

## Responding to Membership in a Disadvantaged Group: From Acceptance to Collective Protest

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The question addressed is, when do disadvantaged-group members accept their situation, take individual action, or attempt to instigate collective action? Ss attempted to move from a low-status group into an advantaged, high-status group and were asked to respond to their subsequent rejection. Ss who believed that the high-status group was open to members of their group endorsed acceptance and individual actions. When access to the high-status group was restricted, even to the point of being almost closed (tokenism), Ss still preferred individual action. Disruptive forms of collective action were only favored by Ss who were told that the high-status group was completely closed to members of their group. Ss who believed they were near to gaining entry into the high-status group favored individual protest, while Ss distant from entry were more likely to accept their position. The theoretical and societal implications of these findings are discussed.

The unequal distribution of resources among groups or categories arises at virtually every level of social organization: from nations, to the place of work, to the family unit. The actions taken by members of a disadvantaged group can range from apparent acceptance, to individual attempts to improve one's personal position, to episodes of collective violence.

The circumstances associated with different forms of action by disadvantaged-group members have not been systematically defined in the social psychological literature. The following three limitations to existing theory and research in intergroup relations may partially account for this deficit: (a) the tendency to focus on feelings and perceptions, not behavior, (b) the failure to study a full array of behavioral options, and (c) the reductionist nature of dominant theories of intergroup relations. The present article attempts to address each of these three limitations.

First, many theories in the area of intergroup relations attempt to predict when disadvantaged people will have strong negative feelings. The fundamental and recurring problem is the tendency of these major theories not to extend their analysis beyond feelings to the resulting behavioral consequences of membership in a disadvantaged group. The dependent measures in most research that is inspired by theories such as equity theory (K. S. Cook & Messick, 1983; Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978), justice motive theory (Lerner, 1977; Lerner & Lerner, 1981), distributive justice theory (Homans, 1961), and relative deprivation theory (Crosby, 1976; Davis, 1959; Gurr,

1970; Mark, 1985; Runciman, 1966; Stouffer, Suchman, DeViney, Starr, & Williams, 1949) have not been behavior—but feelings, attitudes, and perceptions associated with unequal treatment. Notable exceptions to this tendency exist (e.g., T. D. Cook, Crosby, & Hennigan, 1977; Guimond & Dubé, 1983; Martin & Murray, 1984; Morrison & Steeves, 1967; O'Neill & Leiter, 1986; Ross, Thibaut, & Evenbeck, 1971; Vanneman & Pettigrew, 1972; Wilensky, 1963).

However, even when behavior is the focus, a second shortcoming is frequently evidenced: Often, only one form of action is measured. The variety of specific behaviors that members of a disadvantaged group might exhibit is extensive. By focusing on only one form of behavior, these researchers offer subjects only two options: the action being studied or inaction. In these circumstances, the subject's preferred action may not be available, which may inadvertently pressure the subject to endorse the less preferred but available behavior or, alternatively, to choose inaction.

The initial challenge, then, is to develop a framework for categorizing the numerous possible behaviors that might be exhibited by disadvantaged-group members. Crosby (1976) described four categories of resultants associated with feelings of deprivation. This framework presents an initial attempt to provide a systematic structure for predicting behavior but suffers several limitations. First, one of the categories, "mental and physical stress symptoms," is not entirely a behavioral response. More important, these four categories of behavior are concerned with egoistical or personal relative deprivation. Thus, the predictors of behavior are primarily intrapersonal in nature, and a clear distinction between collective and individual behaviors is not presented. Mark and Folger (1984) also presented a "response typology" for those who are relatively deprived. This typology includes both attitudes and behavior, but again, the orientation is interpersonal, and no explicit distinction is made between collective and individual forms of action.

Most recently, Taylor, Moghaddam, Gamble, and Zeller

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(1987) offered the beginnings of a framework that is intergroup in orientation. First, a distinction is made between action and inaction. Second, when action does occur, a contrast is made between individual and collective forms. This distinction is not made simply on the basis of the number of group members involved. A group member engages in collective action anytime that he or she is acting as a representative of the group and the action is directed at improving the condition of the entire group. Individual action, on the other hand, is behavior that is directed at improving one's personal condition. Despite the clear social significance of these different responses to inequality, a third important distinction is necessary. Martin (1986) alludes to the distinction between action that either conforms to the norms of the existing social system, *normative*, or is outside the confines of the existing social rules and structure, *non-normative*. From these three distinctions, five broad categories of behavior arise: (a) apparent acceptance of one's disadvantaged position, (b) attempts at individual upward mobility through normative channels made available by the system, (c) individual action outside the norms of the system, (d) instigation of collective action within the prescribed norms of the existing system, and (e) instigation of collective action outside the norms of the system.

The actions described by these five categories have dramatically different societal implications. For example, collective nonnormative action directly threatens the existing social order, whereas acceptance and individual normative actions serve to protect the status quo. These five categories of behavior, then, provide the framework for investigating behavioral responses to inequality in the present experiment.

The third shortcoming in the intergroup relations literature is that the more prominent theories of intergroup relations involve extrapolations to the intergroup context, of hypotheses formulated to explain interactions at the interpersonal level. This reductionist perspective has resulted in a tendency to focus on individualistic responses to inequality (see Taylor & Moghaddam, 1987). Thus, the major theories are incomplete in their ability to generate a complete set of predictions concerning disadvantaged-group behavior.

Equity theory and relative deprivation theory, by showing how large, objective inequalities need not lead to dissatisfaction and anger, can provide viable explanations for apparent acceptance in the face of high levels of objective inequality (K. S. Cook & Messick, 1983; Martin, 1986). However, although it is reasonable to predict no action when feelings of dissatisfaction and deprivation are absent, it does not follow that the presence of these feelings will inevitably lead to action (Tajfel, 1982). Martin (1986) discusses a variety of situations in which "inequalities may cause feelings of injustice, but these feelings may have little effect on behavior, causing a behavioral, if not emotional, tolerance of injustice" (p. 238). More directly, the presence of dissatisfaction, or even the intensity of these negative feelings, does not determine the form action will take. In short, both equity theory and relative deprivation theory fail to provide any clear insight as to when disadvantaged group members will engage in action that is individual versus collective, or if that action will be normative or nonnormative.

Runciman (1966) introduced a distinction in relative deprivation theory between personal (egoistical) and group (frater-

nal) relative deprivation. Personal deprivation relates to dissatisfaction with one's own treatment, whereas group deprivation results from dissatisfaction with the treatment of one's group. This distinction is an important step toward reducing the highly individualistic nature of earlier versions of relative deprivation theory. There is some evidence that feelings of group deprivation may result in collective action, whereas feelings of personal deprivation may be associated with individual action (Dubé & Guimond, 1986). However, there is substantial agreement that this personal/collective distinction is often misunderstood, poorly operationalized, or ignored in relative deprivation research (Bernstein & Crosby, 1980; T. D. Cook, Crosby & Hennigan, 1977; Isaac, Mutran, & Strykers, 1980; Martin & Murray, 1984; Walker & Pettigrew, 1984), and even when the distinction is more stringently controlled, the link to behavior remains a "troublespot" for relative deprivation theory (Martin, 1986).

The psychology of intergroup relations has recently benefited from the development of psychological theories that explicitly move away from reductionism. Prominent among these is social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). According to social identity theory, the key determinant of how members of a disadvantaged group will respond to inequality is their perception of the intergroup structure. If the structure is perceived as illegitimate or unstable, then disadvantaged-group members will become aware of alternatives to the existing intergroup structure. Social identity theory posits that this awareness of alternatives will lead to a variety of collective responses to improve the relative status of the disadvantaged group. By contrast, the absence of perceived alternatives to the existing intergroup structure leads to either individual attempts at upward mobility or acceptance of the disadvantaged position. Social identity theory is, however, incomplete in its predictive capacity. Beyond identifying instability and illegitimacy as the precursors to the perception of cognitive alternatives and identifying the presence of cognitive alternatives as the determinant of two possible categories of response, social identity theory provides no precise conditions that will determine which of the alternative responses will ultimately be preferred (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1987). In addition, the theory fails to indicate which variables might lead disadvantaged-group members to perceive the intergroup situation as illegitimate and unstable. It thus remains difficult to predict when the response of disadvantaged-group members will be individual or collective, normative or nonnormative.

More recently, Taylor and McKirnan (1984) developed a five-stage model of intergroup relations that builds on social identity theory and elite theory (Dye & Zeigler, 1970; Pareto, 1935). This model proposes that there are five distinct developmental stages to intergroup behavior that all intergroup relations pass through in the same sequential order. This model makes some initial predictions as to the circumstances that will lead individuals within a disadvantaged group to remain inactive, engage in individual action, and instigate collective action.

Like social identity theory, the five-stage model holds that it is their perception of the intergroup situation that determines the response of disadvantaged-group members. When group membership is perceived to be due to individual performance and when individual upward mobility is believed possible,

group members attribute their advantaged or disadvantaged position to their personal characteristics. Under these conditions, members of the disadvantaged group will make interindividual comparisons and will engage in individual behaviors designed to improve their personal position. However, if their attempts at individual upward mobility are consistently blocked, the perception that social stratification is based on performance will be replaced by the belief that group membership is based on external characteristics such as race, sex, or being born into a particular socioeconomic class. This new perception of the advantaged group as closed and the resulting feelings of injustice prompt those individuals who have been denied entrance to the advantaged group to abandon interindividual comparisons in favor of intergroup comparisons. The result of intergroup comparisons is increased dissatisfaction with their disadvantaged position, as well as an interest in collective action as a means of creating a more open system.

A key assumption underlying the five-stage model is that because intergroup comparisons are deemed inappropriate by the overriding social philosophy of stratification on the basis of individual performance, attempts at individual upward mobility—an individual normative response—are always the first strategy attempted by members of the disadvantaged group. It is only when these individual attempts are blocked that the overriding social philosophy is questioned and the advantaged group is perceived as closed to the disadvantaged-group members. And it is only then that collective action will be initiated.

This model also allows for predictions about which individuals within the disadvantaged group will instigate collective action. Because the division of the two groups is initially perceived as legitimately based on performance, only interindividual comparisons are viewed as appropriate. These social comparisons lead only those disadvantaged-group members who perceive themselves to be nearest to having the requirements necessary for entry into the advantaged group to attempt this upward social mobility. On rejection, these individuals initiate collective action.

The present experiment tests three central hypotheses raised by the five-stage model and a fourth that arises out of other theories such as relative deprivation or the resource mobilization theory. First, the five-stage model holds that individual attempts at social mobility will be maintained as long as the advantaged group appears open and as long as entry is dependent solely on individual performance. However, when a disadvantaged-group member is prevented from gaining entry into the advantaged group and perceives the system as closed, individual social mobility will be abandoned in favor of collective action.

*Hypothesis I:* (a) When entrance into an advantaged group is perceived to be completely open, individual action will ensue, and (b) when entrance into an advantaged group is perceived to be completely closed, collective action will result.

In addition to investigating the completely open and closed conditions, there is a need to investigate intergroup situations in which entry into the advantaged group is only partially open. In most social systems, upward mobility by members of a disadvantaged group, though not impossible, is restricted. These conditions lead to questions concerning the point at which re-

strictions on social mobility will begin to affect the responses of disadvantaged-group members.

Taylor and McKirnan (1984) made reference to situations in which a few disadvantaged-group members gained access to the advantaged group. They predicted that these individuals will serve to strengthen the belief in the openness of the social system and will serve as proof that personal ability and effort lead to success. This suggests that even very limited openness in the advantaged group will lead to response patterns similar to that found in a completely open system.

*Hypothesis II:* Even when a mere token percentage of the disadvantaged group is allowed access to the advantaged group, individual action will ensue, and little interest will be shown in collective action.

The third hypothesis arising out of the five-stage model involves the idea that it is those members of the disadvantaged group who are led to believe that they are nearest to gaining entrance into the advantaged group who will initiate collective action. Consistent with this prediction, it is also expected that those who are distant from gaining entrance (especially those faced with what appears to be an open system) will be less likely to blame the system for their failure; therefore, they will be more likely to accept their disadvantaged position.

*Hypothesis III:* (a) Individuals who believe themselves to be near to the level of ability necessary for entrance into the advantaged group will be more likely than those who feel they are far, to take collective action when the system is closed to them, and (b) individuals who believe themselves to be far from the required level of performance necessary for entrance will be more likely than those who feel they are near, to accept their disadvantaged position.

The theoretical foundations on which to base predictions about the normative/nonnormative distinction are not clearly defined. The five-stage model does not address the normative/nonnormative distinction. The primary theme concerning this distinction arising from other theories (i.e. Crosby, 1976; Mark & Folger, 1984; Martin, 1986; McCarthy & Zald, 1979) seems to support the hypothesis that normative behavior is contingent mainly on the availability of a functional channel for normative responding.

*Hypothesis IV:* When action is taken, if there exists a normative means for action, this line of action will be preferred. However, if normative means are unavailable, or ineffective, non-normative action will result.

## Method

### Subjects

The subjects were 52 male and 74 female college students from a variety of faculties and departments. All were volunteers and participated in the experiment for the chance to win \$100 in a lottery. All indicated that they had never participated in a social psychology experiment.

### Procedure and Materials

Subjects participated in small groups of 5 to 9 but were required to work independently and were instructed not to interact with one another.

*Instructions to subjects.* Initial instructions were provided through a tape-recorded message. Subjects were told that the experiment was intended to test their ability to make effective decisions about people, a skill that was characterized as one that is essential for those wishing to move up the social hierarchy and attain a position of responsibility and leadership. We designed the laboratory procedure to represent the basic elements of the North American meritocracy. Subjects were told that as in "the real world," they must begin the experiment as a member of the low-status, unsophisticated decision-making group but that there was opportunity to advance into a high-status, sophisticated decision-making group. Subjects were lead to believe that their performance on an initial decision-making task would determine if they would complete the remainder of the experiment working with members of the high- or low-status groups on a series of group decision-making tasks. In reality, there was no high-status group, and all subjects would fail in their attempt to gain access to this group. The reasons given for this failure served as the independent variables in the present experiment.

To further stimulate the subjects' interest in advancement and to make it apparent that they were, in fact, members of a disadvantaged group, the benefits of membership in the sophisticated group were clearly delineated. They were told that if accepted into the sophisticated group, they would associate with high-status others, who had already been recognized as superior decision makers. Also, consistent with most real-life organizations, the members of the high-status group set the decision-making task, evaluated the performance of unsophisticated-group members, and ultimately determined who would be allowed into their high-status group.

It was explained that a panel of three sophisticated-group members would act as judges in the evaluation of subjects' work. Finally, again consistent with the real world, there were monetary advantages to membership in the high-status group. Sophisticated-group members were to participate in the \$100 lottery, whereas the unsophisticated-group members would participate only in a \$10 lottery. Actually, all subjects participated in the \$100 lottery.

*Experimental procedures.* Following the tape-recorded instructions, participants were given 15 min to read the evidence from a criminal case and to answer three short essay-style questions, ostensibly designed to access their decision-making skills. Their answers were then collected and passed to an assistant, who was to take the answers to the panel of judges from the sophisticated group. A 12-min delay then followed, during which time the three judges presumably graded the subjects' work. During this delay period, the experimenter distributed a blank sample mark sheet and described in detail the procedure used by the judges to arrive at their mark. It was also explained that the sophisticated group collectively had set a mark of 8.5/10, or 85%, as the score required for acceptance into their group. To fill the remaining waiting time, the experimenter gave the subjects a second case with which to familiarize themselves. This case was ostensibly to be used as one of the group decision-making tasks in the second part of the experiment. In reality, this second case served only to reinforce the notion that the subjects would be participating in a second part of the experiment as a member of either the sophisticated or the unsophisticated group.

Following the prescribed delay, the completed mark sheets were returned by an assistant and distributed, one to each subject. On all mark sheets, the final decision stated that the participant was to remain in the unsophisticated group. Information provided on these mark sheets put into effect the two experimental manipulations. Because each experimental trial included 5 to 9 subjects and the experimental manipulations were in the form of written feedback, in any given session it was possible to randomly assign subjects to the different experimental conditions. The experimenter remained blind to the experimental condition of each subject because this was determined by the assistant who returned the mark sheets.

*Group openness manipulation.* This independent variable involved four conditions and was manipulated by altering the information provided in the judges' written comments on the mark sheet. In the open condition, rejection from the sophisticated group was based solely on performance (i.e., failure to reach the required mark). Subjects in this condition were lead to believe that all those who achieved the required score were accepted into the advantaged group. They were given some feedback about their work, but their total mark did not reach the required 8.5 out of 10. In the conditions that were less than open, the judges informed the subjects that the sophisticated group had decided to impose a quota on entry into their group. Subjects were informed that the 8.5 required score would be ignored and that only a specific percentage of the candidates who scored above 8.5 would be accepted. The judges gave no specific reasons to justify the change in the criterion because the manipulation was intended only to alter the apparent openness of the advantaged group and was not intended to alter the justification or legitimacy of the new restrictions. The interpretation of the additional restriction was left to the subject, but the judges' comments stated explicitly that the additional restrictions were directed at members of the unsophisticated group and that the system was no longer completely open to members of this low-status group.

The quota system allowed for easy manipulation of the degree of openness. In the extreme case, a quota of 0% was introduced, resulting in the high-status group's being completely closed. In this closed condition, subjects were told that the sophisticated group had decided not to accept any new members regardless of their performance on the task. Two partially open conditions were also introduced. In the 30% quota condition, the mark sheet indicated that the sophisticated group had decided to ignore the established cutoff of 8.5 out of 10 and was now only admitting 30% of those who had achieved 8.5 or better. The judges' comments indicated that on the basis of the performance of past unsophisticated-group members, the subject's score did not put him or her in this 30% group. In the 2% quota condition, subjects received information identical to that of the 30% quota condition, except that the comments of the judges indicated that the new restrictions were even more severe and indicated that only 2% of those achieving 8.5 or better were being admitted.

*Nearness-to-entry manipulation.* The two levels of this independent variable were determined by the manipulation of the total mark given to the subject. Subjects in the far condition always received a mark of 6.0, indicating that they were substantially below the required 8.5 cutoff. Subjects in the near condition received one of two marks. Near subjects in the open group condition received a mark of 8.2, just slightly below the 8.5 cutoff. Near subjects in the other three group openness conditions (i.e., 30% quota, 2% quota, and closed) received a mark of 8.8. This mark exceeds the designated 8.5 cutoff, and had the system been completely open, this mark would have resulted in acceptance into the sophisticated group. This manipulation in the near condition resulted in a confound because the subjects in the open condition received a slightly lower mark. This confound is unavoidable because the five-stage model specifies that it is the personal experience with the injustice of a closed high-status group that leads those who are near to entry to instigate collective action. Thus, it was necessary that subjects in the closed and quota conditions be personally affected by the new restriction on entry into the advantaged group.

*Behavioral options.* Subjects were given a few minutes to digest their negative feedback. The experimenter then approached the subjects individually and privately asked them if they had succeeded or failed to gain entrance into the advantaged group. Those who failed (all subjects) were given a response form. The instructions on the top of this form informed subjects that before continuing the experiment as a member of their designated group, those who had been rejected by the judges would be given an additional opportunity to respond to the negative decision of the judges. They were then asked to rate the extent

to which each of five alternative behavioral options appealed to them and were informed that they would be expected to undertake the action they rated highest.

The response alternatives were presented in the form of five statements, each accompanied by an 11-point Likert scale, anchored by *not at all* (0) and *very much* (10). Subjects rated the extent to which they were interested in the following: (a) Accepting the decision of the sophisticated group and thus agreeing to remain a member of the unsophisticated group for the remainder of the experiment. (b) Requesting an individual retest. A request for a retest was presented as an option that had been acceptable to the sophisticated group in the past. Subjects supporting this option were therefore indicating a desire to continue their attempts to gain entrance into the advantaged group through an individual normative action. (c) Making an individual protest against the decision of the sophisticated group. This option involved composing and writing of a protest demanding that the high-status group reverse its decision regarding the subject. This action was described explicitly as unacceptable to the advantaged group and inconsistent with the described rules that the decision of the judges is always final. Thus, by endorsing this behavior, a subject was willing to ignore explicitly stated rules and the norms established by the high-status group, in an attempt to gain personal access to the higher status group. (d) Requesting a collective retest. This strategy involved an attempt to solicit the support of the other members of the low-status group to persuade the judges (members of the high-status group) to allow a retest for all unsuccessful members of the low-status group. Thus, this response was collective and normative in nature. (e) Attempting to instigate collective protest. Again, this option was described as unacceptable to the sophisticated group in the past. Here, subjects were to compose a written protest that urged other low-status group members to ignore the explicitly stated rule that the decision of the judges was final and to take action to force the high-status group to allow all members of the disadvantaged group access to the advantaged group. The selection of this alternative called for action that was both collective and explicitly inconsistent with existing rules of the system and the norms established by the sophisticated group.

**Behavioral choice.** After rating each of the five behavioral options, the subject actually carried out the action they most preferred (i.e., rated nearest to 10 on the Likert scale). Those who accepted their position in the unsophisticated group, of course, would do nothing. Subjects selecting an individual retest made a written request for a retest that was to be sent to the high-status group. Subjects selecting a collective retest completed a similar request that first was to be distributed, by the experimenter, to other low-status-group members in the room for their approval and then was to be given to the members of the high-status group. Those selecting either of the protest options were required to write the appropriate protest. An individual protest was to be taken to the high-status group. A collective protest was to be first distributed to the other low-status group members for their approval and then submitted to the high-status group.

**Measures of feelings and perceptions.** To check that the manipulations presented in the experiment were effective in producing the appropriate feelings and perceptions in the subject, the experimenter distributed a short questionnaire. Nine questions were asked. Subjects were asked to rate the following feelings and perceptions in relation to the decision and actions of the high-status group: (a) their level of frustration, (b) their level of resentment, (c) their level of hope for improvements in their personal condition, (d) their satisfaction with their personal treatment, (e) their satisfaction with their group treatment, (f) the justice of their personal treatment, (g) the justice of their group treatment, (h) their satisfaction with the distribution of power between the high- and low-status groups, and (i) their satisfaction with the distribution of money between the high- and low-status groups. All responses were rated on an 11-point Likert scale.

Table 1  
*Mean Rating of Endorsement of Each of Five Behavioral Responses as a Function of Nearness to Entry and Group Openness*

| Behavioral response             | Group openness |           |          |        |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-----------|----------|--------|
|                                 | Open           | 30% quota | 2% quota | Closed |
| <b>Near-to-entry condition</b>  |                |           |          |        |
| Accept                          | 4.35           | 2.94      | 2.59     | 1.76   |
| Individual normative            | 8.47           | 6.31      | 5.18     | 5.18   |
| Individual nonnormative         | 5.76           | 5.88      | 7.59     | 6.65   |
| Collective normative            | 5.00           | 3.75      | 4.88     | 4.29   |
| Collective nonnormative         | 4.29           | 4.25      | 4.70     | 6.64   |
| <b>Far-from-entry condition</b> |                |           |          |        |
| Accept                          | 4.30           | 3.44      | 3.94     | 3.69   |
| Individual normative            | 5.89           | 6.81      | 6.39     | 5.69   |
| Individual nonnormative         | 3.76           | 5.63      | 5.56     | 5.50   |
| Collective normative            | 4.59           | 5.50      | 5.22     | 6.50   |
| Collective nonnormative         | 3.29           | 3.38      | 4.83     | 6.75   |

Following completion of this second set of questions, subjects were thoroughly debriefed and were informed that all participants were entered in the \$100 lottery.

## Results

### *Preliminary Analysis*

Preliminary analysis indicated no significant gender differences across variables. In addition, no significant differences were found for the subjects' faculty or department of study.

### *Behavioral Options Ratings*

The subject's ratings for each of the five behavioral options were analyzed using a two-way  $2 \times 4$  multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with nearness to entry (near, far), and group openness (open, 30% quota, 2% quota, closed) as between-subjects variables. The five behavioral options (acceptance, individual normative, individual nonnormative, collective normative, collective nonnormative) were the dependent measures. The mean ratings for each of the eight conditions are presented in Table 1.

The main effect group openness was statistically significant,  $F(15, 126) = 2.67, p < .01$ . The pattern of results for each of the five dependent measures is presented in Figure 1. The subsequent univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA) yielded a statistically significant effect of group openness, for the endorsement of collective nonnormative action,  $F(3, 133) = 4.57, p < .01$ . Subsequent post hoc, pairwise comparisons using the Newman-Keuls procedure indicated that this effect was the result of a significantly higher rating for collective nonnormative action ( $\alpha = .05$ ) by subjects in the completely closed condition than by subjects in any of the other conditions. The equivalent test for the effect of group openness on the endorsement of individual normative action approached significance,  $F(3, 133) = 2.52, p = .07$ .

The MANOVA also revealed a significant main effect of nearness to entry,  $F(5, 126) = 2.45, p < .05$ , the pattern of results is

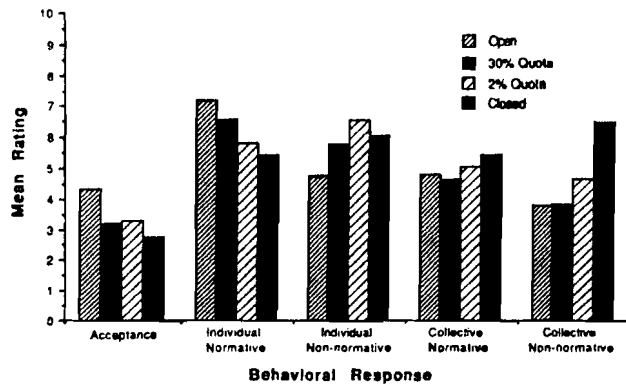


Figure 1. Mean rating of endorsement of each of five behavioral responses by subjects in four group openness conditions.

presented in Figure 2. Subsequent univariate tests showed a significant difference between the near and far conditions on the ratings of the individual nonnormative response,  $F(1, 126) = 5.05, p < .05$ , and the difference between acceptance ratings approached significance,  $F(1, 126) = 3.05, p = .07$ . Subjects in the near condition showed significantly greater interest in individual nonnormative action, and those in the far condition gave higher ratings to the acceptance option.

The Group Openness  $\times$  Nearness to Entry interaction was not significant,  $F(3, 126) = 1.16, ns$ .

### Behavioral Choice

The single behavior actually carried out by each subject yielded frequency data that were analyzed using a hierarchical log-linear modeling approach. A three-way  $2 \times 4 \times 5$  frequency table (see Table 2), involving the two levels of nearness to entry ( $N$ ), the four levels of group openness ( $O$ ), and the five behavioral responses ( $R$ ), was constructed. The two manipulations ( $N$ ), ( $O$ ) served as independent variables because the number of subjects in these cells was determined by the design of the experiment. For this reason, the initial model (hypothesizing independence of the behavioral response from both independent variables) included the main effects and interaction of the two independent variables, as well as the main effect of response, ( $NO$ ) ( $R$ ). We found that the inclusion of the Response  $\times$  Nearness to Entry interaction ( $NR$ ) significantly improved the fit of the model (likelihood-ratio statistic),  $L^2(4) = 12.98, p < .01$ . The subsequent inclusion of the Group Openness  $\times$  Response interaction ( $OR$ ) also significantly improved the fit of the model,  $L^2(12) = 22.99, p < .05$ . No other effects significantly improved the fit of the model. This model, ( $NO$ ) ( $NR$ ) ( $OR$ ) does not differ significantly from the saturated model,  $L^2(12) = 7.54, ns$ , and was the optimal log-linear model to describe the data.

This model indicates a dependence relationship between the response chosen and the level of group openness. The pattern of this relationship is presented in Figure 3. Fewer subjects in the 2% quota and closed conditions accepted their situation than did those in the 30% quota and open conditions. Interest in taking individual normative action clearly declined as group openness decreased. Twice as many subjects in the open condi-

tion opted for individual normative behavior as compared to those in the closed condition. Individual nonnormative action was clearly the action of choice for those facing a 2% quota condition. The most socially disruptive behavior, collective nonnormative action, was undertaken almost exclusively by subjects in the closed condition.

The optimal log-linear model also describes a dependence relationship between the response chosen and the subject's nearness to entry into the advantaged group. This relationship is presented in Figure 4. Individual nonnormative action was undertaken by almost three times as many subjects in the near condition as those in the far condition. The opposite was true of acceptance; this response was selected by over twice as many subjects in the far condition as subjects in the near condition.

### Perceptions and Emotional Responses

We used nine measures of the subjects' perceptions and emotional responses as the dependent measures in a  $2 \times 4$  MANOVA, involving two levels nearness to entry and four levels of group openness. A main effect of nearness to entry was statistically significant,  $F(1, 126) = 3.04, p < .01$ , and subsequent univariate tests showed that those who were far from entry indicated significantly higher feelings of justice in their personal treatment than those near to entry,  $F(1, 126) = 7.92, p < .01$ . The remaining eight univariate tests were not significant.

The MANOVA showed that neither the main effect of group openness,  $F(3, 348) = 0.94, ns$ , nor the Nearness to Entry  $\times$  Group Openness interaction,  $F(27, 348) = 0.93, ns$  was significant.

Examination of the means for these responses indicates that the lack of significant effects is primarily due to the consistently low ratings of satisfaction and justice of treatment, along with moderate-to-high levels of frustration and resentment. It seems evident that the intended feelings of injustice and dissatisfaction were present in subjects in all experimental conditions.

### Discussion

The findings will be discussed in terms of their relevance to the four major hypotheses.

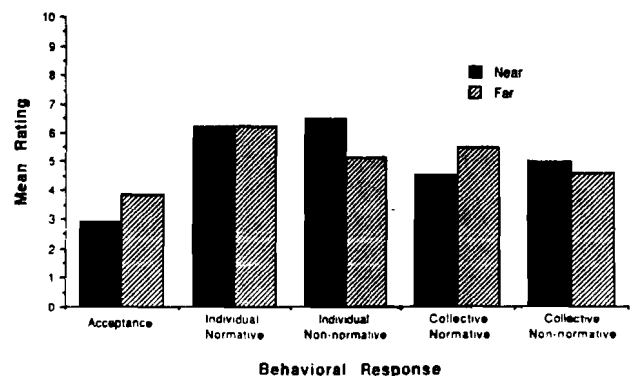


Figure 2. Mean rating of endorsement of each of five behavioral responses by subjects near to and far from entry into the advantaged group.

Table 2  
*Frequency (Freq) of Selection and Percentage of Subjects in Each Cell Selecting Each of the Five Behavioral Responses as a Function of Nearness to Entry and Group Openness*

| Behavioral response             | Group openness |    |           |    |          |    |        |    |
|---------------------------------|----------------|----|-----------|----|----------|----|--------|----|
|                                 | Open           |    | 30% quota |    | 2% quota |    | Closed |    |
|                                 | Freq.          | %  | Freq.     | %  | Freq.    | %  | Freq.  | %  |
| <b>Near-to-entry condition</b>  |                |    |           |    |          |    |        |    |
| Accept                          | 2              | 11 | 3         | 18 | 1        | 6  | 1      | 6  |
| Individual normative            | 10             | 55 | 5         | 29 | 4        | 23 | 3      | 17 |
| Individual nonnormative         | 4              | 22 | 6         | 35 | 10       | 59 | 5      | 28 |
| Collective normative            | 1              | 6  | 2         | 12 | 2        | 12 | 2      | 11 |
| Collective nonnormative         | 1              | 6  | 1         | 6  | 0        | 0  | 7      | 39 |
| <b>Far-from-entry condition</b> |                |    |           |    |          |    |        |    |
| Accept                          | 7              | 41 | 4         | 25 | 3        | 17 | 4      | 25 |
| Individual normative            | 4              | 23 | 7         | 44 | 5        | 28 | 4      | 25 |
| Individual nonnormative         | 2              | 12 | 1         | 6  | 4        | 22 | 2      | 13 |
| Collective normative            | 3              | 18 | 4         | 25 | 4        | 22 | 1      | 6  |
| Collective nonnormative         | 1              | 6  | 0         | 0  | 2        | 11 | 5      | 31 |

*Hypothesis I: Responses to Open and Closed Groups*

We hypothesized that subjects in the open condition would pursue individual action and that those faced with a closed group would show greater interest in collective action. Both the rating scale and frequency data (see Figures 1 & 3) yield a pattern of responding that provides some support for this hypothesis. As predicted, when entrance into the advantaged group was completely open, subjects opted for individual normative action and seldom supported collective nonnormative action. When the opportunity for upward mobility was completely closed, there was much greater support for collective nonnormative behavior and reduced interest in individual normative action.

Support for the first hypothesis, however, is qualified by the subjects' endorsement of the individual nonnormative and collective normative response options. When subjects were faced with the complete closure of the advantaged group, their interest in individual nonnormative action did not differ significantly from that of subjects in the open condition. In fact, mean

ratings on this action were higher for those in the closed condition. As well, a closed advantaged group resulted in ratings of collective normative action equivalent to that of subjects in the open condition. Both Figure 1 and Figure 3 show that when individual nonnormative action and normative forms of collective action are considered, the predicted difference between open and closed advantaged groups is not found. It is only when discussions of individual action are restricted to normative forms and when discussions of collective action are restricted to nonnormative forms that the present data support the claim that individual action will be endorsed in a system that is perceived to be open and that collective action will be undertaken in a system perceived to be closed.

Although not warranted by the stringent statistical analysis performed here, an exploratory examination of the differences between those near and far from acceptance into the advantaged group points to a further qualification in the conclusions concerning the behavioral responses to open, compared to closed, advantaged groups. Table 2 indicates that the greater interest in individual normative action by subjects faced with

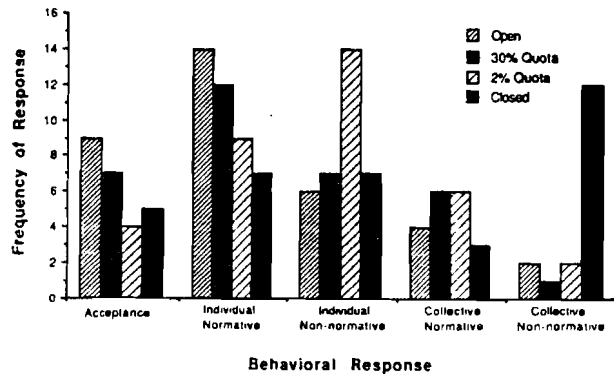


Figure 3. Frequency of selection of each of five behavioral responses by subjects in four group openness conditions.

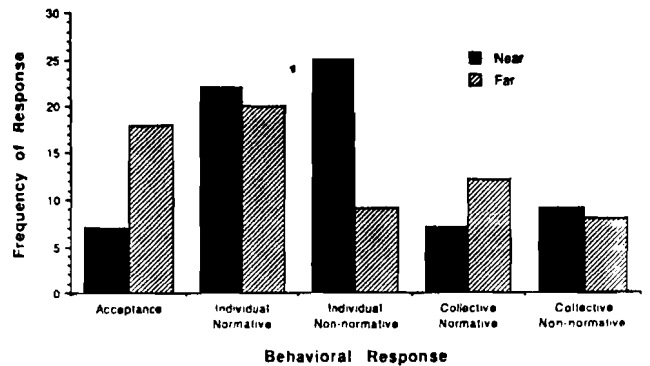


Figure 4. Frequency of selection of each of five behavioral responses by subjects near to and far from entry into the advantaged group.



an open advantaged group over subjects faced with a closed advantaged condition is exclusively found for subjects who are near to gaining entrance into the advantaged group. Subjects in the far condition are no more likely to attempt individual normative action when the advantaged group is open than when it is closed. This inspection of Table 2 suggests that the prediction that an open system will lead to a preference for individual normative action may only be true for individuals who are near to meeting the criterion for entrance into the advantaged group.

### *Hypothesis II: Responses to Partially Open Groups*

The prediction that subjects faced with a partially open advantaged group will prefer to respond individually and will show little endorsement of collective action is supported. Inspection of the frequency data (see Figure 3) shows that a greater number of subjects in both the 30% quota and 2% quota conditions preferred individual forms of action. The rating scale data show that the ratings for both forms of collective action by those in the two partially open groups were not significantly higher than the ratings of those in the completely open condition. In fact, inspection of both Table 1 and Table 2 appears to indicate that there were only two consistent differences between the subjects in the 30% quota condition and those in the open condition. First, subjects near to entry into the advantaged group in the 30% quota condition were much less likely to take individual normative action than were near subjects in the open condition. Second, subjects in the far/30% quota condition were less likely to accept their position than were subjects in the far/open condition. Apparently, the introduction of an arbitrary change in the criterion for entry into the advantaged group does not lead to changes in individual nonnormative action or in collective actions as long as the criterion remains adequately lenient for a perception of openness to be maintained.

Figure 3 indicates some differences between the 30% and 2% quota conditions. A clear shift in interest can be seen from normative forms of individual action in the 30% quota condition to nonnormative forms of individual action in the 2% quota condition. This shift casts serious doubts on the interpretation, arising from the five-stage model, that the continued endorsement of individual action is the result of a strengthened faith in the existing system. Increasing closure of the advantaged group leads to individual action that is expressly antisystem and clearly inconsistent with a strengthened faith in the system. Thus, the prediction arising from the five-stage model concerning the partially open conditions is supported, but apparently for the wrong reason.

One possible explanation for the interest in individual actions in the partially open condition could be simply a concern for personal self-interest. If a member of a disadvantaged group is primarily concerned with personal advancement, then as long as there remains even the slightest possibility for personal advancement (as is the case in the 2% quota condition), there is little appeal in improving the status of the entire disadvantaged group through collective action. If positive social identity is determined through social comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), gaining personal access to a very exclusive group should be more appealing than gaining the same status along with a larger number of one's peers. Thus, even when arbitrary changes in the

rules are introduced and the individual is rejected, as long as personal advancement remains a possibility, individual responding will remain the preferred form of action.

Consistent with this self-centered interpretation, the turn to collective action in the completely closed condition might not represent a shift to a more collective consciousness. This change in strategy might simply reflect the realization that when the advantaged group is completely closed, only through working in consort with one's peers can the individual have a chance to improve his or her personal position. Consequently, selfish concern for personal status might be the main preoccupation even of those engaging in collective responding.

The present findings suggest that collective nonnormative action may be reserved solely for conditions in which opportunity for personal advancement is completely removed. Even the strict and arbitrary restriction on advancement evident in the 2% quota condition did not result in a significant increase in collective protest over that expressed by subjects in the open or 30% quota condition. Apparently, the introduction of a totally exclusionary criterion was so unacceptable to the subjects that it was only in this condition that they abandoned the individual meritocratic rules that they seemed to endorse in other conditions. Inspection of Table 1 and Table 2 shows that this switch to a preference for collective nonnormative action, exclusively in the closed condition, was shared by both subjects who were near to entry into the advantaged group and by those receiving a mark that put them far from the necessary criterion. In this closed condition, collective nonnormative action was endorsed strongly by subjects, irrespective of their distance from the criterion for entry into the advantaged group.

This finding has important implications for the concept of tokenism. In the partially open conditions (especially the 2% quota condition), rules were instituted that allowed for minimal acceptance of disadvantaged-group members into advantaged positions but systematically kept the remainder of that group in a disadvantaged position. By definition, this is tokenism, and the present results show that this situation does not lead disadvantaged-group members to take collective nonnormative action directed at changing the system. Rather, subjects preferred the relatively benign individual action strategies. The present findings seem to indicate that the implementation of a policy of tokenism by the advantaged group could be an effective means of reducing the likelihood of change in intergroup relations or in the system itself.

### *Hypothesis III: Being Near to Entry Into the Advantaged Group*

Two related predictions were raised in Hypothesis III. First, we hypothesized that those people who perceive themselves as near to entry into a closed advantaged group would be most likely to endorse collective action strategies. The present data provide no support for this prediction. The results presented in Figure 2 indicate that subjects who were near to entry into the advantaged group did not show greater interest than those who were distant from entry into the advantaged group in either form of collective action. The clearest test of this prediction would be a comparison of those people in the near and far conditions who were faced specifically with a closed advan-



tagged group. However, the absence of a three-way (Behavioral Options  $\times$  Group Openness  $\times$  Nearness to Entry) interaction effect ( $F < 1.0$ ) indicates that the lack of significant difference between the near and far conditions on interest in the collective actions was consistent across levels of the group openness variable. Therefore, interest in collective action was equally unaffected by nearness to entry in the closed condition as it was in any other group openness condition.

The present findings suggest that it is the preference for individual nonnormative action that distinguishes those who are near to entry from those who are distant. It is informative to recall that three quarters of the subjects in the near-to-entry conditions (those in the last three conditions of group openness) received a mark that by the initial rules should have qualified them for a place in the advantaged group. Subjects in the far condition were given the same information about the changing of the criterion for entrance into the advantaged group; however, they would have failed by either the new or the old criterion. Thus, subjects distant from entrance did not experience personally the consequences of the unjust and arbitrary nature of the system as did those near to entrance. The importance of the personal experience with injustice as a determinant of nonnormative action is consistent with recent work on referent cognitions theory (Folger & Martin, 1986; Folger, Rosenfield, Rheame, & Martin, 1983; Folger, Rosenfield, & Robinson, 1983). Folger and his colleagues found that negative attitudes toward the system are associated with the knowledge that an old procedure would have lead to greater outcomes than the present procedure. In addition, present findings involving subjects' feelings and perceptions also support this interpretation. The only significant difference in these ratings was that subjects near to entry perceived their personal treatment to be less just than those far from entry.

The second prediction raised in Hypothesis III was that those distant from entry would be more likely to accept their disadvantaged position than would those near to entry into the advantaged group. Consistent with the second prediction of Hypothesis III, those distant from entrance into the advantaged group were more likely to accept their disadvantaged position. This finding has provocative social implications. It seems that by fostering the perception that disadvantaged-group members are far from the criteria necessary for entry into their group, an advantaged group could reduce the likelihood of action by disadvantaged-group members.

#### *Hypothesis IV: Normative Versus Nonnormative Behavior*

Hypothesis IV maintained that given a functional channel for normative action, disadvantaged-group members would take normative rather than nonnormative actions. The present data do not support this claim. All subjects, in all conditions, were offered normative forms of both individual and collective action as possible responses, yet many chose to ignore these options in favor of nonnormative strategies. Thus, it is not simply the absence of a normative strategy that leads to nonnormative action. A preference for nonnormative strategies was shown in the 2% quota and closed conditions. Table 2 indicates that this is especially true for those near to entry. Sixty percent of those in the near/2% quota condition chose individual non-

normative action, and a full two thirds of those in the near/closed condition chose a nonnormative action, either individual or collective. In these conditions, subjects were confronted with the highest levels of unfairness. This may suggest that when the actions of the advantaged group are highly inconsistent with the previously established norms of the system, normative action will be perceived as ineffective. In these circumstances, it would seem that disadvantaged group members will respond to the advantaged group's violation of established norms with nonnormative behavior of their own.

#### *Insights Into the Acceptance Response*

Of special interest is the number of subjects in the present experiment who were faced with and perceived unfair treatment and yet chose not to act. The combination of the two dependent measures used in this experiment (rating scale and selected behavior) provides some insight into what it meant for these subjects to accept their disadvantaged position.

Subjects were required to engage in the behavior they rated highest on the rating scales; however, they did not necessarily give that option a 10 rating. So subjects who rated their most preferred option at only 6 might have engaged in that behavior with more reluctance than someone who rated his or her chosen behavior at 10. The mean rating for acceptance by those who actually chose to accept their disadvantaged position was lower than the mean rating of other subjects for their selected form of action. Subjects who accepted their situation did so with a mean rating of 7.28. Subjects who chose to undertake some form of action rated their chosen behavior as follows: For those choosing individual normative,  $M = 8.85$ ; individual nonnormative,  $M = 9.15$ ; collective normative,  $M = 8.81$ ; and collective nonnormative,  $M = 9.06$ . A one-way ANOVA indicated significant differences between these groups,  $F(4, 129) = 6.66, p < .001$ . Subsequent Newman-Keuls comparisons showed that only the differences between the acceptance group and all four other groups were significant ( $\alpha = .05$ ).

What these findings suggest is that subjects who actually chose to accept their disadvantaged situation did so with less commitment than those who chose to take some form of action. Consequently, although a substantial number of subjects accepted their position, they apparently did so begrudgingly. Perhaps it is this reluctant acceptance that leads to the mental stress symptoms that have been suggested as potential consequences of inaction or tolerance in the face of injustice (Crosby, 1976; Martin, 1986).

#### Conclusions

The present research represents an attempt to specify the conditions that are associated with specific actions taken by disadvantaged-group members in the face of inequality. The importance of the normative/nonnormative distinction is clearly demonstrated in several findings. Apparently, advantaged group openness and the individual's nearness to entry into the advantaged group both play a role in determining the likelihood of nonnormative actions over normative actions.

Thus, the notion that normative action is always preferred when a functional channel for normative action exists is far too simplistic.

The results clearly demonstrate the important role of perceived openness of the advantaged group. When the advantaged group is perceived as open, individual normative action is preferred. Dramatically, interest in individual action is maintained even when the openness of the advantaged group is highly compromised by strict restrictions (2% quota condition). Collective nonnormative, the most socially disruptive action, is reserved almost exclusively for situations in which the advantaged group is perceived as completely closed to members of the disadvantaged group. These findings have disturbing implications for the discriminatory practices of tokenism. Even an explicit policy of tokenism, as in the 2% quota condition, results in subjects taking individual actions in an attempt to improve their personal position, rather than taking collective action directed at improving the condition of the group as a whole.

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