Political Psychology

Political Psychology, Vol. 38, No. 6, 2017
doi: 10.1111/pops.12377

Towards a Psychological Analysis of Anomie

Ali Teymoori
University of Queensland

Brock Bastian
University of Melbourne

Jolanda Jetten
University of Queensland

Anomie, as defined by sociologists, refers to a state of society characterized by deregulation and erosion of moral values. In the present conceptual analysis, we bring the concept of anomie under a social psychological spotlight. We explore the conditions under which anomie arises and develop a model outlining various responses to anomie. We define anomie as a shared perception of the state of society and propose that two conditions must be met for anomie to emerge. First, a society's social fabric must be perceived to be breaking down (i.e., lack of trust and erosion of moral standards). Second, a society's leadership must be perceived to be breaking down (i.e., lack of legitimacy and effectiveness of leadership). We highlight two key responses of individuals to an anomic situation: a contraction of the personal self and a contraction of the social self. We discuss how a psychology of anomie can inform and advance broader theorizing on group processes.

KEY WORDS: anomie, leadership, trust, morality, well-being, depression, authoritarianism, tribalism

Towards a Psychological Analysis of Anomie

The concept of anomie is well established within sociological literature. It is often defined as "a state of society" (Durkheim, 1897/1987; Merton, 1938, 1968; Messner & Rosenfeld, 2001) and is understood to arise to the extent that a particular social system begins to crumble or fall apart. Whether this is due to rapid social change, the absence of agreed upon norms, or long-lasting social, economic, or political crises, the state of anomie exists at the interface between the individual and the social system. Such an approach to anomie was explicit in Durkheim's (1897/1987) use of the term to describe the social—as opposed to individual—roots of suicide. In the following contribution, we outline a psychological analysis of anomie. In doing so it is our goal to bring a well established, yet psychologically novel, concept into the purview of psychological theorizing.

We believe that social psychology is particularly well equipped to deliver insights into the nature of anomie. As a discipline, psychology specializes in understanding the interaction of individuals and

Published by Wiley Periodicals, Inc., 350 Main Street, Malden, MA 02148, USA, 9600 Garsington Road, Oxford, OX4 2DQ, and PO Box 378 Carlton South, 3053 Victoria, Australia

their social contexts, including how individuals respond to broader sociostructural change (see Oishi, Kesebir, & Snyder, 2009; Tajfel, 1982). Nonetheless psychologists do not as yet have a solid theoretical paradigm from which to understand societies that are crumbling. Developing psychological theorizing on anomie is both important and timely. By engaging with the sociological literature on anomie, opportunities present themselves to extend the types of contexts to which psychology can be applied.

We present a psychological perspective addressing when and how anomie arises, as well as how individuals respond to anomie. By developing a psychological theory of anomie, we aim to provide a basis from which psychologists can begin to better understand failing or troubled societies. We hope that such an analysis will open up new avenues for research and help to develop deeper insights into these kinds of social contexts. As such, we aim to uncover the psychological factors that contribute to societal decay and the psychological responses of individuals who live in such societies. Furthermore, we aim to elucidate the dynamic nature of social decay, examining both how societies may sink into anomie and how microlevel individual responses may contribute to macrolevel societal perceptions and thereby produce, maintain, or overcome a state of anomie.

Why a Psychology of Anomie?

Sociologists have relied on the concept of anomie to describe contexts characterized by instability. Consider Nepal, a country that over the last decade has faced an ongoing political crisis, rapid changes of leadership, the absence of a functioning and legitimate justice system, and frequent and severe rioting and societal disintegration. These events have not only destabilized the society, but have also led to a power vacuum within which there is little consensus over what should be considered the status quo. For this reason, the current situation in Nepal has been described as chaotic, unstable, and even as hooliganistic (see Racovita, Murray, & Sharma, 2013). A similar dynamic has emerged in Greece, where severe economic downturn, unemployment, and the absence of effective government has led to a dramatic rise in radical political movements at both ends of the political spectrum (e.g., Independent Greeks, Syriza, and Golden Dawn). The rise of these extremist political parties is a response to a failing society, one whose members no longer have the means to achieve their aspirations and in which the social fabric and societal regulation is perceived to be in decay (Ellinas, 2013).

Other examples include Iran (Heydari, Teymoori, Haghish, & Mohamadi, 2014; Heydari, Teymoori, & Nasiri, 2014), countries with a long history of war such as Yugoslavia (see Jamieson, 1998), countries undergoing massive political change like South Africa (Huschka & Mau, 2006), and Eastern European countries facing ideological and political change after the fall of the Soviet Union (Ådnanes, 2007; Genov, 1998). Anomie has also been used to describe the social climate of prosperous countries such as the United States, which is characterized by low levels of generalized trust and high levels of income inequality (see Merton, 1938, 1968; Messner & Rosenfeld, 2001).

It is probably fair to say that, to date, psychology has not been well equipped to provide insights into social contexts that are destabilized, crumbling, or chaotic. Despite the fact that dominant social psychological theories such as social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), system justification theory (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004) and social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 2001) speak to the way that the sociostructural context and collective-level processes more generally affect individual-level outcomes, what these theoretical frameworks have in common is that they originated in Western Europe and/or Northern America. We argue that the broader cultural and sociostructural context in which these theories were developed has left its mark. For example, all three theoretical frameworks take as a starting point a position in which society is largely stratified and in which there exists consensus about which groups are at the top of the hierarchy and which at the bottom. Even if low-status groups challenge the status quo and engage in collective protest to change the status relations in such contexts, they do so against the backdrop of a largely orderly and functioning society. When they

challenge the legitimacy of those in power, they do so with an understanding of who those in power are. When lower-status group members engage in upward mobility, they know who they want to join and which groups they would like to leave behind. In short, all three theoretical frameworks assume that, while different parties in a society might disagree on whether the status quo is desirable or not, they all agree that a status quo of a certain nature exists. But this is not the case in societies that are characterized by political or economic crisis or decades of war, where fragmentation, erosion of the social fabric, and a collapse of the social and economic infrastructure has taken hold. It is therefore likely that these frameworks are ill-suited to explain contexts where the social structure has eroded. Thus, while there are certainly important ways in which these three theoretical frameworks can inform a psychological analysis of anomie, we will not take them as a starting point for our analysis. Instead, we begin by examining (without theoretical preconceptions) contexts where social structure has broken down.

Approaching Anomie as a Psychological Construct

Within the sociological tradition, different authors have tended to define anomie in different ways, oscillating between a focus on the social system (e.g., deregulation; see Durkheim, 1897/1987) and a focus on individual values and beliefs systems (see Muftić, 2006). In many cases anomie has been defined in terms of a wide range of cultural values and norms such as individualism, achievement orientation, and fetishism of money (Messner & Rosenfeld, 2001), and the degree of corruption within a given society (Andvig, 2006). In addition, a range of psychological outcomes have been linked to anomie such as alienation (Srole, 1956), meaninglessness, helplessness or confusion (Thorlindsson & Bernburg, 2004), rejection of social norms or normlessness (Bjarnason, 2009), suicide (e.g., Durkheim, 1897/1987; Heydari, et al., 2014), and withdrawal from civic engagement (e.g., Norasakkunkit & Uchida, 2011). While the diversity of approaches to understanding and defining anomie have led to valuable insights, it has also led to the concept of anomie being clouded and splintered to some degree and importantly has led to a lack of integration between societal and individual-level analyses.

We take Durkheim's (1897/1987) definition of anomie, perhaps the best-known and most widely accepted definition, as a starting point to our analysis. According, we define anomie as involving the breakdown of social integration and social regulation. We adopt this definition here because it does justice to the collective dimension of anomie. Societies crumble to the extent that a sufficient number of people perceive those societies as crumbling and respond accordingly. When a sufficient number of people feel that the regulation of their society is failing them, that moral standards are eroding, and that generalized trust is in decline, they in turn withdraw from others and focus on protecting their more narrowly defined personal interests. Thus, with the definition of anomie as the breakdown of social integration and social regulation, we can see that anomie involves collective perceptions and collective responses. We therefore define anomie as the shared perception that society is breaking down.

Two aspects of this definition are important. First, we focus on the *sharedness* of perceptions. We propose that anomie cannot be experienced by lone individuals but rather arises to the extent that anomie-producing perceptions seep into the collective consciousness, shaping a widespread consensually agreed-upon perception of the general sociopolitical climate across different social strata and social groups. Although it is likely that anomie is higher in some groups that in others (e.g., those with lower socioeconomic status; see Merton, 1938, 1968), anomie itself, perhaps akin to the concept of "zeitgeist" (van der Bles, Postmes, & Meijer, 2015), is a macrolevel phenomenon shared in collective consciousness (Durkheim, 1897/1987, 1893/1997; Merton, 1938, 1968). Second, consistent with psychological theorizing (see Hardin & Higgins, 1996; Moscovici, & Duveen, 2000), anomie is a social *perception*. Even though there may be particular background factors that are necessary for

anomie and that have their roots in economic, political, and social reality (e.g., rapid societal changes, economic growth or crises, economic inequality, war or civil conflict), the existence of anomie depends on the *perception* of these background factors, not on the factors themselves.

Combining the notion that anomie refers to *shared perceptions*, the extent to which background triggers translate into a state of anomie depends on the extent to which they are communicated intersubjectively within a given context, that is, the extent to which "individuals participate actively in the construction and reproduction of intersubjective reality through their perceptions and actions" (Chiu, Gelfand, Yamagishi, Shteynberg, & Wan, 2010, p. 483). Through a continuing process of social verification, in a bottom-up fashion, individually held beliefs transform into shared perceptions (Hardin & Higgins, 1996) whereby an intersubjective "sense-making" process serves to construct a shared understanding between members of a particular society regarding their social world (Chiu et al., 2010; Moscovici & Duveen, 2000; Postmes, Haslam, & Swaab, 2005).

Consistent with these social perception and contextual constructionism analyses, in our approach to anomie we distinguish between macrolevel processes, defined as a shared perception of the state of society, and microlevel processes, defined as the individual behavioral responses to perceived anomie. We argue that anomie exists when people communicate their perceptions of macrolevel processes and patterns within a given social context. Obviously shared perceptions of a given society, including the collective consensus on whether it is in a state of anomie, are shaped by the functioning of that society. But these perceptions are then amplified and allowed to circulate and become dispersed through the process of social communication. In addition, social communication can translate into behavioral tendencies which can themselves either reinforce or ameliorate the extent of perceived anomie. Shared perceptions of anomie motivate a suite of individual behavioral responses, including withdrawal from others, the emergence of authoritarian thinking, and a preference for cohesive (tribal) communities. By separating microlevel processes from the macrolevel shared perception of society, we provide an approach for understanding of how anomie may emerge from a shared perception regarding the state of society and in turn lead to individual responses that serve to reinforce perceived anomie. We treat each of these in turn.

Anomie as a Macrolevel Perception of Society

Further developing our analysis of anomie, and again drawing from classic sociological work by Durkheim (1897/1987), we propose that there are two necessary conditions for anomie: a perception of *disintegration* and a perception of *disregulation*. Disintegration refers to the perception that there is widespread moral disruption in society (see Durkheim, 1897/1987, 1893/1997; Passas, 1995) and a perception that the social fabric is breaking down (i.e., that the superordinate group is no longer held together by trust and moral standards for behavior). Disregulation refers to the perception that leadership is breaking down (i.e., that social regulation is undermined by illegitimate and ineffective leadership; for a review, see Passas, 1995). We argue that it is only to the extent that there is a perceived breakdown of social fabric *and* a perceived breakdown of leadership (two pillars of a healthy and functioning social system) that a society can be considered to be in a state of anomie. Furthermore, we argue that these two perceptions are dynamically interrelated and reinforce each other to produce anomie. We review each of these conditions separately.

Breakdown in social fabric. We define social fabric as the extent to which (1) trust and (2) consensual moral standards are perceived to be evident within superordinate groups. Both trust and consensual moral standards provide strong *bonding capital*: They facilitate social networking within socially heterogeneous societies, they increase the number of weak ties in society (connections between more distant people, including across group divides), and they facilitate information sharing (see Granovetter, 1973, 1983; Putnam, 2000; Uslaner, 2002). By doing so, these factors contribute to

cohesiveness of society, motivating individuals to engage in collective action to further the interests of the superordinate group (see Tajfel, 1982). Under these conditions, subgroups within these societies perceive that their identity is recognized and respected, and they will therefore embrace the superordinate group (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000).

Social fabric starts to breakdown when trust and agreed upon moral standards breakdown, and, in turn, when weak ties and civic engagement across subgroups begin to erode (Brehm & Rahn, 1997; Putnam, 2000). Under these conditions, people are less likely to behave prosocially (Uslaner, 2002), are more inclined to lie, cheat, steal, and engage in corruption or condone it (Tay, Herian, & Diener, 2014), behaviors that reinforce the perception of a weak social fabric.

Breakdown in leadership. We identify two important and interrelated qualities of leadership that can contribute to effective social regulation within the superordinate group: Leaders have to be perceived as (1) legitimate and (2) effective. Legitimate leadership exists to the extent that people feel that their leaders are fair in their treatment of the society at large (Habermas, 1975; Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011). Effective leaders take action to realize group goals, initiate and continue working on structures, practices, and activities, and they create opportunities and material outcomes for the group (Haslam et al., 2011; Steffens et al., 2014). The distinction between legitimate and effective leadership maps onto the well-known distinction between procedural and distributive processes. This means that leaders are perceived to act in ways that support both distributive fairness (the fair distribution of resources and the equal protection of all society members; Tyler, 2006) and procedural fairness (the perception that leaders abide by the appropriate procedures and societal laws in making their decisions; see Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler, 2006). Procedural fairness extends to the perception that leaders have been fairly chosen and that they represent those that are perceived as legitimate ingroup members.

We argue that leadership is perceived to be breaking down to the extent that leaders are considered to be illegitimate, that is, to the extent that they are seen to be failing to fairly distribute resources and follow appropriate procedures and seen as not fairly chosen and failing to represent society's members. Under these conditions, people no longer feel the obligation to cooperate and comply with the leader's directions.

We now turn to analysis of how the dynamic relationship between these two dimension of breakdown in social fabric and breakdown in leadership creates anomie in a society.

How does anomie emerge? The dynamic interaction of the two dimensions of anomie—the perceptions that the social fabric and the leadership are breaking down—can be illustrated by examining four possible states of society, from low anomie to high anomie (see Figure 1).

The first state, *low anomie*, exists to the extent that people perceive that the social fabric and leadership are healthy and functioning (or at least not breaking down). Anomie is low in such contexts, and the collectively shared perception of good leadership and strong social fabric will contribute to a healthy and functioning society. Furthermore, these two factors tend to reinforce each other. When leadership is perceived to be effective and legitimate, members of that society will feel that those leaders represent all members of society (Haslam et al., 2011; Tyler, 2006), in turn fostering a shared sense of identity and providing the bedrock for trust and consensual moral standards to emerge. In other words, effective and legitimate leadership serves to promote and reinforce the social fabric of a given society (see Haslam et al., 2011; Reicher, Haslam, & Hopkins, 2005). This same interdependence may work in the other direction: To the extent that societies possess strong social fabric, that is, when they are cohesive and unified, they will tend to elect leaders who are more prototypical and therefore more likely to be perceived as representative of all members of society (see Haslam et al., 2011). Thus, when both breakdown of social fabric and breakdown of leadership are low, they reinforce each other, maintaining the low anomie state of society.

The next two states characterize societies where anomie has not yet fully emerged, but where one of the pillars is perceived to be crumbling, either leadership or social fabric. Each of these perceptions is likely to positively influence the other.

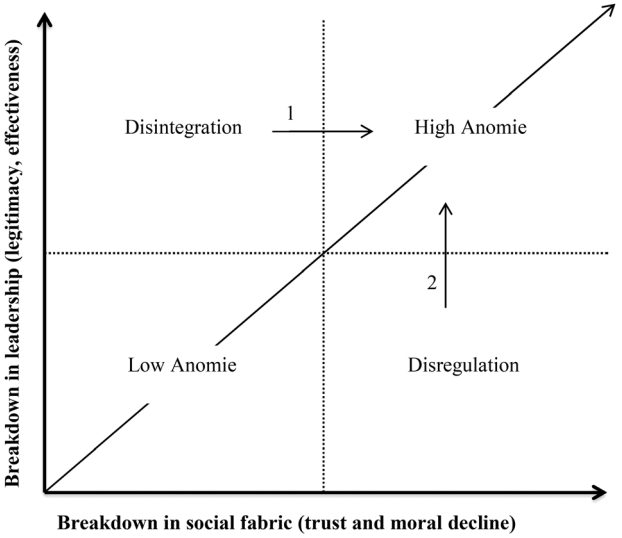

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of anomie whereby the interaction between a perception that social fabric and leadership are breaking down produces different states of anomie.

A *disregulated* society occurs to the extent that there is consensus that there is a breakdown of leadership, which in turn may serve to weaken the social fabric of a society (see pathway 1 in Figure 1). More specifically, to the extent that leaders are seen as ineffective (for reviews, see Reicher et al., 2005; Tyler, 2006) and unfair (see Haslam & Reicher, 2007; Reicher et al., 2005) the cohesiveness of the broader social environment and therefore the social fabric of the society at large will be under threat (see pathway 1 in Figure 1). In addition, despotism and nepotism lead to alienation and marginalization, eroding a sense of belonging within the community, trust in others, and the perception of consensual moral standards.

A *disintegrated* society develops with a consensus that social fabric has broken down, and is characterized by a lack of trust and consensual moral standards, in which everyone follows their own self-interest (see Durkheim, 1897/1987). These fractures in the social fabric may likely lead to the collapse and breakdown of leadership over time, as members of a society fail to agree that leaders are representative of all (see pathway 2 in Figure 1; see Haslam et al., 2011; Reicher et al., 2005).

In instances of both disregulation and disintegration, when the leadership or social fabric is breaking down, that condition of society puts pressure on the other dimension. It is in this way that collectively shared perceptions of anomie may emerge; whether it is the perceived lack of trust and consensual moral standards within a given society that in turn undermine the collective consensus that the leadership is legitimate and effective or the perception of illegitimate and ineffective leadership that undermines the collective consensus that people can be trusted, anomie emerges to the extent that both of these pillars of society begin to collapse.

As such, it is the interdependence of collective perceptions of leadership and social fabric within a society that underpins our theorizing around anomie whereby both types of breakdown are co-occurring, mutually reinforcing, and thereby triggering a downwards spiral leading towards the fourth state of society, *high anomie*, in which both leadership and social fabric is perceived to have broken down.

The cumulative increase in perceived breakdown of both leadership and social fabric is the beginning of the emergence of high anomie in society. There are, however, other factors that influence the emergence of anomie, to which we now turn our discussion.

When does anomie emerge? There are multiple factors influencing the emergence of anomie. These include relevant objective events or states of society, as well as their interpretation and communication. Furthermore, we argue that certain events can act as triggers or tipping points, accelerating communication and the development of shared perceptions, and therefore enhancing the emergence of anomie.

As noted earlier, a number of key objective factors are likely to be present in social contexts where anomie exists. These may include the threat of war, long histories of war, or emergence of terrorist activities (e.g., Jamieson, 1998), extensive political, ideological, and institutional change (Ådnanes, 2007; Genov, 1998; Huschka & Mau, 2006), or high levels of social inequality and crime (e.g., Merton, 1938, 1968; Messner & Rosenfeld, 2001). While not exhaustive, this list highlights that for anomie to emerge there needs to be a significant level of social, political, and economic disruption within a given society.

The appropriate background context is necessary for anomie to occur, but it is not sufficient. Rather, processes of interpretation and social communication determine whether anomie emerges. For instance, a severe global economic downturn may lead to a perception that the leadership is failing at its economic objectives and that the fabric of society is beginning to tear due to rising unemployment. On the other hand, if the economic downturn were perceived to be a matter of external factors, it may never produce such a perception. Furthermore, when high levels of preexisting trust in government and in other members of society exist, economic hard times could also potentially bring people together and increase societal functioning (see Mols & Jetten, 2015). It is possible to imagine similarly divergent responses in the case of war or other threats such as the sudden outbreak of disease. Thus, how people interpret and communicate perceptions of objective events due to various external or internal factors will affect the development of anomie.

This process can be accelerated by a triggering event that accelerates social communication and gives rise to the intersubjective reality of anomie. To take a recent example, a simple rubbish crisis in Lebanon rapidly sparked into a debate about the 'polluted political structure' (Mouawad, 2015). Another well-known example comes from Ferguson in the United States, where the fatal shooting of a Black civilian by police officers led to civil unrest and violence that continues today. These triggering events, often broadcast widely and possessing high emotional content, can be tipping points at which a perception of anomie becomes consolidated within a given society and a consensus emerges that the society as a whole is failing (also see threshold models, Granovetter, 1978). Such events allow anomie to persist and spread, turning individual perceptions into collectively shared ones (Bar-Tal, 2000; Moscovici & Duveen, 2000).

By considering the interaction of background factors and social communication processes and the interdependence of the two dimensions of anomie (breakdown in leadership and social fabric), we have developed a picture of when and how societies may sink into anomie. Critically, our analysis also provides insights into ways in which a society may protect against, and even emerge from, anomie (see below). Before doing so, we will develop an account of the microlevel aspect of anomie, that is, how individuals may respond to a society that is perceived as decaying, an understanding of which is critical for a psychological analysis of anomie.

Microlevel Behavioral Responses to Anomie

The first step in understanding how people respond to anomie is to develop insights into what living in an anomic context means for individuals as well as collectives. We argue that the primary psychological effect of anomie is that a society with high anomie fails to satisfy four fundamental human needs. Based on a taxonomy by Williams (2009), we distinguish a need for a meaningful life, a need for self-esteem, a need to belong and connect to others, and a need to have a sense of personal and

collective control and security (see also Greenaway, Cruwys, Haslam & Jetten, 2016). Previous research has shown that anomie is associated with a sense of meaninglessness (Thorlindsson & Bernburg, 2004), a lack of self-esteem and belonging (see Srole, 1956), a lack of meaningful connection with society (Durkheim, 1897/1987), a belief that the world is dangerous and threatening (Hilbert, 1986), and, since nothing is certain at both a personal and collective level (Bjarnason, 2009), compromised personal and collective control.

To understand these various psychological outcomes, we identify two general responses to anomie.[1] First, we focus on a well-known response to anomie: the notion that anomie reduces well-being and mental health. Because these responses involve a reduction of the richness of an individual's personal world and its potential as well as negative psychological outcomes, we refer to this response as the *contraction of the personal self*. We will outline below how a contraction of the personal self may lead to the adoption of authoritarianism to satisfy fundamental human needs. Second, reflecting on less well examined and understood outcomes of anomie, we suggest that the frustration of fundamental needs satisfaction induced by anomie is associated with a withdrawal from, and disidentification with, the superordinate group. Because this response involves reduced engagement with the broader social world, we refer to it as the *contraction of the social self* (see Figure 2). As we will discuss, contraction of social self might give rise to the emergence of tribalism whereby individuals seek out smaller groups with which to identify.

Contraction of Personal Self

There is a large body of work showing evidence for an association between anomie, either as a whole or as one of its two dimensions, and a contraction of the personal self, characterized by reduced well-being. Perhaps the most striking is Durkheim's (1897/1987) work showing high rates of suicide in anomic societies. Other studies have reported that anomie is related to reduced well-being and life satisfaction (Blanco & Díaz, 2007), reduced happiness (Brockmann, Delhey, Welzel, & Yuan, 2009), and depression (Lantz & Harper, 1990). The BBC Prison Study, which divided participants into groups of prisoners and guards, demonstrated too that when trust in others and consensus around leadership and group effectiveness broke down, participants experienced increased stress, depression, and burnout, and higher cortisol levels (Haslam et al., 2011). A breakdown of social fabric (e.g., reduced trust and social capital) is associated with reduced well-being and depression (Cruwys, Haslam, Dingle, Haslam, & Jetten, 2014; Helliwell & Putnam, 2004; Putnam, 2000). Evidence also shows that effective leadership is associated with the psychological well-being of constituents (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004), a relationship also evident within organizational settings (e.g., Steffens et al., 2014).

One of the reasons that a breakdown in social fabric and leadership may impact negatively on well-being is that these factors are associated with a failure to satisfy fundamental human needs (i.e., a need for meaning, a need for self-esteem, a need to belong, and a need for control, see Greenaway et al., 2016; Williams, 2009). This approach to understanding the effects of anomie is consistent with Merton's (1938, 1968) description of anomie as a state that arises when people lack legitimate means to achieve cultural aspirations, a state in which feelings of hopelessness and helplessness emerge. Supportive of these effects of anomie, Ådnanes (2007) found that anomie manifested itself in postcommunist Bulgarian youth in a range of psychological reactions such as a strong sense of lost personal and collective control, a sense of uncertainty, and lack of social connectivity.

Authoritarianism as a response to personal contraction. When one's fundamental needs are not met, one response is the reliance on alternative strategies to satisfy those needs, such as the emergence of control-restoring ideologies. There is now considerable evidence that, in a context where

[1] Even though these two types of responses are not separate (i.e., there is considerable overlap and interaction between the two), in order to develop our conceptual model, for now, we treat them as unconnected and distinct responses.

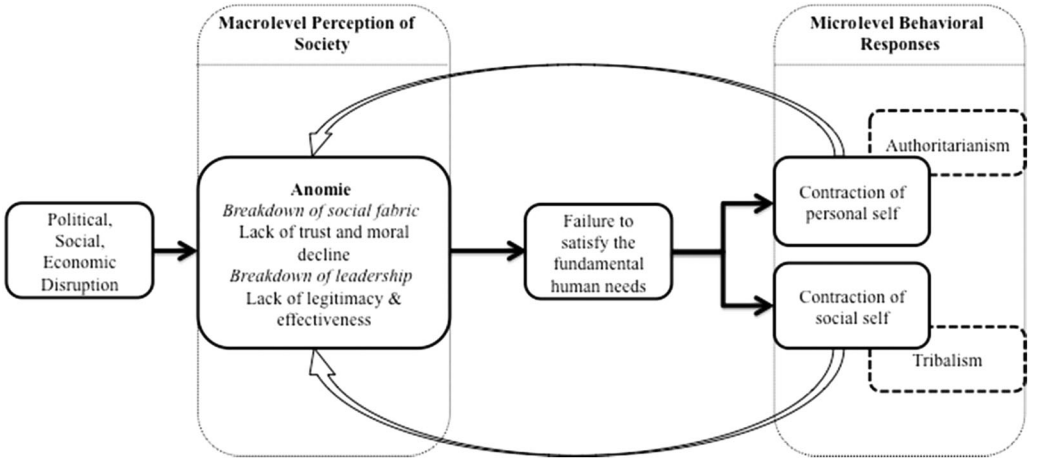

Figure 2. Conceptual framework of anomie and its psychological outcomes.

basic needs have not been met (e.g., high anomie and subsequent uncertainty and insecurity, living in atomized society), people start to value authority and strong leadership, and they become intolerant of those more distant from themselves (Arendt, 1951; Haslam & Reicher, 2007). A lack of control has been linked with higher authoritarianism (Agroskin, 2010), and the relationship between anomie and the rise of authoritarianism is well-established (Arendt, 1951; Oesterreich, 2005; Scheepers, Felling, & Peters, 1992; Srole, 1956). Recent work by Fritsche, Jonas, and Kessler (2011) shows that a crisis threatening both individual personal control and societal cohesion creates more ethnocentric reactions and intolerance of outgroup members. In a similar vein, in their BBC Prison Study Haslam and Reicher (2007) found that a failure to cooperate within a larger prison system enhanced uncertainty, insecurity, and instability, and this facilitated the desire for strong and authoritarian leadership.

We propose that a shift towards authoritarian ideologies in an attempt to satisfy fundamental human needs may counteract the negative effects of anomie on well-being outcomes (contraction of personal self). Specifically, by allowing the individual to restore a sense that their fundamental needs are being or will be satisfied, authoritarian ideologies may also protect the individual against feelings of distress associated with anomie (Van Hiel & De Clercq, 2009).

Contraction of Social Self

In addition to a contraction of the personal self, people may also contract their social selves in response to anomie, a tendency to disengage from the broader web of weak ties with more distant others within the society at large. Although this response is less well documented, the connection between the dimensions of anomie and a contraction of the social self can be extrapolated from existing evidence.

A contraction of the social self occurs in response to a perceived lack of fundamental need satisfaction. When people perceive that leaders are no longer effective and when trust and moral norms are in decline, this increases the potential costs of engaging in cooperative and mutually beneficial interactions with others (Axelrod, 2006), and this undermines a sense of meaning, self-esteem, connectedness and control. Withdrawal from one's broader web of weak ties serves to protect people from these costs and prevents the potential for personal loss.

This waning of cooperation and trust across networks of weak ties has the macrolevel effect of leaving a social system fragmented and incoherent, and the microlevel effect of disrupting an individual's integration into the larger society (Granovetter, 1973, 1983). As schisms within society emerge, subgroup relations deteriorate (Sani, 2005), and identification with the superordinate group weakens (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000), leading individuals to retract from society at large. van Snippenburg and Scheepers (1991) assert that anomie was one of the major reasons for political apathy in the Netherlands during mid-80s. These authors argue that detachment of individuals from society, due to perceived anomie, resulted in decreased motivation to engage in proactive action (see Ådnanes, 2007; van Snippenburg & Scheepers, 1991). One way in which a lack of control manifests itself is the tendency for individuals to withdraw from social life (Leger, 1980).

Tribalism as a response to social contraction. We argue that people are likely to seek out the satisfaction of fundamental human needs within the context of smaller groups. In fragmented and incoherent societies, not only will people withdraw from their weak and cross-cutting social ties, they will also seek to replace these with strong, safe, and secure ties. People focus on "battening down the hatches" or "hunkering down" (Putnam, 2007) by seeking to strengthen the integration and cohesion of the smaller groups to which they belong.

Therefore, contraction of the social self induced by anomie will be associated with the emergence of "tribalism" (see Maffesoli, 1996), the tendency for individuals to coalesce into highly cohesive small groups which might produce strong familial-like ties by virtue of their cohesiveness (see Swann, Jetten, Gómez, Whitehouse, & Bastian, 2012).

"Tribal" groups may have outspoken political or ideological agendas (see Antonio, 2000), or may provide only the promise of physical protection (see Jugert & Duckitt, 2009), depending on their group goals, group dynamics, and other external factors. Tribalized groups may close themselves off from mainstream society in an attempt to protect themselves from anomie (e.g., Amish groups in the United States). Alternatively, they may politicize and engage in social change, either toward a left-wing (Syriza in Greece, Podemos party in Spain) or a right-wing direction (e.g., Golden Down in Greece), and either aimed at stabilizing society by restoring legitimate and effective leadership or taking the form of extremist progroup behavior or terrorism (see van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008).

Such smaller groups are attractive when anomie is high because they serve to satisfy fundamental human needs, restoring a sense of personal and collective control (Fritsche et al., 2011), providing their members with a common purpose and connectedness (Durkheim, 1897/1987, 1893/1997), and providing a secure foundation for self-definition (Hamilton, Sherman, & Castelli, 2002) and identification (Castano, Yzerbyt, & Bourguignon, 2003). Within such groups the boundaries of the personal and social self become permeable, and fusion with the group may occur, creating strong relational ties and promoting a willingness to fight and die for the needs of the group (Swann et al., 2012).

In facilitating satisfaction of individuals' fundamental needs and protecting individuals from dangerous or threatening environments, tribalism may have a number of positive effects. There is a large body of work suggesting that groups satisfy fundamental needs (Greenaway et al., 2016). Because they provide a sense of belonging, tribalized groups can have positive consequence for well-being (Jetten, Haslam, & Haslam, 2012), acting as a buffer against stress and anxiety (Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penna, 2005), and preventing negative psychological outcomes (see also Haslam, Jetten, Postmes, & Haslam, 2009; Haslam et al., 2005; Jetten et al., 2012). In addition, Haslam and colleagues (2005) found that when facing life challenges, higher identification with family and friends (strong ties) significantly predicted lower stress, lower depression, and higher life satisfaction.

Interactions Between Micro- and Macrolevel Effects of Anomie

Our analysis of anomie allows for an understanding of how macrolevel perceptions and microlevel individual behaviors work together to produce and reinforce anomie. We propose that

microlevel behavioral responses to anomie (i.e., personal contraction and social contraction) feed back into macrolevel perceptions of the state of society in a manner depicted in Figure 2. Contraction of both the personal self and social self leads to a reduced motivation to socially engage with one's community. This reinforces the notion that the social fabric is in decay. Furthermore, a shift towards authoritarian ideologies and a preference for highly cohesive groups (i.e., tribalism) further leads to breakdown of social fabric, and this is related to greater distrust of leaders and their motivations.

Critically, given this understanding of the interaction between micro and macro level, our analysis opens up new opportunities for understanding how to combat anomie through both changing individual-level behavior and shaping macrolevel perceptions of the society at large. For instance, subsequent to anomie, tribalized groups might politicize and engage in social change, which may lead to emancipatory responses to the unfairness of a totalitarian authority and bring a society back out of anomie (e.g., the anti-apartheid movement led by Mandela in South Africa). Other ways to overcome anomie involve macrolevel interventions in the lead up to the emergence of anomie whereby authorities take prevention measures that can reverse the development of the perceived breakdown of social fabric and leadership. For instance, the processes that lead from disregulated and disintegrated societies to a high anomie society (Figure 1) could possibly be blocked if policies and strategies are put forward that aim to engage different communities, create shared identification and effective regulation, moving disregulated and disintegrated societies toward a low (rather than high) anomie society.

Using a social psychological analysis of anomie enables us to understand such a dynamic process in the interaction between micro- and macrolevel effects of anomie. This understanding opens up opportunities to disentangle processes that contribute to the emergence of anomie and also illuminates ways to overcome a state of high anomie in society.

What Does a Psychological Analysis of Anomie Have to Offer?

Drawing from well-established psychological theories, we have offered a new conceptualization of anomie that provides an updated account of the concept of anomie. Questions may still remain about what advantages are offered by a psychological analysis of anomie, in contrast to a sociological analysis. A psychological analysis of anomie advances the study of anomie by clarifying the distinction between collective- and individual-level processes and by providing a conceptual framework for operationalizing and measuring anomie, as well as by offering new avenues for research into anomie. Our psychological account of anomie also has the potential to bridge the gap between sociology and psychology and expand the scope of psychological theorizing

First, psychology is particularly well equipped to provide an analysis of the interplay between individual- and collective-level processes (e.g., Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Although we have drawn on ideas developed within sociology in constructing our account, it is only by incorporating new thinking within psychology on connections and interaction between collective- and individual-level processes that we have been able to develop insights into the dynamics of anomie and individuals' responses to it. Thus, a psychological analysis of anomie can distinguish anomie from the responses it induces in individuals (its psychological outcomes), a long-standing problem in existing sociological literature on anomie (for a review, see Bjarnason, 2009). Moreover, by specifying a role for shared perceptions in producing anomie and identifying the ways in which these perceptions may be both grounded in, but also independent of, the objective state of a given society, we add precision to both the theorizing around anomie and its measurement. Theorizing and measurement of anomie must go beyond examining the state of a society to examining how it is perceived by the collective and how this intersubjective reality is predictive of individual responses when measured at the level of the collective (e.g., multilevel modeling). By utilizing these approaches, we can develop new insights into how a collective-level phenomenon affects individual-level outcomes.

Second, solving a long-standing problem in the literature regarding how to operationalize anomie, our psychological analysis provides a conceptual framework for operationalizing and measuring anomie as the perception that a given society is in decay. To this end, Teymoori et al. (2016) developed the Perception of Anomie Scale (PAS). This measure maps onto macrolevel indicators of social and economic stability and predicts economic and human inequality, poverty, unemployment, lower levels of human development (Human Development Index), reduced transparency, and corruption (corruption control index). The measure also predicts individual-level outcomes such as lower life satisfaction and higher disidentification from the superordinate group over and above other anomie measures and country-level objective indicators of social and economic stability (see Teymoori et al., 2016).

Third, psychological analysis of anomie offers up new and important avenues for research. For example, examining the interplay between the two dimensions that give rise to anomie (breakdown of social fabric and leadership) would allow for understanding and predicting more accurately the outcomes for a society experiencing pressure on one or other of the dimensions related to anomie. Furthermore, as indicated by our brief remarks above, our analysis offers insights that could be used to develop an understanding of how societies might emerge from anomie, crucial for many societies today and in the future. These analyses should also be developed to not only better understand anomie at the societal level (as we have focused on here), but also for other contexts where anomie may emerge (e.g., within organizations or smaller communities).

Finally, a psychological analysis of anomie has the potential to create an important bridge between sociology and psychology, advancing both disciplines. A comprehensive account of anomie emerges out of an integration of findings from divergent domains within psychology (e.g., work examining the relationship between subgroup and superordinate groups, the difference between distributive and procedural fairness, the relationship between group membership and well-being, leadership, and the importance of control) with the sociological literature on anomie. This integration invites a fresh appreciation of the important links that psychological theorizing has with sociology and political science and reiterates the importance of seeing individuals as social beings whose actions are shaped by broader social structures and contexts. As such, we hope this review will bridge psychological theorizing to disciplines beyond psychology.

We believe that a psychological analysis of anomie is both important and timely; the failure to provide a psychological analysis of anomie has led the discipline of psychology to overlook a large part of the social and political landscape, thereby restricting the relevance and generalizability of (social) psychological theorizing. By developing a psychological analysis of anomie, we hope to broaden the scope for psychological research aimed at developing and understanding social and human behavior across novel social and political contexts.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research was supported by the Australian Research Council's Discovery Project funding scheme (DP120100053). We thank Naomi Ellemers, Alex Haslam, Stephen Reicher, and Bill Swann for their helpful comments on an earlier version of this article. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ali Teymoori, School of Psychology, University of Queensland, St Lucia, QLD, 4072, Australia. E-mail: ali.teymoori@uqconnect.edu.au

REFERENCES

Ådnanes, M. (2007). Social transitions and anomie among post-communist Bulgarian youth. *Young*, *15*, 49–69.

Agroskin, D. (2010). Out of control: How and why does perceived lack of control lead to ethnocentrism? *Review of Psychology*, *17*, 79–90.

Andvig, J. C. (2006). Corruption and fast change. *World Development*, *34*, 328–340.

Antonio, R. J. (2000). After postmodernism: Reactionary tribalism. *American Journal of Sociology*, *106*, 40–87.

Arendt, H. (1951). *The origins of totalitarianism*. New York, NY: Harcourt Brace.

Axelrod, R. M. (2006). *The evolution of cooperation*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Bar-Tal, D. (2000). *Shared beliefs in a society: Social psychological analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bjarnason, T. (2009). Anomie among European adolescents: Conceptual and empirical clarification of a multilevel sociological concept. *Sociological Forum*, *24*, 135–161.

Blanco, A., & Díaz, D. (2007). Social order and mental health: A social well-being approach. *Psychology in Spain*, *11*, 61–71.

van der Bles, A. M., Postmes, T., & Meijer, R. R. (2015) Understanding collective discontents: A psychological approach to measuring zeitgeist. *PLoS ONE 10*, 1–26.

Brehm, J., & Rahn, W. (1997). Individual-level evidence for the causes and consequences of social capital. *American Journal of Political Science*, *41*, 999–1023.

Brockmann, H., Delhey, J., Welzel, C., & Yuan, H. (2009). The China puzzle: Falling happiness in a rising economy. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, *10*, 387–405.

Castano, E., Yzerbyt, V., & Bourguignon, D. (2003). We are one and I like it: The impact of ingroup entitativity on ingroup identification. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *33*, 735–754.

Chiu, C. Y., Gelfand, M. J., Yamagishi, T., Shteynberg, G., & Wan, C. (2010). Intersubjective culture the role of intersubjective perceptions in cross-cultural research. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, *5*, 482–493.

Cruwys, T., Haslam, S. A., Dingle, G. A., Haslam, C., & Jetten, J. (2014). Depression and social identity: An integrative review. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *18*, 215–238.

Durkheim, E. (1897/1987). Suicide (J. A. Spaulding & G. Simpson, Trans.). London, UK: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Durkheim, E. (1893/1997). The division of labor in society (W. D. Halls, Trans.). New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Ellinas, A. A. (2013). The rise of Golden Dawn: The new face of the far right in Greece. *South European Society and Politics*, *18*, 543–565.

Fritsche, I., Jonas, E., & Kessler, T. (2011). Collective reactions to threat: Implications for intergroup conflict and for solving societal crises. *Social Issues and Policy Review*, *5*, 101–136.

Genov, N. (1998). Transformation and anomie: Problems of quality of life in Bulgaria. *Social Indicators Research*, *43*, 197–209.

Granovetter, M. (1973). The strength of weak ties. *American Journal of Sociology*, *78*, 1360–1380.

Granovetter, M. (1978). Threshold models of collective behavior. *American Journal of Sociology*, *83*, 1420–1443.

Granovetter, M. (1983). The strength of weak ties: A network theory revisited. *Sociological Theory*, *1*, 201–233.

Greenaway, K. H., Cruwys, T., Haslam, S. A., & Jetten, J. (2016). Social identities promote well-being because they satisfy global psychological needs. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, *46*, 294–307.

Habermas, J. (1975). *Legitimation crisis* (T. McCarthy, Trans.). Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Hamilton, D. L., Sherman, S. J., & Castelli, L. (2002). A group by any other name—The role of entitativity in group perception. *European Review of Social Psychology*, *12*, 139–166.

Hardin, C. D., & Higgins, E. T. (1996). Shared reality: How social verification makes the subjective objective. In R. M. Sorrentino & E. T. Higgins (Eds.), *Handbook of motivation and cognition: The interpersonal context* (Vol. 3, pp. 28–84). New York, NY: Guilford Press.

Haslam, S. A., Jetten, J., Postmes, T., & Haslam, C. (2009). Social identity, health and well-being: An emerging agenda for applied psychology. *Applied Psychology*, *58*, 1–23.

Haslam, S. A., O'Brien, A., Jetten, J., Vormedal, K., & Penna, S. (2005). Taking the strain: Social identity, social support, and the experience of stress. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *44*, 355–370.

Haslam, S. A., & Reicher, S. D. (2007). Identity entrepreneurship and the consequences of identity failure: The dynamics of leadership in the BBC Prison Study. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, *70*, 125–147.

Haslam, S. A., Reicher, S. D., & Platow, M. J. (2011). *The new psychology of leadership: Identity, influence and power*. London, United Kingdom: Psychology Press.

Helliwell, J. F., & Putnam, R. D. (2004). The social context of well-being. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, *359*, 1435–1446.

Heydari, A., Teymoori, A., Haghish, E. F., & Mohamadi, B. (2014). Influential factors on ethnocentrism: The effect of socioeconomic status, anomie, and authoritarianism. *Social Science Information*, *35*, 240–254.

Heydari, A., Teymoori, A., & Nasiri, H. (2014). Development of suicidality within socioeconomic context: Mediation effect of parental control and anomie. *Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*, *68*, 63–76.

van Hiel, A., & De Clercq, B. (2009). Authoritarianism is good for you: Right-wing authoritarianism as a buffering factor for mental distress. *European Journal of Personality*, *23*, 33–50.

Hilbert, R. A. (1986). Anomie and the moral regulation of reality: The Durkheimian tradition in modern relief. *Sociological Theory*, *4*, 1–19.

Hornsey, M. J., & Hogg, M. A. (2000). Assimilation and diversity: An integrative model of subgroup relations. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *4*, 143–156.

Huschka, D., & Mau, S. (2006). Social anomie and racial segregation in South Africa. *Social Indicators Research*, *76*, 467–498.

Jamieson, R. (1998). Towards a criminology of war in Europe. In V. Ruggiero, N. South, & I. Taylor (Eds.), *The new European criminology: Crime and social order in Europe* (pp. 480–506). New York, NY: Routledge.

Jetten, J., Haslam, C., & Haslam, A. S. (2012). *The social cure: Identity, health and well-being*. New York, NY: Psychology Press.

Jost, J. T., Banaji, M. R., & Nosek, B. A. (2004). A decade of system justification theory: Accumulated evidence of conscious and unconscious bolstering of the status quo. *Political Psychology*, *25*, 881–919.

Jugert, P., & Duckitt, J. (2009). A motivational model of authoritarianism: Integrating personal and situational determinants. *Political Psychology*, *30*, 693–719.

Lantz, J., & Harper, K. (1990). Anomic depression and the migrating family. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, *12*, 153–163.

Leger, R. G. (1980). Where have all the flowers gone? A sociological analysis of the origins and content of youth values of the seventies. *Adolescence*, *15*, 283–300.

Lind, E. A., & Tyler, T. R. (1988). *The social psychology of procedural justice*. New York: Plenum Press.

Maffesoli, M. (1996). *The time of the tribes: The decline of individualism in mass society* (D. Smith, Trans.). London, United Kingdom: Sage.

Merton, R. (1938). Social structure and anomie. *American Sociological Review*, *3*, 672–682.

Merton, R. (1968). *Social theory and social structure*. New York, NY: Free Press.

Messner, S. F., & Rosenfeld, R. (2001). *Crime and the American dream* (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.

Mols, F., & Jetten, J. (2015). Explaining the appeal of populist right-wing parties in times of economic prosperity. *Political Psychology*, *37*, 275–292.

Moscovici, S., & Duveen, G. (2000). *Social representations: Explorations in social psychology*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Polity Press.

Mouawad, J. (2015). Lebanon's rubbish crisis is a chance to clean up the polluted political system. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/sep/02/lebanon-rubbish-crisis-clean-up-political-system

Muftić, L. R. (2006). Advancing institutional anomie theory: A microlevel examination connecting culture, institutions, and deviance. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, *50*, 630–653.

Norasakkunkit, V., & Uchida, Y. (2011). Psychological consequences of postindustrial anomie on self and motivation among Japanese youth. *Journal of Social Issues*, *67*, 774–786.

Oesterreich, D. (2005). Flight into security: A new approach and measure of the authoritarian personality. *Political Psychology*, *26*, 275–298.

Oishi, S., Kesebir, S., & Snyder, B. H. (2009). Sociology: A lost connection in social psychology. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *13*, 334–353.

Passas, N. (1995). Continuities in the anomie tradition. In F. A. Adler, W. S. Laufer, & R. K. Merton (Eds.), *The legacy of anomie theory* (pp. 91–112). New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction.

Postmes, T., Haslam, S. A., & Swaab, R. I. (2005). Social influence in small groups: An interactive model of social identity formation. *European Review of Social Psychology*, *16*, 1–42.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Putnam, R. D. (2007). E Pluribus Unum: Diversity and community in the twenty-first century: The 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture. *Scandinavian Political Studies*, *30*, 137–174.

Racovita, M., Murray, R., & Sharma, S. (2013). *In search of lasting security: An assessment of armed violence in Nepal* (Special Report No. 19). Geneva, Switzerland: Small Arms Survey.

Reicher, S., Haslam, S. A., & Hopkins, N. (2005). Social identity and the dynamics of leadership: Leaders and followers as collaborative agents in the transformation of social reality. *Leadership Quarterly*, *16*, 547–568.

Sani, F. (2005). When subgroups secede: Extending and refining the social psychological model of schism in groups. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *31*, 1074–1086.

Scheepers, P., Felling, A., & Peters, J. (1992). Anomie, authoritarianism and ethnocentrism: Update of a classic theme and an empirical test. *Politics & the Individual*, *2*, 43–59.

Sidanius, J., & Pratto, F. (2001). *Social dominance: An intergroup theory of social hierarchy and oppression*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

van Snippenburg, L. B., & Scheepers, P. (1991). Social class and political behavior during a period of economic stagnation: Apathy and radicalism in the Netherlands, 1985. *Political Psychology*, *12*, 41–63.

Srole, L. (1956). Social integration and certain corollaries: An exploratory study. *American Sociological Review*, *21*, 709–716.

Steffens, N. K., Haslam, S. A., Reicher, S. D., Platow, M. J., Fransen, K., Yang, J., … Boen, F. (2014). Leadership as social identity management: Introducing the Identity Leadership Inventory (ILI) to assess and validate a four-dimensional model. *Leadership Quarterly*, *25*, 1001–1024.

Swann, W. B., Jetten, J., Gómez, A., Whitehouse, H., & Bastian, B. (2012). When group membership gets personal: A theory of identity fusion. *Psychological Review*, *119*, 441–456.

Tajfel, H. (1982). *Social identity and intergroup relations*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole

Tay, L., Herian, M. N., & Diener, E. (2014). Detrimental effects of corruption and subjective well-being whether, how, and when. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *5*, 751–759.

Teymoori, A., Jetten, J., Bastian, B., Ariyanto, A., Autin, F., Ayub, N., … Wohl, M. (2016). Revisiting the measurement of anomie. *PLoS ONE*, *11*, 1–27.

Thorlindsson, T., & Bernburg, J. G. (2004). Durkheim's theory of social order and deviance: A multi-level test. *European Sociological Review*, *20*, 271–285.

Tyler, T. R. (2006). Psychological perspectives on legitimacy and legitimation. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *57*, 375–400.

Uslaner, E. M. (2002). *The moral foundations of trust*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

van Zomeren, M., Postmes, T., & Spears, R. (2008). Toward an integrative social identity model of collective action: A quantitative research synthesis of three socio-psychological perspectives. *Psychological Bulletin*, *134*, 504–535.

Williams, K. D. (2009). Ostracism: A temporal need-threat model. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, *41*, 275–314.