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*Pers Soc Psychol Rev* 2008; 12; 330

DOI: 10.1177/1088868308323223

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<http://psr.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/12/4/330>

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# The Political Solidarity Model of Social Change: Dynamics of Self-Categorization in Intergroup Power Relations

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*Social and political change involves a challenge to the status quo in intergroup power relations. Traditionally, the social psychology of social change has focused on disadvantaged minority groups collectively challenging the decisions, actions, and policies of those in positions of established authority. In contrast, this article presents a political solidarity model of social change that explores the process by which members of the majority challenge the authority in solidarity with the minority. It is argued that political solidarity as a social change process involves a contest between the authority and the minority over the meaning of a shared (higher order) identity with the majority. When identity ceases to be shared with the authority and becomes shared with the minority, majority challenge to authority in solidarity with the minority becomes possible. The model's contributions to existing social psychological approaches to social change are also discussed.*

**Keywords:** *political solidarity; self-categorization; social identity; intergroup relations; social change; power; social influence*

Social and political change in intergroup relations often involves a contest between those in positions of social power and domination and those who collectively challenge the status quo in intergroup relations. In social psychological terms, however, at the core of social change is a process of psychological change in people's understanding of themselves and others in the broader context of intergroup relations (Simon, 1998; Tajfel, 1975, 1978c; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Traditionally, therefore, within social psychology, social change has been understood to involve a disadvantaged group

defining itself as such and seeking to collectively challenge the status quo. Of particular interest in this area of work are the conditions under which those who see themselves as discriminated against or disadvantaged on the basis of their group membership will also act collectively in an attempt to change their circumstances (e.g., Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1997; Ellemers, Van Rijswijk, Bruins, & de Gilder, 1998; Ellemers, Wilke, & Van Knippenberg, 1993; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996; Klandermans, 2000; Louis & Taylor, 1999; Moghaddam & Perreault, 1992; Reynolds, Oakes, Haslam, Nolan, & Dolnik, 2000; Veenstra & Haslam, 2000; Wright, 1997, 2001; Wright & Tropp, 2002). The ultimate aim of the disadvantaged, as social and power minorities (see Tajfel, 1978b), is to achieve change in the reality of intergroup relations (e.g., eliminate discrimination). As part of this process, minorities often target those who epitomize "the system" by virtue of being in a position of established societal authority (e.g., government, organizational management).

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**Authors' Note:** The writing of this article was financially supported by two Australian Research Council grants awarded to the second and third authors and the Australian Postgraduate Award to the first author. This work was completed as part of the first author's PhD thesis. The authors are grateful to Professor Steve Reicher, Dr. Michael Schmitt, and Professor Steve Wright for their contributions as this work has progressed. The authors would also like to thank Professor Galen Bodenhausen and three anonymous reviewers for their comments on an earlier version of this article. Please address correspondence to Emina Subašić, Department of Psychology, Building 39, Australian National University, Canberra ACT 0200, Australia; e-mail: Emina.Subasic@anu.edu.au.

*PSPR*, Vol. 12 No. 4, November 2008 330-352

DOI: 10.1177/1088868308323223

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However, it could be argued that, on its own, minority challenge to authority and the status quo is rarely sufficient to achieve social change nor does it reflect the broader social and political context of intergroup relations in which social change takes place (Tarrow, 1998; West, 1990). As such, social psychological analyses typically ignore a central force in the process of achieving change. The reality is that conflict between the minority and authority occurs in front of an important “societal audience” (Mugny, 1982; Mugny & Perez, 1991; Simon & Klandermans, 2001). The role that such an audience—the general community, society in general, or the silent majority—plays in the social change process remains largely unexplored. There is a tendency within social psychological research to understand intergroup relations in dualistic terms: in-group versus out-group, dominant versus subordinate, powerful versus powerless, disadvantaged versus privileged. In many cases, this tendency is useful and justified in helping us to explore and understand a complex social world. It may be problematic, however, when there is a need to understand and explain processes characterized by fluidity in people’s understanding of themselves and others in the broader context of intergroup relations, and social change in intergroup relations is an example of such a process. Our capacity to understand the dynamics of social change may, therefore, be hindered by an assumption that this process can be reduced into conflict between the privileged and the disadvantaged, the dominant and the subordinate, or the powerful and the powerless.

To maintain the status quo or achieve social change, those in positions of leadership and authority, as well as those seeking to challenge such an authority, often (at least try to) capitalize on the fluidity in people’s understanding of who they are and how they relate to others in the social world (Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996a; Turner, 2005). Indeed, it could be said that the minority challenge to established authority involves a contest for the hearts and minds of the silent majority. As we elaborate later in this article, whether or not social change prevails over the status quo is, at least to some extent, a function of whether it is the minority or the authority that has the capacity to influence the majority and harness its support. When challenge to authority spreads beyond the minority to include those who are not directly (negatively) affected by the status quo, social change becomes possible. Therefore, if acting collectively to challenge the status quo is fundamental to social change, it becomes crucial to understand the process by which the majority becomes not only sympathetic toward the minority and its cause but also willing to actively challenge the authority in solidarity with the minority. We refer to such a process as political solidarity.

In this article, we present a political solidarity model of social change that, put simply, aims to answer the question, When will the majority challenge the authority in solidarity with the minority? This model is based on the idea that social change is more likely when the minority’s cause becomes endorsed by the majority to such an extent that they become willing to collectively challenge the authority and the status quo in solidarity with the minority. However, it is important to distinguish between *political solidarity as an outcome* from *political solidarity as a process* of change in intergroup relations. Political solidarity as an outcome involves the majority acting in solidarity with the minority to challenge the authority. What this model seeks to explain is the process that leads to such an outcome—a process of psychological change in majority self-categorization that ultimately redefines the authority as out-group and the minority as in-group.

The term *political solidarity* denotes that this process has two conceptually distinct yet interdependent aspects. First, it is about solidarity between the minority and majority, where solidarity captures not only a sense of unity in diversity and a coming together for a common cause but also that the majority, despite not being directly disadvantaged by the authority’s actions or the status quo, comes to embrace the minority’s cause as its own. Second, it is fundamentally political—it involves perceiving the social world and acting in a way that challenges existing power relations between groups and, in particular, the decisions, actions, and policies of those in positions of established (hitherto unquestioned) legitimate authority. The term *authority*, here defined in terms of an individual’s or a group’s capacity to influence others on the basis of shared psychological group membership (Turner, 2005), in a sense presupposes legitimacy. Once the legitimacy of those in positions of authority starts to be questioned, the nature of their relationship with subordinates, voters, followers, and so on becomes open to change.

As a process of social change, political solidarity entails the development of a shared political orientation to the status quo and a sense of common cause between the minority and the majority, manifested in the willingness to act collectively to challenge existing intergroup power relations and achieve social change. Within this model, it is the process of psychological change—the redefinition of the self in relation to the authority and the minority—that makes political solidarity possible. However, the model also speaks to the dynamics of social stability and the process by which the authority can maintain its legitimacy and position of influence in the eyes of the majority despite vocal minority opposition. Majority attitudes toward both the authority and the minority can range from unequivocal support to

ardent opposition. Furthermore, the same authority can be fully supported on some issues and opposed on others. The complex and multifaceted nature of this relationship provides the authority with opportunities to redefine it in a way that boosts a sense of shared identity between these groups and, therefore, support for the status quo.

Therefore, as a process of intergroup contestation, political solidarity is primarily about the redefinition of some higher level, superordinate identity whose norms and values define whether or not the relevant intergroup relations are appropriate and legitimate. However, a parallel process of intragroup contestation takes place within the majority in order to define and/or redefine who we are at a relevant lower level of self-categorization. These processes are elaborated below within a theoretical framework for understanding political solidarity as a social change process.

### POLITICAL SOLIDARITY AS A SOCIAL CHANGE PROCESS: A THEORETICAL MODEL

#### Background

Many questions within social psychology directly or indirectly deal with processes of social change and social reproduction in intergroup relations: When will people conform to group norms? Why do they obey those in positions of authority? How can prejudice and discrimination be reduced? What makes people engage in collective protest? Why do they justify a system or a social hierarchy that disadvantages them? The theoretical and empirical approaches that seek to understand these questions, however, differ with regard to their meta-theoretical orientation—whether it is social change or status quo that they are trying to explain. It is worthwhile briefly considering this meta-theoretical distinction first as it reflects both the ways in which existing theories of intergroup relations inform the political solidarity model but also the way in which the model contributes to current understandings of social change.

There seems to be an implicit assumption within social psychology that understanding the status quo in intergroup relations equally speaks to processes of social change and vice versa. However, it could be argued that these are distinct yet interdependent processes rather than inversions of the same dynamic, as we elaborate later in the article. Furthermore, although the status quo may be more readily conceptualized as the absence of social change, it is more difficult to argue that social change is simply the absence of the status quo. Therefore, theories primarily oriented to the status quo, although addressing an important question of why people support unequal social hierarchies, systems of intergroup relations, or those in positions of authority (e.g., Jost, Banaji, &

Nosek, 2004; Jost, Burgess, & Mosso, 2001; Sidanius, Levin, Rabinowitz, & Federico, 1999; Sidanius & Pratto, 1993, 1999; Tyler, 1997), may have difficulty explaining dynamics of social change in intergroup relations (Reicher, 2004; Reicher & Haslam, 2006; Reicher & Hopkins, 2001; Turner, 2005, 2006; Turner & Reynolds, 2001, 2003). In contrast, theories that seek to explain social change, in terms of factors that both produce and hinder such a process, have a greater capacity to speak to both processes and, as such, are more relevant to understanding the dynamics of intergroup relations involved in political solidarity. Social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization theory (SCT; Turner, 1982, 1985; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), commonly referred to as the social identity perspective (Turner & Reynolds, 2001), form the theoretical basis of the political solidarity model for this reason.

Within this perspective, social identity is seen as that aspect of the self derived from one's membership in social groups, together with the emotional and value significance of those memberships (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As such, social identity makes possible both group life (Turner et al., 1987) and social change in intergroup relations (e.g., Tajfel, 1975, 1978d, 1979). Indeed, SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) originated with a social change question in mind: When will members of a low status, disadvantaged social group perceive themselves as such and act collectively in order to challenge and change a system of intergroup relations that disadvantages them? Therefore, whereas the theory aims to explain intergroup conflict, it does so from the perspective that collective protest—as a form of conflict between the privileged and the disadvantaged, the dominant and the subordinate—is fundamental to social change. Centrally, the theory argues, and a multitude of subsequent research demonstrates, that when group members think of themselves in terms of a social rather than personal identity, they relate to each other in terms of the relevant group (“us”) and to members of other groups in terms of intergroup relations (“us” vs. “them”; e.g., Bettencourt, Charlton, Dorr, & Hume, 2001; Brewer & Silver, 2000; Eggins, Haslam, & Reynolds, 2002; Ellemers et al., 1997; Mummendey, Klink, Mielke, Wenzel, & Blanz, 1999; Reynolds, Oakes, Haslam, Turner, & Ryan, 2004; Simon et al., 1998; Simon & Stürmer, 2003; Tajfel, 1982; Veenstra & Haslam, 2000). However, although necessary, thinking of oneself in terms of social (psychological) group memberships is not sufficient for collective social action to take place. Whether we act with individual or collective benefits in mind will be determined by the perceived social structural organization of intergroup relations in a given social context. People opt for collective social change, rather than individual mobility, when they perceive the intergroup status boundaries between their

own and the more privileged, high status group as impermeable and unstable and, importantly, the intergroup relationships in a given social context as illegitimate (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Perception of illegitimacy is particularly important as it motivates the emergence of cognitive alternatives to the status quo (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In addition, it is via perceived illegitimacy that intergroup boundaries sharpen and groups become salient to one another for social comparison purposes (Caddick, 1982; Tajfel, 1978a).

Whereas SIT-inspired research relevant to social change has focused largely on the factors that affect the likelihood of collective protest as a social change strategy, SCT (Turner, 1982, 1985; Turner et al., 1987) has inspired a large body of work looking at the more cooperative dimension of the social change process (e.g., Brewer, 2000; R. Brown, Vivian, & Hewstone, 1999; De Cremer, Tyler, & den Ouden, 2005; Espinoza & Garza, 1985; Gaertner et al., 1999; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Tyler & Blader, 2003; Van Vugt, Snyder, Tyler, & Biel, 2000). Building on SIT, in which social identity is primarily an explanatory tool in intergroup relations, SCT conceptualizes the social self as the mechanism that, through the process of depersonalization, makes it possible for people to think of themselves as members of social psychological groups (as well as individuals) and, as such, makes group life possible.

Within SCT, the self is seen as hierarchically organized, context specific, and variable. The hierarchical organization of the self is central to understanding not only when people self-categorize at the personal or social level of identity but also when they self-categorize at the subgroup or superordinate level. Self-categorizations are situation (context) specific and emerge through a process of comparison between the self and others within the more inclusive (higher level) self-category. It is the shared higher order category (e.g., psychologist) that enables the comparison to occur at a lower level of self-categorization (e.g., social vs. clinical psychologist). The comparison results in category formation on the basis of the meta-contrast principle: Stimuli are categorized as an entity to the extent that the differences between them, on a relevant dimension of comparison, are smaller than the differences between them and the remaining stimuli that make up the frame of reference (Turner et al., 1987; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994). SCT therefore explains not only the emergence of in-group-out-group categorizations but also the shift from categorizing a person as being out-group to being in-group; when a relevant superordinate identity becomes salient, those hitherto seen to belong to separate subgroups (in-group vs. out-group) now share a psychological group membership within the superordinate (in-group) category.

Of relevance to social change, this process is seen as central in attempts to improve existing intergroup relations (e.g., prejudice reduction, conflict resolution; Brewer, 2000; R. Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2008; Dovidio et al., 1997; Eggins et al., 2002; Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993; Gaertner et al., 2000; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000c; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Wenzel, Mummendey, & Waldzus, 2008). Just as separate individuals come to be seen as (in-)group members when social as opposed to personal identity becomes salient, subgroup differences can become less important when seen in the context of a psychologically meaningful superordinate identity, when the higher order identity is seen as relevant and important in defining intergroup relations. The work on prejudice reduction, in particular, is an attempt to capitalize on this process to achieve intergroup tolerance and harmony.

The contribution of prejudice reduction research to understanding how self-categorization processes shape intergroup relations is well recognized (Brewer, 1996, 2000; R. Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Dovidio, Kawakami, & Gaertner, 2000; Gaertner et al., 2000; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a, 2000b, 2000c). However, much of prejudice reduction work, at least implicitly, focuses on the relationship between the prejudiced majority and the disadvantaged minority (e.g., Whites vs. Blacks, men vs. women), without taking into consideration intergroup power relations in which prejudice may serve a particular function, in particular for those who directly benefit from an unequal intergroup hierarchy (Duckitt, 1992; see also Duckitt, 2001; Jones, 1972, 1998; Turner, 2005). For example, as early as 1939, sociologist William O. Brown (1939) argued that the role of prejudice in maintaining the disadvantage of American Blacks needs to be recognized:

With the rise of a class dependent upon slavery for material needs, status and power, the subordination of the Negro was complete. Defensive prejudices and beliefs emerged in support of the vested interests of the ruling class and the status quo. (p. 353)

Furthermore, prejudice reduction research is characterized by an unresolved argument as to the nature of the self-categorization process that will most successfully reduce prejudice (see Brewer, 2000; Brewer & Pierce, 2005; R. Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Gaertner et al., 2000; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a; Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Weber, 2003; Wenzel, Mummendey, Weber, & Waldzus, 2003)—whether it is better to emphasize the superordinate at the expense of subgroup identities, the subgroup identities at the expense of the superordinate, or somehow aim to keep both (or multiple) identities salient in order to reap the positive benefits of the different approaches.



Although it is beyond the scope of this article to offer an extensive critique of this area, it seems to us that these inconsistencies reveal a somewhat static (rather than dynamic) view of the self-categorization process, which does not take into account its variable and context-dependent nature. Two notable exceptions here include the Ingroup Projection Model (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Wenzel et al., 2008; Wenzel et al., 2003) and the ASPIRe model (Eggins et al., 2002; Haslam, Eggins, & Reynolds, 2003), both of which take into account the way in which the dynamics of subgroup relations shape the meaning of the higher order identity and vice versa.

In summary, it could be said that much of existing social psychological work oriented to social change adopts either a social conflict or cooperation approach. The research that focuses on social conflict conceptualizes the minority as the primary agent of social change (Moscovici, 1976; Tajfel, 1978c) and, as such, focuses on the (conflictual) relationship between social minorities and those in positions of dominance, power, or societal authority (e.g., Ellemers et al., 1993; Kelly & Breinlinger, 1996; Veenstra & Haslam, 2000; Wright, 1997, 2001; Wright & Tropp, 2002). In contrast, the work looking at the cooperative aspects of social change focuses on enhancing the majority–minority relationship and the more passive process by which the prejudiced attitudes of the majority can be changed in the hope of achieving change in the reality of intergroup relations (e.g., cooperation, tolerance, reduced prejudice, and discrimination). As such, there seems to be an implicit assumption within the discipline that social change is achieved through either conflict (e.g., collective protest) *or* cooperation (e.g., prejudice reduction) in intergroup relations.

There has been little consideration of how these processes may affect each other in contributing to or hindering social and psychological change in intergroup relations (see also Simon & Oakes, 2006). As Wright and Lubensky (2004) argue, the same psychological process that aims to reduce intergroup prejudice also has the potential to reduce the likelihood of collective protest because the majority and minority groups come to perceive each other in terms of a shared, higher order identity (see also Dovidio et al., 2008). So, although prejudice reduction strategies may improve the attitudes of the majority toward the minority, they also may curtail the minority's capacity to act collectively to challenge the status quo (thereby reducing the possibility of collective action). This argument points to the interdependence between psychological aspects of conflict and cooperation but also the interdependence between social change and social stability in intergroup relations, and it is this interdependent nature of intergroup dynamics that the political solidarity model of social change is striving to capture.

The model conceptualizes social change as a process by which minority dissent against an established authority or, more broadly, the existing system of intergroup relations becomes widespread. It spreads to include those who are not necessarily negatively affected, themselves, but who nevertheless come to share the minority's view that a challenge to the status quo is needed. To fully understand this process in a systematic and parsimonious way, however, it may be necessary to move away from at least three dualisms that, as the preceding paragraphs suggest, seem to characterize the social psychology of social change.

First, we need to reconsider the notion that having an analysis of either social stability *or* social change is sufficient to understand both outcomes of intergroup dynamics. Conservative political efforts to maintain the status quo often involve as much active campaigning and promulgation of particular norms, values, and beliefs as any social movement campaign does. As such, social change and social stability can be more usefully understood as distinct intergroup dynamics that nevertheless interact with and shape each other. For example, it may be easier to maintain the status quo if those who are striving to achieve social change are successfully marginalized as “elites,” “radicals,” or “crazy hippies.” Similarly, social change may be more likely if those in positions of authority are seen as “crooked,” “tyrants,” or simply “out of touch” with the views and wishes of their constituents.

Second, social change is equally about understanding the dynamics of conflict and protest as it is about building more positive intergroup relations—the two often go hand in hand. Intergroup conflict and challenge to existing intergroup relations may be necessary to advance one's cause or position in society. Equally, however, the success or otherwise of such actions is often premised on the capacity to mobilize widespread support and cooperative relations with others who may be supportive of one's cause (Klandermans, 1997; Simon, 2004; Simon & Klandermans, 2001). As part of this process, intergroup distinctions are overcome in the name of a common cause and in order to mount a successful challenge to the status quo. Failure to consider how these processes interact possibly stems from a somewhat static view of the self that seems to characterize much of intergroup relations research that conceptualizes intergroup relations in bipolar terms.

Third, therefore, focusing solely on bipolar intergroup relations (e.g., dominant vs. subordinate) not only hinders our understanding of the dynamics of social change, but it also does not adequately capture the complexity of the social and historical context in which social change takes place. Given that intergroup relations research is often conducted within experimental laboratory settings, the tendency to simplify a complex social environment is

necessary and understandable. However, it is also important to keep in mind that particular processes and questions require our conceptualization of intergroup relations to go beyond in-groups and out-groups defined in static and unidimensional ways (e.g., privilege–disadvantage). Processes of identity contestation that are the hallmark of social change are rarely confined to a single intergroup (i.e., in-group–out-group) relationship. They involve attempts to mobilize the support of other social actors as well as to consensualize the in-group position through processes of intragroup contestation, persuasion, and influence. Approaches that favor empirical simplicity at the expense of theoretical meaning and complexity are in danger of missing the point that the self, as understood from a social identity perspective, is highly variable, hierarchically organized, and fundamentally shaped by, as well as reflected in, the social context of intergroup relations. Context-dependent variability in the meaning of relevant identities makes possible the mobilization of identity resources in the quest for social change but also in attempts to reproduce the status quo. It is precisely this aspect of the social identity perspective that allows us to understand and explain the dynamics of political solidarity as a social change process in intergroup power relations.

#### Political Solidarity and Self-Categorization in Intergroup Power Relations

With this background and critiques in mind, the political solidarity model suggests that social change takes place within a context of intergroup power relations that involves (at least) three social actors: minority, authority, and majority. It is important to note that the term *minority*, as used within this model, does not necessarily denote a numerical minority. Rather, following Tajfel's (1978b) view that minorities are primarily defined by their social position rather than group size, the term *minority* is used to signify the relative lack of social power available to this group (in particular in comparison with those in positions of legitimate authority). Similarly, following Turner's (2005) analysis, *authority* primarily denotes a position of social power emanating from a sense of shared identity that provides one or one's group with the capacity to persuade, influence, and wield legitimate authority over some relevant social majority.

Authorities derive legitimacy from the perception that they share the relevant norms, values, and beliefs with the majority. Those authorities seen to violate such a shared sense of "who we are" will be questioned and their legitimacy potentially reduced (Turner, 2005; Turner & Reynolds, 2002), as discussed in more detail below. This process is not confined to social systems that are fundamentally defined by the majority's capacity

to question and challenge those in positions of social power (e.g., democracies). Other forms of authority (e.g., religious, genealogical, dictatorial) will be obeyed and respected as long as their position, actions, and decisions are seen as legitimate rather than coercive and exploitative (see also Fiske, 1991; Turner, 2005). Such authorities can and will be challenged when seen to act in a way that violates what "we" believe to be the proper conduct in a given social context.

Finally, the term *majority* simply denotes those who are neither in the position of authority or minority but rather are the target audience for these actors in their quest to maintain the status quo or achieve social change, respectively, in intergroup power relations. Far from being homogeneous or monolithic, the majority is likely to be made up of numerous views and positions in relation to both the authority and the minority. In the extreme, there will be majority members who, in a given social context, completely reject the authority and fully endorse the minority's position, as well as those who do the exact opposite. There will also be others who, while sympathizing with the minority and their plight, continue to support the authority's position. Yet, others will disengage from both of these groups and perceive the conflict between the minority and the authority as something that, for whatever reason, is not relevant or of concern to them. Such diversity of majority views and positions is likely to be a fertile ground for intragroup contestation processes taking place in parallel to the broader intergroup dynamics of political solidarity, as discussed below.

Fundamental to political solidarity are the self-categorical relationships between the majority and authority, and majority and minority; indeed, these relationships primarily define who the majority, minority, and authority are within the present model. As highlighted, the term *authority* signifies that there exists a dynamic intergroup relationship between the majority and a group in a position of social power, where power is the capacity to influence others on the basis of shared psychological group membership (Turner, 2005). In that sense, before the political solidarity process is set in motion, the relationship between the majority and the authority is characterized by a shared social identity, which in turn bestows the authority with a capacity to influence the majority. Even though the majority may disagree with some of the authority's decisions and actions (e.g., authority's treatment of the minority), the authority will be seen as acting in the best interests of the group and fulfilling its legitimate role as long as it is perceived to share one's social identity. Conversely, an authority perceived to act in ways that contradict a hitherto-shared understanding of who we are and how we should relate to others in the social world will become the out-group and is at greater risk of being

challenged (Turner, 2005; Turner & Reynolds, 2002). Unlike the majority relationship with the authority, there is no preexisting sense of a shared identity with the minority; if political solidarity with this group is to exist, such an identity needs to emerge within the broader intergroup dynamic. As such, it is the self-categorical relationship with the majority that primarily distinguishes an authority from a minority within the political solidarity model and, hence, which group has the most influence for the majority of actors.

In contrast to the two majority relationships discussed so far, the relationship between the authority and minority is based on conflict, animosity, and tension between the authority's efforts to maintain the status quo and those of the minority as an agent of change. As such, minorities seek to mobilize majority support in the hope that such support will help them to achieve change in the attitudes, decisions, and actions of those in positions of authority. Similarly, authorities facing minority challenge will appeal to the majority for support, as U.S. President Richard M. Nixon (1969) did to counter the "vocal minority" opposition to the Vietnam War: "And so tonight—to you, the great silent majority of my fellow Americans—I ask for your support."

Such tripolar intergroup dynamics could, therefore, be seen as involving a power struggle between the authority and the minority where power is the capacity to influence the majority on the basis of creating and maintaining a shared social identity with this group. Although this dynamic can be understood from the perspective of either of the social actors involved, taking the authority or the minority perspective involves focusing more on the self-categorical strategies that these actors, as sources of influence, can use to maximize the chances of their goals and interests being met. In contrast, the majority perspective is that of the target of (simultaneous authority and minority) influence and, as such, is primarily concerned with the process of self-categorical change involving members of this group. The political solidarity model presented in this article is fundamentally concerned with such a process of self-categorical change involving members of the majority: What is the process by which members of the majority self-categorize in a way that makes possible challenge to authority in solidarity with the minority?

As sources (as opposed to targets) of influence, the authority and the minority can use different strategies to shape the self-categorization of the majority. A range of forces will determine the success or otherwise of these strategies, such as the historical context of intergroup relations as well as the authority and minority relative capacity to access the (psychological, social, political, and economic) resources needed to mobilize majority support. These contextual complexities and nuances

notwithstanding, the source that best captures the majority's understanding of themselves in the relevant social context of intergroup relations (while also undermining their opponent's capacity to do so) will have a greater capacity to exercise influence. As such, whether there is a shared social identity between the authority and majority or minority and majority explains whether the status quo or social change, respectively, is more likely to prevail.

Rather than considering how these processes might interact, however, most of the existing work either takes an authority or the minority perspective in this context. So, we know from studies of leadership and leadership rhetoric that those in positions of (or aspiring to more) authority can enhance their capacity to influence others by creating, maintaining, and enhancing a self-categorical bond between themselves and their relevant in-group (Haslam et al., 1998; Haslam & Platow, 2001; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996a, 1996b; Turner & Haslam, 2001). Similarly, existing evidence suggests that minorities will be more influential when the nature of the comparative context allows a shared self-category to emerge with the targets of influence. For example, minority influence research based on SCT found that radical feminists were seen as more in-group by moderately feminist (female) participants and were more influential when participants compared themselves with men as opposed to other feminists (David & Turner, 1999, 2001a, 2001b).

As a number of models have suggested, however, in order to maximize the chances of social change taking place, the minority needs to mobilize the majority (i.e., societal audience, the general community) in its struggle against the status quo and those in positions of authority (e.g., Mugny & Perez, 1991; Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Although the direct conflict often takes place between the minority and the authority, these actors (and minorities in particular) need to at least attempt to influence the majority to support their cause. Indeed, Simon and Klandermans (2001) suggest that only when such an attempt at triangulation occurs can the minority identity be considered as fully politicized. So, akin to the dynamics of political solidarity, this work makes an important contribution in recognizing the complexity of the intergroup relations context of social change.

What remains to be considered more systematically, however, is the way in which these intergroup relationships may affect each other. More specifically, the process by which shared psychological group membership between the minority and majority may come about in response to change in the majority's (self-categorical) relationship with the authority remains to be explained. Building on existing research and theorizing within social psychology and the social identity tradition in



particular, the political solidarity model argues that the emergence of majority solidarity with the minority will depend on a severing of the psychological relationship between the authority and the majority.

Akin to this argument, the Elaborated Social Identity Model (ESIM), proposed by Reicher and colleagues (Drury & Reicher, 1999; Reicher, 1996a, 2001; Stott & Drury, 2000; Stott, Hutchison, & Drury, 2001; Stott & Reicher, 1998), recognizes that such a process is central to the dynamics of crowd action and, in particular, the spread of crowd conflict with the police. According to ESIM, it is change in the self-categorization of “moderate” crowd members in response to harsh police treatment that leads this group to endorse more radical protest strategies. However, given that it is primarily oriented to explaining crowd dynamics, ESIM focuses on the spread of conflict with the police that involves those crowd members who are directly affected by harsh police actions. In contrast, the political solidarity model seeks to explain social change as a process by which people who are not directly affected by authority’s actions nevertheless become willing to challenge such actions in solidarity with those who are.

Political solidarity, therefore, is a process marked by change in the relationships between the majority, authority, and minority, where the ultimate goal is not only to mobilize support for one’s cause but to do so in a way that changes the existing nature of intergroup power relations. A hallmark of political solidarity as a process of social change is the emergence of cooperation and support between the majority and minority to the extent that the majority becomes willing to challenge the authority in solidarity with the minority. In contrast, the status quo is more likely to be maintained to the extent that the authority maintains majority support and, therefore, its position of influence over the majority.

Furthermore, these relationships are interdependent in that solidarity with the minority may be more likely to emerge to the extent that the majority starts questioning whether or not it should support the authority. In turn, given the conflictual relationship between the authority and the minority, the greater the majority support for authority, the less likely it is that the majority will support the minority’s position. As such, although primarily oriented to social change, the political solidarity model can also be applied to understanding social stability, in particular as it interacts with processes of social change. What needs to be elucidated, however, is the mechanism that makes these intergroup dynamics possible. Within the political solidarity model, at the core of social change is psychological change in people’s understanding of themselves in relation to relevant others in a particular social context (i.e., self-categorization) that enables a recategorization of the authority as

out-group and the minority as in-group. As such, the term *political solidarity* seeks to capture two distinct yet interdependent aspects of this process that need to be further elaborated: the emergence of majority *solidarity* with the minority and majority *challenge* to those in positions of power and authority.

### Emergence of Solidarity and Challenge to Authority

The term *solidarity* can be used in an intragroup sense to denote members’ commitment to the group and to each other (e.g., Doosje, Ellemers, & Spears, 1999; Doosje, Spears, & Ellemers, 2002; Ellemers et al., 1997; Ellemers et al., 1998). It is important that individual differences do not simply disappear or become completely irrelevant once people start to define themselves in terms of their membership of a particular social (psychological) group. They do, however, come to be understood in the context of higher order (i.e., group) goals and interests (e.g., Postmes & Jetten, 2006; Reynolds & Turner, 2006; Turner, Reynolds, Haslam, & Veenstra, 2006). Group life is possible because people have a capacity to understand and interpret individual differences and similarities in the context of a relevant social identity. As such, solidarity denotes higher level unity rather than lower level uniformity.

A similar dynamic applies at the intergroup level, where different subgroups come together to achieve a common cause. In this context, solidarity implies that we are united not only despite subgroup difference but precisely because we are different. When different groups act in solidarity, they do so in a way that capitalizes on subgroup differences—in membership composition, position in the social structure, or access to resources—in order to achieve a common purpose. Durkheim’s (1893/1984) notion of organic pluralism is akin to this idea (Haslam, 2004; see also Haslam, Eggins, & Reynolds, 2003). However, what needs to be explained is the process by which people reconcile differences at the subgroup level in a way that makes higher order goals and interests possible to achieve. In political solidarity terms, although members of the majority may perceive the minority’s dissent as justified and their disadvantage as illegitimate, how does the minority cause become the cause of the majority?

SCT analysis of the self (Onorato & Turner, 2004; Turner et al., 1987; Turner & Onorato, 1999; Turner et al., 2006) provides the basis for resolving this question. As noted earlier, the theory conceptualizes the self as being variable, context dependent, and hierarchically organized, with the more inclusive levels of self-categorization (e.g., social, human) being just as valid cognitive representations of the self as the personal level (Turner et al., 1987). The hierarchical organization of the self allows not only a

shift in an individual's self-perception from personal to social identity (i.e., from me to us) but also a shift in whether relevant others are members of an in-group (us) or an out-group (them). It is important that we are likely to perceive as in-group those who are seen to share the relevant norms, values, and beliefs, and those who are seen to violate them as out-group (Reicher, 2004; Turner & Reynolds, 2002). From this perspective, individual self-categorization processes have the capacity to reflect and shape the social reality of intergroup relations, allowing for a more complex analysis of intergroup dynamics, which goes beyond static in-group–out-group distinctions, to be considered.

Of particular relevance for this article is the idea that the social self can be further stratified into lower and higher levels of inclusiveness, sometimes referred to as subgroup and superordinate<sup>1</sup> levels of social identification. It is the higher order (superordinate) identity that provides the comparative context in which the lower level subgroup relations are understood, just like a social identity provides a comparative context in which relationships among individual group members are evaluated (e.g., Postmes & Jetten, 2006; Reynolds & Turner, 2006; Turner et al., 2006). Indeed, it is the hierarchical organization of the social self that makes inter-subgroup solidarity (and inter-subgroup division) possible by allowing for subgroup differences to be understood with reference to higher order identity norms, values, and beliefs.

Just like depersonalization is not a loss of individual identity or its submergence within the group, neither is self-categorizing at a higher level identity the loss of lower level (social) identities or necessarily their complete submergence within the higher order category (Reynolds, Turner, & Haslam, 2003). On the contrary, higher level categorization and associated identity meaning inform how we understand and act on the lower level subgroup memberships and inter(sub)group relationships. We are likely to see as higher order in-group those subgroups perceived to share the relevant higher order norms and values, and as out-group those seen to violate them. This dynamic, although clearly elucidated within SCT, is currently not captured by research that (at least implicitly) conceptualizes social identity solely in terms of group boundaries.

Shared social identity or psychological group membership (i.e., in-group) denotes more than group boundaries, however. It is also fundamentally about shared higher order *identity meaning* in terms of the relevant norms, values, and beliefs about the social world—a shared understanding of the inter(sub)group relations and the in-group's (and the individual group member's) place within it. Identity, as a model of social relations (Reicher, 2000), captures both group boundaries and

the way in which different groups and group members (should) relate to each other (see also Billig, 1976; Tajfel, 1978a, 1981). It is the violation of shared identity meaning that has the capacity to define and redefine group boundaries, so that we reject as out-group those individuals and groups whose beliefs, values, and behaviors no longer adequately capture the in-group identity within a given context of intergroup relations.

For example, Reicher and colleagues speak to this issue in their recent analysis of the rhetorical use of social identity as part of a political campaign against the deportation of Bulgarian Jews during the Second World War (Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins, & Levine, 2006). In this context, national identity rhetoric was used not only to construct categorical boundaries in a way that included Jews as part of the Bulgarian nation but also to shape category norms so that preventing the deportation of Jewish people was at the heart of what it meant to be Bulgarian (and failure to do so a violation of this identity). Furthermore, building on categorical boundaries and norms, the campaigners appealed to broader category interest, suggesting that the in-group as a whole will be harmed if the persecution of Jews were allowed (Reicher et al., 2006). As such, this research highlights the importance of group boundaries but also the meaning of group identity (e.g., norms, values) in shaping intergroup dynamics.

This process could also be understood from a more tripolar, political solidarity perspective. Whereas much of the campaign rhetoric referred to the relationship with Bulgarian Jews, it also more or less explicitly raised counter-claims disputing the Nazi supporters' version of the relevant social reality (Reicher et al., 2006). Therefore, the campaign was seeking to construct not only Jews as "us" or "Bulgarians" but also the Nazis and their supporters as "not us," an out-group. Furthermore, this intergroup dynamic included the Bulgarians' relationship with the Nazi regime and its supporters, more generally. As Reicher and colleagues point out, this relationship was already starting to weaken in light of the perception that Bulgaria needed to consider its postwar future and its relationship with allies in light of Germany's imminent defeat. As such, the argument that Jewish people are a part of "us" was contextualized by the view that the Nazis and their supporters are increasingly "them." A similar analysis has been applied to the case of Denmark, where it has been argued that the rescue of Danish Jews needs to be understood not only in the context of the Jewish minority being seen as members of the Danish in-group but also in light of an increasing majority opposition to the Nazi regime (Bastholm-Jensen & Jensen, 2003; Mogensen, 2003).

What these examples demonstrate is the highly contested nature of identity and, in particular, the higher

order identities that shape lower level intergroup relations. In the political solidarity context, these relationships involve social power and influence (including legitimate authority) based on a shared understanding of who we are and how we should relate to others in the social world (Reicher et al., 2005; Turner, 2005). As such, the creation and maintenance of social influence (i.e., power) and authority involve the meaning of identity (including higher order identity) within intergroup power relations being continually contested rather than given. As such, the struggle between the authority and the minority for the hearts and minds of the majority could be seen as a contest for the definition of the higher order identity—the norms, values, and beliefs that define who we are. Authorities seen to act in accordance with group norms and values will be seen as legitimate and maintain the capacity to influence their subordinates, and vice versa, those authorities seen to violate a sense of shared identity will be seen as illegitimate (Turner, 2005; Turner & Reynolds, 2002) and more vulnerable to majority opposition. Furthermore, those who subscribe to the higher order norms, values, and beliefs the most are also most likely to object to their violation (Simon & Oakes, 2006). As such, those members of the majority most committed to the norms that the authority is seen to violate will be most likely to reject the authority as out-group.

However, whether the majority will endorse an authority's or the minority's definition of who we are depends on the majority's relationship with both of these groups. Therefore, when it comes to solidarity with the minority, the extent to which the majority self-categorizes as sharing the higher order norms, values, and beliefs with the minority depends not only on its relationship with the minority but also on the majority's relationship with the authority. When the authority's actions toward the minority are seen to violate higher order values, norms, and beliefs, and therefore bring into question the extent to which the authority shares the relevant identity with the majority, solidarity with the minority is more likely (and vice versa) (Subašić, 2008; Turner, 2005; Turner & Reynolds, 2002).

Furthermore, the majority's understanding of its relationship with the authority and the minority can change with relevant changes in the reality of intergroup relations. Historical events that pose a threat to the higher order category as a whole can serve to solidify majority support for a given authority on a range of issues (e.g., increased support for U.S. President George W. Bush in the aftermath of September 11, 2001). They also provide opportunities for authorities to construct the social reality in us-versus-them terms, using the exclusion of particular (sub)groups to sharpen intergroup boundaries and enhance a sense of shared identity with the majority

(Subašić, Turner, & Reynolds, 2008; Turner, 2005). Under such conditions, any criticism of the authority is more likely to be seen as an affront to "all of us" and rejected as illegitimate.

It is important that, at their outset, the intergroup dynamics of political solidarity involve a self-categorical asymmetry between the majority's relationship with the authority and its relationship with the minority (Subašić, 2008). Namely, although the self-categorical relationship between the majority and authority involves a preexisting shared social identity, such an identity needs to emerge within the majority–minority relationship. This self-categorical asymmetry, in turn, affects intergroup power relations. Because the authority starts from a position of shared identity with the majority, it has an existing capacity to influence the majority. In contrast, the minority has to build such a capacity through creating a shared identity with the majority. Given the contested relationship between the authority and the minority, the more the majority shares an identity with the authority, the easier it will be for the authority to marginalize the minority and its concerns as unreasonable and illegitimate and the more difficult it will be for the shared identity between the minority and majority to emerge (Subašić, 2008; Turner, 2005; Turner & Reynolds, 2002). Furthermore, if the perceived conflict of relevant norms and values can be easily resolved by redefining or resorting to a different system of values, then the status quo is likely to continue (Tajfel, 1981).

Conversely, if the majority starts to question the extent to which the authority indeed shares their understanding of who we are in the broader context of intergroup relations, solidarity with the minority becomes possible. When an authority is perceived to act in a way that violates group norms, values, and the best interests of the collective, the injustice hitherto experienced only by the minority will become a collective experience (Turner, 2005; Turner & Reynolds, 2002). Authority decisions, policies, and actions toward the minority will be seen as illegitimate when they are perceived as a violation of a shared higher order identity that prescribes what subgroup relations within this system should be like. Only when authority's actions toward the minority lead the majority to question whether the authority shares the relevant higher order identity will solidarity with the minority become possible.

As such, the perception that authority's actions toward the minority violate a shared identity with the majority is a precondition of solidarity with the minority. This perception is unlikely to result in an instantaneous and full rejection of authority and endorsement of the minority, however. Rather, the more the authority is seen to act in a way that violates what it means to be "us," the more it will be rejected and the more it becomes possible

for the minority to be seen to share the majority's understanding of intergroup relations. However, even when the authority is rejected as out-group, challenge is unlikely unless the minority and its cause are seen to be in-group, as discussed further below.

It is important to note, however, that political solidarity is largely a process of influence and persuasion rather than necessarily a call to arms or an endorsement of open conflict and confrontation. As such, in many contexts, it will involve seeking change in authority's actions that will restore its legitimacy, as opposed to a complete overhaul or even destruction of the existing social system (e.g., coup d'état). For example, those acting together on the basis of political solidarity may (at least initially) seek authority's endorsement of policies that will grant equal rights to minorities (e.g., gay marriage) rather than attempting to overthrow the government (but see below). As such, although a sense that the authority no longer shares a higher order identity may trigger political solidarity and challenge to such an authority, more often than not, the ultimate objective is to shape the authority's actions, decisions, and policies in a way that is consistent with the redefined nature of the higher order identity—who we are and how we should relate to each other.

The authority's response is crucial in shaping the majority self-categorization in this context, so that the reality of intergroup relations intersects with the majority self-categorization to either enhance or attenuate the likelihood of social change. Namely, an authority that responds by accommodating the majority's concerns (expressed in solidarity with the minority) is likely to have its membership of the in-group reinstated. Therefore, the more accommodating the authority, the less there is a need for members of the majority to define themselves in distinction to the authority and the easier it is for the authority to reclaim its (higher order) in-group membership and legitimacy. Under these conditions, members of the majority will most likely self-categorize as members of the higher order category (e.g., American). The authority can also reclaim its legitimacy through other means: by successfully shifting the debate to issues that have the potential to sever the shared identity between the minority and authority (e.g., national security in the context of immigration) and/or by strengthening the bond between themselves and the majority on another front (e.g., economic prosperity, tax cuts) that provides the basis for a shared identity between the authority and majority to be (re)established.

However, the more the authority is seen to "dig in its heels" and disregard majority (and minority) concerns, the stronger the perceived higher order norm violation and the stronger the self-categorical distinction between the majority and authority will be. Perceptions of

authority illegitimacy will, under these conditions, enhance the salience of not only the relevant higher order identity and its norms, values, and beliefs but also the relevant subgroup distinction between the majority and the authority. Given the contrastive nature of identity, this process is equally about recategorizing the self (i.e., majority) as "not other" as it is about recategorizing the other (i.e., authority) as "not self." At the same time, the distinctions between the minority and majority will become less important, salient, and relevant, and the extent to which members of these groups are interchangeable—and, therefore, the extent to which there is a shared, higher order self between the minority and majority—will be increased. Therefore, the greater the perceived illegitimacy of the authority's position, the sharper the in-group boundaries that exclude the authority while including the minority.

It is important that the process of majority self-categorization may involve redefining the meaning of the existing higher order identity to such an extent that it no longer includes the authority (e.g., authority as un-American), as well as the emergence of a novel subgroup identity that uniquely captures the majority and minority members to the exclusion of the authority (e.g., identifying as a member of the gay, Black, or women's rights movement; see also Simon & Klandermans, 2001). The extent to which the majority perceives itself as a distinct subgroup (within the relevant higher order identity) and what the definition of that subgroup is (e.g., White, Democrat, psychologist) will depend on the relevant dimension of social comparison (e.g., race, political orientation, profession) that makes sense given the social reality of intergroup relations. Therefore, whether the relevant identity meaning is redefined to exclude an authority or a novel (subgroup) identity emerges that unites the minority and majority against the authority (e.g., workers, parents, environmentalists)—or, indeed, some combination of these processes takes place—will depend on the social context of intergroup power relations, the kinds of issues that are being contested, and whether or not the relevant actors are seeking to mobilize the support of a (yet) broader, higher level majority for their cause.

In summary, within the political solidarity model, it is challenge to authority (in solidarity with the minority) that is at the core of social change. Political solidarity as a process of social change, therefore, involves psychological change in the self-categorization of the majority whereby the meaning of the relevant majority identity is no longer shared with the authority but with the minority. Although the view that an authority no longer shares the relevant identity (i.e., authority seen as out-group) makes solidarity possible, it is solidarity with the minority (i.e., minority seen as in-group) that makes challenge



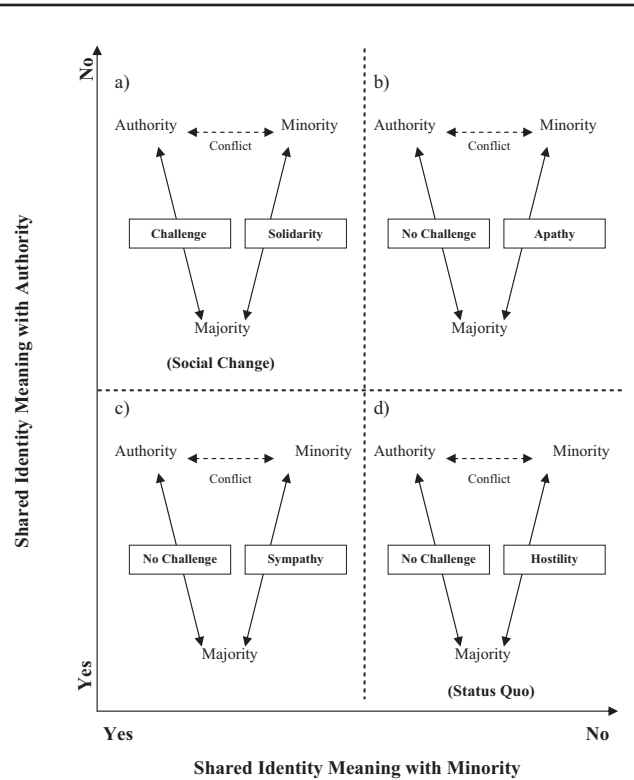
to authority possible. Unless there is also a shared identity meaning with the minority, a majority challenge to authority in solidarity with the minority is unlikely (Subašić, 2008).

Therefore, when the meaning of the relevant identity ceases to be shared with the authority and becomes shared with the minority, majority challenge to authority in solidarity with the minority, and therefore social change, becomes a reality. Somewhat paradoxically, therefore, it is solidarity with the minority, rather than merely rejection of authority, that makes majority challenge to the status quo possible. Indeed, it could be said that if what defines the minority is their challenge to the status quo, then by engaging in political solidarity, the majority effectively becomes such a minority. Alternatively, to the extent that the cause of the few becomes the cause of the many, it is through political solidarity that the minority becomes the majority (Subašić, 2008).

**Political Solidarity With Whom?**

At the core of the political solidarity model of social change is the interaction between the majority’s self-categorical relationships with the majority and the authority. As shown in Figure 1, the majority self-categorization with the authority and the minority is conceptualized as occurring along two (interdependent and interacting) continua. As discussed, only in relatively extreme circumstances will the authority and minority be recategorized as out-groups to such an extent that violent conflict or the desire to obliterate these groups ensues (e.g., revolution, war). Consistent with the SIT idea of interpersonal-intergroup continua, the extent to which such extreme polarization occurs depends on a number of social structural and historical factors that are relevant in a given social context. Most of the time, however, the majority will move along these continua in a less radical fashion, aligning with the authority or minority on some issues but not others and in some contexts more than others. As such, the majority is likely to be made up of multiple views and interests (e.g., Whites who support Black rights, those who are disinterested in the issue, those who are hostile toward Black people, etc.), leaving room for processes of contestation not only with regard to the higher order identity but also in relation to the meaning of the subgroup (majority) identity itself. Such within-group contestation processes are also likely to take place within the minority and authority groups as they seek to position their group in a way that maximizes the chances of their goals and objectives being achieved.

It is also important to consider, however, the conditions that make particular majority responses more or less likely. The current model predicts that political solidarity will be more likely the more it is the minority



**Figure 1** Majority stance toward the minority and challenge to authority as a function of shared identity meaning with authority and minority.

NOTE: Given that the majority does not share identity meaning with the authority in condition b, challenge to authority may be possible for reasons other than in solidarity with the minority.

rather than the authority that is seen as sharing the majority’s understanding of the relevant intergroup relations in the context of higher order norms, values, and beliefs (Figure 1a). This is the dynamic that is most likely to result in majority willingness to challenge the authority and, therefore, social change in intergroup relations. However, it is also possible to predict other outcomes on the basis of the model. For example, when members of the majority not only continue to share the meaning of the relevant identity with the authority but also perceive the minority as violating the relevant group norms and values, it is likely that they will engage in political solidarity with the authority and, in turn, be actively hostile toward the minority (Figure 1d), as research looking at the dynamics of deviance suggests (Abrams, Marques, Bown, & Dougill, 2002; Abrams, Marques, Bown, & Henson, 2000; Abrams, Randsley de Moura, Hutchison, & Viki, 2005; but see also Packer, 2008). It is under these conditions that the status quo is most likely to be maintained.

Considering the dynamic nature of the self-categorization process, it is also possible that the authority’s treatment of the minority is seen as unjust but the actions of the authority are justified on other grounds and its legitimacy

maintained. For example, although people may perceive that detaining and deporting asylum seekers is quite harsh and even identify with this group in terms of their suffering, this policy will not be challenged by the majority as long as such authority actions are seen as legitimately fulfilling other needs (e.g., enhancing national security). Under such conditions, and given the self-categorical asymmetry between the majority relationships with the authority and minority (see above), the minority will, at best, elicit the sympathy of the majority and actions of the authority will not be challenged (Figure 1c). However, perceptions that authority actions are unfair or illegitimate (because they violate important norms and values and, therefore, a shared understanding of who we are) make the status quo unsustainable in the long run (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner & Reynolds, 2002), in particular if the authority does nothing to maintain its legitimacy in other ways and identification with the minority strengthens. As such, this dynamic may, over time, become one of political solidarity with the minority.

Finally, there are situations in which the conflict between proponents of social change and those who wish to maintain the status quo either fails or ceases to capture the imagination of the majority as something that is relevant to and defining of who we are. Under such conditions, the likely response is apathy or disengagement in relation to the minority's efforts to achieve social change, making challenge to authority unlikely (Figure 1b). On the other hand, members of the majority who are disengaged from or apathetic toward the minority's cause may also be a useful part of the "mobilization potential" for the authority and, in the case of a shared identity with authority emerging, could become a source of support for the authority and a source of hostility toward the minority. However, given that there is no preexisting sense of shared identity meaning with the authority in this condition, it is also possible that these conditions may be conducive to the questioning of and challenge to the authority in order to achieve those goals and interests seen to be in conflict with or thwarted by the authority. Such actions, however, are unlikely to be motivated by solidarity with the minority.

### Some Connotations, Caveats, and Qualifications

The political solidarity model seeks to offer a parsimonious analysis of (some of) the social psychological aspects of social change that extends current understandings in a way that will stimulate further research and theorizing in this domain. As such, however, it is also somewhat limited in its scope and application. Social change is a complex and multifaceted societal

phenomenon constrained by a multitude of social, political, historical, economic, and other factors. Social psychology as a science concerned with psychological aspects of society (Turner & Oakes, 1986) can, at best, claim to do justice to those processes that are located within its particular niche, namely, the interaction between the human mind and society. As such, the current model is primarily concerned with explaining the psychological aspects of social change and, in particular, the dynamics of social identity and self-categorization in this domain. However, rather than psychologizing this process, the political solidarity model locates the dynamics of social change at the intersection between individual self-categorization processes and the social reality of intergroup relations.

Oriented to social change and primarily seeking to explain this process, the political solidarity model also offers insight into social stability and the interdependent nature of these processes. It, therefore, moves away from the argument that the status quo can be explained simply by explaining the factors that hinder social change in intergroup relations and vice versa. Rather, in the political solidarity model, status quo is accounted for by a different (if interdependent) process whereby the majority continues to support the authority despite or even because of minority opposition to the status quo. Locating the dynamics of social stability and change within a tripolar political solidarity context enables such an explanation.

Relatedly, the model also speaks to the process by which those in positions of (or aspiring to) authority can enhance their power by creating and/or marginalizing a minority group in a way that boosts a sense of shared identity between the authority and the majority (Reicher, 2004; Turner, 2005). As others have argued, intergroup animosity and prejudice can be conceptualized as functional (rather than pathological) in maintaining the status quo that benefits those in positions of privilege and dominance (W. O. Brown, 1939; Duckitt, 1992, 2001; Jones, 1972, 1998; Tajfel, 1978b; Turner, 2005). As such, it is also important to point out that the model seeks to explain particular self-categorical processes and dynamics of intergroup relations rather than necessarily suggesting that this is how "positive social change" comes about. The model applies equally to social change in relation to racial and gender equality, for example, as it does to the rise of fascism or religious fundamentalism.

For the sake of parsimony, the political solidarity model focuses on the dynamics within a single set of tripolar intergroup power relations. It is almost inevitable, however, that such relations are contextualized by and likely to intersect with multiple other higher and lower level intergroup relations and relevant social identities.

For example, the intranational dynamics of social change in relation to apartheid in South Africa were fundamentally shaped by the perceived views and attitudes, and ultimately South Africa's relationship with, the broader international community. Indeed, minorities whose rights have been severely violated within the national context will often appeal to the international community as their majority of choice for achieving social change at the national level. Such a process can still be conceptualized as involving political solidarity, however, given that it involves the emergence of majority solidarity with the minority in order to challenge and ultimately change the way in which that minority is treated by some relevant authority.

Furthermore, political solidarity is conceptualized as a construct that is psychologically meaningful to the participants in the social change process and, as such, reflected in their actions in the reality of intergroup relations. However, political solidarity is not necessarily deducible from such actions—people may behave in a way that benefits the minority's cause and challenges the status quo for other reasons (e.g., due to own conflict with authority). Central to political solidarity is a subjectively meaningful commonality of purpose or cause—a shared understanding of the social world—rather than common fate as an objective feature of the social context in which both groups are in some way mistreated by the authority or share a preexisting belief that social change is needed. A relevant example here may be the forming of coalitions of interest, where different groups come together on the basis of existing dissent against the status quo and the desire to achieve social change in intergroup relations. It is important, however, that such a coalition forming does not involve a shift or change in one's orientation toward the system but rather the realization that social change may be more easily achieved if those who are already opposed to the status quo come together. However, it is important to recognize that political solidarity may come about through participation in such forms of collective action; acting collectively in terms of particular identities changes the meaning of those identities and increases the likelihood of future collective action participation (see Drury & Reicher, 2000; Drury & Reicher, 2005; Drury, Reicher, & Stott, 2003).

In addition, the political solidarity model does not presume that political solidarity involves altruism or selflessness in the sense of acting on behalf of others rather than in one's own self-interest, although we understand how, on a phenomenological level, the process we are trying to explain could be seen as such (see also Giugni & Passy, 2001; Koopmans, 2001; Passy, 2001). The political solidarity analysis is grounded in the social identity perspective and the idea

that the individual self is both personal and social. As such, when people share a collective or social self, they are indeed acting in terms of their self-interest—when the minority is seen to share one's collective self, acting in solidarity with the minority is very much in one's (social) self-interest. As such, the model moves away from the notion that acting in terms of self-interest is necessarily incompatible with action aiming to achieve a collective goal (Gamson, 1992b; McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001; cf. Olson, 1965). Having said that, however, it is also possible for people to act in a way that benefits the minority's cause but for such actions to take place in the absence of a shared social identity and be motivated by the selfish interests of one's own group (e.g., politicians supporting vocal community groups critical of their political opponents).

Finally, the model seeks to explain the self-categorical processes that shape the majority's willingness to collectively challenge the authority and the status quo in intergroup relations in solidarity with the minority. It does not, however, seek to account for all possible factors that may affect whether or not such actions will, in fact, take place. For example, self-efficacy and intergroup emotions could be important in determining the likelihood of collective action in this context (Iyer, Leach, & Crosby, 2003; Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2006; van Zomeren, Spears, Leach, & Fischer, 2004). Furthermore, as highlighted earlier, historical events and broader social and political processes can also affect the likelihood of political solidarity by either providing or attenuating opportunities to build, enhance, and challenge the shared meaning of social identities. These may be important catalysts in processes of social and psychological change and, given the somewhat limited scope of this article, deserve to be considered more fully in further research.

#### RELATIONSHIP WITH EXISTING MODELS OF RELEVANCE TO SOCIAL CHANGE

The political solidarity model is consistent with, but extends in novel ways, a number of approaches to intergroup relations that are relevant to social change. For example, like the proposed model, the work on minority influence by Mugny and colleagues (Mugny, 1982; Mugny, Kaiser, Papastamou, & Perez, 1984; Mugny & Papastamou, 1982; Mugny & Perez, 1991), the politicized collective identity model developed by Simon and Klandermans (Klandermans, 2000; Klandermans & de Weerd, 2000; Simon, 1998; Simon & Klandermans, 2001; Simon et al., 1998), and the work on crowd behavior by Reicher and colleagues (Drury & Reicher, 1999; Drury et al., 2003; Reicher, 1996a, 1996b, 2001; Stott & Drury, 2000; Stott et al., 2001; Stott & Reicher,

1998) also consider the tripolar nature of intergroup relations in these domains.

Mugny (1982) proposed that minority influence takes place in a tripartite context of intergroup relations involving a minority group in an antagonistic relationship with a dominant “power majority” and seeking to influence and mobilize the support of the “population” or numerical majority. This approach conceptualizes the relationship between the minority and the population as one of influence—the minority being more likely to influence the majority to the extent that it maintains a consistent position and is seen as sharing the same group membership with the majority. According to Mugny and colleagues, however, the relationship between those in positions of power and the population is one of domination, where the population is assumed to uncritically submit to the demands of the dominant group. In contrast, within the political solidarity model, both relationships are characterized by dynamics of self-categorization and social influence, accounting for change in the majority’s relationship with the minority as well as the authority.

The politicized collective identity model (Simon & Klandermans, 2001) was inspired by minority influence research and the tripolar context in which minority influence takes place (Mugny, 1982). Politicized collective identity is said to exist when people who are self-conscious of their particular group membership engage in a power struggle on behalf of their group, while being aware of the wider societal context in which such struggle takes place (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). Drawing on SCT (Turner, 1982, 1985; Turner et al., 1987), this model acknowledges that intergroup relations are embedded in a context of a more inclusive shared category, which is “likely to bring into play third parties such as representatives of the more inclusive ingroups” (Simon & Klandermans, 2001, p. 323). As such, it recognizes the complex interplay between different levels of social identity and how they might affect the nature of the intergroup relations in a particular social context. In addition, the model builds on earlier work by Klandermans (1997) and explicitly considers those who make up the mobilization potential of social movements as people who sympathize with or have positive attitudes toward the movement and who share a “collective action frame” with regard to the movement’s cause. Akin to a sense of shared social identity (see Billig, 1976; Tajfel, 1981), collective action frames are shared sets of beliefs that serve to explain social issues and suggest an appropriate collective response (Gamson, 1992a). They define one’s grievance as injustice, define self and others in collective identity terms (e.g., us vs. them), and facilitate the belief that social change is not

only possible but that the social movement is capable of achieving such an outcome (see also Klandermans, 1997).

It is easy to see the relevance of these ideas to the political solidarity model, which also seeks to understand processes by which attempts to achieve social change spread to include others who may be willing to support the movement’s cause. However, unlike the political solidarity model, this line of work (at least implicitly) conceptualizes the mobilization potential as made up of those who share a preexisting categorization or collective identity with members of the relevant social movement (e.g., gay people as the mobilization potential for the gay rights movement). As such, it makes an important contribution to understanding how social minority members come to identify not only with their group but also with the relevant social movement striving to advance the group’s cause, and the implications of such a politicized identity on willingness to engage in collective action.

In contrast, the political solidarity model focuses on the process by which such shared (psychological, rather than sociological) group membership emerges within the relevant context of intergroup power relations. It is important that Simon and Klandermans (2001) argue that collective identity becomes fully politicized once the minority attempts to mobilize the support of third parties (e.g., general public, societal audience). If triangulation (i.e., generating wider community support for one’s cause) is to be successful, however, we need to understand not only the self-categorization processes involving the minority (whether they see the wider community as in-group) but also the self-categorization process involving the wider community—the process by which members of the society at large come to see the minority or the activists, rather than their opponents, as sharing the relevant norms, values, and beliefs and, ultimately, social (self-)category membership.

In the ESIM of crowd behavior, Reicher (1996a) also differentiates between three distinct social actors typically involved in a crowd event: the “confrontation minority” as that part of the crowd playing a more active role in the event; the groups in a position of authority, seeking to regulate crowd behavior (e.g., the police); and the rest of the crowd, coming along to the event but with a less confrontational role in the protest. In explaining the process of crowd conflict, he further differentiates between the *initiation* of conflict (which typically involves the confrontation minority and the police) and the subsequent *change* in the nature of conflict as a result of indiscriminate police action against all crowd members. In particular, if police actions are seen to deny the perceived rights of *all* crowd members, then the conditions for the spread of conflict are created as hitherto separate sections of the crowd form a single category.



Reicher (1996a) further argues that involvement in collective conflict will be limited to those in the crowd who perceive their rights to be denied. As a consequence, as discussed earlier, this model suggests that crowd members will engage in conflict with the police to the extent that they are directly affected by police actions. From a political solidarity perspective, however, it is possible to imagine situations in which challenge to authority spreads to involve people who are not directly affected by the authority's action but nevertheless object to the way in which (other) group members are treated. In this context, a different set of norms may emerge and come to redefine the relevant social category, promoting opposition to authority even when there is no direct experience of negative treatment (see also Reicher et al., 2006). Such opposition to hitherto legitimate authority, we argue, is based on perceived in-group norm violation by an authority and the ensuing political solidarity with groups whose rights have been subjugated.

Whereas the approaches discussed above relate to the specific theoretical aspects of the model (e.g., tripolar nature of intergroup dynamics, the self-categorization process), it is also worthwhile briefly discussing other work of relevance on a more phenomenological level. For example, given that political solidarity is manifested in majority actions that seek to advance the cause of the minority, perhaps it could be argued that this process simply involves good people helping others in need. As a consequence, the political solidarity model needs to be distinguished from other work looking at instances of positive social interaction, such as research on altruism and helping. Within social psychology, altruism is often seen as an individual characteristic, a hallmark of altruists, with limited consideration for social and group norms that may promote altruistic behavior more generally (see Monroe, 1996, 2003; Oliner & Oliner, 1992). As a consequence, most of the altruism research has been conceptualized and executed in the domain of interpersonal relations (e.g., see Batson, 1987, 1991, 1998; Batson & Shaw, 1991). Similarly, prominent social psychological analyses of helping and prosocial behavior focus mostly on how individual motivations in interaction with the social environment affect interpersonal helping (Darley & Latane, 1968; Latane & Darley, 1970; Latane, Nida, & Wilson, 1981). Although this work is valuable in its own right, it does not consider how perceptions of self and others as sharing (or not sharing) a relevant social (psychological) group membership shape altruistic and helping behavior.

There is now a growing body of research on helping from the perspective of intergroup relations that takes social identity processes into account and seeks to investigate the effects of perceived shared category membership on helping behavior. For example, extending their

work on the Common Ingroup Identity Model of prejudice reduction, Dovidio and colleagues (1997) have shown that helping is more likely to occur when there is a sense of shared in-group identity between helpers and those in need of help. In addition, applying the self-categorization analysis of helping to bystander intervention, recent findings indicate that the targets of helping behavior who are perceived to be in-group members receive more help from bystanders (Levine, Prosser, Evans, & Reicher, 2005; Levine & Thompson, 2004). Stürmer and colleagues (Stürmer, Snyder, Kropp, & Siem, 2006; Stürmer, Snyder, & Omoto, 2005) have also shown that the effects of empathy on helping (see Batson, 1998) are moderated by whether there is shared group membership between the source and the target of helping behavior. The relationship between empathy and helping was stronger when the source and the target shared relevant group membership. This work has also shown that the effects of empathy on (in-group) helping were stronger the greater the perceived similarity between the target and the source of helping behavior (Stürmer et al., 2006; Stürmer et al., 2005).

In contrast to intergroup helping, political solidarity (as a process of social change) is characterized by a shared belief that social change is needed and a commitment to not only help the minority but also challenge the authority and the status quo in solidarity with the minority. More generally, intergroup helping research rarely considers status and power distinctions in contexts where members of one group are required to help another (for an exception, see Nadler, 2002). As Nadler (2002) argues, intergroup helping both reflects and is affected by preexisting differences in status and power and may serve to maintain such differences. Within the political solidarity model, the perceptions and actions of potential helpers (i.e., the majority) are understood within a tripolar dynamic in which both the minority and the authority are potential "helpees," depending on the nature of the majority's self-categorization in interaction with the social reality of intergroup power relations. As such, whether the majority will see the minority as being in need of help, and whether such help will ensue in support of the minority attempts to achieve social change, depends not only on the self-categorical relationship between the minority and the majority but also on the majority's relationship with the authority as well as their understanding of the authority-minority relationship.

## CONCLUSIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The political solidarity model addresses a gap that we perceived to exist in current social psychological

approaches to understanding social change. Whereas this article has focused on outlining a theoretical framework for understanding political solidarity as a social change process, our analysis has implications for future developments in a number of specific areas of social psychology of relevance to social change, as detailed below. Furthermore, the model has the potential to advance current understanding and application of the social identity perspective more generally. As mentioned previously, much of the existing intergroup relations research inspired by the social identity perspective conceptualizes the social context of intergroup relations in bipolar terms. Building on SCT and its understanding of the self as variable, hierarchically organized, and epitomizing the relevant context of intergroup relations, the political solidarity model shows how this understanding can be extended to (at least) a tripolar dynamic, in particular when the focus is on challenging existing relations of social influence and authority.

As Turner (2005) suggests, social power as the capacity to influence others rests on the perception that the source and targets of influence share a psychological group membership; as such, it is the shared social identity that makes influence possible. However, the meaning of social identity and the extent to which it is shared with relevant others are continually contested, in particular when social change in intergroup power relations is at stake. The political solidarity model seeks to understand these dynamic (rather than static or mechanical) self-categorization processes by which psychological changes in majority perceptions of shared social identity with the authority and minority create the conditions for social change in the reality of intergroup relations. Equally, however, it speaks to processes of (social) power creation and maintenance as a process by which those in positions of legitimate authority succeed in maintaining and strengthening their shared identity with the majority, while destroying their opponents' capacity to do so. For example, the authority can strengthen the shared identity with the majority and, therefore, enhance its power (i.e., influence over the majority) by demonizing the minority as deviant or in some way threatening to all of us (Subašić et al., 2008; Turner, 2005).

Furthermore, the model contributes to an existing understanding of the social self in the context of intergroup relations. It is increasingly recognized that self-categorizing at the level of the social identity does not necessarily discount one's personal identity (e.g., Postmes & Jetten, 2006; Reynolds & Turner, 2006; Turner et al., 2006). Similarly, self-categorizing or acting in terms of higher order norms, values, and beliefs does not make subgroup differences or relationships irrelevant and meaningless. Fundamental to the interaction between the social self and the social context of

intergroup relations is a process by which lower level subgroup relationships shape the meaning of the higher order identity—the relevant norms, values, and beliefs epitomizing who we are and what intergroup relations should be like within a given social context. The opposite is also true—the meaning of a shared higher order identity not only reflects but also shapes the nature of intergroup relations (see also Haslam et al., 2003; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996a, 1996b, 2001).

As such, defining who we are is a complex process given that “we” is rarely homogeneous and can be mobilized in different ways. In the context of political solidarity, this process may involve mobilizing support across a range of issues, taking into account a history of shared identity with authority. As a result, different dimensions of norm violation and explanations for violation can be emphasized to mobilize the majority to either support or oppose social change. Nevertheless, it becomes possible to imagine how once harmonious intergroup relations between an authority and the majority of their supporters become conflictual as those in positions of authority are increasingly seen to violate a higher order understanding of who we are. In turn, to the extent that it is the minority rather than authority that shares such an understanding, solidarity with this group becomes possible. As such, rather than thwarting solidarity, in this context, the perceived differences among subgroups and differential subgroup relations make possible both higher order unity with the minority and higher order division from a hitherto legitimate authority.

In turn, these theoretical developments have the capacity to inspire new directions in social psychological research of relevance to social change. For example, the political solidarity model, in line with other approaches relevant to social change (e.g., Reicher, 1996a; Simon & Klandermans, 2001), suggests that collective action research could be expanded to consider the tripolar intergroup dynamics in which collective attempts to achieve change in intergroup relations take place. Traditionally, this area of research has focused on those who were directly disadvantaged by a particular system of intergroup relations. It may be important to consider the factors that affect not only the likelihood of this group acting collectively but also the extent to which such action may spread to include others willing to support their cause. As such, the political solidarity approach extends beyond the conditions that affect the likelihood of collective action, per se, to consider the broader dynamics of social change in intergroup power relations.

Similarly, prejudice reduction processes could be considered within a tripolar self-categorical dynamic whereby the majority stance toward minorities is understood within a broader context of intergroup relations that includes those in positions of authority. Allport

(1954) himself recognized that intergroup contact will have little success in reducing prejudice when societal authorities and institutions fail to endorse tolerant norms and values. Furthermore, prejudice against a minority can be created and encouraged by those in positions of authority to maintain the status quo and enhance their own position (Turner, 2005). When we say that someone in a position of leadership and authority is engaging in a fear campaign or playing the race or immigration card, what we mean is that they are creating or encouraging prejudice against some out-group (e.g., "Asians," "Muslims," "Jews," "illegal immigrants") to galvanize in-group support and, in the process, win votes or advance their policies. This dynamic is relevant not only for prejudice reduction strategies (focusing on the relationship between the majority and minority) but also for leadership and influence processes (focusing on the relationship between the authority and the majority). Understanding leadership as occurring within a tripolar intergroup dynamic would enable us to understand further how social inclusion and exclusion strategies can be used to create and advance one's position of social power as influence over the majority of subordinates (Subašić et al., 2008; Turner, 2005; Turner, Reynolds, & Subašić, in press).

However, just as leaders can create and exclude minorities as out-groups in order to boost their majority support, they also have the capacity to use their position and existing shared identity with the majority to build more harmonious intergroup relations with marginalized and disadvantaged minority groups by (re)defining the minorities as members of a shared in-group and relations with these groups as central to who we are. For example, the newly elected Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd recently apologized to Indigenous Australians for past injustice resulting from assimilationist policies such as removal of Indigenous children from their families. The apology not only heralded a change in the government's stance toward this group but also explicitly called for non-Indigenous Australians' commitment to the reconciliation process (Rudd, 2008; Subašić & Reynolds, in press). Building on other work in this domain (Reicher et al., 2006; Reicher et al., 2005; Reicher & Hopkins, 1996a, 1996b; Turner & Haslam, 2001), the political solidarity model can be a useful tool in understanding these dynamics and the role that leadership processes play in the creation as well as the reduction of prejudice.

In addition, the proposed model has implications for intergroup emotions research, where emotions are experienced on behalf of one's collective or social self (Smith, 1993, 1999; Smith & Ho, 2002) and, as such, could be seen as manifestations of people's shared understanding of the relevant intergroup relations. Whether one experiences collective guilt on behalf of one's group as a perpetrator of historical injustice

depends not only on one's perceived relationship with the victim but also on whether those in positions of in-group leadership and authority are endorsing or rejecting such a view of intergroup relations. For example, in the Australian context, collective guilt in relation to historical mistreatment of Australia's Indigenous people has been actively discouraged by much of the political leadership and, as such, rejected by the majority of non-Indigenous Australians as a meaningful response in this context (see Augoustinos & LeCouteur, 2004; McGarty et al., 2005; Subašić & Reynolds, in press). In contrast, the majority may more readily accept and act on their feelings of moral outrage or anger when such emotions arise in response to those in positions of authority and their (illegitimate) actions toward the minority (see also Iyer, Schmader, & Lickel, 2007; Leach et al., 2006; Leach, Iyer, & Pedersen, 2007). As such, more explicitly locating intergroup emotions research within a tripolar context of intergroup power relations may help in understanding when such emotions will hinder as opposed to enhance attempts to achieve social change.

Finally, the model has relevance for the use of political solidarity as a strategy for achieving social change. Namely, as social movement researchers have recognized (e.g., Tarrow, 1998), when members of the silent majority become vocal and act on their concerns for the minority groups, the powerful are more likely to take notice. As discussed above, groups in a position of social power largely depend on majority support to remain in their privileged position and, therefore, have a keen interest in keeping the majority on their side. However, the majority not only bestows the power onto the powerful (i.e., authority) but also has the capacity to empower the powerless (i.e., minority). As such, members of the majority who are not affected by negative treatment or policies of the authority often have a greater capacity to engage in action and lend their voice to the otherwise voiceless and highly marginalized groups (e.g., political prisoners, asylum seekers in detention).

Focusing on when political solidarity with the minority will arise also enables us to consider when it may fail to occur (i.e., when the silent majority indeed remains silent) or even when political solidarity with the authority will come about (i.e., when the majority becomes a vocal supporter of the authority). For example, it would be interesting to explore further the strategies that authorities can use to (re)legitimize themselves and their treatment of the minority in the eyes of the general community and, therefore, mobilize collective community support in their opposition to the minority. Another strategy available to this group is to keep the minority dissent under the radar and off the political agenda, an issue that the majority need not concern themselves with. It is possible that this strategy would be the first

choice of those in positions of established authority in dealing with dissent and that they would only engage in attempts to legitimize their position when faced with the majority that has, in one way or another, voiced its concern for the minority.

In conclusion, the political solidarity model proposed in this article offers a novel framework for understanding social change and social stability as distinct yet interdependent processes shaped by the dynamics of self-categorization in the tripolar context of intergroup power relations. Central to the dynamics of political solidarity is a contest between the authority and the minority over the definition and meaning of a shared (higher order) identity with the majority—whether the status quo or social change prevails depends on whether the majority comes to perceive the authority or the minority (respectively) as sharing an understanding of who we are and how we should relate to others in the social world. When identity meaning ceases to be shared with the authority and becomes shared with the minority, majority challenge to authority in solidarity with the minority, and therefore social change, becomes possible. Given the relevance of the model for social psychological approaches to social change, we hope that this article will stimulate further interest and debate in this area of work.

## NOTE

1. In the original statement of self-categorization theory, the term *superordinate* is reserved for the human level of categorization, which becomes salient when we make interspecies comparisons. Contemporary use of this term denotes a higher level of a social identity, more generally.

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