Failure Leads Protest Movements to Support More Radical Tactics

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Abstract

Most social movements will encounter setbacks in their pursuit of sociopolitical change. However, little is known about how movements are affected after protestors fail to achieve their aims. What are the effects of failure on subsequent engagement in various conventional and radical actions? Does failure promote divergent reactions among protestors and/or dissatisfaction with democracy? A meta-analysis of nine experiments ($N = 1,663$) assessed the effects of one-off failure on protestors' reactions, subsequent tactical choices, and support for democracy; and iterative stochastic simulations modeled the effects of failure over multiple protests over time. Results indicated that initial failure gives rise to divergent, somewhat contradictory responses among protestors and that these responses are further influenced by the repeated failure (vs. success) over time. Further, the simulations identified "tipping points" in these responses that promote radicalization and undermine support for democracy.

Keywords

collective action participation, collective action outcomes, collective action failure, radical collective action, protest

Despite significant personal costs, protesters around the world challenge injustices, or stand up for traditions, in the face of those who seek change. Insights from decades of research suggest that collective protest flows from people's collective sense of identity (Klandermans, 1984; Thomas et al., 2012) and is fueled by shared grievances, a sense of efficacy, and the sense that the status quo is morally wrong (van Zomeren et al., 2008).

But one feature that has been neglected is the experience of chronic protest failure. Protest movements are regularly thwarted, co-opted, sidelined, or crushed (Davenport, 2007). What is not yet well understood is what happens *after* protesters fail to achieve their aims, and why some persist, but others change tactics or abandon the movement altogether. Existing accounts provide structural or psychological explanations for the *genesis* of protest movements, yet few address how protest-outcomes might influence protesters' subsequent tactical choices and perceptions of the broader political systems in which they operate.

This article addresses these omissions by experimentally testing and meta-analyzing the effect of protest failure on protesters' reactions, subsequent tactical choices, and support for democracy across a range of contemporary social movements. We then use iterative stochastic simulations to model these dynamics over time across multiple protest events. In seeking

to explore the effects of protest failure, the present investigation is informed by Louis and colleagues' (2020) DIME model (DIME: disidentification, innovation, moralization, and energization). The DIME model proposes that protest success and failure differentially impact protesters' subsequent commitment to the cause and future action tendencies. That is, rather than examining collective action as a dependent variable, DIME conceptualizes collective actions (and their successes or failures) as independent variables, which have recursive

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effects on subsequent commitment and future action engagement. The model offers a framework (as yet largely untested) to understand the dynamic feedback loop between collective action outcomes and protesters' subsequent commitment and willingness to engage in future action. Thus, we sought to provide one of the first empirical tests of the model's efficacy in explaining reactions to protest failure (see also Lizzio-Wilson et al., 2021).

Diverging Reactions to Social Movement Failure

Failure can take many forms, and reasons for failure (e.g., flawed tactics, corrupt authorities) are often contested among collective actors. However, while there are many ways to fail or succeed, in the broadest sense, protests fail when they do not achieve their desired social change (Gulliver et al., 2021). DIME theorizes that the degree to which failure is subjectively perceived is associated with divergent responses: disidentification from the group (D), innovation or a change in tactics (I), increased moralization of the cause and/or its tactics (M), and energization or a need to redouble efforts and try harder using existing strategies (E). These reactions are overlapping and are discussed in greater detail below. Our contention is that when policies and contested status positions are in flux, failure is not seen and understood in a uniform/objective way. DIME differences arise precisely because the reasons for failure can be heterogeneous and contested, alongside the very aims of the movement.

Specifically, Louis and colleagues (2020) theorize three different responses that arise when protests fail. One possible response to failure is to decrease one's psychological commitment to that group, that is, disidentification (see Becker & Tausch, 2014). When protesters perceive that the group lacks efficacy (van Zomeren et al., 2018) or that other group members do not support the action sufficiently (Bond et al., 2012; Louis et al., 2018), protesters may abandon the cause.

Another response to failure is innovation: changing tactics in response to the perceived failure of the movement's current choices (Jones & Libicki, 2008). Alternatively, failure may increase one's performance of the original action, which is proposed to have two components: moralization of the cause and its methods, leading to an increased sense of moral conviction or urgency (Rhee et al., 2019; Skitka & Mullen, 2002; van Zomeren et al., 2018), and energization, which involves redoubling efforts to overcome a challenge by increasing the frequency and intensity of action. We propose that moralization and energization go hand in hand, as committed protesters who encounter obstacles experience greater moral urgency and often double down on their tactics (Skitka & Bauman, 2008; van Zomeren et al., 2018).

On the other hand, according to the DIME model, success is expected to lead to sustained commitment and continued engagement in collective action using the same tactics as before. This is because successfully achieving the movement's goals should assuage protesters' need to exit an undesirable group and limit the need to try new things, as past tactics have proven to be effective. Similarly, success should reduce the need to moralize the cause and engage in the same actions more fervently and instead introduce complacency. Thus, we expected that relative to failed action, successful action would result in lower DIME processes: lower disidentification, innovation, moralization, and energization.

In turn, these varied responses arise from social change efforts within sociopolitical contexts that range from more democratic toward more authoritarian (Moghaddam, 2013, 2016, 2018, 2019). As has been noted (Feddes et al., 2019; Thomas & Louis, 2013), support for democratic political systems underpins acts of conventional protest. But what predicts support for democracy itself? Prior work has theorized (but not empirically tested) that the failure of conventional protest within democratic systems undermines support for democracy (Crelinsten, 2002; Moghaddam, 2018; Pratt, 2015). This is because within democracies, citizens may expect the state to be responsive to protest. Failure of conventional action, therefore, signals to protesters that the system may be broken, leading to greater dissatisfaction in the democratic process. The present research provides the first direct test of this hypothesis, which support for democracy itself may decrease after protest failure.

The Differential Impact of Failed Conventional and Radical Action

The DIME model (Louis et al., 2020) also highlights the importance of protesters' past tactical choices in informing future actions. Forms of protest may be characterized as more or less conventional (aligned to methods expected and approved of by others) versus radical (unexpected and disapproved of; see Louis, 2009). Of course, what is conventional in one context may be radical in another. Nevertheless, the failure of these different forms of action is proposed to have distinct effects: When one type of action fails, actors may turn to other alternatives, seeking success. In contrast, the success of past conventional or radical actions may promote a continued preference for those actions.

Concretely, to the extent that failure drives a shift in tactics, we propose it is a driver both of *radicalization* (i.e., escalating commitment to extreme or unconventional tactics when conventional tactics fail) or *deradicalization* (increasing commitment to moderate or conventional tactics when radical tactics fail). As noted above, prior work has proposed (but not empirically tested) that the failure of conventional protest increases the likelihood of radicalization (Crelinsten, 2002; Moghaddam, 2018; Pratt, 2015). Conversely, historical evidence also shows that protestors may return to conventional tactics after radical actions fail (Jones & Libicki, 2008). In the present research, we provide experimental tests of the impact of failure on (de)radicalization. This novel causal evidence makes a contribution to the radicalization literature, which has relied disproportionately on correlational and theoretical analyses (Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2018).

The Present Research

The present research tested the effect of protest outcomes (failure vs. success) and prior tactical choices (conventional vs. radical) on protestors' divergent reactions (i.e., disidentification, innovation, moralization, energization), subsequent tactical choices (conventional/radical action), and support for democracy, across a range of contemporary social movements. Given the comparative absence of data addressing the impact of collective action outcomes, this article aims to establish whether failure per se has a (main) effect on engagement and (de)radicalization. This remains an unresolved scientific question of considerable theoretical interest as well as applied significance for governments and for protesters.

First, we report and meta-analyze nine experiments in which supporters of various causes were presented with scenarios in which their protests faced failure after pursuing conventional or radical tactics. We examined these four reactions, subsequent tactical choices (conventional and radical intentions), and support for democracy. We then present iterative stochastic simulations of postfailure protest to establish and model the dynamics of these responses across multiple protest cycles (and failures/successes). DIME theorizes dynamic, cumulative changes in motivation and action tendencies over long sequences of collective actions, in addition to the immediate effects within an experimental design. Unsurprisingly, given the difficulties of sampling collective actors over multiple significant protest events, we are not aware of any studies that have examined these dynamics rigorously over protest cycles. Thus, modeling allows us to explore longer term outcomes following a sequence of events with lower or higher probabilities of failure. The full surveys and scripts for all simulations and analyses are available on the Open Science Framework (see https://osf.io/wde2r/?view_only=893ecae70a984c76a9d5e 295a9a0b84f).[1]

Method

Reported below and in the Supplemental Material is how we determined our sample size, data exclusions, manipulations, and measures in the study (Simmons et al., 2012). All tests are two-sided.

Participants

All participants were recruited in relation to real protest movements: for environmental protest, American opponents of shale gas mining (Study 1, $N = 168$) and Australian opponents of coal seam gas mining (Study 2, $N = 87$); for immigration, American conservative opponents of sanctuary cities (Study 3, $N = 215$), Australian opponents of mandatory detention (Study 4, $N = 126$), and American opponents of "travel ban" policies to restrict immigration (Study 5, $N = 324$); for abortion, American pro-life women (Study 6, $N = 264$) and pro-life and pro-choice Irish participants (Study 7, $N = 155$); and for marriage equality, American (Study 8, $N = 163$) and Australian supporters of marriage equality (Study 9, $N = 161$). Participants all supported the social movement that was the focus of each study. Table S1 summarizes the number of and reasons for participant exclusions across each study and the outcomes of post hoc sensitivity analyses, which indicate that each study was adequately powered to detect small-to-medium effects.

Ethical approval for all studies was obtained from the Human Ethics Committee at the institution of the principal researcher for each study (i.e., University of Queensland and University of Limerick).

Procedure

Participants read (online) an information sheet and indicated informed consent. Participants were randomly allocated using survey software (Qualtrics or Questback) to read a scenario in which they participated in conventional protest (e.g., a rally) or radical protest (e.g., a blockade), which had been either a success (e.g., politicians announced they were changing policies in response) or a failure (e.g., politicians affirmed their commitment to the status quo). The context-specific tactics were selected based on conventional actions that were accepted and approved of within the real movement's social context versus radical actions violating the norms of the system, for example, where uncommon, disapproved of, illegal, or violent (see also, Louis et al., 2020; Thomas et al., 2014); manipulation checks were always included. The randomization was without stratification, resulting in unequal n.

A summary of additional measures and conditions included in some studies is found in Table S1, and full scenarios and items can be found on the Open Science Framework. Participants were then provided with a debriefing page and given the opportunity to withdraw their data.

Measures

Radical and conventional action intentions. Principal components analysis was used with oblimin rotation to analyze conventional and radical intention items for each study. Items differed across studies as contextually appropriate. In most studies, radical intentions (e.g., "I intend to join protests chaining myself to farming equipment") loaded separately to conventional intentions (e.g., "I would donate money to an organization"). In these instances, we created two scales with cross-loading items removed. When both radical and conventional intentions loaded on to a single factor, we created one conventional intentions scale (Studies 3 and 7). Items, factor loadings, eigenvalues, and Cronbach's αs for all studies are available in Supplemental Table S8.

Disidentification. We adopted a validated measure of disidentification (Becker & Tausch, 2014). Items included from the scale varied between studies (α > .90). A list of the items used in the dependent measures for each study and their respective Cronbach's αs is provided in Supplemental Table S9.

Table 1. Means (Standard Deviations) for Each Dependent Variable Included in Studies 1–9.

Study	Disidentification	Innovation	Moralization	Energization	Conventional Action Intentions	Radical Action Intentions	Social Democratic Values	Individual Democratic Values
Study 1	1.87 (0.92)	2.60 (1.84)	4.61 (1.34)	4.87 (0.93)	4.12 (1.45)	2.29 (1.22)	7.47 (0.85)	6.65 (0.96)
Study 2	2.42 (1.03)	1.26 (1.57)	3.93 (1.35)	4.55 (0.95)	3.89 (1.33)	2.55 (1.27)	6.96 (0.94)	6.61 (0.88)
Study 3	2.44 (1.18)	1.24 (1.48)	4.88 (1.37)	5.45 (1.06)	3.18 (1.38)	—	7.31 (1.03)	6.13 (1.08)
Study 4	2.34 (0.95)	1.22 (1.80)	5.11 (1.06)	5.40 (0.80)	4.39 (1.25)	2.58 (1.18)	6.25 (0.80)	7.44 (1.05)
Study 5	2.56 (1.50)	2.22 (2.27)	5.34 (1.08)	5.47 (1.03)	4.12 (1.56)	2.53 (1.52)	5.89 (0.85)	6.25 (0.93)
Study 6	2.54 (1.46)	2.93 (2.20)	5.11 (1.11)	5.46 (1.00)	4.29 (1.57)	2.58 (1.30)	7.80 (0.93)	7.03 (0.84)
Study 7	2.46 (1.68)	0.46 (1.11)	—	4.13 (1.29)	3.20 (1.53)	—	5.86 (0.83)	4.95 (0.83)
Study 8	—	1.94 (1.61)	5.10 (1.36)	5.46 (0.99)	4.94 (1.30)	2.94 (1.36)	7.28 (1.03)	6.69 (0.87)
Study 9	—	1.89 (1.85)	5.25 (1.09)	5.16 (0.82)	5.25 (0.94)	3.53 (0.94)	6.74 (0.82)	6.56 (0.85)

Note. Social and individual democratic values were measured on a 9-point scale. All other variables were measured on a 7-point scale.
— : denotes that the variable was not measured in this study.

Innovation. Participants were asked to generate up to five additional strategies to convince their local government to support their cause, and they rated how likely they would be to personally engage in each action (1 = *definitely no* to 7 = *definitely yes*). Innovation was calculated by counting the number of novel strategies that participants indicated they would participate in (i.e., rated as 4 or higher on the Likert-type scale). Thus, this variable reflects the total number of listed strategies that each participant was likely to engage in. References to null strategies (e.g., "No idea") were excluded, as were strategies participants indicated they would not engage in personally. Although some participants listed strategies seemingly similar to previous tactics (e.g., organizing a rally), these were not excluded because we did not want to assume what constituted a novel strategy to participants.

Moralization. Participants rated their agreement with statements that measured the extent that they viewed their cause as a moral issue (e.g., "My feelings about [cause] are a reflection of my core moral beliefs and convictions," 4–6 items per study, α > .80 for all studies; adapted from van Zomeren et al., 2011).

Energization. Participants rated their agreement with statements to measure the extent they supported increasing efforts within the cause (e.g., "We need to redouble our efforts," 4–7 items per study, α > .71 for all studies).

Participants then indicated their support for democracy (Moghaddam, 2018). Both *social democratic values* (e.g., "Everyone must have the right to vote," 9–18 items per study, α > .57 for all studies) and *individual democratic values* (e.g., "I try to better understand those who are different from me," 11–20 items per study, α > .61 for all studies) were assessed.

Results

Descriptive statistics are summarized in Table 1. We conducted and meta-analyzed the nine experiments ($N = 1663$) and then performed an iterative stochastic simulation of the demonstrated effects unfolding over repeated protest events.

Meta-Analysis

A series of moderated multiple regressions were conducted to derive the effect sizes (i.e., partial correlations) used in the meta-analysis. Protest outcome and protest type were effect coded (−1 = success, +1 = failure; −1 = radical, +1 = conventional). The direct effects of protest outcome and protest type were entered at Step 1, and the interaction was entered at Step 2.

Using R's "metafor" package (Viechtbauer, 2010), we then computed the sample variance for each partial correlation using the "escalc" function and then estimated a series of fixed-effect models using the "rma.uni" function. Aggregate partial correlations, 95% confidence intervals, and Q statistics are summarized in Table 2. Effect sizes and sample variances across each study separately are also reported in Supplemental Table S2.

Table 2 shows that as predicted, failed (vs. successful) protest led to divergent responses: higher disidentification, higher energization, and higher radical action intentions. Effects of protest type were also observed, such that initial exposure to conventional (vs. radical) collective action led to lower disidentification and lower radical action intentions.

Also, a significant interaction emerged on innovation, such that the trend for the failure of conventional action to boost innovation, $r_p = .07$, $SE = .04$, CI [−.003, .136], was different from the trend for the failure of radical action to undermine it, $r_p = −.03$, $SE = .03$, CI [−.096, .039], although neither simple slope was significantly different from zero. Follow-up analyses showed the results were largely the same when controlling for age and gender (see Supplemental Tables S3–S6 for details). In particular, the focal significant effects of failure (vs. success) were unchanged.

We used Q tests to examine the homogeneity in effect sizes between the studies. Significant heterogeneity was observed

Table 2. Aggregate Partial Correlations (Standard Errors), 95% Confidence Intervals (CI), and *Q* Statistics for Meta-Analyzed Results.

	Protest Outcome: Failure vs. Success	Protest Type: Conventional vs. Radical Action	Protest Outcome × Protest Type
Disidentification	**.07 (.03)**	**−.22 (.03)**	−.02 (.03)
	CI [.019, .127]	**CI [−.272, −.167]**	CI [−.073, .035]
	Q(6) = 12.84*	**Q(6) = 34.97*****	Q(6) = 6.14
Innovation	.00 (.02)	.01 (.02)	**.05 (.02)**
	CI [−.046, .050]	CI [−.038, .059]	**CI [.003, .100]**
	Q(8) = 15.34	Q(8) = 5.82	**Q(8) = 12.55**
Moralization	.04 (.03)	−.01 (.03)	.01 (.03)
	CI [−.010, .092]	CI [−.063, .039]	CI [−.043, .059]
	Q(7) = 9.03	Q(7) = 10.79	Q(7) = 10.63
Energization	**.10 (.02)**	.05 (.02)	.05 (.02)
	CI [.055, .150]	CI [−.003, .094]	CI [−.002, .095]
	Q(8) = 19.75*	Q(8) = 6.06	Q(8) = 5.43
Conventional action intentions	.03 (.02)	.00 (.02)	−.01 (.02)
	CI [−.022, .075]	CI [−.046, .051]	CI [−.056, .040]
	Q(8) = 13.42	Q(8) = 18.69	Q(8) = 8.11
Radical action intentions	**.08 (.03)**	**−.06 (.03)**	−.02 (.03)
	CI [.025, .134]	**CI [−.112, −.003]**	CI [−.073, .037]
	Q(6) = 11.97	**Q(6) = 13.85***	Q(6) = 6.20
Individual democratic values	−.03 (.02)	−.03 (.02)	−.01 (.02)
	CI [−.080, .018]	CI [−.077, .020]	CI [−.055, .043]
	Q(8) = 2.72	Q(8) = 4.39	Q(8) = 7.34
Social democratic values	−.01 (.02)	.02 (.02)	.03 (.02)
	CI [−.060, .038]	CI [−.033, .065]	CI [−.014, .083]
	Q(8) = 7.97	Q(8) = 9.94	Q(8) = 8.48

Note. Significant results are in bold; protest outcome (−1: success; +1: failure), protest type (−1: radical; +1: conventional).
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

for the effects of failure on disidentification and energization, and the effects of action type on disidentification and radical action intentions (see Table 2), indicating potential context differences for these variables. The impact of failure on radicalization was homogenous, however.

Iterative Stochastic Simulation of Effects Over 10 Protest Events

Having established the experimental effects of protest outcome and type on our outcome variables, we conducted iterative stochastic simulations to model the effects of repeated success or failure of conventional and radical actions over time (i.e., 10 protest cycles or events) and as a function of failure probability (i.e., 0%, 25%, 50%, 75%, and 100%). Effect sizes observed in the meta-analyses were used to set the β coefficients (see Table 2). These effect sizes provide the basis for the simulation to model the cumulative impact of these effects over a protest cycle.

The simulations extend on the experiments to estimate protesters' cumulative resilience to varying proportions of failures in a sequence of actions and show tipping points of weaker commitment, to their movement or to democracy, and shifts toward innovation or (de)radicalization.

The simulations were conducted in R using the plyr and dplyr packages and plotted using functions from cowplot and ggplot packages. The impact of the meta-analytic effects on outcomes, when repeated over a protest cycle of 10 events with varying probabilities of success, was simulated by employing the equation below, where the level of each dependent *y* was calculated.

$$y = \beta\_outcome \times outcome + \beta\_type \times type$$
$$+ \beta\_interaction \times outcome \times type.$$

The panels in Figure 1 show the predicted outcomes after 10 events with each proportion of failures and successes (e.g., for 50% success, after five failures and five successes). Each event within the cycle (success or failure) was independent. Figure 1 is separated for ease of interpretation into effects of conventional action failure (Figure 1A) and radical action failure (Figure 1B) on disidentification, energization, innovation, and moralization. Similarly, Figure 1C shows effects of conventional action failure on conventional and radical action intentions and support for democracy, and Figure 1D shows effects of radical action failure on the same variables. The lower (dashed) line represents the scale minima, the upper (dash and dotted) line represents the scale maxima, and the dots represent the scale midpoint. Error bars show the expected standard deviation of scores after the specific number of
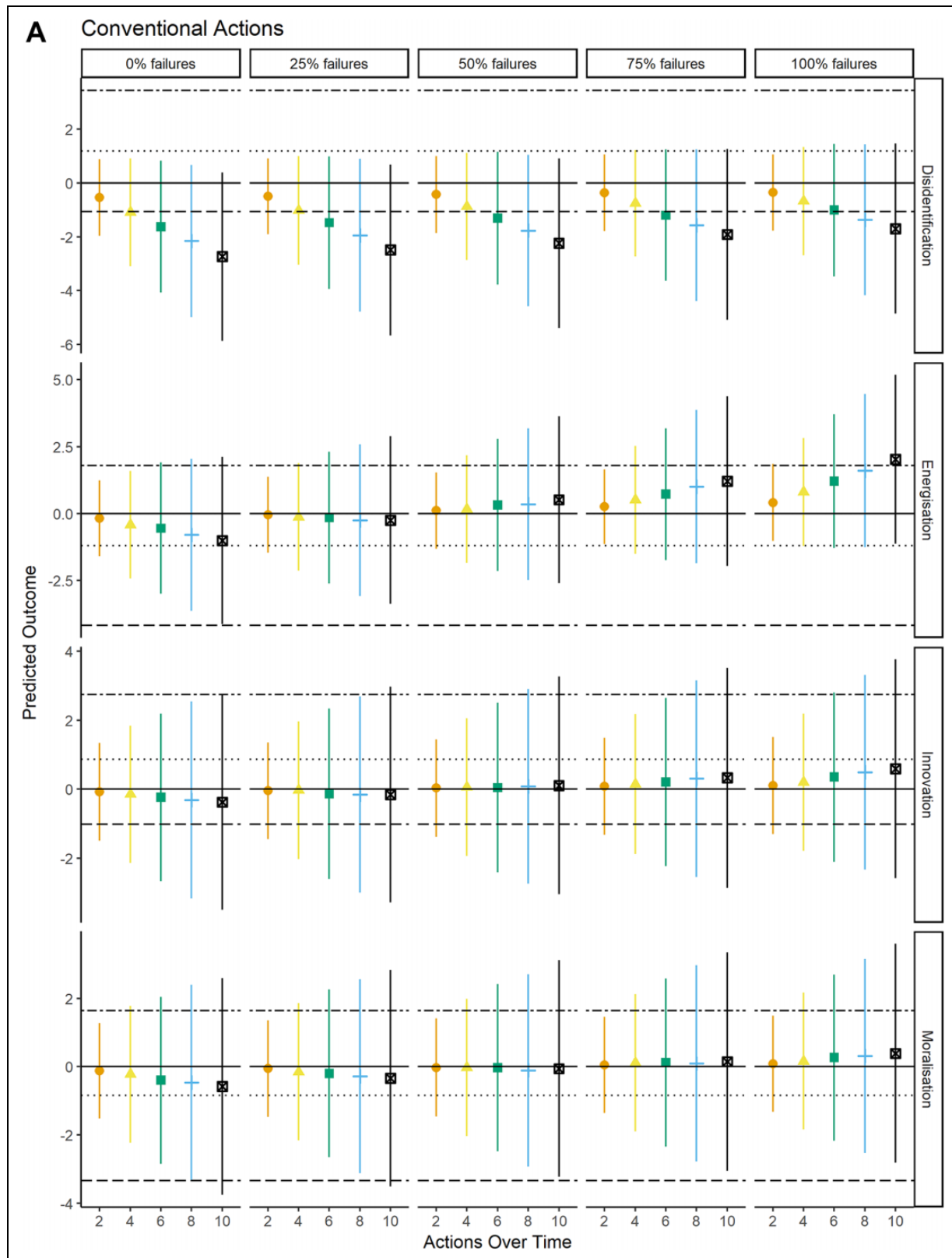
Figure 1. Panel A: Iterative stochastic simulation of disidentification, innovation, moralization, and energization as a function of the success/failure of conventional action. Panel B: Iterative stochastic simulation of disidentification, innovation, moralization, and energization as a function of the success/failure of radical action. Panel C: Iterative stochastic simulation of conventional action intentions, radical action intentions, support for democratic values, and support for societal democracy as a function of the success/failure of conventional action. Panel D: Iterative stochastic simulation of conventional action intentions, radical action intentions, support for democratic values, and support for societal democracy as a function of the success/failure of radical action. *Note.* Error bars show standard deviations.
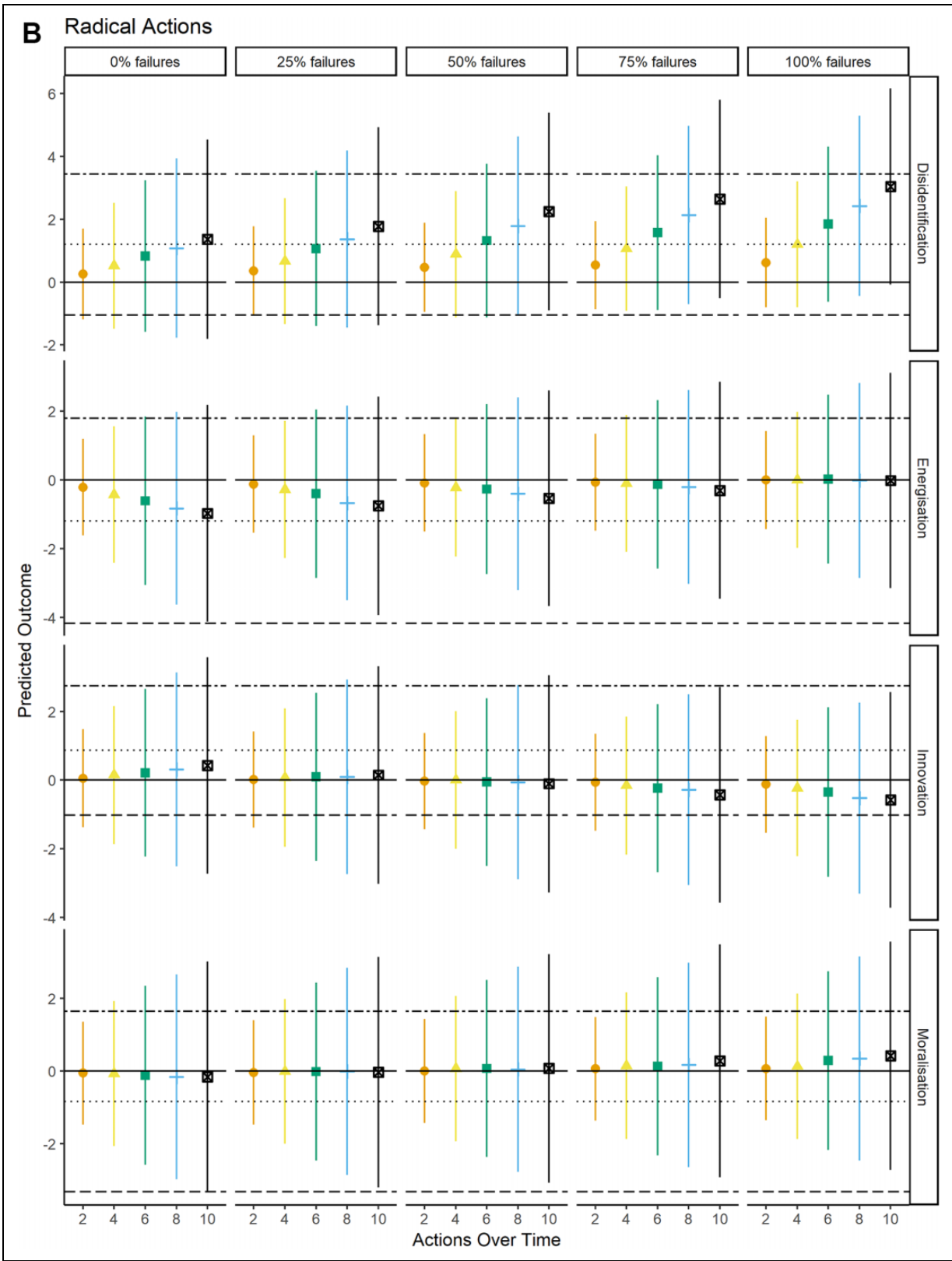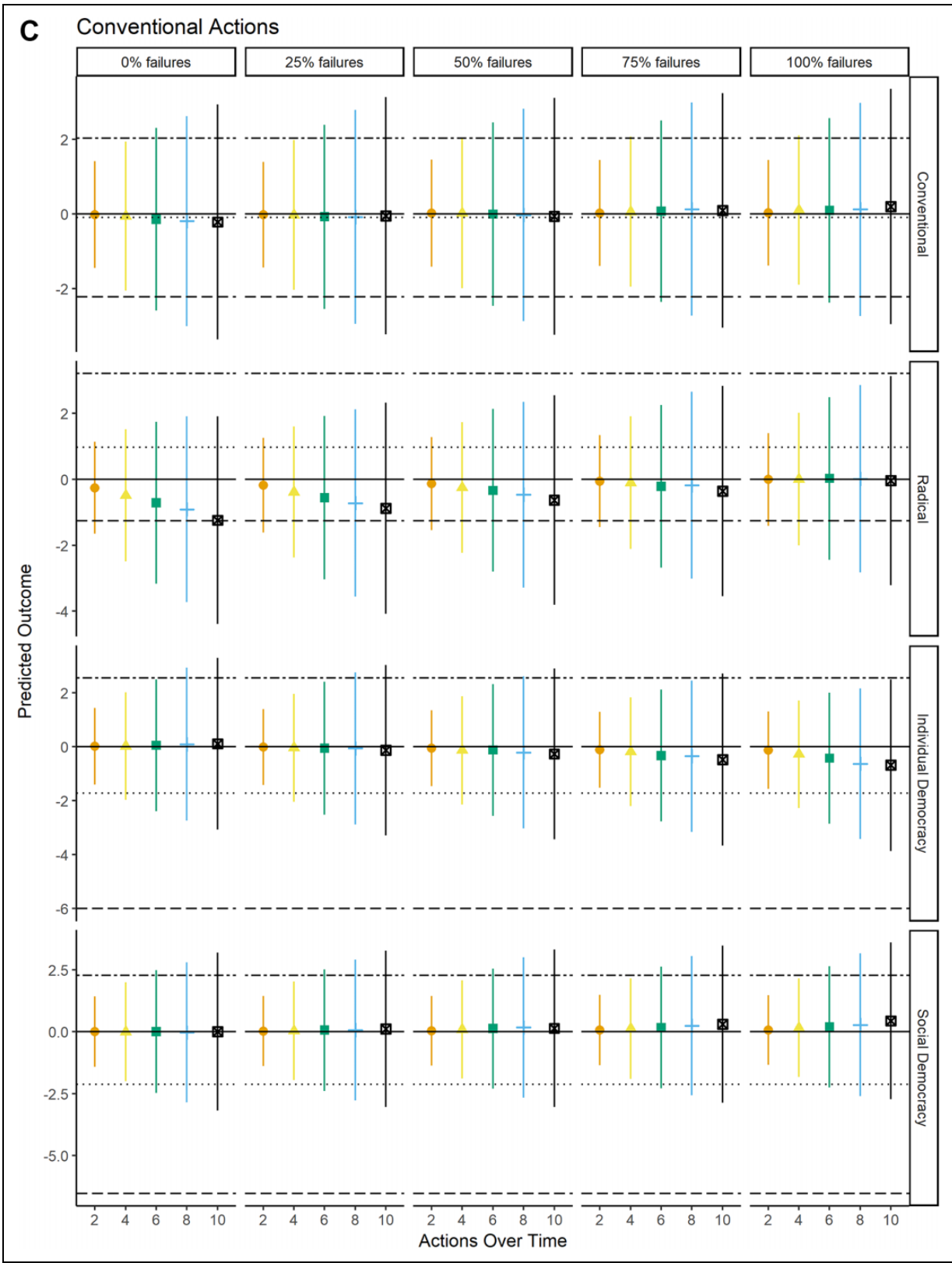
Figure 1. Continued.
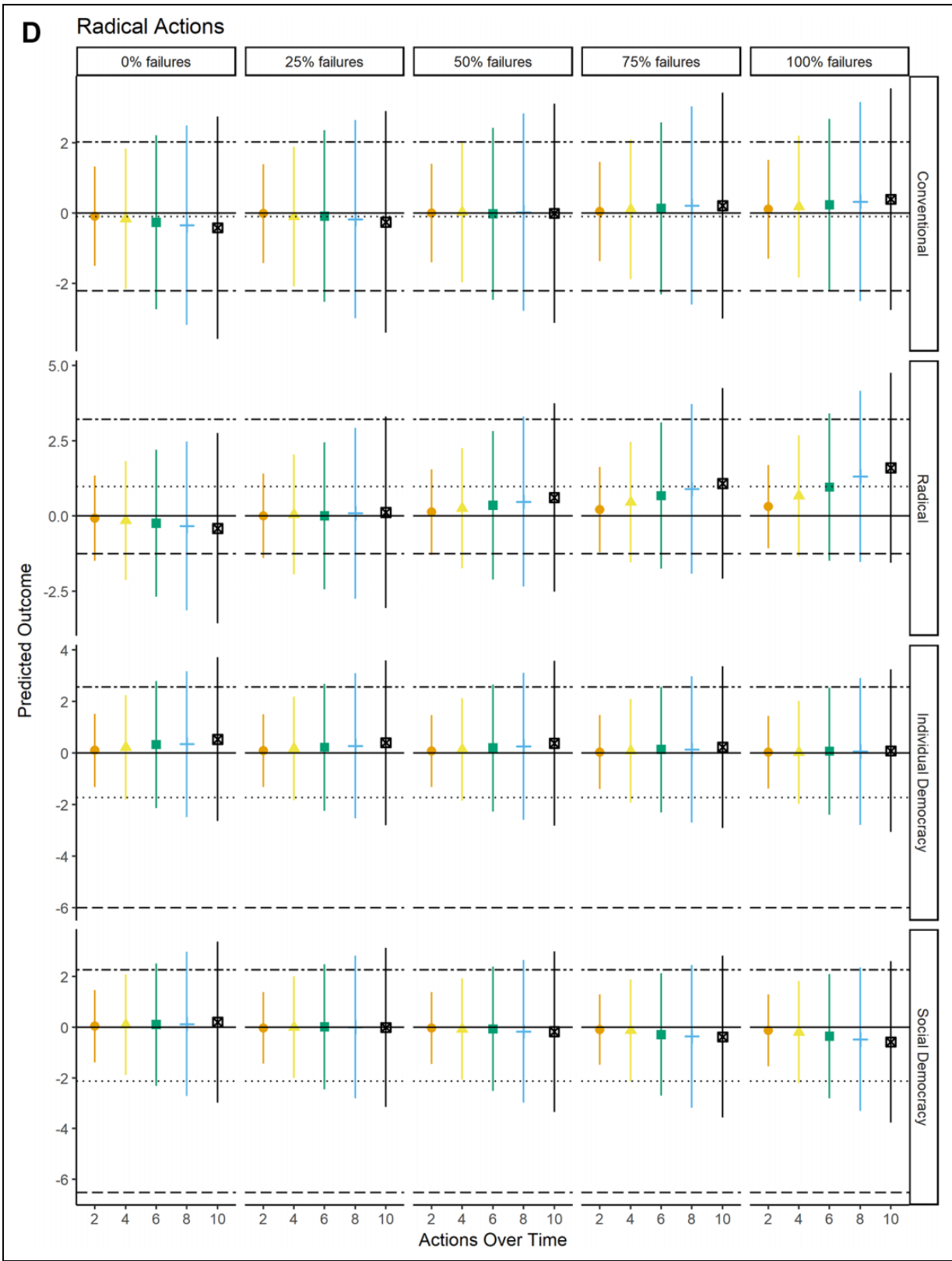
Figure 1. Continued.

Figure 1. Continued.

actions, estimated as the addition of a series of independent normally distributed variables with $SD = 1$.

Figure 1B shows that the values are expected to reach the upper end of the scale range (indicating full disidentification and dissolution of the movement) when 10 radical actions are completely unsuccessful; this is not the case for conventional action, however, where failure reduces disidentification (Figure 1A). Figure 1A also shows that failure should lead to energization in the context of conventional action; peak energization is observed (scale maxima) where 10 conventional actions fail. Moralization is weakly negatively associated with the failure of conventional action in Figure 1A; it is unrelated to the success or failure of radical actions in Figure 1B. In Figure 1A, increased innovation is expected after repeated failures of conventional action, if the movement starts to fail more than 50% of the time.

Figure 1C shows that radical action intentions are expected to reach the floor level in the context of 10 successful conventional actions. Conversely, Figure 1D shows that conventional action intentions should start to increase (above scale midpoint and the mean) when radical actions fail completely over five or more occasions. Support for individual democratic values only reduces when conventional action consistently fails (Figure 1C); support for societal democracy is unrelated to the success or otherwise of radical action (Figure 1D). Across all of the effects, widening error bars over the 10 events highlight that the volatility of the results increases over longer simulated protest sequences.

Discussion

We examined the effect of the failure and success of conventional and radical action on protestors' reactions to failure, support for future conventional and radical tactics, and support for democracy. Findings show that protest failure leads to divergent outcomes: greater disidentification, greater energization and a desire to redouble efforts, and stronger radical action intentions. Providing experimental evidence of these effects is a contribution to the scholarship of collective action and the (de)radicalization literature more broadly.

The research also highlights that initial engagement in a conventional protest led to lower disidentification and weaker radical action intentions. While the causal path from identification to conventional action has been demonstrated, the reverse path (i.e., enacting conventional action to identification and to lower radical action) has received less attention (for an exception, see Vestergren et al., 2018). Modeling this relationship over multiple protests, the simulations indicated that a history of repeated success using conventional action lowered support for radical actions, while conventional action intentions began to increase after a consistent failure of radical actions (i.e., over five or more occasions), evidence consistent with deradicalization. Together, these results provide the first experimental support for the proposition that failure can radicalize and that engaging in conventional actions also has the potential to deradicalize protesters (Moghaddam, 2018). These findings also

highlight the utility of employing iterative stochastic simulations to model these dynamics over longer periods of time, which allowed us to identify potential "tipping points" at which protesters begin to innovate or deradicalize as a function of successful conventional and failed radical actions. In practical terms, these findings suggest that authorities pursuing a deradicalization agenda by suppressing conventional protest movements may backfire (see also Smith et al., 2020).

In addition, the experimental data indicated that innovation, moralization, and support for democracy were not influenced by single failure outcomes. However, the simulations suggest that innovation increased after repeated protests with 50% or higher probabilities of failure, while individual democratic values declined after repeated failed conventional protests. While one-off failure does not necessarily affect innovation or support for democracy, repeated failure has an effect, and support for democracy itself can be undermined when attempts to appeal to that democratic process are repeatedly rebuffed (Moghaddam, 2018). In contrast, neither moralization nor support for democracy at the societal level was related to protest outcome or type in the experimental data or simulations.

Failure Drives Contestation in Social Movements

While the overall effects of failure are of interest, there was notable variation in the effect sizes for the failure direct effects across the nine studies (see significant Q statistics in Table 2). This is an important direction for future research, particularly given that many theoretically interesting moderators may be identified, in terms of the failure signal, the attribution for the failure, and the responses of other actors.

In terms of the failure operationalization, in the present approach, protesters always responded to a single explicit signal by the authorities that they would or would not accept their demands. However, this binary of acceptance (total capitulation) or rejection (total intransigence) does not capture the nuances of possible state responses to protest, such as symbolic concessions without material change, ignoring the protest entirely, or mixed messages from different actors (see also Staggenborg, 1998). Further, protesters demonstrably contest the failure signals they receive, and may fail to sway decision makers yet claim success in other ways (Hornsey et al., 2006). Examining the contestation of failure will be an important direction of future research (see also Drury & Reicher, 2009; Vestergren et al., 2018).

The nature of the failure and the attributions for it clearly also will inform the different effects, which implicitly underpins DIME's different trajectories. Real social movements debate endlessly the reasons for their failure, which are almost certainly multiply determined. The lack of specification of the reasons for failure in the present research is therefore likely to reflect the experiences of actual social movement participants, heightening ecological validity. However, we did not assess or model appraisals of the failure's causes here. For example, a failure attributed to the incompetence of the other protesters may give rise to disidentification, while a failure attributed to

the corruption of the democratic system may give rise to radicalization. Relatedly, an important extension of the DIME model (Louis et al., 2020) would be to explore how different emotional reactions to failure influence protesters' reactions and subsequent choices. It may be that disidentification and lower action tendencies are preceded by hopelessness or disappointment, while innovation is underpinned by anger or disgust at the current status quo, which spurs future action (see also Tausch & Becker, 2013).

More broadly, protesters may have a diversity of short-term and long-term goals (Gulliver et al., 2021). From this perspective, failure and success are by no means inevitably opposed: A protest will always have multiple outcomes, and failure on one dimension (e.g., to achieve policy change) may align with success on another (e.g., exposing corruption). Protesters' expectations of the outcomes are also critical: If the initial chances for success are already minimal, a policy defeat may not register, and an event may be defined as "success" in terms of other goals such as awareness raising (Hornsey et al., 2006). If a movement has ambitious goals, a modest policy step forward may be experienced as infuriating, relative to disappointed expectations. Similarly, in democratic societies, as we have argued, expectation of the responsiveness of the state to conventional action may set the stage for disappointment and radicalization if grievances are ignored (Moghaddam, 2018). In less open societies, however, expectations of authorities' chronic hostility and inattention may blunt the impact of any one "failure." Differences in these appraisals and expectations, and changes after protest outcomes, should be measured in the future research.

Responses of the actors involved in the protest may also moderate reactions to failure, a possibility not explicitly addressed and modeled in the present research. For example, group discussion and leadership may influence protesters' commitment and subsequent tactical choices. Intragroup processes are critical in the formation of new radical or moderate identities and norms (Smith et al., 2015) and limit or enable moral support for radical tactics (Blackwood & Louis, 2017; Thomas et al., 2014). Further, radicalization among protesters may increase state actors' willingness to respond with repression, further promoting "mutual radicalization" (Crelinsten, 2002; Moghaddam, 2018; Pratt, 2015).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

As a limitation of the study, it should be noted that although the meta-analysis results suggest that our findings are robust across multiple social movements, protesters were sampled in similar sociopolitical contexts in terms of education, wealth, Westernization, and democratization. Our results may not be entirely generalizable to contexts with varying levels of wealth, types of government, inequality, and intergroup animosity, and future work should systematically examine whether these factors impact protesters' reactions to failure. Furthermore, sampling biases (e.g., more conventionally minded protesters may be more willing to participate in survey research) may

affect the generalizability of the results, and future research should target and compare conventional and radical activist group members.

In the same vein, we note that some of the simulated elements would vary greatly in real-world contexts. For example, in historical protest movements, some protest cycles are one-off events, while others last over decades or centuries. Similarly, although it is a strength that we utilized experimental methods (Gøtzsche-Astrup, 2018), future work examining individual differences, the spread of tactical changes through social networks, and qualitative narratives (Kruglanski et al., 2019) may provide additional insights as to how and why tactics change over time. For example, certain factors may buffer protestors against the negative effects of failure, such as in-group identification, anger, or efficacy (Thomas et al., 2012; van Zomeren et al., 2008); while others may heighten disidentification, such as individual differences in system justification (Kruglanski et al., 2019).

Conclusion

The present research provides evidence of protesters' diverging responses to failure, both immediately and cumulatively over simulated protest cycles. Our approach highlights radicalization and deradicalization as forms of tactical innovation, arising from state responses and a consideration of prior tactics. Further, the results support the contention that radicalization and lower support for democracy can arise as responses to groups' previous failed conventional actions. Theoretically, the research makes a new contribution to the literature on radicalization and protest choices and more broadly offers a new framework for studying trajectories of engagement in action for sociopolitical change.

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Supplemental Material

The supplemental material is available in the online version of the article.

Note

1. The data are not publicly posted because we did not obtain participants' consent to do this. However, the data will be provided by the first author upon request.

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