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From Marginal to Mainstream and Vice Versa: Leaders’ Valuation of Diversity While in the Minority versus Majority

Radmila Prislin*

San Diego State University

Cory Davenport

University of Maryland

Yishan Xu

University of Virginia

Ryan Moreno

Miami University

Nathan Honeycutt

Rutgers University

This study examined tolerance and appreciation for differences within a group among leaders of numerically distinct factions (majority vs. minority), whose size remained stable or changed over time (majority ↔ minority). Appreciation or valuing differences in and of themselves was significantly higher among minority than majority leaders when their positions remained stable but not when their positions changed. Appreciation for differences decreased significantly when minority leaders became majority leaders. Tolerance or willingness to put up with differences even when evaluating them negatively increased significantly among both minority and majority leaders once their positions changed. Although this increased tolerance may be temporarily beneficial, in the long run, it could be detrimental to the group as it leads to a cessation of interactions between a minority and a majority. Findings could inform policies to advance functioning of

*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Radmila Prislin, San Diego State University, 5500 Campanile Drive, San Diego, CA 92182. [e-mail: rprislin@mail.sdsu.edu].

the groups whose minority and majority factions may reverse positions by design (e.g., political parties winning or losing elections) or via demographic changes (e.g., ethnic or racial minorities becoming majorities and vice versa).

Negotiation of differences is a hallmark of effective leadership. For all their similarities that provide the glue that keeps them together, group members can and do differ among themselves. Successful management of these differences is just as important for the health of the group as is nurturing the similarities (Brewer, 1991; Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Packer, Miners, & Ungson, 2018). Importantly, some of the differences may provide a basis for ingroup differentiation into factions, additionally increasing the challenge of their negotiations. For example, groups in which opinions are bimodal and asymmetrical typically consider opinions by a majority faction as normative. These normative opinions serve as a reference against which all others are judged. Hence, opinions espoused by a minority faction are evaluated against the majority standard, rendering the minority as “different” (Prislin, 2010b). Negotiation of these differences, perhaps more than any other aspect of leadership, indicates that leadership is a group process (Alderfer, 1987; Gaffney, Rast, & Hogg, 2018; Hogg, 2011; Hogg, van Knippenberg, & Rast, 2012; Pittinsky, 2009, 2010; Pittinsky & Simon, 2007).

Vilification of differences is a leadership style of least resistance. It plays to a widespread tendency to see enemies in those who are not friends (Levine, 1989). As history teaches and recent events illustrate, many a leader rises and rides on this platform. Then U.S. presidential candidate Donald Trump’s unfiltered tirades against minorities may have been particularly egregious but similar tendencies can be found in political leaders throughout time and across the world (Glaeser, 2005; Gurr, 2000). As seductive as this leadership style may be, it is ultimately costly. The costs are many and not limited to the targeted minority, though, of course, the latter are most obvious. There are costs to the group as a whole and they range from a seriously undermined group creativity (Antonio et al., 2004), and effectiveness (Sommers, 2006), to narrowmindedness and destructive conflicts (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Lamoreaux, 2007). Effective leadership, therefore, requires an alternative approach to negotiating intra-group differences.

Rather than vilified, differences may be tolerated. Importantly, tolerance implies neither indifference nor the absence of a negative valuation. Inherent in the concept of tolerance is the notion that differences, though still negatively valued, may be perceived as legitimate. Leaders advocating for tolerance, relative to vilification, may be just as prejudiced against those who are perceived as non-normative; however, tolerant leaders are willing to accommodate different others. In the political arena, tolerance refers to a willingness to grant political rights to political opponents (Harell, 2010; Marquart & Paxton, 2007), mostly as a means of avoiding the destructive consequences that occur when prejudice turn into discrimination (Sullivan & Transue, 1999; Walzer, 1997). Tolerance, therefore, requires

a level of self-control and restraint from acting on the contempt for differences (Chong, 1994; Dijker & Koomen, 2007). Tolerant leaders are willing to “put up with” differences, considering them as an expression of the positions within the allowable, though not necessarily preferred, range of variations within a group.

Differences, however, need not always be perceived as inferior. “A warmer grade of tolerance” (Allport, 1954, p. 425) recognizes that differences may represent a value in and of itself. Their value in advancing progress of a group was recognized as early as mid-19th century by John Stuart Mill (1848/2001) who wrote: “It is hardly possible to overstate the value of placing human beings in contact with persons dissimilar to themselves, and with the modes of thought and action unlike those with which they are familiar . . . Such communication has always been, and is particularly in the present age, one of the primary sources of progress” (p. 677). Clearly, within this conceptualization, differences are appreciated as a benefit to the group (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999; Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Weber, 2003). Leaders appreciating differences consider them a social capital that strengthens the group (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000) and in some rare instances, possibly defines the group (Devos, Comby, & Dechamps, 1996; Hutchinson, Jetten, Christian, & Haycraft, 2006; Jetten & Hornsey, 2011; Jetten, Postmes, & McAuliffe, 2002). The latter notion is reflected in multicultural societies (Berry, 1984), whose prototype encompasses differences tied together by mutual appreciation through the shared, higher-order values (Stanley, 2003).

Appreciating versus Tolerating Differences While in the Minority versus Majority

Under what conditions could leaders be expected to appreciate versus merely tolerate differences? We propose that their reactions are shaped by their own position within a group. In groups with a numerically majority and a numerically minority, it is the former that typically defines group prototype (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). That is, members of the majority in general—their leaders in particular—tend to perceive their own characteristics as normative and project them into a group prototype. From the perspective of the majority, the group is who they are (Wenzel, Mummendey, Weber, & Waldzus, 2003). For example, in a study conducted after the political unification with Eastern Germany, Western Germans who comprised the numerical majority declared themselves more prototypical Germans than their Eastern counterparts (Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Boettcher, 2004, Study 3). Even when this tendency for majority in-group projection is not expressed explicitly, it is present implicitly as evident in White Americans’ tendency to associate themselves more strongly the category “American” than they associated African Americans and Asian Americans (Devos & Banaji, 2005).

This appropriation of the group is unlikely among the members of the minority. Their numerical inferiority is a serious reality-check against the ingroup projection tendency. Whereas typically unable to claim that the group reflects exclusively their own characteristics, members of the minority in general - their leaders in particular—are likely to claim a place within the group prototype. From the perspective of the minority, therefore, the group prototype is multifaceted and it reflects both who they are, but also who others, unlike them, are. Martin Luther King, Jr. underscored this idea, saying: “We may have all come on different ships, but we’re in the same boat now.”

These contrasting perspectives are likely to shape how majority and minority leaders conceive of differences with the group. Having the luxury of the normative position, majority leaders presumably attribute “different” to the minority whose non-normative distinction is outside of the group prototype (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). That is, they perceive the minority as different from the majority. Minority leaders, however, cannot simply reciprocate seeing majority as “different” and stop at that. The distinctiveness of their position within a group is likely to broaden their conceptualization of differences to include both majority and minority. This possibility is suggested by research on multiculturalism showing that minorities endorse a group (society) prototype consisting of a conglomeration of differences (cultures; Verkuyten, 2005). If so, then while perceiving the majority as different from themselves, minority leaders are likely to extend the concept of differences to themselves, acknowledging that they are different from the majority. If “different” is a self-attribute as much as another-attribute, then leaders in the minority, compared to those in the majority, should show greater appreciation for the differences within the group. With respect to tolerance, however, there is little reason to expect that majority and minority leaders would differ. Other things being equal, both should generally be willing to tolerate each other, granting each other legitimacy irrespective of their valuation of each other’s position. Stated formally:

Hypothesis 1(i) and 1(ii): Minority leaders, in comparison to majority leaders, should show (i) greater appreciation for differences but (ii) comparable tolerance for differences.

The relative positions of minority and majority within a group can and do change. Attempts at change are motivated by the asymmetrical nature of the positions whereby majorities, compared to the minorities, enjoy disproportionately more benefits and carry fewer burdens. Even within the groups that have built-in mechanisms to protect against this asymmetry, there are costs to being in the minority. This was recognized by the former Chief justice of the United States Supreme Court William Rehnquist (1952), who wrote: “To the argument that the majority may not deprive a minority from its constitutional rights, the answer must

be made that while this is sound in theory, in the long run it is the majority that will determine what the constitutional rights of the minority are.”

Moscovici (1976) eloquently summarized this reality stating that even though there may be nothing wrong with being a minority, “it is tragic to remain one” (p. 74). Recognizing this, minority leaders often strive to change their position, seeking to convert members of the majority to their (minority) position (Prislin, 2010a). When successful, they effectively transform themselves into the majority and ipso facto, majority leaders become minority leaders. Such a transformation affords both leaders the experience of being in both positions. The relativity of the positions should then make the concept of “different” salient and applicable to both.

Taken at its face value, such a promise implies that in the aftermath of social change, there ought to be a greater appreciation for differences within the group. Yet, social change is much more than a mechanical switch of positions. Because a sense of loss for the former majority is stronger than the corresponding sense of gain for the former minority, a losing majority tends to distance themselves from the group faster and more intensely than the former minority accepts the group as its own (Prislin & Christensen, 2005). The resultant lack of a shared group identity is not conducive to appreciation of differences with the group. Different others can be appreciated only in the context of a higher-order shared identity (Mummendey & Wenzel, 1999). Thus, we anticipated that immediately in the aftermath of social change, both former majority leaders and former minority leaders would decrease their appreciation for differences within the group, though the former may be less pronounced due to the flooring effect (i.e., low initial appreciation). If so, then the overall appreciation for differences with a group that has experienced social change should be lower than in the stable group.

We anticipated a different pattern of results with respect to tolerance. Whereas relativity of majority-minority positions within a group may not be conducive to increasing appreciation for differences, it should contribute to tolerance for such differences. This relativity should make the concept of “different” not only salient but also attributable to both those newly in the minority and those newly in the majority. In the context of a weakened shared identity (Prislin & Christensen, 2005), this should increase tendencies to dissociate from each other. Thus, leaders newly in the minority, as well as those newly in the majority should show higher tolerance for differences compared to their counterparts whose positions within a group remain stable. Because tolerance provides a way of acknowledging differences while still refusing to interact with different others (i.e., “respectful distancing” see Lee, 2013), it should be equally acceptable to leaders newly in the majority and those newly in the minority. Stated formally,

Hypothesis 2(i) and 2(ii): In comparison to their counterparts whose positions remain stable, minority (majority) leaders whose position changes to majority

(minority) should show (i) lower appreciation for differences but (ii) higher tolerance for differences within the group. As a result, the overall appreciation for differences should be lower but the overall tolerance for differences should be higher in the groups undergoing change in minority (majority) leadership compared to groups with stable minority (majority) leadership.

These hypotheses were tested in a study that emulated a group decision-making process. A naïve participant, acting as a group leader, received either minority or majority support from other group members (experimental confederates) for the advocated position on a social issue. This initially established position either remained stable or was reversed (minority ↔ majority) when, half-way through the group discussion, some of the initial supporters (opponents) switched their alliances. Upon completion of the group discussion and prior to the alleged second, group decision-making phase of the study, the participant indicated (i) tolerance and (ii) appreciation for the differences of opinions within the group. This experimental setting was developed to reflect real-life group interactions that involve opinion-based majorities and minorities whose positions evolve through the process of social influence (e.g., political parties, factions within an organization).

Method

Participants and Design

Of the 141 undergraduate students who participated in exchange for partial fulfillment of a course requirement, 105 were women and 36 were men, with the mean age of $M = 18.55$ ($SD = 2.26$). The sample included 71 White (non-Latino/a) Americans, 27 Asian Americans, 21 Latino/a Americans, 5 African Americans, and 17 participants of an unspecified race or ethnicity. Participants were randomly assigned to conditions in a 2 (numerical position: majority vs. minority) × 2 (position stability: stable vs. changed) between-subjects design.

Procedure

In each session, one participant and five confederates engaged in a discussion about the issues relevant to the legalization of marijuana, which was debated in the state of California. The ten issues included addictiveness, medicinal and legal considerations, psychological harm, economic considerations, similarity to alcohol and tobacco, work-related considerations, potential for increased revenue to the state, traffic accidents, and constitutional issues. The discussion was presented as a first phase of the two-part study that was described as an investigation into group-decision making. The first, discussion phase was presented as a necessary

precursor to the second phase in which a group would decide whether or not marijuana should be legalized.

In an ostensibly random procedure, the naïve participant was selected to lead the discussion, expressing her or his position first, followed by the five confederates. Depending on the experimental condition, confederates either agreed or disagreed with the participant and offered supporting arguments for their positions. Arguments that the confederates offered as explanations for their positions were selected in a pilot study. To ensure that the position advocated (pro or contra legalization of marijuana) was not confounded with the quality of explanation, arguments were selected so that those supporting the issue were on average as strong as arguments used to oppose the issue, $F(1, 23) = .91, ns$.

The pattern of confederates' (dis)agreement with the participant was prescribed to afford the participant the initial majority or minority position, which either remained stable or was changed half-way through the discussion. To establish the initial *majority* position, three confederates initially agreed and two disagreed with the participant. To establish the initial *minority* position, four confederates initially disagreed and one agreed with the participant. In the *stable* conditions, this 4:2 (2:4) ratio of agreement to disagreement was maintained for all 10 issues. In the *change* conditions, the ratio was reversed when two voters (confederates) switched their alignment on the sixth through the tenth issue. This manipulation was meant to convert the participant's initial majority (minority) position to a minority (majority) position.

At the conclusion of the discussion, participants were told that although some in the discussion group supported and others opposed legalization of marijuana, the group as a whole would have to make a decision in the second part of the study. Before the purported decision-making phase, participants were asked to answer a few questions about their experiences in the first part of the study. For that purpose, they were escorted to separate rooms. Upon completion, in the course of a thorough debriefing, participants were told that there would be no second part of the study. Participants were thanked for their participation and dismissed.

Dependent Measures

All measures were assessed on a 9-point scale ranging from -4 (*completely disagree/very much decreased*) to 4 (*completely agree/very much increased*).

Appreciation for differences. Participants indicated their (dis)agreement with the statements that different opinions that were held by few members of the group made their group interesting, enhanced the group, enriched the group, represented a gain for the group, and enabled the group to carry on throughout ($\alpha = .84$).

Tolerance for differences. Participants indicated their (dis)agreement with the statements about not minding different opinions as long as they did not impose on them, approaching differences with the motto “live and let live,” respecting those with whom they disagreed, rejecting imposition of opinions on others, and acknowledging that each side knew what was best for them ($\alpha = .70$).

Manipulation Checks

The effectiveness of the numerical position manipulation was assessed by questions about the extent to which others in the session (dis)agreed with the participant at the beginning and at the end of group discussion and the extent to which other’s agreement with the participant changed from the beginning to the end of the discussion.

Results

Manipulation Checks

Numerical position. Responses to the questions about others’ agreement and disagreement (recoded) at the beginning of the discussion were averaged into an index of perceived agreement with one’s views ($r = .67$). A 2×2 (numerical position \times stability) ANOVA on this index yielded only a significant main effect of numerical position, $F(1, 137) = 704.02$, partial $\eta^2 = .84$, $p < .001$. As expected, participants in the majority condition perceived a significantly higher level of agreement with their views ($M = 2.78$, $SD = .98$) than those in the minority condition ($M = -2.47$, $SD = .98$).

Position stability. Responses to the questions about others’ agreement and disagreement (recoded) at the end of the discussion were averaged into an index of perceived agreement with one’s views ($r = .51$). A 2×2 (numerical position \times stability) ANOVA on this index yielded only a significant interaction effect of numerical position and stability, $F(1, 137) = 383.31$, partial $\eta^2 = .72$, $p < .001$. This and all other interaction effects were further examined by conducting simple effect tests, with Bonferroni correction for multiple comparisons. As expected, participants initially in the majority perceived a significantly higher level of final agreement when their position remained stable ($M = 2.74$, $SD = .83$) than when it was changed ($M = -2.03$, $SD = 1.71$), $t(137) = 14.32$, $p < .001$. In contrast, participants initially in the minority perceived a significantly higher level of final agreement when their position changed ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.35$) than when it was stable ($M = -2.14$, $SD = 1.47$), $t(137) = 13.37$, $p < .001$. An additional analysis examined the extent to which participants felt that agreement of others varied within the session. This analysis compared perceived variation to zero, which

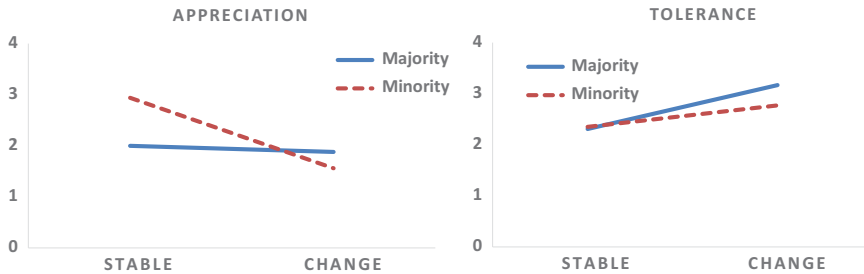


Fig. 1. Appreciation and tolerance for differences within a group as a function of numerical position and stability of numerical position. [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

would indicate consistent (lack of) others' agreement. As anticipated, participants in the stable conditions perceived little change in others' agreement with their views ($M = .12$ and $-.46$ for the majority and minority conditions, respectively; neither mean was significantly different from zero, both $t_s(137) < 1.15$, *ns*). In contrast, those in the change conditions perceived a significant decrease in agreement when they started in the majority ($M = -1.51$; $t[137] = 3.72$, $p < .001$), but a significant increase in agreement when they started in the minority ($M = 1.14$; $t[137] = 2.89$, $p < .01$).

Taken together, these findings support that experimental manipulations were successful.

Dependent Measures

A $2 \times 2 \times 2$ (position \times stability \times type of reaction) mixed model ANOVA with type of reaction (tolerance, appreciation, $r = 0.36$) as a within subjects factor, yielded a significant main effect of type of reaction, $F(1, 137) = 29.28$, partial $\eta^2 = .18$, $p < .001$, and two-way interactions between position and type of reaction, $F(1, 137) = 5.67$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$, $p < .05$, and stability and type of reaction, $F(1, 137) = 45.71$, partial $\eta^2 = .25$, $p < .001$. These effects, however, were qualified by a significant three-way interaction, $F(1, 137) = 4.02$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$, $p < .05$ (see Figure 1). This interaction was further analyzed by performing separate 2×2 (position \times stability) ANOVAs on (i) appreciation and (ii) tolerance for differences within a group.

Appreciation for differences. Significant main effects of position, $F(1, 137) = 4.96$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$, $p < .05$, and stability, $F(1, 137) = 29.51$, partial $\eta^2 = .18$, $p < .001$, were qualified by a significant position \times stability interaction, $F(1, 137) = 20.66$, partial $\eta^2 = .13$, $p < .001$. Simple effect tests revealed a significantly stronger appreciation for differences among leaders in the minority

($M = 2.94$) than majority ($M = 2.00$) when their position was stable, $t(137) = 4.56$, $p < .001$, lending support to Hypothesis 1(i). When their position changed, however, both expressed similar levels of appreciation ($M = 1.56$ and 1.88 for leaders initially in the minority and initially in the majority, respectively), $t(137) = 1.56$, ns. Additional analyses within the initial majority conditions revealed a similar level of appreciation regardless of position stability, $t(137) = .58$, ns. In contrast, leaders initially in the minority had a significantly lower level of appreciation for differences when their position was changed to majority than when it remained stable throughout group interaction, $t(137) = 6.79$, $p < .001$, lending partial support to Hypothesis 2(i).

Tolerance for differences. An ANOVA revealed only a significant main effect of stability of position, $F(1, 137) = 22.45$, partial $\eta^2 = .14$, $p < .001$. Tolerance for differences was significantly higher upon change of position ($M = 2.96$) than when position remained stable throughout group interaction ($M = 2.33$), lending support to Hypothesis 2(ii).

Discussion

One of the most important tasks of a leader is negotiation of differences with a group. Our results provide support for the hypothesis that leaders approach differences from the perspective of their own position within the group. This was evident in minority leaders' much stronger appreciation for differences compared to their majority counterparts. Importantly, this held true only in the groups with stable minority and majority factions. When these factions reversed their positions, leaders newly in the majority (formerly in the minority) expressed appreciation for differences similar to that observed in the leaders newly in the minority (formerly in the majority). This leveling of the reactions in the aftermath of social change was due primarily to the change of heart among leaders newly in the majority. Upon securing the coveted majority position, their appreciation for differences within the group plummeted. Interestingly, and contrary to our expectation, no such reduction was observed among leaders newly in the minority whose appreciation for differences remained stable. Significant reduction in appreciation among leaders newly in the majority, coupled with a relatively low appreciation maintained among leaders newly in the minority resulted in the overall reduction in appreciation for differences in the aftermath of social change.

Policy Implications

These findings are especially important in light of the fact that many minority leaders advocate for social change on the platform of a strong appreciation for different others. In the political arena, leaders in a minority typically campaign

promising better future not only for like-minded followers but for all. Part of that better future includes better treatment of their opponents than they received while in the minority. For example, several years ago, Nancy Pelosi, a then minority leader in the U.S. House of Representatives criticized Republican majority's threat to eliminate the filibuster as a measure of last resort for a minority in the legislative process. Arguing against this so-called "nuclear option," congresswoman Pelosi promised a much better treatment of her fellow Republicans once Democrats won a majority. When Democrats did become the majority, however, the promise of better (inclusive) treatment vanished in a flurry of the legislation that all but excluded the Republican minority. The ideals of inclusiveness, advocated by minority leaders while seeking social change, do not necessarily translate to reality immediately in the aftermath of social change.

Whereas successful minority leaders may not uphold their ideals of appreciation for differences, they fare much better with respect to tolerance for differences. Our results suggest that upon winning a majority, they significantly increased their tolerance. This suggests that although far from celebrating a new minority, leaders newly in the majority showed an increased readiness to recognize this minority as rightfully within the group. In a way, the new majority's loss of ideals (of appreciation) was accompanied by an increase in pragmatism (of tolerance). Notably, leaders newly in the minority showed a similar increase in tolerance. This suggests that in spite of losing the normative position within a group, these leaders were willing to recognize that a new normative position, however objectionable, was legitimate. In so doing, they also appear to be increasingly pragmatic.

The shared increase in tolerance likely has different functional bases for the leaders newly in a majority and leaders newly in a minority. We surmise that increased tolerance among leaders newly in the majority serves primarily to consolidate their newly won position within the group. Their increased tolerance likely aims to appease those who lost control of the group. Acknowledgment of their legitimacy could be disarming if it provides a vehicle for expression of the new minority position without making it competitive. By preventing further contest over the normative position within a group, leaders newly in the majority can focus on administration and strengthening of their position. Their increased tolerance, therefore, is functionally assertive.

In contrast, increased tolerance among leaders newly in the minority is likely defensive. We surmise that its primary function is to protect them from discrimination by those newly in control of the group. By claiming legitimacy of different and possibly objectionable positions within a group, they emphasize legitimacy of their own position. An important notion here is the right to existence without fear of negative consequences. Tolerance, therefore, could serve as a preemptive defense against discrimination among those forced into a non-normative (minority) position.

Although these conjectures need to be examined empirically in future studies, some suggestive evidence in support of the proposed interpretation comes from the reactions to the recent decision by the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) to legalize same-sex marriage. The SCOTUS decision is an example par excellence of social change effected through successful minority advocacy. Writing on behalf of the new majority on the SCOTUS, Justice Anthony Kennedy stated:

“Finally, it must be emphasized that religions, and those who adhere to religious doctrines, may continue to advocate with utmost sincere conviction that by divine precept, same-sex marriage should not be condoned. . . . The same is true of those who oppose same-sex marriage for other reasons. . . . The Constitution, however, does not permit the state to bar same-sex couples from marriage on the same terms as accorded to couples of the opposite sex.”

In a demonstration of tolerance of the (new) majority, Justice Kennedy affirmed the right of the opponents of the same-sex marriage to advocate their position: “. . . *may continue to advocate with utmost sincere conviction that by divine precept, same-sex marriage should not be condoned. . . . The same is true of those who oppose same-sex marriage for other reasons.*” At the same time, he emphasized that there would be no further contest of the same-sex marriage because the Constitution “*does not permit the state to bar same-sex couples from marriage on the same terms as accorded to couples of the opposite sex.*”

Leaders newly in the minority also reacted with tolerance but with a different undertone. Their emphasis was on the protection of a new minority. Representing this minority, former Republican presidential candidate and Governor of Florida, Jeb Bush stated:

“In a country as diverse as ours, good people who have opposing views should be able to live side by side. It is now critical that as a country, we protect freedom and the right of conscience and also not discriminate.”

Similarly, another former Republican presidential candidate and the U.S. Senator Marco Rubio stated:

“While I disagree with the decision, we live in a republic and must abide by the law. A large number of Americans will continue to believe in traditional marriage and a large number of Americans will be pleased with the Court’s decision today. In the years ahead, it is my hope that each side will respect the dignity of the other.”

It appears that increased tolerance in the aftermath of social changes serves as a vehicle for respectful disengagement (Lee, 2013). Leaders on both sides generally appear to subscribe to the motto “live and let live,” acknowledging each other while disapproving of each other’s positions. This strategy of disconnection may be beneficial for both involved parties and for a group as a whole. It could provide a “time off” needed to disengage from a direct contest. If used temporarily, this strategy could prevent conflict escalation (Jacobs, Christensen, & Prislin, 2009;

Prislin, Sawicki, & Williams, 2011) and weakening of the group, often seen in the aftermath of social change that transforms a minority to a majority and vice versa (Prislin, 2010b).

This potentially beneficial outcome, however, is far from assured. A prolonged period of disengagement in the absence of attempts toward a constructive re-engagement, can be costly. It can lead to balkanization as each faction continues to reside comfortably within its own niche. Worse yet, it may lead to a further narrowing of the minds as each side polarizes its position while professing tolerance for the other. Some suggestive evidence in support of this possibility comes from the research on temporal trends in political views of the various segments of the U.S. population, which showed an increased polarization of the views on both sides of the political spectrum (Twenge, Honeycutt, Prislin, & Sherman, 2016), along with an increase in tolerance (Twenge, Campbell, & Carter, 2014). At a societal level, this has led to tolerance-professing but segregated communities that have all but ceased to interact (Dunkelman, 2014; Motyl, Iyer, Oishi, Trawalter, & Nosek, 2014). Tolerance, in the absence of interaction, may signal dissolution of the superordinate category where communities cease to perceive themselves as different parts of the same (societal) category and begin to perceive themselves as completely different categories.

If tolerance has a Janus face, it provides a leadership opportunity. Successful leaders turn challenges into opportunities. In this case, it would mean turning the challenge that an increased tolerance could dissolve a group into an opportunity for strengthening it. The latter could be achieved through a constructive re-engagement of group differences in a process focused primarily on learning from differences. With an emphasis on learning, leaders could forge high-quality individual relationships with different members (LMX) to capitalize on the differences within a group (Nishii & Mayer, 2009; see also Martin, Guillaume, Thomas, Lee, & Epitropaki, 2016). Leaders who leverage tolerance to re-examine the meaning of differences and what could be learned from them foster creativity and innovation in their group (see Martin, Thomas, Hewstone, & Gardikiotis, 2018). New ideas are much more likely to emerge from engaging with rather than separating from different others (Mill, 1848/2011; Nemeth, 1986). Thus, even when they do not appreciate different others for who they are, prudent leaders embrace different others for what they could do in advancing the vitality of the group.

Limitations and Future Directions

However intriguing, our conclusions are necessarily limited to the conditions examined in the present research and may differ with changed circumstances that elevate minority leaders and demote majority leaders. Although we captured transitions in leadership by manipulating the size of their support, a timeframe was too narrow to depict many complex variables that may affect leaders' valuation of

differences with a group. Moreover, our experimental design, while ensuring a high level of control over the variables of interest, created an “artificial” environment. Extending the timeframe, preferably in a longitudinal research involving “natural” groups and their leaders outside a laboratory would be an important direction for future research. Such research would test generalizability of our findings and allow for an examination of the conditions that moderate the effects of increased tolerance in the aftermath of social change. Establishing conditions under which increased tolerance deescalates conflict versus polarizes positions would help to develop policies that promote capitalizing on differences and guard against disintegration.

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RADMILA PRISLIN received her PhD from University of Zagreb, Croatia. She is currently Professor of Social Psychology at San Diego State University. Her research interests include social influence, group dynamics, attitudes, and persuasion. Her research has been supported by National Science Foundation (U.S.A.),

Leverhulme Trust (U.K.) and World Health Organization. She currently serves as co-Editor of the *European Journal of Social Psychology*.

CORY DAVENPORT received his PhD from Texas Tech University. He is currently a Senior Researcher at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), a Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence at the University of Maryland. His research interests include political psychology, emerging social/behavioral science methodologies, and science and technology policy.

YISHAN XU received her PhD from University of Virginia. Her research interests include cognitive processes and emotion regulation procedures, cross-cultural differences in cognitive processes and clinical presentations, as well as clinical application of psychological research.

RYAN MORENO received his MA in social psychology from San Diego State University. He is currently a doctoral student in the Miami University Social Psychology Program. His research interests include intergroup relations, group dynamics, and social ostracism.

NATHAN HONEYCUTT received his MA in social psychology from San Diego State University. He is currently a doctoral student at Rutgers University. His research interests include political psychology, minority influence, group processes, and scientific integrity.

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