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Four Core Social-Psychological Motivations to Undertake Collective Action

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Abstract

Collective action against collective disadvantage is a theoretically and socially relevant phenomenon that has received increased scientific attention in recent years. Because recent work combines different theoretical traditions, the last decade can be rightly called an ‘age of integration’. In this article, I take stock and look ahead by briefly reviewing four core social-psychological motivations for undertaking collective action (based on identity, morality, emotion, and efficacy). I then review recent accumulating evidence for an encompassing social-psychological model of collective action that integrates all four core motivations. Based on this model’s shortcomings, I close by calling for an ‘age of innovation’ for which I propose a theoretical and research agenda.

The 2010 and 2011 uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt demonstrate powerfully that individuals can collectively exert the agency to change the social structure. Indeed, the success of the Tunisian and Egyptian mass demonstrations inspired individuals in other countries to undertake collective action in similar ways (e.g., Syria and Yemen). Unfortunately, this success has also led threatened regimes to show their violent faces (e.g., Syria). One can only speculate about how these developments will play out, but at the very least one observation seems true and clear: Collective action, and thus individuals’ participation in it, can ‘make a difference’.

The question of why individuals engage in collective action has received increased scientific attention over the last decade. The key aims of this article are to take stock and look ahead by (a) providing a brief overview of four core social-psychological motivations (based on identity, morality, emotion, and efficacy; e.g., Klandermans, 1997; van Stekelenburg, Klandermans, & van Dijk, 2009), (b) discussing recent accumulating evidence for an encompassing social-psychological model that uniquely incorporates all four core motivations (the *Social Identity Model of Collective Action*; e.g., van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008; van Zomeren, Postmes, Spears, & Bettache, 2011), and by (c) outlining a theoretical and research agenda on ‘innovation’.

Collective Action

Collective action is typically defined by social psychologists as any action that individuals undertake as psychological group members, and with the subjective goal to improve their group’s conditions (Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). Collective action therefore does not have to be large or focused on the powers that be (as was the case in Egypt and Tunisia). In fact, studies of collective action have focused on many different groups and their different disadvantages (van Zomeren et al., 2008). Moreover, collective action does not have to look like *collective* action—a single individual can participate in collective action by, for example, signing a petition. This action can be viewed as collective when individuals act as psychological group members to improve their group’s conditions. Importantly, a slight widening of this

definition (to improve their *or another* group's condition) further accommodates that *advantaged* group members can undertake collective action on behalf of the disadvantaged (van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009; Wright, 2009).

This psychological definition further makes clear that collective action is not only about rare revolutions but also about everyday activism. Although the occurrence of collective action can be viewed as an exception to the general rule of societal stability (e.g., Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), this is merely a matter of perspective. Social and group-dwelling species such as humans have psychological mechanisms available that facilitate social harmony as well as conflict (e.g., De Waal, 1996). Individuals thus have the tools available to maintain as well as challenge the status quo. As a result, any theory of societal stability needs to explain how social change arises, as much as any theory of social change needs to explain how social stability is maintained (van Zomeren, Leach & Spears, 2012).

Socio-structural conditions hinder or afford whether individuals view collective action as an appropriate and efficacious strategy (e.g., Tajfel, 1978). For instance, in the social identity tradition, the perceived stability and legitimacy of the intergroup status differential predicts whether individuals see hope and scope for social change (Ellemers, 1993; Mummendey, Kessler, Klink, & Mielke, 1999). Work from sociology and political science similarly suggests that particular structural conditions must be met before successful mobilization can occur (e.g., a favorable political opportunity structure; see Klandermans, 1997). However, most work on collective action has typically focused on contexts where collective action was already likely or ongoing, which is sometimes interpreted as evidence that these structural variables were indeed in place. Irrespective of the validity of this somewhat circular logic, it has become clear that subjective (as compared to objective) factors are the more proximal predictors of individuals' participation in collective action (e.g., Corcoran, Pettinicchio, & Young, 2011; see also Green, Glaser, & Rich, 1998). Put differently, collective action does not occur without the consent of individuals' hearts and minds. Thus, an understanding of their core motivations to undertake it seems essential.

Four Core Social-Psychological Motivations to Undertake Collective Action

Psychological theories of collective action have focused on different motivations (for detailed summaries see van Zomeren et al., 2008; van Zomeren et al., 2012). In the last two decades, an integrative trend emerged (e.g., Klandermans, 1997; Simon et al., 1998) that has resulted in a consensus that there are four core motivations to undertake collective action: efficacy, identity, emotion, and morality. Specifically, these four core motivations to undertake collective action reflect individuals' *group efficacy* beliefs; their sense of *group identification*; their feelings of *group-based anger* that reflect felt unfairness; and, although having received the least attention to date, their sense of *violated moral standards*. I briefly discuss each in turn before I discuss accumulating evidence for an encompassing model that integrates all four core motivations.

Efficacy

Scholars generally agree that individuals have instrumental motivations to undertake collective action (Olson, 1968; Klandermans, 1984; Mummendey et al., 1999; Simon et al., 1998). Collective action can indeed be an important means to promote or defend material interests (e.g., farmers protesting cuts on subsidies). The theoretical roots of instrumental motivation can be found in early work on individuals' decision to engage in collective action as involving a social dilemma in which individual and group interests are opposed (Olson, 1968). In this dilemma, an individual needs to expend individual costs to participate in collective action, while the

valued benefits are not individually but collectively distributed. This implies that individuals' costless *inaction* could still lead to harvesting the collective benefits of collective action, of course, provided that others do engage in collective action (i.e., the 'free-rider' effect).

Instrumentally motivated individuals are assumed to weigh the value of the desired outcome of collective action against the expected chance of achieving it through collective action (Olson, 1968). For that reason, Klandermans (1984) and Simon et al. (1998) conceptualized instrumental motivation as value-expectancy products. Although individuals' valuation of outcomes and their expectancy of success through collective action are no doubt important, it is quite unclear whether cost-benefit calculations of the form proposed by Olson (1968) are involved. Recent evidence points more strongly to *group efficacy beliefs* as a strong predictor of collective action in its own right (Hornsey et al., 2006; Mummendey et al., 1999). Notably, Corcoran et al. (2011) showed with World Values Survey data from 48 countries that subjective efficacy beliefs predicted collective action. I therefore prefer to conceptualize instrumental motivation through the concept of group efficacy beliefs (defined as individuals' beliefs that the group is able to achieve group goals through joint effort; Bandura, 1997; Mummendey et al., 1999). This fits with the idea that the 'value' element is already indicated by other core motivations such as identity, emotion, and morality.

Identity

Individuals' memberships in groups are of great importance because these reflect the basis for the development of *social* (or *group*) *identities*. The social identity approach to collective action suggests that individuals can identify with these groups (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and thus view themselves and their social context in group terms (e.g., thinking of oneself as 'I' or 'we'; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). One consequence of this insight is that individuals can be motivated to protect, maintain, and enhance their *group* interests or identity (just as they can be motivated to protect, maintain, and enhance their *personal* interests or identity). Moreover, it implies that cost-benefit calculation can occur as much on the individual as on the group level (Louis, Taylor, & Neil, 2004; see also Blackwood & Louis, 2012). This casts serious doubt on whether an individualistic value-expectancy approach such as used in Klandermans (1984) and Simon et al. (1998) can conceptually capture individuals' instrumental motivations to undertake collective action.

Research on social identity and collective action has consistently shown that stronger group identification leads to stronger intentions to act collectively and to a higher likelihood of participation in collective action (Simon et al., 1998; van Zomeren et al., 2008). This is particularly the case when group norms associated with a particular social identity prescribe collective action (for instance in the case of action groups; e.g., Simon et al., 1998). Meta-analytic results confirm that group identification is a powerful predictor of collective action, and that identification with an action group (which are associated with clearer norms about action) is an even stronger predictor (van Zomeren et al., 2008).

Although some have conceptualized the instrumental and identity motivations to undertake collective action as separate motivational pathways (e.g., Simon et al., 1998), it is doubtful whether this conceptualization is complete. Louis et al. (2004), for instance, found that high identifiers based their instrumental calculations on *group-level* costs and benefits, whereas lower identifiers focused on *individual-level* costs and benefits. Cost-benefit calculation, then, is an important psychological mechanism involved in making decisions, but there is nothing inherently individualistic about it. This is unsurprising if one considers that self-interest can refer to individuals' *personal* self or identity (i.e., 'I as a unique individual) but also to individuals' *group* self or identity (i.e., who I am as a group member). Cost-benefit calculation

therefore does not have to be restricted to individuals' *personal* value of and expectancy about the group goals that collective action seeks to achieve (Kramer & Brewer, 1984). Indeed, this is exactly why the 'expectancy' element deserves a focus of its own (see also Tabri & Conway, 2011). The 'value' element is indicated by different motivations based on identity but also on emotion and morality.

Emotion

Arguably the strongest historical shift in thinking about motivations for collective action can be found in the conceptualization of emotions. Two major sources of influence were Le Bon (1896), who influentially associated crowds with emotional irrationality (a view unsupported by systematic research; McPhail, 1971), and Freud (1926), who focused on emotions as intrapsychic conflicts that required catharsis through violence (a hypothesis rejected by current theory and research; e.g., Bushman, 2002; Frijda, 1986; Scherer, Schorr, & Johnstone, 2001). Scholars influenced by these ideas assumed that collective action is fuelled by primitive impulses such as frustration and general discontent that led to violence and social disarray.

This view has changed dramatically. Recent work focused on how emotional motivations (or *e-motivations* for short; Roseman, 2001) gear individuals up for collective action (e.g., Miller, Cronin, Garcia, & Branscombe, 2009; Tausch & Becker, 2012; van Stekelenburg et al., 2009). Based on modern psychological theorizing that suggests that emotions perform a key role in human functioning (Lazarus, 1991; Scherer et al., 2001; van Zomeren et al., 2012), emotion is conceptualized as a dynamic psychological mechanism that guides individuals' efforts to cope with their environment (Lazarus, 1991). The cognitive appraisal of their environment leads to the experience of discrete emotions (e.g., anger or fear), which are associated with states of action readiness that prepare individuals for adaptive action.

A broad range of work suggests that *anger* is the most relevant emotion with respect to collective action because it is an approach emotion (see Carver & Harmon-Jones, 2009) that seeks to redress injustices (Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Runciman, 1966; Walker & Smith, 2002). In this respect, the emotion process is as 'rational' as the cost-benefit calculation process (Frank, 1988). Moreover, just as cost-benefit calculation can occur at the individual or group level, so can emotions like anger be experienced at the individual or group level (Smith, Seger, & Mackie, 2007). Recent work has found that *group-based anger* systematically predicts individuals' willingness to engage in collective action and actual collective action (e.g., Miller et al., 2009; Tausch & Becker, 2012). Indeed, there is a conceptual fit between the importance of individuals' *group* identity, *group* efficacy beliefs, and *group-based* anger in predicting collective action against *collective* disadvantage.

Morality

The fourth core motivation to undertake collective action is based on violations of individuals' moral standards. As such this motivation is different from mere perceptions of illegitimacy and injustice (e.g., Haidt, 2007; Skitka, Bauman, & Sargis, 2005). For instance, research shows that individuals with strong moral convictions (e.g., anti-abortionists) are quite likely to *adjust* their sense of what is legitimate and just to defend their underlying sense of what is *absolutely right* (e.g., Mullen & Skitka, 2006). In line with Klandermans' (1997) notion of violated principles, recent work has focused on *violated moral convictions*, defined as strong and absolute attitudes on a moralized issue. The key point here is that such moral motivations derive from violations

of standards that carry a strong self-relevance and which are viewed as subjectively absolute (i.e., no violation can be tolerated because the moral standard must be defended; Tetlock, 2002).

This line of thought concurs with the importance of e-motivations for collective action because theory and research on moral violations suggest that anger is a likely response to violations of moral standards (e.g., Rozin, Lowery, Imada & Haidt, 1999; Shweder, Much, Mahapatra & Park, 1997; Skitka et al., 2005; Tetlock, 2002). Furthermore, the distinction between the individual and group level is also key with respect to moral convictions. Moral standards can be *collectively* deduced when group ideology informs individuals' moral standards (Turner et al., 1987). However, they can also be *individually* induced such as when moral convictions develop within individuals (Skitka et al., 2005). This implies that any violation of these standards could bring individuals together who share these convictions (e.g., defending human rights), independent of the groups they may be part of. Thus, moral motivation may not only be important in providing a fourth core motivation to participate in collective action but also in potentially *uniting* the disadvantaged and (part of) the advantaged in a joint struggle for social change (van Zomeren et al., 2011).

Integration

Theoretical and empirical integration is an important scientific goal because it paves the road toward a broad and unified understanding of, in this particular case, the psychology of collective action. Earlier integrative attempts, however, did not incorporate all four core motivations, mostly because these did not make explicit the importance of moral motivations (e.g., Mummendey et al., 1999; Simon et al., 1998). The recently extended social identity model of collective action (SIMCA) integrates all four core motivations.

In the SIMCA, individuals' social identity is positioned at the model's core, which reflects the assumption that individuals are motivated to protect, maintain, or enhance their group identity and interests. A stronger sense of 'us' is assumed to predict collective action *directly* because it engenders conformity to the group's norms about collective action. Moreover, group identity is further assumed to predict collective action *indirectly* through individuals' group-based anger (which is based on group identity because it enables the group-based appraisal of unfairness in group terms; Smith et al., 2007). Similarly, group identity fosters individuals' instrumental motivation, although lower identifiers' group efficacy beliefs are likely to be part of their *individual* calculus (based on personal identity), whereas higher identifiers' group efficacy beliefs are likely to be part of their *group-based* calculus (based on social identity). Thus, social identity is viewed as a psychological platform on which individuals can become motivated for collective action in different ways (for a detailed discussion see van Zomeren et al., 2008).

Importantly, this triad of motivations is assumed to be relatively *context-dependent*. For instance, although individuals may not strongly identify with a particular group, specific events can make their social identity salient and thus motivate them to engage in collective action. Similarly, (the appraisal of) specific events may evoke individuals' feelings of group-based anger and/or change their group efficacy beliefs. The conceptualization of this motivational triad sharply contrasts with that of individuals' moral motivation because moral convictions are assumed to be relatively *context-independent* (Skitka et al., 2005). For this reason, moral motivation has quite a special place in the extended SIMCA.

Specifically, violated moral standards are predicted to make salient the relevant group identity or strengthen group identification, which in turn predicts collective action directly and indirectly (i.e., through group-based anger and group efficacy). Thus, individuals should identify more strongly with a group that *normatively fits* their personal convictions. As a

consequence, violated moral standards act as motivational *catalysts* because they also increase group-based anger (in line with work on moral violations; e.g., Rozin et al., 1999; Shweder et al., 1997; Skitka et al., 2005) and group efficacy (because absolute convictions *must* be achievable; van Zomeren et al., 2012). Together, this motivational quartet exerts a significant motivational ‘push’ toward participation in collective action. Moreover, because of its special place in the SIMCA, moral motivation arguably represents the core motivation that uniquely motivates the *advantaged* to act on behalf of the disadvantaged group. Indeed, exactly because of its relative context-independency, moral motivation has the potential to *unite* individuals from both disadvantaged and advantaged groups through new group identities defined by joint moral convictions. The inclusion of moral motivation thus effectively elevates the status of the SIMCA to a model of collective action for the disadvantaged as well as the advantaged.

Recent empirical evidence has been kind to the model’s predictions across quite diverse samples, issues, and contexts. For instance, Tabri and Conway (2011) surveyed Lebanese Christians (representing a disadvantaged or low-status group in that context) and found reliable support for the SIMCA’s predicted associations between measures of group identification, perceived group injustice, perceived group (in)efficacy, and collective action intentions. Similarly, Cakal, Hewstone, Schwär, and Heath (2011) found among South-African Blacks that although group identification predicted group efficacy but not relative deprivation, both predicted collective action intentions in turn. These studies, however, did not include a measure of moral motivation.

Mazzoni, van Zomeren, and Cicognani (2013) included such a measure in their survey of Italian Water Movement activists and potential sympathizers. They found, across these two samples and in line with the SIMCA, that moral motivation (operationalized as right violation in both studies) predicted identification with the Water Movement, which in turn predicted intended activism. Furthermore, van Zomeren, Postmes, et al. (2012, Study 2) found support for the SIMCA in a study on Italian consumers’ response to European legislation that would violate their ‘right to know’ (in terms of clearly labeling food that incorporates genetically modified ingredients). Violated moral convictions about this ‘right to know’ predicted identification with the relevant group (Greenpeace), which in turn predicted group-based anger, group efficacy, willingness to engage in collective action, and the signing of a Greenpeace petition. Thus, recent studies supported the validity of the four core motivations as well as their integrative conceptualization in the SIMCA among disadvantaged group members.

Recent studies also tested the predictive power of the SIMCA for members of advantaged groups. Tabri and Conway (2011) also surveyed Lebanese Muslims (which represent the advantaged or high-status group in that context) and again found general support for the SIMCA (barring the absence of significant correlations between perceived group injustice and the other SIMCA variables). Similarly, Cakal et al. (2011) found among South-African Whites that group identification predicted group efficacy and relative deprivation, both of which predicted collective action intentions in turn. Finally, Thomas, Mavor, and McGarty (2012) found support for the SIMCA at the correlational level in three studies about support for developing nations among Australian student, university community, and community samples. Nevertheless, these studies did not include a measure of moral motivation.

van Zomeren et al. (2011, Study 2) tested the SIMCA including a measure of moral conviction among the advantaged Hong Kong Chinese who responded to the unfair discrimination of the disadvantaged Mainland Chinese in Hong Kong. Results showed that violated moral convictions about discrimination predicted identification with the disadvantaged group, which in turn predicted group-based anger and collective action tendencies. Violated moral conviction also affected group efficacy, which predicted collective action tendencies. Taken

together, recent research supported the general validity of the four core motivations as well as their integrative conceptualization in the SIMCA among advantaged group members.

With respect to the SIMCA's internal validity, experimental research has supported some of the causal links suggested by the SIMCA. For example, Simon et al. (1998, Study 2) and van Zomeren, Spears, and Leach (2008, Study 2) found evidence for the causal effect of group identification on collective action (tendencies). Miller et al. (2009) found evidence for the causal effect of group-based anger on collective action, whereas van Zomeren et al. (2010) found evidence for the causal effect of group efficacy on collective action. The SIMCA's internal validity thus seems quite good. Its external validity also seems very good considering the diverse research contexts of the recent studies that supported the SIMCA. Indeed, despite many between-study differences, the general line of integrative thought as offered by the SIMCA seems to be one that is broadly applicable. In a way, this should not be surprising because the SIMCA was originally synthesized from many different studies that employed different populations, groups, and contexts. The addition of moral conviction ensures that morally motivated collective protests now also fall within the purview of the model. As such, the SIMCA represents a considerable step toward an encompassing psychological model of collective action. Of course, this is not to say that the model is complete or indeed fully encompassing. Below, I outline shortcomings of the model and link them to a theoretical and research agenda of innovation.

Innovation

Innovation is the main theme for the field of collective action at present. After the 'age of integration' (van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009), it is time now for scholars to focus on questions that require new theorizing and novel ways of thinking (see also van Zomeren & Klandermans, 2011). Recognizing the limitations of models such as the SIMCA can be a starting point for such innovative work. I elaborate on three key issues below.

Effects of (repeated) participation in collective action

The SIMCA is a descriptive model that explains collective action but also stops precisely at that point. I therefore join a chorus of voices in the literature that call for a focus on *dynamics* (Drury & Reicher, 2005, 2009; Klandermans, 1997; van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009). Although some refer in this respect to more macro- or meso-level interaction between the 'demand' and 'supply' side of contention (Klandermans, 1997; see Corcoran et al., 2011), I refer here to including the social-psychological *consequences* of undertaking collective action as part of the dynamic processes that lead to collective action and social change (van Zomeren et al., 2012). Because studies on collective action typically focus on predicting it, research into its social-psychological consequences is only quite recent. Although this research reveals that participating in collective action can affect at least three of the core motivations (i.e., identity, emotion, and efficacy; e.g., Becker, Tausch, & Wagner, 2011; Drury & Reicher, 2009), I believe there are more innovative questions to ask about the effects of (repeated) participation in collective action. These all revolve around the larger question of how ordinary individuals become seasoned activists, or, put differently, how fighting for (lasting) social change leads to (lasting) psychological change.

For instance, does (repeated) participation in collective action develop individuals' moral convictions (the fourth core motivation)? Although moral convictions are believed to be fairly stable over time, this does not explain their genesis (nor their demise). Furthermore, does (repeated) participation turn situational emotional experiences like anger into more structural

sentiments (e.g., Halperin & Gross, 2011)? Finally, does (repeated) participation politicize individuals' group identity (Simon et al., 1998)? With respect to the latter question, I believe that using *multidimensional* conceptualizations of group identification will be fruitful in revealing whether particular aspects of group identity are more strongly related to politicization (e.g., Giguère & Lalonde, 2010; Leach et al., 2008). The field needs to start asking innovative questions like these that may help to explain how ordinary individuals become seasoned activists.

Embedding specific theorizing into general theories

Although the SIMCA integrates four core motivations to undertake collective action, it is not grounded in a larger theory about human functioning. This is mainly, I believe, because the field lacks an underlying consensus about such a theory. As a consequence, there are many small theories and models that each explain their own phenomenon in their own little niche in the literature. Yet what is missing, really, is the big picture. Elsewhere, my colleagues and I have argued that one promising avenue of theorizing is Lazarus' (1991) cognitive-motivational-relational theory (van Zomeren et al., 2012). This theory covers the psychological processes of appraisal, emotion, coping, and reappraisal and in doing so includes all four core motivations.

Indeed, according to Lazarus (1991), individuals constantly attempt to manage the demands of their environment. *Coping* refers in this respect to the continuous process of managing the person-environment relationship. Key appraisals of the situation (e.g., self-relevance, blame for unfairness, coping potential) help individuals to respond adaptively to the situation), be it through cost-benefit calculation, emotion, and either as a function of identity or morality concerns. Importantly, Lazarus (1991) also allows for dynamic feedback loops between, for instance, collective action and the appraisals that guide the coping process. Of course, this is just one example of embedding the four core motivations within a larger theory about human functioning. Nevertheless, I believe the field is in dire need of innovative theorizing at this 'big picture' level.

Multidisciplinarity

The SIMCA is a psychological model. Such psychological models need to be embedded into theories of collective action from other disciplines. This is necessary because the psychology of collective action does not examine its nonpsychological causes or consequences (e.g., Corcoran et al., 2011). It is striking that, for instance, there is little evidence to date that supports the common assumption in our field that collective action is an effective tool to achieve social change (Louis, 2009). Ironically, it seems that the million-dollar question of whether collective action has *objective* impact (and under which objective conditions, and for what reasons), remains unanswered. I believe that answering this question necessitates a multidisciplinary approach—in fact, a key challenge for our field is to learn from and be inspired by models of objective factors that predict the occurrence of collective action (e.g., McAdam's (1982) political process model, or McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly's (2001) model of dynamic contention).

One intriguing step forward would be to systematically compare models of *political* processes with models of *psychological* processes and derive hypotheses about how the political becomes personal or vice versa. For instance, at least two key factors in the political process model (grievances and organizational strength) seem compatible with the four core motivations. First, objective grievances should only predict collective action to the extent that individuals experience them (most likely in terms of their moral and e-motivations). Second, for

organizational strength to matter, I suspect that individuals need to identify with the organization and believe in the efficacy of the group to achieve the change they seek. Deriving hypotheses like these represents a first step toward connecting objective and subjective factors that predict collective action (see Corcoran et al., 2011), and with it toward enabling new and better predictions about when collective action occurs and whether it leads to objective social change.

Conclusions

Knowledge about the psychology of collective action is rapidly accumulating. As a consequence, the need for theoretical and empirical integration becomes more and more clear. This also has practical implications. If the SIMCA indeed has the validity that it appears to have at present, then organizers and practitioners of collective action should target individuals' four core motivations in their mobilization attempts. Although it is possible that some contexts will favor one or the other motivation (e.g., van Stekelenburg et al., 2009), I believe it certainly does not hurt to focus on all four. Not unlike some journals in our field, the practice of collective action often seems more concerned with effects and outcomes than with processes and explanations. Practitioners of collective action are therefore well-advised to craft their mobilization attempts in terms of the four core motivations (based on identity, morality, emotion, and efficacy).

I close with an observation about something that many in the field seem to assume and that requires a word of caution. That is, discussions of collective action and social change can implicitly be (and often are) interpreted as meaning that these are necessarily 'good' things. Although one may feel that they are (e.g., people released from oppression), it should be clear that this is a normative question that scientists should not answer or even ask. History is replete with good causes that were disasters for some or many. In Syria, for instance, the authorities have been responding extremely violently to collective action. Similarly, in Egypt social change may not have brought what people thought they fought for. What the social-psychological study of collective action can do, however, is help us to better understand when, how, and why disadvantaged and advantaged group members become motivated to foster or hinder social change via collective action. For this reason, any theorizing about collective action and social change also and always represents theorizing about collective inaction and social stability. One's focus is merely a matter of perspective.

Short Biography

Martijn van Zomeren is an associate professor at the Department of Social Psychology of the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. His theoretical and research interests revolve around the psychology of collective action and social change and more generally around the study of human motivation.

Endnotes

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