

Introduction to the special thematic section: The importance of group identification, context and culture in promoting social action

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This special thematic section is the first in a series of special sections that the Asian Association of Social Psychology (AASP) is developing for the *Journal of Pacific Rim Psychology*. Over the last four years, the AASP has guest edited one special issue each year on applied social psychology research in the journal in an attempt to encourage Asian social psychologists to engage in research that address real world problems in Asian societies. The special issues have featured a variety of research approaches (action research, program development, experiments, and so on) on a range of important social concerns (see Bernardo & Liu, 2018, for a retrospective view of these special issues). As part of its continuing cooperative relationship with the journal, every year for the next five years, the AASP will guest edit smaller special thematic issues, each with a more well-defined focus, in the hope of making stronger incremental contributions to research and theory on important areas of social psychology.

This special thematic section on collective action research was guest edited by Winnifred Louis (lead editor), Niki Harré and Allan Bernardo, and it is derived from an AASP conference symposium of research studies supported by small research grants given by the AASP to young scholars. All future special thematic sections will also be derived from AASP conference symposiums. In doing so, the AASP aims to publish in the journal important social psychology research by Asian-based researchers, with the journal's open access policy providing the widest possible readership for these studies.

The three articles and commentary in this special section attempt to understand the intersection of group identification and social action in different countries (Japan, the Philippines, China and Indonesia) with regard to dif-

ferent issues (gender equality, threats to collective wellbeing, and the role of religion in national politics). Together they show that our identification as group members not only directs our attention to particular issues, but also influences the interplay between affect and action. What is particularly exciting about this collection of studies is that by going beyond WEIRD samples (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010), they draw attention to the crucial role of context and culture and if, and how, people respond to injustice and are willing to work with others for improved social conditions.

Ochoa, Manalastas, Deguchi, and Louis (2019) used the SIMCA model of social identity and collective action to examine the factors associated with men's allyship with women in Japan and the Philippines. One particularly interesting finding was that whereas Filipino men were more likely to report collective action if they identified more strongly with women, Japanese men were more likely to report collective action if they identified less strongly with men. The authors discuss how the Japanese government's push for more gender equity in a relatively gendered environment may be threatening to men who identify strongly as men, thus decreasing their support for women. On the other hand, in the more egalitarian Philippines, men may feel less threatened as the situation is relatively stable, and thus collective action is better explained by the extent to which they identify with women. Notably, the authors also found that while moral concern and considering how men could play a useful role in reducing discrimination were important in motivating collective action, anger about discrimination did not seem to affect allyship.

The role of anger was also a focus in Li, Xu, Yang, and Guo's (2019) research that used the SIMCA model as the

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basis for two related studies in China. In contrast to Ochoa et al., they found that anger did motivate collective action, but only for upper-class participants. Lower-class participants not only indicated less overall intention to engage in action to protect the group's interests than did their upper-class peers, but also did not show an association between collective action intentions and anger. As the authors suggest, this may be due to lower feelings of efficacy and empowerment in people who are likely to have relatively few resources at their disposal. This article is among comparatively few studies of collective action from China, and is also notable for using a mixed-methods design to examine the role of emotion in motivating collective action.

The third empirical article, by Wibisono, Louis, and Jetten (2019), examined the intersection of social identities among activists within religious movements in Indonesia. They first showed that the strength of religious identity and national identity were positively associated in Indonesian Muslims regardless of their level of religious fundamentalism. They then found that the more fundamentalist activists gave more importance to their religious identity, but that more moderate activists considered their religious and national identities as compatible and integrated. The study is noteworthy in many respects: it looks at the role of religious identities as a factor in collective activism and examines how religious identities interact with other social identities, and, as with all the studies in this special thematic section, it explores these issues in a non-WEIRD sample.

Collectively, these articles provide further evidence that there may be no universal triggers to action for the common good. This issue is picked up in the commentary by Martijn van Zomeren (2019), in which he differentiates the *psychological processes* behind collective action from *when* collective action actually occurs. Van Zomeren's argument is that there are probably universally applicable motives for collective action, these being group identification, group-based anger, group efficacy beliefs, and moral convictions. Without these psychological motives, individuals are unlikely to participate in such action. However, each of these motives require particular culture contexts

to be activated. One good example of this is Li, Xu, Yang, and Guo's article in this special section in which they find anger only motivated collective action in upper-class Chinese participants. This illustrates the *when* side of the equation – anger leads to action only when the cultural context encourages it. For upper-class participants, this appeared to be the case, but not so for the lower-class participants. As van Zomeren also notes, and Li et al.'s study shows, it is not just the overarching culture of a nation or region that matters, but the smaller subcultures within it for class, religion, ethnicity, profession, and so on.

The research presented here is, we think, an important contribution to a question that haunts us as editors and indeed underpins considerable scholarship in the social sciences: How do we inspire people to help create the societies that promote wellbeing for all? This is both a cultural and a psychological question, as these studies show. We hope you find the articles in this section valuable and a trigger to further research in this field.

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