Achieving Social Change: A Matter of All for One?

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Recently, there has been a growing interest in not only understanding the processes underlying responses to disadvantage, and ways of reducing prejudice, but also to gain insight into how experiences of prejudice and social disadvantage affect the need to address one's disadvantage. Our goal in this issue is to discuss how and when low status group members move from experiences of individual versus collective disadvantage to social change. In this article, we consider the individual coping and social change literature, departing from the analyses of individual-level responses to disadvantage, to those at the collective level, to discuss how both strands of research relate to social change. Throughout this article, we introduce the contributions to this special issue and discuss the caveats and paradoxes they raise with regard to the existent literature.

Research on responses to social disadvantage, social stigma, or status differences has largely been based on the premise that the experience of disadvantage can be particularly oppressive for certain individuals and groups within society. Yet, the step from individual experiences of disadvantage to resistance thereof is one that is not easily taken (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This special issue examines ways in which members of disadvantaged groups deal with disadvantage individually or collectively. By doing so, it aims to integrate theory and research examining the relationship between individual and collective action and social change.

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To this end, we define social change as a change in intergroup relations to reflect greater social equality. Social change can be instigated by members of disadvantaged and advantaged groups, yet the focus of this special issue lies largely on action by members of low status groups. Therefore, our definition includes actions, both at the collective (e.g., by promoting collective actions by one's disadvantaged group) and at the individual level (e.g., individual action such as attaining leadership positions) that challenge existent sociostructural conditions that maintain power differences between groups. We also consider that such actions could be based on individual (e.g., personal interest) or collective (e.g., group interest) motives (Stroebe, Wang, & Wright, 2015). Whereas the former might as a consequence help to achieve (e.g., by increasing the representation of the group in leadership positions) or undermine (e.g., by helping to legitimize the system) social change, the latter directly relate to social change as a goal in itself.

Many research areas study how members of low status groups respond to disadvantage (e.g., Jost, Kay, & Thorisdottir, 2009; Kaiser & Major, 2006; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Yet, often, these different approaches have remained fairly autonomous. Also, some have largely considered the collective level (e.g., collective action; see special issue of van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009) whereas others have focused more on individual coping strategies (e.g., confronting discrimination, challenging stereotyping; see special issue of Nagda, Tropp, & Paluck, 2006; Barreto & Ellemers, 2010). For example, although collective action research can provide indications of when individuals take action against disadvantage at a collective level, not all types of disadvantage necessarily induce the types of collective responses largely studied within the collective action literature. Someone who experiences workplace discrimination may not feel that signing a petition or taking part in a demonstration against discrimination is the best way to go (Barreto, Ryan, & Schmitt, 2009). Indeed, here "resistance" to discrimination may translate into individual strategies to confront it that might be driven by group (improve the position of the group) but also by personal (improve my own position) motives, such as personally trying to perform better (Stout & Dasgupta, 2013), challenging the group stereotypes even at the implicit or nonverbal levels (de Lemus, Spears, & Moya, 2012; de Lemus, Spears, Bukowski, Moya, & Lupiáñez, 2013), or confronting discrimination directly (e.g., Becker, Glick, Ilic, & Bohner, 2011). Yet, such actions befitting these more individual level experiences of disadvantage have so far received less attention in the "collective action" literature. However, such individual actions that may, or may not, be motivated by a desire to improve conditions for one's group as a whole may be key to initiating social change. An integration of these approaches can thus provide valuable insights both from a theoretical and applied perspective as to when and how individuals move from experiences of disadvantage to (collective) action and social change.

Moreover, by taking a more broad perspective on social change that goes beyond a focus on collective action, the present issue challenges readers to

consider what constitutes social change—a concept that arguably is not that well-defined yet within social psychology (but see Louis, 2009; Sweetman, Leach, Spears, Pratto, & Saab, 2014). Indeed, as the title of Louis' recent paper illustrates ("collective action and then what"), there has been little attention to when and how social movements or collective action actually achieve social change (Louis, 2009). More recently, in a further effort to elucidate the concept of social change, Sweetman and colleagues developed a typology of potential social change goals to consider more broadly the goals people can have when engaging in social change. In line with these recent developments, we would like to contribute in developing a more in-depth understanding of *what* constitutes resistance and ultimately, social change. Our special issue tries to do so by, for example, challenging us to reconsider, as evidence of resistance, strategies traditionally considered as indicative of acceptance disadvantage (Leach & Livingstone, 2015), considering how alternative strategies such as female empowerment in developing countries may achieve social change (Hansen, 2015) or discussing existent approaches to and potential definitions of social change (Stroebe et al., 2015).

In this introduction, we will first review briefly the literature from individual coping to social change, departing from the analyses of individual level responses to disadvantage, and continuing by analyzing those at the collective level, while discussing through it how both strands of research relate to social change. In the second part of the introduction, we will briefly overview the contents and structure (in different sections) of this special issue proposal, and conclude with some final remarks.

Responses to Social Disadvantage: Individual- or Group-Level

One of the important contributions of Social Identity Theory (SIT) has been the idea that individuals have a need to uphold and strive for a positive image of themselves and their groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When individuals are confronted with negative views with regard to their group, thus potentially threatening their social identity, different action strategies are possible. Group members can focus on collectively improving the position of their group, for example, by engaging in collective action (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; see special issue by van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009). Alternatively, they can endorse an individual mobility strategy which involves psychologically (e.g., distancing oneself from one's low status group) or physically (e.g., becoming a member of the high status group) moving from the low to the high status group. Individual mobility has traditionally be seen to be directed at improving personal outcomes, as opposed to acting on behalf of the group or engaging in activities that would improve the status of the group as a whole (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990).

Individual Mobility: Individual Movement across Hierarchies

Individual mobility, that is the move across hierarchies, can be determined both by the context in which individuals experience disadvantage, as well as by their feelings with regard to the low status group. With regard to context, the extent to which low status group members have open or closed access to the high status group determines mobility strategies. When access is open to low status group members (i.e., the barriers between groups are perceived as permeable), individual efforts to become part of the high status group are more likely to take place (Wright et al., 1990). Therefore, sociostructural variables, as described in detail in SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), play an essential part in determining the type of strategy individuals chose (see also Ellemers, Wilke, & Van Knippenberg, 1993; Wright et al., 1990).

Yet, next to these more "external" conditions, feelings toward the ingroup, i.e., feelings of belonging and group identification are seen to be crucial in instigating collective action (but see Jimenez, Spears, Rodriguez, & de Lemus, 2015). Those who show lower identification with regard to their low status group are more likely to endorse an individual mobility strategy (e.g., Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997), perhaps because they endorse more meritocratic beliefs or attribute their lower status to individual (vs. group) factors.

A number of papers in this special issue focus on the consequences of individual mobility. Kulich, Lorenzi-Coldi, and Iacoviello (2015) consider the interplay between an inherited low status group (e.g., the original national identity for an immigrant) and an acquired high status group (e.g., new nationality by the host country). Specifically, they study whether gaining membership of an acquired high status group impacts levels of identification with one's inherited low status group. The authors find that individuals identify with their acquired group while maintaining levels of identification with the low status group. They contrast their work with the classical SIT prediction that individual mobility entails leaving one's low status group.

Derks, van Laar, Ellemers, and Raghoe (2015) focus on low status group members who have achieved high status within their professional career. Building on their queen bee work that reveals that women who achieve high positions in male-dominated organizations are likely to distance themselves from the group of women (Derks, van Laar, Ellemers, & De Groot, 2011; Ellemers, Van Den Heuvel, De Gilder, Maass, & Bonvini, 2004), Derks and colleagues argue that the queen bee phenomenon is a more generic individual mobility response to discriminatory organizational contexts not limited to women. They provide evidence for this in the context of Hindustani employees in the Netherlands.

Furthermore, challenging us to rethink the meaning of individual mobility, Hansen provides evidence that individual empowerment, by giving women in low-income countries the opportunity to take part in microfinancing programs, has the

potential to change the status of these women within their families and within society. Therefore, responses or interventions that may seem "individual," in that they need not to be collectively motivated (e.g., by the desire of these women to improve the position of women in general), can have the potential to address inequality and induce social change.

Group-Level Strategies

   Collective action.   Collective protest or action refers to the responses to disadvantage or perceived injustice aimed at changing the status of a group as a whole, rather than merely one's individual status. This means that collective action comprises not only collective movements (e.g., mass political actions), but also individual responses aimed at influencing the collective level (e.g., signing a petition; see van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009). This points to the question regarding the extent to which individuals who adopt the previously discussed individual strategies to cope with disadvantage (e.g., individual mobility, social creativity, prejudice confrontation) also *intend* to improve the status of the group. Interestingly, Leach and Livingstone (2015) challenge us to think outside the box and reconsider how strategies formerly seen as reflective of acceptance of in-feriority of one's low status (e.g., outgroup favoritism, endorsing stereotypes of one's group) may in fact signal psychological resistance to the status quo. For example, when the disadvantaged endorse stereotypes of their low status group, such as viewing themselves as especially fair, trustworthy, or communal, this may actually be an assertion of their superior morality.
   Going back to the literature on collective action, converging evidence from sociology, political science, history, and psychology share the common assumption that collective action and social protest are the main routes to increasing social justice and inducing social change (see van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008 for a meta-analytic overview; see Wright & Baray, 2012 for a theoretical discussion).
   Three elements have been identified as key predictors of collective action: Group efficacy, perceptions of subjective injustice, and group identification (e.g., Klandermans, 2004; Stürmer & Simon, 2004; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). *Group efficacy*, the shared belief that one's group can resolve its grievances through unified effort to improve its conditions, has proven to be a stable and essential determinant in predicting collective action (e.g., van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Building on Relative Deprivation Theory (RDT; see Walker & Smith, 2002 for a review), many studies reveal that *perceptions of injustice* of one's disadvantaged status induce collective action tendencies (e.g., Smith & Ortiz, 2002; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). RDT posits that individuals make social comparisons that can induce feelings of group (in the case of inter-group comparisons) and individual (in the case of interindividual comparisons) deprivation. Specifically, these feelings of group rather than individual relative

deprivation are likely to induce collective action tendencies (see also Gorska & Bilewicz, 2015). In addition, building on SIT (e.g., Ellemers, 1993; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), *group identification*, the feeling of belonging to one's group, has proven crucial in predicting collective action when sociostructural factors are advantageous (e.g., access to the high status group is closed, one's low status is perceived as illegitimate; e.g., Iyer & Ryan, 2009; Stuermer & Simon, 2004; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990).

Extending this previous knowledge, Jiménez-Moya, Spears, Rodríguez-Bailón, and de Lemus (2015) provide a case in which identification paradoxically works as a *de*mobilizer for some types of actions, namely radical actions. Because high identifiers are concerned that radical actions of their own group may damage the image the outgroup has of their own group (something low identifiers do not care about), they may not engage in these actions even though they could potentially improve their low group status.

Furthermore, Becker, Barreto, Kahn, and de Oliveira Laux (2015) consider how levels of identification and disidentification with one's low status group influence different forms of action. Whereas a lot of work in the area of collective action has focused on dissecting determinants of action, less attention has been paid to predicting the *types of* collective action displayed (but see Jiménez-Moya et al., 2015; Tausch et al., 2011). Importantly, Becker and colleague's contribution expands the classification of individual versus collective action to consider different forms of action (collective vs. individual level protest; acceptance of the status quo, rejection of categorization as low status group member). Their work reveals that gender identification predicts both individual and collective confrontation of discrimination but that only collective confrontation induces broader collective action intentions toward social change.

Reducing prejudice through collective interventions—does it help or hinder social change?   Another approach that has been taken as a means to achieve social change and that has proven highly influential is that of prejudice reduction at the collective level (Wright & Lubensky, 2009): It is the idea that if we improve attitudes of both low and high status groups with respect to each other at the collective level, for example, by encouraging intergroup contact or changing the way groups categorize each other (e.g., seeing one another as fellow students instead of as African American versus White students), levels of prejudice will decrease (see Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Next to the large evidence supporting the efficacy of such interventions, a new critical approach questions the implications of such interventions for social change (e.g., Wright & Baray, 2012). Paradoxically, this improvement in intergroup attitudes might result in acceptance of the status quo and hinder social equality (Dixon, Durrheim, & Tredoux, 2007; Jaśko & Kossowska, 2013; Saguy, Tausch, Dovidio, & Pratto, 2009; Wright & Lubensky, 2009).

Tausch, Saguy, and Bryson (2015) further examine this paradoxical "demobilizing" effect of intergroup contact. They show how contact between Latino students with non-Latino Whites in the United States can reduce collective action via improved outgroup attitudes and reduced intergroup anger, whereas at the same time promoting individual mobility strategies.

Furthermore, Górska and Bilewicz (2015) argue that superordinate categorization need not impede collective action when participants' self-construal of discrimination is framed in terms of group-relative deprivation. They analyze the impact of making salient superordinate categorization (i.e., Polish identity), on support for collective action in LGBTQ members. These authors invite us to rethink the (negative) relation between superordinate categorization and social change, arguing that in discussing how superordinate categorization influences social change, it is important to take into account feelings of deprivation (and group pride).

Finally, Dixon et al. (2015) provocatively propose a form of contact, namely "horizontal" contact among members of different low status groups that may *promote* rather than impede social change by uniting the efforts of low status group members in a common political cause. Specifically, they investigated relations between two historically disadvantaged communities in South Africa: Indians and Black Africans. Their research reveals that intergroup contact positively relates to Indians' support for pro-Black Africans policies (and negatively to policies against them), and willingness to participate in joint collective action to challenge inequalities.

Overview of this Issue

This special issue proposal examines ways in which members of disadvantaged groups deal with disadvantage individually or collectively. It reflects a growing debate regarding the nature of social change that we aim to follow up and expand in the present proposal on "Resisting and confronting disadvantage: from individual coping to societal change" in a number of ways by: (1) reviewing more individual-level strategies (e.g., individual mobility, empowerment) of dealing with disadvantage and how these affect social change (see Derks et al., 2015; Hansen, 2015; Kulich et al., 2015); (2) Challenging readers to rethink concepts that have been seen at some point as impeding social change (e.g., stereotypes, intergroup contact, common identity; see Dixon et al., 2015; Gorska & Bilewicz, 2015; Leach & Livingstone, 2015; Tausch et al., 2015); and (3) opening the discussion of whether social change only occurs when intergroup conflict arises and the low status group "fight" for equality with regard to the high status group (as is implied in the collective action literature). We propose that in certain contexts, or at certain moments within the time span of an intergroup conflict, other means of achieving equality and social change may be more useful

(e.g., empowerment of women; Hansen, 2015 and increasing contact and support between low status group members; Dixon et al., 2015). Furthermore, some forms of collective actions (e.g., radical) might not always be in the best interest of the group (Jiménez-Moya et al., 2015).

Moreover, the questions we address in this special issue potentially speak to policy implications both at an individual and a more collective or institutional level. At the individual level, contributions such as that of Becker and colleagues (2015) suggest potential ways of instigating individual action against discrimination by taking into account the extent to which group members affiliate with their group. At the collective or institutional level, the contribution by Dixon and colleagues (2015), for example, potentially speaks to the importance of encouraging contact between members of low status groups. It also challenges policy makers to consider how such contact is best put into practice. The contribution by Hansen (2015) evaluates developmental policies, by which members of disadvantaged groups receive financing, in the light of social change. Although not all contributions are directly policy-oriented, they offer food for thought for policy makers and researchers who are interested in applied social psychology.

The issue comprises nine articles from eight different countries that vary in their theoretical and methodological approach (from field studies, to experiments in the lab), the research/theoretical questions they study, as well as in the groups examined (e.g., LGBTQs, black Africans, Indians, women, immigrants, Latino students), all of them including policy-oriented discussions.

We have structured the contents of this special issue in three sections. In the first section of this issue, *Processes in coping with low status and the experience of disadvantage: From individual mobility to group confrontation*, we consider how individual-level strategies to deal with social disadvantage influence social change. Two contributions look at individual mobility from low to high status groups and its consequences for identification with and attitudes and behaviors toward one's low status groups (Derks et al., 2015; Kulich et al., 2015). Finally, Becker and colleagues (2015) focus on the interplay between individual- and collective-level strategies in response to disadvantage.

In the second section of this issue, *Resistance to social disadvantage: New perspectives on "determinants" of collective action and social change*, Jiménez-Moya et al. (2015) analyze the antecedents of radical actions. Second, Tausch et al. (2015) elaborate on the implications of intergroup contact for social change. Furthermore, Górska and Bilewicz (2015) argue that recategorization may para-doxically *enhance* collective action depending on LGTB members' endorsement of group or individual relative deprivation.

Finally, the last section of this issue, *The power of low status groups: Framing social change differently*, challenges us to redefine social change from the individual and the collective perspective. Leach and Livingstone (2015) ask us to reconsider strategies that are seen to signal endorsement of the one's low status

group membership (e.g., ingroup stereotyping). Both Dixon and colleagues and Hansen (2015) translate theory into practice by presenting (potential) interventions to successfully promote social change in highly unequal societies (South Africa, and Sri Lanka, respectively).

The issue ends with a commentary by Stroebe et al. (2015), which focuses on the need to reconsider our conceptualizations of social change in light of the present evidence. What are the underlying motives that guide people's (re)actions to disadvantage? How does individual mobility relate to social change? The authors try to answer these and other thought-provoking questions, expanding the conclusions of the special issue beyond its individual contributions.

We hope that the questions raised in these papers will spark the reader's interest and encourage his or her thinking with regard to how to enhance social change processes within society. From an applied perspective, they provide different focal points for interventions as some approaches necessitate initiating resistance to disadvantage collectively in members of disadvantaged groups, whereas others might initially benefit from promoting individual forms of resistance that potentially can contribute to social change. This issue should be of interest both to the wide array of researchers studying disadvantaged groups as well as those who are interested in hands-on implementation of individual resistance and social change within society.

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