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It's about Us, not Them.

Identity Fusion and Ingroup versus Outgroup Humanization on the Will to Fight

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Abstract

A visceral feeling of oneness with a group—identity fusion—predicts extreme actions on its behalf. Identity fusion focuses on how intragroup, rather than intergroup, processes drive behaviors. **Objective.** The present research explores whether the association between fusion and the will to fight is more strongly linked to intragroup processes (ingroup humanization), than to intergroup factors (outgroup humanization and meta-humanization). **Method.** Across seven cross-sectional field studies, participants completed a questionnaire including measures of fusion, ingroup humanization (Studies 1a–3b), outgroup humanization (Studies 2a–3b), meta-humanization (Studies 3a–3b), and willingness to fight (Studies 1a–3b). **Results.** Studies 1a-1b indicated that fusion is positively associated with willingness to fight, with this association linked to higher ingroup humanization among Persons Deprived of Liberty (PDL) belonging to gangs in Spain and non-violent extremists in Indonesia. Studies 2a–2c indicated that the indirect association between fusion and willingness to fight was larger via ingroup humanization than via outgroup dehumanization among PDL in the Philippines, Palestinians in the West Bank, and former Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) PDL in Spain. Studies 3a–3b replicated this pattern, showing that the indirect association via ingroup humanization was also larger than via meta-dehumanization among Taiwanese and Gazan citizens. These findings held regardless of whether the fusion target was a group or a value. **Conclusions.** Across diverse contexts, willingness to fight among strongly fused individuals is more closely associated with enhanced perceptions of the ingroup than with diminished perceptions of outgroups, or meta-perceptions, underscoring the central role of intragroup processes. *Keywords:* Identity fusion, humanization, dehumanization, meta-dehumanization, extreme behavior.

Public Significance Statement

Seven studies identify the pathways through which identity fusion is associated with extreme behavior on behalf of the fusion target. Individuals strongly fused with a group or a shared value exhibit greater willingness to fight, with this association more strongly linked to ingroup perceptions—specifically, ingroup humanization—than to intergroup or meta-perceptual processes -outgroup dehumanization or meta-dehumanization, which did not show consistent indirect associations across studies.

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Identity Fusion and Ingroup versus Outgroup Humanization on the Will to Fight

Identity fusion was originally conceived as a visceral feeling of oneness with a group, and it has been consistently shown to be an extraordinary predictor of extreme behavior on its behalf. Under certain conditions, such extreme behaviors can take the form of aggressive outcomes. These potential damaging consequences have prompted researchers to disentangle the underlying mechanisms that explain—i.e., mediators—the effects of fusion.

Given that fusion with groups emphasizes how the personal self becomes aligned with the group to motivate extreme behavior, rather than intergroup dynamics (Swann et al., 2024), the effects of fusion should arise mainly from individual and intragroup mechanisms (i.e. the personal self, group characteristics, or self-group interactions) rather than from intergroup perceptions (i.e. perceptions of the outgroup or intergroup meta-perceptions). However, while the mediating role of personal and intragroup factors in the effects of fusion has been extensively examined (Gómez, Vázquez, Blanco, et al., 2025), the potential role of intergroup perceptions remains largely unexplored. The present research addresses this gap by examining whether fusion is related to extreme behaviors primarily through intragroup rather than intergroup perceptions.

To examine this intragroup-intergroup distinction, we focus on the attribution of humanness. Specifically, we examine whether the association between fusion and the will to fight operates more strongly through attributing humanness to the ingroup, rather than through denying humanness to the outgroup (i.e., dehumanization) or perceiving that the outgroup denies humanness to the ingroup (i.e., meta-dehumanization). To test this assumption across a broad range of contexts, the present research draws on an

unusual body of field data involving more than two thousand participants, including gang members in Spain and the Philippines, former members of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in prison, non-violent extremists in Indonesia, citizens facing the risk of a potential war in Taiwan, and citizens currently living under a context of prolonged armed violence in the West Bank and Gaza.

Identity Fusion and the Will to Fight

Evidence from a meta-analysis and a systematic review indicates that identity fusion is an extraordinary predictor of extreme behavior on behalf of a group (Varmann et al., 2023; Wolfowicz et al., 2021), and that its effects replicate across the five continents (Swann, Buhrmester et al., 2014). Identity fusion has been consistently identified as a predictor of the will to fight, through non-violent or violent actions, in defense of the group among combatants fighting against the Islamic State (ISIS, ISIL), including members of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), (Gómez et al., 2017), frontline Libyan revolutionaries fighting against the Gaddafi regime (Whitehouse et al., 2014), Brazilian and British football hooligans (Newson, 2021; Newson et al., 2018), persons deprived of liberty (PDL) convicted of jihadist terrorism (Gómez et al., 2021; Gómez, Chiclana, et al., 2022; Gómez, Vázquez, & Atran, 2023), and PDL belonging to organized crime groups or street gangs (Gómez, Atran, et al., 2022; Gómez, Vázquez, & Atran, 2023; Gómez, Vázquez, Alba, et al., 2025).

In sum, researchers have provided ample and consistent laboratory and field evidence that identity fusion predicts different expressions of the will to fight. The next section focuses on the analyses of the factors that explain identity fusion and on the mechanisms that predict extreme behavior on behalf of the target.

Why Identity Fusion Predicts the Will to Fight

The nature of the mechanisms through which identity fusion predicts the will to fight for the group—i.e., mediators—could be classified into three general factors: processes that correspond to the personal self, the characteristics of the group, and the interaction between the self and the group (see Gómez, Vázquez, Blanco, et al., 2025 for a review).

Regarding the personal self, certain individual factors have been found to mediate the effect of fusion. These include the motivation to increase self-efficacy through acquiring new perspectives and identities, and the motivation to integrate experiences to build a coherent and clear self-concept (Besta et al., 2018; Besta & Kossakowski, 2018). Other mediators have an emotional nature, such as an automatic drive to protect the group (Swann, Gómez et al., 2014), visceral responsibility (Chinchilla et al., 2022), empathic concern (Landabur et al., 2022), psychological kinship (Gómez, Atran, et al., 2022; Swann, Buhrmester et al., 2014), satisfaction with the ingroup (Hart & Lancaster, 2019), trust (Gómez, Vázquez, & Atran, 2023), and perceived emotional synchrony (Páez et al., 2015).

Concerning the characteristics of the group, several factors have been shown to influence fusion. Perceptual factors include perceived descriptive norms indicating that other ingroup members engage in behaviors that benefit the group (Pretus & Vilarroya, 2022), perceived ingroup efficacy (Besta et al., 2018), and perceived ingroup physical and/or spiritual formidability (Gómez, Vázquez, & Atran, 2023; Vázquez, Dovidio et al., 2023; Vázquez et al., 2020). Motivational factors include the desire to restore the family's honor (Ashokkumar & Swann, 2023), the motivation to protect the group's reputation (Ashokkumar et al., 2019), and readiness to deny the group's wrongdoing (Besta et al., 2014).

Finally, variables representing the interaction between the self and the group have illuminated the consequences of fusion, such as perceived positive social interaction with the group or perceived social support (Henríquez et al., 2023), group-based invulnerability and agency (Gómez et al., 2011; Pretus & Vilarroya, 2022), perceived personal discrimination based on group membership (Gómez, Atran, et al., 2022), perceived injustice (Besta et al., 2019; Gómez, Atran, et al., 2022), and feelings of oppression (Lobato et al., 2020).

None of these mediators has explicitly considered perceptions of the outgroup, or how the outgroup is perceived to view the ingroup (i.e., meta-perceptions), in explaining the effects of fusion with a group on the will to fight. To examine our main assumption that the effects of fusion are more strongly driven by intragroup perceptions rather than intergroup perceptions (i.e., perceptions of the outgroup or intergroup meta-perceptions), we focus on the attribution—or denial—of humanness, a process increasingly recognized as central to intergroup hostility and aggression, and frequently identified in research on radicalization and violent extremism. The next section introduces this mechanism and discusses its potential relation to identity fusion.

Identity fusion and humanization

Individuals may display a wide range of characteristics and express diverse attitudes, yet they are all understood to belong to a single overarching category: the human group. People commonly assume that humans occupy the highest position within a perceived *hierarchy of beings*, viewing non-human entities as inferior and less deserving of value than humankind (Bastian et al., 2012; Smith, 2020). The notion of an *ideal human* draws on the idea of a Platonic ideal, serving as a benchmark against which social targets are evaluated. This ideal human is conceived as aspirational, embodying the complete set of attributes that are believed to define and legitimize

membership in the group positioned at the top of the hierarchy of beings (Kteily & Landry, 2022). This constellation of attributes is referred to as humanness and is understood as the distinctive essence of human beings, comprising the qualities that differentiate humans from non-human entities. A broad range of features have been identified as signaling humanness, such as human-specific emotions (i.e., secondary emotions; Leyens et al., 2000), uniquely human traits (i.e., attributes that distinguish humans from other animals) and human nature traits (i.e., attributes essential to being human but not unique to humans; Haslam et al., 2005), capacities for agency and experience (Gray et al., 2007), and the possession of core psychological needs (Schroeder & Epley, 2020).

The distinction between the attribution of human characteristics to the ingroup, the outgroup, how their own group is viewed by others, and its relation to identity fusion, is fundamental to this investigation.

Humanness can be preferentially attributed at the group level through ingroup humanization (Vaes et al., 2010, 2012, 2014). Typically, though not invariably (e.g., Bruneau et al., 2018), individuals perceive their ingroup as approximating the ideal of humanity (Kteily & Landry, 2022). People also tend to believe that their ingroup possesses greater humanness than other groups (Leyens et al., 2000, 2001), independently of ingroup favoritism (Vaes et al., 2012).

The perception that human traits are central to one's personal and social identity (Haslam et al., 2005; Vaes et al., 2012) makes feeling human play a critical role in shaping one's identity (Demoulin et al., 2009; Paladino et al., 2004). Human qualities such as interpersonal warmth, agency, and morality are considered core attributes in theoretical models of humanness (e.g., Formanowicz et al., 2023; Haslam, 2012; Rodríguez-Pérez et al., 2021). These traits are also closely tied to identity fusion, which

differs from other forms of social categorization, such as group identification, by emphasizing relational ties (Gómez et al., 2019), personal agency (Swann et al., 2010) and the moral justification for behavior (Chinchilla et al., 2022), within the group.

Identity fusion reflects a visceral sense of oneness with the ingroup, characterized by a high degree of self–ingroup overlap. When the ingroup becomes incorporated into the self-concept, the core human characteristics that define the self are more readily extended to ingroup members. In this way, identity fusion should bias perceivers to attribute higher levels of humanness to their ingroup. Because the psychological boundaries between self and ingroup are attenuated, self-relevant human qualities are projected onto the group, increasing the tendency to see ingroup members as fully human.

Previous research has offered empirical proofs demonstrating that these core human attributes are distinctive among strongly fused. First, interpersonal warmth is linked to one of the principles of the original identity fusion theory applied to groups, relational ties –sentiments toward ingroup members– (Swann et al., 2012). These sentiments include experiences with warmth (i.e. friendly, affectionate behaviors, Ackerman et al., 2019) towards them. Research indicates that strongly fused individuals experience their ingroup as a family-like group, with intense relational bonds, shared values and perception of shared genes (Swann, Buhrmester et al., 2014). Also, strengthen relational ties through sharing intense collective experiences (e.g. Bautista et al., 2025; Jong et al., 2015, Whitehouse et al., 2017, among others), or via increasing the perception of self-verification –i.e. feeling understood– (Gómez, Vázquez, Alba, et al., 2025), cause or increase identity fusion. And degrading relational ties cause defusion (Gómez et al., 2019).

Second, agency –the capacity to initiate and control intentional behavior– is another principle of the original identity fusion theory applied to groups (Swann et al., 2012). Previous investigations have offered consistent evidence about the role of agency for identity fusion. For instance, agency mediates the effects of fusion on the will to fight for the group (Gómez et al., 2011), and pro-group behaviors (Swann et al., 2010).

And third, regarding morality, strongly fused individuals are willing to display extreme self-sacrifices for their groups or for their family, but only when it is morally justifiable (Chinchilla, Vázquez, & Gómez, 2022). In fact, strongly fused individuals delay their motivation to fight for the group when they perceive that other ingroup members self-sacrifice for the group for morally relevant reasons, but not for pragmatic motives (Paredes, Briñol, & Gómez, 2018). Also, when participants are introduced with intergroup versions of the trolley dilemma, strongly fused individuals consider self-sacrifice for the group as moral and ethical (Swann, Gómez et al., 2014). In fact, while strongly fused recognize that they are willing to self-sacrifice for other ingroup members because it is the morally correct course of action, weakly fused argue utilitarian rationales.

To the extent that interpersonal warmth toward ingroup members, agency, and morality behavior constitute core criteria of humanness and identity fusion, when individuals experience these characteristics in relation to the group, it would be expected a positive relationship between fusion and humanization of the ingroup. However, no previous research has empirically tested this association.

In contrast, why identity fusion should be less associated with dehumanization and meta-dehumanization? We focus on these issues next.

Whereas the ingroup is typically perceived as close to the human ideal, other groups (i.e., outgroups) are viewed as differing in their distance from this ideal,

depending on the extent to which they are seen as possessing human qualities.

Individuals may selectively attribute certain dimensions of humanness (e.g., agency) while simultaneously denying others (e.g., morality; de Ruiter, 2021; Kteily & Landry, 2022; Phillips, 2022). As a result, some groups can be regarded as less human than others while still being perceived as belonging to the broader human category.

However, when targets are perceived as falling sufficiently far below the human ideal, they risk being seen as no belonging to the category at all. The process through which such groups are stripped of human qualities and subsequently perceived and treated as less than fully human is referred to as dehumanization (Haslam et al., 2005; Haslam & Stratemeyer, 2016).

The research exploring the role of another kind of group alignment—group identification—on dehumanization has proposed a bidimensional model differentiating between attachment—i.e., commitment to the group and the inclusion of the group in one's self-concept—and glorification—i.e., comparative judgments implying that the ingroup is viewed as superior to outgroups across various dimensions (Roccas et al., 2006). Using this distinction, Leidner et al. (2010) found that only ingroup glorification, and not attachment, was associated with dehumanization. A similar pattern was reported by Viki and Calitri (2008), who observed that endorsement of nationalism, but not patriotism, was linked to greater dehumanization. Following this logic, identity fusion should be unlikely to be strongly related to outgroup dehumanization because its core mechanisms—relational and collective bonds—operate within the ingroup and do not rely on comparative judgments. However, an analyses of the narratives of QAnon groups found a high prevalence of linguistic identity fusion indicators, along with external threat narratives, and dehumanization of the outgroup when compare to non-violent groups (Ebner et al., 2022b). Therefore, it might be the case that, under

threatening conditions, and to a lesser extent that the association between fusion and humanization of the ingroup, fusion could be associated to the denial of human attributes to outgroup members.

The harmful consequences of dehumanization for intergroup relations have been extensively documented. Early theoretical contributions highlighted the central role of dehumanization in violence and aggression, particularly in seminal writings on war and genocide (Kelman, 1973; Staub, 1989), and subsequent work demonstrated that perceiving victims as less than human facilitates the moral disengagement that enables violent behavior (Bandura et al., 1996). Later research has concentrated on the link between dehumanization and harm-related outcomes, including punitive attitudes, harsh treatment (Viki et al., 2013), and reduced willingness to provide help to dehumanized individuals (Andrighetto et al., 2014; Carella & Vaes, 2006; Cuddy et al., 2007; Dalsklev & Kunst, 2015; Fincher & Tetlock, 2016; Zhang et al., 2015).

Finally, research on meta-dehumanization has emerged at the intersection of research on dehumanization and scholarship examining the consequences of meta-perceptions in intergroup conflict (Richeson & Shelton, 2007; Vorauer et al., 1998). Meta-dehumanization is defined as individuals' perception that their own group is dehumanized or regarded as less than fully human by another group (Kteily et al., 2016). This process contributes to vicious cycles in intergroup conflict, as perceiving one's group as dehumanized (meta-dehumanization) elicits reciprocal dehumanization of the outgroup, which in turn fosters hostile attitudes and behaviors that can sustain and escalate ongoing conflicts (e.g., Kteily et al., 2016). As a consequence, dehumanization and meta-dehumanization should be positively associated with the will to fight.

However, the contexts where the consequences of dehumanization and meta-dehumanization have resulted in intergroup hostility, aggression, and violence, have

included, to some extent, the perception that the outgroup exerts some kind of threat to the ingroup (e.g. Kteily & Landry, 2022; Kteily et al., 2016). Noting that strongly fused individuals do not display extreme behaviors toward outgroups unless threatened (Gómez et al., 2011; Swann et al., 2009; Vázquez, Gómez et al., 2023), under calm conditions identity fusion should be less associated with dehumanization and with meta-dehumanization than with ingroup's humanization.

In sum, we propose that among the various humanness-related processes—ingroup humanization, outgroup dehumanization, and meta-dehumanization—ingroup humanization is the one most closely and consistently linked to identity fusion, as it is the only one that is explicitly intragroup-focused. As a consequence, identity fusion should be associated to the will to fight for the target of fusion more strongly through humanizing the ingroup than via dehumanizing the outgroup or meta-dehumanization.

Overview

The purpose of the present research is to examine whether the association between identity fusion and the will to fight on behalf of the group occurs more strongly through the humanization of the ingroup, than by dehumanizing the outgroup or the perception that the outgroup dehumanizes the ingroup (i.e., meta-dehumanization). Importantly, we also expect the same effect when the target is a core value shared with the group and its members.

We conducted seven studies. Three studies were conducted with participants in prison: two investigations were carried out with PDL in Spain, including members of street gangs (Study 1a) and former members of the militant Basque nationalist organization Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA)—self-defined as combatants but designated as a terrorist organization in Spain, France, the European Union, and other countries (Study 2c)—and one study with PDL in the Philippines (Study 2a). Another study

involved non-violent extremists in Indonesia (Study 1b). One study included strategically critical groups in Taiwan (military reservists, first responders, technology/communication professionals, logistics/transport personnel, and local community leaders) (Study 3a). And two studies included representative samples from Palestine, in the West Bank (Study 2b) and Gaza (Study 3b). See Table 1 for a summary of studies, characteristics of the samples, and measures.

< Table 1 >

All studies were conducted in the field using the Artis Magi Wise Platform, which enables the combination of traditional scales with dynamic measures and has been successfully tested in previous fieldwork. These studies include combatants and terrorists in Syria and Iraq (Gómez et al., 2017), individuals convicted of jihadist terrorism offenses in prison (Gómez et al., 2021; Gómez, Atran, et al., 2022; Gómez, Chiclana, et al., 2022; Gómez, Vázquez, & Atran, 2023), members of street gangs and delinquent bands (Gómez, Atran, et al., 2022; Gómez, Vázquez, & Atran, 2023; Gómez, Vázquez, Alba, et al., 2025), individuals at risk of radicalization in Morocco (Sheikh et al., 2016), and members of the U.S. Air Force (Tossell et al., 2022), among others. Consistent with the literature reviewed, we formulated the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. Fusion will be positively associated with the will to fight.

Hypothesis 2. Fusion will be positively associated with humanization of the ingroup.

Hypothesis 3. Humanization of the ingroup will be positively associated with the will to fight.

Hypothesis 4. Fusion will be positively associated with the will to fight through humanization of the ingroup.

Hypothesis 5. Identity fusion will be positively associated with outgroup dehumanization and meta-dehumanization, although these associations will be weaker than the association between identity fusion and ingroup humanization.

Hypothesis 6. Outgroup dehumanization and meta-dehumanization will be positively associated with willingness to fight.

Hypothesis 7. The indirect association between identity fusion and willingness to fight through outgroup dehumanization and meta-dehumanization will be weaker than the indirect association through ingroup humanization.

Transparency and Openness

Although the studies' design and its analyses were not pre-registered, for each study we report all data exclusions (if any), and all measures included in the analyses. We do not include all the variables considered on each study because they are part of broader investigations. Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS, version 27.0. All data (except personal data that could be used to identify participants) and materials have been made publicly available at the OSF repository and can be accessed at [Open Science Framework](#).

Studies 1a–1b. Fusion and The Will to Fight Among Street Gang Members and Non-violent Extremists

Two cross-sectional studies tested whether identity fusion with a group (Study 1a) and a shared core value for the ingroup (Study 1b) were positively associated with humanization of the ingroup and the will to fight for the target of fusion. Also, the studies examined whether humanization of the ingroup was positively associated with the will to fight for the target of fusion. Finally, we assessed whether fusion was associated to the will to fight through humanizing the ingroup.

In Study 1a, the gang was the target of fusion, humanization and the will to fight. In Study 1b, religion was the target of fusion and the will to fight, and the group who shared the same religion of the participant was the target of humanization.

Method

Participants

Study 1a involved 71 PDL, all men, located in 20 prisons in Spain. Five participants did not respond to all the measures of interest and were not considered for the analyses. The final sample included 66 PDL ($M_{age} = 26.36$, $SD = 5.48$), belonging mainly to four different street gangs: Dominican Don't Play (39.4%), Trinitarios (21.2%), Ñetas (13.6%), and Latin Kings (10.6%). Their countries of origin were mainly Dominican Republic (37.9%), Spain (24.2%), Ecuador (24.2%), and Colombia (6.17%).

Study 1b encompassed 138 non-violent extremists in Indonesia. Six participants did not respond to all the measures of interest and were not considered for the analyses. Therefore, the final sample consisted of 132 participants (57.2% men; $M_{age} = 37.13$, $SD = 12.53$) who were interviewed in five different locations (Jakarta, Sumedang, Purwakarta, Surabaya, and Tangerang). Most of them belonged to Khilafatul Muslimin (53%) and Front Pembela Islam (42.4%) and had Indonesian nationality (94.7%).

All participants in the two studies voluntarily collaborated on this research and provided informed consent.

Procedure

In Study 1a, we followed the same procedure as Gómez, Atran, et al. (2022), Gómez, Vázquez, and Atran, (2023), and Gómez, Vázquez, Alba, et al., (2025). Authorized professionals from the prison selected PDL who satisfied the inclusion criteria, based on the reason of their imprisonment and the group they belonged to, and

they were offered to voluntarily collaborate in the investigation. For most participants, this was the first time they participated in scientific research.

In Study 1b, we recruited members of non-violent radical Islamist groups in Indonesia, which advocate for the implementation of Islamic law (*sharia*). Participants were selected based on predetermined inclusion criteria (they were members or leaders of Islamic mass organizations advocating for the implementation of *sharia* in Indonesia, ranging in age from 18 to 70 years old). The recruitment began by approaching group leaders through intermediaries trusted by each group and once they agreed, the leaders coordinated and assisted the data collection process by selecting members to be interviewed in accordance with the research needs and agreed criteria.

Participants responded to a questionnaire on a tablet including measures of fusion, humanization of the ingroup, and the will to fight. In Study 1a, *fusion* with the gang was measured with the Dynamic Index of Identity Fusion (DIFI, Jiménez et al., 2016). Respondents viewed two circles of different sizes on a screen: a small “self” circle (or “me”) and a larger “my gang” circle. Participants were asked to indicate how they perceived their relationship with their gang by moving the small circle toward or away from the large circle. The *humanization of gang members* was assessed with the Ascent of Man pictorial vignette of dehumanization (Kteily et al., 2015). Participants were showed an image depicting linear human evolution, from a quadrupedal ancestor to a fully upright human, and then asked to rate members of their gang on a scale from 0 (*least evolved*) to 100 (*most evolved*). The *will to fight* was measured with a reduced version of the costly sacrifices scale from Gómez et al. (2021) including three items: “If necessary, I would be willing to... give up my income to defend my gang, give up visiting my family or important people to defend my gang, move to another city/country

further away from my family to defend my gang”, on scales ranging from 0 (*totally disagree*) to 6 (*totally agree*) ($\alpha = .73$).

In Study 1b, *fusion* with the religious ideology and *humanization* of ingroup members were assessed with the same measures as in Study 1a. The will to fight for the religious ideology was tapped with two-items adapted from the willingness to fight and die scale from Swann et al. (2009; e.g., “I would fight/die for my religious ideology”), on scales ranging from 0 (*totally disagree*) to 6 (*totally agree*), $r = .91$. Fusion and fight and die for religion were measured through their perceptions in the past rather than in the present. This decision was motivated by preliminary interviews with key informants, who indicated that some participants might have engaged in violence in the past but later abandoned it, and who suggested that asking for the past could provide a more reliable assessment of our variables of interest. This is a proof of how difficult is to investigate with individuals at different levels of radicalization, and the role of time perception in this process (Chinchilla & Gómez, 2024).

Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations are displayed in Table 2. As predicted, identity fusion, humanization of the ingroup, and the will to fight were positively and significantly correlated in both studies.

To test the hypothesis that fusion is associated with the will to fight through the humanization of the ingroup, we conducted a mediation analysis with 5,000 bootstraps using the IBM SPSS PROCESS macro (Model 4) from Hayes (2022). We included fusion as the predictor, humanization of the ingroup as the mediator, and the will to fight as the outcome. As can be seen in Figure 1, in both studies the analyses suggested a significant indirect association between fusion and the will to fight through ingroup humanization. In these studies, the analyses indicated a full mediation.

< Table 2 >

< Figure 1 >

Discussion

The results of Studies 1a–1b support hypotheses 1 to 4. As expected, they replicate the common positive association between identity fusion and different expressions of the will to fight—costly sacrifices in Study 1a and willingness to fight and die in Study 1b (Gómez, Vázquez, Alba, et al., 2025; Gómez, Vázquez, Blanco, et al., 2025; Swann et al., 2024; Varmann et al., 2023). Also as predicted, fusion was positively associated with humanizing the ingroup, and humanizing the ingroup was positively associated with the will to fight for the target of fusion. And finally, as anticipated, the analyses showed a significant indirect association between fusion and the will to fight through ingroup humanization. Importantly, the results were replicated with samples of different nature—street gang members in prison and non-violent extremists—in distinct countries—Spain and Indonesia— with different targets—group members and a shared core value by the ingroup, and at the perception of different time points as the present (Study 1a) and the past (Study 1b).

These studies provide two important theoretical contributions to the existing literature. First, the findings suggest that identity fusion —either with a group or with a cherished value shared by ingroup members—is positively associated with ingroup humanization. Second, ingroup humanization appears to function as a mechanism linking identity fusion to the will to fight.

Studies 2a–2c. Fusion and The Will to Fight Among Gang Members, Citizens from the West Bank, and Former ETA Members

The results of Studies 1a and 1b provide initial support for our main hypothesis that fusion is associated with the will to fight for the target of fusion through

characteristics attributed to the ingroup. However, the previous studies have four main limitations. First, as Study 1a involved a highly unusual sample—street gang members in prison—it was important to assess whether the findings would replicate among gangs of a different nature and in another national context. Study 2a therefore included members of four gangs in a Philippine jail to test the robustness of the previous results. Second, results from Study 1b indicated that the indirect association between fusion and the will to fight through humanizing the ingroup held when the target of fusion is a value. Nevertheless, data collection procedures required participants to report their feelings of fusion and willingness to fight with reference to the past rather than the present. This limitation precludes fully generalizing the group-based effect found in Study 1a to current value-based contexts. By including a sample of former members of an extremist group, Study 2c aimed to test whether the effects replicate when participants report fusion and willingness to fight for a value in the present. Third, the samples included in Studies 1a and 1b are relatively small and do not include members of the general population, limiting the generalizability of the findings to non-violent or non-extremist individuals. Study 2b was designed to solve these limitations. *Fourth*, the variables assessed in Studies 1a and 1b do not offer empirical evidence to conclude whether the association between fusion and willingness to fight is larger through ingroup humanization than through outgroup dehumanization.

To address this last limitation, in Studies 2a–2c we examined whether the positive association between fusion and the will to fight is larger through participants’ perception of the ingroup (i.e., humanizing its members) than by their perceptions of the outgroup (i.e., dehumanizing its members).

Three cross-sectional studies tested whether identity fusion with a group (Studies 2a–2b) and a shared core value (Study 2c) were positively associated with

ingroup humanization and willingness to fight, while also attempting to replicate prior evidence that ingroup humanization is positively related to willingness to fight. In addition, these studies tested whether fusion was positively associated with outgroup dehumanization, but to a lesser extent than its association with ingroup humanization, and whether outgroup dehumanization was positively associated with willingness to fight. Finally, the research assessed indirect effects, specifically whether the relationship between fusion and willingness to fight is more strongly mediated by ingroup humanization than by outgroup dehumanization.

Method

Participants

Study 2a included 58 PDL, all men, located at Manila City Jail Male Dormitory, in the Philippines. Three participants did not respond to all the measures of interest and were not considered for the analyses ($M_{age} = 41.02$, $SD = 11.94$). They belonged to four different gangs: Sigue Sigue Commando (37%), Batang City Jail (29.6%), Sigue Sigue Sputnik (25.9%), and Bahala na Gang (7.4%).

Study 2b included a representative sample of 1,007 participants from Palestine during the conflict between Palestine and Israel after the October 7th attack of Hamas (49.9% men; $M_{age} = 37.31$, $SD = 13.54$, 6 participants did not report their age) residing in the West Bank, 97.1% of whom identified as religious or somewhat religious.

Study 2c involved 86 former Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) members, located in 16 Spanish prisons (average number of years in prison = 20.35, $SD = 5.87$). Twenty-two participants did not respond to all the measures of interest and were not considered for the analyses (90.3% men, $M_{age} = 47.10$, $SD = 6.14$). Most of them had the Spanish nationality (96.8%). To the best of our knowledge, this study represents the first empirical contribution including this group—erstwhile members of the militant Basque

nationalist organization ETA in Spanish prisons. Self-described as combatants but designated as a terrorist group by several nations, ETA announced a definitive cessation of its armed activity on October 20, 2011. This announcement was followed by the complete disarmament of the organization's arsenal on April 8, 2017, and its final dissolution in May 2018.

Procedure

In Study 2a, a similar procedure to that used in Study 1a was followed, with some modifications. First, several interviews were conducted simultaneously in the same room. However, the space of the room allowed no interferences between interviews. And second, a member of the security staff was present during the interviews, but in a location that did not interfere with the interviews.

In Study 2b the sample for the survey was designed to be representative of West Bank residents. Interviews were conducted by using tablets or mobile phones by teams of professional data collectors.

In Study 2c, we followed the same procedure that in Study 1a. In this case, for all participants, this was the first time they participated in scientific research.

In the three studies, we conducted in-depth, face-to-face interviews. No financial incentives were provided for participation. The studies were conducted under the auspices of the governments of the respective countries. Standard human subjects' protections were acknowledged through informed consent. Further details about data collection procedure can be found in the Supplementary Materials.

Participants responded to a questionnaire including measures of *fusion*, *humanization of the ingroup*, *humanization of a threatening outgroup*, and the *will to fight*. The chosen outgroups were the enemy of the gang in Study 2a, Israel in Study 2b, and members of the State Law Enforcement Agencies (LAE) in Study 2c. In Studies 2a

and 2b, the target of *fusion* and the *will to fight* was a group (the gang and Palestine, respectively), and in Study 2c, the target of *fusion* and the *will to fight* was a value (the independence of the Basque Country).

In the three studies, *fusion* with the group (Studies 2a and 2b) and with the value (Study 2c), and *ingroup and outgroup humanization* were assessed as in Studies 1a and 1b, with the DIFI (Jiménez et al., 2016) and with the Ascent of Man pictorial vignette of dehumanization (Kteily et al., 2015), respectively. The *will to fight* in Study 2a was measured with the seven items of the fight and die scale from Swann et al. (2009), adapted to the gang (e.g., “I would fight/die for my gang”, $\alpha = .92$); in Study 2b with an adapted version of the costly sacrifices scale from Gómez et al. (2017, 2021), including four items (e.g., “If necessary, I would be willing to go to jail to defend Palestine”, $\alpha = .90$); and in Study 2c with a reduced version of the costly sacrifices scale from Gómez et al. (2017, 2021), including three items (“If necessary, I would be willing to give up visiting my family or important people to defend the independence” $\alpha = .87$). All items in all studies ranged from 0 (*totally disagree*) to 6 (*totally agree*).

Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations are displayed in Table 3.

Replicating findings from Studies 1a and 1b, identity fusion, humanization of the ingroup, and the will to fight were positively and significantly correlated in the three studies.

Regarding hypothesis 5, fusion was positively associated with outgroup dehumanization in study 2b, but not in studies 2a and 2c. However, a correlation for the test of the difference between two dependent correlations with one variable in common (Lee & Preacher, 2013; Steiger, 1980), indicated that, as expected, the association between fusion and outgroup dehumanization was weaker than the correlation between

fusion and ingroup humanization for study 2a, $z = 3.27, p < .001$, 2b, $z = 4.84, p < .001$, and 2c, $z = 1.69, p = .05$, respectively.

Concerning hypothesis 6, outgroup humanization correlated significantly with the will to fight in Study 2b, but the correlation was not significant in studies 2a and 2c.

< Table 3 >

To test the hypothesis that fusion is associated with the will to fight strongly through ingroup humanization than through outgroup dehumanization, we conducted a mediation analysis with 5,000 bootstraps using the IBM SPSS PROCESS macro (Model 4) from Hayes (2022). We included fusion as the predictor, ingroup and outgroup humanization as parallel mediators, and the will to fight as the outcome. As can be seen in Figure 2, the indirect effect was significant in Studies 2a and 2c only through ingroup humanization. The analyses also indicated full mediation.

However, in Study 2b, the indirect effect of fusion on the will to fight was significant through ingroup humanization but also through outgroup dehumanization, and the analyses revealed only partial mediation. The results indicate that fusion with Palestine is associated with humanizing Palestinians and dehumanizing Israelis, while both are associated with the will to fight for Palestine. When comparing the size of the indirect effects through the ingroup and outgroup humanization, the results yielded no significant differences, $z = 0.55, SE = 0.01, p = .58$.

< Figure 2 >

Discussion

Supporting hypothesis 1, the results of Studies 2a–2c replicate the commonly found association between fusion and the will to fight (Gómez, Vázquez, Blanco, et al., 2025; Swann et al., 2024; Varmann et al., 2023). The results also provide additional evidence for hypotheses 2 and 3 by reproducing the positive association between fusion

and humanization of the ingroup, and between humanization of the ingroup and the will to fight. The three studies also confirmed hypothesis 4, replicating the association between fusion and the will to fight through humanizing the ingroup found in Studies 1a and 1b.

Results partially support the first section of hypothesis 5. In study 2b fusion was positively associated with outgroup dehumanization, but this association was not significant in studies 2a and 2b. However, as expected, and confirming the second section of hypothesis 5, the analyses revealed that the association between fusion and outgroup dehumanization was weaker than the association between fusion and ingroup humanization in the three studies.

The evidence for hypothesis 6 was also partial, and only in study 2b outgroup dehumanization was positively associated with the will to fight.

Finally, studies 2a and 2c provided evidence supporting hypothesis 7 and the indirect association between identity fusion and the will to fight occurred only through ingroup humanization. However, in study 2b, the indirect effect of fusion on the will to fight through ingroup humanization and outgroup dehumanization was similar. Being strongly fused with Palestine is positively associated to the will to fight for Palestine through humanizing Palestinians but also, to the same extent, through dehumanizing Israelis.

The fact that participants in Study 2b are currently living the dramatic consequences of the armed conflict during data collection might justify that they dehumanize their enemy, and that such dehumanization makes them more willing to fight for Palestine.

The next two studies will examine whether this could be explained by collecting data in two scenarios where participants are also being victims of an armed conflict at

the time of data collection (Gaza), or where participants are involved in a potential ongoing conflict but in the absence of a current war (Taiwan).

Results of Studies 2a–2c provide further empirical support for the two theoretical contributions of the previous studies: first, the identification of identity fusion with a group or with a value shared by ingroup members as positively associated to ingroup humanization; and second, the role of ingroup humanization as a mechanism consistently accounting for the association between identity fusion and the will to fight.

Importantly, the findings of Studies 2a and 2c show no indirect association between fusion and the will to fight through outgroup dehumanization in the case of gangs and former ETA members in prison. The next two studies were designed in part to test whether the fact that finding an indirect association between fusion and the will to fight through outgroup dehumanization to the same extent than through ingroup humanization in Study 2b is an exception, or whether this effect can be context-dependent, that is, if it only, or mainly occurs under conditions of an actual or potential conflict.

To provide more conclusive evidence that highly fused individuals engage in extreme behavior strongly driven by intragroup mechanisms, and to generalize this process to different fusion targets, such as groups and shared core values, the previous studies have two main limitations. First, they overlooked the role of meta-perception in intergroup dynamics. Or, in other words, we did not measure participants' perception of how their group is viewed by other groups. Recent evidence points at how negative or inaccurate meta-perceptions can drive negative intergroup relations (e.g., Lees & Cikara, 2020). Furthermore, meta-dehumanization (the perception that one's ingroup is attributed less than human qualities) can drive intergroup conflict (e.g., Pavetich &

Stathi, 2021). The next two studies try to examine the potential mediational effect of meta-dehumanization on the association between fusion and the will to fight.

Our second limitation is related to the target of fusion. Although the previous studies show that the association between fusion and the will to fight through ingroup humanization holds when the target is a group or a shared core value, none of these studies show whether, with the same sample of participants, ingroup humanization has a double role in the association between fusion and the will to fight for a group and a value.

Therefore, Studies 3a–3b were designed to test whether ingroup humanization—rather than outgroup dehumanization or meta-dehumanization—strongly mediates the association between fusion and the will to fight for groups and values within the same sample.

In addition, the next two studies were designed to be carried out in high-tension political conflicts. On the one hand, Taiwan, although with no open armed conflict now, is facing a constant threat from China, which considers the island part of its territory and does not rule out the use of force for reunification (Lee & Blanchard, 2025). On the other hand, Palestine, and specifically, Gaza, which has been under a prolonged blockade and under direct military attacks from Israel.

Studies 3a–3b. Fusion and The Will to Fight among Citizens from Taiwan and Gaza

Two cross-sectional studies tested whether fusion with a group—Taiwan in Study 3a and Palestine in Study 3b—and with a shared core value—national sovereignty in Study 3a and the right of return in Study 3b—were positively associated with the will to fight for the respective group and value. This association was expected to operate strongly through ingroup humanization than via outgroup humanization—

China in Study 3a and Israel in Study 3b—or meta-dehumanization—perceptions about how the outgroup views the ingroup.

Method

Participants

Study 3a included 613 participants including strategically critical groups in Taiwan (military reservists, first responders, technology/communication professionals, logistics/transport personnel, and local community leaders), (73.6% men; $M_{age} = 37.15$, $SD = 12.29$), 98.5% of them born in Taiwan.

Study 3b included a representative sample of 500 Gaza residents (50.4% men; $M_{age} = 36.99$, $SD = 13.34$).

Procedure

Studies 3a and 3b were conducted in the field through face-to-face interviews. Participants responded to an online questionnaire using the Magi Wise platform on a tablet. For more information about the procedure see the Supplementary Materials.

The questionnaire included measures of fusion with the country and with relevant values, humanization of the ingroup, the outgroup and meta-humanization, and the will to fight.

Fusion with Taiwan and with national sovereignty in Study 3a, and *fusion* with Palestine and with the right of return in Study 3b, were assessed using the DIFI (Jiménez et al., 2016). *Humanization* of the ingroup (Taiwanese and Palestinians), the outgroup (members of the government of China and Israel), and *meta-humanization* (perceptions about how members of the government of China perceive Taiwanese and how Israelis perceive Palestinians) were assessed using the Ascent of Man pictorial vignette by Kteily et al. (2015). In both studies, the *will to fight* for Taiwan, national sovereignty, Palestine, and the right of return was assessed with two items each, adapted

from the fight and die scale from Swann et al. (2009): “If necessary, I would be willing to lose my job or my family’s source of income to defend Taiwan/Palestine/national sovereignty/the right of return” and “If necessary, I would be willing to fight and die to defend Taiwan/Palestine/national sovereignty/the right of return”. Inter-item correlations were high: $r = .88$ and $.87$ for the will to fight for the group and value, respectively, in Study 3a, and $r = .77$ and $.80$ in Study 3b.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations are displayed in Table 4. Fusion, ingroup humanization, and the will to fight were positively correlated in both studies, regardless of the target of fusion: group (Taiwan versus Palestine) or value (national sovereignty versus the right of return).

Regarding hypothesis 5, fusion with the group was unrelated to outgroup dehumanization in study 3a and positively and significantly associated with outgroup dehumanization in study 3b. Fusion with the value was positively and significantly associated with outgroup dehumanization in both studies. In addition, fusion with the group was unrelated to meta-dehumanization in study 3a and in study 3b. However, fusion with the value was positively and significantly associated with meta-dehumanization in both studies.

A correlation for the test of the difference between two dependent correlations with one variable in common (Lee & Preacher, 2013; Steiger, 1980) indicated that, as expected, the association between fusion and outgroup dehumanization was weaker than the association between fusion and ingroup humanization in Studies 3a and 3b when the target was a group, $z = 5.93, p < .001$, and $z = 5.83, p < .001$, and when the target was a value, $z = 6.55, p < .001$, and $z = 8.12, p < .001$, respectively. Also as predicted, the association between fusion and meta-dehumanization was weaker than the association

between fusion and ingroup humanization in Studies 3a and 3b when the target was a group, $z = 4.45, p < .001$, and $z = 3.49, p < .001$, and when the target was a value, $z = 2.24, p = .01$, and $z = 3.56, p < .001$, respectively.

Concerning hypothesis 6, in study 3a, outgroup dehumanization significantly and positively correlated with sacrifices for the group but it was unrelated with sacrifices for the value. In study 3b outgroup dehumanization significantly and positively correlated with sacrifices for the group and for the value. In study 3a meta-dehumanization positively correlated with sacrifices for group and value. In contrast, in study 3b meta-dehumanization negatively correlated with sacrifices for group and value.

< Table 4 >

To test the hypothesis that fusion is associated with the will to fight for the group and for the value strongly through ingroup humanization, we conducted four mediation analysis with 5,000 bootstraps using the IBM SPSS PROCESS macro (Model 4) from Hayes (2022). For each model, we included fusion as the predictor; ingroup humanization, outgroup humanization, and meta-humanization as parallel mediators; and the will to fight as the outcome. In Study 3a, the target of the measures was Taiwan as the group and national sovereignty as the value, and in Study 3b, the targets were Palestine as the group and the right of return as the value.

As shown in Figures 3a and 3b, the indirect effects of fusion on the will to fight for the group and for the value were significant in both studies through ingroup humanization. However, in all the cases, the mediation was partial.

The indirect effects on the will to fight through outgroup humanization was significant only in Study 3a and fusion with national sovereignty was positively associated with the will to fight via dehumanizing the members of the Chinese government. The comparison of the size of the indirect effects yielded significant

differences, $z = 3.88$, $SE = 0.01$, $p < .001$, indicating that the indirect effect through ingroup humanization was stronger than the indirect effect through outgroup dehumanization.

The indirect effect through meta-humanization was significant only in Study 3b. Participants strongly fused with the right of return tended to perceive that Israelis viewed them as more human, which in turn was negatively associated with the will to fight. Nevertheless, comparisons between indirect effects revealed that the indirect effect through ingroup humanization was significantly stronger than the indirect effect through meta-humanization, $z = 5.11$, $SE = 0.02$, $p < .001$.

< Figure 3a >

< Figure 3b >

These results indicate that individuals strongly fused with their country or with a shared core value are more willing to fight on behalf of the country or the value mainly through humanizing the ingroup, more strongly and consistently than through dehumanizing the outgroup or meta-dehumanization.

Discussion

The results of Studies 3a and 3b replicate previous findings and provide evidence for Hypotheses 1 through 4. Specifically, identity fusion was positively associated with the will to fight and ingroup humanization; ingroup humanization was positively associated with the will to fight; and the analyses suggested an indirect association between fusion and the will to fight through ingroup humanization.

As happened with studies 2a and 2b, results partially support the first section of hypothesis 5. Fusion with the group was positively associated with outgroup dehumanization in study 3b, and fusion with the value was positively associated with outgroup dehumanization in studies 3a and 3b. However, fusion with the group was

unrelated to outgroup dehumanization in study 3a. Fusion with the group was unrelated to meta-dehumanization in the two studies. In contrast, fusion with the value was positively associated with meta-dehumanization in the two studies.

However, as expected, and confirming the second section of hypothesis 5, the analyses revealed that the association between fusion and outgroup dehumanization, and the association between fusion and meta-dehumanization were weaker than the association between fusion and ingroup humanization in the two studies no matter whether the target was a group or a value.

Regarding hypothesis 6, as predicted, outgroup dehumanization was positively associated to sacrifices for the group in studies 3a and 3b, and to sacrifices for the value in study 3b. However, outgroup dehumanization was unrelated to sacrifices for the group in study 3b. Meta-dehumanization was significantly associated to sacrifices for group and value in the two studies. However, while these associations were positive in study 3a, they were negative in study 3b.

Finally, studies 3a and 3b provided additional evidence supporting hypothesis 7. In study 3a, the indirect association between fusion and sacrifices for the value emerged through outgroup dehumanization, and in study 3b, the indirect association between fusion and sacrifices for the value was significant through meta-dehumanization. However, even in these cases, the indirect associations between fusion and sacrifices through outgroup dehumanization and meta-dehumanization were weaker than the indirect association through ingroup humanization.

The analyses conducted for these studies do not support our alternative explanation of the mediation through outgroup dehumanization obtained in Study 2b, according to which the indirect effect of fusion on the will to fight through dehumanizing the outgroup could be context-dependent—that is, occurring only under

conditions of an actual or potential conflict. The possibility that this pathway depends on other contextual or psychological factors (e.g., perceived moral obligations toward the group, normative support for violence for the ingroup, or the structure of authority within the group) cannot be ruled out.

Finally, Studies 3a and 3b also showed that the association between fusion and the will to fight would not be consistently explained by meta-humanization, a pattern that only occurred in one of the four mediational analyses.

General Discussion

In seven cross-sectional studies conducted in the field, we tested the general assumption that fusion with a group and with a core value shared with ingroup members is positively associated with the will to fight more strongly through intragroup processes (ingroup humanization), than through intergroup factors (outgroup humanization and meta-humanization).

Studies 1a and 1b with PDL belonging to gangs in Spain and with non-violent extremists in Indonesia, showed that fusion was positively associated with the humanization of the ingroup, which in turn was positively associated with the will to fight. The results were replicated when the target was a group—the gang—and a value—religion.

Studies 2a, 2b, and 2c involving PDL in the Philippines, general population in the West Bank, and former members of the militant Basque nationalist organization ETA, replicated previous findings. In addition, these studies indicated that fusion was positively associated with outgroup dehumanization in study 2b, but not in studies 2a and 2b. However, the results confirmed that, as expected, the association between fusion and outgroup dehumanization was weaker than the correlation between fusion and ingroup humanization in the three studies. Outgroup humanization correlated

significantly with the will to fight in Study 2b, but the correlation was not significant in studies 2a and 2c. The results of studies 2a and 2c showed that the indirect association between fusion and the will to fight occurred only through ingroup humanization. However, in study 2b, the indirect effect of fusion on the will to fight through ingroup humanization and outgroup dehumanization was similar.

Studies 3a and 3b included strategically critical groups in Taiwan and citizens of Gaza. The results replicated previous findings and fusion was positively associated to the will to fight through humanizing the ingroup when the target was a group, Taiwan or Palestine, and a value, national sovereignty or the right of return. Outgroup dehumanization was positively associated with fusion with the group in study 3b and fusion with the value in the two studies. Also in the two studies, meta-dehumanization was unrelated with fusion with the group, but positively associated with fusion with the value. As expected, and in all cases, the association between fusion and outgroup dehumanization, and between fusion and meta-dehumanization, were weaker than the association between fusion and ingroup humanization. Results also indicated that outgroup dehumanization was positively associated to sacrifices for the group in studies 3a and 3b, and to sacrifices for the value in study 3b, and meta-dehumanization was significantly associated to sacrifices for group and value in the two studies. However, while these associations were positive in study 3a, they were negative in study 3b. But importantly, although the indirect association between fusion and sacrifices for the value emerged in study 3a through outgroup dehumanization, and in study 3b, through meta-dehumanization, these associations were weaker than the indirect association through ingroup humanization.

In conclusion, the results of our studies provide strong convergent evidence that fusion with a group and with a core value shared with ingroup members are positively

associated with the will to fight more strongly through ingroup humanization than through outgroup humanization or meta-humanization.

Although the results of these studies confirm our general assumption, it merits attention the finding that the association between fusion and the will to fight was also significant through the dehumanization of the outgroup in Studies 2b and 3a conducted in the West Bank and Taiwan when the target was the country for Study 2b, or the value for Study 3a respectively, and via meta-dehumanization in Study 3b conducted in Gaza, when the target was the value.

A potential explanation is that, under an actual or a potential armed conflict (as the studies conducted in Palestine and in Taiwan respectively), the danger is so extraordinary that could motivate strongly fused individuals to dehumanize their enemy or to perceive that the outgroup dehumanizes them. In fact, research on dehumanization has consistently shown that perceived threat from an outgroup is a key antecedent of the dehumanization process (e.g., Castano & Giner-Sorolla, 2006; Čehajić et al., 2009; Cuddy et al., 2007; Haslam, 2006; Haslam & Loughnan, 2014). But importantly, and in any case, analyses indicated that, even under these circumstances of dramatic threat, only the path from fusion to the will to fight through the humanization of the ingroup is consistent and stronger among the studies.

Our evidence that identity fusion operates on the will to fight more strongly through ingroup humanization dovetails with evidence that strongly fused persons are positive toward outgroups and only when threatened they become hostile and aggressive. For example, previous research indicates that only after three different forms of negative intergroup contact (direct, extended, and depersonalized) did strongly fused individuals denigrate outgroup members (Vázquez, Gómez et al., 2023). The recently developed fusion-secure base hypothesis (Klein & Bastian, 2023) states that

fusion may engender positive intergroup relations in the absence of outgroup threat. Being fused with a group can act as a source of support and security and can even promote intergroup trust and cooperation (Klein et al., 2024).

Regarding dehumanization, in the two studies conducted in Palestine (Studies 2b and 3b when the target was the value), and in the study conducted in Taiwan, when the target was the group (Study 3a), as expected, dehumanizing the outgroup was associated with the will to fight. In the case of Taiwan, when the target was national sovereignty, the association was not significant, but the effect goes in line with what it was predicted. However, the association between dehumanization and the will to fight was not significant in the two studies conducted in prison, with gangs in the Philippines, and with ETA in Spain. A potential explanation supported by the comments of the inmates while responding to the interviews is that, in prison, intergroup contact with members of other gangs is positive, what, according to Haslam et al. (2021), reduces dehumanization and meta-dehumanization and its consequences.

In the case of meta-dehumanization the pattern is more complex. The results in Gaza confirm that perceptions of being dehumanized by Israelis is positively associated with the will to fight. In contrast, the findings in Taiwan show that perceptions of being dehumanized is negatively associated with the will to fight.

A final finding that deserves attention is the relationship between ingroup and outgroup humanization. Results indicate a weak negative association between these constructs in the two studies conducted in Palestine, whereas a positive association emerged in the studies conducted in relatively lower-threat contexts (e.g., prison samples, gangs in the Philippines, former ETA members in Spain, and participants from Taiwan).

This pattern may be understood in light of contextual variations in intergroup relations. From a social identity perspective, strong intergroup differentiation under conditions of salient and ongoing conflict may be associated with reduced attribution of human qualities to the outgroup relative to the ingroup, which is consistent with the pattern observed in Palestine.

In contrast, identity fusion theory emphasizes the importance of relational bonds and suggests that, in the absence of acute intergroup threat (Vázquez, Gómez et al., 2023), intergroup evaluations may be less driven by comparative differentiation processes and more by generalized relational orientations. Under these conditions, perceptions of humanity toward ingroup and outgroup members may covary rather than diverge.

This interpretation is also broadly consistent with recent interpersonal accounts of “tethered humanity,” which propose that the perception of humanity can become dynamically interdependent between individuals involved in conflictual relationships (Vaes & Bastian, 2021). According to this framework, perpetrators and victims may experience their sense of humanity as mutually linked, such that harm to one’s humanity is associated with a diminished sense of humanity in the self, and that re-humanization of the other can facilitate the restoration of one’s own full human status. Although originally developed in the context of interpersonal harm and reconciliation, this perspective suggests a broader principle whereby humanization processes may become interdependent rather than strictly antagonistic, offering a complementary explanation for the positive association between ingroup and outgroup humanization observed in low-threat contexts.

Summarizing, our findings build upon earlier evidence suggesting that the mechanisms through which identity fusion is associated with the willingness to fight

may be rooted in the personal self, the characteristics of the group, or the interaction between the self and the group (see Gómez, Vázquez, Blanco, et al., 2025, for a review). The present studies indicate that ingroup humanization was the most consistent and comparatively strongest of the three mechanisms examined, relative to outgroup dehumanization and meta-dehumanization. At the same time, the generally modest indirect effects and the persistence of direct associations indicate that these pathways account for only part of the overall relationship, and that additional psychological mechanisms are likely to be involved. That is, ingroup humanization appears to represent one relevant pathway through which identity fusion is associated with the willingness to fight, while additional psychological processes are also likely to contribute.

Identity Fusion and Humanness

To the best of our knowledge, this is the first investigation that empirically test the relationship between identity fusion and the attribution of humanness to the ingroup and the outgroup, as well as meta-humanization. Although preliminary research identified dehumanizing vocabulary in the analyses of violent self-sacrificial manifestos in which fusion played a role (Ebner et al., 2022b) and a high prevalence of fusion indicators alongside dehumanizing language in multiple QAnon groups (Ebner et al., 2022a), these findings cannot establish a direct link between fusion and dehumanization.

Despite its relevance, ingroup humanization has received considerably less attention in the literature. Research has primarily focused on the idea that people may draw distinctions between groups along the human dimension due to a general motivation to differentiate their own humanness from that of others, which often serves as the primary basis for achieving positive intergroup distinctiveness (e.g., Koval et al.,

2012; Vaes et al., 2012, 2014; Vaes & Paladino, 2010). However, intergroup distinctiveness is not the glue that binds strongly fused individuals together, nor the motive that drives their behavior (Gómez et al., 2020; Swann et al., 2024). The present work contributes to this literature by introducing the role of ingroup humanization as a motivational process underlying the will to fight for the ingroup among individuals fused with the group or with core values shared by other group members.

In contrast, outgroup dehumanization and meta-dehumanization have been the focus of extensive research as a motive to justify war and genocide (Staub, 1989) (Kelman, 1973), other kinds of violent behavior (Bandura et al., 1996), punitive attitudes or harsh treatment (Viki et al., 2013), and intergroup conflict or hostility (e.g., Kteily et al., 2016; Landry et al., 2022), among others. However, and although in some cases operates as a mechanism between fusion and the will to fight, neither the dehumanization of the outgroup nor meta-dehumanization accounted for a consistent role in the positive association between fusion and the will to fight in our research. Two explanations help clarify the weakness of this association and its exceptions. First, as our general prediction states, strongly fused individuals are more focused on intragroup dynamics than on intergroup relations. Second, although in our studies outgroup dehumanization did not generally explain the association between fusion and the will to fight, this does not preclude the possibility that, under certain conditions, fusion may shape how strongly fused individuals perceive and relate to outgroups. In this regard, recent work by Yin et al. (2026) demonstrated that when moral viewpoints are recognized by others this gives rise to what they termed *moralized identity fusion*, wherein personal and group identities become deeply intertwined through shared moral commitments. Following Scatolon et al. (2023), morality is essential for human social survival and has been identified as one of the most influential human traits in processes

of humanization and dehumanization (e.g., Bastian et al., 2011; Haslam et al., 2012; Rai et al., 2017). In turn, human qualities attributed to the self or the ingroup may facilitate the humanization of others (Scatolon et al., 2023). Consistent with this idea, Studies 2a-2c and 3a revealed positive correlations between ingroup humanization and outgroup humanization. It is therefore possible that perceived moral similarity between the ingroup and the outgroup might improve intergroup relations among strongly fused individuals by fostering the humanization of the outgroup.

Limitations

Our research is not free of limitations. The first limitation is that we cannot establish a causal relation between identity fusion and humanization of the ingroup, neither between humanization nor the will to fight, because all the studies conducted in this research are cross-sectional. Although this is a relevant empirical issue, it is important to note that conducting experiments with the kind of samples involved in this investigation is problematic, even almost impossible, and might involve ethical complications. A potential solution could be to include controlled laboratory experiments to provide causal evidence. However, it would be impossible to replicate the nature of the conditions that are living the participants involved in our studies, as being in prison or being a victim in an actual war. We consider that the number of studies included in this investigation and the analyses comparing indirect effects provide enough empirical evidence supporting all our hypotheses. In any case, it would be interesting to explore these dynamics with general population in controlled scenarios to determine whether these mechanisms also operate, and under which conditions.

In addition, although all studies confirm a positive association between fusion and humanization of the ingroup, the cross-sectional design of the studies does not permit to determine whether identity fusion causes ingroup humanization or ingroup

humanization causes fusion. To the same extent that relational ties, feeling of personal agency and the moral justification of the behavior can make strongly fused individuals to humanize the ingroup, perceiving these same characteristics could motivate individuals to get fused with a group. Further research should explore whether there is a unidirectional causality between fusion and ingroup humanization or if each variable plays a dual role, acting both as cause and as a mediator.

Second, the sample size for obtaining reliable effects was not calculated and none of the studies were pre-registered. There are two main reasons for these limitations. First, the nature of the samples of some of the studies, as those involving PDL, does not allow to know beforehand how many participants would be accessible, and how many of them would voluntarily participate in the research. And second, it is impossible for the researcher to determine when and how the data collection will be possible, as in the case of the studies in the West Bank and Gaza. Even conscious of these limitations, we preferred to sacrifice this methodologic rigor for obtaining timely results with unusual samples (for an analysis of why it is so difficult to investigate in this field, see Gómez, Vázquez, Chinchilla, et al., 2023). As the suggestion indicated for the first limitation, adding pre-registered laboratory experiments could help to delve into these mechanisms.

Third, readers might note that in some studies conducted in prisons (Studies 1a, 2a, and 2c) and in the field with non-violent extremists (Study 1b), some participants were excluded from the analyses because they omitted responses required for the mediation models. Such missingness may not have been completely random, although the reasons for nonresponse cannot be determined with the available data. In most studies, the proportion of excluded participants was relatively modest (Study 1a = 7.04%, Study 1b = 4.35%, Study 2a = 5.17%), which makes it unlikely that exclusions

substantially affected the overall pattern of findings. The proportion was higher in Study 2c (25.58%), which may reflect the particularly challenging data-collection context, as participants had experienced long-term incarceration and were being surveyed in this setting for the first time. These findings should therefore be interpreted with additional caution. In contrast, in Studies 2b and 3b, interviews were administered by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research using structured field procedures, and the final datasets contained no missing responses on the variables used in the present analyses.

Fourth, several analyses—particularly those involving indirect effects through out-group dehumanization and meta-dehumanization—had low statistical power. This limitation warrants caution in the interpretation of nonsignificant findings, as insufficient power substantially increases Type II errors. The predicted pattern of results was directly derived from identity fusion theory, and the observed data were consistent with theoretical expectations across studies. Moreover, when indirect effects through intergroup pathways did emerge, they were consistently small in magnitude and significantly weaker than the indirect effects through ingroup humanization. Thus, although low power leaves open the possibility that weak intergroup-mediated effects may exist, the available evidence suggests that such effects are unlikely to rival the primary intragroup mechanism derived from identity fusion theory. Nevertheless, future research with larger samples will be necessary to further clarify their scope and magnitude.

Fifth, a common limitation in psychosocial research concerns the reliance on self-reported outcomes rather than behavioral measures. Although this limitation could also apply to the present investigation, it is worth noting that three of the studies involve individuals who were incarcerated for having previously engaged in extreme behaviors

on behalf of their groups or values. This provides valuable evidence that these participants had already made extreme sacrifices for their most cherished group or value.

Sixth, our outcome measures are different expressions of the will to fight—willingness to fight and die, and costly sacrifices—which are basically defensive and not aggressive. The nature of these measures focusing on protecting the ingroup rather than on damaging the outgroup could explain, to some extent, that humanizing the ingroup mediated the effect between fusion and the will to fight, whereas dehumanizing the outgroup and meta-dehumanization did not. Further research should examine whether the mechanism operating the consequences of fusion differs depending on whether the outcome measure is related to protecting the ingroup or engaging in violence against outgroups.

Seventh, although identity fusion was originally conceived to explain why some individuals are so allied with a group that they are willing to self-sacrifice for it (Swann et al., 2012), the comprehensive identity fusion theory (Swann et al., 2024) extended the nature and the effects of fusion to other targets. Beyond fusion with groups, the second more researched target of fusion has been a value (Gómez et al., 2021; Gómez, Atran, et al., 2022; Gómez, Vázquez, & Atran, 2023; Gómez, Vázquez, Alba, et al., 2025). Our results indicate that, for core values shared with the group, the role of the distinct dimensions of humanization on the association between fusion and the will to fight resembles what happens when the target is a group. However, our findings cannot be applied to other targets of fusion, such as individuals like the romantic partner, a sibling or a political leader (Gómez et al., 2024; Gómez, Vázquez, Alba et al., 2025; Gómez, Vázquez, & Atran, 2023; Kunst et al; 2019; Joo & Park, 2017). This boundary not only

constitutes a limitation of the present research but also highlights promising directions for future research, which are addressed in the next section.

Eight, although multiple trained interviewers conducted data collection across studies and participants were randomly assigned to interviewers with standardized procedures, interviewer effects were not formally modeled. Therefore, we cannot fully rule out the possibility that variation across interviewers may have introduced some degree of measurement variability, a common limitation in field-based research of this nature.

Finally, the studies varied substantially in sample size and therefore in statistical sensitivity, which may have influenced the precision of the estimated effects across studies. Smaller samples are associated with greater uncertainty and wider confidence intervals, whereas larger samples provide more precise estimates and increased sensitivity to detect small effects. At the same time, very large samples may yield statistically significant effects even when effect sizes are small in magnitude, highlighting the importance of focusing on effect sizes and confidence intervals rather than relying solely on statistical significance. Accordingly, results should be interpreted in terms of their overall pattern and consistency across studies rather than focusing on individual significance tests.

Future Research Directions

Our research not only provides important theoretical and empirical insights to the literature about identity fusion and humanization, and its role on the psychology of violence, but also opens the door to further research directions. For instance, beyond perceived threat from the outgroup, which is the main moderator of the effects of identity fusion (e.g., Gómez et al., 2011; Swann et al., 2009), other potential moderators should be investigated to determine whether they influence the relationship between

identity fusion and dehumanization. For instance, research has shown that inducing negative emotions, such as anger, contempt, or disgust (Bastian et al., 2013; Buckels & Trapnell, 2013; Harris & Fiske, 2006), is sufficient to elicit or amplify the dehumanization of others. In this vein, future studies could incorporate these variables, which may be critical in the formation of radicalized groups, to examine whether they have a clear effect on the fusion–dehumanization relationship.

Also, future research should aim to extend the findings of the present study by employing different measures of dehumanization. Individuals who consciously endorse the belief that another group is less than fully human (i.e. blatant dehumanization) are likely to face few constraints in treating them accordingly. In contrast, those whose dehumanizing perceptions conflict with their consciously held beliefs may primarily dehumanize others through omission rather than commission (Kteily & Landry, 2022). Consequently, using more subtle measurement techniques may help detect finer-grained differences in constructs such as willingness to fight. In addition, the antecedents of blatant dehumanization are complex, encompassing perceived threat (Haslam & Loughnan, 2014; Kteily & Landry, 2022). Therefore, it is essential to verify whether the observed effects hold across measures of dehumanization that are less sensitive to intergroup threat.

Finally, although this investigation introduces a new mediator in the literature of identity fusion, our studies do not reveal whether humanizing the ingroup remains as an independent mediator when other explanatory mechanisms of fusion are included. Future research should examine this possibility.

Prevention and Policy Implications

By drawing on an unusually diverse body of empirical evidence involving gang members in Spain and the Philippines, former members of ETA, non-violent extremists

in Indonesia, citizens living under the risk of conflict in Taiwan, and people experiencing war in the West Bank and Gaza, the present investigation offers important insights into the nature of violent and non-violent radicalization, collective violence, and the dynamics of war.

First, our findings indicate that individuals who feel a strong sense of fusion with a group and with shared core values do not always display a willingness to fight for their group because they denigrate their enemies by perceiving them as less than fully human, nor because they believe that themselves are perceived as less human by rival groups. Rather, their willingness to fight is driven consistently and largely by the humanization of individuals who belong to their group or who share fundamental convictions. This finding suggests that, among strongly fused individuals, ingroup humanization may entail a risk of extreme actions that can damage others, even though such actions would be interpreted by perpetrators as acts of protection rather than as harm-inflicting behaviors.

Second, by demonstrating that primarily intragroup factors rather than intergroup mechanisms are the vehicle that can strongly motivate and justify intergroup violence, interventions with individuals at risk of radicalization or programs aimed at fostering disengagement from violence should pay more attention to intragroup dynamics. For instance, strategies aimed at preventing intergroup conflict or improving intergroup relations typically involve dynamics that engage both the ingroup and the outgroup, either directly—such as promoting intergroup contact (e.g., Tropp, 2015)—or indirectly through cognitive mechanisms, including the creation of a common ingroup identity, perspective taking (e.g., Schellhaas & Dovidio, 2016), or the correction of meta-perceptions (Moore-Berg & Hameiri, 2024). If willingness to fight among strongly fused individuals is driven consistently and strongly by intragroup perceptions,

then interventions centered exclusively on these classical strategies are unlikely to be sufficient. Policymakers should recognize that extreme behaviors can emerge in the absence of strong outgroup hatred. Our investigation shows that, for those strongly fused with a group or with core values shared by its members, managing intragroup dynamics can have intergroup consequences. Future interventions should focus on avoiding or reducing the negative effects for others, such as aggression and violence, and foster positive outcomes, such as intergroup harmony and even the desire for peace with rivals. Because fused individuals are often motivated by perceived obligations to protect and care for ingroup members, interventions can channel these motivations into nonviolent, socially constructive forms of engagement (e.g., humanitarian action, community service, or political participation).

Third, regarding prevention policies, indicators of radicalization should incorporate intragroup perceptions, rather than focusing exclusively on non-intragroup factors, such as negative attitudes towards other groups.

Conclusion

The research literature has offered considerable insights into the intragroup mechanisms that explain the effects of identity fusion on extreme behaviors. However, no investigation has empirically tested whether the effects of identity fusion are driven by intergroup factors, such as perceptions of the outgroup or meta-perceptions. The present research addressed this gap by examining the general prediction that fusion with a group and with a core value shared with ingroup members is positively associated with the will to fight more strongly through intragroup processes (ingroup humanization), than through intergroup factors (outgroup humanization and meta-humanization). Our findings support this assumption across different targets of fusion (groups and values) and across diverse samples, including incarcerated individuals

(members of gangs and members of a violent extremist independentist group), non-violent extremists, and individuals living in actual conflict or war-affected contexts (citizens from Taiwan, the West Bank, and Gaza). These findings provide strong empirical evidence of the stronger role of intragroup mechanisms in driving the will to fight among strongly fused individuals. In addition, our results offer an innovative theoretical and empirical perspective on the relationship between identity fusion and the attribution of human characteristics to the ingroup, opening avenues for future research.

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Table 1. *Summary of Studies, characteristics of the samples and measurements*

		Fusion	Ingroup's Humanization	Measurements		Expressions of the Will to Fight
				Outgroup's Humanization	Meta-Humanization	
		 Jiménez et al. (2015)	  Kteily et al. (2015)			Willingness to Fight and Die (F&D) Swann et al. (2009) Costly Sacrifices (CS) Gómez et al. (2017)
Study 1a (Spain)	Street Gangs in Prison (<i>N</i> = 71)	Group: Gang	Gang Members	–	–	CS for the Gang
Study 1b (Indonesia)	Non-violent Extremists (<i>N</i> = 138)	Value: Religion	Non-Violent extremists	–	–	F&D for Religion
Study 2a (Philippines)	Gangs in Jail (<i>N</i> = 58)	Group: Gang	Gang Members	Gang's Enemy	–	FD for the Gang
Study 2b (Palestine)	West Bank (<i>N</i> = 1,007)	Group: Palestinians	Palestinians	Israelis	–	CS for Palestine
Study 2c (Spain)	Former ETA members in Prison (<i>N</i> = 86)	Value: Independency	Basques	L.E.A	–	F&D for Independency
Study 3a (Taiwan)	Professionals (<i>N</i> = 613)	Group: Taiwan Value: National Sovereignty	Taiwanese	Chinese	How Chinese perceive Taiwanese	CS for Taiwan and for National Sovereignty
Study 3b (Gaza)	Gaza (<i>N</i> = 500)	Group: Palestine Value: Right of Return	Palestinians	Israelis	How Israelis perceive Palestinians	CS for Palestine and for the Right of Return

Note. L.E.A. = Law Enforcement Agencies.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations for Studies 1a-1b.

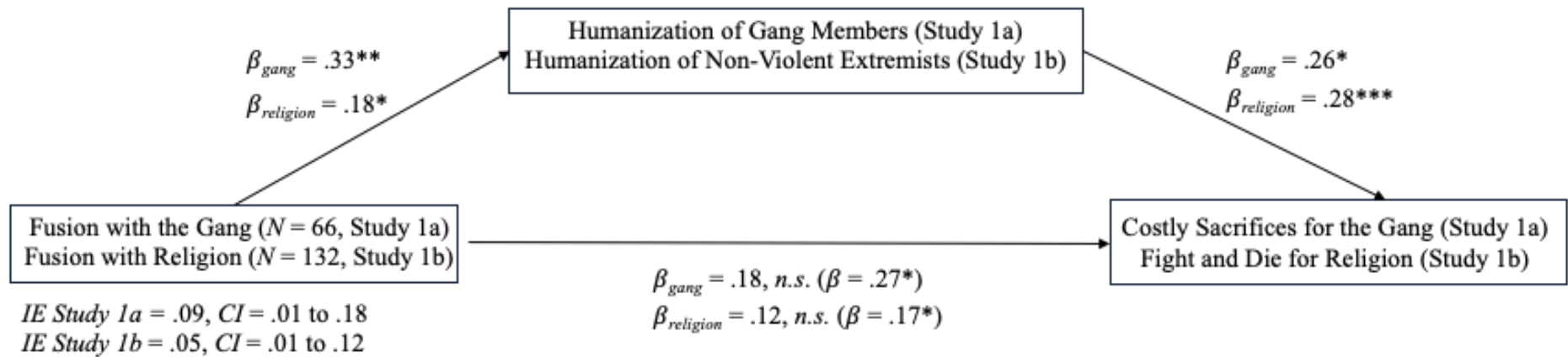
	Study 1a (Street Gangs Inmates, Spain)			Study 1b (Non-Violent extremist, Indonesia)		
	<i>M (SD)</i>	IG Humanization	CS	<i>M (SD)</i>	IG Humanization	F&D
Fusion	.10 (.27)	.33**	.27*	.45 (.42)	.18*	.17*
IG Humanization	49.02 (34.97)		.32**	83.05 (25.61)		.31***
Will to Fight (CS/F&D)	.51 (1.11)			3.77 (2.03)		

Note. IG = Ingroup; F&D = fight and die; CS = costly sacrifices. Values for *fusion* range from 0 to 1, for *ingroup humanization* range from 0 to 100, and for the *will to fight* from 0 to 6.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 1

Fusion is Positively Associated with the Will to Fight through Humanizing the Ingroup among Gang PDL in Spain and Non-violent Extremists in Indonesia.



Note. Standardized coefficients are reported, and 95% confidence intervals were estimated. The total effect of the model is reported within brackets. IE = Indirect effect, CI = confidence interval, n.s. = non-significant. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3*Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations for Studies 2a-2c.*

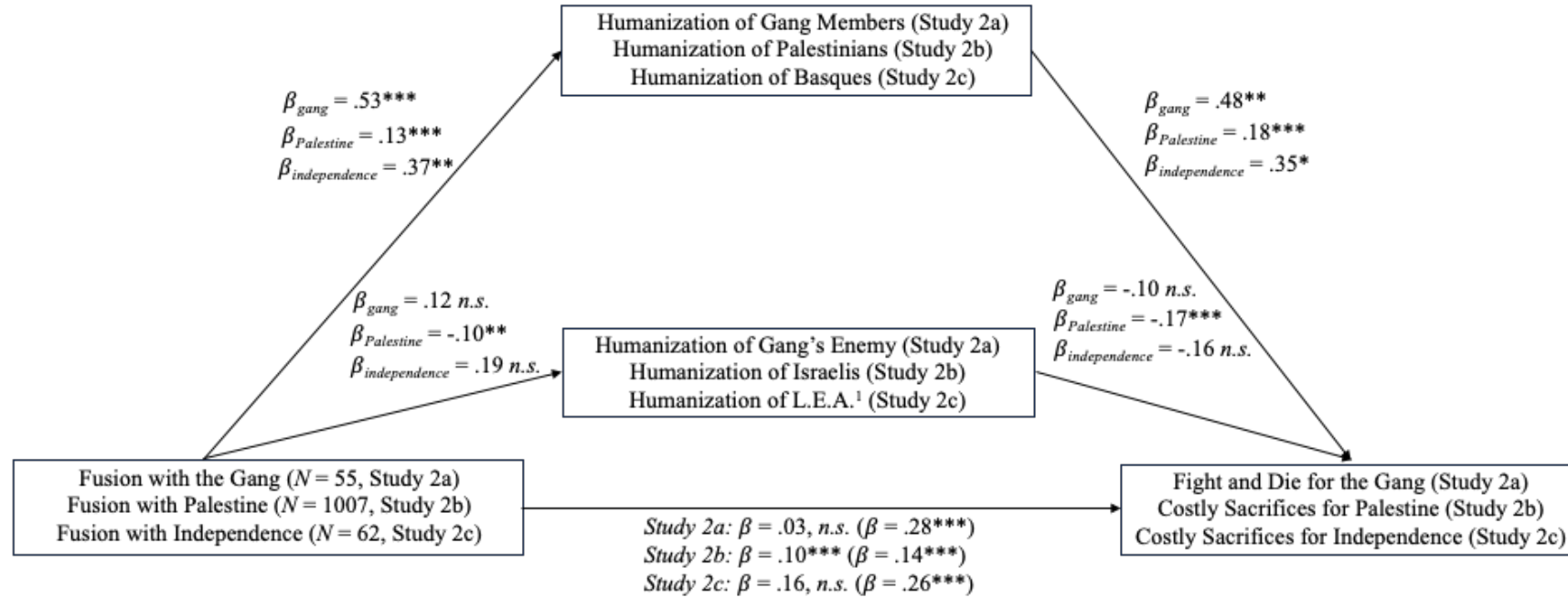
	Study 2a (Gangs in Philippines)				Study 2b (West Bank, Palestine)				Study 2c (Former ETA Members, Spain)			
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Ing. Hum.	Out. Hum.	CS	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Ing. Hum.	Out. Hum.	CS	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Ing. Hum.	Out. Hum.	F&D
Fusion	.51 (.47)	.53***	.12	.28*	.97 (.15)	.13***	-.10**	.14***	.85 (.30)	.37**	.19	.26*
Ing. Hum.	68.57 (30.02)		.46***	.46***	85.35 (17.92)		-.15***	.22***	82.97 (19.78)		.47***	.34**
Out. Hum.	39.20 (33.31)			.13	14.33 (19.66)			-.21***	45.01 (35.78)			.03
CS	2.66 (1.79)				4.06 (1.84)				3.01 (2.11)			

Note. Ing. Hum. = Ingroup Humanization, Out. Hum. = Outgroup Humanization, F&D = fight and die; CS = Costly Sacrifices. Values for *fusion* range from 0 to 1, for all measures of *humanization* range from 0 to 100, and for *costly sacrifices* from 0 to 6.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 2

Fusion is Positively Associated with the Will to Fight Primarily Through Humanizing the Ingroup among Gang Members, Palestinians, and Convicted Former ETA Members.



IE (Study 2a), Fusion-Humanization Ingroup-Fightdie = .25, CI = .09 to .44
IE (Study 2a), Fusion-Humanization Outgroup-Fightdie = -.01, CI = -.10 to .04
IE (Study 2b), Fusion-Humanization Ingroup-Sacrifice = .02, CI = .01 to .04
IE (Study 2b), Fusion-Humanization Outgroup-Sacrifice = .02, CI = .03 to .03
IE (Study 2c), Fusion-Humanization Ingroup-Sacrifice = .13, CI = .01 to .31
IE (Study 2c), Fusion-Humanization Outgroup-Sacrifice = -.03, CI = -.11 to .02

¹ L.A.E. (State Law Enforcement Agencies): Justice System, Police agents, Civil Guards, Prison staff

Note. Standardized coefficients are reported, and 95% confidence intervals were estimated. The total effect of the model is reported within brackets. IE = Indirect effect, CI = confidence interval, n.s. = non-significant. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 4*Means, Standard Deviations and Correlations for Studies 3a-3b*

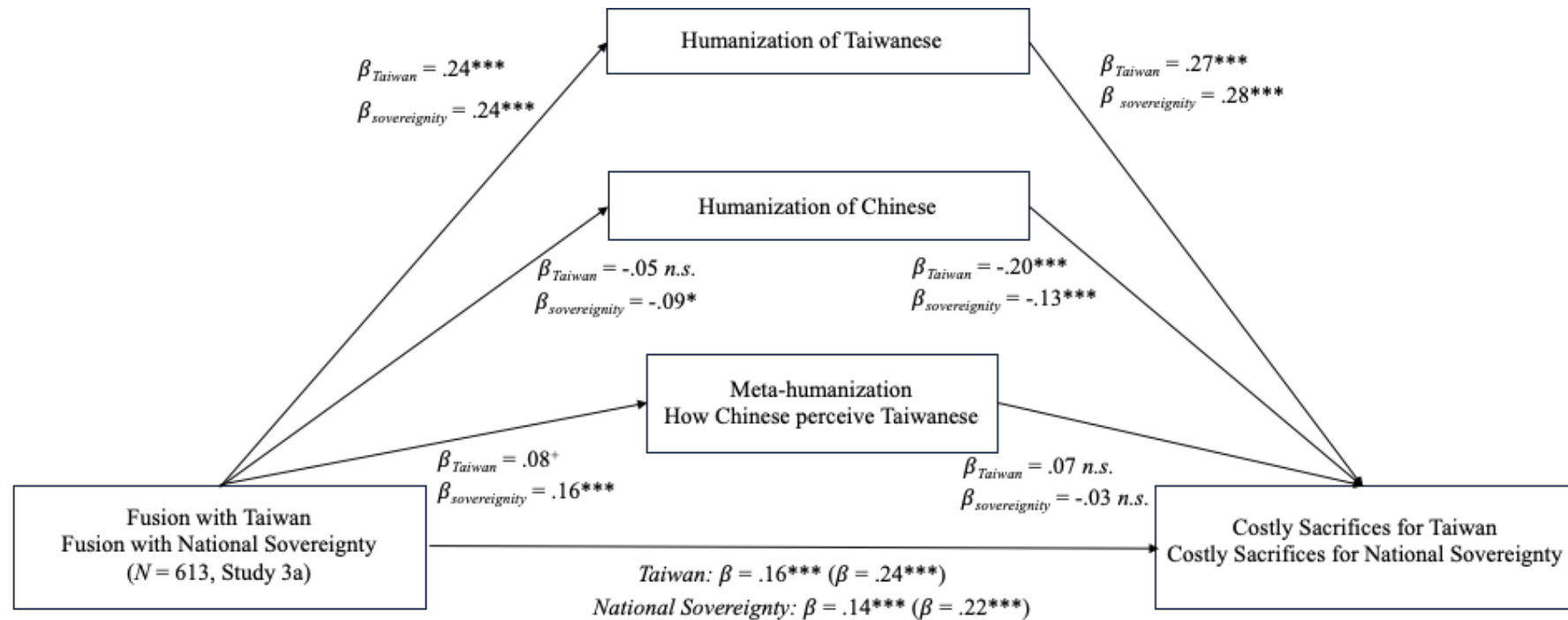
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Fusion Value	Study 3a (Taiwan)					<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Fusion Value	Study 3b (Gaza)				
			Ing. Hum.	Out. Hum.	Meta- Hum.	CS Group	CS Value			Ing. Hum.	Out. Hum.	Meta- Hum.	CS Group	CS Value
Fusion Group	.78 (.33)	.58***	.24***	-.05	.08	.24***	.23***	.69 (.38)	.78***	.27***	-.11*	.06	.37***	.35***
Fusion Value	.81 (.33)		.24***	-.08*	.16***	.22***	.22***	.63 (.40)		.33***	-.19***	.12**	.42***	.41***
Ing. Hum.	72.74 (22.90)			.24***	.59***	.31***	.30***	64.87 (34.53)			-.11*	.05	.34***	.30***
Out. Hum.	42.61 (28.45)				.22***	-.12*	-.07	19.16 (21.33)				.23***	-.19***	-.21***
Meta-Hum.	76.51 (22.30)					.20***	.19***	26.00 (25.56)					-.21***	-.20***
CS Group	44.37 (35.45)						.89***	2.56 (1.73)						.89***
CS Value	43.44 (35.16)							2.52 (1.71)						

Note. Ing. Hum. = Ingroup Humanization, Out. Hum. = Outgroup Humanization, Meta-Hum. = Meta-humanization; F&D = fight and die; CS = costly sacrifices. Values for *fusion* range from 0 to 1, for all measures of *humanization* range from 0 to 100, and for *costly sacrifices* from 0 to 100 in Study 3a and from 0 to 5 in Study 3b.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Figure 3a

Fusion with Taiwan and with the National Sovereignty is Positively Associated with the Will to Fight through Humanizing the Ingroup, not through Dehumanizing the Outgroup, among Taiwanese Citizens.



IEs Fusion with Taiwan

IE Fusion-Humanization Ingroup-Sacrifices = .07, CI = .04 to .10
 IE Fusion-Humanization Outgroup-Sacrifices = .01, CI = -.01 to .03
 IE Fusion-Metahumanization-Sacrifices = .01, CI = -.01 to .02

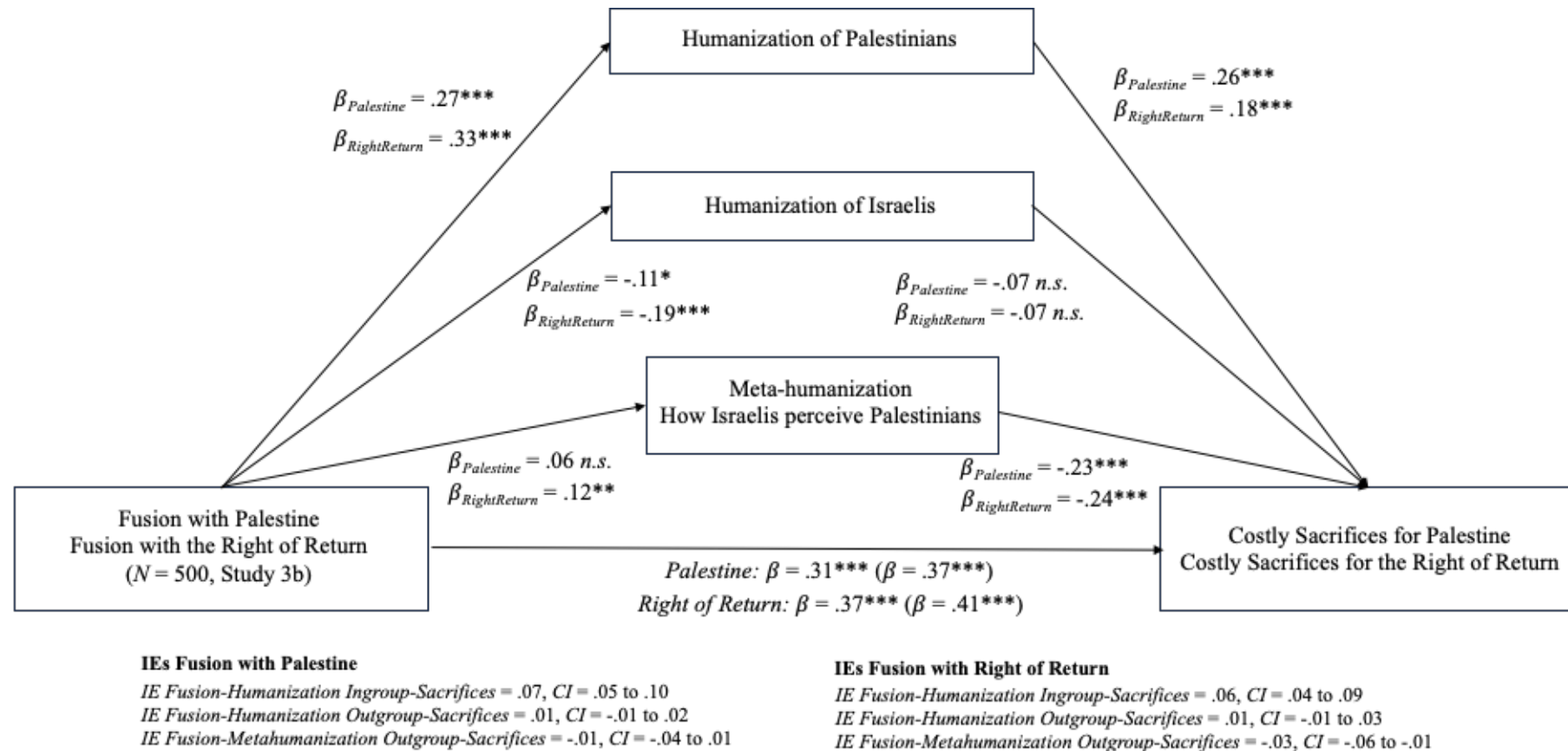
IEs Fusion with National Sovereignty

IE Fusion-Humanization Ingroup-Sacrifices = .07, CI = .04 to .10
 IE Fusion-Humanization Outgroup-Sacrifices = .01, CI = .01 to .03
 IE Fusion-Metahumanization-Sacrifices = .01, CI = -.01 to .02

Note. Standardized coefficients are reported, and 95% confidence intervals were estimated. The total effect of the model is reported within brackets. IE = Indirect effect, CI = confidence interval, n.s. = non-significant. $^+ p = .07$, $^* p < .05$, $^{**} p < .01$, $^{***} p < .001$.

Figure 3b

Fusion with Palestine and with the Right of Return is Positively Associated with the Will to Fight through Humanizing the Ingroup, not through Dehumanizing the Outgroup, among Palestinian Citizens.



Note. Standardized coefficients are reported, and 95% confidence intervals were estimated. The total effect of the model is reported within brackets. IE = Indirect effect, CI = confidence interval, *n.s.* = non-significant. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.