

From Moral Outrage to Social Protest:
The Role of Psychological Standing

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Abstract

The thesis of this chapter is that the decision to protest requires not only that people experience outrage but that they feel entitled to act upon their outrage. We call this feeling of entitlement *psychological standing*. One important determinant of a person's standing to protest an injustice is the extent to which he or she is materially affected by it. The more one is materially affected by the source of outrage the more standing one has to protest it. When people lack a material stake in an issue, they can nonetheless feel that they have the standing to protest if they observe other non-vested individuals protesting or if they perceive themselves as having a moral stake in the issue. Having a personal characteristic or history that justifies to others why one feels such outrage can also provide one with standing. However, not just any connection to an issue will suffice. Having committed a particular transgression in the past, or simply being a member of a group that has committed (or continues to commit) that transgression deprives one of the standing to protest that particular transgression. Finally, having a material stake in an issue's outcome is not always sufficient to license protest. Victims lack the standing to retaliate against a transgressor when others who have been more victimized by the transgression choose to turn the other cheek. The chapter concludes by showing that the concept of standing, in addition to permitting unique predictions, offers an alternative frame for viewing previous findings.

When confronted with circumstances they judge to be unfair, people commonly experience some form of anger or moral outrage (Mikula, 1993; Miller, 2001; Solomon, 1990). How they respond to their outrage varies: Sometimes it leads them to protest the perceived injustice and sometimes not (Jackman, 1994; Olson & Hafer, 2001). Clarifying when and for whom moral outrage provokes social protest is the goal of this chapter. In particular, we will show that the decision to protest requires not only that people experience outrage but that they feel entitled to act upon their outrage. We call this feeling of entitlement *psychological standing*, and in this chapter we illustrate how its absence can constrain--and, conversely, how its presence can liberate--social protest.

Our analysis begins with a consideration of an empirical anomaly: The personal cost inflicted by a perceived injustice influences less how one *feels about it* than how one *acts toward it* (Green & Cowden, 1992). More specifically, whereas those affected and unaffected by a controversial policy or action are often equally outraged by it, those directly affected by it are much more likely to protest it. As an example, consider American Whites' attitudes toward school busing as a means of achieving racial integration during the 1960's and 1970's. This was an unpopular policy among Whites in the targeted areas when it was implemented and this was as true for those Whites who had no school age children, and hence were not personally inconvenienced by it, as for those who did (Sears, Hensler, & Speer, 1979). On the other hand, it was Whites with school age children who dominated the membership of anti-busing organizations (Green & Cowden, 1992).

The finding that personal relevance does not dispose people to feel more negatively towards a controversial social policy but does render them more likely to act upon their outrage

is well-established. Regan and Fazio (1977), for example, found that Cornell University undergraduates were equally outraged by a campus housing shortage whether or not they were personally inconvenienced by it, but those directly affected were much more likely to participate in social action to alleviate it. Similarly, Sivacek and Crano (1982) found that Michigan college students affected by a proposal to raise the state drinking age were no more opposed to it than were those old enough that their ability to drink would not be hindered by the new drinking age; however, those under the drinking age were more likely than those above it to get involved with a local group protesting the change.

The clear conclusion from the research described above is that being outraged by an action or policy in which one does not have a stake is insufficient to prompt one to take social action. Green and Cowden (1992) offered an account for why outrage alone does not prompt social action. They proposed that the opportunity to protest an injustice (in contrast to merely feeling moral outrage about it) leads the sympathetic actor to ask “Is it worth it?” They argue that the answer to this question (especially if money, time, or effort is required) is more likely to be affirmative when the actor has a stake in the issue. Stated more generally, one may not need to be directly affected by a policy or action to be outraged by it, but one does require a level of motivation that only having a stake in the issue can provide in order to convert a sense of outrage into an act of protest.

Miller and Ratner (Miller, 1999; Miller & Ratner, 1996; 1998; Ratner & Miller, 2001) offered an alternative account for why a sense of outrage is insufficient to produce social protest. They emphasized not the diminished motivation of would-be actors who lack a material stake but their diminished feelings of entitlement to act upon their outrage. They contend that not everyone outraged by an act or policy will feel equally comfortable acting on their outrage. The actor

faced with behavioral involvement in a social cause must ask not only “Is it worth it?” but also “Is it appropriate?” Concluding that “it is not my place” to protest will inhibit people from acting, irrespective of how unjust they find the state of affairs. In other words, what often prevents people from protesting is not a lack of motivation to protest, but rather their feeling that they lack the legitimacy to do so.

The difference between Miller and Ratner’s and Green and Cowden’s accounts is captured by the distinction between avoidance and approach motivation. As Lewin (1951) noted, people’s reluctance to undertake a particular action can be due either to weak motivation to do so (the absence of approach motivation) or to strong inhibitions against doing so (the presence of avoidance motivation). In explaining the greater tendency of vested than non-vested actors to protest, Green and Cowden point to the greater approach motivation afforded by being vested and Miller and Ratner point to the greater avoidance motivation afforded by not being vested.

The idea that not everyone who believes something is unjust is equally entitled to protest is captured in the legal system by the concept of legal standing. According to the law, one cannot bring a suit for judicial review merely because one feels an injustice has occurred; one must additionally be able to show that one has been materially affected by it. Even if one is morally outraged by the policies or actions of another, without demonstrable personal injury, one does not have sufficient grounds for bringing legal action. So, for example, Whites who could not show that they were materially affected by the school busing policy, or college students who could not show that they would be materially affected by the change in the drinking age could not gain access to the courts—for they, unlike their counterparts with a vested interest, would lack standing.

Psychological Standing

In this section we argue that the lack of *psychological standing*, defined as the subjective feeling of entitlement or legitimacy to perform a particular action, inhibits people from expressing their outrage through social protest. At least four factors determine the extent to which people feel entitled or disentitled to protest. These factors are the extent to which one has either a material or moral stake in an issue, the extent to which one can link an issue in which one does not have a stake to another in which one does, and the extent to which one has a personal characteristic or history that explains one's outrage. We consider each factor in turn.

Psychological Standing from Material Stakes

One important determinant of a person's psychological standing to protest an injustice is the extent to which he/she is materially affected by it. Initial empirical support for the claim that a lack of standing inhibits protest among those not materially affected by the injustice came from a study by Ratner and Miller (2001). These researchers presented Princeton undergraduates with a circumstance designed to offend their sense of justice—the proposed decision to shift government funds from a worthy to an unworthy cause. After reading of the injustice (“Proposition 174”), participants were given the opportunity to indicate their opposition to it and also their willingness to protest it by assisting an organization called *Princeton Opponents of Proposition 174*. The researchers manipulated the participants' material stake in the cause by varying whether the threatened “worthy” cause would exclusively benefit their sex or the opposite sex.

Ratner and Miller correctly anticipated that while participants would be equally opposed to the proposed action irrespective of whether it exclusively affected their sex or the opposite

sex, these comparably strong feelings of opposition would more likely translate into behavioral opposition among those with a material stake (i.e., vested participants) than among those without a stake (i.e., non-vested participants). Specifically, whereas 94% of the vested students signed a petition and 50% agreed to write a statement, only 78% of the non-vested signed the petition and only 22% agreed to write a statement.

Ratner and Miller (2001) further reasoned that if the higher rate of protest among vested than non-vested participants in this study was due to non-vested participants' lack of psychological standing rather than their lack of incentive, then granting standing to the non-vested should equalize the rates of protest between both groups. They tested this hypothesis by including another set of conditions that employed a different name for the group that participants had the opportunity to help. The rationale for this manipulation was that the name *Princeton Opponents of Proposition 174*, although it did not explicitly exclude the unvested gender, neither did it extend them the standing they needed to feel comfortable acting. In this other set of conditions, therefore, Ratner and Miller called the group *Princeton Men and Women Opposed to Proposition 174*, reasoning that the inclusiveness of this name would provide even the non-vested gender with the standing needed to feel comfortable participating. If this organization welcomed both male and female advocates, then both male and females must be entitled to advocate, even if one gender lacked a self-interested stake in the Proposition. Stated differently, the inclusive name was expected to license members of the non-vested gender to act on their feelings. It communicated that a self-interested stake was not necessary for them to have psychological standing.

The results supported these predictions: when the group bore the inclusive name, non-vested participants were just as likely as vested participants to protest by signing the petition and

writing the statement. Ratner and Miller argued that the fact that the group label explicitly acknowledged the appropriateness of non-vested actors joining the protest group disinhibited them. Without a sufficient stake, even passionate actors may feel inhibited from acting unless their inhibitions are reduced by a framing that grants them standing to protest in some other way.

Although Ratner and Miller contended that the inclusive group label--*Men and Women Opposed to Proposition 174*--elicited more protest behavior from non-vested actors because it legitimated their participation, there is another possibility. Namely, the inclusive label may not have generated greater rates of protest behavior among the non-vested because it liberated them to protest but because it increased their felt obligation to protest. However, the fact that there was a stronger (positive) correlation between attitudinal opposition and commitment to social protest among the non-vested in the inclusive condition than in the exclusive condition favors the disinhibition over the obligation hypothesis. That is, the correlational pattern suggest that non-vested actors felt freer to act on their attitudes where the disinhibition account suggests they should feel most free but the obligation accounts suggests they should feel least free.

It is not necessary that the cost of the injustice be highly significant for concerns about standing to influence protest behavior. Consider the case of an illegitimate intrusion into an existing queue (line). When someone enters a queue at some point other than the end, the “first-come-first-served” justice principle is violated and protest commonly ensues. To examine how standing affects the inclination of queue members to speak up in response to an unjust line intrusion, Zak and Miller (2008) conducted a field study at a large national retailer location. The procedure they used to create a violation of queue norms was as follows: One confederate (the buffer) took a place in line; when he reached the third position from the front and at least third position from the back, another confederate (the intruder) asked to cut into line. The buffer

always allowed the intruder to cut in line, though the researchers manipulated whether he allowed the intruder ahead or behind his own position.

Following the staging of the intrusion, the pattern of protest behavior among queue members was noted. There was a strong tendency for people ahead and behind the intrusion point to speak up more when the buffer let the intruder in the line behind him as opposed to ahead of him. Most relevant to the present analysis, however, there was a strong tendency for those behind the intruder to speak up more than those ahead of the intruder. That people in front of the intrusion point spoke up less frequently than those behind may simply indicate that they were less outraged by it. After all, they were not going to be delayed by the intrusion. But it is also possible that their reluctance to speak up was due, at least partly, to their lacking the standing to do so. Support for the latter claim comes from the finding that those not materially affected by the intrusion tended only to speak up once one or more of the materially affected victims spoke up. The idea that people in front of the intrusion cared less about this violation than those behind the intrusion cannot by itself easily account for this finding. Their lack of standing, on the other hand, can explain both why they were less inclined to speak up and why when they did speak up it was only after those bearing a material cost did.

Psychological Standing from Moral Stakes

Ratner and Miller's (2001) research suggests that having a self-interested stake grants people the psychological standing to protest. How else might people obtain psychological standing? Once again, the legal system provides a concept to which there may be a psychological analogue. In international law, as in domestic law, not all parties are entitled to bring legal action against perpetrators. The U.S., for example, does not have the jurisdiction to prosecute Canadian citizens who commit crimes in Canada against other Canadians, in part

because the U.S. has no material stake in preventing such crimes. The concept of *universal jurisdiction*, however, provides an exception. Under universal jurisdiction, all countries are permitted to apprehend and prosecute the so-called *hostis humani generis* (i.e., “the enemies of all people”) because all countries are thought to have a stake in preventing such crimes. Because all countries have a material stake in keeping the seas free from piracy, for example, the U.S. would be allowed to apprehend and prosecute pirates who attack a British ship outside of American waters. More importantly, international law extends universal jurisdiction to matters in which countries have only a *symbolic* or *moral stake*. Such is the case with offenses dubbed “crimes against humanity.” For example, although genocide committed in a foreign country by foreign nationals against their own people does not affect the U.S.’s material interests, the egregious nature of such a crime offends the international community’s basic moral values, and thus vests the U.S. and other nations with the entitlement to prosecute those responsible (Randall, 1988).

Individuals may similarly feel entitled to protest against policies they perceive as morally reprehensible, even if these individuals lack a self-interested stake in these policies’ outcomes. In other words, perceiving oneself as having a moral stake in an issue may grant people the psychological standing to protest, even if they lack a material stake.

Historical and contemporary acts of protest lend anecdotal support to this idea. Consider the “Freedom Riders” of the early 1960s who risked (and in many cases experienced) incarceration and bodily harm to protest racial discrimination in the Deep South. Although the many White members of the Freedom Ride may have lacked a material stake in the civil rights movement, they no doubt perceived civil rights as a moral issue. Consider also the observations that many heterosexuals vocally protest efforts to legalize or prohibit same-sex marriage, or that

many men vocally protest abortion or efforts to restrict it, despite these groups' apparent lack of a self-interested stake in these issues. Notably, however, these are issues that the public discourse (on both sides of each debate) moralizes.

Although it is possible that moralization of these issues motivated these non-vested groups to protest by increasing their feelings of obligation, moralization may have also licensed members of these groups to act on their pre-existing outrage. This licensing explanation is consistent with the United Nations' application of universal jurisdiction to acts of piracy: "parties have the right, but not the obligation, to assume jurisdiction over piratical acts with which they have no connection" (Randall, 1988, p. 792). In other words, a perceived moral stake may give them the entitlement to protest rather than obligating them to do something they would rather avoid.

If moral stakes grant people psychological standing, then non-vested actors who feel comfortable protesting an issue should moralize the issue to a greater extent than vested actors, whose self-interested stake in the issue already grants them standing. Effron and Miller (2008) tested this prediction in a sample of undergraduates who all supported legalized abortion. The researchers measured participants' attitudes about abortion and how comfortable they would feel engaging in different behaviors in protest of anti-abortion legislation (e.g., by attending a demonstration, signing a petition, attending a meeting of people who shared their attitude about abortion). They also measured participants' "moral mandates" (Skitka & Houston, 2001) -- that is, how much participants felt that their attitudes about abortion reflect their "core moral values and convictions." Effron and Miller reasoned that, because of women's greater self-interested stake in the abortion issue, women would feel more comfortable protesting than men-- unless men expressed a relatively strong moral mandate, in which case men and women would feel

equally comfortable. The results supported this reasoning: among male and female participants who shared the same strong attitudes about abortion and felt equally comfortable protesting anti-abortion laws, men had a significantly stronger moral mandate than did women. Controlling for moral mandates revealed that if men and women had both moralized the issue to the same extent, then men would have felt less comfortable protesting than women. One interpretation of these correlational results is that, in order to feel just as comfortable speaking up as those with a material stake, people who lack a material stake must have a moral stake in the issue.

In a second study, Effron and Miller (2008) manipulated whether or not participants had a moral stake in an issue and again measured how comfortable they would feel publicly expressing their privately held attitude. In a paradigm closely paralleling the previously described study by Ratner and Miller (2001), they told participants about “Proposition 174,” which would shift funding from a worthy to an unworthy cause. To manipulate self-interested stake, they randomly assigned participants to learn that the worthy cause either benefited only their own gender (vested condition) or only the other gender (non-vested condition). Orthogonal to this manipulation, they manipulated whether or not participants read a moralizing passage. Participants randomly assigned to read this passage learned that an advocacy group opposed the funding cuts on the grounds that society has “a moral obligation to protect public health;” this advocacy group urged people to listen to their “core values or convictions” and oppose the proposition. The data showed that of participants who did *not* read the moralizing passage, those who lacked a self-interested stake indicated less comfort publicly expressing their attitudes about the funding cuts than did participants who did have a self-interested stake, thus replicating results from Ratner and Miller (2001). For participants who had read the moralizing passage, however,

no differences in comfort were found between vested and non-vested participants. The moralizing passage apparently increased non-vested participants' comfort speaking up.

Additional data from this study suggest that the moralizing passage liberated non-vested participants to act on their moral outrage rather than increasing their motivation to protest. First, measures of *private* attitudes did not respond to any of the manipulations; all participants in all conditions opposed the funding cuts. Persuasion produced by the moralizing passage thus cannot account for these results. Second, private attitudes predicted comfort protesting only when the manipulation granted them a self-interested stake, a moral stake, or both. Taken together these two findings suggest that rather than increasing non-vested participants' felt obligation to speak up, the moralizing passage gave these participants the standing to feel comfortable acting on their privately held attitudes.

The finding that attitude change did not even accompany, let alone cause, the behavioral change found in the Effron and Miller (2008) study speaks to an important fact about the different ways persuasive arguments can affect behavior: they can either change people's attitudes, with their newly formed attitudes then leading people to change their behavior, or they can simply license people to act on the attitudes they already have. For those trying to exhort people to action it is important to know whether the challenge they are facing is insufficient attitudinal support or insufficient comfort in acting on existing attitudes.

Arguments that may effectively change attitudes may not effectively license behavior, and vice versa. Kuran (1997), for example, talks about the powerful role played by the argument that slavery was un-Christian in the period leading up to the emancipation of slaves in America. As Kuran notes, this argument was not a decisive one when expressed earlier in the anti-slavery campaign but became increasingly decisive as abolition sentiment grew suggesting that this

rallying cry did not so much shift attitudes in an abolitionist direction as it did license already shifted attitudes. Thus, the argument functioned more to provide converts to the abolitionist cause with psychological standing-- in this case, by giving them a moral stake in the slavery issue-- than to produce more converts.

Psychological Standing from Links to Other Issues

Moralization, we argue, makes people feel comfortable protesting because it transforms an issue in which only certain people have a (material) stake into an issue in which everyone has a (moral) stake. In this way, granting non-vested individuals a moral stake links their outrage about an issue on which they lack the standing to protest (e.g., abortion) to an issue that everyone has the standing to protest (e.g., threats to the right to life or threats to the freedom to choose). This analysis suggests a more general strategy for granting people standing. If someone feels outraged over an issue, but does not feel entitled to express her outrage, linking that issue to another one that the person does feel entitled to protest should give her the standing to speak up about the first issue (cf. McAdams, 1997).

The idea that linking issues together provides people with standing may explain a surprising asymmetry that has been observed in the relation of males' and females' attitudes toward social issues and their political participation in these issues. There are many social policy issues that men and women feel differently about but none more so than gun control. Women consistently report stronger pro-gun control attitudes than men. Does this intensity gap, as it is called (for even men's attitudes are pro-gun control), mean that women are more likely to engage in political action in support of gun control than men? Historically, this has not been the case. Consistent with the general tendency of men to be more likely to engage in political action than women, the 1996 National Gun Policy survey, for instance, found that men were actually more

likely to be involved in pro-gun-control activities. But by 1999 the participation gap between men and women had narrowed or reversed. Men were only marginally more likely to have joined or given money to a gun control group, and women were actually more likely to have contacted a public official (Goss, 2003). So what happened in the late 1990's to lead women to finally convert their more intense pro-gun-control attitudes into action? According to Kristin Goss (2003) the answer is that during this time the gun control debate had been reframed in a way that empowered women to act. In particular, gun control, traditionally linked to crime prevention, now became a child safety issue, a change that allowed women to "own" their feelings. Because gender norms legitimate women speaking out about child-related issues, linking women's outrage about gun control to child safety issues gave them more standing to protest lenient gun laws, thus allowing their political participation in the gun control issue to be commensurate with their attitudes.

Psychological Standing from Personal Experience

We have argued that having a future stake, whether material or moral, in an issue grants people the standing to speak up about that issue. Having had past experience with an issue may also provide people with standing, even when this past experience does not implicate a future stake. The importance of standing of this type can sometimes be seen in the categories of members who are most and least likely to assume leadership roles in organizations.

As an example of how standing affects the leadership dynamics of organizations, consider the involvement of Whites in the NAACP (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People). The NAACP's goals remain the same as when it was founded almost 100 years ago:

To promote equality of rights and eradicate caste or racial prejudice among the citizens of the United States; to advance the interest of colored citizens; to secure for them

impartial suffrage; and to increase their opportunities for securing justice in the courts, education for their children, and complete equality before the law.

Whites have been represented in the membership of the organization since its inception, yet in the year 2007 only one of its over 400 branch presidents was white. Why would the percentage of Whites in leadership positions in the NAACP not mirror the percentage of Whites (over 10%) on the organization's membership rolls? Do white members tend to be less committed to the goals of the organization than black members? Possibly, as the organization's explicit goal of promoting the welfare of African-Americans would seem to give Blacks a greater material stake in the organization than Whites. But there is another possibility, one that assumes that the Whites who join the NAACP are every bit as committed to the organization and its goals as are the Blacks who join it. This possibility points to a racial gap not in commitment but in standing. Whatever prevents members from running for, or being elected to, a leadership position in the NAACP, Whites have the additional hurdle, by virtue of their race, of not having the standing in the organization that Blacks do. Their entitlement, perhaps even to belong, but certainly to lead an organization with NAACP's mandate is simply less than it is for Blacks.

What would give Whites the standing to hold a leadership position in the NAACP? News articles about the 2007 election of a white president to the Georgetown chapter of the NAACP provide a clue. These articles focused to a great extent on the past experience the new president had that gave her the standing to be president despite being white. One article described the individual as follows:

A few highlights from the bio: Gunderson's from a predominantly black working-class suburb of Detroit; she aspires to be a civil rights lawyer, either at the Southern Poverty Law Center or the NAACP; she never planned to be the group's president this year, but someone nominated her, and she cared about the issues. She figured, Why not?

One last thing: Gunderson is white. Listen to her speak, and you might never know. Her vocal inflection is unmistakably “urban.”

The article goes on to say:

Now black students generally regard Gunderson as she regards herself: the sum of her parts. She has civil rights experiences—both participating in diversity-related groups in high school and in watching her many black friends endure prejudice. And, most important, she understands what it feels like to look around and only see people who don’t look like you. (Samuelson, 2007)

These passages imply that the new president’s past-- embodied in her “urban accent”-- gives her a personal connection to the issues that the NAACP takes up. This personal connection gives her the standing to assume a leadership position, despite her race. Note that these experiences do not necessarily vest her with a material stake in promoting the NAACP’s goals. It appears that past experiences can substitute for future stakes in providing people with standing. Not only did the president’s past experiences make her feel comfortable running for office, they also apparently gave her legitimacy in voters’ eyes as well.

That a lack of perceived standing can prevent a certain category of members from assuming leadership roles in organizations is also evident in the case of MADD (Mothers against Drunk Driving). Despite admitting male members for the 25 year history of the organization, it was not until 2007 that it elected its first male president. Notably, this male president’s son had been killed by drunk driver (*MADD’s first male president to honor area police, 2005, October 17*). Formal eligibility requirements for the presidency of MADD require neither that you have lost a child to a drunk driver nor that you be a mother, but standing requirements favor candidates for whom both are true. As difficult as it is to imagine MADD members electing a

male president, it is even more difficult to imagine them electing one who did not at least have the standing provided by personal experience with the issue.

Like leaders of cause organizations, advocates for causes frequently have and readily publicize their connection to the cause (e.g., by identifying that they or someone close to them has been affected personally by it). Given our position that personal connections provide people with standing, publicizing these connections would seem a reasonable strategy to establish one's entitlement to advocate.

Consider the case of James Brady, President Reagan's press secretary, who was shot while protecting Reagan from an assassination attempt. Brady and his wife Sarah have since campaigned vigorously and effectively for stricter gun control laws. Why have the Bradys been effective advocates for their cause? One possibility is that their personal tragedy gives them credibility on the gun control issue. This is possible but it is difficult to see how their personal connection with the issue would give them expertise in the customary way one thinks about credibility. Indeed, one might argue that their experience biased them on the issue (cf. Kelley, 1972). But, whether having a meaningful connection to the cause they promote does or does not increase advocates' credibility and hence their persuasiveness, it will increase their standing –which may ultimately be more critical to their effectiveness (Miller, Ratner, & Zhao, 2008). Advocates who emphasize their standing increase the likelihood that others will listen when they present their claims. Having standing helps advocates gain entry to the halls of power, access media outlets, and obtain positions in which they can more easily collect money, signatures, or other forms of support. Just as people would probably not elect a male president of MADD whose life had not been in some way touched by drunk driving, people are more likely to allow a victim of gun violence to speak publicly about his views on gun control.

Undermining Standing

Standing is necessary not only to protest a policy or promote a cause but also to protest particular actions of another person that one finds unjust or offensive. Suffering the consequences of such actions usually bestows psychological standing on the victim by virtue of his/her personal connection or material or moral stake. At least three factors, however, can undermine the standing derived from stakes and personal connection, thus making people uncomfortable expressing their outrage even when they directly experience the consequences of the injustice. These factors are the lack of an appropriate relationship to the perpetrator, the presence of a similar transgression in one's past, and the presence of others who have suffered a greater injustice than oneself but have declined to protest. We consider each factor in turn.

When Lack of Shared Group Membership with the Perpetrator Undermines Standing.

Often people do not protest behavior that they find offensive because they feel that the relationship they have to the offending party does not give them the standing to do so. Consider the norms pertaining to the appropriate response to a publicly misbehaving young child. A quick perusal of parenting websites show that the question of what norms guide the reaction to someone else's child are much discussed and debated and that issues of both obligation and entitlement arise. On the one hand, there is the question of whether anyone other than the parent is *obligated to* discipline the misbehaving child; on the other hand, there is the question of whether anyone outside of the child's family is *entitled to* discipline the misbehaving child. Reasons for not intervening thus sometimes reflect the denial of responsibility ("it's not my job to discipline someone else's child") but perhaps as often reflect the denial of entitlement ("it's not my place to discipline someone else's child"). Even though the offended person is directly affected by the child's misbehavior (and therefore has a personal stake in the situation), the

absence of the requisite relationship with the perpetrator (i.e., the child) undermines the person's standing to speak up.

A similar dynamic arises when one hears derogatory comments made about an out-group by a member of the disparaged group. As an example, consider the circumstances of a male who hears misogynistic comments made by a female. However offended the male is by the comments, he will likely be less comfortable rebuking the female than he would another male. For one thing, he might construe the comment differently coming from a female than from a male: surely the comment is not, in fact, sexist if a woman would say it. A second possibility is that, personally offended though he may be, he may simply feel that it is not his place to rebuke the female speaker. As a woman, she has the standing to criticize her own group; as an out-group member, the man lacks the standing to chastise her.

Experimental evidence supports the claim that observers are sensitive to a critic's relation to the group that he or she criticizes. In one relevant line of work, a target person who made derogatory comments about Australians was perceived more negatively when he was presented as a non-Australian than when he was presented as an Australian (Hornsey, Trembath, & Gunthorpe, 2004). Importantly, both Australian and non-Australian participants displayed this effect, suggesting that negative perceptions of the non-Australian critic are driven by shared understandings of who has a right to criticize (Sutton, Elder, & Douglas, 2006; Sutton, Elder, Douglas, & Tarrant, 2008). Because critics lack the standing to criticize perpetrators with whom they do not share a social identity, they can expect more negative social consequences for their criticism relative to in-group critics.

The importance of a shared group membership with the offending party becomes especially salient when people's actions undermine this relationship. Consider the words of a

Philadelphia prosecutor quoted in Buzz Bissinger's *A prayer for the city* as he explains why he refuses to move to the suburbs despite the city's high taxes and deteriorating conditions "...I like being a Philadelphian. Once you leave Philadelphia you lose your standing to care and complain about it" (p. 14). In essence, the prosecutor is claiming that if you don't live and have a stake in a city, you are not entitled to complain. By leaving the city, you have changed your relationship with the offending party (in this case, Philadelphia itself); by moving, you have undermined the standing that your personal experience with the city granted you.

Research by Hornsey and Imani (2004) provides an empirical demonstration of how changing one's group membership relative to the offending party can undermine one's standing. These researchers presented Australian participants with anti-Australian comments attributed to a fellow Australian, a foreigner, or an Australian who had recently left the country and adopted British citizenship. Participants reacted just as negatively to the ex-Australian critic as they did to the foreign critic, which was significantly more negative than reactions to the Australian critic. For the same reason that Bissinger's prosecutor worried about the decision to move out of Philadelphia, people seem to feel that implicitly or explicitly renouncing their group membership revokes their license to criticize that group. If you have abandoned the requisite relationship with the perpetrator, you no longer have the standing to express your outrage.

When One's Past Behavior Undermines Standing

We have emphasized that having a personal connection to an issue in one's past gives one the standing to speak out about that issue in the present, as in the example of the White NAACP president. There is a particular kind of past experience, however, that undermines, rather than grants standing. Having once committed a particular transgression undermines one's standing to protest a similar transgression in the future. For example, Israel frequently

challenges European countries' criticism of Israel's treatment of Palestinians by referring to the Europeans' disregard for the fate of Jews during the 1930s and 1940s.

A lack of standing may also prevent members of groups who have committed particular transgressions from speaking up even when they themselves are victimized by those same transgressions. In a national phone survey, a full 50% of European-American respondents who believed that they had been the target of racial discrimination chose not to speak up about their feelings of discrimination, whereas only 32% of African-Americans who reported being the target of racial discrimination reported not speaking up (Dixon, Storen, & Van Horn 2002; see Kaiser & Major, 2006). One interpretation of these observations is that European-Americans felt they lacked the entitlement to protest "reverse" discrimination given their own racial group's historical and contemporary discrimination against African-Americans. Similarly, in a survey of over 8,000 federal employees, only 23% of men who felt that they were victims of sexual harassment reported "asking or telling the [offender] to stop," whereas 41% of women reported confronting the harasser in this manner (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 1995). Again, it is tempting to speculate that, as members of a group that people likely view as the primary perpetrator of sexual harassment, men feel that they lack standing to protest their own victimization by sexual harassment.

A similar dynamic occurs in families when parents find themselves inhibited from protesting some behavior in their children, such as smoking, that they themselves once did. It is not exactly hypocrisy to chastise your adolescent child for smoking if you smoked as a teenager, (it would be hypocrisy if you continued to do it) but there is something illegitimate about it. At least the parent is unlikely to be seen by the child as having the right to protest her smoking. We

have no standing to inveigh against the dangerous or immoral actions of others when we previously did the same thing ourselves.

When Others' Refusal to Protest Undermines Standing

A third factor that can undermine one's standing to protest a transgression is the behavior of others who have suffered more from the same transgression than oneself. It is widely recognized that the feeling of deprivation and the ensuing outrage that a perceived injustice produces is relative. Both depend on how the victim perceives his or her treatment to compare to that of other victims (Crosby, 1976; Davis, 1959; Gurr, 1970). Feelings of entitlement to be outraged are also relative. Victims who feel that others have more grounds to be outraged than they do, however outraged they may feel, will be inhibited from expressing it, if those worse-off are not protesting their treatment. For example, the conciliatory tone taken by the black South African leader Nelson Mandela toward the white government that had imprisoned him for 25 years likely had the calming effect it did at least partially because it diminished the standing to complain felt by other Black South Africans less harshly treated than Mandela. In effect, their standing to resist a conciliatory stance toward a white minority, however strong their motivation to do so, was undermined by the grace Mandela showed under much greater pressure. It simply is difficult to feel that one is entitled to refuse to turn the other cheek when someone whose cheek has been slapped much harder does.

That the legitimacy of a complaint depends upon the relative standing of the complainant is one reason people react so negatively to the often well-meaning attempts by others to console them about their misfortunes by pointing out that others are worse off. The claim that others have it worse off than you is a direct challenge to your standing to feel and express outrage. Being told that you are luckier than others may or may not diminish your sense of injustice, but it certainly

will diminish the standing you think you have to express your sense of injustice. Your feelings of injustice may not be diminished by the words of others but your sense of entitlement to those feelings will be.

Miller and Zak (2008) tested the hypothesis that people will be inhibited from protesting an injustice if they are confronted with another who fails to protest an even a worse injustice. The context they chose was the *Ultimatum Game*. This is a two-person game with the following rules. One person (*the proposer*) is provided with an amount of money (e.g., \$5) and asked to decide how to distribute the money between him or herself and the other player (*the responder*). The only power the responder has in the situation is to accept or reject the offer (ultimatum). If the responder accepts the proposer's offer they each get the money specified in the proposal. If the responder rejects the proposer's offer neither player gets any money. Because the game is played only once, and anonymously, reciprocation is not an issue.

The Ultimatum Game has generated more attention than any experimental game since the *Prisoner's Dilemma Game* and was introduced because of the irrational behavior that it generates. The game-theoretic solution to this game is for the proposer to offer the responder as little as possible; after all, the responder will be better off accepting whatever the proposer offers rather than rejecting it and getting nothing. However, this is not what typically happens. Participants in the proposer's position tend to offer at least 30-40% of the sum to the other player. Indeed, if they offer less than this, participants in the responder's position tend to reject it, thereby consigning both parties to nothing. This may represent a case of "cutting off one's nose to spite one's face," but players in the responder's role apparently feel that receiving an insulting and unjust offer entitles them to deviate from the rational response. Their sense of justice is piqued and they feel entitled to express their outrage by punishing the perpetrator.

Miller and Zak (2008) sought to determine how witnessing another person accept an even less generous offer would affect the willingness of Ultimatum Game players to accept an unfair offer they received themselves. They predicted that being confronted with the rational, level-headed response of another person in the face of an even more unequal split would increase the willingness of players to accept their offer. They reasoned that a player's perceived standing to reject an offer (i.e., be vindictive on principle) would be reduced if he or she witnessed another accept a more insulting offer. That is, witnessing the lack of vindictive action from another would undermine their intentions to "show" the proposer.

Participants played one round of an Ultimatum Game on a computer terminal with another (imaginary) person and along side two other (imaginary) people playing an independent round of the game. Participants were unaware that the other actors in the game were imaginary. Participants were "randomly" assigned to the role of responder and told that their partner allocated to them \$1.50 of the \$5.00 pool of money and that in the other pair an even less fair amount was being offered to the other responder (i.e., \$1). Participants' standing to protest was manipulated by the information they were given about the response of the other victim (who either accepted or rejected her offer). There was also a control condition, where participants were not told how the other victim responded to the \$1. It was assumed that participants who were informed that a more victimized other accepted her offer (i.e., turned the other cheek) would feel they had less standing to retaliate against their partner by rejecting their \$1.5 offer. Consistent with prediction, only 28% of participants rejected their \$1.5 offer when they were told that the other more deprived victim accepted a \$1 offer as compared to 50% of participants who were not told how the other victim responded and 52% of participants who were told that the other victim rejected the \$1 offer.

Support for the claim that the non-spiteful behavior of a worse off victims inhibited participants from acting on their feelings of spite rather than simply reduced their spitefulness came from measures that probed participants' feelings toward the other victim. Even though a fellow victim of an unfair split had more impact on participants' behavior when she accepted it than when she rejected it, participants liked the other victim more in the latter case than in the former case. In other words, participants may have been influenced more by the rational than irrational other but they liked her less. This is to be expected, of course, if the nature of the influence she wielded was that of undermining the participants' standing to act on their feelings of outrage rather than actually reducing their feeling of outrage.

In further support of this analysis, consider what happened when participants were asked whether they did or did not want to give the other victim, in another round of a similar game, the full control to decide on how to split up another pot of money. Consistent with the reasoning that participants resented the other victim who accepted an even worse offer for shaming them into accepting their offer, only 37% of participants in this condition choose to benefit their worse-off fellow victim, as compared to 70% when the other had rejected the worse offer. The fact that victims both derogated and punished other victims who deprived them of their standing suggests that standing, perhaps because of the freedom of action it provides, is something people do not like to lose.

Conclusions

This chapter addressed a powerful psychological barrier that can prevent outrage from being converted into social protest. Although there may be many barriers that hinder a person who is outraged by a situation from protesting it, such as the fear of retaliation, our focus has been on one particular psychological barrier: one's level of psychological standing. We have

argued that protesting an injustice in social spheres, as in legal spheres, can be regarded as a right or entitlement. (This claim does not deny that in some circumstances it might also be a responsibility as well.). Not everybody can legitimately protest an injustice no matter how outraged they are by it. A person's standing to protest is defined by a person's relation to the source of the outrage, with the particulars of standing varying considerably from context to context.

The concept of standing permits unique predictions as well as an alternative frame for viewing previous findings (e.g., the relation between self-interest and protest). As an example of the latter, consider an anomaly that exists in the intersection of procedural and distributive justice. On the one hand, research shows that people's satisfaction with an outcome often correlates more strongly with their perceptions of the fairness of the procedure that produced it than with its favorability. On the other hand, the likelihood of protesting an outcome is more strongly related to feelings of distributive injustice than procedural injustice (Tyler, Huo, & Lind, 1999). One possibility for why procedural justice sentiments are more predictive of satisfaction than of protest is that the feeling that it was an unjust procedure that produced an outcome, in the absence of the feeling that the actual outcome was unfair, leaves one with less standing to protest.

We began this chapter by illustrating how lacking a material stake in a perceived injustice deprives people of the psychological standing to protest, but we have argued that people may obtain standing via other means. When people lack a material stake in an issue, they can nonetheless feel that they have the standing to protest if they observe other non-vested individuals protesting (Ratner & Miller, 2001), or if they perceive themselves as having a moral stake in the issue (Efron & Miller, 2008). Having a personal characteristic or history that

explains to the world why one feels such outrage – as in the case of the White NAACP chapter president or James Brady – can also provide one with standing. At the same time, not just any connection to an issue will suffice. Having committed a particular transgression in the past, or simply being a member of a group that has committed (or continues to commit) that transgression – as in the case of the Whites who are reluctant to report perceived racial discrimination – deprives one of the standing to protest that particular transgression. Finally, having a material stake in an issue's outcome is not always sufficient to license protest. Victims lack the standing to retaliate against a transgressor when others who have been more victimized by the transgression choose to turn the other cheek (Miller & Zak, 2008). This list of characteristics that give people standing is by no means exhaustive. By identifying some of the ways in which people can acquire and lose standing, and by showing various ways in which standing shapes protest behavior, we hope to have given readers a sense of the power and predictive utility of this psychological construct.

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