

RESEARCH ARTICLE

(Not so) powerful allies? Decision makers' reactions to advantaged group allies in collective action

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Abstract

Do allies in collective action have a positive impact on political efficacy? Theoretical considerations and common sense might lead us to expect that advantaged group allies will be beneficial to the success of social movements. However, across five experimental studies, with samples from the United States and Germany (three pre-registered, total $N = 696$, 48% women, $M_{\text{age}} = 38$), we find that such involvement does not significantly affect authorities' reactions to the demands of disadvantaged groups. Decision makers were given information about proposals supported either by only disadvantaged group members or by disadvantaged group members and advantaged group allies. Their support, budget allocations, voting intentions and perceptions of movements and proposals did not differ as a function of this information. However, collective actions including allies did reduce perceptions of intergroup conflict. These results were replicated across different contexts with student and local politicians and with participants acting as parliamentarians in fictional scenarios.

KEYWORDS

allies, collective action, inequality, intergroup relations

1 | INTRODUCTION

Collective action is an important instrument of social change and its predictors and motivations have received much attention in the social psychological literature (Becker, 2012). Collective action can have a range of goals and outcomes such as raising awareness, movement building, resource mobilization or influencing policymakers (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Thomas & McGarty, 2018). In this research, we are interested in the latter objective. Collective action often targets political decision makers directly, asking them to implement specific policies (Gulliver et al., 2021). Consistent with this, theoretical models conceptualize those in authority as an important and distinct group in the collective action context (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Subašić et al., 2008). However, the dynamics between activists and such authorities

remain rather unexplored (Gulliver et al., 2019; Louis, 2009). This is an oversight given the importance of identifying the factors that make collective action more likely to succeed in changing decision makers' minds.

One factor that is of interest here is the involvement of advantaged group allies—members of privileged social groups who engage in collective action on behalf of disadvantaged groups, such as white people joining Black Lives Matter protests (Kutlaca, Becker et al., 2020). It is often assumed that, because of their status and shared group membership with decision makers, advantaged group allies are crucial in bringing about social change. However, this proposition has not yet been empirically tested. Research has shown, however, that the involvement of allies can raise controversy in other respects. For example, while advantaged group supporters are effective in appealing to

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bystanders from their own group (Kutlaca et al., 2022), they might evoke negative reactions from disadvantaged group members and even alienate them from the movement if they take up too much space (Iyer & Achia, 2021; Kutlaca et al., 2022; Radke et al., 2022). The potentially detrimental effects on disadvantaged group activists that can result from the involvement of allies renders it even more important to investigate whether advantaged group allies can make a sizeable contribution to influencing decision makers positively (Subašić et al., 2008). This research sets out to address this question. We investigate whether decision makers are more likely to be responsive to the demands of social movements when they include advantaged group allies and examine four mechanisms that may contribute to this. First, ally involvement may lead to less perceived conflict between advantaged and disadvantaged groups. Second, ally involvement may signal a more serious challenge to the authorities and therefore a greater threat to their image and electability if they reject the demands. Third, allies may bolster the legitimacy of the demands and, fourth, increase perceptions of the activists' trustworthiness. We study these questions in different intergroup contexts such as economic inequality and immigration and with participants from the United States and Germany.

1.1 | Collective action achieving social change

The term *collective action* encompasses acts like protests, petitions or online activism, which are undertaken with the goal of maintaining or improving the status of a social group (Van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009; Wright et al., 1990). Especially for disadvantaged groups, which often lack direct access to the policymaking process, collective actions constitute an important way to make their concerns heard and sway the opinions of their political representatives (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017). While social psychologists have made substantial headway in identifying factors that affect collective action engagement (Stürmer et al., 2003; van Zomeren et al., 2008), or bystander perceptions (Feinberg et al., 2020), relatively little is known about what makes collective action more likely to achieve social change and sway decision makers (Louis, 2009).

Sociological research using historical, comparative and case-study approaches has found that social movements can be anything from effective to barely influential in affecting political decision making (for a review see Amenta et al., 2010). These investigations also showed that the factors that facilitate movement mobilization, such as organization, communication and framing, do not necessarily translate into political success (Amenta et al., 2010; Biggs & Andrews, 2015). Thus, identifying the factors that do increase the likelihood of collective action achieving its political aims and influencing decision makers remains an important task for research in this field.

1.2 | Why allies might enhance the success of collective action

Theories of political change have long proposed that building alliances should be considered a key part of a social movement's success (e.g.,

Gramsci et al., 1972). In social psychology, both the triangulated (Simon & Klandermans, 2001) and the political solidarity models of collective action (Subašić et al., 2008) propose that three main parties are involved in the struggle for change: those in the minority or disadvantaged group demanding social change, those in positions of power or authority, referred to here as decision makers, who can grant or refuse their demands, and the majority—that is, members of the advantaged group and possibly other disadvantaged groups—who may become allies and support the minority's demands. While the initial conflict exists between a minority or disadvantaged group engaged in collective action and an authority, both sides are actually competing for the support of the majority, which has the power to tip the scales. Social change becomes possible when the challenge to the status quo spreads beyond those who are negatively affected by it because this will force the authority to change its position in order to remain in power (Subašić et al., 2008). Based on these two theoretical models, the involvement of allies should be a factor that makes collective action more likely to succeed. Both models further suggest two mechanisms by which it may do so. First, the involvement of allies indicates that the majority has taken the side of the minority in its struggle with the authority, which should be reflected in perceptions of alignment, rather than conflict, between the two groups. Second, it signals a more serious challenge to the authority and should raise decision makers' concerns about their public image and electoral prospects were they to refuse the minority's demands.

There are reasons to believe that advantaged group allies, in particular will have a positive impact on collective action success. One is that research in political science has shown that politicians' perception of the will of the people is shaped by the views of their privileged constituents (Belchior, 2014; Miler, 2007). This suggests that decision makers are not only more susceptible to influence from advantaged group members (Butler & Broockman, 2011; Ellis, 2012) but actually perceive their positions as representative of the general population. Thus, a third mechanism for success may be that advantaged group allies convey that the disadvantaged group's demands reflect the broader interest of the populace, thereby increasing the perceived legitimacy of these demands.

Decision makers are not only receptive to influence from advantaged group members; they tend to be members of advantaged groups themselves (Carnes, 2012; Hawkesworth, 2003; Tate, 2003), and, as such, they share a common identity with advantaged group allies. Based on self-categorization theory, research has found that ingroup sources are more effective than outgroup sources (David & Turner, 1996; Louis et al., 2020); this should give those allies an advantage over other supporters when it comes to swaying decision makers. Indeed, advantaged group allies have already been shown to be effective in increasing other advantaged group members' support for a disadvantaged group's cause (Kutlaca et al., 2022; Subašić et al., 2018). An explanation for this difference in effectiveness comes from the social influence literature. Advantaged group allies constitute single, or ingroup, minorities because, while they share an opinion-based identity with the disadvantaged group that they support, at the same time they retain their shared group identity with the majority, including

most political decision makers. This distinguishes them from disadvantaged group activists who are in a double minority, or outgroup minority, position. Research has shown that single minority members evoke fewer perceptions of self-interest (Maass & Clark, 1984; Mugny et al., 1984), which makes them more convincing, whereas the double minority's arguments are more often disregarded due to attributions of self-interest (Kelley, 1971). In interpersonal confrontations, allies are often taken more seriously and seen as more persuasive as a result of their presumed objectivity and lack of self-interested motivation (Czopp & Monteith, 2003; Czopp et al., 2006; Drury & Kaiser, 2014; Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). As a fourth mechanism, advantaged group allies may therefore benefit from their apparent objectivity, which should make them seem more trustworthy to decision makers.

1.3 | Why allies might not affect the success of collective action

There are important reasons to expect that allies may be effective in convincing political decision makers by way of their shared identity but there are also reasons to doubt how powerful their role may be. Research on minority influence paints a complex picture. Ingroup minorities are particularly effective when they advocate their own group's vested interest (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; David & Turner, 1999); however, when they argue in favour of outgroup interests, conflict elaboration theory suggests that they may actually elicit greater resistance (Mugny & Perez, 1991). Indeed, it has been found that, depending on factors such as their communication strategies and the exact number of shared versus non-shared characteristics, the effectiveness of ingroup minorities advocating for the outgroup varies greatly (Politi et al., 2017; Quiazade et al., 2003). Research so far has focused on ingroup minority influence on group members who did not occupy positions of authority, such as political decision makers; it is entirely possible that different mechanisms apply when the targets of influence do hold these positions.

In line with political cognition research on the mechanisms of allegiance detection, studies have also shown that political orientation, particularly party membership, can trump categories such as race, which are otherwise used to spontaneously identify others as cooperative or competitive (Pietraszewski et al., 2015). Thus, if a particular cause is associated with a specific political party or identity, supporters are seen primarily in terms of their politics and their membership of the advantaged group becomes less salient and thus less impactful. Given that social movements advocating for the interests of disadvantaged groups are most often politically progressive or liberal, this may be an important factor shaping the perceptions of conservative or right-wing politicians. For example, to white conservative politicians, both Black and white Black Lives Matter activists may primarily register as liberals rather than members of the racial ingroup or outgroup. This is a major constraint on the reasoning outlined above, potentially reducing the hypothesized effectiveness of advantaged group allies in increasing the likelihood of a movement's political success.

To sum up, based on the theories and literature reviewed here, the involvement of advantaged group allies might make collective action more politically successful via several mechanisms: It should signal to the authority that the majority is in agreement rather than conflict with the minority and that refusing their demands would damage decision makers' public image. Their involvement should increase the legitimacy of the disadvantaged group's demands and, because of their status as ingroup messengers, they should also receive the benefit of increased trustworthiness. As a result, their support should make authorities more likely to make concessions to the movement. However, we have already identified one condition under which this would likely not be the case, namely, if allies are perceived first and foremost as political opponents. It therefore stands to reason that if allies do indeed have a positive effect on collective action outcomes, this effect might be neutralized or even reversed depending on the context and the specific actors involved.

1.4 | The present research

In the five studies presented here, we examine whether the political goals of collective action are more likely to be achieved when advantaged group allies are involved. Our search uncovered only one sociological study that included a manipulation of a protest's composition by way of either mentioning or not mentioning that sympathetic Belgians participated in a protest for the rights of asylum seekers in Belgium. However, this manipulation was not central to the research question and did not yield any effect on decision makers' attitudes or willingness to publicly support the issue (Wouters & Walgrave, 2017).

Given these preliminary results, we aim to include a more comprehensive range of outcome measures in order to be able to detect the potential effects of ally involvement. These encompass not only support but also voting intentions and willingness to allocate funding for the disadvantaged group's demands as well as prioritization relative to another issue. The latter is included as a way to capture subtler changes in support, especially if it should turn out that ceiling effects occur because participants are extremely supportive of the disadvantaged group's demands regardless of ally involvement. Based on the theories and research reviewed above, we also investigate possible underlying mechanisms. Specifically, we expect that allies will reduce perceptions of intergroup conflict (H1), raise decision makers' concerns about damaging their public image by refusing to make concessions (H2), increase perceptions of the demands' legitimacy (H3), make the movement seem more trustworthy (H4) and increase decision makers' willingness to support, vote for and allocate funds to the issues in question (H5).

In sum, our studies address the question of if and under what circumstances advantaged group allies affect the political success of social movements by impacting decision makers' perceptions and responses to their demands. In Studies 1–3, we experimentally manipulate whether or not advantaged group allies are involved in collective action and investigate the effects on the outcomes listed above. In

order to increase the generalizability of the findings, we employ a range of issues and intergroup contexts and recruit both regular participants and actual politicians for the role of decision makers. Given that we assume shared group membership between decision makers and advantaged group allies to be one of the factors working in these allies' favour, we test identification with the advantaged group as a moderator to empirically examine the possibility that positive effects of allies are limited to highly identified decision makers. In Studies 4 and 5, we examine whether the impact of allies is affected by their shared political identity with decision makers as well as advantaged group status. For this purpose, we also manipulate the political orientation of the advantaged group allies.

2 | STUDY 1

In Study 1, we used the context of economic inequality in a fictional society whereby participants were asked to take on the role of parliamentarians. A proposal to reduce inequality was said to be supported either only by those from poorer social groups, in the control condition (i.e., only by disadvantaged people without allies) or, in the experimental condition, by an alliance of poor and wealthy citizens. Political orientation and participants' identification with their assigned social class were tested as moderators in additional exploratory analyses to examine whether reactions to the allies vary between political subgroups or for those with higher or lower identification with the shared group.

2.1 | Method

We report all manipulations, measures and exclusions in these studies. All materials, questionnaires, data and code for the analyses reported here as well as any supplementary materials and additional analyses mentioned are available at the Open Science Framework depository: https://osf.io/9aeq8/?view_only=.

2.1.1 | Participants

Power analysis for one-way ANOVA with two groups set to detect a medium effect ($f = 0.25, \beta - 1 = .80, \alpha = .05$) suggested a minimum sample size of 128. We recruited 195 US nationals on the online platform *Prolific Academic* who were paid \$2.30 for their participation. There were 62 exclusions: 38 failed attention checks, nine failed manipulation checks, seven incomplete submissions, six duplicate submissions and two multivariate outliers, identified by using Mahalanobi's distance with a cut off of $p = .001$. This left a final sample of 133 participants (69% women, $M_{age} = 31, SD = 12.14$). Most of the sample were college educated (79%), 29% identified as lower or lower middle class, 50% as middle class and 21% as upper middle or upper class. The majority (73%) identified their political affiliation as Democrat, 16% as Repub-

lican and 11% as neither. Seventy-seven participants were randomly allocated to the control condition and 56 to the experimental condition.

2.1.2 | Procedure

We used the Bimboola paradigm (Jetten et al., 2015), which asks participants to imagine starting a new life in a fictional country named Bimboola. Participants were shown a graphic depicting the social stratification of Bimboolan society and informed that they would be allocated randomly to one of its socioeconomic status groups. In reality, all participants were assigned to the upper middle class, the second highest of five groups, and were asked to take on the role of politicians. To immerse themselves in the scenario and increase identification with their assigned status, participants were then shown a selection of houses and cars corresponding to each socioeconomic group and allowed to choose from those accessible to their own group or lower. To enhance the richness of the context, they were also given information about the wealth distribution and percentage of the population in each income group and about key industries and pollution levels in the country.

Subsequently, participants were assigned randomly to either the control or the experimental condition. In their roles as politicians, they were asked to vote on and allocate money to two proposals brought before the parliament and supported by mass protests. One was a filler proposal about reducing pollution put forward by the Green Movement of Bimboola and supported by about 40% of the population. The proposal that was key to the current study (i.e., the experimental proposal) concerned the fight against inequality and the initiative aimed to provide poor families with better housing and job opportunities—an idea that participants were told had the support of 40–50% of the population. In the control condition, these supporters were said to be from the poorer social groups whereas in the experimental condition they were said to be from both poorer and wealthier groups. We included several attention and manipulation checks throughout the study to assess the quality of the data, such as asking participants to recall which groups had supported the proposals.

2.1.3 | Measures

Unless otherwise indicated, responses were measured on scales from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). In all studies, dependent variables were assessed for both the experimental and filler proposals. As only the responses to the items concerning the experimental proposal are relevant to the research question, those concerning the filler proposal are not reported here.¹

¹ In all of the studies, we also measured realistic threat as a dependent variable. In Studies 1, 4 and 5, we included measures of solidarity with the poor, emotional reactions to the situation of the poor and perceived fairness of the wealth distribution. In Studies 1 and 4 we measured perceived norms within one's political party and the perceived responsibility of the different social classes for the situation of the poor. The experimental manipulation had no effect on any of these measures.

Group identification

Before the manipulation, participants' identification with their assigned group was measured with two items ('I identify with people in this group', $r = .82$) based on the established measure by Leach et al. (2008).

Political orientation

Political orientation was assessed with three items ($\alpha = .93$) asking participants to indicate their general, social and economic preferences on scales from -3 (*strongly liberal*) to $+3$ (*strongly conservative*).

Conflict

The perception of intergroup conflict was assessed with two items ('I believe that poorer and richer Bimbooleans are in conflict'; $r = .81$).

Image

Based on previous research (Teixeira et al., 2020), participants' concern for their public image was measured with four items ('If I support this project, my chances of getting re-elected would increase'; $\alpha = .79$).

Legitimacy

Legitimacy of the proposals was measured with four items ('In your view, the goal of this project is: *very illegitimate* (-3) - *very legitimate* (3); $\alpha = .89$).

Trust

Trust toward the proponents was measured with three items ('How likely are the groups supporting this proposal to be trustworthy?' $\alpha = .93$).

Support

A single item assessed support for the proposals ('I support this proposal').

Voting intentions

Participants were asked to indicate how they intended to vote on the proposals ($1 = \textit{very likely against}$, $7 = \textit{very likely for}$). After having read both proposals, participants were again able to vote on the proposals, this time in a binary choice format (*yes* or *no*). We included both measures because, although the former allows us to capture the extent to which people agree, the latter more closely resembles an actual vote.

Priority

Participants indicated the proposal that they thought should be prioritized, with lower scores indicating prioritization of the experimental proposal ($1 = \textit{prioritize experimental proposal}$; $4 = \textit{equal priority}$; $7 = \textit{prioritize filler proposal}$).

Funding

Participants were also asked how they would distribute a total budget of \$2 million between the proposed projects. Money was allocated by moving two sliding scales to any desired amounts as long as the sum did not surpass the budget.

2.2 | Results and discussion

Analysis was conducted in R Version 4.1.0 (R Core Team, 2021) using the packages *psychometric* (Fletcher, 2010), *dplyr* (Wickham et al., 2021), (Hothorn et al., 2008), and *effectsize* (Ben-Sachar et al., 2020). Correlations between variables are reported in Table 1. Participants reported average levels of identification with their allocated group ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.39$). This is similar to findings from previous research in conditions when participants were assigned to preferred social groups (de Vreeze & Matschke, 2019).

Based on the correlations between the dependent variables, we decided against running a MANOVA and instead opted for individual ANOVAs (Salkind, 2012). The effect was significant for only one outcome: Perceived conflict between richer and poorer citizens of Bimboola, which was higher in the control than the ally condition, $M_{diff} = -0.88$, 95% CI $[-1.25, -0.51]$, (Table 2), confirming Hypothesis 1.² The binary measure of voting intentions revealed no differences between conditions for either the experimental, $\chi^2(1) < 0.001$, $p = 1$, or filler proposal, $\chi^2(1) < 0.001$, $p = 1$. The distribution of votes can be found in the Supporting Information on the OSF.

Additional analyses revealed no interactions between the manipulation and political orientation or group identification, indicating that the presence of allies was not perceived differently by members of different political subgroups, nor did it differentially affect those with lower or higher identification with the shared group.

In sum, most of our hypotheses were not confirmed. The presence of allies did not affect decision makers' likelihood of supporting a disadvantaged group's cause, voting in favour of it, or allocating more funds to it. The only effect we did find was that when advantaged group allies were said to be involved in the cause, decision makers perceived significantly less conflict between poor and wealthy groups in society. This suggests that participants did pick up on the information provided about the make-up of the interest group and that it influenced their perception of intergroup relations in the expected manner. However, perceived conflict was not related to any of the other outcomes and thus this variable did not mediate outcomes.

One caveat of Study 1 is that our participants were not real-life decision makers but merely took on the role of politicians in an immersive scenario. It is therefore possible that they did not react to the presence of allies in the same ways that individuals more familiar with this role and the wider political context would. We aimed to address this shortcoming in the following studies.

3 | STUDY 2

The objective of Study 2 was to test our hypotheses with participants who had real-world experience of political decision making. To this end, we recruited members of student parliaments. Such parliaments are important governing bodies at German universities and candidates

² Because of the relatively large number of participants who did not pass our attention checks, we reran these analyses with the whole sample. This did not change the results.

TABLE 1 Correlations between variables.

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|--------------------------|-------|--------|---------|---------|------|--------|---------|--------|---------|--------|---------|
| 1. Age | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Wealth | -.10 | - | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Political orientation | -.03 | .01 | - | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Group identification | -.05 | .38*** | .14 | - | | | | | | | |
| 5. Conflict | -.17* | -.04 | -.11 | -.10 | - | | | | | | |
| 6. Image | .01 | .06 | -.19* | -.18* | .13 | - | | | | | |
| 7. Legitimacy | .20* | -.11 | -.31*** | -.30*** | .15 | .18* | - | | | | |
| 8. Trust | .15 | .09 | -.28** | -.24** | .07 | .30*** | .38*** | - | | | |
| 9. Support | .09 | -.01 | -.54*** | -.31*** | .18* | .18* | .67*** | .38*** | - | | |
| 10. Voting intentions | .04 | .07 | -.49*** | -.30*** | .15 | .26** | .61*** | .34*** | .90*** | - | |
| 11. Priority | -.04 | .01 | -.03 | .11 | .04 | -.24** | -.29*** | -.20* | -.32*** | -.27** | - |
| 12. Funding | .08 | .08 | .17 | -.06 | -.09 | .11 | .21* | .13 | .19* | .21* | -.74*** |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 2 Means, SDs and one-way ANOVAs.

| Measure | Control | | Ally | | F(1, 131) | η^2 |
|-------------------------|---------|------|------|------|-----------|----------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| Conflict | 5.51 | 0.97 | 4.62 | 1.18 | 22.24*** | .15 |
| Image | 5.03 | 1.07 | 5.28 | 0.83 | 2.08 | .02 |
| Legitimacy | 2.62 | 0.59 | 2.60 | 0.59 | 0.02 | <.001 |
| Trust | 5.66 | 1.21 | 5.73 | 0.89 | 0.13 | <.001 |
| Support | 6.14 | 0.85 | 6.21 | 0.89 | 0.22 | .002 |
| Voting intentions | 6.13 | 0.88 | 6.25 | 0.85 | 1.05 | .008 |
| Priority | 2.84 | 1.31 | 2.75 | 1.27 | 0.17 | .003 |
| Funding (in million \$) | 1.23 | 0.30 | 1.22 | 0.33 | 0.02 | <.001 |

*** $p < .001$.

take part in elections that are open to the whole student body. We also decided to focus on another topic—one that might be more relevant in a university context—and changed the intergroup dimension from socio-economic status groups to domestic and international students. In contrast to the large structural problem of social inequality in Study 1, in Study 2 we focused on a smaller and more specific issue. The study was preregistered at: <https://aspredicted.org/zm7cd.pdf>.

3.1 | Method

3.1.1 | Participants

Power analysis for one-way ANOVA with two groups set to detect a medium effect ($f = 0.25$, $\beta = 1 - .80$, $\alpha = .05$) suggested a sample size of 128. We recruited 155 members of 85 student parliaments across Germany. Five submissions were incomplete, five participants revoked their consent and 17 failed the manipulation check, leaving a final sample of 128 (35% women, $M_{age} = 24$, $SD = 3.14$). All but three were

domestic students.³ Fifty-four participants were randomly allocated to the control condition and 72 to the ally condition.

3.1.2 | Procedure

The student politicians were instructed to imagine taking part in a parliamentary session asking them to vote on and allocate funds to two proposals, each asking for a budget of €10,000. One was a filler proposal requesting funds for the organization of a climate week at the university. The experimental proposal concerned free German language classes for international students and was supported by only international students in the control condition and by a coalition of international and domestic students in the ally condition. Participants were informed that there were more international students than places in the free university-funded classes and that the university leaders had refused to provide additional funding, leaving it up to the student government to decide whether to use its own funds to organize more language classes. Both proposals were said to come in the wake of multiple protests by concerned students that had been covered in the local newspaper in order to emphasize the collective action aspect as well as the relevance of the issues to students at large.

3.1.3 | Measures

Given that participants with actual political experience are more difficult to recruit, we opted for shorter questionnaires in order to increase the likelihood of participation. In Studies 2 and 3, we therefore limited the outcome measures to voting intentions, funding, prioritization,

³ The three international students are members of the disadvantaged group so we reran the analyses without them. This did not affect results.

legitimacy, trust and conflict. Unless otherwise indicated, all responses were measured on five-point scales.

Group identification

Prior to the manipulation, participants' identification with students at their university was measured with one item ('I identify with students at my university').

Political orientation

Political orientation was assessed with one item on a scale from 1 (*left*) to 7 (*right*).

Conflict

The perception of an intergroup conflict between domestic and international students was assessed with two items ('I believe there is a conflict between German and international students'; 'I believe the proposal is in the interest of the whole student body'). These items are considered separately as *conflict* and *common interest*, respectively because of insufficient reliability ($r = -.15$).

Legitimacy

Legitimacy of the proposals was measured with two items asking how legitimate and important they rated them. Due to insufficient reliability ($r = .26$) these items were not combined into a scale and only the legitimacy item was included in the main analyses.

Trust

Trust toward the proponents was measured with two items ('I believe the groups supporting this proposal are trustworthy'; $r = .70$).

Voting intentions

Participants were asked to indicate how they intended to vote on the proposals (1 = *very likely against*, 5 = *very likely for*).

Priority

After having read both proposals, participants were asked to distribute a budget of €10,000 between the two projects on scales ranging from 1 (€0) to 11 (€10,000) in steps of €1000.

Funding

Participants were asked how much money they would allocate to the proposals if there were no budgetary restrictions, using the same scales as above.

3.2 | Results and discussion

Correlations between variables are reported in Table 3. Participants reported high levels of identification with their student ingroup ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.86$) and were politically left-leaning as is common for student samples ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 0.99$). An ANOVA (Table 4) showed that the difference in voting intentions between the ally and control

conditions approached significance ($p = .080$).⁴ Replicating the results from Study 1, participants in the ally condition perceived significantly less conflict, $M_{diff} = -0.46$, 95% CI [-0.81, -0.11], and more shared interests, $M_{diff} = 0.39$, 95% CI [0.02, 0.76], between international and domestic students than participants in the control condition. Overall, the results mirror those from Study 1 and do not suggest a significant effect of allies on any of the outcome measures of support for the disadvantaged group's demands.

One shortcoming of Study 2 is that while student government members do have real experience of voting on proposals and allocating budgets, these decisions do not have the same impact as those made by politicians outside of the university context. Moreover, student politicians are not compensated for their roles in student government and re-election to their positions is likely to not be as central a consideration for them as it is for full-time politicians.

4 | STUDY 3

The objective of Study 3 was to increase validity even further by recruiting elected members of city councils rather than student parliamentarians. We invited experienced politicians to consult on the study design to make it as realistic as possible. The study was preregistered at: <https://aspredicted.org/x2ee6.pdf>.

4.1 | Method

4.1.1 | Participants

Power analysis for one-way ANOVA with two groups set to detect a medium effect ($f = 0.25$, $\beta - 1 = .80$, $\alpha = .05$) suggested a sample size of 128. We contacted city councils in 81 German cities, asking them to distribute the survey among their members. In this way we recruited 182 city councillors from across Germany. Thirty-eight failed the manipulation check and one was identified as a multivariate outlier, leaving a final sample of 143 participants (42% women, $M_{age} = 51$, $SD = 13.51$).⁵ Eighteen indicated that they or at least one of their parents had been born outside of Germany.⁶ Fifty-four participants were randomly allocated to the control condition and 89 to the ally condition. The unequal group sizes are due to more participants in the control condition failing the manipulation check.

4.1.2 | Procedure

The politicians were asked to imagine that they were voting on two motions brought before their council. The filler proposal asked for funding to investigate the energy efficiency of the city's buildings

⁴ The inclusion of the 17 participants who failed the manipulation check rendered this effect significant, $F(1, 143) = 6.31$, $p = .013$, $\eta^2 = .04$. None of the other results were affected by this.

⁵ Rerunning the analyses with the whole sample did not affect results.

⁶ Excluding these participants did not affect results.

TABLE 3 Correlations between variables.

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|--------------------------|---------|------|------|--------|------|------|--------|--------|
| 1. Political orientation | - | | | | | | | |
| 2. Group identification | -.10 | | | | | | | |
| 3. Conflict | .14 | .16 | | | | | | |
| 4. Common interest | -.29*** | .01 | -.15 | | | | | |
| 5. Legitimacy | -.20* | -.04 | -.17 | .34*** | | | | |
| 6. Trust | -.10 | .03 | -.13 | .10 | .20* | | | |
| 7. Voting intentions | -.27** | .04 | .11 | .30*** | .16 | -.12 | | |
| 8. Priority | -.07 | -.03 | .15 | .23* | .11 | -.09 | .65*** | |
| 9. Funding | -.17* | -.07 | .05 | .19* | .22* | -.03 | .66*** | .64*** |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 4 Means, SDs and one-way ANOVAs.

| Measure | Control | | Ally | | F(1, 126) | η^2 |
|-------------------|---------|------|------|------|-----------|----------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| Conflict | 2.35 | 1.14 | 1.89 | 0.85 | 6.85** | .05 |
| Common interest | 3.67 | 1.17 | 4.05 | 0.95 | 4.28* | .03 |
| Legitimacy | 4.39 | 0.76 | 4.39 | 0.89 | 0.00 | <.001 |
| Trust | 4.39 | 0.56 | 4.25 | 0.65 | 1.58 | .01 |
| Voting intentions | 3.44 | 1.19 | 3.80 | 1.06 | 3.11 | .02 |
| Priority | 5.35 | 2.78 | 5.58 | 2.52 | 0.24 | .002 |
| Funding | 6.85 | 3.80 | 7.04 | 3.28 | 0.09 | <.001 |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

and identify opportunities for improvements to mitigate against climate change. The experimental proposal asked for funding to investigate discrimination against immigrant residents in the city's housing, social services, education and employment sectors. In the control condition, this proposal was said to be brought forward by an initiative of immigrant residents while in the ally condition it was described as an initiative of both immigrant and non-immigrant residents. As in Study 2, the proposals were said to come in the wake of protests and events aimed at raising awareness of the issues.

4.1.3 | Measures

The questionnaire was kept to a minimum length in order to increase the likelihood of completion. The same measures of political orientation, conflict, legitimacy ($r = .84$) and trust ($r = .86$) as in Study 2 were used. Both proposals asked for a sum of €500,000 and funding was measured on scales from 1 (€0) to 6 (€500,000) in steps of €100,000. Prioritization was measured at the end of the study by asking participants to distribute a budget of €700,000 between both proposals and the amount allocated to the experimental pro-

posal was reported on the same scale. Identification with other Germans was measured with one item on the same 5-point scale as in Study 2.

4.2 | Results and discussion

The sample was somewhat politically left of centre ($M = 3.08$, $SD = 1.45$) and participants identified strongly with their German ingroup ($M = 4.01$, $SD = 0.99$). Correlations between variables are displayed in Table 5. Analysis of variance showed no differences between the control and ally conditions for any of the dependent variables (Table 6). Additional analyses showed no interactions with either group identification or political orientation. Thus, Study 3 confirmed the results from the previous studies in a setting that came as close to real-life political decision making as possible within the constraints of an experimental study, making it unlikely that the previous studies' results can be explained by a lack of realism. Our sample of actual politicians did not react differently to the inclusion of allies than did student politicians or *Prolific* respondents.

As is usually the case, political orientation was significantly correlated with support for the disadvantaged groups' causes in all three studies. Liberals are already favourable toward the causes of disadvantaged group members, so in the next study we focused on conservatives, as their responses might be more contingent on advantaged group support for the cause. Furthermore, conservatives might assume by default that advantaged group allies in these contexts are liberals, possibly leading to the allies being perceived primarily as (political) outgroup members rather than (advantaged) ingroup members and thus losing the benefits of ingroup messengers. To investigate this process, explicit information was provided in Studies 4 and 5 confirming or disconfirming this assumption.

5 | STUDY 4

The objective of Study 4 was to investigate the role of allies' political orientation. Partisan political beliefs and identities shape people's

TABLE 5 Correlations between variables.

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|--------------------------|---------|-------|------|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. Political orientation | - | | | | | | | |
| 2. Group identification | .40*** | - | | | | | | |
| 3. Conflict | -.01 | .11 | - | | | | | |
| 4. Common interest | -.39*** | -.05 | .10 | - | | | | |
| 5. Legitimacy | -.54*** | -.18* | .05 | .69*** | - | | | |
| 6. Trust | -.41*** | -.08 | -.05 | .54*** | .68*** | - | | |
| 7. Voting intentions | -.39*** | -.13 | .08 | .53*** | .62*** | .45*** | - | |
| 8. Priority | -.19* | -.03 | .12 | .43*** | .50*** | .35*** | .67*** | - |
| 9. Funding | -.27** | -.07 | .05 | .44*** | .54*** | .40*** | .65*** | .68*** |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 6 Means, SDs and one-way ANOVAs.

| Measure | Control | | Ally | | F(1, 141) | η^2 |
|-------------------|---------|------|------|------|-----------|----------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| Conflict | 3.50 | 1.06 | 3.36 | 1.07 | 0.58 | .004 |
| Common interest | 4.24 | 0.95 | 4.13 | 1.16 | 0.32 | .002 |
| Legitimacy | 4.21 | 0.88 | 4.29 | 0.84 | 0.29 | .002 |
| Trust | 4.07 | 0.83 | 4.06 | 0.77 | 0.02 | <.001 |
| Voting intentions | 3.70 | 1.24 | 3.71 | 1.29 | 0.00 | <.001 |
| Priority | 3.67 | 1.53 | 3.49 | 1.25 | 0.54 | .003 |
| Funding | 3.22 | 1.51 | 3.11 | 1.48 | 0.18 | .001 |

interpretation of social and political events (Green et al., 2002) and the perception that a message is coming from outsiders rather than one's own group can trigger backlash and polarization (Louis et al., 2020). It is therefore possible that the political affiliations of participants and allies impact decision making and reactions to collective action. In Study 4, we address this possibility by focusing on conservative participants who are less likely to already be supportive of social change and thus might be swayed by the influence of allies. For this purpose, we expand the experimental design from Study 1 by including two additional conditions, a liberal ally condition where the allies are said to belong to a liberal group and a conservative ally condition where the allies are said to belong to a conservative group. In order to ensure that the shared political and social class identities were equally relevant to participants, we only recruited individuals who identified as conservative and high-SES for this study.

5.1 | Method

5.1.1 | Participants

Power analysis for one-way ANOVA with four groups set to detect a medium effect ($f = 0.25$, $\beta = .80$, $\alpha = .05$) suggested a minimum sample size of 180. We recruited 365 US nationals on the online platform

Prolific Academic. Other inclusion criteria were high socio-economic status (>6 on the MacArthur ladder), political identification as Republicans, and not having previously participated in Study 1. After excluding 88 participants who failed the manipulation check, 29 who failed attention checks, four who withdrew consent, nine incomplete submissions, 30 duplicates, two multivariate outliers and 15 who identified as Democrats, the final sample consisted of 188 participants⁷ (40% women, $M_{age} = 39$, $SD = 15.05$). Forty-nine were randomly allocated to the control condition, 47 to the (no political orientation provided) ally condition, 46 to the liberal ally condition and 46 to the conservative ally condition.

5.1.2 | Measures

The same measures as in Study 1 were used to assess group identification ($r = .84$), political orientation ($\alpha = .72$), conflict ($r = .77$), image concerns ($\alpha = .86$), legitimacy ($\alpha = .93$), trust ($\alpha = .94$), support, voting intentions, prioritization and funding.

5.2 | Results and discussion

Participants reported relatively high levels of identification with their allocated upper middle-class group ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.18$) and conservative-leaning political views ($M = 1.76$, $SD = 0.79$). Correlations between the variables are reported in Table 7. Again, there was no significant effect of the manipulation on any of the primary dependent measures (Table 8). The binary measure of voting intentions revealed no differences between conditions for either the experimental, $\chi^2(3) = 3.24$, $p = .356$, or filler proposal, $\chi^2(3) = 6.04$, $p = .110$, either. The distribution of votes can be found in the Supporting Information.

The effect of the presence of allies on perceived intergroup conflict from Studies 1 and 2 was not replicated but there was a significant effect on trust. Tukey contrasts for multiple comparisons of means

⁷ Because of the large number of exclusions, we reran the analyses with the whole sample. This did not affect the results.

TABLE 7 Correlations between variables.

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
|--------------------------|------|--------|---------|-------|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. Age | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Wealth | .05 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Political orientation | .17* | .09 | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Group identification | -.04 | .30*** | .06 | | | | | | | | |
| 5. Conflict | -.03 | .01 | .00 | .05 | | | | | | | |
| 6. Image | -.10 | -.06 | -.10 | .01 | .17* | | | | | | |
| 7. Legitimacy | .06 | -.09 | -.25*** | -.11 | .15* | .36*** | | | | | |
| 8. Trust | .05 | .04 | -.14 | -.03 | .11 | .30*** | .58*** | | | | |
| 9. Support | .08 | -.11 | -.26*** | -.12 | .15* | .39*** | .77*** | .59*** | | | |
| 10. Voting intentions | .08 | -.13 | -.21** | -.08 | .11 | .46*** | .67*** | .51*** | .82*** | | |
| 11. Priority | .11 | .17* | .25*** | .15* | -.02 | -.33*** | -.53*** | -.32*** | -.57*** | -.47*** | |
| 12. Funding | -.01 | -.08 | -.23** | -.14* | .10 | .40*** | .62*** | .41*** | .65*** | .57*** | -.79*** |

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 8 Means, SDs and one-way ANOVAs.

| Measure | Control | | Ally | | Liberal ally | | Conservative ally | | F (3, 184) | η^2 |
|----------------------------|---------|------|------|------|--------------|------|-------------------|------|---------------|----------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| Conflict | 5.13 | 1.18 | 4.80 | 1.16 | 4.71 | 1.58 | 4.83 | 1.43 | 0.91 | .01 |
| Image | 4.78 | 0.91 | 4.90 | 1.34 | 4.58 | 1.35 | 4.79 | 1.07 | 0.59 | .01 |
| Legitimacy | 1.51 | 1.12 | 1.69 | 1.33 | 1.29 | 1.44 | 1.74 | 1.20 | 0.33 | .02 |
| Trust | 4.88 | 1.33 | 4.79 | 1.60 | 4.01 | 1.58 | 4.83 | 1.52 | 3.46* | .05 |
| Voting intentions | 4.80 | 1.41 | 5.02 | 1.57 | 4.59 | 1.84 | 5.20 | 1.42 | 1.32 | .02 |
| Support | 4.73 | 1.51 | 4.94 | 1.69 | 4.33 | 1.99 | 5.15 | 1.48 | 2.03 | .03 |
| Priority | 3.98 | 1.80 | 4.28 | 1.95 | 4.52 | 2.29 | 4.37 | 1.76 | 0.65 | .01 |
| Funding (in million \$) | 0.98 | 0.45 | 1.02 | 0.46 | 0.86 | 0.57 | 0.94 | 0.44 | 0.96 | .02 |

* $p < .05$.

revealed that trust was significantly lower in the liberal ally condition than in the control condition, $M_{diff} = -0.87$, $SE = .31$, $t(184) = -2.81$, $p = .028$, 95% CI [-1.67, -0.07]. Trust was also lower in the liberal ally condition compared to the (neutral) ally, $M_{diff} = -0.78$, $SE = .31$, $t(184) = -2.49$, $p = .064$, 95% CI [-1.59, 0.84], and conservative ally conditions, $M_{diff} = -0.81$, $SE = .31$, $t(184) = -2.58$, $p = .051$, 95% CI [-0.004, 1.62], although these effects did not reach significance. The differences between the other conditions did not approach significance.

Taken together, these results do not show an effect of ally involvement in general but they suggest that conservatives' support for a disadvantaged group's cause may be affected by the presence of allies identified as liberals. Our conservative participants found advocates for reducing inequality less trustworthy when they included allies from their own social class ingroup who were identified as liberals than when no allies were present at all. This indicates that,

depending on the political affiliations of supporters and decision makers, the presence of allies is not only ineffective but might even be harmful to a cause. Our manipulation checks revealed that a relatively large proportion of participants did not correctly recall the presence or absence of allies. This suggests that one additional explanation for the lack of effects might be low salience of this information.

6 | STUDY 5

In Study 5, we aimed to strengthen the manipulation by making the presence of allies more vivid and memorable. For reasons of parsimony we omitted the (neutral) ally condition in this study and this allowed us to investigate the possible ramifications of allies' political orientation without having to recruit a larger sample. We again recruited

conservative participants because they were less likely to already be overwhelmingly supportive of the cause. The study was preregistered at: <https://aspredicted.org/6xc64.pdf>.

6.1 | Method

6.1.1 | Participants

Power analysis for one-way ANOVA with three groups set to detect a medium effect ($f = 0.25$, $\beta = .80$, $\alpha = .05$) suggested a sample size of 156. We recruited 267 participants from *Prolific Academic* with the same inclusion criteria as in Study 4. We excluded 88 participants who failed manipulation checks, 34 duplicates, one who withdrew consent, 17 who identified as Democrats and one who was identified as a multivariate outlier. The final sample consisted of 126 (43% women, $M_{age} = 37$, $SD = 12.45$) participants, making the study somewhat underpowered. Forty-one participants were randomly allocated to the control condition, 41 to the liberal ally condition and 44 to the conservative ally condition.

6.1.2 | Procedure

We used the same design as in Study 4 but added a picture and statement from a featured advocate. In the control condition, this advocate was identified as a spokesperson for the Foodbank of Bimboola, a low-income community organization. In the liberal and conservative ally conditions he was identified as a member of a middle and upper class group called Liberals or Conservatives for Bimboola, respectively.

6.1.3 | Measures

The same measures as in Studies 1 and 4 were used to assess group identification ($r = .73$), political orientation ($\alpha = .73$), conflict ($r = .77$), legitimacy ($\alpha = .94$), trust ($\alpha = .95$), support, voting intentions, prioritization and funding. We changed the binary voting measure so that instead of voting yes or no to each proposal, participants had to choose between the experimental and filler proposal. This allowed us to test whether allies might make a difference in a situation where it is not possible to support both proposals equally.

6.2 | Results and discussion

Participants showed high identification with their allocated upper middle class ingroup ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 1.31$) and conservative-leaning political views ($M = 1.81$, $SD = 0.85$). Correlations between variables are displayed in Table 9. The new forced choice measure revealed no significant differences between conditions in participants' preference

for the experimental proposal over the filler proposal, $\chi^2(2) = 0.62$, $p = .732$. The distribution of votes can be found in the Supporting Information.

Analysis of variance (Table 10) showed no significant effects of condition on any of the dependent variables. The large number of planned exclusions meant that the study was somewhat underpowered, so we reran the analyses with the whole sample for comparison. This resulted in the effects on legitimacy, $F(2, 253) = 3.39$, $p = .035$, $\eta^2 = .03$, trust, $F(2, 252) = 4.24$, $p = .016$, $\eta^2 = .03$, and voting intentions, $F(2, 253) = 4.91$, $p = .008$, $\eta^2 = .04$, reaching significance. Tukey contrasts for multiple comparisons of means showed that, compared to those in the conservative ally condition, participants in the liberal ally condition perceived the proposal as less legitimate, $M_{diff} = -0.44$, $SE = .18$, $t(253) = -2.39$, $p = .046$, 95% CI [-0.87, -0.01], and the proponents as less trustworthy, $M_{diff} = -0.66$, $SE = .23$, $t(252) = -2.77$, $p = .017$, 95% CI [-1.22, -0.10]. Participants in the liberal ally condition were also less likely to vote for the proposal than those in both the control, $M_{diff} = -0.71$, $SE = .25$, $t(253) = 2.82$, $p = .014$, 95% CI [-1.31, -0.12], and conservative ally conditions, $M_{diff} = -0.65$, $SE = .25$, $t(253) = 2.59$, $p = .027$, 95% CI [-1.25, -0.06].

There were no significant differences between the control and conservative ally conditions, suggesting that if allies did have an effect at all, it was not in the intended direction. While the presence of allies from the opposing political camp may make conservatives less likely to decide in favour of an initiative for more socioeconomic equality, the presence of allies from their own camp did not have any impact. We can therefore surmise that not even allies who share both political and social class ingroups with decision makers and featured prominently in the campaign were able to sway policy decisions in favour of a disadvantaged outgroup.

7 | INTERNAL META-ANALYSIS

As a result of initially basing power analyses on medium-sized effects and the substantial numbers of exclusions, we might not have had significant sample sizes to detect a potential smaller effect of ally involvement. To address this issue, we conducted internal meta-analyses for the key outcomes of voting intentions, legitimacy, trust and conflict which were included in all studies. Data from Studies 1, 2, 3 and the control and (neutral) ally conditions in Study 4 were included. Study 5 did not contain a neutral ally condition, so no data from this study were included. Following the procedure outlined by Goh et al. (2016), we used fixed effects with inverse variance weighting. For voting intentions, $M_d = 0.15$, $Z = 1.65$, $p = .099$, 95% CI [-0.33, 0.03], legitimacy, $M_d = 0.05$, $Z = 0.51$, $p = .612$, 95% CI [-0.22, 0.13] and trust, $M_d = -0.06$, $Z = -0.62$, $p = .535$, 95% CI [-0.12, 0.24], no significant effects were found. For conflict, there was a significant medium sized effect, $M_d = -0.43$, $Z = -4.63$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.25, 0.61], suggesting that allies did, in fact, reduce decision makers' perceptions of intergroup conflict between the advantaged and disadvantaged groups.

TABLE 9 Correlations between variables.

| Variable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|--------------------------|------|-------|------|------|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|
| 1. Age | - | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Wealth | .04 | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Political orientation | .11 | .08 | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Group identification | -.01 | .28** | .01 | | | | | | | |
| 5. Conflict | .08 | .08 | .07 | .17 | | | | | | |
| 6. Legitimacy | -.14 | .08 | -.10 | -.03 | .05 | | | | | |
| 7. Trust | -.13 | .22* | -.09 | .03 | .08 | .76*** | | | | |
| 8. Support | -.01 | .10 | -.16 | .00 | .21* | .76*** | .76*** | | | |
| 9. Voting intentions | -.02 | .05 | -.17 | -.01 | .18* | .78*** | .76*** | .94*** | | |
| 10. Priority | -.02 | -.09 | .10 | .18* | -.12 | -.41*** | -.39*** | -.43*** | -.40*** | |
| 11. Funding | .08 | .02 | .17 | .11 | -.08 | -.45*** | -.45*** | -.51*** | -.47*** | .63*** |

p* < .05. *p* < .01.

TABLE 10 Means, SDs and one-way ANOVAs.

| Measure | Control | | Liberal | | Conservative | | F (2, 123) | η^2 |
|--------------------|---------|------|---------|------|--------------|------|------------|----------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | M | SD | | |
| Conflict | 4.73 | 1.15 | 4.66 | 1.32 | 4.42 | 1.51 | 0.64 | .01 |
| Legitimacy | 1.58 | 1.39 | 1.47 | 1.30 | 1.86 | 1.09 | 1.12 | .02 |
| Trust | 4.63 | 1.75 | 4.46 | 1.77 | 5.10 | 1.56 | 1.87 | .03 |
| Support | 4.85 | 1.62 | 4.68 | 1.68 | 5.11 | 1.48 | 0.79 | .01 |
| Voting intentions | 4.88 | 1.66 | 4.59 | 1.70 | 5.07 | 1.65 | 0.90 | .01 |
| Priority | 4.61 | 1.91 | 4.39 | 1.86 | 4.32 | 2.10 | 0.25 | .004 |
| Funding (in \$10k) | 5.44 | 2.81 | 4.79 | 2.51 | 5.23 | 2.84 | 0.62 | .01 |

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

8 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

This research investigated the impact of including advantaged group allies in collective action on decision makers' willingness to follow the demands of the movement. Across five studies, using different intergroup contexts and proposals, we found very few consistent effects of these allies' involvement. The results of the internal meta-analysis showed that they did reduce perceptions of intergroup conflict, which confirms Hypothesis 1 and suggests that their presence did not go entirely unnoticed. However, we found no evidence for the idea that allies have a discernible impact on decision makers' concerns about their public image (Hypothesis 2), the perceived legitimacy of demands (Hypothesis 3), trustworthiness of the movement (Hypothesis 4), or support, voting intentions, prioritization and budget allocation (Hypothesis 5).

A failure to reject the null hypothesis does not prove the absence of an effect but it does suggest that, if there is an effect of ally involvement on these outcomes, it is likely to be either very small or to only occur under a specific set of circumstances that were not captured in these studies. For example, we provided informa-

tion about opinion polling suggesting that about half the population support the protestors' demands in Studies 1, 4 and 5 and no such information in Studies 2 and 3. It is conceivable that in a different public opinion climate, such as very low levels of support at the start of a campaign, ally involvement might be a significant factor.

The only other effect we did find, although not consistently, was an unfavourable one: it seems that the presence of liberal allies can negatively affect the responses of conservative decision makers. This suggests that, depending on the circumstances, advantaged group allies might do more harm than good when it comes to influencing voting decisions.

8.1 | Theoretical and practical implications

We derived our hypothesis that the involvement of advantaged group allies would increase the likelihood of collective action's success from two sets of assumptions. First, based on political and psychological theories of social change, we reasoned that it renders the challenge

to the authority more effective because it no longer only comes from those directly harmed by the status quo. We expected that the resulting political pressure would increase the likelihood of politicians' concessions by decreasing perceptions of conflict and increasing image concerns. Crucially, the seriousness of the challenge hinges on decision makers' perceptions that allies truly have made the disadvantaged group's cause their own (Subašić et al., 2008). As advantaged group members, these allies benefit from the status quo and have an interest in preserving it (Becker & Wright, 2022; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), which conflicts with the disadvantaged group's interests. Indeed, advantaged group members' support for movements often wanes as the issue drops from public consciousness (Chudy & Jefferson, 2021) and their participation might be motivated by reasons that have little to do with the disadvantaged group, such as concern for their own image or that of their ingroup (Radke et al., 2020). Those in positions of authority, who should themselves be strongly averse to losses of power, might believe that advantaged group allies would shy away from a true upheaval of the system that benefits them and thus not consider ally involvement a threat to the status quo.

While we did find the expected reduction in perceived conflict as a result of ally involvement, it does not appear to be a mechanism through which allies can convince decision makers to make concessions. Instead, in our studies perceived conflict was not at all or even positively associated with voting intentions and support. Thus, it is possible that, rather than perceiving a lack of conflict and interpreting it as a sign of universal support for the disadvantaged group's demands, decision makers may see it as a sign that nothing is truly amiss and no serious challenge to the status quo exists, reducing the necessity for making changes (Saguy et al., 2009).

Second, based on the social influence and confronting discrimination literatures, we assumed that advantaged group allies would be particularly persuasive because their shared group membership with decision makers would increase trustworthiness. Again, their effectiveness may be undermined by the fact that advantaged groups are usually motivated to maintain their privilege and the status quo and to resist attempts at social change (Osborne et al., 2019; Phillips & Lowery, 2018). This might lead to the perception that group members showing solidarity with disadvantaged groups and mobilizing for social change are not prototypical members of the group, thus limiting their influence (Di Bernardo et al., 2023; Knippenberg, 2019). Interestingly, research has found that advantaged group allies themselves show low levels of identification with their privileged ingroup (Lowery et al., 2006).

Previous research on bystander reactions to collective action has also shown that, defying ingroup bias, advantaged group members sometimes evaluate allies less favourably than they do disadvantaged group activists (Kutlaca, Radke et al., 2020). The authors suggest that this might be an instance of do-gooder derogation where advantaged group members feel morally threatened by their ally peers (Minson & Monin, 2012; Monin, 2007). This, too, might explain why decision makers did not react more positively to allies in our experiments. We assumed that their perceived lack of self-interest would render them more trustworthy, but it is also possible that it invoked the perception

that they were acting morally superior to other group members, thus turning them into a source of threat instead.

Moreover, our findings highlight the importance of considering the complexities of cross-cutting group memberships, encompassing demographic categories as well as opinion groups (McGarty et al., 2009; Smith et al., 2015). The latter are important predictors of collective action (Bliuc et al., 2007) and may also be crucial in determining reactions to it, with studies showing that partisanship can influence how observers perceive elements of protests. For example, self-identified Republicans—but not Democrats—judged the same protest tactics as more violent when employed by groups whose goals are at odds versus congruent with their beliefs (Hsiao & Radnitz, 2020). In a similar vein, it seems likely that for our conservative participants, the liberal allies' partisan group membership sometimes trumped their shared class identity (Pietraszewski et al., 2015). Finally, it might be the case that the salience of shared group membership was reduced by the decision-making situation itself, leading participants to be more focused on their role as politicians and construe it in opposition to that of the activists making demands of them. Thus, it is possible that the ability of allies to influence decision makers is hampered by relatively weak shared identity between them.

We did not find support for the hypothesis that the presence of allies makes protests more likely to succeed in swaying political decision makers but that does not mean that allies are not helpful at all or should even refrain from engaging in collective action completely. After all, their engagement can have other advantageous effects on advantaged group observers, movements and the allies themselves. For observers, it has been found that the presence of allies increases their politicized identification (Kutlaca et al., 2022), which is a strong predictor of collective action engagement, suggesting that allies can be helpful in raising awareness among their fellow advantaged group members and recruiting them to the disadvantaged group's cause. Allies may also be beneficial to social movements when it comes to resource mobilization (Jenkins, 1983) if they put their material and cultural privileges and institutional access toward the movement's goals. For the allies themselves, taking part in collective action is likely to lead to politicized contact with the disadvantaged group and this in turn has been found to increase willingness to take part in costlier acts of solidarity and risk one's own privileges (Becker et al., 2022). Thus, genuine political solidarity may be a result as well as a predictor of collective action engagement.

Furthermore, as previous research has suggested, the size of protests and movements does matter for influencing political decision makers (Burrows et al., 2022; Wouters & Walgrave, 2017) and because the number of disadvantaged group members that can be recruited is finite, the addition of outgroup allies is likely to still constitute an advantage. Our findings merely suggest that there seem to be no additional benefits of their group membership.

It is worth noting that, whereas in this research we have focused on the reactions of decision makers, the theoretical models consider them not just as passive targets of collective action but as actors with their own agendas (Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Subašić et al., 2008). These agendas may include mobilizing support for the status quo and against

the disadvantaged group's demands and they might choose to paint advantaged group allies as non-prototypical or do-gooders in order to undermine their influence on other advantaged group members.

Beyond the social psychological study of collective action and intergroup relations, this research has practical implications for struggles for social justice. Based on our findings, there does not appear to be any support for the idea that it makes sense for social movements to go out of their way to center allies in their campaigns and mobilization efforts, especially when it might be to the detriment of their own members (Iyer & Achia, 2021). Given that disadvantaged group members and activists are often unimpressed by the actions of allies (Droogendyk et al., 2016; Radke et al., 2022), these findings might well be seen as good or empowering news for social movements.

8.2 | Limitations and directions for future research

There are a number of limitations to this research. We based our power analyses on medium-sized effects; therefore, it is possible that smaller effects of ally participation were not detected by these studies. The internal meta-analysis indicates that this is unlikely, but additional studies with larger sample sizes would still help to validate these findings. We also had large numbers of participants failing manipulation check questions that asked about the composition of the protests. This might be because these questions were asked at the very end of the studies, after participants had read and evaluated the experimental and filler proposals. In Studies 1–3, these exclusions led to unequal group sizes; however, this does not seem to be systematic, as it resulted in more participants in the control condition in Study 1 and more participants in the ally condition in Studies 2 and 3. Across all studies, the only effect that became significant as a result of including those who failed manipulation checks was that on voting intentions in Study 2 and it is worth noting that these were all exclusions in the control condition who incorrectly recalled the involvement of allies. Thus, there is no indication that exclusions obscured a positive effect of allies.

More generally, we did not measure behaviour in real-world parliamentary settings but in fictional contexts and our findings are limited in their generalizability due to the fact that our studies focused on democratically elected politicians in WEIRD countries. Future research could strengthen these conclusions by extending them to other cultural contexts and political systems where politicians' fates do not primarily depend on their constituents' approval. Similarly, while we attempted to cover a range of issues, it might be worthwhile to study the effects of allies in other intergroup contexts such as the queer or women's movements as well as for different types of demands. Our scenarios involved demands for material resources and budget allocations, but we did not look at more symbolic concessions such as rights or recognition. It is possible that authorities may be swayed by advantaged group allies under these circumstances.

The majority of our experimental manipulations described the scenarios as ongoing social movements rather than isolated occurrences of protest but this does not negate the fact that longitudinal stud-

ies might reveal different or more nuanced insights into the influence of allies and the development of decision makers' responses to their presence over time. There are also two caveats concerning the allies' political orientation. First, this information might not always be readily available in real-world scenarios. Second, it is possible that the involvement of conservative allies was less believable because collective action on behalf of disadvantaged groups is usually linked to progressivism.

Finally, future research might investigate empirically the reasons why the expected effects of ally presence failed to manifest, including but not limited to the role of shared (politicized) identities with both disadvantaged group members and decision makers that was theorized above. We measured participants' own identification with the advantaged group but we did not include measures of identification with the allies, nor did we assess the allies' prototypicality or the relative importance of politicized and advantaged group identification. Doing so may shed more light on the processes of social identity and influence at work in this constellation.

9 | CONCLUSION

This research contributes to filling a gap in the collective action literature concerning the effectiveness and political outcomes of collective action. From theory as well as research in related areas, we derived the hypothesis that the involvement of advantaged group allies should be a factor that makes social movements more likely to achieve their political goals and influence decision makers. Contrary to our expectations, however, we found no evidence that they have a positive impact, either with regard to support, prioritization and voting intentions or when it comes to perceptions of legitimacy and trustworthiness. Instead, our findings point to the importance of considering cross-cutting group memberships, particularly with regard to political partisanship, and stress the role of identification and intergroup and intragroup conflicts in the context of collective action and the struggle for social change.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no conflicts of interests to disclose.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

All data, materials and analysis scripts are available at the Open Science Framework depository: https://osf.io/9aeq8/?view_only=f7b0d1bf369e40f8af1f34fb9864de77

ETHICS STATEMENT

The authors confirm that these studies adhere to the ethical guidelines specified in the APA Code of Conduct and the Declaration of

Helsinki. Ethical clearance was obtained from the ethics committee at Osnabruck University. Informed consent was obtained from all participants at the start of each survey.

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