Greetings,

You recently participated in a study about peace activism and said that you would be interested in getting a longer summary of the results. Thank you for your interest!

SUMMARY OF RESULTS: PEACE ACTIVISM:
SUSTAINED VERSUS DECLINING ACTIVIST IDENTIFICATION AND BEHAVIOUR
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WHAT WE FOUND

1. People who responded to the study remained committed to being an activist over the 3 months, but their actual participation in peace activism declined from April to May and from May to June.

2. Activism was associated with (a) egalitarian values, (b) membership in organized peace groups, (c) a focus on the successes and effectiveness of the peace movement, and (d) affiliation with political parties that strongly opposed the war. Activism was also linked however to (e) conflict with the Australian identity and (f) war-related stress in April.

3. Engaging in specific actions was associated with (a) perceived support from peers for the behaviours, (b) perceived control over the action, (c) cost-benefit perceptions, (d) attitudes towards the behaviour, and (e) intentions. These 'rational' motives were especially important for people who didn't identify strongly as activists.

4. We were interested in variables that would predict changes in activist identification and behaviour in May and June, controlling for respondents' activism in April. We found that (a) engaging in more collective action strengthened activist identity among weakly identified respondents. More generally, (b) the anticipation of a long war and (c) the perception of high Iraqi casualties were associated with more sustained identification and action. By contrast, (d) conflict with the Australian identity weakened respondents' activism and (e) self-reports that time pressure and financial concerns were barriers to action were associated with decreasing identification.

5. There's lots in the data to look at, but the findings we would see as more novel and good targets for intervention concern the relative importance of information about Iraqi casualties and ongoing fighting (subjects of potential information campaigns, especially since Iraqi casualty figures dont always make the news) and the importance of managing tensions between peace activist and other group identities (the particular importance of stressing the peacenik - Aussie link).

WHAT WE WERE LOOKING FOR

The study attempted to predict participants' peace activist behaviours and their sustained or changing commitment to activism over a two-month period (April-June 2003). The theoretical framework guiding the present research is social psychological, and considers participants' sense of identity to be at the centre of their political decision-making.

According to research in the social identity tradition, the way that people think about themselves changes as a function of the social context, and is socially constructed to define meaningful reference groups. Changes in how people identify themselves are seen as the proximal predictor of behaviour, because with changes in identification come changes in the definitions of what actions are appropriate. For example, the same person might be prone to chanting slogans at a rally ("I am a protestor; protestors chant"), but not in someone's living room ("I am a guest; guests do not chant"). Even more interestingly, the same person might be willing to go to a rally when they are thinking about themselves in political terms ("I am a Green supporter; Greens go to rallies"), but not when they are thinking about themselves in terms of other identities (if they think that rallying is un-Australian; un-Christian; un-parental; un-collegial, etc). Often, there are a range of possible
identities for individuals, at different levels (e.g., Australian, Green voter, protestor, parent, friend) and with them a range of competing norms for appropriate action. In our research tradition, then, if you want to understand whether or not people will engage in activism, you've got to understand two things: the identities that people are using, and the norms for appropriate behaviour that are attached to those identities. This is the big picture - and then there are a lot of microtheories that we looked at related to different aspects of volunteerism, collective action, and intergroup behaviour.

SOME INFORMATION ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

We recruited 155 peace activists in April 2003 to complete an online survey, Peace Actions 2003, by sending out invitations to Australian peace groups' mailing lists, miscellaneous students whose contact information we had from studies earlier in the semester, and yahoo groups who turned up in a search for Australia / peace. For this survey, people were considered "peace activists" if they had engaged in any previous anti-war activism, such as signing a petition or attending a rally.

Respondents were diverse but unrepresentative: Australian (67% of April sample) or dual (Australian +) citizens (20%); mostly female (62%); self-identified as of Anglo-European (80%) or other European (10%) cultural/ethnic background; non-religious (66%) or Christian (12%); voting mostly Green (63%) or Democrat (19%); and ranging in age from 16-75 with a median of 35. A very high proportion of the sample (93%) had tertiary educational qualifications, including 51% (!) with postgraduate education. While 46% worked full time, 28% were students or retired, and 25% were employed casually, part-time, or were unemployed. Most (62%) were members of at least one formal political, religious or community activist group/organization, with more than 45 groups represented in the sample.

Of the 155 April participants, 76 were willing to be contacted regarding a May follow-up, and 72 (95%) completed the questionnaire. Of the May participants, 58 were willing to be contacted regarding a June follow-up, and 28 (48%) completed the questionnaire. The April - June data collection occurred during and after the early of fighting in the Iraq war (March 20th: first US missile attacks; April 9: fall of Baghdad). The participants who dropped out did not differ on the demographic factors listed above from participants who completed more data collection, but people who dropped out earlier were on average less committed as activists.

RESULTS

1. MEASURES OF ID & ACTION.

ACTIVIST IDENTIFICATION. Self-rated activist identification was assessed with three Likert items (e.g., "I am committed to being an activist") rated on 5 point scales (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). No reliable differences as a function of demographic variables were observed. Self-rated activist identification hovered around 4/5 for the April, May, and June samples (i.e., respondents reported reasonably strong commitment throughout).

ACTIVIST BEHAVIOUR. At each wave, participants indicated whether they had engaged in each of five pro-peace behaviours in the last month (attending a rally, attending a meeting, donating money, volunteering, and signing a petition), and generated up to 3 additional actions they had taken. In March-April, most respondents (91%) had attended a peace rally in the last month, and/or signed a petition (84%). A majority had also engaged in organizational behaviours, like attending a meeting of a pro-peace group (54%), volunteering time (52%), and donating money (51%); 45% listed additional actions as well. Naturally, being a member of an organization and self-identifying as an activist in April were strongly associated with reported activist behaviour in the previous month.

Across the behaviours, _self-reported activism declined significantly from April to May, and again from May to June_. We had wondered whether the drop off in activism would be steeper among respondents who were not members of organized groups and who did not identify strongly as activists. This pattern was observed for donating money: among respondents who completed both waves 1 and 2, the decline in self-reported donations for people who were members of
organized groups was from 55% in April to 30% in May, whereas among non-members it was from 55% in April to 5% in May (a much bigger drop). However, on the other behaviours different patterns emerged. Strongly identified activists and group members were equally likely, compared to weakly identified activists and non-members, to report declining rally attendance. Group members were *more likely to report declining meeting attendance and volunteerism, but this was because non-members generally didn't engage in these actions to begin with (a 'ceiling effect').

We had also wondered whether activist behaviours would change the identification of people who were weakly identified: this was the case. Strongly identified activists remained committed through April and May regardless of specific behaviours in that month. For people who were weakly identified in April, however, activist behaviours in the following month strengthened their subsequent activist identity (or at least, signing petitions, attending meetings, and donating $ were associated with stronger identification later on - interestingly attending rallies was not).

2. PSYCHOLOGICAL CORRELATES OF ACTIVISM. There were a number of psychological variables which we expected would be related to peace activism, on the basis of previous research in collective action, volunteerism, and intergroup behaviour. In this context, we were also interested in exploring the role of these variables as moderators of the decline in activist behaviour over April-June.

A. SOCIAL DOMINANCE ORIENTATION is a variable measuring people's endorsement of hierarchical social systems (e.g., "It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and others are at the bottom") versus egalitarianism ("All groups should be given an equal chance in life"). Most of the activists (93%) endorsed egalitarian values and rejected hierarchical values. However, as predicted, we found that people who rejected hierarchical values more strongly were more committed activists and more likely to engage in peace activism. Egalitarian values did not buffer against the decline in activism, however. High egalitarians were equally likely to report the decline in peace activism April - June.

B. STRESS, EMOTIONS, WORRYING ABOUT THE WAR. We had a four-item measure of general stress (e.g., "The past four weeks have been stressful for me"), which people filled in for each wave. We also had a measure of how much people had worried about the war and five other issues in the previous month, which we used to establish their focus on the war relative to other social and personal concerns, and a four-item measure of emotional well-being (self-reported happiness & calm, vs anxiety and depression) which we used as a control variable.

Overall, stress hovered around the 4/5 mark through the three month period (people felt their month had been stressful) while negative emotions more broadly hovered below the midpoint of the scale (respondents felt more happy and calm than anxious or depressed). However, the focus of people's anxiety was changing markedly over that time. In April, respondents reported more worry about the war than other personal and social issues; in the May sample, people were equally worried about the war and other social issues in Australia; in the June sample, people reported more worry about other social issues in Australia than the war, and as much worry about their personal lives as about the war itself. Moreover, in April strongly identified activists reported more stress, and that stress was associated with past peace activism. However, by May and June, reported stress was unrelated to identity and activism, which were linked only to a focus on the war relative to other concerns in waves 2 and 3. That is, at April the experience of stress was war-related and associated (positively) with action, but not at 2 and 3.

C. CONTROL, EFFICACY, and EFFECTIVENESS. The literature on stress and coping is extensive and complex, but can be simplified as suggesting a curvilinear relationship between a specific stressor and action. People who are not stressed are not motivated to action, but people who are too stressed are sometimes paralysed and avoidant. Avoidance rather than problem-focused action is especially likely if people don't perceive an effective way of solving the problem.
Accordingly, we had a look to see if we could observe people who were highly stressed about the war dropping out as a function of control issues. The short answer is no, we didn't see this pattern.

Three types of control judgements have been considered in the decision-making literatures. One is over the behaviour itself: whether, if you try to engage in the action, you will be able to complete the action. Researchers using the _planned behaviour_ framework have found that the more you perceive control over an action, the more likely you are to intend to engage in the action and (when your control perceptions are accurate) the more likely your intentions are to lead to action. Another type of control judgement is _efficacy_: a judgement of whether an actor can succeed in its goals without focusing on particular actions. The higher efficacy that people have, and the more efficacy people perceive social movements have, the more likely to act. Finally, a third type of control judgement is _effectiveness_: the judgement of whether particular behaviours would help achieve the goals of the movement. The more effective behaviours are judged, the more likely they are to be enacted.

We found that in April, strongly identified activists and those who had engaged in more past activism were more likely to see the pro-peace behaviours as effective, and perceived more control. In addition, in April, strongly identified activists were more likely to see the peace movement as achieving its overall goals, and demonstrating opposition to the war. Past activism was also associated with the tendency to think of successes rather than failures when asked about other goals the peace movement had attempted. (A more detailed summary of activists' views of the goals of the peace movement is online at http://www2.psy.uq.edu.au/~wlouis/wl0703_1.pdf.) Overall then, April identification and activism were associated with strong effectiveness, control, and efficacy judgements. However, there wasn't any difference in declining activism to May between respondents who perceived higher or lower effectiveness / efficacy / control.

Moreover, we found a curvilinear relationship of war-related stress and identification in the opposite direction to the one we were expecting: we found that people who were either low or high stress in April were more strongly identified as activists and more likely to engage in activism than those who reported moderate stress. All of this is a bit baffling from the point of view of previous theory & empirical research, and we're still working out the attributes of the highly identified activists who reported they were not stressed by the war in April.

Leaving aside the question of stress then, another slant on the effectiveness - identification data is that among those who reported weak identification as activists in April, effectiveness and control judgements were more closely linked to May identification and action than among those who were strongly identified as activists. This finding suggests that instrumental motives are more important for less committed activists than for the dedicated, which is consistent with some past research.

D. POLITICAL, NATIONAL, INTERPERSONAL NORMS. We had single-item measures of political and national ingroup norms (e.g., "What do average members of your party think about the war in Iraq?"), identification (e.g., "How important is being Australian in your everyday life?"), and power (e.g., "How much power does Australia have to achieve its goals?"). We also had single-item political and national outgroup norm measures (e.g., "What do average people who do not support your party think about the war on Iraq?") and interpersonal norm measures ("In the next month, if you engaged in these pro-peace / anti-war behaviours, how would important people in your life react?"). The usual pattern in norm studies is to observe a positive relationship between the identity, norm, and the normative behaviour, and (in social identity research) an interaction between identification and norms, such that high identifiers are especially influenced by the group norm.

At the _national level_, focusing on the Australian subsample of activists (excluding 16 non-citizens), we found that respondents perceived the Australian identity and norms conservatively. They experienced conflict between their national and activist identification, presumably because of Australia's militarist foreign policy. Across the sample, activists tended not to identify very strongly as Australians (53% at or below the midpoint of the scale). In April, only 61% thought average Australians were also opposed to the war, versus 87% who thought citizens of other
countries opposed the war. Activists also saw Australia as having relatively little power to achieve its goals (73% at or below the midpoint of the scale). What is more, those peace activists who identified more strongly as Australian were less committed to the activist identity and less likely to engage in pro-peace activism in May even when April activism were controlled. In other words, strongly identified Australians were disproportionately likely to disidentify as peace activists in the May questionnaire.

At the political level, again focusing only on the Australian citizens, respondents were not strongly identified either (58% at or below the midpoint of the scale) but virtually all (94%) perceived that average members of their political parties opposed the war, whereas only 55% saw average supporters of other parties as opposing the war. Most (69%) rated their party as low in power, presumably because most respondents (>99%) affiliated with opposition parties. Activist identification and behaviour were related to identifying as a member of a party that strongly opposed the war. However, political identity and norms didn't contribute to predicting subsequent activism once activism in April were controlled. That is, strong political identification norms opposing the war didn't buffer against the decline in activism.

At the interpersonal level, most (76%) of respondents thought that the important people in their lives would approve of peace activism, and this interpersonal support was associated with activist behaviour. For weakly identified activists, in fact, interpersonal approval bolstered activism in May, controlling for April activism, whereas for strongly identified activists interpersonal support did not contribute independently. This finding suggests that individual-level relational motives are more important for less committed activists than for the dedicated, which is again consistent with some past research.

3. CASUALTY ESTIMATES. In the April questionnaire, we asked people how long the war would last (complemented by a question we added in mid-month, after the fall of Baghdad, as to whether the war was "over"). We also asked respondents to guess how many casualties there would be (including American, Australian and Iraqi military casualties, and Iraqi civilians) and whether there would be terrorist attacks in the US and Australia. Each estimate was also paired with a question about how confident respondents were about their answer. Here we were interested in casualty estimates as a kind of cost-benefit calculus about the war. Accordingly, we wondered whether risk perceptions would be associated with activism, and whether the estimates of Australian risks would be disproportionately influential.

We found that indeed, activists were more confident that the war would last longer. Activists were less likely, in late April, to agree that the war was over, anticipating ongoing guerrilla resistance and regional instability. Moreover, respondents who anticipated a longer war were more likely to sustain activism in May, controlling for April activism.

There was a great deal of variability in responses to the casualty estimates, partly because we didn't clarify whether we were talking about casualties in the sense of injuries or deaths. At any rate, casualty and terror risk estimates in April for the US and Australia were unrelated to activism in both April and May. Overall, the median estimate was of 200 American casualties and 10 Australian. Eighty percent of respondents thought there would be a terrorist attack in the US (51% were confident this would be the case), and 51% thought there would be an attack in Australia (37% were confident). For Iraqis, the median number of estimated casualties was 3000 each for military and civilians. However, greater confidence in higher estimates of Iraqi casualties were associated with activist identification in April, and with May identification and (weakly) activist behaviour, even when April activism was controlled. It is very unusual, and theoretically interesting, to find risk factors for _other_ groups of people predicting political behaviour when own and ingroup risk is assessed. (A more usual finding may be seen at http://www psy q u.edu.au/~wlouis/wl0503_1.pdf : In a study of students' war support and opposition, everyone claimed to be motivated in war support or opposition by concern for Iraqis, but analyses suggested that behaviour and attitudes were actually associated with perceived costs for Australians.)
4. ACTIVISTS’ EXPLANATIONS FOR DECLINING COMMITMENT. In May, respondents rated seven reasons they might have engaged in less activism than expected in the previous month: 57% said time and financial concerns got in the way and 39% agreed family concerns were a barrier; 45% agreed they would have done even more activism had there been more opportunities; 5% agreed they felt less need to act because the fighting was less casualty intensive than they originally feared and 7% agreed the fighting was over relatively quickly. No one agreed that they came to feel the war was justified, nor that they believed once troops were committed peace activism was inappropriate.

Interestingly, agreement with these reasons was actually unrelated to Time 2 behaviour, when April behaviour was controlled - except for the self-report that they saw the fighting as over. People who had engaged in less Time 2 activism were less likely to reject this as a reason for inaction. Similarly, rationales for reduced activism were generally unrelated to actual declines in the activist identity, except for the "time and money" option. Respondents who had lower commitment to activism in May, controlling for April, were more likely to agree that time and money were barriers to action.

5. THE PEACE MOVEMENT IN RELATION TO OTHER ACTIVISM. In the third questionnaire we had a measure of involvement in miscellaneous other social movements, and we were interested in the degree of overlap. Unfortunately we had only a small sample for Wave 3, so the results have to be interpreted with caution. Respondents all approved of the goals of the peace movement (100% - and 100% had engaged in activism on this topic in the last year). Approval was also high for the environmental/green movement (100% approved; but only 61% active in the last year), human rights (100% approve; 57% active), refugee support / anti-detention centres (100%; 79%) and reconciliation / aboriginal rights (100%; 39%). Respondents were positive about third world poverty / debt relief (96%; 39%), anti-globalisation / anti-WTO (89%; 44%), queer / lgbt rights (89%; 25%), organized labour / unions (89%; 29%), the youth / student movement (82%; 25%) and feminism (79%; 25%). Only 33% endorsed Christian values / church movement, but a bigger proportion than usual of these (25% of the sample) had engaged in Christian activism in the last year. Respondents also generated other causes, including animal liberation, health care, housing, disability rights, anti-nuclear campaigns, as well as political parties and specific Christian denominations, that they had supported recently.

These results are theoretically interesting on two fronts: the interrelationship among the movements, and the attitude-behaviour discrepancy. One of the issues that we are interested in in general is the question of conflict and reinforcement among different identities: Here for example it looks as though, even though Christian churches are often very active in the peace movement, committed Christian peace activists might potentially experience identity conflict. A second issue is the question of when people will act on particular political attitudes and identities - we can contrast, for example, the 100% who acted on their approval for peace values with the 39% who acted on their approval for aboriginal rights. All interesting topics - to be pursued in further studies and analyses!

IMPLICATIONS

I would certainly expect that different people react differently to this data, but at this point I'm going to focus in on my own reactions. I divide the results into easy and difficult targets of intervention from the point of view of sustaining activism. For example, egalitarian values are linked to peace activism, but they seem more difficult to promote than information about ongoing fighting or Iraqi casualties, which are beliefs also linked to sustained peace activism. Many organizers may also have observed the four-step cycle suggested in the present data: (1) that relational, instrumental, and control motives can draw weakly identified activists to engage in collective action and join groups; (2) that this action / group membership reinforces an activist identity; (3) that an activist identity can sustain activism in the face of social and material costs or short-term movement failure; (4) to a limit that is associated with the experience of 'burnout', self-
reported pressure - signs of disidentification in progress, and suggesting a need for relational, instrumental, and control reinforcement.

It may be more novel however for activists to reflect that identity conflicts between peace activism and political conservatism, Christian identification, and (especially) the Australian national identity are important issues to address. These data suggest that highly committed peace activists are feeling alienated from their Australian identity and that highly identified Australians are more likely to be alienated from peace activism - a finding supported by other studies we have run associating Australian national identification with more right-wing political affiliation and militarism. Deciding how to respond to this finding is a political decision - some peace activists would recommend an attempt to persuade Australians to renounce nationalism in favour of universalist values. Similarly, painting oneself as Australian or reaching out to "mainstream Australia" can be frustrating and unpleasant if activists already have the sense of mainstream Australia as captured by militarist conservatives. Distinguishing between the peace movement and the population on important values is likely to preserve the cohesiveness of the movement and avoid stress in the short term. However, I believe that it is essential to reject an identity dichotomy between Australians and peace activists and worth trying to self-consciously identify peace activism with Australian values (such as concern about civilian casualties). In stressing the values of other important groups such as Christians (pacifism) and political conservatives (independence) that also support peace activism, activists can diffuse support for peace across group boundaries and obtain the broadest possible support for a pro-peace coalition. However, others may disagree - I'm happy to rant on about this with interested parties, if any!

THANKS AGAIN....

So that's a description of what we found in this study! If you have any questions, or would like references for further reading or a copy of the longer write-up when we get that done (in several months) please get in touch. And thank you again for your participation and interest.