al., 2009), in which we excluded the disidentification path (see Table 4 and Figure 2 in the online supporting information). The complete measurement model obtained an excellent fit,  $\chi^2(80, N = 272) = 226.303, p < .001, CFI = .961, TLI = .949, RMSEA = .082, SRMR = .031$ . The indirect

effect of PDV on collective action through social identity was found to be nonsignificant. Both moral outrage and efficacy were found to mediate the relationship between PDV and collective action.

## Discussion

The aim of the present study was to understand whether and how perceiving the analogy between historic transgressions and current events can mobilize people for collective action directed at the outgroup (e.g., system, political party) who is portrayed as a perpetrator by means of a rhetorically constructed historical analogy. We did so in the political climate of Argentina's 2017 election campaign when the country's political opposition was explicitly comparing the disappearance of the antigovernment protester to mass enforced disappearance, conducted by the 1978–83 military regime. The results of the present study, with a sample of individuals contacted at the time of the nation-wide social mobilization campaign, generally support our theoretical claims about the crucial role of PDV in delineating a victim-perpetrator dichotomy needed for social mobilization of politicized collective identities and driving system-challenging collective action. Our results demonstrate that perceiving these two events to be similar was likely to evolve participants' identification with the supporters of Argentina's political opposition and disidentification from the ruling government accused by their main rivals of systematic oppression of civil activists. Further, we found that the relationship between PDV and collective action was sequentially mediated by disidentification, moral outrage, and collective efficacy beliefs, whereas the indirect effects of social identification in this context was found to be nonsignificant.

The obtained results not only confirm previous theorizing about the role of the rhetorical evocation of the past in social mobilization (e.g., Liu & László, 2007; Páez & Liu, 2012; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001), but expand on them as well. First, they show that, due to what we take to be a rhetorically constructed historical analogy, individuals may form associations between the past situation and existing circumstances, thus experiencing political *déjà vu*. PDV was found to be linked to two self-categorization processes—social identification and disidentification—indicating the delineation of group boundaries and one's self-positioning within the seemingly salient "victim-perpetrator" dichotomy using contextually relevant categories in the context of past victimization. This finding extends previous research that has shown how recollection of traumatic memories can help to construct or restore a dichotomous victim-perpetrator frame through which people, even unaffected by past crimes, view the history and make attributions of blame (e.g., Augoustinos & Every, 2007; Condor et al., 2013; Finlay, 2007; Hammack & Pilecki, 2012; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Rooyackers & Verkuyten, 2012). It also aligns with the idea that people confronted with the distressing traumatic memories are likely to seek comfort in collective symbolic structures that transcend physical existence and provide satisfaction of the basic psychological needs of continuity, efficacy, purpose, and belonging (Hirschberger, 2018). The pattern revealed also demonstrates that the direct relationships between PDV and social identification and disidentification were large in size (Cumming, 2014), suggesting the relevance of both mechanisms in producing an "us vs. them mentality" inherently needed for system-challenging collective action to occur (Chayinska et al., 2019).

Second, our results contribute to the understanding of the underlying mechanisms in the context of PDV. Consistent with our predictions, we showed that disidentification and identification form two distinct psychological paths to collective action through the sequential effects of moral outrage and collective efficacy beliefs. For instance, we found that disidentification, plausibly triggered by the perceptions of PDV, was related to a strong negative emotion towards the government's actions as well as to people's belief in own capacity to overturn the regime. Instead, social identification was not significantly associated with collective action and moral outrage, while its effects on efficacy beliefs were small in size (Cumming, 2014). These findings are intriguing and present a promising venue for the further in-depth investigation because they show that disidentification as one's standing

*against* the “offender” in the face of a possible recurrent victimization is more likely to predict the willingness to oppose and challenge the outgroup compared to standing *with* the victimized and their cause. Although we operationalized both self-categorization processes as the unitary scales (based on the study of Chayinska et al., 2019), our approach provides an expandable framework for a more fine-grained analysis of the effects of self-categorization processes, including disidentification, on collective action. It also opens room for a further theoretical discussion and operationalization of the concept (Becker & Tausch, 2014).

Furthermore, our findings extend a growing convergence of social identity models of collective action (Thomas et al., 2009, 2012; van Zomeren et al., 2008) suggesting that the conventional factors—moral outrage and collective efficacy beliefs—can have mobilizing effect in the context of PDV. We observe the indirect effect of moral outrage at the authorities consistent with converting disidentification into participants’ intentions to take system-challenging collective action. Of particular theoretical interest is the role of collective efficacy showing that a perceived analogy between past and present societal-level traumatic events did not undermine people’s belief in their own capacity but, in contrast, was related to a sense of agency (Benight, 2004; Drury & Reicher, 2005; Muldoon et al., 2017; Rimé et al., 2010) needed to mobilize people’s collective action against perpetrating groups. Our research shows that disidentification can be understood as a crucial identity mechanism expressing one’s active rejection and subjective distancing from the “agent of injustice”, thus providing the target for system-challenging collective action. It further shows that collective efficacy beliefs and group-based outrage can function as crucial psychological resources needed to translate perceived PDV into collective behaviour aimed at challenging and defeating the aggressor in ways that minimize, if not eliminate, the risk of future victimization.

Taken together, our results resonate with the growing concern in the collective action research regarding the ability of the established models to adequately explain rapid societal changes (e.g., Smith, Livingstone, & Thomas, 2019) and capitalize on the strength of more systematic, contextualized, and history-informed approaches to the understanding of how narratives of the ingroup’s victimization may spark nation-wide antigovernment protests.

#### *Limitations of the Present Research*

Notwithstanding our confidence in these findings, our results should, of course, only be generalized beyond this particular research setting with caution. First, experimental studies should provide a robust test of causality and overcome limitations of this study associated with cross-sectional research. For example, future research might manipulate the hypothesized role of public rhetoric in evoking PDV as well as investigate the causal relationship between perceived historical analogy, psychological group memberships, and collective action. It may be that those group membership(s) have a greater or lesser impact on the way people are prone to see some events as analogs. Further research should also pay more attention to other factors related to social cognition and persuasion that could potentially explain why some people are more likely to perceive PDV while others are not. Such experimental research can be conducted in other political context where historical analogies between past traumatic events and current intergroup relations are embedded in public discourse and may be shared by members of certain social groups.

Second, in the present study, we measured participants’ social attitudes with respect to the government’s handling of the Mapuche land conflict, the cause that brought Maldonado to Patagonia, but we did not explicitly measure blame attributions nor perceived illegitimacy, that is the extent to which participants perceived both past and present cases to be transgressive and conducted by the regime. Future research may therefore scrutinize the effects of perceived illegitimacy in line with the contemporary social identity models of collective action (Thomas et al., 2012; van Zomeren et al., 2008). Likewise, it might be useful to examine whether perceiving PDV

can mobilize ally activism (e.g., Droogendyk, Wright, Louis, & Lubensky, 2016; Saab, Tausch, Spears, & Cheung, 2015) and whether the elicited experience of empathetic concern for the future vitality of another can turn bystanders into upstanders (e.g., Wohl, Tabri, Hollingshead, Dupuis, & Caouette, 2019).

Third, our theoretical model did not account for the effects of individuals' self-reported political ideological orientation within the conventional left–right spectrum. The classic left–right distinction has been notoriously complicated in Argentina due to Peronism (a local form of 20th-century populism with affinities to left- and right-wing political stances). We, therefore, cannot draw any conclusions about the moderating effects of classic ideology on PDV-induced collective action (although our sample shows a diversity of views on the focal social issue of the Mapuche conflict). Future research should examine its effects. It could be that, depending on the political orientation, some people do not want to see parallels between the past and the present or that political orientation can itself predict disidentification and further collective action (thus suppressing the effect of PDV).

Finally, future research should seek to employ a set of mixed methods, including qualitative research components, needed to achieve a broader and deeper understanding of individual and shared social meanings associated with collective memory of victimization and current events predictably related to the willingness to prevent the return of the past.

### Conclusion

An emphasis on the past has been an important extension to the sociopsychological toolkit for exploring political relations and dynamics. The past is not straightforward, and it is unlikely to be uncontested. The concept of political *déjà vu* offers some promise for helping to understand some of the regularities buried within but also in creating nuance in political events. Indeed, despite the contested and disputed nature of past events, PDV was an impressively strong predictor of collective action intentions and seems to capture the ideological heart of this matter in a way we rarely see in political psychology. Our results suggest that PDV may be a powerful mechanism leading to the (re) construction of a victim-perpetrator dichotomy and producing people's intentions to challenge the asymmetrically stronger political actor to the extent that they feel moral outrage and believe in their own collective efficacy. The present study may also be the first to demonstrate a unique mediating role of disidentification compared to identification in predicting collective action. It highlights the need to continue progress towards a more nuanced, historically informed approach to understanding how collective memories of past trauma can mobilize dissent and become an instrument in political power struggles.

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