

The Absolute - Relative Deprivation Dichotomy in Estimating Variations in Reaction to Inequality: Comparing Antecedents of Collective Action among Disadvantaged Groups

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ABSTRACTThe conceptualization of poverty lines has often relied on the absolute measure of deprivation. However, scholars have for long agreed that feelings of injustice accompanying experiences of deprivation becomes active when such experiences are negatively compared with similar others. This sort of analysis presumes that absolute deprivation itself is not a sufficient condition for frustration. This study compares the reaction of a sample of low income urban dwellers (n=383) on indices of absolute and relative deprivation to determine which measure better predicts respondents' willingness to engage in collective action as a result of deprivation and actions they recently participated in. The results of the study showed that neither construct predicts willingness to embark on collective action or actual action. It was therefore recommended that Social Movement organizations willing to foster change should emphasize more on changing structural conditions and resources for mobilization rather than the victim's feelings or experiences of deprivation.