The Decision of Taking Peaceful or Violent Action

We examined how the interactions of grievance, status, and ideological factors (Right-Wing Authoritarianism, System Justification, and Social Dominance Orientation) influenced an individual’s decision in the choice of peaceful or violent political protest. The current research sought to replicate and combine findings of different pieces of the previous literature on the subject. 97 undergraduate college students at Eastern Kentucky University agreed to participate in this study. Participants voluntarily read and responded to one of four randomly assigned vignettes that manipulated levels of grievance and status. Participants also completed the Social Dominance Orientation, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, and System Justification scales. We found support for one of our hypotheses – Right-Wing Authoritarianism was significantly negatively correlated in taking political action – and no support for our three other hypotheses. We believe that our vignettes may not have been dramatic enough to elicit dramatic responses from participants. Future research should look to present events of Covid-19 pandemic protests as well as the government shutdown of 2019 protests to understand what motivates an individual into action.