

Support for Social Movements: How the Moral Basis of Social Movements Influences the Penalization of Extreme Protest Actions



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The following is an excerpt from a longer piece. For the full text, please visit https://scholar.colorado.edu/concern/undergraduate_honors_theses/pv63g1800 or scan the QR code.

Abstract

The factors that contribute to support for social movements and penalizing extreme protest actions are not well understood; this study aims to identify those factors. We tested three hypotheses in this study. Hypothesis 1 expects that support for the goal of the movement will decrease when presented with more extreme protest actions. Hypothesis 2 predicts that the size of the extremity penalty will depend on the framing of the movement (group versus goal of the movement). Hypothesis 3 predicts that the effect of framing on the size of extremity penalty will depend on the described morality of the movement. One pilot study and two experimental studies were conducted, with a 2x2 manipulation and ratings of ten protest actions. Data were collected via an online survey (consisting of 336 undergraduate students) and were analyzed using multilevel models. Results showed that as protest actions became more extreme, support for the movement decreased. Study 1A found larger extremity penalties when the framing of the movement was focused on the group compared to the goal of the movement. Additionally, morality moderated the interaction of framing and extremity. Study 1B found larger extremity penalties when the group was perceived as highly moral. This study identified that extremity levels, framings of the movement and perceived morality act as factors influencing extremity penalties. Identifying these factors encourages a better understanding of how social movements can become more effective.