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Abstract

Work on collective action focuses mainly on the perspective of disadvantaged groups. However, the dynamics of social change cannot be fully understood without taking into account the reactions of the members of advantaged groups to collective action by lowstatus groups. In 10 experiments conducted in 4 different intergroup contexts (N = 1349), we examine advantaged groups support for normative versus non-normative collective action by disadvantaged groups. Experiments 1a to 1e show that normative collective action is perceived as more likely to improve the disadvantaged group's position and that non-normative collective action is perceived as more damaging to the advantaged group's social image. Also, these differences are due to differences in perceptions of actions violating norms of protest and perceptions of protesters as blaming the advantaged group for the inequality. Experiments 2a to 3 show that high compared with low identified members of advantaged groups distinguish more between types of collective action, showing a greater preference for the normative type. Both a mediational design and an experimental-causal-chain design (Experiments 3 and 4) show that support among high identifiers depends more on whether collective action damages the high-status group's social image than on whether it actually reduces inequality. Findings suggest that highstatus groups' support for collective action is not only shaped by the perceived likelihood of change but also by its potential damage to the image of the high-status ingroup.

Keywords: collective action, social change, advantaged groups, low-status groups