

# Perceiving Expatriate Coworkers as Foreigners Encourages Aid: Social Categorization and Procedural Justice Together Improve Intergroup Cooperation and Dual Identity

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## Abstract

We propose that social categorization can encourage particular forms of intergroup cooperation because it differentiates a group in need from a group that can give aid. Moreover, social categorization is most likely to occur when individuals perceive procedural justice (i.e., fair treatment) from authorities in a superordinate group that includes the individuals' subgroup. Two field studies investigating relations between local and foreign coworkers tested not only this prediction, but also whether high social categorization and procedural justice would yield a dual identity, in which group members identify simultaneously with their social category and the superordinate group. Both studies supported our predictions: Local employees engaged a dual identity and offered knowledge to aid a foreign coworker's adjustment more often when local-foreign categorization and procedural justice from organizational authorities was high than when these variables were low. These discoveries point to controllable mechanisms that enable intergroup cooperation, and our findings have important implications for intergroup aid, expatriate adjustment, immigration, and multiculturalism.

## Keywords

social categorization, procedural justice, intergroup contact, prosocial behavior, dual identity

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In 2008, China experienced a devastating 7.9-magnitude earthquake. To assist the Chinese public, other countries and not-for-profit agencies offered aid; the British Red Cross (2009) alone raised £4.8 million. It is encouraging to see such generosity cross intergroup boundaries, and it is tempting to speculate that individuals must leave intergroup differences behind to assist other people. However, particular forms of support may require the psychological maintenance of those intergroup boundaries (i.e., social categorization; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971), because such categorization can differentiate groups in need of assistance from those who can give aid. Recognizing that social categorization is often associated with less cooperation and greater intergroup conflict, we sought to achieve two primary goals: (a) to test whether social categorization can be associated with increased intergroup cooperation and (b) to test a potential moderator of social categorization's intergroup effects: procedural justice from authorities.

The literature on intergroup relations tends to conclude that social categorization leads to intergroup conflict (for recent

reviews, see Dovidio & Gaertner, 2010, and Yzerbyt & Demoulin, 2010), but accumulating research points to inconsistencies in that link. Theory and evidence support the notion that social categorization is necessary to generalize positive contact to other moments of contact (see Brown & Hewstone, 2005), and recent research indicates that intergroup competition is not universal (Stürmer & Snyder, 2010).

Our perspective builds on this direction but offers a new approach. We argue that social categorization can be used to identify the groups of people in need of aid and the groups of

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people who can give aid, specifically aid that involves a transfer of resources. By resources, we refer to anything that has potential value to members of the recipient group; among other things, such resources can be financial (e.g., earthquake relief donations), physical (e.g., housing for displaced flood victims), or informational (e.g., farming knowledge to developing nations). Social categorization allows for a more effective transfer of resources from one group to another. By contrast, this rationale should not apply to outcomes typically evaluated in intergroup contact (e.g., cross-category friendships, prejudice reduction, or peaceful coexistence; for a meta-analysis, see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). These outcomes often reflect attitudes about the intergroup context rather than about a potential transfer of resources.

Another area of interest is what determines whether social categorization leads to cooperation or competition. One potential moderator is procedural justice. Distinguished from distributive justice (i.e., the fair distribution of outcomes), procedural justice refers to the fair treatment of individuals. Although it can be exhibited by a wide variety of sources (e.g., peers, subordinates), procedural justice exhibited by authorities has been revealed by research (e.g., Blader & Tyler, 2009; Tyler & Lind, 1992) to be particularly useful, as it increases members' identification with and cooperation within the group. It does so because it is expected to create identity security and respect (Tyler & Blader, 2003), leading members to be "voluntarily motivated to act in ways that make use of distinctive qualities and abilities" (p. 360).

Procedural justice can improve intergroup relations when the groups are nested within a more inclusive superordinate group that includes authority figures. In such a case, procedural justice will lead members of the subgroups to feel secure and respected (Haslam, Eggins, & Reynolds, 2003; Huo & Molina, 2006; Leonardelli & Tormala, 2003), and these feelings will motivate cooperation across group boundaries. Theory and evidence support this notion; for example, White Americans and Black Americans were more likely to support authorities' efforts to maintain intranational justice, including the redistribution of resources between these two groups, when they perceived fair treatment from American authorities (Smith & Tyler, 1996).

As this evidence suggests, fair treatment from authorities may be sufficient to improve intergroup attitudes. However, it should not be sufficient for improving the intergroup transfer of resources because it does not specify the type of help needed by one group or whether the other group is capable of helping. By contrast, social categorization can do so, because it enables people to identify which group is in need of assistance and which group can provide it. For that reason, we expected to find that procedural justice motivates group members to perceive social categorization as a distinctive quality that could facilitate cooperation. Thus, we predicted a Procedural Justice  $\times$  Social Categorization interaction: Increasing social categorization leads to greater intergroup cooperation when procedural justice is high, but less cooperation when it is low. In

addition, procedural justice should lead to greater cooperation when social categorization is high but not when it is low.

This research also explored the antecedents of a dual identity, in which group members simultaneously identify with their own subgroup and the more inclusive superordinate group in which their subgroup is nested (Dovidio, Gaertner, & Saguy, 2009). A dual identity is beneficial to intergroup contact because the superordinate identity builds a basis for shared identity and cooperation within the superordinate group without attenuating the identity of the nested category. Evidence supports this prediction (e.g., Crisp, Stone, & Hall, 2006; González & Brown, 2003; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000b; Richter, West, van Dick, & Dawson, 2006); with a dual identity in place, conflict may be more persistently reduced.

However, a dual identity can be difficult to establish. Evidence reveals an antagonism between superordinate and subgroup identities (Sidanius, Feshbach, Levin, & Pratto, 1997; Waldzus, Mummendey, Wenzel, & Boettcher, 2004); as subgroup identification increases, superordinate identification decreases. One explanation is that subgroup members are motivated to retain the distinctiveness of smaller or nested groups (Hornsey & Hogg, 2000a; for a review, see Leonardelli, Pickett, & Brewer, 2010). Thus, we expected social categorization to lead to less identification with the superordinate group, preventing a dual identity.

For this antagonism to be overcome, subgroup identity threats need to be minimized without preventing identification with the superordinate group. Fair treatment from authorities might reduce this antagonism because such treatment leads group members to feel that their group is secure and respected, thereby reducing the threat the superordinate group poses to the subgroup's distinctiveness. Thus, procedural justice allows for a dual identity by allowing subgroup categorization and superordinate identification to be high simultaneously.

Considering this information, we generated two hypotheses. First, we predicted that procedural justice and social categorization interact to predict intergroup cooperation: Greater social categorization is associated with greater intergroup cooperation at high but not at low levels of procedural justice. Second, we theorized that procedural justice and social categorization interact to predict a dual identity: Social categorization will be negatively related to superordinate identity, but as procedural justice increases, this negative association will be reduced.

These hypotheses were tested by exploring intergroup relations between local employees indigenous to their countries and expatriate coworkers from other countries. This context is ideal because information from locals is imperative to facilitate expatriates' learning about and adjustment to the local organization (Toh & DeNisi, 2005): Expatriate coworkers are new to the host country and the organization and thus often can benefit from the insights of locals who have greater familiarity with and knowledge of local customs. In such situations, social categorization can be informative, because it helps locals identify that expatriates are

outsiders requiring assistance and shows locals how they can cooperate by sharing cultural and organizational knowledge to aid the expatriates.

We conducted two studies, each consisting of a Procedural Justice (continuous)  $\times$  Local-Expatriate Categorization (continuous) between-participants design. We tested both of our hypotheses with local employees, but each study used different measures of procedural justice and dual identity. Furthermore, Study 2 addressed an alternative hypothesis for the effects of procedural justice: distributive justice. Because recipients' perceptions of justice are thought to matter more than the actual justice they received (Blader & Bobocel, 2005), these studies collected locals' spontaneous and naturalistic observations about procedural justice and perceptions of social categorization, identity, and information sharing. No previous research has tested these predictions; these studies are the first of their kind.

## Study 1: A Field Test

### Method

Seventy-four local employees (37 women, 36 men, and 1 of unspecified gender; age range = 20–61 years,  $Mdn = 31$ ) from a total of six countries (United States, Canada, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, and Japan) were recruited directly or indirectly via other participants. All of these participants worked with an expatriate coworker from another country.

We used four measures in this study. Local-expatriate categorization (i.e., the degree to which participants saw themselves as host-country nationals and saw expatriates as members of different social groups) was assessed with two items created for this study and five items adapted from an existing scale (e.g., "I consider expatriates as 'one of them' and host country national employees to be 'one of us'";  $\alpha = .76$ ; Greenland & Brown, 1999). Participants also completed a five-item measure of perceived procedural justice in their organization (e.g., "The procedures [used to arrive at my pay package] have been free of bias";  $\alpha = .84$ ; Leung, Smith, Wang, & Sun, 1996; Moorman, 1991) and a five-item measure of organizational identity (e.g., "I feel strong ties with my organization";  $\alpha = .92$ ; Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2001). Participants responded to each of these measures on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

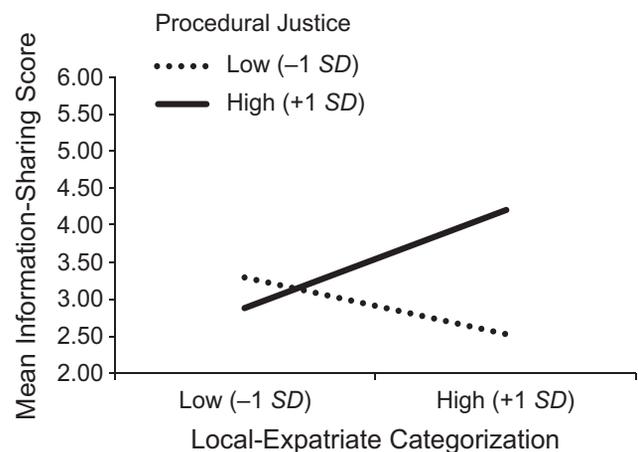
Information sharing (i.e., how frequently participants shared adjustment-relevant knowledge with their expatriate coworker) was rated on a five-item measure (Morrison, 1993; e.g., "How often do you provide your foreign-national coworker [with] information on the behaviors and attitudes that the organization values and expects?";  $\alpha = .91$ ). Participants responded to this measure on a scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*always*). Negatively worded items were reverse-scored, and item scores for each measure were averaged together, with higher numbers indicating greater levels of each construct.

## Results and discussion

Organizational identity was related positively to procedural justice ( $r = .48, p < .05$ ), as in past work (e.g., Blader & Tyler, 2009). However, organizational identity was related negatively to local-expatriate categorization ( $r = -.26, p < .05$ ), demonstrating an antagonism between nested and superordinate identities.

Scores for information sharing were submitted to regression analysis. Following standard procedures (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003), we tested whether centered scores for local-expatriate categorization and procedural justice and their interaction predicted information sharing. The product of the two predictors yielded a significant interaction ( $b = 0.44, p < .01, sr = .34$ ; see Table S1 in the Supplemental Material available online). Following standard procedures for plotting interactions (Cohen et al., 2003), we used the regression equation to calculate mean scores for information sharing at 1 standard deviation below and 1 standard deviation above the means for social categorization and procedural justice (see Fig. 1). Simple-slopes tests (Cohen et al., 2003) indicated a positive relation between local-expatriate categorization and information sharing when procedural justice was high ( $b = 0.55, p = .007, sr = .30$ ), but not when it was low ( $b = -0.27, p = .18, sr = -.15$ ). Greater social categorization was associated with greater information sharing only at higher levels of procedural justice. Consistent with the notion that fair treatment from authorities is not sufficient for encouraging this form of intergroup cooperation, the results of additional tests revealed a positive relation between procedural justice and information sharing when local-expatriate categorization was high ( $b = 0.75, p < .001, sr = .40$ ), but not when it was low ( $b = -0.20, p = .32, sr = -.11$ ).

Scores for organizational identity were submitted to the same analysis, which revealed effects for procedural justice



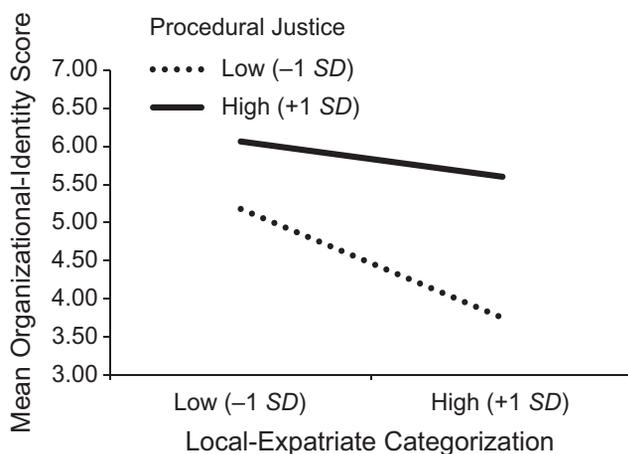
**Fig. 1.** Results from Study 1: information sharing. Mean predicted scores are plotted as a function of participants' degree of local-expatriate categorization (1 SD above or below the mean) and perception of procedural justice (1 SD above or below the mean).

( $b = 0.60, p < .001, sr = .56$ ) and local-expatriate categorization ( $b = -0.45, p < .001, sr = -.38$ ), and an interaction between these two variables ( $b = 0.21, p < .05, sr = .19$ ; see Fig. 2 and Table S1 in the Supplemental Material). Simple-slopes tests indicated that higher local-expatriate categorization was associated with lower organizational identity when procedural justice was low ( $b = -0.64, p < .001, sr = -.41$ ), but not when it was high ( $b = -0.26, p = .07, sr = -.17$ ). Consistent with the prediction, results showed that procedural justice attenuated the identity antagonism.

The evidence supported both hypotheses, with one exception. Although there was a trend for greater social categorization to be associated with less information sharing when procedural justice was low, this trend was not significant. This result may have been related to the high overall levels of procedural justice; the sample's mean score ( $M = 4.38, SD = 1.15$ ) was above the measure's midpoint (4),  $t(73) = 2.88, p = .002$ . Considering the regression equation yielded by analysis, the negative trend should become increasingly negative as procedural justice decreases—a result consistent with our prediction. Given the novelty of the effects, we thought it important to replicate this interaction in Study 2.

## Study 2: Replication and Testing of an Alternative Explanation

A sample of local U.S. employees participated in our second study, which was similar to the first study. To conceptually replicate effects, we adopted a measure of procedural justice that was more global than the one used in Study 1 (Blader & Tyler, 2009); this measure assessed employees' general perceptions of fair treatment from authorities. Whereas Study 1 gave insight into how procedural justice moderated an identity antagonism, Study 2 measured dual identity directly (Beaton, Dovidio, & Léger, 2008). To be consistent with predictions,



**Fig. 2.** Results from Study 1: organizational identity. Mean predicted scores are plotted as a function of participants' degree of local-expatriate categorization (1 SD above or below the mean) and perception of procedural justice (1 SD above or below the mean).

the evidence would have to reveal that local employees exhibit a dual identity only when local-expatriate categorization and procedural justice are both high; that is, procedural justice and social categorization should interact.

This study also tested an alternative explanation for effects related to procedural justice: distributive justice (i.e., the degree of fair outcomes for work). Distributive justice has been offered as an explanatory variable for employees' willingness to cooperate with one another (e.g., Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001) and could thus account for the effects we found in Study 1. Hence, we conducted our interaction analyses with scores for distributive justice as a main-effect covariate and with a Distributive Justice  $\times$  Local-Expatriate Categorization interaction term as a covariate, given that our prediction entails an interaction with social categorization (see Hull, Tedlie, & Lehn, 1992, for an explanation regarding why control interaction terms are advocated as a means of ruling out alternative explanations). This regression model is a stronger test of whether the predicted Procedural Justice  $\times$  Local-Expatriate Categorization interaction is attributable to procedural justice.

## Method

Participants were recruited from the StudyResponse Project (Stanton & Weiss, 2002), a service providing access to working adults across occupations and industries. A prescreening survey identified potential recruits: U.S. employees who interacted with a foreign coworker locally and were willing to participate in the study. Of the 489 respondents who met these criteria, 145 were contacted, and 83 participated (40 women, 43 men; age range = 21–54 years,  $Mdn = 34$ ), for a 57% response rate.

Participants completed a five-item measure of perceived procedural justice (e.g., “Is there a general sense among employees that things are handled in fair ways at work?”;  $\alpha = .94$ , Blader & Tyler, 2009). Item scores were summed; higher numbers indicated greater perceived procedural justice. Local-expatriate categorization ( $\alpha = .78$ ) and information sharing ( $\alpha = .94$ ) were measured as in Study 1. Negatively worded items were reverse-scored, and item scores for each measure were averaged; higher numbers indicated greater levels of each construct.

Participants also completed a two-item measure of dual identity (Beaton et al., 2008; e.g., “Local employees and foreign employees are different groups, but working together to contribute to the organization”;  $\alpha = .73$ ) and a five-item measure of distributive justice (Moorman, 1991; e.g., “I am fairly paid considering my job responsibilities”;  $\alpha = .95$ ). Participants responded using a 7-point scale indicating their agreement with each item. Each measure's item scores were averaged; higher numbers indicated higher levels of each variable.

## Results and discussion

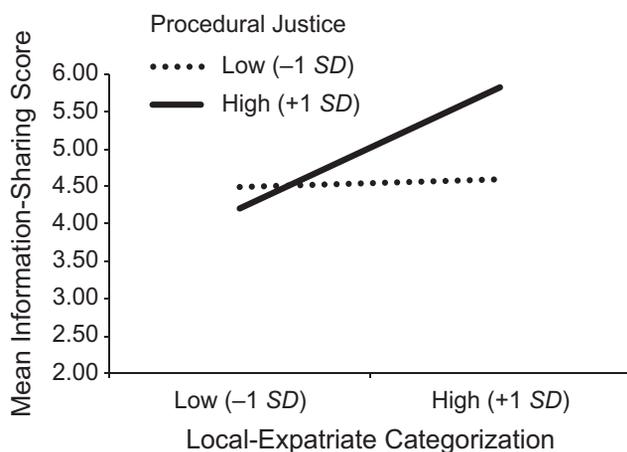
Distributive justice and procedural justice were positively correlated ( $r = .69, p < .01$ ). The correlation's magnitude is

consistent with the strength of previous associations in the .60s and .70s (cf. Colquitt et al., 2001).

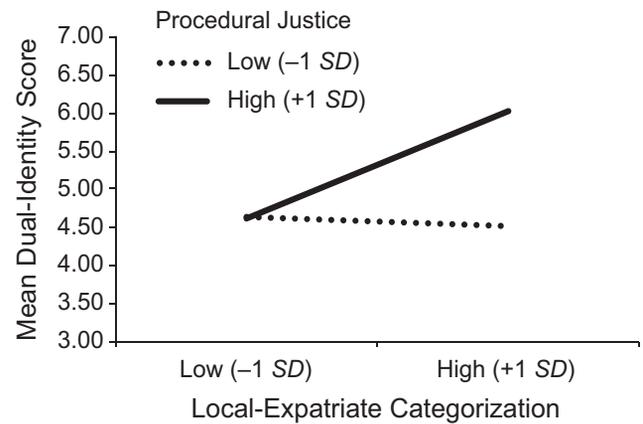
Scores for information sharing and for dual identity were submitted to a regression analysis, with centered scores for local-expatriate categorization, procedural justice, and distributive justice entered first. The product of local-expatriate categorization and procedural justice, to test the predicted interaction, and the product of local-expatriate categorization and distributive justice were entered next.

The analysis for information sharing yielded significant effects for local-expatriate categorization ( $b = 0.51, p < .001, sr = .30$ ), distributive justice ( $b = 0.51, p < .001, sr = .37$ ), and, more important, the Local-Expatriate Categorization  $\times$  Procedural Justice interaction ( $b = 0.05, p < .05, sr = .14$ ; see Fig. 3). The Local-Expatriate Categorization  $\times$  Distributive Justice interaction was not significant ( $b = -0.22, p > .05$ ; see Table S2 in the Supplemental Material). Simple-slopes tests indicated that local-expatriate categorization and information sharing were positively related when procedural justice was high ( $b = 0.88, p < .001, sr = .28$ ), but not when it was low ( $b = 0.06, p = .81, sr = .02$ ). These results are consistent with the results of Study 1. Additional tests yielded a positive relation between procedural justice and information sharing when local-expatriate categorization was high ( $b = 0.08, p < .01, sr = .18$ ), but not when it was low ( $b = -0.02, p = .53, sr = -.04$ ). These results are consistent with the notion that procedural justice was not sufficient to encourage this type of intergroup cooperation.

The analysis of dual identity revealed main effects for procedural justice ( $b = 0.05, p = .02, sr = .20$ ), local-expatriate categorization ( $b = 0.40, p < .01, sr = .27$ ), and distributive justice ( $b = 0.23, p = .02, sr = .19$ ). More important, the Local-Expatriate Categorization  $\times$  Procedural Justice interaction was significant ( $b = 0.06, p < .05, sr = .17$ ; see Fig. 4), but the Local-Expatriate Categorization  $\times$  Distributive Justice interaction was not ( $b = -0.14, p > .25$ ; see Table S2 in



**Fig. 3.** Results from Study 2: information sharing. Mean predicted scores are plotted as a function of participants' degree of local-expatriate categorization (1 SD above or below the mean) and perception of procedural justice (1 SD above or below the mean).



**Fig. 4.** Results from Study 2: dual identity. Mean predicted scores are plotted as a function of participants' degree of local-expatriate categorization (1 SD above or below the mean) and perception of procedural justice (1 SD above or below the mean).

the Supplemental Material). Simple-slopes tests indicated a positive relation between scores for local-expatriate categorization and dual identity when procedural justice was high ( $b = 0.78, p < .001, sr = .29$ ), but not when it was low ( $b = -0.07, p = .80, sr = -.02$ ). Only when procedural justice and local-expatriate categorization were both high were participants likely to simultaneously identify with the organization and with local-expatriate categories.

The results supported both hypotheses; local employees were most likely to assist their foreign coworkers and have a dual identity only when procedural justice and local-expatriate categorization were both high. The hypothesized effects held even when distributive justice was included in the regression model. As in Study 1, this study did not yield a negative association between social categorization and intergroup cooperation when levels of procedural justice were low (i.e.,  $-1 SD$ ). However, it should be noted that the regression equation produced by the analysis reveals that as procedural justice continues to decrease, the relation between social categorization and information sharing should become increasingly negative. As noted earlier, the lack of a negative effect when procedural justice was low may be a function of generally high levels of procedural justice, as the sample's mean ( $M = 24.76, SD = 7.69$ ) was above the scale midpoint (20.5),  $t(82) = 5.05, p < .001$ .

## General Discussion

These two studies supported our two predictions. In accordance with our first hypothesis, neither higher levels of procedural justice nor higher levels of local-expatriate categorization were sufficient alone to yield greater information sharing; rather, both were needed (Studies 1 and 2). In accordance with our second hypothesis, locals were less likely to identify with the superordinate organization at high levels of local-expatriate categorization, except when procedural justice was high (Study 1); also, dual identity was highest when

local employees reported high procedural justice and high social categorization (Study 2). Procedural justice thus allows superordinate and local identities to be distinctive but compatible.

These studies employed two field samples of working adults and different operationalizations of procedural justice and dual identity. In addition, Study 2 controlled for an important alternative explanation: distributive justice. These methodological differences created more rigorous tests to provide greater confidence in the conclusions. Nevertheless, the correlational data do not rule out the possibility of reverse causality or a third variable that could explain the associations. Replicating effects with experiments can help address this limitation.

Overall, these discoveries have implications for intergroup aid, expatriate adjustment, immigration, and multiculturalism. First, whereas research on intergroup contact typically investigates contact favorability (such as cross-group friendships; e.g., Mendoza-Denton & Page-Gould, 2008), our research investigated a new and important type of contact, one we call *intergroup aid*. In this type of contact, members of one group engage in a voluntary transfer of resources to another group (for similar notions, see Lancaster, 2007). Our findings add to the growing body of research suggesting that social categorization need not lead to intergroup conflict (Stürmer & Snyder, 2010). It will be beneficial to investigate whether social categorization could facilitate aid in other contexts, such as whether age-related categories can facilitate physical aid (the young assisting the elderly cross a street) or whether categorizing nations as industrialized or developing could facilitate financial aid.

In the present studies, intergroup aid (i.e., adjustment-related knowledge) may have benefited the local employees' work group and, thus, their own interests. It would be interesting to test whether the findings hold even when the helper's interests are in conflict with the other group's interests. Recently, Swann, Gómez, Dovidio, Hart, and Jetten (2010) revealed that participants whose personal and subgroup identities were fused together were more willing to jump to their deaths to save the lives of out-group members who shared a superordinate identity with the participants than to save the lives of individuals who belonged to neither the subgroup nor the superordinate group of the participants. Extrapolating from our theoretical position, it is interesting to consider whether increasing the salience of categorical differences between the helper and the people in need would affect self-sacrifice.

In addition, our research offers insights into improving expatriate adjustment and local-immigrant relations. Research has demonstrated that merely belonging to the same superordinate group is sufficient to make locals react more favorably to immigrants (Esses, Wagner, Wolf, Preiser, & Wilbur, 2006). Our work contributes to this particular intergroup context in two ways. First, building on work by Esses et al., our findings suggest that increasing perceptions of authorities' fair treatment may be sufficient to encourage favorable reactions to expatriates and immigrants, because such perceptions

encourage superordinate identification. Second, our work highlights the importance of social categorization in this context to encouraging aid from locals, and we wonder whether it may also be useful in making expatriates and immigrants more receptive to aid. Perhaps information that is shared receives greater validity if the source is perceived to be a local. Some evidence supports this rationale; Phillips (2003) revealed that decision-making groups were more likely to identify correct solutions when new information originated from members of another group rather than from their own group.

Finally, our data point to one reason it might be difficult to implement multiculturalism policies: the absence of just procedures by authorities. Dual identities are crucial to the establishment of multiculturalism, in which individuals try to achieve social cohesion and maintain subgroup differences (Huo & Molina, 2006). However, as we have revealed, dual identities are most likely to occur when treatment by authorities is perceived to be fair. Perceiving favoritism by authorities thus may be one reason why an identity antagonism may remain, become manifest, or be exaggerated. It suggests why racial profiling by security officers (e.g., police, customs, Transportation Security Administration) can be detrimental to minority-group members' willingness to identify with their nation, as these group members see authorities exhibiting what appears to be unfair treatment. Our studies point to a way of increasing the success of multiculturalism policies: by having authorities communicate how exactly they are implementing fair treatment and allowing group members a voice so that they can perceive such authorities as fair.

Most striking about this research is that, even in intergroup contexts, social categorization can have a positive effect by facilitating resource transfer. Instead of inhibiting diplomacy, deal making, and dispute resolution, perhaps—under the right conditions—social categorization could also facilitate them, helping to differentiate the priorities of different groups of people and to improve the efficiency of exchange.

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### Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared that they had no conflicts of interest with respect to their authorship or the publication of this article.

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### Supplemental Material

Additional supporting information may be found at <http://pss.sagepub.com/content/by/supplemental-data>

## Note

1. Responses to two items indexing friendship with an expatriate coworker (“I regard him/her as a personal friend” and “We are on friendly terms”) were averaged and submitted to the same analysis, which revealed no interaction ( $b = 0.08, p = .44$ ), but a negative effect of social categorization ( $b = -0.28, p = .02, sr = -.27$ ). Consistent with our rationale, the beneficial effect of social categorization—of differentiating a group in need from a group who can give aid—did not apply to cross-group friendship; rather, social categorization was associated with lower levels of friendship.

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