

# Can men promote feminist movements? Outgroup influence sources reduce attitude change toward feminist movements

*Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*

14(5) 723–733

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DOI: 10.1177/1368430210398013

gpir.sagepub.com



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## Abstract

This research investigates the possibility for men to promote feminist movements. In two experiments, we used the social influence technique of reassociation, known to reduce the rejection of feminists by blaming the target for forgetting that feminists have promoted women's rights. An influence source, either same-gender (lower threat) or different-gender (higher threat), confronted participants with the reassociation technique and blamed them in a more versus less threatening manner. This procedure is known to induce positive attitude change when threat is lower. Results of two experiments showed that a less threatening ingroup source induced a more positive attitude change toward feminists when reassociation was less threatening than when it was more threatening, while a more threatening outgroup source achieved equally lower levels of attitude change in all conditions. In sum, the reassociation procedure can be used to ameliorate attitudes toward feminist movements, but within the framework of intragroup, not intergroup, social influence communications.

## Keywords

feminist movements, social influence, intergroup threat, minority, discrimination

Paper received 18 June 2010; revised version accepted 30 November 2010.

Can men promote feminist movements? As noted by Marx Ferree and McClurg Mueller (2004), women's movements, among which feminist movements, have been "among the most enduring and successful of all movements in the modern period" (p. 576) and have profoundly influenced the values, structure and functioning of today's society. At the same time, however, empirical evidence shows that feminists are discriminated against and rejected, even by women (e.g., Roy, Weibust, & Miller, 2009; Tougas, Brown,

Beaton, & Joly, 1995), which reduces the support given to feminists in their action against the many social issues that still need further change, from

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gender inequalities to modern forms of sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995; Tougas et al., 1995). In this respect, the question of the support needed by feminists is a lively debated one, and the possible support provided by men is one of the most controversial issues in this debate (e.g., hooks, 2000; Jardine & Smith, 1989). There is no question that a number of men have been involved in feminist actions and writings, from Condorcet (1790) and John Stuart Mills (1869/1997) to contemporary scholars such as Kimmel (1993) and Messner (1995), although there is still a fierce debate on whether men supporting women's rights or feminist movements may be labelled as feminist (e.g., Funk, 1997). However, this article is concerned with the more specific question of whether or not men can be effective in promoting feminist movements, that is whether or not men can successfully influence attitudes toward feminist movements.

### **Social influence on attitudes toward feminist movements**

Research on minority influence has long shown that minority groups are generally described with negative attributes (Mugny, Kaiser, Papastamou, & Pérez, 1984), even minority groups whose action has promoted actual social progress at the level of society (Vernet & Butera, 2005). Indeed, a study by Mugny and Pérez (1989) showed that people hold positive attitudes toward core societal values such as liberty, gender equality, equality across ethnic groups, respect for the environment, and peace, but negative attitudes toward the minority groups who, in the recent history of Western societies, have promoted these values through their action (an effect called "social cryptomnesia"; see Butera, Levine, & Vernet, 2009, for an account in English). Feminist movements are no exception: Notwithstanding their historical role in promoting most of women's rights (e.g., Bard, 1999; Marx Ferree & Tripp, 2006; Michel, 1979), a vast majority of people—even among women—hold negative attitudes toward feminist activists and movements (Twenge & Zucker, 1999).

According to Pérez and Mugny (1990), this phenomenon relies on a message–source

dissociation process. Indeed, during the first stages of minority influence, targets are reluctant to consider the minority's message, because a minority is generally seen as a negative and invalid source of influence (Moscovici, 1980). However, a great deal of research has shown that minorities—when arguing consistently for their contention—can stimulate message elaboration and result in indirect, delayed social influence (e.g., Martin & Hewstone, 2008). During this process, Pérez and Mugny (1990) argue, the targets of minority influence focus on the message and "forget" the source, which explains how people can hold simultaneously positive attitudes toward an important societal value and negative attitudes toward the minority groups who have fought for it.

Vernet, Vala, Amâncio, and Butera (2009) have recently tested this idea in a study concerned with the reduction of negative attitudes toward feminist movements. They reasoned that, if Pérez and Mugny's (1990) hypothesis is correct and negative attitudes toward active minorities derive from a dissociation between the source and the message, then it should be possible to improve people's attitudes toward minorities by reassociating the source (namely, the feminists) and the message (namely, women's rights). Thus, Vernet et al. (2009) asked their female participants to report their attitudes toward women's rights and, separately, feminist movements; they all displayed a far less positive attitude toward feminist movements than toward the rights that these groups promoted. Results showed that participants who were reminded that feminist movements are at the origin of most of today's women's rights showed improved attitudes toward feminist movements than participants who were not. Interestingly for the present research, improvement in attitudes due to this procedure was significantly higher than the control condition when the source–message reassociation was not threatening for the participants (they were accused of forgetting the role of feminists), but not when reassociation was threatening (participants were accused of discrimination against feminist movements). In sum, feminist movements—like many other minorities—suffer from a negative image,

even among women, notwithstanding the social worth of their action; however, attitudes toward feminist movements can be influenced and improved by reassociating the movements with the rights they have promoted, provided that this reassociation is not too threatening.

### Threatening social influence

With the above results in mind, one might be tempted to use the reassociation technique as a device to improve attitudes toward feminist movements. However, can men as well as women use this device and yield equal social influence? This is an operational way to ask the question with which we have begun this article. We argue that it depends on the gender of targets: A male influence source should yield less influence than a female source when trying to improve attitudes toward feminist movements in a female target, and the reverse should be true with a male target. Why? Vernet et al. (2009) have shown that attitude change is higher than a control when reassociation is not threatening but not when it is threatening. Thus, this effect seems hindered by high levels of threat. In terms of social influence, it follows that—if it is true that threat drives the above effect—an influence source eliciting low levels of threat could reproduce the difference obtained by Vernet et al. (2009), while an influence source eliciting high levels of threat should result in lower attitude change toward feminist movements whatever the type of reassociation.

Several lines of research indicate that the identity of the influence source, in terms of outgroup versus ingroup identity, may be able to induce respectively higher and lower levels of threat. Stephan and Stephan (2000), in their integrated threat theory, argue and demonstrate that prior intergroup conflict is a major antecedent of threat, which nicely fits the present case: Women–men intergroup conflict, especially when influence relationships are concerned, puts a male influence source in a position of threat for a female target. Importantly, the reverse is also true, and a female influence source can be threatening for a male target, since Stephan et al. (2002)

have shown that the effect of intergroup conflict on threat occurs for both the dominant and the dominated group. It should be noted that Stephan and Stephan (2000) distinguish four kinds of threats in intergroup relations, namely realistic threats, symbolic threats, intergroup anxiety and negative stereotyping; in the present case we are mainly concerned with symbolic threats, as—following the authors' taxonomy—the influence relationship is concerned with attitudes, but Stephan and Stephan (2000) clearly state that when prior intergroup conflict is concerned, "all four threats are likely to be heightened" (p. 38).

Conflict elaboration theory (Pérez & Mugny, 1996), a theory more specifically concerned with social influence, brings support to the idea that outgroup influence sources may be more threatening than ingroup influence sources. Social influence situations involving attitudes are socially anchoring, that is, they make highly salient that any conflict is elaborated in terms of category membership. In particular, Pérez and Mugny (1996) pointed out that conflict elicited by an outgroup source, called intergroup conflict, is particularly threatening and may hinder attitude change, as compared to conflict elicited by an ingroup source. One might argue that outgroup sources can be threatening but also irrelevant, or even a valuable source of normative influence, when outgroup norms inform the target's cost–benefit analyses in social decision-making (cf. Louis, Taylor, & Douglas, 2005). In the present research, however, social influence is concerned with attitudes, a task that is more likely to entail social anchoring than indifference (cf. above, Pérez & Mugny, 1996), and that does not require from the target an analysis in terms of costs and benefits.

Finally, supplementary evidence for the threatening nature of outgroup sources comes from research on intergroup and intragroup criticism (e.g., Hornsey, Oppes, & Svensson, 2002), particularly relevant for the present research to the extent that the reassociation procedure consists of criticizing the influence target for neglecting the role of feminist movements. Hornsey et al. pointed out in a series of studies that outgroup criticism was more threatening than ingroup criticism, in

that it elicited higher levels of defensiveness (an effect called “intergroup sensitivity”; Hornsey & Imani, 2004; Hornsey et al., 2002). In sum, in the present research we consider that a male influence source is more threatening than a female influence source for female targets, and that a female influence source is more threatening than a male influence source for male targets.

## Overview and hypothesis

In the present research we used the materials and procedure developed and validated by Vernet et al. (2009) to study the extent to which a source–message reassociation improves attitudes toward feminist movements. Participants were asked to report their attitudes toward feminist movements and, separately, women’s rights; then the experimenter confronted them with the higher score attributed to women’s rights than to feminists movements, reminded them the important role of feminists in obtaining those rights, and attributed the participants’ differential score either to forgetting (lower threat) or to discrimination (higher threat). It should be noted that in this experimental paradigm the experimenter is the one who confronts the participants to the reassociation procedure and reminds them of the role played by feminist movements; in this respect, the experimenter is the influence source of this paradigm. Finally, a second measure of attitudes toward feminist movements allowed computing an attitude change score.

In Experiment 1, all participants were women, in order to reproduce Vernet et al.’s (2009) experimental sample. To manipulate the source’s gender, the experimenter, that is, the influence source, was said to be either a man (higher threat) or a woman (lower threat). It should be noted that the manipulation of the outgroup versus ingroup identity of the experimenter has been successfully used in the field of stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995) to induce respectively higher versus lower threat. Indeed, Marx and Goff (2005) showed that Black participants were more threatened by a White (outgroup) experimenter than by a Black (ingroup) experimenter.

In addition, Marx and Roman (2002) showed that female participants were more threatened with a male (outgroup) experimenter than with a female (ingroup) experimenter. Similar results have been obtained in research on confrontation (Czopp, Monteith, & Mark, 2006, Experiment 2), a work that used an experimental setting very close to ours, to the extent that a confederate whose category was either ingroup or outgroup confronted the participants with their biases toward a minority. Indeed, in their Experiment 2, Czopp et al. (2006) showed that when participants were mildly confronted (as in our reassociation by forgetting condition), an outgroup confronter elicited more negative affects directed toward the self than an ingroup confronter. In sum, Experiment 1 tested the hypothesis that a female—less threatening—experimenter should elicit in female participants greater attitude change in favor of feminist movements when reassociation was presented in less threatening terms (forgetting) than when it was presented in more threatening terms (discrimination), while a male experimenter should elicit equally lower levels of attitude change because of his threatening status.

More generally, since threat originates in intergroup conflict, and it applies to both the dominant and the dominated groups (Stephan et al., 2002), we should find the above hypothesized effect by manipulating the source–target relationship: An ingroup experimenter should elicit greater attitude change in favor of feminist movements when reassociation was presented in less threatening terms (forgetting) than when it was presented in more threatening terms (discrimination), while an outgroup experimenter should elicit equally lower levels of attitude change. Experiment 2 tested this hypothesis by confronting male and female participants to either a male or a female experimenter.

## Experiment 1

### *Method*

**Participants and design** Sixty-seven women, undergraduates of a large French university, with

a mean age of 20.4 ( $SD = 1.95$ ), volunteered in the experiment, that was presented as a survey on some currently important social issues. They were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions of a 2 (gender of experimenter: female, male) X 2 (type of reassociation: forgetting, discrimination) between-participants design, with  $N$ s ranging between 15 and 20 per condition.

**Procedure and materials** During a regular social psychology course, the teacher (a man) asked the students to fill in three questionnaires, following the procedure set forth by Vernet et al. (2009, see below). Although the teacher was the true experimenter, in order to manipulate the experimenter's gender, he stated that he had three questionnaires developed by a colleague of his and that she (vs. he) would be really grateful if they could fill them in. As mentioned above, previous research has already shown that an outgroup experimenter is more threatening than an ingroup one (Marx & Goff, 2005).

Then, the teacher distributed the first questionnaire in which two scales were presented. The first was concerned with attitudes towards feminist movements and asked the participants to indicate on a 13-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all*; 13 = *completely*) their answer to four questions, such as "To what extent do you have a liking for feminist movements?",  $\alpha = .91$ ; the second scale, again to be answered on a 13-point Likert scale (1 = *not at all*; 13 = *completely*), was concerned with attitudes toward women's rights (four items such as "To what extent are you in favour of equal wages for men and women?" (this second scale only serves the purpose of inducing reassociation, see below, and will not be used as a dependent variable). A pilot study reported by Vernet et al. (2009) showed that these four women's rights are clearly seen as being promoted by current, and not only by past, feminist movements.

In the second questionnaire, participants were asked to compute their scores for women's rights and feminist movements, by adding up the responses given to each of the four questions in both scales. They were asked to report these two

scores in two different boxes on the same page and to assess whether or not there was a difference: They all gave a higher score to women's rights than to feminist movements (see the Results section). On the next page, they read an explanation, allegedly written by the experimenter, outlining how women's rights were obtained thanks to a long series of actions led by feminist movements. At the end of this text, the difference in scores made by participants was presented either as a form of discrimination against feminist movements (high-threat reassociation) or the forgetting of the relationship between feminist movements and women's rights (low-threat reassociation). A second pilot study reported by Vernet et al. (2009) showed that indeed, in this procedure, discrimination was perceived as more threatening than forgetting.

In the last questionnaire, participants were again asked to report their attitude toward feminist movements ( $\alpha = .91$ ); thus, the main dependent variable was attitude change toward feminist movements, computed by subtracting the pre-test score from the posttest score. A positive score refers to a change toward a more positive attitude. All questionnaires were administered within the same session, which lasted about half an hour.

### *Results and discussion*

**Reassociation procedure** As in Vernet et al. (2009), the procedure aiming at inducing reassociation revealed a profound discrepancy between attitudes towards women's rights and attitudes towards the feminist minorities who defended them. Participants were clearly in favor of women's rights ( $M = 12.81$ ,  $SD = 0.48$ ),  $t$  test against the midpoint of the scale,  $t(66) = 99.26$ ,  $p < .001$ . This was not the case of attitudes toward feminist movements ( $M = 6.89$ ,  $SD = 2.27$ ),  $t$  test against the midpoint of the scale,  $t(66) = .39$ ,  $p = .70$ . The difference was clearly made by all participants and was significant,  $t(66) = 20.67$ ,  $p < .001$ , thereby justifying the rationale for the reassociation procedure.

**Table 1.** Attitude change toward feminist movements

Experiment 1 (female participants)				
Gender of experimenter	Female (ingroup)		Male (outgroup)	
	Forgetting	Discrimination	Forgetting	Discrimination
<i>M</i>	0.54	-0.95	-0.77	-1.45
<b><i>SD</i></b>	<b>1.02</b>	<b>2.69</b>	<b>2.22</b>	<b>2.05</b>
Experiment 2 (female and male participants)				
Gender of experimenter	Ingroup		Outgroup	
	Forgetting	Discrimination	Forgetting	Discrimination
<i>M</i>	1.44	0.04	-0.65	0.25
<b><i>SD</i></b>	<b>1.91</b>	<b>2.24</b>	<b>1.96</b>	<b>1.71</b>

*Note.* Higher scores refer to more positive attitude change.

**Attitude change toward feminist movements** Considering our specific hypothesis, a contrast analysis (Judd & McClelland, 1989) was performed on the attitude change score. The model contrast opposed the condition where a female experimenter induced reassociation with the forgetting explanation against the other three conditions. The analyses are conducted on a square-root index (cf. Hartwig & Dearing, 1979), due to heterogeneity of variance, but uncorrected means are reported for greater clarity. Results showed that the contrast testing the model was significant,  $F(1, 54) = 8.35, p < .006, \eta^2 = .134$ , while the residual was not,  $F(1, 54) < 1$ . Variations in degrees of freedom are due to missing values in the posttest.

As shown in Table 1, attitude change toward feminist movements was more positive when a less threatening female experimenter induced reassociation with the less threatening forgetting explanation than in the other three conditions where threat was heightened either by reassociation with reference to discrimination, or by a male experimenter. Thus, with this sample made of women, a female influence source allowed to replicate Vernet et al.'s (2009) results, while a male influence source proved to be threatening enough

to elicit equally low level of attitude change in both reassociation conditions.

In order to support the above interpretation in terms of threat originated in intergroup conflict (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), we should replicate the results of Experiment 1 by manipulating the source–target relationship: In Experiment 2, with a sample made of both women and men, we tested the hypothesis that an ingroup experimenter should elicit greater attitude change in favor of feminist movements when reassociation is presented in less threatening terms (forgetting) than when it is presented in more threatening terms (discrimination), while an outgroup experimenter should elicit equally lower levels of attitude change.

## Experiment 2

### *Method*

**Participants and design** Thirty-one women and 40 men ( $N = 71$ ), with a mean age of 25.37 ( $SD = 9.20$ ), were asked to participate in the experiment when walking in a square in a large Portuguese city, by one of two female and two male experimenters. They were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions in a 2

(gender of experimenter: ingroup, outgroup) X 2 (type of reassociation: forgetting, discrimination) between-participants design, with  $N$ s ranging between 17 and 19 per condition.

**Procedure and materials** The procedure was identical to that of Experiment 1. The reliability for the scale concerned with attitude toward feminist movements was good at pretest ( $\alpha = .92$ ) and posttest ( $\alpha = .91$ ), as was that for the scale concerned with women's rights ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

### Results and discussion

**Reassociation procedure** An analysis with gender as a between-participants factor and attitudes toward women's rights and feminist movements as repeated measures showed that, again, participants were by far more favorable toward women's rights than toward feminist movements,  $F(1, 69) = 429.05, p < .001, \eta^2 = .861$ ; importantly, neither differences between women and men,  $F(1, 69) = 1.58, p > .10$ , nor the interaction effect appeared  $F(1, 69) < 1$ . Participants were clearly in favor of women's rights ( $M = 12.58, SD = 1.25$ ),  $t$  test against the midpoint of the scale,  $t(70) = 37.67, p < .001$  and they were unfavorable toward feminist movements ( $M = 5.21, SD = 2.73$ ),  $t$  test against the midpoint of the scale,  $t(70) = 5.52, p < .01$ .

**Attitude change toward feminist movements** Considering our specific hypothesis, a contrast analysis (Judd & McClelland, 1989) was performed. The model contrast opposed the condition where an ingroup experimenter induced reassociation with the forgetting explanation against the other three conditions. Results showed that the contrast testing the model was significant,  $F(1, 67) = 8.44, p < .005, \eta^2 = .112$ , while the residual was not,  $F(1, 67) < 1.10, p > .30, \eta^2 < .017$ . A supplementary analysis including gender of participants yielded no significant effects either for gender or for the interaction between gender and the model contrast, both  $F$ s  $< 1$ . Thus, as shown in Table 1, attitude change toward feminist movements was more positive when a less threatening ingroup experimenter induced reassociation with the less threatening forgetting explanation than in the other three conditions where threat was heightened either by reassociation with reference to discrimination, or by an outgroup experimenter.

The above analyses tested our specific hypothesis, that was formulated in terms of ingroup versus outgroup identity of the experimenter. One may wonder, however, what the specific pattern of results would be when considering man and women participants separately. These means are reported in Table 2. The 2 (gender of participant: male, female) X 2 (gender of experimenter: male,

**Table 2.** Attitude change toward feminist movements for female and male participants (experiment 2)

Gender of experimenter	Female		Male	
	Forgetting	Discrimination	Forgetting	Discrimination
Female participants				
<i>M</i>	1.09	-0.61	-0.57	-0.46
<b><i>SD</i></b>	<b>1.13</b>	<b>1.26</b>	<b>1.71</b>	<b>1.47</b>
<i>N</i>	8	9	7	7
Male participants				
<i>M</i>	-0.70	0.75	1.73	0.63
<b><i>SD</i></b>	<b>2.20</b>	<b>1.76</b>	<b>2.38</b>	<b>2.80</b>
<i>N</i>	10	10	10	10

*Note.* Higher scores refer to more positive attitude change.

female) X 2 (reassociation: forgetting, discrimination) interaction was significant,  $F(1, 63) = 5.30$ ,  $p < .05$ ; inspection of the means revealed that indeed for female participants attitude change was the highest when confronted to a female experimenter using reassociation based on forgetting, while for male participants attitude change was the highest when confronted to a male experimenter using reassociation based on forgetting. In other words, this pattern of results confirms the previous analysis, showing that attitude change toward feminist movements was more positive when an ingroup experimenter induced reassociation with the forgetting explanation than in the other three conditions. Overall, the results of Experiment 2 replicate and extend those found in Experiment 1, in that they confirm that the observed effect is indeed related to intergroup conflict and not to the specific influence effect of a male source on a female target.

## General discussion

The present research originated from the concern with the much-needed support that can be given to feminist movements, and in particular with the effectiveness of men in supporting feminist movements, a highly debated question (e.g., Jardine & Smith, 1989). Indeed, it has been recognized that feminist movements are targets of negative attitudes, even by women, notwithstanding their contribution to the promotion of women's rights (e.g., Tougas et al., 1995). Drawing on minority influence research (Pérez & Mugny, 1990), Vernet et al. (2009) have shown that this phenomenon is due to a source–message dissociation process, and that it is possible to positively influence attitudes towards feminist movements by reminding the targets of the association between feminist movements (the source) and women's rights (the message). However, they have also shown that the reassociation procedure is ineffective if the targets of this procedure feel threatened. The focal question of the present research thus became whether men are too threatening an influence source to produce a positive attitude change toward feminist movements. Based on Stephan and Stephan's integrated

threat theory (2000), Pérez and Mugny's conflict elaboration theory (1996), and Hornsey et al.'s (2002) work on the intergroup sensitivity effect, showing that outgroup sources produce more threat than ingroup sources, we hypothesized that a female influence source could produce the reassociation effect (more attitude change in low- than in high-threat reassociation) in female influence targets, but not a male influence source. Moreover, results by Stephan et al. (2002), showing that threat operates on both the dominant and the dominated groups involved in the intergroup conflict, led us to extend our hypothesis and predict that the reverse effect should occur with male influence targets.

The results of the two experiments fully supported the above hypotheses. Experiment 1, conducted with an all-female sample, confirmed that attitude change toward feminist movements was more positive when a less threatening female source induced reassociation with the less threatening forgetting explanation than with the more threatening discrimination explanation (the reassociation effect; Vernet et al., 2009), while a more threatening male source achieved equally lower levels of attitude change in all conditions. Experiment 2 replicated and generalized these results in a sample including both male and female participants: Attitude change toward feminist movements was more positive when a less threatening ingroup source induced reassociation with the less threatening forgetting explanation than with the more threatening discrimination explanation, while a more threatening outgroup source achieved equally lower levels of attitude change in all conditions. In sum, the reassociation procedure can be used effectively to promote positive attitudes toward feminist movements, but within the framework of intragroup, not intergroup, social-influence communications.

These results are limited by three important elements. First, although the interpretation of the results in terms of intergroup conflict fits the tenets of the integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000), the present research is only concerned with men–women relations. Thus, future research should replicate these results within the



framework of a different intergroup conflict, in order to extend the generality of the present analysis. Second, although the theoretical background for this research framed the hypotheses in terms of threat, the experiments did not measure perceived threat. This is not really a problem to the extent that the threatening character of the discrimination explanation of reassociation, as compared to the forgetting explanation, has been demonstrated by Vernet et al. (2009), and the threatening character of an outgroup experimenter, as compared to an ingroup one, has also been demonstrated by previous research (e.g., Marx & Goff, 2005). In a way, we have manipulated the mediator, that is, threat, at group level, as recommended by Spencer, Zanna, and Fong (2005). However future research could make this framework more complete by studying the mediational role of perceived threat in the present results. Third, the measures taken in the present research are only concerned with attitude change and, with a view to generalizing these results to collective action, it would be interesting to test whether the same effects hold for behaviors. Recent research carried out with a social-identity perspective pointed out that ingroup norms may have an impact on attitudes as well as on behaviors to the extent that injunctive norms (what the ingroup says) are supported by descriptive norms (what the ingroup does; c.f. Smith & Louis, 2008, Study 2). Since in the present research the influence source only expressed injunctive norms, it might have fallen short of impact had it tried to persuade targets to change their behaviors as well. Future research should manipulate injunctive as well as descriptive norms and measure attitude as well as behavioral change.

Notwithstanding these limitations, this research provides both a theoretical and an applied contribution. From a theoretical point of view, the present results allow to specify the conditions under which minority influence can be furthered by external support. A longstanding research tradition in minority influence has shown that minority influence can benefit from a positive zeitgeist (Pérez, Papastamou, & Mugny, 1995), but also that—as mentioned in

the introduction—most of the time minority movements are dissociated from their achievements, which allows holding negative attitudes toward them (Mugny & Pérez, 1989). They can therefore benefit from influence sources that promote them, reducing these negative attitudes. The present results have pointed out that, as far as feminist movements are concerned, the promotion of minority movements can be effective to the extent that it proceeds from an ingroup source; an outgroup source appears to be too threatening to enhance attitudes in such a controversial issue as the promotion of minorities.

The applied contribution of the present research is that it allows answering the question with which we began this article: Can men promote feminist movements? Yes, but only with male-influence targets. The influence of female targets seems to be limited to female sources. Although these results point out how difficult it is to promote minority movements, they also indicate avenues for intervention by specifying which is the optimal source–target fit. We hope that this can be of help for those who design communication campaigns to further the action of social movements.

### Acknowledgments

Part of this work was conducted during Jean-Pierre Vernet's doctoral dissertation under the supervision of Fabrizio Butera, and part during his postdoctorate at the University of Lisbon, under the supervision of Jorge Vala. This work was supported by the Swiss National Science Foundation. We wish to thank Vera Biscaia, António Louro, Sílvia Fernandes and Hugo Salvaterra, for playing the role of experimenter.

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## Biographical notes

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