Effects of collective marginalization experiences on right-wing political extremist attitudes: on the important role of negative emotions

Diego Farren, Katrin Brettfeld, Rebecca Endtricht, Jannik M.K. Fischer, Peter Wetzels
University of Hamburg
Introduction

- **Monitoringsystem und Transferplattform Radikalisierung (MOTRA)**
  “Monitoring System and Transfer Platform Radicalization” (MOTRA) is a research association funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany. The project was developed for the early detection, prevention and combating of extremism and terrorism over the course of five years (11/2019 - 10/2024).
  ([https://www.motra.info/](https://www.motra.info/))

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  The study Menschen in Deutschland (People in Germany) is a yearly population survey conducted by the University of Hamburg. The survey addresses questions about life in Germany on main topics from society, politics and religion.
  ([https://www.mid.uni-hamburg.de/en/startseite.html](https://www.mid.uni-hamburg.de/en/startseite.html))

- **Data source**
  The data used for this presentation represents the first data collection of the MiD survey (N = 4 483; collected between 18. März and 10. Juni 2021; participation rate = 23.6).
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Main idea:
Strain theory

X: Strain
(collective marginalization)

M: Emotions
(anomie; fear of cultural loss)

Y: Extremism
(extremist attitudes)

“[T]he GSTT [“general strain theory of terrorism”] states that terrorism is more likely when individuals experience “collective strains” [...]. These collective strains increase the likelihood of terrorism because they increase negative emotions [...].” (Agnew 2017, pp. 121–122)

“These strains include absolute and relative material deprivation; [...] the problems encountered by certain immigrant groups, including Muslims in Western countries; [...] a range of human rights violations, including the denial of civil and political rights; [...] religious and ethnic discrimination; [...]”
(Agnew 2017, p. 124)
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Operationalization:
Strain

X: Strain
(collective marginalization)

Y: Extremism
(extremist attitudes)

M: Emotions
(anomie; fear of cultural loss)

Where we live, people like me are ...

... not acknowledged for what they achieve.
... held back from getting on in life.
... often not valued much by others.
... portrayed incorrectly in the media.
... disadvantaged regarding receiving social benefits.
... treated disrespectfully by authorities.
... not taken seriously by politicians.
... treated unfairly by the police.
“These collective strains, [...] lead to strong negative emotions that are conducive to terrorism, including anger, frustration, envy, humiliation, and hopelessness.” (Agnew 2017, p. 127)

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These days, everything has become so uncertain. You have to be ready for anything.

Everything changes so fast these days that it is often hard to know what to abide by.

Looking at the events of the last few years makes you feel really insecure.

Things today have become so difficult. You don't know what is going on.

Nowadays you can't rely on anyone.

Traditions that are important to me are given no room in this society.

In this society, men are increasingly being denied the right to protect their families themselves.

The mixing of so many people with different origins in Germany cannot work.
“These collective strains, [...] lead to strong negative emotions that are conducive to terrorism, including anger, frustration, envy, humiliation, and hopelessness.”

(Agnew 2017, p. 127)

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**Operationalization:**

**Extremism**

- Based on the „Konsens“ definition and operationalisation of right-wing extremist ideology (Decker et al. 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Xenophobia</td>
<td>– There are too many foreigners in Germany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islamophobia</td>
<td>– If we are not careful, Germany will become an Islamic country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisemitism</td>
<td>– Jews have too much influence in Germany.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– You cannot trust Jews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chauvinism</td>
<td>– We should at long last have the courage to feel a strong sense of national identity again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>– My people are superior to other peoples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social-Darwinism</td>
<td>– The strongest must prevail, otherwise progress is not possible.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>– There are worthwhile and also worthless forms of human life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports right-wing dictatorship</td>
<td>– A state should have a leader who rules the country with a forceful hand for the good of everyone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trivialization of national socialism</td>
<td>– A lot of what has been said about the crimes committed by the national socialists is exaggerated.</td>
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Operationalization:

**Extremism**

X: Strain (collective marginalization)

Y: Extremism (extremist attitudes)

M: Emotions (anomie; fear of cultural loss)

![Bar chart showing distribution of responses to questions related to extremism.](chart.png)

- **Mean** = 1.7
- **SD** = .57
- **Alpha** = .83

16.22. September 2022
Hypotheses:

- H1: Strain (X) has an effect on emotions (M)
- H2: Strain (X) has an effect on extremism (Y)
- H3: The effect of strain (X) on extremism (Y), is at least partially mediated through emotions (M)
Results:
All respondents

Effect of collective marginalization on...
(X)

...anomie
(M1)

...cultural loss
(M2)

...extremism
(Y)

\[ m_i = \alpha_0 + (\alpha_1 x_i) + \alpha_2 \text{controls}_i + e_i \]

\[ y_i = \beta_0 + (\beta_1 x_i) + \beta_2 m_i + \beta_3 \text{controls}_i + e_i \]

\[ y_i = y_0 + (\gamma_1 x_i) + \gamma_3 \text{controls}_i + e_i \] or \[ \beta_1 + \alpha_1 \beta_2 \]

*Z-standardized coefficients

22. September 2022
Results:
All respondents

X: Strain
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M: Emotions
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y_i = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 x_i + \gamma_3 \text{controls}_i + e_i \quad \text{or} \quad (\beta_1 + \alpha_1 \beta_2)
\]

\*Z-standardized coefficients

Effect of collective marginalization on...

(X)

- anomie (M1)
- cultural loss (M2)
- extremism (Y)

- direct
- indirect
- total

22. September 2022
Results:
All respondents

X: Strain (collective marginalization)

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\[ m_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 x_i + \alpha_2 \text{controls}_i + e_i \]

\[ y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_i + \beta_2 m_i + \beta_3 \text{controls}_i + e_i \]

\[ y_i = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 x_i + \gamma_3 \text{controls}_i + e_i \quad \text{or} \quad (\beta_1 + \alpha_1 \star \beta_2) \]

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22. September 2022
Results:
All respondents

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\[ m_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 x_i + \alpha_2 controls_i + e_i \]

\[ y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 x_i + \beta_2 m_i + \beta_3 controls_i + e_i \]

\[ \gamma_1 - \beta_1 \] or \[ (\alpha_1 \ast \beta_2) \]

\[ \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 x_i + \gamma_3 controls_i + e_i \] or \[ (\beta_1 + \alpha_1 \ast \beta_2) \]

\[ \gamma_1 - \beta_1 \] or \[ (\alpha_1 \ast \beta_2) \]

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*Z-standardized coefficients

Effect of collective marginalization on...
(X)

...anomie
(M1)

...cultural loss
(M2)

...extremism
(Y)

\[ 0.001 \]

\[ 0.442 \]

\[ 0.442 \]

\[ 0.405 \]

\[ 0.405 \]

\[ 0.296 \]

\[ 0.295 \]

ο direct  • indirect  + total

22. September 2022
Results:
All respondents

Effect of collective marginalization on...
(X)

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22. September 2022
Closure

Results in a nutshell
• Perceived collective marginalization is a relevant predictor of extremism
• The effect of collective marginalization on extremism is completely mediated through anomie and fear of cultural loss
• The strain theory applies appropriately to the data at hand

Limitations
• Cross-sectional data, i.e. no causal interpretation possible

Implications/Future
• Measures presented may be used as a barometer of conflict in time and space
• The importance of collective marginalization opens the door for a procedural justice perspective
X: Strain  
(collective marginalization)  

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Die Bedeutung kollektiver Marginalisierung und negativer sozialer Emotionen für die Erklärung extremismusaffin
politischer Einstellungen: Eine empirische Untersuchung auf Basis der General Strain Theory

Zusammenfassung:

Die General Strain Theory nimmt an, dass Konfrontationen mit sozialen Belastun
gen vor allem dann zur Etablierung normalerweise wünschenswerten und Einstel
lungen führen, wenn diese Belastungen mit negativen Emotionen verbunden sind. Extremismusaffine politische Einstellungen können solche Formen normalerweise wünschenswer
er Haltungen darstellen. In der vorliegenden Studie wird, anschließend an diese theo
erischen Überlegungen, untersucht, ob (1) das Erleben kollektiver Marginalisierung die Wahrscheinlichkeit der Befürwortung extremismusaffiner politischer Einstellungen steigert und (2) erwartet dieser Effekt über die Wirkungen damit verbundener negat
er sozialer Emotionen zu erklären ist. Die überwiegenden Annahmen werden anhand von Daten einer für die deutsche Wählerbör
erung ab 18 Jahren repräsentativen Befragung (n = 4.495) überprüft. Im Wege von Strukturgleichungsmodellen wird un
tersucht, ob negative soziale Emotionen, hier gemessen an kulturelle Verluste, den Zusammenhang zwischen der Wahrnehmung einer gesellschaftlichen Marginalisie
rung der Eigengruppe (kollektive Marginalisierung) einerseits und demokratisierun
ten, extremistischen Einstellungen andererseits vermitteln. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass ein Erleben kollektiver Marginalisierung wie erwartet mit einem signifikant erhöhten Risiko der Entwicklung demokratiedenker, extremismusaffiner politischer Einstellungen einhergeht. Dieser Effekt wird vollständig durch mit kollektiver Margi
nalisierung assoziierten negativen sozialen Emotionen mediiert. Immerhin ist festzustel
len, dass die Wahrnehmung einer gesellschaftlichen Ausgrenzung und Beraubtheit der Eigengruppe zwar ein wichtiger Faktor zur Erklärung der Entstehung politisch-ext
remistischer Einstellungen ist, dieser aber zentral als interindividuell stärkeren emotionalen Prozess vermittelt wird. Neben sozial dysfunktionalen gesellschaftlichen Zuständen sind daher vor allem damit assoziierte negative Emotionen wie Angst und Bedrohungsgefühle zentral zur Erklärung von politischen Extremismen, was auch für präventive Maßnahmen eine wichtige Feststellung bedeutet.

Jens M. K. Fischer, Rebecca Entricht und Diego Farren

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Thank you!

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