Chapter Five
General Discussion
Chapter Five

This thesis sought to better understand collective action as a broader process through which the disadvantaged negotiate social change with the advantaged group. Our thinking was guided by a tailored approach to understanding collective actions’ effects, where we chose to focus on what types of action might be effective at changing specific outcomes for specific members of the advantaged group. This enabled us to focus on how collective action could generate support for the main policy goals of the disadvantaged among members of the advantaged group who are more resistant to social change. As a result of this focus, a core aim of the thesis was to develop and empirically examine the notion of constructive disruption: The idea that in order to motivate concessions from the advantaged, collective action needs to both generate a sense of social disruption and also communicate constructive intentions (see Chapters 2 and 3). As this research progressed, we also developed the goal of better understanding those resistant advantaged group members who were the main target audience of this research, which we investigated in detail in Chapter 4 through a new conceptualization and measure of their identity management strategies.

To achieve the first goal, in Chapters 2 and 3 we conducted 8 empirical studies spanning four intergroup contexts in two countries (Israel and the US), employing correlational, observational, experimental, and longitudinal methods. To achieve the second goal, in Chapter 4 we conducted 5 empirical studies to construct a new scale measuring advantaged group identity management as a more fine-grained approach to understanding their resistance to social change and validated this scale in two intergroup contexts (race relations in the US and Jewish-Arab relations in Israel). The key findings suggest that constructive disruption may be pivotal in understanding when and how collective action affects resistant advantaged group members in way that is conducive to change (Chapter 2-3), and that such resistance is psychologically multi-faceted and can be measured (Chapter 4).

In the remainder of this discussion chapter, we (1) review and integrate the key
findings that can be derived from considering all three chapters as a whole and then move on to (2) consider their theoretical implications (for the key findings of each individual chapter see its discussion section), (3) suggest directions for future work on the effectiveness of collective action, and the psychology of advantaged group identity, and how these relate to social change processes, before (4) delivering a conclusion.

**Overview of Key Findings**

By integrating the findings of the chapters of the thesis we derive seven main findings organized around three core topics. We focus on the chapters relating to constructive disruption and integrate their findings to discuss what they mean for psychological processes of social change and the effectiveness of various collective action tactics. Then we review the findings from Chapter 4 and discuss what they can tell us about the resistance of the advantaged to social change. Finally, we address what the implications of these findings for using a general tailored approach to studying the effectiveness of collective action, and what other more peripheral findings about effective action our research revealed.

**Generating Constructive Disruption**

The first two empirical chapters contributed to the social psychological research on the effectiveness of collective action (Louis, 2009), particularly on understanding which collective action tactics could increase support for the policy goals of the disadvantaged among resistant advantaged group members. In our attempt to understand this process, we developed the notion of constructive disruption which argues that (1) collective action needs to produce a sense of disruption among the advantaged in order to motivate them to respond to the action; that (2) this must be accompanied by the perception of constructive intentions which helps make a conciliatory response more likely; and that (3) collective action tactics that are nonnormative and nonviolent are most likely to generate this sense of constructive disruption. While we developed this notion based on an approach that argued that
conclusions about effectiveness must always be specified to their target audience and outcome, in the section below that focuses on summarizing the findings regarding constructive disruption we will use “effectiveness/effective”, for the sake of concision, to mean effective in terms of our specific focus here (i.e., support for concessions among the resistant).

1. **To Be Effective, Protests by the Disadvantaged Need to Be Disruptive.** In line with sociological theories arguing that collective action derives its power to create change from its ability to disrupt normal social relations (see Piven, 2008; Sharp, 1994), the findings of both Chapter 2 and 3 indicate that disruption may be an essential ingredient for effective collective action. In Chapter 2, we found that at least a small amount of violent protests (which are inherently more disruptive) were required to produce increases in support for the policies goals of the movement among more resistant advantaged group members. More specifically, advantaged conservative white Americans living in counties where there were both nonviolent and violent BlackLivesMatter protests were significantly more supportive of the BlackLivesMatter movement’s main policy goals than conservative whites living in counties with only nonviolent protests (or no protests at all), and that these results remained both when controlling for all other variables and in propensity score analyses.

While these findings were drawn from examining exposure to real world protests, they did not allow us to precisely examine the psychological effects of different protest tactics or test that disruption was a key psychological mechanism. Therefore, in Chapter 3 we experimentally exposed participants to protests using different tactics and measured the disruption they were perceived to produce as a potential mechanism. For example, in Study 1 we exposed white Americans to BLM protests with different tactics and in Studies 2-3 we exposed Jewish Israelis to protests of Arab students against discrimination taking place on a university campus. The findings of these studies further supported the notion that disruption
is a key ingredient to protests’ effectiveness. Nonviolent normative action, which was perceived to be the least disruptive of the three tactics studied was not effective. However, nonviolent nonnormative action, which was seen as significantly more disruptive, was the most effective tactic of those we studied.

However, the findings of this chapter also revealed that disruption alone is not enough to make an action effective, and that too much disruption erodes effectiveness (as expressed in violent action, for example Studies 1-3 of Chapter 3 showed that protests that took the form of violent riots were perceived as more disruptive but were less effective and increased support for aggressive responses). These limits on disruption are echoed in the complex findings of Chapter 2, where a mix of violent and nonviolent tactics also produced a backlash in more conservative areas. As such, it is important to note that although this thesis offers clear support for the notion and effectiveness of constructive disruption, more research is needed to understand its complexity and limits.

2. Disruption Alone is not Enough – Protests also Need to be Perceived as Having Constructive Intentions. The findings of Chapter 3 highlighted the complexity inherent in effective collective action as producing disruption alone was not enough to for a collective action tactic to be effective. For example, the results of Chapter 3 showed that despite producing the most disruption, purely violent action was not effective – i.e., in all studies where participants were exposed to a single violent protest it did not increase their support for policy outcomes (in fact, it increased their support for aggressive responses). This indicates that despite Chapter 2’s findings that some amount of violent protests in a nonviolent movement could increase effectiveness, a single wholly violent protest was not effective. Some of the results of Chapter 2 support this as well: While there were not enough counties that experienced only violent protests to analyze them using inferential statistics, descriptively speaking living in such a county led resistant advantaged group members to be
less supportive of the movement’s goals (see Supplementary Materials for Chapter 2). This suggests that the nonviolent protests were also playing a role in the effectiveness of collective action in counties that experienced both types of protest, helping to balance the disruptive violent protests with some other element. While the broad nature of the studies in Chapter 2 generally did not allow us to examine this in detail, the more fine-grained approach of Chapter 3 did.

In fact, in Chapter 3, we were able to examine the second key ingredient for collective actions’ effectiveness, i.e., constructive intentions. The findings of Chapter 3 revealed that it is not enough for protests to produce disruption -- they must also communicate constructive intentions (i.e., that they are attempting to improve the situation for their group and not just attack or harm the advantaged group). These findings indicated that effective collective action is a complex psychological balancing act, as these two ingredients of constructive disruption tend to be negatively correlated -- that is, the tactics that most likely produce the most disruption (e.g., violent nonnormative tactics) were found to be perceived least constructively, whereas tactics that were perceived the most constructively (e.g., nonviolent normative tactics) produced the least disruption. This delicate balancing act between these two ingredients of constructive disruption is probably why nonviolent nonnormative action can be so effective: It is able to balance these two key components, producing high levels of disruption while still being perceived relatively constructively. In other words, it is able to generate the “constructive tension necessary for growth” as described in the epigraph.

3. Nonviolent Nonnormative Tactics May Be Most Effective for Increasing Policy Support Among the Resistant. Beyond our focus on the psychological process of constructive disruption, we were generally interested in identifying which collective action tactics (e.g. see Zlobina & Gonzalez Vazquez, 2018) would be most effective at triggering this process and thus increasing support for key policies among resistant advantaged group
members. In the most direct test of this question, the results of Chapter 3 indicated that compared to purely normative nonviolent tactics or purely violent tactics, nonnormative nonviolent action was most effective to this end. While Chapter 2 indicated that a broad movement that combines both nonviolent and violent tactics can also achieve this effect, the results of Chapter 3 indicate that there is inherent risk in violent protest. This was also observed in Chapter 2 as in more conservative areas these mixed protests produced a backlash effect.

This slight divergence between the findings of these two Chapters makes sense given that Chapter 2 examined collective action on a large scale where tactics were mixed allowing for emergent properties of their mixture to be detected. On the other hand, Chapter 3 examined carefully controlled exposure to a single protest with a single tactic thus removing the potential for any interactive or emergent properties of multiple tactics employed in the same movement. Taking all these findings into account, we conclude that overall nonviolent nonnormative action is likely the most effective tactic (of those we studied) at increasing policy support among resistant advantaged group members, as it better avoids the risk of backlash that is inherent in violent protest.

**Understanding Collective Actions’ Effects on the Advantaged Requires an Understanding of their Resistance to Social Change**

In both Chapters 2 and 3, resistance to social change was a consistent moderator of the effects of different types of collective action, with effects depending on how open or resistant to social change advantaged group members were. In particular, we found that constructive disruption was particularly effective for those higher in resistance to social change. However, part of our understanding of this process is limited by the limits of our grasp of the psychological roots of this resistance. This gap in our understanding is a result of the fact that in the first two chapters we used more generic measures, or proxies, of resistance
to social change (e.g., political ideology, identification with the advantaged group), limiting our ability to say that it is truly resistance acting as a moderator. One reason for this was that a generic measure of resistance to social change with a specific disadvantaged group does not exist, and we did not yet have the measure we developed in Chapter 4, which suggests such resistance is multi-faceted.

4. Resistance to Social Change Among the Advantaged Can Take Many Forms

As a result of these limitations in our own studies in Chapters 2-3 and the literature more broadly, we set out to develop a more detailed conceptual understanding and measure of resistance to social change that could be easily modified (i.e., by changing the names of the groups to which it referred) to make it applicable in any intergroup context, thus making it both psychologically general, but also context-specific. Such a scale could then be used in future work on resistance to social change, in particular for our work on processes of constructive disruption. To do so, we drew from and expanded upon a recently developed theory of white identity management (Knowles, et al., 2014).

After developing and experimentally validating a new measure of advantaged group identity management, we found support for the existence of four distinct strategies in two intergroup contexts (race relations in the US and Jewish-Arab relations in Israel). These strategies were *Defending* the hierarchy, *Denying* or minimizing the existence of inequality, *Distancing* oneself from inequality or the advantaged identity category, or seeking to *Dismantle* inequality. While there were differences in the prevalence and implications of these strategies between the two contexts, their existence and relevance in both contexts was supported by confirmatory factor analyses that supported measurement invariance and strong construct validity. These results indicated that there is in fact a great deal of diversity in how advantaged group members understand their privileged status.

Although we have not yet been able to test these measures as moderators of the
effects of different types of collective action, we do have indications from the data collected that they help capture varying levels of resistance to social change. Based on their correlations with a number of other variables collected for the testing of construct validity, Defending was associated with the highest amount of resistance to social change, followed by Denying, Distancing from inequality, Distancing from identity, and Dismantling (which was the only identity management strategy consistently related to openness to or support for social change). The fact that only Dismantling captured openness or support for social change indicates that resistance to social change can take up to four different forms, which differ from each other in both quality and intensity. This means that any future research on social change and the advantaged’s resistance to it should take into account this more complex and multifaceted nature of resistance.

Use of a “Tailored Approach”

5. Taking a Tailored Approach is Critical to Studying the Effectiveness of Collective Action

This thesis reflects a first step toward using a tailored approach to the study of effective collective action. Specifically, we used a tailored approach to guide our thinking that emphasized the importance of specifying the types, outcomes, and target audience rather than speaking of “effectiveness” more generally. Although the research in this thesis offers only a first step (i.e., we did not conduct research on every possible research direction that such a tailored approach outlines), we still feel that the findings in this thesis highlight the importance of using such an approach. We focused on the effectiveness of various types of collective action (differentiated by their tactics) on increasing support for the policy goals of the movement among members of the advantaged group who are resistant to social change, but our results provide findings about other target audiences and outcomes (though not the focus of this thesis) and thus indicate the potential of this approach.
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We argued that in order to draw more clear and precise conclusions about the effectiveness of collective action, it is imperative to state what types of action, outcome variables, and target audience are being studied. Broadly, our results demonstrate the importance of this tailored approach: Across our studies we found, where available, indications of different effects for different types of collective action (e.g., the tactics used) on different outcome variables (e.g., policy support vs prejudice) for different target audiences (e.g., those more and less resistant to social change). This demonstrates the importance of considering many potential types of action, outcomes, and target audiences both when designing studies (particularly around real-world events when there may be only one opportunity to measure reactions) and when drawing conclusions about effectiveness (i.e., instead of conclusions stating that a certain protest was in/effective, conclusions should highlight that a certain type of protest was in/effective on a specific outcome for a specific target audience). This aligns with a more general shift towards the importance of a tailored and personalized approach when considering influence and attitude change in intergroup relations (Halperin & Schori-Eyal, 2020). However, we note that the work in this thesis is just the first step toward fleshing out such a tailored approach in more detail.

6. Prejudice May Not Always Be a Relevant Outcome for Collective Action. The results of Chapter 2 in particular indicated that none of the collective action tactics studied had any effects on prejudice, both among advantaged group members who were more open to social change and those who were more resistant. This indicates that prejudice and negative attitudes towards the disadvantaged group, despite their importance for positive intergroup relations more broadly, may not be a relevant outcome for studying the effectiveness of collective action. While prejudice’s longstanding importance in the study of intergroup relations may lead some social psychologists (e.g. Sawyer & Gampa, 2018) and political scientists (e.g. Reny & Newman, 2021) to naturally evaluate collective action’s effectiveness
in terms in ability to reduce prejudice, such efforts may not have been looking in the ideal place. This is because as many other social psychologists have noted (Dixon et al., 2012; Wright & Lubensky, 2009) prejudice reduction and collective action reflect to fundamentally different strategies for social change, with their own (sometimes conflicting) psychologies, as one is based around creating commonality and harmony between the groups while the other seeks to use some level of conflict (or at least disruption) to advance equality.

7. **Nonviolent Normative Tactics May Be the Most Effective at Mobilizing Sympathetic Advantaged Group Members.** Although this was not the focus of this thesis, studies 3.1-3 in Chapter 3 all included measures of willingness to engage in solidarity-based action in support of the disadvantaged. In these three studies, nonviolent normative action tended to be the most effective in increasing advantaged group members willingness for *solidarity-based action*. These findings align with other recent work in social psychology on the effects of collective action. For example, Feinberg et al. (2020) also found that more normative and less radical protests were most effective at increasing support and willingness to join the movement. Similarly, Teixeira et al. (2020) found that normative action was more effective than nonnormative action at winning support from the advantaged group. This suggests that the same tactic may positively affect one audience while negatively affecting (or not affecting) another. This further corroborates the potential of the tailored approach we suggest, and the importance of better understanding the different ways by which advantaged group members can resist social change.

**Implications**

**Theoretical Implications**

Broadly speaking, the findings of this thesis contribute to two main literatures. First, this thesis and particularly Chapters 2-3 contribute to a small but rapidly growing literature in social psychology that considers the psychological effects of collective action on the
advantaged group and their role in social change processes (Feinberg et al., 2020; Louis, 2009; Orazani & Leidner, 2019; Teixeira et al., 2020; Thomas & Louis, 2014). While social psychology has long considered the motivations of the disadvantaged to participate in collective action (for reviews see Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; van Zomeren, 2013), it has only recently begun to consider the effects and effectiveness of this action for the advantaged group (see Feinberg et al., 2020; Teixeira et al., 2020). This thesis contributes to this work by (1) introducing the notion of constructive disruption which begins to shed light on psychological processes involved in social change among the advantaged, and (2) suggesting a tailored approach for studying the effects of collective action.

In addition, this thesis, and particularly Chapter 4, adds to the literature on the psychology of the advantaged group more broadly. While social identity approaches typically hold that, unlike disadvantaged identity (see Reicher, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1979), advantaged identity does not require complex identity management mechanisms, we show that the context of modern societies, which are characterized by efforts for social change and value systems that sometimes clash with group-based privilege (Knowles et al., 2014), stimulates identity management processes among the advantaged. Thus, this thesis aims to better understand the psychological experience of being a member of a historically advantaged group, with the hope that this understanding can inform how to better manage social change processes. We discuss the theoretical implications for these two areas of research below.

1. Constructive Disruption and the Psychology of Social Change. First, our findings regarding the role of constructive disruption in processes of social change have implications for sociological theories of disruptive protest. It is in line with sociological perspectives on the power of protest and collective action. Theorists of large scale mass protest (e.g., Piven, 2008; Sharp, 1994, 2013) argue that it derives its power from the ability
to disrupt normally cooperative relations and the broader social order, which can incentivize powerful groups to make concessions to the movement. According to this perspective the goal of protests is to create some level of conflict and disruption to key aspects of life to pressure people to address to the protesters’ key grievances (Piven 2008, Sharp, 1994, 2013). Our findings largely align with these theories as they suggest that disruption is a key ingredient for protests effectiveness, at least when it comes to generating support for policy concessions from those who are more resistant to the social change that the protest aims to achieve. In addition, they extend this theory by providing both observational (Chapter 2) and experimental (Chapter 3) support, thus including support for the external and internal validity of these arguments. However, our findings add an important caveat to this literature, namely that in order for disruption to have these effects, it must be generated in such a way that still communicates constructive intentions on the part of the protesters. If resistant advantaged members feel, for example, that the disruption is purely for the sake of disruption or designed to attack them, they are more likely to respond to the disruption with aggressive retaliatory measures rather than concessions to the disadvantaged.

Our findings on generating constructive disruption also speak more broadly to the literature on social change within social psychology by hinting at the need for balance within the models social psychologists apply in order to try to advance social change. Social psychological research has coalesced around two broad models of social change (Dixon et al., 2012; Wright & Lubensky, 2009): One is more focused on generating harmony and commonality between groups (often referred to as the prejudice reduction model), as a means to reduce prejudice and thus discrimination as means to creating more equal and positive relations between the groups. The second focuses on generating some level of conflict and social competition between the groups by motivating the disadvantaged to engage in collective action to contest their disadvantaged status and thus hopefully win greater equality
(the collective action model). Much recent work has discussed the tension between these models (Dixon et al., 2016; van Zomeren, 2019), although the focus has been primarily on the risks of an overemphasis on harmony within the prejudice reduction model (see the irony of harmony, Saguy et al., 2009, and the sedative effect of contact, Cakal et al., 2011). Our work, on the other hand, sits firmly within the collective action model of social change, yet it suggests perhaps similar dynamics in a mirror image.

More specifically, recent work on intergroup contact and prejudice has called for elements more often associated with the collective action model such as maintaining strong group identification (at least in the form of dual identity, see Dovidio et al., 2007, 2009), recognition of group differences and the existence of injustice (Saguy et al., 2008; Shani & Boehrne, 2017), and empowering minority group members in contact encounters (Hässler et al., 2020). This could be read as incorporating some of the main elements of the collective action model (i.e. identification, injustice, efficacy; see van Zomeren et al., 2008) to help balance the harmony inherent within the prejudice reduction model. While our notion of constructive disruption does not explicitly attempt to balance or integrate these two models, it does highlight a similar notion of balance within the collective action model. Indeed, when disadvantaged groups aim to actively create some level of conflict and disrupt the current system through collective action, this is most effective when it is balanced with some communication of constructive intentions. In other words, some expression of care for the existence of harmony or at least a functioning relationship between the two groups (see Adams, 2005; van Zomeren, 2015) needs to remain to balance out the disruption.

2. Tailored Approach as Framework for Integrating Prior Research. As we have discussed previously, there is discussion and debate about the effectiveness of various types of collective action, e.g. nonviolent versus violent (Chenoweth & Stephan, 2011; Enos et al., 2019; Gould & Klor, 2010; Wasow, 2020), normative vs. nonnormative (Feinberg et al.,
2020; Shuman et al., 2020; Teixeira et al., 2020), and joint vs. non-joint action (Selvanathan et al., 2020). The literature in this area often considers different outcomes and different target audiences, which can perhaps explain the frequency of conflicting findings. As a result, we suggest that applying the framework of the tailored approach could perhaps help organize and integrate these findings. While we do not attempt to do so here, we suggest that it could be fruitful ground for future theoretical integration. By specifying not only type of action but also the key outcome and target audience, the current work offers a roadmap for future work on other tactics, outcomes and target audiences, which may lead to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of what it means for collective action to be “effective”.

3. Multi-faceted Resistance among the Advantaged Group. In Chapter 4, we already discussed at length two implications of our findings about advantaged group identity management for social identity theory. First, it expands and diversifies the concept of identity management within SIT and, second, it applies it to the advantaged group, and points to how socio-structural perceptions (stability, legitimacy, permeability) may govern identity management among both groups (Reicher, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Here, we will not reiterate those points but focus on the implications of our findings regarding advantaged identity management processes for the broader topic of thesis, namely the process of negotiating social change.

One key implication of this perspective is that the threats advantaged group members experience as a result of social change are multi-faceted, and thus their responses are equally diverse. So far, the literature on the advantaged group’s reactions to social change does reflect some level of consensus that social change is a psychologically threatening process for members of the advantaged group. For example, work has documented advantaged group members “fear of falling” in response increases in status and representation of minority groups (Jetten et al., 2015, 2017) and that demographic changes generate threat responses
among majority group members (Brown et al., 2021; Craig & Richeson, 2014). However, this body of work has mainly focused on a more general threat to the hierarchy induced by social change. The theoretical perspective guiding our work in chapter 4 (Knowles et al., 2014) highlights that there are many potential types of threats the advantaged may experience, namely status threat, meritocratic threat, and moral image threat (at least in the contexts where we did the studies). As a result of different combinations of these various threats, advantaged group members manage their identity in a variety of ways, which may suggest potential avenues to further social change processes.

Put differently, the more diverse and multifaced perspective on advantaged group identity suggested by Chapter 4 may aid work looking to identify psychological changes that help move the advantaged towards support for social change. For members of the advantaged group who tend to prioritize egalitarianism, reminders of their group’s persistent advantages threaten the ingroup’s moral reputation thus driving them to Dismantle their privileges through support for inequality-reducing policies. This suggests that heightening moral image threat may be an effective psychological tool for increasing support for social change among advantaged group members who prioritize egalitarianism over the other two value systems. On the other hand, those that primarily prioritize meritocracy are most likely to engage in Distancing, reflecting a dislike for being associated with their group identity and its advantages, thus appeals to correct inequality based on a common identity (e.g., we are all Americans and deserve the same opportunities) may be particularly effective for these advantaged group members. Finally, there are those advantaged group members more strongly invested in their group’s status. If this is their strongest commitment, they are likely to Defend and it is unclear if there is any way they could be won over to support social change. However, if this investment in status co-occurs with some commitment to meritocracy, they are more likely to Deny, and thus we suggest that this is the kind of
moderate resistance that is responsive to constructive disruption (see more discussion below).

All these implications are, as of yet, untested and thus should subjected to future empirical scrutiny. Nevertheless, our findings provide a framework to guide such future work into how to better manage social change processes with the advantaged.

**Practical and Applied Implications**

At least three practical or otherwise applied implications follow from our findings and theoretical rationale. First, some may wonder whether winning, perhaps grudgingly, support from the advantaged for policy changes that would advance equality pertains to much of an advance towards social change, particularly because it does not mean the advantaged group’s underlying attitudes towards the disadvantaged or equality have changed. However, to the extent that such changes help actual policy change to occur this can result in real differences in the daily lives of disadvantaged group members. For example, Campbell (2021) found that census locations with BLM protests experienced a 15%-20% decrease in police homicides from 2014 through 2019 as a result of changes made to policing policy.

While this study did not show that these policy changes were the result of changes in support among the advantaged group, some of the research presented in this thesis shows that areas with BLM protests exhibit similar effects on policy support among the advantaged (see Chapter 2). Further, an almost exact parallel study to Chapter 2 of this thesis that examined the effect of the 2020 George Floyd protests on local and state policy found that those protests were linked to policing policy change (Ebbinghaus et al., 2021), except in areas with large Republican vote shares. These findings directly mirror our findings on support for policy change in Chapter 2. While no causal link can be drawn between advantaged group support and policy change based on these studies, support for such changes among the advantaged (majority) group can only have facilitated their implementation, while stronger opposition likely would have posed some sort of barrier (Burstein, 2003; Burstein & Linton,
2002). Thus, support for policy changes and their implementation can make a real difference for disadvantaged group members, even if it leaves the advantaged’s broader attitudes unchanged.

Importantly, policy change could help set the stage for the deeper attitude change that would be more likely to occur through more complex longitudinal processes. First, it could do this by initiating normative processes whereby advantaged group members look to their institutions for signals of what are the correct normative attitudes (see Tankard & Paluck, 2016 for more discussion of normative processes and social change). In addition, policies like affirmative action or housing policy change could create environments with more contact between advantaged and disadvantaged group members, helping to foster deeper changes in attitudes, which are more effectively driven by long term process involving the development of close intergroup ties (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

Thus, if we accept increasing policy support among resistant advantaged group members as an important practical goal in the real world, what applied implications can be derived from these findings? First, we suggest that when disadvantaged group activists are focused on this goal, they should try to employ nonviolent nonnormative tactics as much as possible. These kinds of tactics were most reliably linked to constructive disruption and thus to winning support for policy concessions for resistant advantaged group members. However, if disadvantaged activists are in a different stage of their struggle where other goals, for example mobilizing sympathizers, are more important, we suggest based on some of our findings and others (see Feinberg et al., 2020; Teixeira et al., 2020) that more normative nonviolent tactics may be more effective.

Second, our findings may help provide activists with guidance for what to do if violence breaks out at some protests. Generally, our findings suggest that violence is a risky protest tactic that can often have negative effects (Chapter 3), despite that we found that it
can sometimes have positive effects (Chapter 2), thus for this (and also for ethical reasons) we would not recommend it to activists as deliberate planned tactic. However, often violent protest is spontaneous expression of the strong negative emotions aroused by continuing and unaddressed injustices faced by the disadvantaged. Martin Luther King Jr. captured this dynamic well, saying, “a riot is the language of the unheard . . . And so, in a real sense our nation's summers of riots are caused by our nation's winters of delay. And as long as America postpones justice, we stand in the position of having these recurrences of violence and riots over and over again” (King, 1967). In addition, even if violence is initiated by the police or other authorities, protesters can be perceived has having engaged in violent protest, especially if they are members of minority groups (Manekin & Mitts, 2021).

In order to avoid the negative effects of violent protest observed in Chapter 3 and other studies (Feinberg et al., 2020; Manekin & Mitts, 2021; Wasow, 2020), we suggest that when violence occurs, activists should hurry to organize a large number of nonviolent protests, so that the violent protests are only a part of a larger nonviolent movement – making the positive effects observed in Chapter 2 more likely. In addition, they should engage in public relations efforts to communicate the broader movement’s constructive intentions to the advantaged, i.e., that they are attempting to achieve something positive for their group, not attack the advantaged, and that protests will be concluded when their aims are achieved, as a way to balance the disruption generated by the violence.

Third, our findings regarding the importance of constructive intentions point to the importance of public relations and communications more generally for activists, especially when they engage in disruptive action. Based on our findings, we would recommend that activists exert effort not just to explain their key goals and demands, but also the rationale behind their disruption. For example, if activists aim to generate major disruption by blocking roads, they should probably attempt to communicate why they feel such efforts are needed
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despite their negative effects on the everyday person. This may be easiest when disruptive efforts are as directly tied as possible to goals of the action – for example, if blocking roads is used in the context of protests against housing discrimination and home demolitions by Arab activists in Israel (for more detail on this context, see Lis, 2017) in order to delay or even prevent the arrival of demolition equipment to demolition sites, it may be easier to explain and be perceived as more constructive even as it also causes wider disruption to everyday traffic and travel. This being said, we acknowledge the inherent challenge for activists in being both disruptive and conveying constructive intentions --- it is surely easier said than done.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite these important theoretical and practical implications, the research in this thesis potentially suffers from at least four limitations and directions for future research. First, as we have already noted we only developed our measure of advantaged group identity management after conducting the first two projects examining the effectiveness of different types of collective action for resistant advantaged group members. Thus, we do not yet know exactly how the advantaged group management strategies measured reflect resistance to social change in response to protests by the disadvantaged, or which types of action are most effective for advantaged group members who employ the various identity management strategies. However, based on the findings of this thesis we can generate new hypotheses about what the effects of collective action would be depending on the various identity management strategies.

For example, we would expect that the processes captured here are particularly relevant to advantaged group members who rely on Denial, as this is a strategy associated with resistance to social change but not in its extreme forms. As such, constructive disruption might be a relevant psychological mechanism for these advantaged group members. In
addition, we suggested that joint action might be particularly effective for advantaged group members who *Distance*, as they may be particularly receptive to its appeals that are more based on a common identity. Advantaged group members who *Dismantle* are already generally supportive of social change, so for them the relevant goal may be to mobilize them rather than change their policy support. As such normative protests (see Feinberg et al., 2020), particularly ones that generate moral image threat, may be effective at mobilizing these advantaged group members. Finally, we would expect advantaged group members who *Defend* to be resistant to any form of collective action. The primary relevant goal for these advantaged group members may rather be to avoid motivating them to engage in active defense (e.g. counter-protests or other hierarchy defensive collective action see Jost et al., 2017). All these hypotheses are currently untested, however, and thus call for a new program of research to systematically test how various forms of collective action affect advantaged group members depending on their identity management strategy and the psychological mechanisms behind these effects.

Second, while we did consider the effects of a longer movement that spanned a summer in Chapter 2 (BLM), for the most part our research focused on the immediate impacts of a brief movement (Chapter 2) or single protests (Chapter 3). This means we are unable to draw firm conclusions about the long-term effects of social movements that often combine multiple protest tactics and have many different goals over the lifespan of the movement. As a result, future research should examine the impacts of movements that combine multiple tactics (e.g. radical flank effects, see Tompkins, 2015) and movements react to success and failures and the processes involved in achieving broader more systematic social change, not just specific policy goals (see DIME and ABIASCA models, Gulliver et al., 2021). For example, recent research indicates that some activists innovate, i.e. change their collective action tactics, in response to failures to achieve their goals (Lizzio-Wilson et
al., 2021; Louis et al., 2021), making it more likely that an initial failure will produce a movement or group of movements with a diversity of tactics. Thus, there is a need for future research that will examine the impact of such movements containing multiple different types of protest tactics and following such movements over time to study the dynamics of their effects.

Third, our research focused solely on the effects of collective action on the advantaged group. Similarly, to our knowledge most of the other nascent research on the effects of collective action in social psychology has also focused on the advantaged (see Orazani & Leidner, 2019; Teixeira et al., 2020), with relatively little research examining the effects of collective action on the disadvantaged group itself, and most of this work examines effects on activists themselves not the broader disadvantaged group (Drury et al., 2005; Drury & Reicher, 2005; Selvanathan & Lickel, 2019). This is an important limitation that needs to be addressed in future research because it may be that actions that have beneficial effects on the advantaged have problematic effects for the disadvantaged. As collective action is ultimately aimed at advancing the status of the disadvantaged group, their perspective should not be ignored. Thus, it is important that future research examine what types of action are effective at empowering and mobilizing the disadvantaged, and what are the mechanisms behind these effects. Furthermore, it would be interesting to understand better whether the disadvantaged also react differentially to collective action based on the identity management strategy they employ, as we suggest here for the advantaged. If further research suggests that specific forms of identity management play a role for both groups and these identity management strategies of both groups can be further integrated under the umbrella of social identity theory (e.g., Ellemers, 1993), this could provide fertile ground for a unifying psychological model of how advantaged and disadvantaged group members dynamically respond to social change efforts, including how they negotiate social change.
Fourth, while this thesis highlighted the potential value of constructive disruption to generate support for policy change towards equality, it did not fully delve into the underlying psychology of this mechanism. As a result, there are still many open questions that merit further research. For example, what precisely is it that constructive disruption disrupts? Is this a general sense of social order and normality, or something more inherently psychological? For example, a number of theorists have suggested that humans are fundamentally motivated by the relationships they are embedded in and that violations to how these relationships are meant to be enacted motivate us to regulate such relationships (see Fiske, 1992; Rai & Fiske, 2011; van Zomeren, 2015). Perhaps the effects we observed under the umbrella of constructive disruption suggest that similar processes are occurring on an intergroup level. In other words, perhaps disruption suggests that people’s notions of the proper dynamics of relations between the groups have been violated, motivating them to respond to the disadvantaged group’s action. Further research should explore this possibility, as it may help better elucidate the notion of constructive disruption and if there are forms of disruption that are more likely to be constructive than others.

Conclusion

Collective action has long been a focus of social psychological research. In this thesis, we broaden the scope of this area of research to include the advantaged group in order to better elucidate how the disadvantaged negotiate social change with the advantaged. In particular, we used a tailored approach focused on how different collective action tactics might effectively overcome resistance to social change from the advantaged and generate support for their key policy goals. In doing so, we first developed the notion of constructive disruption, which indicates that in order to be effective in this regard, the disadvantaged need to employ forms of action that are somewhere between the two extremes of completely nonviolent normative action and nonnormative violent action --- namely nonviolent
nonnormative action, or perhaps some amount of violence within a larger nonviolent movement. This allows them to generate a balance of both disruption which pressures the advantaged to respond and communicating constructive intentions which help make a conciliatory response more likely. Second, we delved more deeply into the psychological nature of resistance to social change among the advantaged group by developing a conceptualization and measure of advantaged group members’ identity management. Taken together, this research has implications for the study of the effectiveness of collective action, social change processes, and advantaged group identity. We hope that it will stimulate further research into how collective action can generate the “constructive tension” described in the epigraph which can drive growth towards a more equal society and help elucidate the psychology of the advantaged group’s resistance in this process.