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**GOING SOMEWHERE OR STAYING PUT?**  
**THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF MOVEMENTS THAT CHALLENGE**  
**MINORITY-MAJORITY RELATIONS**

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## DECLARATION

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This thesis describes original research undertaken in the Department of Psychology, Murdoch University. This thesis has been prepared as a series of papers, with context statements to demonstrate the connections between the papers. Where the chapters involved substantial contributions from others this is appropriately acknowledged and my own original contribution is clearly demonstrated. Otherwise, the writing and work outlined in these chapters is solely my own.

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**Lisa Kathryn Hartley**

## ABSTRACT

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In many societies around the world the position that members of a privileged majority should take regarding institutionalised inequalities experienced by some minority groups is the site of contentious debate. Despite, or perhaps even because of, such debate there is often a lack of progress of these views into well-defined and effective movements that produce social change. This thesis starts with the assumption that reducing intergroup inequality involves, at least in part, the effective mobilisation and engagement of majority members.

Using Australia as a case example, the central research question is what are the social psychological factors that help movements take a form that is consistent with action to produce change in minority-majority relations? From a social identity perspective, it is argued that such movements encounter challenges due to the conflicting (and potentially conflicted) emotions and beliefs that their members and other members of the society hold. The research is based on a triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods and is conducted in the context of significant socio-political transformations in Australian society, starting with the defeat of a social conservative Australian Prime Minister and the succeeding Prime Minister's apology to the minority Indigenous population for past wrongs.

In a review of Australia's recent socio-political history, social psychological factors of potential relevance to the research question are proposed (Chapter 1). Evidence for some of these claims is then offered through the reporting of interviews of social activists (Chapter 2). In light of the Prime Minister's apology to Australia's

Indigenous population and the findings from the interviews, the remaining chapters focus specifically on Indigenous and non-Indigenous relations. In Chapter 3, the social psychological theoretical concepts and research relevant to this issue are critically reviewed.

In three cross-sectional studies during the year after the apology, majority group members' positions regarding policies that aim to foster reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians are tracked (Chapter 4). This research provides correlational evidence for the utility of the opinion-based groups construct in explaining collective action intentions in contexts of emerging debate. Findings show that other factors such as group-based guilt and efficacy beliefs play an important, but secondary role in predicting action. Results also show that groups formed around opinions can become disconnected from action and explanations for this are discussed.

The utility of opinion-based group memberships in capturing emerging debate and collective action is also explored on a social networking internet site (Chapter 5). In Study 1, a content analysis of group forming around conflicting positions about minority-majority relations is presented. In Study 2, posts on the discussion board of two groups with opposing positions about the apology is analysed over a six point period. Findings suggest that group discussion and the actions advocated by group members shifted with changes in the offline political environment. Specifically, pro-apology group members are more likely to encourage others to undertake actions to promote their groups' opinion compared to the anti-apology group.

Chapter 6 examines whether the same processes underpin action for activists compared to sympathisers regarding to two government policies designed to address Indigenous disadvantage: economic development and paternalistic intervention. Most noteworthy, social movement identification is found to be an important predictor of action for the economic development policy for activists, whereas opinion-based group identification is important for the general community. Social identity has no predictive value for the intervention policy for either sample. It is argued that these results suggest the lack of development of action-orientated identities. In a technical note (Chapter 7), the validity of the opinion-based group construct is examined and it is argued that opinion-based group membership can be an excellent predictor of action but opinion-processes might be more relevant in certain contexts (e.g., for contested issues).

This thesis provides converging evidence for the idea that the incipient and actual members of the movements can be seen to be involved in active processes of forming social identities that are suited to producing social change. At all times these movements also appear to face challenges from alternative views (government decisions, public opinion and the policies of organisations). In some cases these appear likely to compromise or undermine the likelihood of the social identity promoting the level of engagement necessary to promote social change. Indeed, if the most active and most committed are ambivalent about the need to act on behalf of the cause then the cause is in trouble.

The value of this thesis lies in helping to map out social psychological factors that may contribute to the social stability of disadvantage. That is, rather than explaining the lack of social change in terms of explicit or implicit ideological resistance or

economic and political conspiracies, we can explain the lack of change as resting that intricate social psychological processes that have the potential to go wrong. On the upside, this thesis offers important practical implications for advocates of social change.

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## DEDICATION

---

This thesis is dedicated to Mike (Reza) McCoy, Altaf Ali, Ishaq Ali, Wali (Daniel) Baboli, Sudat Muradi and Joenishananth Gunarathnam. Thank you for teaching me that even in the midst of profound injustice and suffering beautiful friendships can grow. I hope that one day, very soon, you and your families will receive the peace and the freedom that so many of us take for granted.

I came across this poem during the early stages of my PhD candidature. I think it aptly captures the inherent tensions involved in the struggle for justice for Indigenous peoples in Australia, many of which are touched upon in this thesis. I include this poem as a dedication to all those engaged in this struggle and as an acknowledgement that the injustices that Indigenous peoples have endured and continue to endure should not, and cannot, be forgotten.

### **New Politics: Reverse Cycle. Climate Change.**

Eleven years of leadership  
to white out difference  
and create just 'ONE great Tribe,  
one Australia' (Sydney Morning  
Herald headline 12/10/07).

'Strayan', you know,  
mainstream services,  
make all the same now,  
Sameness is in,  
Like 'One Nation', like  
Hanson's fish and chips.

'Sorry'?

No guilt. No victim.  
No black arm band.  
No 'Sorry' way.

But will write a preamble of Symbol  
in the Constitution  
to say, 'once many a tribe left  
their footprints on the land'!  
For museum and gallery showcase only.

We sure want their Black traces caked in  
like museum iron cast pieces  
of connected head chains  
and prisoners' iron ball rings.

For those still truly alive,  
back to Mission space, my friend!  
Assimilate or Perish!

A new INVASION or a new  
POLITICAL INVENTION?  
With a 21st Century stroke of a pen,  
the gubba sends in an army of police,  
medicos, welfare people,  
without needing permits,  
troops who can legally invade  
remote black homelands  
for at least five years  
to hunt down child abusers.

What a lucky break  
our *Little Children are Sacred* report gave  
our national visionary leader  
enabling him to legislate  
to send in the troops and  
hide behind a trendy law  
of reverse cycle (racial discrimination)  
and climate change (mainstream  
everything to one 'Strayan' way)

The community's welfare cheques  
can now be quarantined  
by good-hearted administrators  
for worthy expenditures,  
definitely not for grog  
to dull the pain  
of a 'dying' race.

Back to Mission space, my friend!  
Back to the Future!  
Assimilate or Perish!

Legislation escapes  
Land rights, Human rights,  
any rights that don't suit  
the neo colonialists who, however,  
are willing to write a lovely preamble  
admitting this country is not terra nullius  
when they first arrived,  
and sing hymns of praise  
of 'She'll be right, mate.'

We're all egalitarian now-  
One Dream, One Nation.

If Blacks want their own land,  
they can buy their own!  
Interested in a 99-year lease?  
Negotiate (if they can),  
that's our strategy, wedge politics,  
Survival of the fittest clan,  
our brand new rule.  
If elected,  
we promise to sign the death warrant:  
Multiculturalism is dead.  
Land rights is dead.

But watch out, fellow 'Strayan',  
two faces of the same coin  
brand each other:  
the Economic Conservative!  
Same Choice! One Nation!

Oh bipartisan saints who humanely  
send in the troops  
to protect our sacred little children;  
they promote individual tax cuts  
for worker's choice to choose a dream  
that can be bought! (election bribe)

Voters, come help ink in  
an imposed national amnesia,  
vote for 'Reverse Cycle  
and Climate Change'!

- *Deborah Ruiz Wall*



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