

# Together we will rise? Perceptions of instrumentality and normalization as motivations for joint collective action among the disadvantaged

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## Abstract

The current research examines joint collective action between advantaged and disadvantaged groups, from the perspective of the latter. We hypothesize that joint action poses a dilemma which lies in the tension between perceived instrumentality of joint action (i.e., ability to promote the disadvantaged's goals) and perceived normalization (i.e., its tendency to blur power relations). We test this idea across three studies in the United States and Israel/Palestine. In Study 1 (n = 361) we manipulated perceptions of joint action from the perspective of a hypothetical character, and in Study 2 (n = 378) we presented participants with an article highlighting the risk and benefit of joint activism. Results showed that perceived instrumentality increases, whereas perceived normalization decreases joint action tendencies. In Study 3 (n = 240), we described a joint action event that taps into some of the themes that induce concerns about normalization. We found that normalization perceptions feed into perceptions of instrumentality, and this occurred mainly among high identifiers, for whom the dilemma is most salient. The implications of these findings for understanding the complexity of joint collective action from the perspective of the disadvantaged are discussed.

## Keywords

collective action, intergroup relations, normalization, power relations, social change

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*The Jewish-Israeli left can participate in the Palestinian struggle, but not as a partner.*

-Rami Younis (2014), +972 Magazine

Collective action is typically viewed as involving members of disadvantaged groups, who seek social change to improve their group's conditions (Van Zomeren, 2013; Wright et al., 1990). Yet during struggles against injustice, members of

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disadvantaged and advantaged groups sometimes join forces to promote social change. This interesting phenomenon can be observed in alliances between, for example, White and Black Americans, Jewish Israelis and Palestinians, and men and women. Researchers have explored the psychology of such *joint action* from the perspective of the advantaged (i.e., solidarity-based action; see Radke et al., 2020; Van Zomeren et al., 2011), but little attention has been given to the disadvantaged group's perspective on such collaboration (but see Hasan-Aslih et al., 2020; Kutlaca et al., 2020; Radke et al., 2021; Selvanathan et al., 2020, for more recent work). We propose, however, that joint action may pose an intriguing dilemma for disadvantaged group members: While such action may be *instrumental* in mobilizing the privilege and status of the advantaged group in support of the struggle of the disadvantaged, it may also entail the risk of *normalizing* intergroup disparities and masking privilege with harmony and good will, as the epigraph suggests.

Understanding this dilemma could offer more comprehensive insights into whether and when disadvantaged groups prefer to act alone, or cooperate with members from the advantaged group—often, their oppressor—to achieve social change. Illuminating the factors that lead disadvantaged group members to disengage from joint collective action is important because it speaks to the ongoing debates about oppressive structures and the persistence of inequality within the spaces of activism (see Gorski & Erakat, 2019). Describing the pitfalls of and roadblocks to joint activism can point to potential avenues for constructing safe and empowering spaces that place the voice and the issues of the disadvantaged at the heart of such actions, facilitating more appealing and effective actions, and thereby also progress toward social change.

In this paper, we conceptualize joint collective action as any action jointly undertaken by members of the disadvantaged and advantaged group that is aimed at bolstering the disadvantaged's status (Hasan-Aslih et al., 2020; Radke et al., 2022; Wright, 2009). This can be distinguished from solidarity-based collective action, which by virtue of the focus on the term “solidarity” centers on

the perspective of advantaged group members who sympathize with the disadvantaged or/and support their cause (e.g., Iyer & Ryan, 2009; Kutlaca et al., 2020; Leach et al., 2006; Louis et al., 2019; Radke et al., 2020; Thomas & McGarty, 2009; Van Zomeren et al., 2011). The term *joint collective action* thus speaks also to the perspective and motivations of disadvantaged group members to act together with advantaged outgroup members.

For members of the disadvantaged group, joint action poses a dilemma stemming from the potential double-edged nature of collaborating with members of the advantaged group. For instance, while the presence of White activists in antiracism movements increases the likelihood that actions will challenge racism and discrimination, activists of color report lived experiences of White activists invalidating their perspectives and undermining their racial justice efforts (Gorski & Erakat, 2019). Collaborating with members of a group that is regarded as the oppressor might thus be perceived as entailing certain costs for the disadvantaged.

The present research offers a social-psychological examination of joint action among the disadvantaged that explores a *motivation* and a *barrier* that we believe form the basis for this dilemma: the perceived *instrumentality* of joining forces with members of the advantaged group, and the perceived potential for joint action to *normalize* power relations between the groups.

## The Dilemma of Joint Collective Action

### *Instrumentality*

Joint action can benefit the disadvantaged group by increasing their access to power, influence, and decisionmakers, which are all *instrumental* factors that could advance social change. Instrumental motives for participation in collective action stem from the appraisal that some desired outcomes can be achieved at affordable costs through engaging in collective action. This approach assumes that individuals weigh the perceived costs

and benefits of participation in collective action (Klandermans, 1984; Sturmer & Simon, 2004), reflecting a social dilemma between individual and collective motives. Thus, the more effective that individuals believe participation in collective action will be, the more likely they are to participate (Louis et al., 2004; Van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013).

We believe that the dilemma underlying joint action is not just between the individual and the group, but relates also to the collaboration with privileged outgroup members. More specifically, perceived instrumentality can be defined as an appraisal that joining forces with members of the more powerful group will make the action more effective in achieving its goal and leading to tangible payoffs. There would be good reason to assume that this is not “just” a belief or perception. Resource mobilization theorists suggest that allies—that is, advantaged group members who take action in support of the disadvantaged group (Radke et al., 2020)—can offer resources that turn an otherwise ineffective action or campaign into an effective one (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). Advantaged group members can benefit social change efforts as they have more access to power and resources than members of the disadvantaged group, and as a result more means to leverage influence over the authorities and decisionmakers.

In addition, advantaged group members are more likely to be persuasive to the public than disadvantaged group members. For example, Louis (2009) argues that collective action can better enhance perceptions of injustice when the public identifies with the actors, which is more likely when (some of) the actors are representatives of the dominant group. Likewise, Selvanathan et al. (2020) suggest that the involvement of advantaged group members in collective action can increase the legitimacy of the disadvantaged in the eyes of the public and shift norms toward equality. Indeed, recent work by Kutlaca et al. (2022) shows that including allies from the advantaged group can increase identification with the social movement by strengthening norms about solidarity. Applied psychological research

also demonstrates that messages pertaining to prejudice confrontation (Rasinski & Czopp, 2010) and diversity (Gardner & Ryan, 2020) can be more potent and persuasive when they are made by advantaged group members rather than by the disadvantaged.

Thus, cooperating with advantaged group members may indeed have beneficial outcomes, as it can bridge gaps between the disadvantaged and the public as well as the outgroup-controlled authorities. Assuming members of disadvantaged groups have knowledge or intuition regarding this increased effectiveness, they would see joint collective action as instrumental for achieving their goals. Accordingly, we expect stronger perceptions of instrumentality of joint action to be associated with increased willingness to participate in joint action.

### *Normalization*

Joint action could entail some costs from the perspective of the disadvantaged group, as cooperation with the advantaged group could obscure the salience of intergroup boundaries and contribute to normalizing hierarchy, thereby undermining the efforts to promote social change (see Becker et al., 2013 on cross-group contact). In this paper, we define normalization as the process of cloaking inequality and privilege in ways that make power relations between the group seem normal (for a relevant discussion in the context of common identity, see Ufkes et al., 2016); perceived normalization thus refers to individuals' perception that joint action will have this effect.

Although joint action is aimed at promoting social change, Droogendyk et al. (2016) identify several challenges that could arise when disadvantaged and advantaged group member act together, and these can illuminate the process of normalization (see also Kutlaca et al., 2022; Selvanathan et al., 2020). A process of normalization can take place when the boundaries between the perpetrators and the victims of injustice become less clear as a function of idealizing harmony. Droogendyk et al. (2016), for example, suggest that participants in a movement may seek to define the

shared space of activism by highlighting cross-group commonalities in identities, values, and attitudes. While this can create a sense of togetherness, the distinct group identity of the disadvantaged might be compromised in the process of establishing such commonality (Louis, 2009). Consistent with this idea, the literature on intergroup relations (e.g., Dixon et al., 2010; Sengupta & Sibley, 2013) has provided empirical evidence that promoting harmony and common ingroup identity can reduce attention to inequality and undermine motivation for social change (Hässler et al., 2020; Saguy, 2018; Ufkes et al., 2016). Thus, if re-defining intergroup boundaries occurs without maintaining clarity about the power relations between the groups, concerns about normalization are likely to arise and undermine willingness to engage in joint action. Nevertheless, it is unclear whether emphasizing commonalities is always interpreted by disadvantaged group members as normalizing power relations. Therefore, it may be important to disentangle commonality considerations from normalization considerations.

Processes of normalization could also occur when the disadvantaged are marginalized by benevolent paternalistic behaviors that are ostensibly meant to do good (Jackman, 1994). Indeed, Droogendyk et al. (2016) point out that advantaged group members may fail to recognize their privileges, taking the role of “saviors” and instructing the disadvantaged on how to conduct their struggle (see also Gorski & Erakat, 2019). A number of works (Becker et al., 2018; Nadler, 2002; van Leeuwen & Tauber, 2010) suggest that inappropriate forms of help can be driven by a motivation to maintain an advantaged social position alongside a positive identity, all of which under the guise of care and protection. Because such acts maintain the dependency of the disadvantaged on the advantaged, they serve to perpetuate and normalize the power relations between the groups (Jackman, 1994; Nadler, 2002). Therefore, if disadvantaged group members worry that they might be patronized as part of the struggle, they will be reluctant to act jointly with advantaged group members.

In sum, we theorize that the motivational path to joint collective action is derived from considerations of the materialistic and tangible benefits weighed against the symbolic or non-materialistic costs of collaborating with members of the outgroup.

### *The Role of Ingroup Identification*

Given that concerns about normalization are predicated on some level of awareness of the group’s structural power disadvantage, it is likely that responses to normalization depend on individual variations between disadvantaged group members in how much they are committed to their group. Indeed, group identification influences one’s perceptions of collective disadvantage and thus whether individuals will invest in protecting the group identity in the face of threats (Spears et al., 1997; Veenstra & Haslam, 2000). Moreover, research suggests that people who have strong identification with a group tend to place more weight on consequences for the group when choosing certain actions over others, and thus their decision is more likely to be shaped by perceptions of collective costs and benefits (Louis et al., 2004). In the context of joint collective action, it might be that high identifiers are more attuned to the risks posed by normalization than low identifiers, and are thus more likely to weigh this disincentive in their deliberations on whether to participate in joint collective action. Accordingly, their willingness to cooperate with outgroup members is more likely than that of low identifiers to be derived from cost-benefit assessments weighing the risk of normalization against the instrumentality of joint action. It may even be that these two concepts, while distinct, may not be orthogonal to high identifiers. In fact, an assessment of such costs may be *related* to their instrumentality perceptions: to the extent that disadvantaged group members discern the consequences of normalization on the group as a whole—which may be tied to the strength of their identification with the group—viewing an action as normalizing might render it less instrumental to these group members. Consistent with

this, recent work by Hasan-Aslib et al. (2020) found that Palestinians with a strong group identity showed decreased willingness to engage in joint collective action with Jewish Israelis when the conflict between the groups was exacerbated, which suggests that identification might play a role in shaping perceptions of what serves the group in a particular situation.

*The current research.* The goal of this research is to examine whether and how perceived instrumentality and normalization influence disadvantaged group members' willingness to participate in joint collective action. Given the power imbalance between the groups involved, we argue that joint action poses a unique dilemma to disadvantaged group members which lies between the instrumental benefits of joint action and the risk of blurring power relations. We specifically hypothesize that perceptions of instrumentality increase willingness to participate in joint collective action, whereas perceptions of normalization undermine this willingness. To examine these hypotheses, we conducted three experimental studies in two different contexts that feature an ongoing struggle for equality and justice (the United States and Palestine), characterized by clear inequality between the groups (White and Black Americans, Israeli Jews and Palestinians).<sup>1</sup> Both contexts are characterized by historical and present-day state violence and systematic oppression, but also occurrences of joint collective action between disadvantaged and advantaged group members, which are at times fraught with challenges. Such challenges include power conflict between the groups, and problematic behaviors by the advantaged, such as racism, White fragility, patronizing the disadvantaged, and dominating the movement (see Gorski & Erakat, 2019; Kameir & Mayard, 2014; Selvanathan et al., 2020; Younis, 2014). Studies 1 and 2 tested the influence of perceived instrumentality and normalization on Black Americans' intentions to undertake joint collective action. To ensure that the blurring of power relations (i.e., normalization) do not merely reflect the blurring of group boundaries, we also manipulated appraisals of commonality

between Black and White activists. Study 3, conducted among Palestinians, examined whether the costs associated with normalization may be so high as to also undermine the perceived effectiveness of the joint action. In Study 3, we also investigated whether the effects of normalization are shaped by ingroup identification.

## Study 1

The purpose of Study 1 was to obtain initial evidence that perceptions of instrumentality and normalization influence joint collective action tendencies. The study was conducted among Black Americans in the context of the collective action against racial discrimination. As no protests were taking place at the time of data collection (February 2016), we presented participants with a hypothetical scenario of joint action faced by an imagined character. We manipulated how the person described in the scenario appraised a joint Black and White protest—his perceptions of the action as instrumental and normalizing power relations, and his perceptions of commonality between Black Americans and White activists—and explored the extent to which participants expected him to feel conflicted about the protest and to support joint activism. We predicted that participants would perceive the target's participation in joint action as more likely when he appraises the action as instrumental, and less likely when he appraises it as normalizing power relations.

## Method

*Participants.* To calculate sample size, we performed a power analysis with G\*Power, specifying 80% power and an anticipated medium effect size of Cohen's  $f = .20$ , yielding a sample size of 327. We recruited 376 Black American participants through Amazon Mechanical Turk, oversampling to allow for possible exclusions due to the online format. Because the study was conducted online, where attention is less likely to be sustained throughout the study (Maniaci & Rogge, 2014), we excluded 15 participants who failed all the attention checks embedded between

the survey questions (e.g., “This is an attention check, select number four”, scale ranging from 1 to 6) and/or had duplicate Internet Protocols (IPs), yielding a final sample of 361 participants (196 females, ages 18–65;  $M_{\text{age}} = 32.71$  years).

*Procedure.* We adapted the method of *imagined responses to criteria-based scenario simulations*, which is commonly used in the research based on appraisal theories of emotions (see Scherer, 1988). The original method consists of constructing scenarios in which specific components of the situation that imply particular appraisal criteria are systematically varied. The subjects imagine which emotion they or the person in the scenario would have felt if they experienced the same situation and appraised it in the same way. This method allows us to estimate collective action tendencies even in the absence of contemporaneous protests. In addition, it can also help overcome possible biases based on people’s prior beliefs about joint activism. To manipulate appraisals relevant to joint action, participants were presented with a profile of a Black student named Joshua, who is considering taking part in joint Black and White protests. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of several versions of a text that described how Joshua appraised the action. These appraisals varied across three variables in a 2x2x2 design: the effectiveness of the protests (instrumentality), the extent to which the protest blurs power relations (normalization), and the extent to which Joshua and White allies share values and goals (commonality). For example, in the instrumentality, normalization and commonality condition, participants read the following text:

“... [T]hese joint protests of both White and Black students blur the deep hierarchical relations between the groups and maintain White privilege while seeming to be non-racial. However, he thinks these White allies share his values and goals, and that these protests are beneficial in improving the status and treatment of African-Americans on campus.”

Participants then rated the extent to which they expected Joshua to be motivated to partake in joint collective action. The underlying assumption was that the way participants make sense of the dilemma that Joshua faces reflects to a large extent their calculation of the costs and benefits of participation.

*Measures.* The following variables were measured on a 1 (= not at all) to 6 (= to a great extent) Likert-type scale.

*Manipulation checks.* To check whether participants comprehended the vignette in accordance with the conditions to which they were assigned, three items measured the extent to which they believed Joshua thinks that: (a) joint protests would be beneficial for promoting the status of Black Americans (instrumentality); (b) joint protests would blur hierarchical race relations (normalization); and (c) Josh and White allies share common values and goals (commonality).

Appraisals of joint action as a dilemma.<sup>2</sup> We measured with 11 items the extent to which participants thought Josh appraised joint action as a dilemma (e.g., “To what extent do you think Josh will join the protests?”; “To what extent do you think Josh feels conflicted about joining the protests?”; “To what extent do you think Josh believes that joining the protests is the right decision?”;  $\alpha = .90$ ).

*Perceived joint action tendencies.* were assessed with three items asking participants to what extent they thought Josh would be willing to engage in different forms of joint action (e.g., “Participating in peaceful demonstrations with other Black and White Americans”; “Participating in joint campaigns against racism with other Black and White Americans”; “Putting pressure on political or authority figures with other Black and White Americans”;  $\alpha = .89$ ).

*Personal joint action tendencies.* We measured participants’ own hypothetical action tendencies with a single item: “If you were in Josh’s position, to what extent do you think you would join these protests?”



**Table 1.** Means and standard deviations (SDs) of instrumentality, normalization, and commonality perceptions, and joint action tendencies in Study 1.

	Instrumentality condition	No instrumentality condition	Normalization condition	No normalization condition	Commonality condition	No commonality condition
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Instrumentality perceptions	4.12 (1.34)	2.80 (1.39)	3.18 (1.52)	3.74 (1.46)	3.54 (1.49)	3.38 (1.54)
Normalization perceptions	3.92 (1.45)	3.75 (1.50)	4.44 (1.27)	3.24 (1.43)	3.71 (1.49)	3.96 (1.46)
Commonality perceptions	3.49 (1.62)	3.17 (1.56)	3.17 (1.60)	3.48 (1.58)	4.30 (1.20)	2.36 (1.34)
Perceived joint action tendencies	4.03 (1.16)	3.41 (1.18)	3.35 (1.19)	4.08 (1.12)	3.91 (1.21)	3.52 (1.15)
Participants' joint action tendencies	4.23 (1.26)	3.90 (1.46)	3.92 (1.38)	4.20 (1.35)	4.05 (1.42)	4.08 (1.33)

*Results and Discussion*

*Manipulation checks.* A series of three-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) specifying the three manipulated appraisals as the independent variables and each manipulation checks as an outcome variable revealed that participants reported higher perceived instrumentality ( $F_{(1, 353)} = 89.92, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .20$ ) in the instrumentality condition ( $M = 4.12, SD = 1.34$ ) than the no instrumentality condition ( $M = 2.80, SD = 1.39$ ), and higher perceived normalization ( $F_{(1, 353)} = 71.13, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .17$ ) in the normalization condition ( $M = 4.44, SD = 1.27$ ) than the no normalization condition ( $M = 3.24, SD = 1.43$ ). Participants also reported higher perceived commonality ( $F_{(1, 353)} = 213.12, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .38$ ) in the commonality condition ( $M = 4.30, SD = 1.20$ ) compared to no commonality condition ( $M = 2.36, SD = 1.34$ ) (see Table 1).

The analysis also yielded unintended cross-effects of the manipulations, such that perceptions of instrumentality were also lower ( $F_{(1, 353)} = 18.35, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .05$ ) in the normalization condition ( $M = 3.18, SD = 1.52$ ) than in the no normalization condition ( $M = 3.74, SD = 1.46$ ), which might imply that normalization

concerns play a part in group members' instrumentality calculations. Furthermore, perceptions of commonality were higher in the instrumentality ( $F_{(1, 353)} = 6.80, p = .005, \eta_p^2 = .02$ ) ( $M = 3.49, SD = 1.62$ ) and no normalization ( $F_{(1, 353)} = 5.62, p = .018, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ) ( $M = 3.48, SD = 1.58$ ) conditions than in the no instrumentality ( $M = 3.17, SD = 1.56$ ) and normalization ( $M = 3.17, SD = 1.60$ ) conditions. This could indicate that perceived commonality is linked to perceived instrumentality and normalization, at least according to people's lay-theories about joint action.

*Appraisals of joint action as a dilemma.* We conducted another three-way ANOVA to test whether the manipulated appraisals of instrumentality, normalization and commonality affected the extent to which participants thought Josh conflicted about joint action. Results revealed significant main effects for both instrumentality ( $F_{(1, 353)} = 74.77, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .17$ ), and normalization ( $F_{(1, 353)} = 57.63, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .14$ ). Appraisals of joint action as a dilemma were higher in the instrumentality ( $M = 4.03, SD = 0.91$ ) than in the no instrumentality ( $M = 3.41, SD = 1.18$ ) condition, and lower in the

normalization ( $M = 3.37, SD = 0.89$ ) than in the no normalization ( $M = 3.99, SD = 0.90$ ) condition. The main effect of commonality was also significant ( $F_{(1, 353)} = 25.44, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .07$ ), with higher perceptions of joint action in the commonality ( $M = 3.89, SD = 0.94$ ) than in the no commonality ( $M = 3.47, SD = 0.91$ ). No significant interactions were found between the factors (Instrumentality X Normalization:  $F_{(1, 352)} = 0.71, p = .400, \eta_p^2 = .002$ ; Instrumentality X Commonality:  $F_{(1, 352)} = 3.64, p = .057, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ; Normalization X Commonality:  $F_{(1, 352)} = 0.003, p = .959, \eta_p^2 = .000$ ).

*Perceived joint action tendencies.* We repeated the same three-way ANOVA for perceived general joint action tendencies. Consistent with our hypotheses, the ANOVA yielded significant main effects for both instrumentality ( $F_{(1, 352)} = 30.85, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .08$ ) and normalization ( $F_{(1, 352)} = 40.36, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .10$ ). Perceived joint action tendencies were higher in the instrumentality ( $M = 4.03, SD = 1.16$ ) than in the no instrumentality ( $M = 3.41, SD = 1.18$ ) condition, and lower in the normalization ( $M = 3.35, SD = 1.19$ ) than in the no normalization ( $M = 4.08, SD = 1.12$ ) condition. The main effect of commonality was also significant ( $F_{(1, 352)} = 12.00, p = .001, \eta_p^2 = .03$ ), with higher perceptions of joint action in the commonality ( $M = 3.92, SD = 1.23$ ) than in the no commonality ( $M = 3.52, SD = 1.15$ ). No significant interactions were found between the factors (Instrumentality X Normalization:  $F_{(1, 352)} = 0.45, p = .500, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ; Instrumentality X Commonality:  $F_{(1, 352)} = 1.02, p = .312, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ; Normalization X Commonality:  $F_{(1, 352)} = 0.24, p = .622, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ). These results suggest that the perceived instrumentality of joint collective action and perceived commonality with outgroup members enhance perceived joint action tendencies, whereas perceptions that the action is normalizing weaken these perceived tendencies.

*Personal joint action tendencies.* We repeated the above analysis, this time using participants' own

willingness to engage in joint action as the dependent variable. The analysis revealed that own willingness was affected by both perceived instrumentality ( $F_{(1, 353)} = 5.49, p = .020, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ) and normalization ( $F_{(1, 353)} = 4.15, p = .042, \eta_p^2 = .01$ ), such that it was higher in the instrumentality ( $M = 4.23, SD = 1.26$ ) than the no instrumentality ( $M = 3.90, SD = 1.46$ ) condition, and lower in the normalization ( $M = 3.92, SD = 1.38$ ) than the no normalization ( $M = 4.20, SD = 1.35$ ) condition. Commonality did not influence own action tendencies ( $F_{(1, 353)} = 0.05, p = .823, \eta_p^2 = .00$ ). Again, these results support the notion that perceived instrumentality and normalization reflect the core of the dilemma of joint action among members of disadvantaged groups.

In sum, the results of Study 1 provide initial evidence that perceptions of instrumentality increase, and perceptions of normalization decrease, joint action tendencies. Interestingly, the manipulations produced cross effects on perceptions of instrumentality and normalization, such that normalizing joint action was perceived to be less instrumental. This could mean that low instrumentality, rather than normalization, is what undermines joint action tendencies, but the findings of Study 1 alone could not attest to this. Furthermore, responses to a hypothetical scenario may not necessarily reflect participants' own intentions to engage in joint action. Accordingly, further evidence is needed to make causal inferences about the effects of normalization and instrumentality perceptions on joint action tendencies. In Study 2 we thus aimed to replicate our findings, this time inducing participants' own perceptions of the instrumentality and normalization of joint action.

## Study 2

Building on the above findings, in Study 2 we wanted to again test the causal effects of perceived instrumentality and normalization on joint action intentions, as these constructs presumably reflect the core of the disadvantaged's dilemma of joint action. Instead of using a hypothetical



joint action scenario, Study 2 (conducted in November 2016), was contextualized within the ongoing racial justice movement that followed the shooting of Michael Brown by police. To prime perceptions of instrumentality, normalization and commonality, we presented Black American participants with an article that highlighted the positive and negative aspects of joint White and Black activism. We specifically hypothesized that perceptions of instrumentality will increase whereas perceptions of normalization will decrease joint action tendencies.

In addition, we sought to explore the role of group identification, which reflects the degree to which individuals identify with, and commit to, their group (Spears et al., 1997). Because high identifiers tend to be more aware of the societal power struggle, they should be more sensitive than low identifiers to (the lack of) power cues and more concerned with any consequences of joint action that may perpetuate their disadvantage (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Van Zomeren & Spears, 2009). Accordingly, we wanted to test whether the effect of normalization on joint action intentions depends on levels of identification with the disadvantaged group, with high identifiers being more susceptible to the negative effect of normalization on motivation for joint action. As both low and high identifiers are likely to have instrumental motives (see Klandermans, 1984, 2002), we did not expect identification to moderate the effect of instrumentality perceptions.

### Method

*Participants.* Based on medium effect sizes obtained in Study 1, we aimed for a sample size of 366 participants. We included attention checks and oversampled to address any necessary exclusions. Overall, 401 Black American were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk, of which 23 were excluded based on attention checks and duplicate IP's. The final sample comprised 378 participants (231 females, ages 18–87;  $M_{\text{age}} = 32.07$ ).

*Procedure.* Participants were instructed to read an ostensibly real article published in the *New York Times* about academic research that examined Black and White joint collective action against racial discrimination, outlining three features (i.e., instrumentality, normalization, and commonality). Participants were randomly assigned to read one of eight versions of the article, featuring variations of the three different variables in a 2x2x2 design:

1. Instrumentality: joint action as effective versus not effective in influencing Whites' attitudes and views on racial issues (e.g., "the combined efforts of Black and White activists are considerably more effective in changing the opinions of Whites").
2. Normalization: joint action as creating a false sense of equal and harmonious relations between the groups versus exposing discrimination and unequal power relations (e.g., "the presence of White allies actually obscures White privilege and gives a wrong signal to the public that race relations have improved and that inequality and discrimination are not as pressing issues as they were in the past").
3. Commonality: joint action as almost always reflecting versus not reflecting great commonality in goals and vision between Black and White activists. (e.g., "White and Black activists who join efforts and protest together had, much more than expected, a shared vision and aspirations").

The order in which these aspects were presented in the article was also randomized. The manipulation text was followed by manipulation checks and measures of collective action tendencies and group identification.

*Measures. Manipulation checks:* reading comprehension in the different conditions was confirmed using extended versions of measures used in Study 1. Three items measured the extent to which joint

**Table 2.** Means and standard deviations (SDs) of instrumentality and normalization perceptions, and joint action tendencies in Study 2.

	Instrumentality condition	No instrumentality condition	Normalization condition	No normalization condition
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Instrumentality perceptions	4.17 (1.04)	3.72 (1.16)	3.67 (1.12)	4.24 (1.06)
Normalization perceptions	4.21 (1.00)	4.03 (0.95)	3.29 (0.98)	2.46 (0.79)
Joint action tendencies	4.01 (1.32)	3.75 (1.45)	3.72 (1.41)	4.04 (1.36)

collective action was perceived as instrumental (e.g., “To what extent do you think Black and White joint protests are beneficial or not beneficial to improving the status of Black Americans?”), rated from 1 = not at all beneficial to 6 = extremely beneficial;  $\alpha = .82$ ). Three items measured the extent to which joint collective action was perceived as normalizing (e.g., “To what extent do you think Black and White joint protests blur or expose racial inequality and discrimination against Black people in the U.S.?”), rated from 1 = obscure very much to 6 = highlight very much;  $\alpha = .90$ ). Perceived commonality was assessed using two items (e.g., “To what extent do you think you and White allies share many common values and goals?”), rated from 1 = not at all to 6 = extremely;  $r = .83$ ).

*Joint collective action tendencies* were measured using three items based on those used in Study 1, assessing intentions to engage in various activities aimed at protesting racism and police brutality against Black Americans (e.g., “Participating in joint peaceful demonstrations alongside other Black and White Americans”, rated from 1 = not at all to 6 = to a great extent;  $\alpha = .89$ ).

*Group identification* was measured with six items (e.g., “I feel being a Black American is an important part of my identity”, rated from 1 = not at all to 6 = to a great extent;  $\alpha = .93$ ) (derived from Roccas et al., 2008).

## Results and Discussion

*Manipulation checks.* A three-way ANOVA revealed a significant main effect for the

instrumentality manipulation ( $F_{(1, 370)} = 15.49, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .04$ ) on perceptions of instrumentality, with greater perceptions of instrumentality ( $M = 4.17, SD = 1.04$ ) in the instrumentality condition than in the no instrumentality ( $M = 3.72, SD = 1.16$ ) condition. The normalization manipulation also yielded the predicted significant effect ( $F_{(1, 370)} = 78.74, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .17$ ), such that joint action in the normalization condition ( $M = 3.29, SD = 0.98$ ) was perceived as significantly more normalizing (i.e., as obscuring power relations) than in the no normalization condition ( $M = 2.46, SD = 0.79$ ) (see Table 2). Finally, the commonality manipulation had no effect on perceptions of commonality ( $F_{(1, 370)} = 0.57, p = .451$ ).

As in Study 1, the manipulations also produced a cross-effect. Specifically, the normalization manipulation again influenced perceived instrumentality ( $F_{(1, 370)} = 26.03, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .07$ ), with lower perceptions of instrumentality in the normalization condition ( $M = 3.67, SD = 1.12$ ) than in the no normalization condition ( $M = 4.24, SD = 1.06$ ). This replicates the cross-effect found in Study 1, signaling that joint action that exposes power relations (not normalizing) is perceived as more instrumental than joint action that obscures power relations (normalizing). No other cross main effects were found.

*Joint collective action tendencies.* To test our hypotheses, we again ran a three-way ANOVA. The analysis yielded a non-significant effect of instrumentality ( $F_{(1,370)} = 2.90, p = .087, \eta_p^2 =$

.01) on joint action tendencies, with participants somewhat more willing to partake in joint action in the instrumental condition ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 1.32$ ) than in the non-instrumental condition ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 1.45$ ). Replicating previous findings, the analysis yielded a significant main effect of the normalization manipulation ( $F_{(1,370)} = 4.95$ ,  $p = .029$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .01$ ), with participants reporting less willingness to engage in joint action when it was perceived as normalizing ( $M = 3.72$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ) rather than not normalizing ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ) (see Table 2). No significant interactions were found among the factors (Instrumentality X Normalization:  $F_{(1,370)} = 2.27$ ,  $p = .133$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ ; Instrumentality X Commonality:  $F_{(1,370)} = 0.02$ ,  $p = .897$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ ; Normalization X Commonality:  $F_{(1,370)} = 1.23$ ,  $p = .268$ ,  $\eta_p^2 = .00$ ).

We then turned to explore the moderating role of group identification. We first tested whether the manipulations affected ingroup identification, and the analysis showed that neither instrumentality ( $F_{(1,370)} = 0.09$ ,  $p = .770$ ) nor normalization ( $F_{(1,370)} = 1.87$ ,  $p = .173$ ) had an effect. We then employed Hayes' (2013) PROCESS command (Model 1) in two separate analyses to examine whether group identification moderated the effects of the normalization and instrumentality manipulations on joint collective action. No significant interaction was found between identification and instrumentality ( $b_{\text{interaction}} = 0.04$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ ,  $t = 0.39$ ,  $p = .794$ , confidence interval (CI) [-0.18, 0.27]). The results also showed that group identification did not significantly moderate the effect of normalization on joint action tendencies ( $b_{\text{interaction}} = -0.17$ ,  $SE = 0.11$ ,  $t = -1.52$ ,  $p = .127$ , CI [-0.40, 0.05]), but the effect here was slightly larger. An exploratory examination of the conditional effects showed that when joint action is normalizing, support for such action is lower among people with relatively higher levels of identification ( $b = -0.43$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ ,  $t = -2.39$ ,  $p = .017$ , CI [-0.78, -0.07]), compared to those with lower levels of identification ( $b = -0.03$ ,  $SE = 0.18$ ,  $t = -0.21$ ,  $p = .827$ , CI [-0.39, 0.31]). As the interaction was not significant, we are constrained in our ability

to draw conclusions, but the conditional effects hint at the possibility that people with stronger identification may experience the dilemma of joint action more strongly, particularly when it comes to potential implications such as normalization—a possibility that warrants replication.

*Exploratory analysis.* In light of the cross-effects of the normalization manipulation on instrumentality in Studies 1 and 2, we decided to examine whether the effect of normalization on joint action tendencies is explained, at least in part, by its influence on perceptions of instrumentality (i.e., whether such perceptions mediate the effect of normalization on joint action). To this end, we conducted a mediation analysis using Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macro (Model 4; 5,000 iterations), with normalization as the independent variable, perceptions of instrumentality as a mediator, and joint action tendencies as the dependent variable. The analysis showed that the effect of the normalization condition on the joint action tendencies ( $b = -0.32$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ ,  $t = -2.25$ ,  $p = .024$ , 95% CI [-0.60, -0.04]) became non-significant when perceptions of instrumentality were included in the model ( $b = -0.03$ ,  $SE = 0.13$ ,  $t = -0.20$ ,  $p = .864$ , 95% CI [-0.39, 0.63]). The indirect effect through perceptions of instrumentality was significant (a\*b:  $-0.29$ ;  $SE = 0.07$ ; 95% CI [-0.45, -0.16]), indicating that normalization leads to decreased perceptions of benefit, which in turn undermine willingness to engage in joint action.

In sum, replicating the results of Study 1, we found that perceptions of normalization undermine joint action tendencies. Although the effect of instrumentality was non-significant, the pattern was similar to that observed in Study 1. We speculate that the effects obtained in Study 2 were weaker because the procedure we used targeted people's beliefs about and their tendencies to take part in the broad racial justice movement, which are usually hard to shift. In addition, the manipulation of commonality had no effect on collective action tendencies, indicating that this construct may be less central than instrumentality and normalization. Another consistent finding across the

studies so far is that when joint action is perceived as normalizing power relations, it is also perceived as less instrumental. This fits nicely with the notion of perceived normalization as a barrier for joint action—in fact one that seems to dampen individuals' instrumental motivation for it.

We therefore designed Study 3 as a focused, confirmatory test of this dampening effect. Study 3 manipulated only perceived normalization to observe its effects on perceived instrumentality and joint action. Study 3 again tested the interaction between perceived normalization and group identification, to determine whether normalization is particularly relevant to those who identify more strongly with the disadvantaged group or whether the differences we found in conditional effects in Study 2 were spurious. In addition, instead of manipulating beliefs about joint collective action in general, Study 3 was designed to focus on a specific, timely joint action (modeled after a real-world event) tapping into some of the themes that can induce perceptions of normalization.

### Study 3

Study 3 capitalized on a real-world development to present participants with a seemingly real collective action event. In this way, we could test the effects of normalization on disadvantaged group members' willingness to engage in specific instances of joint action with advantaged group members. To induce perceptions of normalization, we contrasted a joint protest that privileges peace and co-existence between the groups over justice with one that highlights existing inequalities and focuses on achieving justice for the disadvantaged. The study was conducted in Palestine in January 2018, shortly after Palestinian teenager Ahed Tamimi was imprisoned for confronting Israeli soldiers in her front yard in the village of Nabi Saleh in the occupied West Bank. This incident attracted local and international attention and sparked a series of protests demanding the girl's release, some of which were attended jointly by Palestinians and Israelis. We hypothesized that normalization would undermine joint action

tendencies, and this effect would be partially due to decreased instrumentality perceptions. We also predicted that the effect of normalization on joint action tendencies would be moderated by group identification.

### Method

*Participants.* A sample of 261 Palestinian citizens of Israel participated in the study. The sample size was determined based on the same power analysis used in Studies 1 and 2 (80% power and Cohen's  $f = .20$ ), but specifying only two experimental conditions, thus yielding a required sample of 200. Again, we oversampled in anticipation of potential participant exclusions. Participants were recruited either through social media or in-person on university campuses, in return for a chance to win a gift card in a raffle. The final sample comprised 240 participants (147 females; ages 18–69;  $M_{\text{age}} = 26.15$ ), after 21 participants who failed all attention checks were excluded.

*Procedure.* Participants gave their informed consent and then read a brief text providing background about a joint Jewish–Arab action in response to Tamimi's imprisonment. After this introduction, participants were randomly assigned to view one of two versions of a contrived Facebook event page, advertising a joint collective action to demand Tamimi's release. We created these event pages based on real Facebook posts and events that were being publicized at the time. The conditions included a call for a joint action that contained messages implying equal or asymmetrical power relations between the groups. Participants read the following texts:

Normalization condition: “Young Palestinians and Israelis are enduring the ongoing conflict, and we have to act together to change this reality . . . Join us in the streets to remind the public of the reality of the conflict that cannot be ignored anymore! Let's take the streets to raise our voice against the conflict that is harming all of us.”

**Table 3.** Means and standard deviations (SDs) of instrumentality and normalization perceptions, and joint action tendencies in Study 3.

	Normalization condition	No normalization condition
	M (SD)	M (SD)
Normalization perceptions	3.81 (1.15)	2.67 (0.88)
Instrumentality perceptions	3.12 (1.29)	3.64 (1.25)
Joint action tendencies	2.86 (1.51)	3.26 (1.53)

No normalization condition: “Palestinian youth are enduring the ongoing occupation and its practices and are paying the price for resisting the occupation, and we should act together to change this reality. . . Joint us in the streets to remind the public of the reality of occupation that cannot be ignored anymore! Let’s take the streets to raise our voice against the occupation against the Palestinian people.”

Following the manipulation, we assessed participants’ willingness to engage in joint action, the extent to which they thought the described action was normalizing (manipulation check), instrumental, and reflected commonality, and finally their levels of ingroup identification.

*Measures*

*Manipulation check.* The manipulation check for normalization was a simplified and extended version of the measure used in Study 2, including new items designed to strengthen the validity of the measure and ensure its sensitivity to the context. The six-item measure assessed the extent to which participants perceived the joint collective action at hand as normalizing (e.g., “To what degree do you think the described action contains messages that overlook the power differences between Palestinians and Jewish Israelis?”,  $\alpha = .80$ ). *Perceptions of instrumentality* were measured using three items, as in Study 2, but adapted to the particular context (e.g., “To what degree do you think this action is effective in shedding light on the occupation practices in the West Bank?”,  $\alpha = .82$ ). For consistency’s sake, *perceptions of com-*

*monality* were measured using the same two items used in Study 2, with the addition of a third item (“To what degree do you think you share common values and goals with Jewish Israelis who take part in such actions?”,  $\alpha = .86$ ). The three measures of perceived normalization, instrumentality, and commonality were rated from 1 = not at all to 6 = to a great extent.

*Joint collective action tendencies* were measured using four items assessing intentions to participate in the described action (e.g., “To what extent are you willing to click ‘going’ in response to the Facebook event?”; “To what extent are you willing to actually engage in such Jewish–Arab joint action?”, rated from 1 = not at all willing to 6 = willing to a very great extent;  $\alpha = .94$ ).

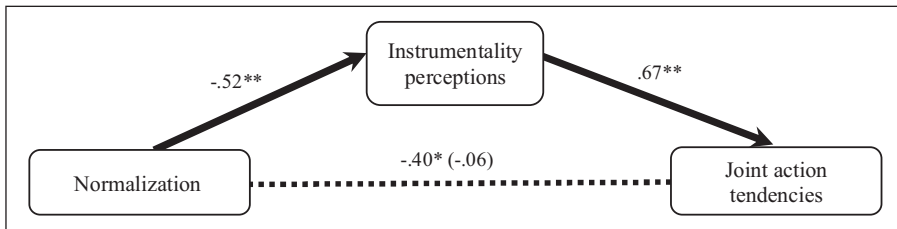
*Group identification* was measured as in Study 2 ( $\alpha = .93$ ).

*Results and Discussion*

*Manipulation check.* We first tested whether the normalization manipulation successfully affected participants’ perceptions of the action. An independent samples t-test revealed that the action designed to appear as normalizing was indeed perceived as higher ( $t_{(238)} = -8.61, p < .001, d = 1.11$ ) on normalization ( $M = 3.81, SD = 1.15$ ) than the action designed to appear as non-normalizing ( $M = 2.67, SD = 0.88$ ) (see Table 3).

*Perceived instrumentality and commonality.* Replicating previous findings, a t-test revealed that the joint action was also perceived as less instrumental ( $t_{(238)} = -3.17, p = .002, d = 0.40$ ) in the normalizing condition ( $M = 3.12, SD = 1.29$ ) than in

**Figure 1.** The effect of normalization on joint action tendencies is mediated by instrumentality perceptions in Study 3.



the non-normalizing condition ( $M = 3.64$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ). This provides confirmatory support for the dampening effect of perceived normalization on the perceived instrumentality of joint action (see Table 3). Perceptions of commonality did not significantly differ between conditions ( $t_{(238)} = 0.06$ ,  $p = .950$ ,  $d = 0.01$ ), suggesting once more that normalization is distinct from commonality.

*Joint collective action tendencies.* We conducted an independent samples  $t$ -test to compare tendencies for joint action between conditions. Again, replicating previous findings, we found that willingness to participate in joint action was lower ( $t_{(238)} = -2.06$ ,  $p = .041$ ,  $d = 0.27$ ) when the action was normalizing ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 1.51$ ) than when it was non-normalizing ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 1.53$ ) (Table 3).

*Mediation by perceived instrumentality.* We then conducted an additional analysis to test whether perceptions of instrumentality mediate the effect of the normalization condition on collective action tendencies, employing Hayes' (2013) bootstrapping PROCESS macro (Model 4; 5,000 iterations). The analysis showed that the normalization condition decreased perceptions of instrumentality ( $b = -0.52$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ ,  $t = -3.16$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $CI [-0.85, -0.19]$ ), leading to decreased joint action tendencies ( $b = 0.67$ ,  $SE = 0.06$ ,  $t = 10.35$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $CI [0.54, 0.79]$ ). The total effect of normalization on joint action tendencies was significant ( $b = -0.40$ ,  $SE = 0.19$ ,  $t = -2.06$ ,  $p = .041$ ,  $CI [-0.79, -0.02]$ ), the direct effect was no longer significant ( $b = -0.06$ ,  $SE = 0.17$ ,  $t = -0.34$ ,  $p = .730$ ,  $CI [-0.38, 0.27]$ ), and the indirect effect

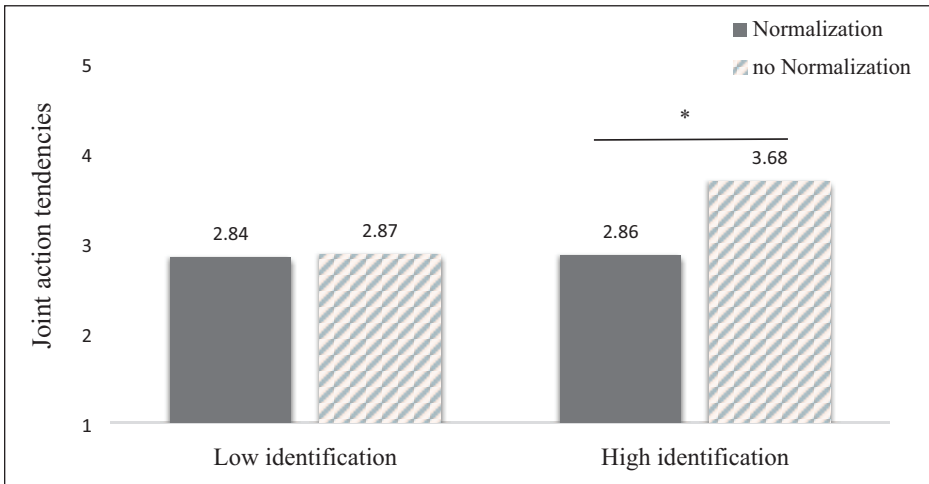
through perceptions of instrumentality ( $a*b$ :  $0.35$ ;  $SE = 0.12$ ,  $CI [-0.59, -0.11]$ ) was significant (see Figure 1). Thus, we found confirmatory evidence for the dampening effect of perceived normalization via instrumentality on joint action.

*Moderation by group identification.* We then conducted a confirmatory test of our hypothesis that group identification moderates the relationship between normalization and willingness to participate in joint action using Hayes' (2013) PROCESS command (Model 1). The analyses revealed significant main effects for both normalization ( $b = -0.44$ ,  $SE = 0.19$ ,  $t = 2.25$ ,  $p = .025$ ,  $CI [-0.83, -0.06]$ ) and group identification ( $b = 0.20$ ,  $SE = 0.09$ ,  $t = 2.25$ ,  $p = .025$ ,  $CI [0.02, 0.38]$ ), as well as the hypothesized two-way interaction ( $b = -0.38$ ,  $SE = 0.18$ ,  $t = 2.10$ ,  $p = .037$ ,  $CI [-0.74, -0.02]$ ). Decomposition of the interaction (see Figure 2) revealed that normalization decreased willingness to participate in the joint action when group identification was high ( $b = -0.82$ ,  $SE = 0.26$ ,  $t = -3.10$ ,  $p = .002$ ,  $CI [-1.33, -0.30]$ ), but not when group identification was low ( $b = -0.03$ ,  $SE = 0.28$ ,  $t = -0.10$ ,  $p = .920$ ,  $CI [-0.58, 0.53]$ ), more reliably replicating the conditional effects found in Study 2. This suggests that the dilemma underlying joint action is most strongly experienced by higher identifiers within the disadvantaged group, and that the heart of the dilemma seems to involve the perceived normalization of joint action.

Next, to test whether instrumentality similarly mediates the above interaction, we used Hayes' (2013) bootstrapping PROCESS macro to test moderated mediation (Model 8, 5,000 iterations).



**Figure 2.** The effect of normalization on joint action tendencies is moderated by ingroup identification in Study 3.



The analysis first revealed that the interactive effect of normalization and identification on the mediator (i.e. instrumentality perceptions) was significant ( $b = -0.48, SE = 0.15, t = -3.24, p = .001, CI [-0.78, -.019]$ ), such that normalization led to decreased perceptions of instrumentality among high identifiers ( $b = -1.06, SE = 0.22, t = -4.89, p < .001, CI [-1.49, -0.63]$ ), but not among low identifiers ( $b = -0.06, SE = 0.23, t = -0.25, p = .80, CI [-0.51, 0.39]$ ). The interactive effect on action tendencies became non-significant when perceptions of instrumentality is added to the model ( $b = -0.06, SE = 0.16, t = -0.41, p = .680, 95\% CI [-0.37, 0.24]$ ). Furthermore, the index of moderated mediation for high vs. low identification was significant ( $a*b = -0.32, SE = 0.11, 95\% CI [-0.58, -0.11]$ ). The indirect effect of the condition  $\times$  identification interaction on joint action was significant for high identifiers ( $b = -0.69, SE = 0.17, CI [-1.05, -0.40]$ ), but not for low identifiers ( $b = -.04, SE = 0.17, CI [-0.39, 0.26]$ ). Normalization thus detracts from the benefits of joint action from the perspective of high identifiers, which leads to decreased joint action tendencies.

In sum, Study 3 provided further causal evidence for the idea that perceptions of normalization undermine willingness to engage in joint

collective action, and that one key reason is that perceived normalization decreases the perceived instrumentality of the action—particularly for those who experience the dilemma most due to their high identification with the disadvantaged ingroup.

### General Discussion

In the current research, we investigated the motivational path to joint collective action between disadvantaged and advantaged group members. We put forward the argument that joint collective action poses a unique dilemma for disadvantaged group members, as the power relations between the groups propel more deliberate thinking about the potential costs and benefits of acting together with members of the advantaged group. Specifically, the results of Studies 1 and 2 were in line with our hypothesis that perceptions of instrumentality increase willingness to engage in joint action, whereas normalization counteracts this motivation. We also examined the role of commonality in Studies 1 and 2 in an attempt to differentiate it from normalization, but our data did not provide solid evidence regarding its effects on joint action tendencies or relationship with normalization. Additionally, the results of

Study 3 replicated the finding that normalization serves as a barrier to joint action, and Studies 2 and 3 both demonstrated that high identifiers are more prone to the influence of normalization. Importantly, Study 3 revealed that normalization influenced the motivation of high identifiers to engage in joint action through their instrumentality perceptions. Together, the current findings signify that the decision to partake in joint action is shaped by the anticipated consequences of the action for the disadvantaged ingroup.

### *Theoretical and Practical Implications*

Our research contributes to the existing literature on collective action in several important ways. Despite growing research on allyship and solidarity-based action (Kutlaca et al., 2020; Radke et al., 2020; Thomas & McGarty, 2009; Van Zomeren et al., 2011), only a few works have examined joint collective action from the perspective of disadvantaged group members (See Kutlaca et al., 2022; Park et al., 2022; Radke et al., 2022; Selvanathan, 2020). Extending this line of research, our findings add to our understanding of the considerations underlying disadvantaged group members' willingness to act jointly with outgroup members. Particularly, our research highlights the need to treat joint collective action as a distinct form of action that poses a unique dilemma to disadvantaged groups centered on the (materialistic and symbolic) costs and benefits of participation. While decision-making relying on outcome expectancy has long been a part of the collective action literature, it has mainly considered the tension between individual and collective motives (Klandermans, 1984, 2002), overlooking social-structural factors that could influence motivational processes in collective action participation. Our work, which is guided by an integrative perspective on collective action (see Van Zomeren, 2016), suggests that the dilemma of joint action is shaped by the power relations between the groups that push the disadvantaged to weigh the various implications of their participation. In a reality of asymmetrical intergroup relations, acting collectively with

members of the advantaged group could hold benefits in terms of increasing the power of the collective and increasing access to public opinion and decision-makers (Subašić, et al., 2008); nonetheless, this form of action can come with risks that counteract these benefits (Droogendyk et al., 2016).

The present work also introduces the concept of *normalization*, which reflects the basic idea that unequal power dynamics between groups can become normal while being masked by good intentions to promote social change. The above findings demonstrate that disadvantaged group members, especially high identifiers, may have concerns about the potential of cooperative relations to normalize inequality. Such concerns, in turn, play a significant role in regulating their tendencies to engage with members of the advantaged group, even in the context of collective action designed to advance the disadvantaged group's interests. These findings resonate with recent research demonstrating that disadvantaged group members evaluate allies less positively when they act or communicate their support in a dominant way (Park et al., 2022; Radke et al., 2022; see also Radke et al., 2020).

Interestingly, perceptions of normalization were found to feed into perceptions of the joint action's instrumentality especially among those individuals who highly identify with their group, undermining their motivation for joint action by making it seem ineffective. Our work sheds light on the different motivational and decision-making processes in joint collective action for low and high identifiers from the disadvantaged group, which is in line with the notion that social identity guides actions and affects how individuals strategically manage behaviors related to the group's interests (Klein et al., 2007; Van Zomeren et al., 2012). We contend that disadvantaged members who are more connected and committed to their group demonstrate an understanding that joint action entails potential risks and negative consequences that could project onto the group level and perpetuate the disadvantage of the group as a whole.

Our research also has important applied implications for those seeking to mobilize disadvantaged group members for collective action. Activists and leaders should be aware that the classic core motivations for action may not be enough to bring disadvantaged members to take part in joint struggles with outgroup members. It is crucial to understand the dilemma inherent in the decision to undertake joint action by virtue of the power relations between the groups. Activists should be especially mindful of certain realistic concerns that disadvantaged group members might have about features of joint action that are perceived as normalizing and obscuring intergroup inequalities, thereby counteracting the potential benefits of such action. Addressing such concerns is crucial to increasing the effectiveness and success of mobilization efforts targeted at disadvantaged group members.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that the specific context can affect how people perceive joint collective action. We believe that normalization concerns may be more pronounced in contexts in which power relations between the groups are overlooked and the struggle of the disadvantaged is unrecognized. For instance, Palestinian–Israeli relations are often situated in a binary conflict framework rather than an anti-occupation or anti-colonial framework, and this as a result embeds the discourse around the Palestinian struggle in narratives of mutual violence and victimhood (Jong, 2018). When the lack of parity between the dominant and the subordinate is disregarded, the disadvantaged group's concerns about normalization are more likely to emerge as a barrier to collaboration with advantaged outgroup members.

### *Limitations and Future Directions*

Despite these important contributions, the present work has several limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, our ability to draw conclusions from our studies is constrained by the lack of a control condition. Although

describing joint action without touching on any of its features is difficult, having a neutral condition would have helped to determine whether, for example, it is normalization that actively creates the perceived costs, or a lack of normalization that attenuates those costs (or both). Second, our findings demonstrate that perceptions of instrumentality and normalization affect willingness to engage in joint action, but, with the exception of Study 3, they do not elucidate the specific features that feed or counter these perceptions. Future research could further explore what features of joint actions make them appear more or less instrumental or normalizing to disadvantaged group members. Relatedly, perceptions of instrumentality and normalization can vary across intergroup contexts. Specifically, solidarity with the disadvantaged group is likely to be more normative and common in some contexts (e.g., the United States compared to Israel/Palestine), and hence joint action might be almost inescapable, which could render concerns about normalization less detrimental to the decision to collaborate with the outgroup. Accordingly, future research should examine the contextual factors that shape the dilemma of joint action and its strength, such as the intensity of the conflict and the normativity of joint action.


In conclusion, this work highlights the complexity of joint collective action and its potential to pose a dilemma for members of the disadvantaged group, especially for those whose identity is stronger. We demonstrate that lower identifiers are driven mainly by instrumentality considerations, but for higher identifiers the dilemma lies in the tension between instrumentality as a catalyst for joint action and normalization as potential barrier. As such, this research implies that the joint action dilemma is different from the typical collective action dilemma because it seems more pronounced among high identifiers rather than low identifiers, and it seems to involve group-based rather than individual-based cost calculations.


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## Notes

1. All data were collected before pre-registration became the pervasive norm in social psychology, and so the studies reported here were not pre-registered. That said, we formed all main hypotheses pre-hoc, and we clearly note in the results where analyses are exploratory rather than confirmatory. The authors are committed to open science and thus all materials and data are publicly available at <https://osf.io/p9e6d/>.
2. All the experiments reported in this manuscript included additional measures for exploratory purposes and can be found on the Open Science Framework (OSF): <https://osf.io/p9e6d/>.

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