7 'We are more than Alliances between Groups'

A Social Psychological Perspective on the Gezi Park Protesters and Negotiating Levels of Identity

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> 'On the first day we were terrorists; on the second day we were provocateurs; on the third day we were demonstrators; on the fourth day we became the people'
>
> Sign in Gezi Park

The Gezi Park protests brought together people from a variety of walks of life. Though nearly half of the protesters claimed they had not previously participated in any kind of social action, protests were largely started and maintained through extant activists, NGOs and political organisations. Some members of these groups had previously protested together, but many were coming together for the first time. With the poorly-chosen words of Prime Minister Erdoğan, protesters were able to find a new identity under the guise of *çapulcu*, which allowed them to see themselves as part of a greater whole while still maintaining their original allegiances.

This chapter will examine constructs of social activism and identity from a social psychological perspective in order to better understand the structure of the Gezi Park protests, the participants and the way they negotiated identities. A background to the protests and the participants will be provided, followed by a brief review of the social psychological perspective and its relevance in understanding the interplay of identities at Gezi. Finally, research conducted with activists from the protests describing their reasons for participating and relationships across groups will be presented.

Background to the Gezi Park Protests

In order to understand who the protestors were, why they were there and what they wanted, KONDA researchers conducted a study with 4411

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participants in Gezi Park during the first week of June.[1] Of those participants, 93.6 per cent stated that they had come to Gezi Park as a 'simple citizen,' whereas only 6.4 per cent of the participants said they were part of an organisation or political party. Citing KONDA, it can be seen that a majority of those who attended the protests did so as individuals, and that close to half had never participated in a protest before. As will be discussed later, many activists stated their initial participation in the protest was as an individual rather than as a representative of a group. This could account for the difference between the numbers participating as individuals and the percentage of previous participation.[2]

When asked why they attended the protests, participants cited such reasons as restrictions on freedom, opposition to the policies of the AKP government, reaction against the words of Prime Minister Erdoğan and opposing the destruction of Gezi Park. Issues of freedom and police brutality were the principle motivations for the protestors across the board, though considering the differing ideologies represented at the park, more group-specific reasons for participation were also expected.[3] In the following sections, we will examine social psychological perspectives for participation in collective action.

Social Psychological Perspectives on Collective Action

The birth of the industrial revolution in Europe and North America placed the concept of the crowd (or the masses) at the forefront of society. Understanding the crowd as a representative of the masses at large made it all the more important for the elite to demonise it, in part as an effort to prevent the lower classes from gaining power and disrupting traditional hierarchies. For many, crowds represented an end to perceived stability and the birth of a reign of anarchy, and quickly became a fascinating new area of research.

Gustave Le Bon remains one of the most influential researchers of crowd dynamics to date. His seminal work was published in 1895 and has managed to sway the understanding of mass politics throughout the twentieth century. Le Bon saw the crowd as submerging the rationality

1 http://www.genar.com.tr/files/GEZIPARKI_PROFIL-SON.pdf.

2 Another study by Istanbul Bilgi University was conducted the same week and showed similar results: http://t24.com.tr/haber/gezi-parki-direniscileriyle-yapilan-anketten-cikan-ilginc-sonuclar/231335.

3 For more social psychological research on identification at Gezi Park, see Uluğ and Solak 2013 and for groups at Gezi Park, see Dalğar et al. 2013.

and self-consciousness of its members, turning it into a primitive, base and ghastly group of people. According to Le Bon, individuals lose all sense of self when they become part of a crowd. They are unable to 'resist any passing idea or emotion,' as they have lost their intellect.

Later theorists did not assume such abnormality in crowd behaviour, but rather imagined that some existing group process functioned to generate purpose and order within the crowd. They claimed that crowd behaviour should not be understood as a lack of personal sense of self but as a shift in understanding of the self from the individual to the group level.

If the crowd is defined as a social group, it follows that the same processes of social categorisation and identification will determine crowd action. Crowd members, while identifying with the crowd, infer not just what is normal for an ideal and typical group member but also what the limits of group behaviour are. This is why, in some instances, though violence may occur, it is directed toward specific targets (e.g. the police) and is selective and patterned (Feagin and Hahn 1973; Stephenson 1979).[4]

Social identity theory (e.g. Tajfel and Turner 1979; Turner et al. 1987; also see Abrams and Hogg 2010) posits the concept of social identity, which can be understood as the part of the self-concept derived from our membership in social groups. Social identity is multiple and part of a complex system, rather than a single unit. Social identity defines in terms of 'we' rather than 'I' (personal identity), as members of a social category in relation to other social categories (Turner 1991, 1999; Turner et al. 1987).

Contrary to deindividuation and the Le Bon tradition, social identity theory proposes that group behaviour will occur irrespective of anonymity and identifiability when social identity is salient (Reicher 1987; see also Abrams 1985). Within the confines of this approach, social identity, rather than personal identity, is salient. That is, rather than a loss of identity in the group, there is a switch of identity in the group from personal to social.

When it comes to group behaviour, we define ourselves along the lines of the behaviour of other group members. That is, we engage in self-stereotyping based on the relevant identity in a particular context and perform the behaviour that is expected for those group members in that situation. With regard to Gezi, if that behaviour is building barricades or dancing the tango, we build barricades or dance the tango. Which category is relevant at which time is flexible and, oftentimes, what is relevant or salient at the moment is the identity that comes to the forefront and through which we tend to behave in that given moment. The question is not just 'what do we

4 See http://roarmag.org/2014/01/women-gezi-park-protests/.

do in this situation?,' but rather 'what is appropriate as a group member in this particular situation?'

Antecedents to Collective Action

Having established an identity and group-based understanding to collective action, it is worthwhile taking a moment to examine what precedes participation. Simon and Klandermans (2001) point to the need for group members to be aware of their shared group membership, their common enemy or opponent, as well as the wider societal conflict of the power struggle. They state that feeling aggrieved, an awareness that it is a shared grievance (with other group members) and the designation of an external enemy are necessary first steps in engaging in a power struggle on behalf of their group. It is then important to feel that engaging in protest will be efficacious in redressing grievances (Klandermans 1984, 1997).

A meta-analysis of 180 studies of collective action conducted by van Zomeren, Postmes and Spears (2008) attempted to integrate perspectives of antecedents for collective action. The proposed Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA) describes identity, perceived injustice and perceived efficacy as the important conditions and predictive elements of collective action, showing that perceptions of illegitimacy (injustice) indeed function to create a sense of need for collective action. In this model, identity has a very important role, as it is both a direct predictor of collective action as well as an indirect predictor, which might follow the injustice and efficacy pathways (Thomas et al. 2011). However, there is also another possibility in collective action that identity might play a less important role than perceived injustice.

Creating a Group from the Crowd

Overall, psycho-social perspectives function based on constructs of social identity and related elements. Thomas et al. (2011) proposed an Encapsulated Model of Social Identity in Collective Action (EMSICA) as an alternative to the SIMCA model mentioned above. In this model, as in the SIMCA model, social identity is still important. However, Thomas et al. (2011) claim that social identity can be a mediator for injustice and efficacy in predicting collective action. The situation in Gezi Park explains this phenomenon. People participated in the Gezi Park protests across Turkey based first on the perception of injustice rather than on a shared identity. However, later, when Prime Minister Erdoğan called all the protestors – who were from very diverse groups – *çapulcu* (looter), protestors defined themselves as such as well. As

in the model, group formation comes later, based on shared perceptions of injustice and efficacy. Different people who share the same perception of injustice felt as one under the guise of the *çapulcu*, or *resister*, identity.

In trying to understand how a sense of 'oneness' can emerge from the crowd, it is clear that issues of identity and the group are highly important. A sense of shared identity with other protesters allows the individual to see her/his fate as connected to the fate of those around her/him. The stronger the belief that what happens to all happens to the individual, the more likely the individual is to feel an attachment to the group and to perceive injustice against other members as injustice against the self.

The Common Ingroup Identity Model (CIIM) (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000; Gaertner et al. 1993) advocates eliminating intergroup boundaries by either increasing the salience of an existing common ingroup identity or creating a new, more inclusive identity for subgroups. Research has yielded positive findings for the effectiveness of this perspective, though questions of equal status and shared threat are important to note (Dovidio et al. 2004). Especially in the face of a common outgroup threat (e.g. the police), multiple groups functioning under a single superordinate identity can be highly effective.

There is an important caveat, however. Social identity theory argues that group members have a motivation to maintain distinctiveness for their ingroup from the outgroup. According to the social identity perspective, self-esteem is partially attained from the social groups (e.g. friend groups, political parties, football fans, national citizens) individuals belong to. It is important, therefore, that the attainment of a positive self-evaluation relies on the individual's ability to positively differentiate between their ingroup and relevant outgroups.

Based on these perspectives, we argue that there are two main reasons why the Gezi Park protests were able to bring people together so effectively: the existence of a salient outgroup (i.e. the police) and the existence of a superordinate category (i.e. *çapulcu*, protester, resister) that did *not* impinge on pre-existing subgroup categories (i.e. Anti-capitalist Muslims, Kemalists). In the frame of the Gezi Park protests, a member of any group present there should be able to maintain her or his identity as a party member while also considering her- or himself a protester in the park. When the police make their presence felt, the protester (superordinate) identity should become more salient, and when the police retreat, the party member (subordinate) identity should become more salient. In the following, the dynamics of the protesters both within and between groups will be discussed with a case study from the Gezi Park activists.

'We Are More than Alliances between Groups': An Identity-based Analysis of the Gezi Park Protest Activists

Crowd dynamics are quite complex to understand. However, in line with the literature, we also argue that in today's world, crowd identity plays an important role in collective action participation. In order to understand the ingroup, outgroup and superordinate group dynamics and to explore participants' position in relation to self and being part of a particular group, the relationship between ingroup(s) and outgroup(s), and how participants position themselves in terms of reasons for participation at Gezi Park, in-depth interviews were conducted with activists who participated in the protests.[5]

Participants' groups were chosen based on their visibility in the protests. They included: 1) Alevi activists; 2) Anti-capitalist Muslims/Revolutionary Muslims; 3) members of the football fan group *Çarşı*; 4) women's rights activists; 5) Kemalists (ADD, TGB, İP [İşçi Partisi]); 6) Kurdish activists; 7) LGBTI activists; 8) trades union members; 9) members of the TKP; and 10) *Ülkücüler* (Nationalist Movement Party or *Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi*, MHP; *Ülkü Ocakları*). Participants were activists who participated frequently in the Gezi Park protests in different cities across Turkey. In total, 24 participants were interviewed. Participants were asked whether they attended the protests as a member of their group or alone, how important their activist identity is for them and why their own group attended the protests. Participants were also asked to name any groups they felt close to (or not close to) in order to understand the relationships across different groups in the protests. Thematic analysis was applied to the transcriptions of the interviews. In the following, the perspectives of participants from each group will be represented.

1) *Alevi Activists* (*Ankara and Hatay*): Alevi participants noted specific reasons for their participation in the protests, referring to ethnic and religious discrimination as well as regional issues (especially in Hatay). Participants discussed perceptions of assimilationist policies on the part of the government towards Alevis. Participants also noted the role of the AKP in the conflict in Syria, believing the AKP to be working in conjunction with Al-Qaeda and Al Nusra and using Hatay as a logistics centre.

5 For full interviews, see Uluğ and Acar 2014.

Especially for the participant living in Hatay, Alevi identity was very salient both as a religious and as a cultural identity. On the other hand, the participant from Tuzluçayır said that his socialist identity was more important than his Alevi identity. Both felt close to *Çarşı*, a group of supporters of the Beşiktaş football club, and members of the People's House (*Halkevleri*). They did not feel close to the İP, TGB and some leftist parties who they felt discredited the Gezi movement.

2) *Anti-capitalist Muslims/Revolutionary Muslims* (*Ankara and Istanbul*): Anti-capitalist Muslims and Revolutionary Muslims stated that they believe property belongs to God ('a park belonging to the public, given away to the "capitalist followers" of the AKP, is not something the people can tolerate'). They saw the AKP government as endangering the environment by continually building shopping centres around the country, and they stated that Muslims should rather live in peace with nature. According to participants, Gezi Park is the only place in Taksim where people can sit for free and they did not want to see that change. Importantly, they also wanted to show that the protesters are not enemies of religion, as implied by members of the 'Islamist' AKP government, and which they thought was incorrectly expressed through the AKP.

   The Anti-capitalist and Revolutionary Muslim identity was important for the participants while they were attending the protests, and more so for the participant who attended in Istanbul than the participant from Ankara. As part of the occupation, many groups, including the Anti-capitalist and Revolutionary Muslims, pitched tents in Gezi Park, implying a more concrete and permanent identity-based presence. They felt close to *Kaldıraç* (an LGBTI organisation), *Çarşı* and socialist and communist groups in the protests. The only group they did not feel close to was TGB, but stated 'if we are bothered [by the presence of] any other group, this would be against the Gezi spirit.'

3) *Çarşı* (*Istanbul*)*:* A fan group of Beşiktaş supporters, *Çarşı* is a group highly involved with social issues. Participants made a point of stating that *Çarşı* has a conscience; in their own words, 'where there is injustice, Çarşı is there, too.' *Çarşı* members were active both in Gezi Park and in their own district of Beşiktaş, where there were particularly harsh clashes between protesters and police. One reason they cited for their participation was the proximity of the protests to what they considered their 'home turf.' With police encroachment in Beşiktaş, *Çarşı* members

felt an obligation to 'protect' their neighbourhood. According to *Çarşı* members, the AKP has taken hold of all institutions (even the football league) and blocked all other existing ways of seeking democracy.
Participants indicated that they attended the protests with their *Çarşı* identity, with their personal identity and with their leftist identity (though not all members of *Çarşı* are leftists). They also mentioned that these identities intertwined during the protests. They felt close to other fan groups such as *Tek Yumruk* (Galatasaray), *Karakızıl* (*Gençlerbirliği*), *Halkın Takımı, Beleştepe, Fenerbahçe Sol Açık, Vamos Bien* and *Öteki 1907*. They also felt close to *Taksim Solidarity* and the TKP. They said they did not feel close to TGB, the CHP and the Kurdish movement. Ultimately, all participants from *Çarşı* emphasised that being a part of the protests was a privilege, irrespective of identity and ideology.

4) *Women's rights activists* (*Ankara and Istanbul*): The visibility of women in general during the protests was quite high.[6] Women's rights activists discussed many reasons for that visibility, including attacks on women, women feeling their place is restricted in the public sphere and feeling they have no right to speak. In general, participants discussed their reasons for protest as being related to the AKP's aggressive policies against women and their rhetoric of control over women. They specifically mentioned bans on abortion and the morning after pill, pressure on women by the government to have three children, the murder of women and feeling that they have no safe haven when they are exposed to violence.
Participants indicated that they were in the streets as women because this identity had become increasingly important during the AKP rule. They emphasised that there is no place for women in the AKP's government. Participants felt close to the LGBTI movement, the Kurdish movement, anarchists and the Anti-capitalist Muslims. They also said that they could stand together with TGB and İP, though they criticised Kemalists in general.

5) *Kemalists* (*ADD – Rize, TGB – Hatay and Istanbul, İP – Mersin*): Under the Kemalist umbrella, participants were members of two NGOs: the ADD and the TGB, as well as one political party (İP). Participants stated that Kemalists had joined the protests to object to the bans on the celebration of national holidays, the 'disappearance of secularism' and

6 See http://roarmag.org/2014/01/women-gezi-park-protests/.

the AKP's interventions that effectively tied the hands of the military. In addition, they were protesting to protect the Republic of Turkey, founded by Atatürk, and to protect the unity and integrity of the nation. Participants from TGB indicated that they were in the protests with their TGB identity. On the other hand, there were times when the participants were present with their personal, rather than their activist identity. Participants from the İP in Mersin and ADD in Rize stated that they did not participate with their activist identity because the protests in these cities were more like community gatherings, rather than gatherings of organisations, as in Istanbul.
All of the Kemalist participants felt close to the LGBTI movement, CHP, TGB, TKP and some environmentalist platforms, such as the Fellowship of Rivers Platform (*Derelerin Kardeşliği Platformu*). However, the Kemalists did not feel close to the Kurdish movement.

6) *Kurdish Activists* (*Istanbul*): The reasons mentioned by Kurdish activists were more general compared to the other groups. They mentioned the importance of protecting the green spaces in the city centre, which, during times of disaster, are meant to be used as meeting places. They expressed a desire to prevent urban renewal projects and they objected to police violence and to the media's deliberate negligence in appropriately covering police brutality during the protests. Participants stated that the violence they observed during the protests reminded them of the treatment of Kurds in the 1990s.[7] The Kurdish participants discussed the AKP's attempts to impose on all areas of life through 'oppression, prohibition, insult and humiliation.' However, the foremost reason for participants was Sırrı Süreyya Önder's (parliamentarian of the pro-Kurdish BDP) presence in the park and his support for the protests since their inception.
Two participants indicated that their Kurdish identity was less important during the protests. Rather, their socialist, environmentalist and/or labourer identity was more important. One participant commented on this issue, stating, 'if you live in Turkey, you have many identities. In the Gezi protests, we brought all of these identities together.'
Kurds felt close to the Anti-capitalist Muslims, Revolutionary Muslims, LGBTI movement, feminists, *Çarşı*, *Tek Yumruk* and *Sol Açık*, sex workers, voluntary health care workers and some socialist political parties,

7 Throughout the 1990s, a great deal of violence and oppression was inflicted on the Kurds due to the state of emergency legislation; it remains a bitter memory in the minds of many.

such as the Socialist Democracy Party (*Sosyalist Demokrasi Partisi*), the Labour Party (*Emek Partisi*), the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (*Ezilenlerin Sosyalist Partisi*), the Socialist Solidarity Platform (*Sosyalist Dayanışma Platformu*) and the Socialist Party of Refoundation (*Sosyalist Yeniden Kuruluş Partisi*). On the other hand, Kurds did not feel close to the İP and TGB.

7) *LGBTI groups* (*Istanbul*): LGBTI participants were in the protests to indicate that the park and Taksim are an especially important meeting space for their community. Participants stated that the LGBTI community could never get along well with the police, law enforcement agencies and other authority figures, because they have a problem with the 'patriarchal, male-dominated, authoritarian, fascist, heteronormative system.' They participated in the protests to respond to the state's violent, brutal and fascist attitude, and also mentioned specific incidents of attacks on friends. Participants from the LGBTI movement indicated that they were in the protests not only with their LGBTI identity, but also with other identities. One participant stated, 'identity was of no importance anymore during the protests.' They felt close to the Anti-capitalist Muslims, vegans, feminists, *Çarşı*, anarchists, activists against armament (*Silahlanma Karşıtları*) and the Kurdish movement. However, some of the LGBTI participants criticised the Taksim Solidarity platform, leftist men from the '1968 generation' and CHP.

8) *Trades unions* (*Istanbul*): Trades unions, such as TMMOB and the Union of Health and Social Service Workers (SES), participated in the protests against the persecution of the environment and environmentalism, the persecution of 'the people' and to prevent the AKP's Taksim project. Especially in the second term of the AKP government, massive changes were conducted across Turkey in the name of urban renewal without first consulting with TMMOB, despite its role in appraising urban development proposals. Participants stated very firmly: there are certain living spaces in the city that just should not be touched. They were, therefore, against these urban renewal projects and became a barrier to the AKP government's projects.[8]

8 In July 2013, the AKP rushed a bill through parliament that removed TMMOB from any planning and approval processes for urban development, interpreted as a response to TMMOB's support for the Gezi Park protests.

Trades union members participated in the protests both as individuals and with union identities. They felt close to Taksim Solidarity, *Çarşı* and the Anti-capitalist Muslims and other unions, but not to the CHP.

9) *TKP* (*Ankara and Istanbul*): Participants from the TKP were in the protests because '[their] problem is with the AKP as a whole – [they] are looking for total liberation.' From their perspective, the AKP is destroying the values of the first Turkish Republic and creating a second one based on 'everything that is an affront to humanity, such as capitalism, bigotry, backwardness. All come together under the AKP rule.' Objecting to urban renewal was one of the biggest reasons for participation. In addition, participants from TKP stated that the people poured into the streets of their own accord and that it was the duty of the TKP to support and protect them. They cited this as an important reason for their participation.
Participants from TKP said that they were in the protests both with their personal identity and their political party identity. Their political party identity was quite important for them and, unlike most participants, they stated that they were always with other party members during the protests. They felt close to *Çarşı* and the LGBTI movement, but they did not feel close to İP, MHP, TGB and the Kurdish movement.

10) *Ülkücüler*[9] (*MHP and Ülkü Ocakları – Ankara and Istanbul*): The *Ülkücü* participants stated that they were in the protests to object to Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, 'the most ignorant prime minister thus far, who went so far as to say the founders of the Republic are drunks.' They said that Erdoğan sees things as black or white and does not see anything as grey. There were also more general objections to the leadership style of the prime minister, such as 'never taking a step back, always interfering in all levels of government' and 'getting joy out of pouring salt in people's wounds.' Another important reason for participation was related to *Ülkücü*'s perception that there had been serious persecution against them over the last ten years, especially in the public sector. *Ülkücüler* also greatly objected to the participation of the AKP in the Oslo and İmralı meetings.[10]

9 *Ülkücüler* is a group of MHP. They refer to themselves as 'Turkish nationalists.'

10 The AKP conducted meetings with the PKK in Oslo and the imprisoned leader of the party in İmralı in order to negotiate peace for the Kurdish conflict.

The situation of the *Ülkücüler* in the protests was different from other participants, because of the criticism coming from MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli. At the beginning of the protests, the participants said they attended with their *Ülkücü* identity. However, after Devlet Bahçeli stated that those who wanted to attend the protests should resign from the party, some *Ülkücüler* continued to participate in the protests individually, rather than with a party or group identity. These participants indicated that they did not feel close to any groups – especially to the Kurdish movement – in the Gezi Park protests except for the Anti-capitalist Muslims and Revolutionary Muslims.

Conclusion

Even though every group interviewed had different motivations and reasons for participating in the Gezi Park protests, it is still possible to find some commonalities between each group. These similarities include dissatisfaction with the AKP, the struggle for rights such as democracy, freedom and equality, and objecting to excessive police force. Participants also discussed standing against injustice, especially in cases where a friend was injured, the AKP ignoring the public (or being against the prime minister's 'I'll do what I want' attitude), recent events related to AKP policy (e.g. prohibitions against alcohol, internet censorship, increased restrictions on women's rights) and not protecting the green space in the cities. In addition, when talking about the protestors in the Gezi resistance, participants used words such as 'we (all),' 'each of us,' 'all of us,' 'none of us' and 'everyone.' These similarities point to the bigger or superordinate identity rather than separate activist identities of those who attended the protests for different reasons.

There were other similarities between different groups in the protests. For example, many groups in the protests felt close to Anti-capitalist and Revolutionary Muslims, *Çarşı* and the LGBTI movement, while most criticised Kemalist groups such as TGB and İP. There was an ambivalent attitude towards the Kurdish movement by several groups in the protests. While some felt they would have liked to see increased support from the Kurdish movement, a divide between *Ülkücüler* and *Kemalists* and the Kurdish movement can be felt quite clearly in the discourse of the participants.

Another important factor was the city in which participants attended protests. Region affected their involvement and identification with their own groups in the context of the Gezi Park protests. In Istanbul, there were many tents for the groups where activists could go and spend their

time with other ingroup members, whereas in other cities this was not the case. According to participants, groups were less important in other cities. This does not necessarily mean that the activist identity was not important; simply that it depended on the context where the identity(s) becomes salient.

Following the initial events in Gezi Park, protests sprang up in all but two cities across Turkey. They became a forum for airing grievances related to numerous issues; but, in one way or another, all indicated a reaction to AKP policies. Unlike other protests or the public airing of grievances seen previously in Turkey, individuals and groups from very different political and social backgrounds found themselves united against the police and the AKP government. In order to be able to stand together, the protesters had to find ways to negotiate not only how to respond to outgroup threat, but also the history of their own intergroup relationships.

A social psychological perspective allows us to examine these dynamics more analytically. As discussed above, identity has an important role in today's collective action. Yet, we cannot speak of any single identity; beyond personal identity, a person has as many social identities as groups exist in the world. Rather, it is the case-specific ingroup, outgroup and superordinate group identities that have more of an explanatory power for collective action, especially for the Gezi Park protests. Participants still kept their central activist identity as a feminist, member of *Çarşı* or anything else, while being a *Çapulcu* or resister when positioning themselves against an outgroup such as the police. Unlike Le Bon's argument that protestors lose all sense of self in the crowd, the activist identity of Gezi participants remained intact. It influenced their behaviour through group norms and functioned within the superordinate identity formed at the park under the *Çapulcu* identity. The importance of the social context and identity relations helps put into perspective the relationships between the individual and the group, the groups themselves, how they all relate to a superordinate category and how that category functions against a salient outgroup such as the police.

These dynamics were made especially clear through interviews with participants, who discussed the importance of their activist identities during the protests; even influencing where, why and how they protested. They also demonstrated the degree to which those identities coloured their interactions with other activists and perspectives on other participants, who, despite profound disagreements in position, were still able to see each other as ingroups within the larger category. In the Gezi Park context, we can also argue that when there was no police – in other words, no

outgroup – the differences within superordinate identity were clearer and active. However, when the police was visible or police brutality was high, the differences within ingroup(s) were less important (see also Drury and Reicher 2000; Reicher 2004).

The Gezi Park protests sparked interest in numerous areas of study and are likely to continue to do so. The protests allow for the examination of policy, politics, social status, human relationships and many other issues. A social psychological perspective on group participation is just one piece of a growing puzzle of a case study that will continue to influence work to come.

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