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Normative Management and Diversity in International Non-government Organizations

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Abstract To accomplish their goals, International Non-government Organizations (INGOs) manage a network of internal and external stakeholders across national boundaries while having limited authority under demanding circumstances. Consequently, INGOs often rely on normative management practices aimed at influencing discretionary behavior. Unfortunately, normative management can be difficult when INGO stakeholders perceive little common ground due to large functional, cultural, socioeconomic, and power differences. These dynamics raise an important question: How can INGOs manage internal and external stakeholders in a normative fashion when these stakeholders are remarkably diverse and may perceive little or no similarity among themselves? In response to this difficulty, we argue that effective diversity management is a key contributor of effective normative management, and we develop social cognitive theory aimed at managing the salience and meaning of social distinctions. We also provide initial guidance on adapting management practices when differences are large and when individual identities are exclusive.

Keywords International Non-government Organizations · Diversity · Discretionary behavior · Social categorization

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Introduction

Defined broadly, International Non-government Organizations (INGOs) are private nonprofit institutions that operate with the ultimate goal of improving society (Lewis 2007). These kinds of organizations often consult and collaborate with the United Nations (UN ESOCOC Resolution E/1996/1), but they also manifest in a wide variety of forms (Salamon et al. 2004; Martens 2002) that may or may not be explicitly linked to UN coordination. Common activities include but are not limited to: providing relief in emergency situations, encouraging economic development for the alleviation of poverty, and/or advocating for members of disadvantaged populations. In pursuit of these kinds of goals, INGOs face a number of unique management challenges. For example, they have limited authority because much of their work is accomplished through collaboration with volunteers (Salamon et al. 2004), partner organizations (e.g., Balcik et al. 2010), governments and militaries (e.g., Harris and Dombrowski 2002), and other stakeholders. Further, they often face dynamic circumstances that arise suddenly or continuously change (Kovács and Spens 2009). Consequently, INGOS cannot over-rely on control-oriented and standardized management practices, and there is a need for complementary normative management techniques (Lewis 2007) that are more flexible and rely on social capital (Fukuyama 2001; Weisinger and Salipante 2005) to influence the discretionary behavior of internal and external stakeholders.

Unfortunately, normative management can also be difficult for INGOs because their stakeholders are inherently diverse (Lewis 2002; Weisinger et al. 2016) in terms of function, culture, socioeconomic status, and degree of influence and authority, and they may therefore perceive little common ground. Functional diversity stemming from

differences in stakeholders' primary tasks and purposes can lead to conflicting priorities, while cultural diversity arising from differences in social norms can be associated with irreconcilable belief systems. Both socioeconomic and power-related diversity originating from differences in social standing, economic well-being, and authority can be associated with distrust and disparate efficacy. Our position is that these kinds of complications are so ubiquitous to INGO operations that effective diversity management is a key contributor to successfully accomplishing social goals, and there is an inherent need to manage diversity among both internal and external stakeholders if these goals are to be accomplished with a minimum of negative unintended consequences (cf. Leslie 2018).

Toward this end, we develop a new model of diversity management (see Fig. 1) that is flexible enough to account for the fundamentally complex identities and contexts that INGOs must navigate on a continuous basis. Our model is unique in that it encourages managing the perceptions of both internal and external stakeholders in a 360-degree manner while maintaining clear distinctions between management strategies aimed at managing the *salience* of differences (i.e., *vertical recategorization*, *horizontal recategorization*, *individualization*, and *task orientation*) and strategies aimed at managing the *meaning* of differences (i.e., *inclusion*, *education*, and *perspective techniques*). Consequently, we are better able to draw conclusions regarding the relative effectiveness of
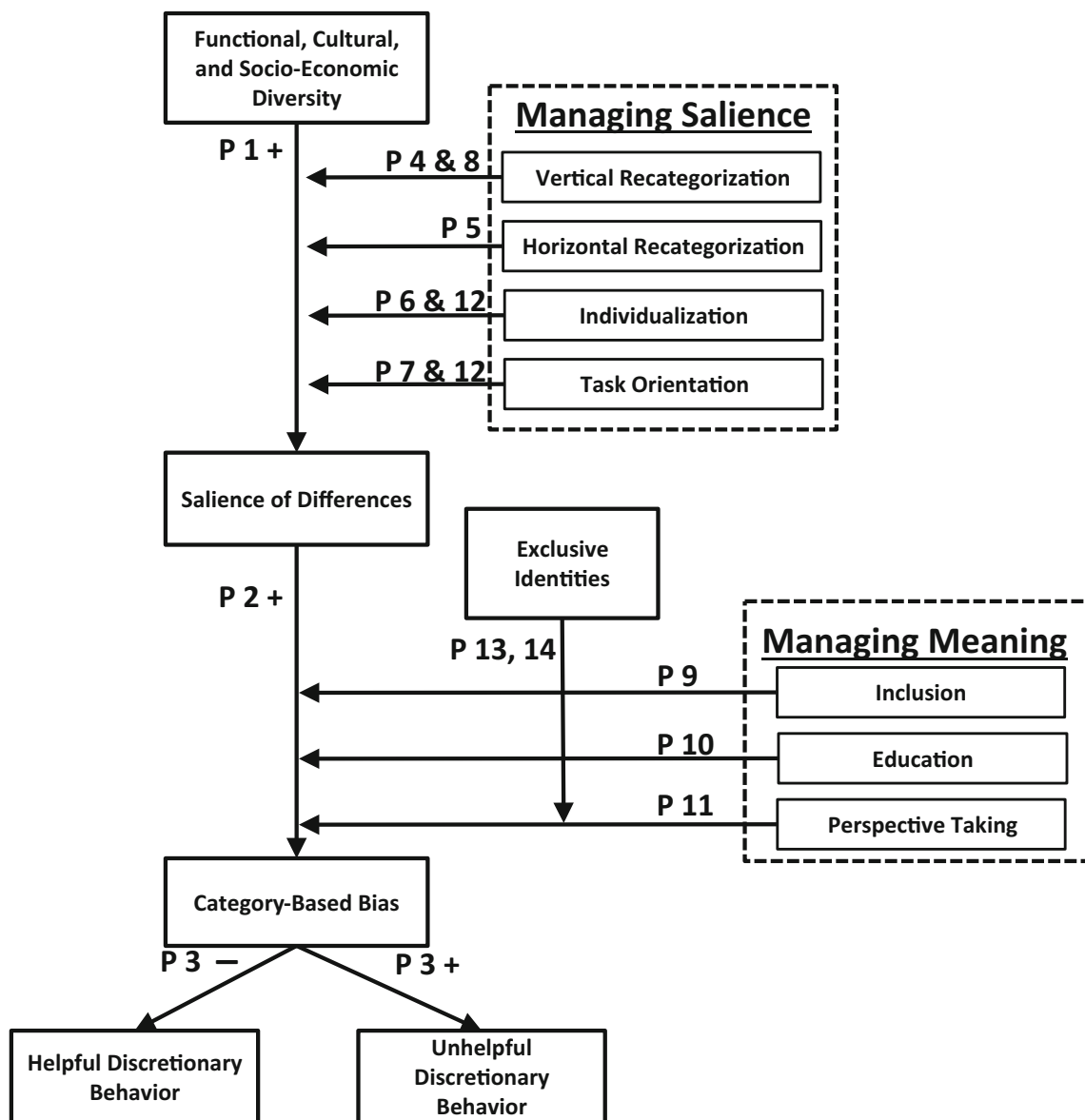

Fig. 1 Managing the salience and meaning of diversity

management approaches depending on the contextual factors INGOs frequently encounter. For example, our model predicts that when differences between stakeholders are conspicuous and self-defining, diversity management techniques aimed at creating a unified sense of 'we' are less likely to be effective and may even cause unexpected difficulties.

Managing Stakeholders with Limited Authority

One unique complication for INGO management is that the financial viability and operational efficacy of these organizations often require convincing an international network (Stephenson and Schnitzer 2006) of external and internal stakeholders to prioritize and address social issues. Examples of INGOs managing external stakeholders include coordination of international relief supply chains (e.g., Balcik et al. 2010), influencing business policy (e.g., Arenas et al. 2009) and governments (e.g., Brinkerhoff 1999), aiding local support organizations (e.g., Brown 1991; Brown and Kalegaonkar 2002), collaborating with militaries during complex emergencies (e.g., Harris and Dombrowski 2002), and changing the behaviors and beliefs of local populations (e.g., Goldman and Little 2015). Examples of INGOs managing non-employee internal stakeholders over whom there is limited authority include influence over board members and volunteers (Salamon et al. 2004).

In effect, INGOs must successfully manage the attitudes and behaviors of these stakeholders in a 360-degree manner while often having limited and potentially no authority to demand compliance (Lewis 2007). INGOs cannot simply dictate what external organizations and individuals who are acting independently and are motived by their own purposes believe or do. Even when it comes to internal and quasi-internal stakeholder groups and individuals, the formal authority to issue directives is often lacking. For example, at the international organization level, the United Nation's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) does not even have direct authority over affiliated relief and development organizations, let alone the many other societal-, organizational-, and individual-level stakeholders participating in relief and development activities (Reindorp and Wiles 2001). This lack of control extends down to the individual level where volunteers can be considered unpaid staff (Chang 2005) even though they might primarily serve their own self-centered interests (Berry 2014).

Heterogeneous Crisis-Type Circumstances

Another unique complication related to INGO functioning is that they operate under heterogeneous crisis-type circumstances that are frequently disaster related (Kovács and Spens 2009). These situations may be natural and/or man-made. They may be more or less predictable, and they also vary in terms of scale, intensity, and pace. At one time, an INGO may be responding to a somewhat predictable emergency evolving slowly in a stable political and cultural environment (e.g., steady increases in sea level in Bangladesh: Agrawala et al. 2003). These kinds of circumstances may be best handled by a well-planned, analytical, and incremental approach. At other times, the same INGO may be responding to emergencies that manifest suddenly in a tumultuous political and cultural environment (e.g., the 2004 South-East Asian Tsunami: Thévenaz and Resodihardjo 2010). Under these kinds of circumstances, time is limited, and rapid in-the-moment responses may be necessary. Hence, it is difficult to standardize INGO management practices because what is appropriate and effective in one situation may be inappropriate and potentially harmful in another.

Normative Management and Discretionary Behavior

Given limited authority and the difficulties associated with responding to heterogeneous emergencies, INGOs must sometimes rely on flexible normative management techniques such as symbolic rewards, promoting shared values, and persuasion (Claeyé 2014; Lewis 2007). This kind of management requires significant social capital (Fukuyama 2001; Weisinger and Salipante 2005) and encourages stakeholders to spontaneously perform behaviors supporting INGO goals out of their own volition (i.e., positive discretionary behavior) while simultaneously discouraging voluntary behaviors that impede social welfare (i.e., negative discretionary behavior). Encouraged, positive discretionary outcomes include extra effort, courtesy, sportsmanship, and cooperation (Podsakoff et al. 2000), while discouraged, detrimental discretionary behavior includes such actions as aggression, blaming, gossiping, and withholding information (Giacalone and Greenberg 1997).

The Difficulties of Normative Management Among Diverse Stakeholders

While a lack of authority and dynamic circumstances will at times preclude INGOs from utilizing control-oriented and/or standardized management tactics, it is also important to recognize that the alternate and necessarily normative management practices can also prove to be difficult. This is because INGO stakeholders are inherently diverse and potentially have functional, cultural, socioeconomic, and power-related differences that are quite large in scale. In fact, it is possible that normative management prescriptions that are commonly accepted and highly useful in many other kinds of contexts may not be fully applicable. For example, it may not be possible to create a sense of common in-group identity (e.g., Gaertner et al. 2000) when the scale of differences is considerable, and it may not be possible to celebrate differences (e.g., Plaut et al. 2009) when those differences are inextricably linked to social problems.

Functional diversity (i.e., differences in goals, tasks, and purposes) can become problematic for INGOs when it creates large representational gaps (Cronin and Weingart 2007) and substantial role conflicts (Foreman 1999) between stakeholders having considerably different understandings of goals and ways of achieving them. For example, collaborating businesses partners may ultimately be seeking profit through opportunity identification and value chain development (e.g., Dahan et al. 2010) and collaborating militaries may be most preoccupied with maintaining stability through the management of threats and armed conflict (e.g., Harris and Dombrowski 2002), while the INGO itself is principally concerned with promoting social good through relief efforts, development, and advocacy. Consequently, even though each of these stakeholder groups may come together aiming to improve society, they are doing so from fundamentally different perspectives and may frequently be at odds with each other's priorities and methodologies. Examples of this kind of conflict are documented by Ramarajan et al. (2004) who found that contact between INGO workers and Dutch military peacekeepers was positively correlated with interpersonal conflict, by Roberts (2010) who discusses issues related to conflicting priorities and perspectives that are fundamental to civilian–military interaction under threatening conditions, and by Najam (2000) who discusses potential differences among the preferred goals and the preferred means of goal achievement between NGOs and governments.

Cultural diversity (i.e., differences in generally accepted social norms) can become problematic for INGOs under conditions of separation wherein differences between stakeholders' strongly held beliefs and values are perceived to be incompatible (Harrison and Klein 2007; Klein and Harrison 2007). At times, separation may manifest as INGOs being perceived as weak (Nezhina and Ibrayeva 2013) or as subordinating and marginalizing the histories and cultures of others (e.g., Fowler 2012). At other times, separation may manifest as resistance grounded in a culturally bounded sense of morality (e.g., Othman 2006). In extreme cases, strongly devoted individuals may even take a fundamentally adversarial stance because of standards that are considered sacred and potentially more valued than life itself (e.g., Atran and Ginges 2012). Under these kinds of conditions, diverse INGO stakeholders are less likely to consider alternative positions points of view (Tetlock 2003) and ultimately be less cooperative due to irreconcilable ideologies.

Socioeconomic diversity (i.e., differences in social status and economic well-being: Harrison and Klein 2007; Klein and Harrison 2007) can also become problematic for INGO operations when inequality is undeniably apparent. For example, when INGOs are perceived as 'rich' in a way that undermines legitimacy (e.g., perceived as promoting self-interest or as having limited experience with harsh day-to-day realities), they experience difficulties coordinating with other distrusting INGOs (Ashman 2001) and local stakeholder groups (Jakimow 2010). Even among minority groups, economic differences can lead to the perception of incompatible interests and an unwillingness to support social programs (Gay 2006). Creating even more difficulties, INGOs may be attempting to provide relief in a context where economic discrepancies underlies animosity leading to armed conflicts which ultimately leads to even more disparity and animosity (e.g., Fearon and Laitin 2003; Muller and Seligson 1987).

Lastly, *power-related* diversity (i.e., differences in control and influence over self and others: Harrison and Klein 2007; Klein and Harrison 2007) can be troublesome for INGOs because it is difficult for the less powerful to tend to their own needs and difficult to get those who are more powerful to tend to the concerns of those who are less so. For example, bridging organizations (Brown 1991) and coalitions (Bolton and Nash 2010) are often needed to span the gaps between larger-scale social institutions and less powerful grass roots organizations and individuals, community-driven social accountability programs often fail because they lack 'teeth' and can be subverted by dominating local elites (Fox 2015), and national governments and INGOs sometimes find themselves struggling to balance degrees of authority, social influence, and autonomy (Bratton 1989).

Overcoming the Difficulties of Normative Management

Given that INGOs must sometimes rely on normative management practices aimed at influencing discretionary behavior and given that this kind of normative management can be difficult when stakeholders perceive little (if any) common ground due to functional, cultural, socioeconomic, and power differences that are more cause for concern rather than celebration, an important question is raised: How can INGOs manage internal and external stakeholders in a normative fashion when these stakeholders are likely to be remarkably diverse? To begin addressing this issue, we now turn to social cognitive (Fiske 1993) psychology research for insight. We start by clarifying the linkage between diversity, salience of differences, category-based bias, and discretionary behavior. We then theorize context-specific strategies for managing the salience and meaning of differences with the intent of facilitating stakeholders' discretionary behavior supporting the social welfare goals of INGOs.

Perceived Differences, Biased Thinking, and Discretionary Behavior

Individuals often classify themselves and others into larger social groups (i.e., categories) so that the world makes sense and can be navigated (Hogg and Terry 2000). Indeed, individuals may only know who 'we' are, who 'they' are, or how to interact with 'them' because social categories serve as labels that facilitate the attribution of characteristics and motives. As such, social categories are heuristics (i.e., mental shortcuts) that allow individuals to interact in an efficient and effective manner when the distinctions between categories become the focus of attention (i.e., distinctions become salient: Oakes 1987), and the specific categories active in an individual's mind are determined by circumstances highlighting how one social group is different from another. In the context of humanitarian organizations, the distinctions between and among internal and external stakeholders will frequently be highly salient as they represent real and obvious functional, cultural, socioeconomic, and power-related differences.

Proposition 1 *Among INGO stakeholders, functional, cultural, socioeconomic, and power-related diversity all have positive relationships with the salience of differences.*

Despite being a useful and necessary sense-making tool, social category heuristics often cause individuals to depersonalize themselves and others (Hogg 2001; Tajfel and Turner 1986). Consequently, when differences become salient, it is easy to assume greater similarity among 'us,'

greater similarity among 'them,' and greater degrees of differences between 'us' and them' than is warranted. This kind of category-based bias is easily triggered and frequently operates outside of awareness, as the mere perception of a distinction between groups can lead to stereotyping that contradicts professed beliefs (Banaji and Hardin 1996). For example, Spencer et al. (1998) found that they could induce bias by flashing a stereotypical image on a computer screen for only 17 ms. Given the robustness of findings that salience leads to bias even among the most minimal of groups and given the inherently diverse nature of INGO stakeholders, it is likely that these stakeholders will frequently be thinking in a biased categorical manner when differences are salient. For example, Paluck (2010) found that a radio talk show designed to draw attention to and discuss intergroup conflicts resulted in listeners taking a more adversarial stance.

Proposition 2 *Among INGO stakeholders, salience of differences has a positive relationship with category-based bias.*

The triggering of biased category-based thinking does not bode well for the accomplishment of INGOs' social welfare goals because individual behavior and attitudes become less cooperative and more adversarial toward those who are perceived to be outsiders. At times, individuals are even willing to harm their own economic well-being in order to maximize the differences between groups when distributing rewards (e.g., Li et al. 2011).

Given that INGOs rely on normative management techniques (Claeyé 2014; Lewis 2007), we expect the relationship between biased thinking and discretionary behavior will generalize to both internal and external stakeholders. Indeed, when differences are large enough to create representational gaps and feelings of separation and disparity, concomitant factors emphasize social distinctions, leading to the biased and depersonalized thinking that ultimately decreases positive discretionary behavior while simultaneously increasing negative discretionary behavior. As such, it should not be surprising that a commonly reoccurring theme in academic research is that coordinating and collaborating among individual and organizational INGO stakeholders and partners are inherently difficult (e.g., Ashman 2001; Chandy and Kharas 2011; Jakimow 2010; Pillay 2003).

Proposition 3 *Among INGO stakeholders, category-based bias has a negative relationship with helpful discretionary behavior and a positive relationship with unhelpful discretionary behavior.*

Preventing Bias by Minimizing Salience

While the relationships we have described are likely to be robust, it is important to recognize that their strength can vary. In particular, when the salience of distinctions is low, the ultimate effect that diversity and salience of differences have on discretionary behavior may be relatively small and inconspicuous (Chua 2013). However, when distinctions are highly salient, the consequences of category-based bias are likely to be more overt (e.g., paranoid distrust: Kramer 1998; intergroup aggression: Struch and Schwartz 1989). This dynamic suggests that managing the salience of differences can reduce the extent to which biased thinking and subsequent adverse impact on discretionary behavior manifest. Toward this end, we describe four strategies aimed at salience reduction: vertical recategorization, horizontal recategorization, individualization, and task orientation.

Vertical Recategorization

One way of reducing the salience of differences is to draw attention to all-encompassing social categories to which every stakeholder belongs. This kind of vertical recategorization represents the largest level and most social of our proposed salience management tactics because it leverages social categories to transform 'us vs. them' confrontations into more congenial 'we' orientations with a sense of similarity and shared identity (Gaertner et al. 2000). Vertical recategorization can be achieved in a variety of ways, some of which might require large-scale organizational changes. For example, McPeak (2001) found that unity among the subdivisions of a decentralized INGO increased when coordination practices became more comprehensive, and Petersen's (2012) comparative case study documents how one Muslim INGO chose to emphasize the universal nature of their work rather than the exclusive nature of their religious identity. However, many vertical recategorization strategies operate on a much smaller scale. For example, van Dick et al. (2005) found that apparently trivial changes to the titles and headers of documents (van Dick et al. 2005) so that they reflected larger-level overarching social categories determined whether individuals assumed a cooperative orientation. Similarly, INGOs would likely do well to favor ubiquitous facets of human and organizational characteristics in their policies and communications over unnecessary mentions of social distinctions, political boundaries, or particularistic worldviews. Among INGOs, these kinds of dynamics are aptly illustrated by the fundamental principles of the International federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (The Seven Fundamental Principles 2019), which include all-encompassing ideals such as humanity, unity, and universality.

Proposition 4 *Vertical recategorization moderates the relationship between diversity and the salience of differences.*

Horizontal Recategorization

A smaller scale but still social method of moderating salience is to draw attention to mid-level social categories that crosscut problematic social distinctions. The idea is to make INGO stakeholders aware that members of some other differentiated and potentially adversarial social category are also members of one's own group, albeit on a different dimension (Urban and Miller 1998). Similar to vertical recategorization, horizontal recategorization identifies common ground and facilitates the use of social categories that transform an 'us vs. them' confrontation into a more congenial 'we' orientation, but in a manner that is much smaller in scale and local in scope and often based on common interest. For example, the categories of 'parents,' 'committee members,' or 'volunteers' do not typically denote an unhelpful contrast, and they may be useful frameworks for creating a more unified orientation because they draw attention to common experience, expertise, interests, and/or needs. Along these lines, the Grassroot Soccer (What We Do: 2019) INGO utilizes a crosscutting sports-related categorization (i.e., soccer player) as a platform for providing health- and gender-related education in 45 countries.

Proposition 5 *Horizontal recategorization moderates the relationship between diversity and the salience of differences.*

Individualization

On an even smaller scale, the salience of divisive social distinctions can also be reduced by drawing attention toward specific persons. This facilitates one-on-one interactions that differentiate individuals from social categories (Brewer and Miller 1988; Gaertner et al. 2000) that decategorizes and repersonalizes individuals in order to create a perception of uniqueness and independence. Contrasting efforts to vertically or horizontally recategorize, individualization fosters collaboration by preventing the use of social categories as heuristics so that individuals are perceived and judged on their own merits. For example, Polzer et al. (2002) found that an interpersonal orientation improved creativity in diverse groups, and Mawdsley et al. (2005) found that face-to-face meetings facilitated trust and accountability between members of collaborating northern and southern INGOs. Individualization can also occur when attention is given to particular individuals to highlight either personal need or personal success, such as when

Oxfam International (Success Stories: 2019) provides the backstories and achievements of those receiving aid.

Proposition 6 *Individualization moderates the relationship between diversity and the salience of differences.*

Task Orientation

A final approach for reducing the salience of differences is nonsocial strategy of developing a task orientation. Similar to individualization, these kinds of management strategies foster collaboration by preventing the use of social categories as heuristics. However, rather than drawing attention away from social categories by focusing on individuals, these kinds of strategies draw attention toward the utilitarian aspects of work. Evidence for this effect is documented by research demonstrating that goal setting (Pieterse et al. 2013) and functional orientations (Chemin and Vercher 2011; Ely 2004) promote unified effort and higher performance among diverse groups. Among INGOs, these kinds of findings suggest that focusing stakeholders' attention on the most pressing priorities and the timelines by which they must be fulfilled should be helpful for managing diversity concerns. The idea here is to create a sense of urgency that focuses attention on the job at hand and the problem being solved rather than the characteristics of the people doing the job. For example, labor-focused and time-appropriate disaster relief provides common goal-driven purpose to diverse volunteers at All Hands and Hearts (About Us 2019).

Proposition 7 *Task orientation moderates the relationship between diversity and the salience of differences.*

When Differences are Large

While each of the four described salience management strategies are likely to be generally valuable tools for reducing the salience of differences, it is important to recognize that it becomes more and more difficult to ameliorate salience when differences are large in magnitude, and circumstances defined by greater differences are challenging for each management approach. However, it is worth noting that these kinds of circumstances make it especially difficult for individuals to perceive a single overarching social category to which everyone belongs (Hogg 2001). Consequently, when INGOs are responding to larger-scale emergencies that are fueled by conflicts inherently tied to representational gaps (e.g., between governments and social institutions), cultural separation (e.g., between ethnic groups), and extreme socioeconomic or power disparity (e.g., between the stigmatized poor and ruling elite), it may be almost impossible to facilitate the all-inclusive perception of 'us' that vertical recategorization approaches aim to create.

Proposition 8 *As differences become larger, vertical recategorization will become less effective than other salience management strategies.*

Preventing Bias by Managing Meaning

Given that functional, economic, sociocultural, and power-related differences permeate the INGO theater of operations, and given that it is unlikely that stakeholders will completely ignore or subsume valued group memberships under some other classification, it is likely not possible (or even desirable) to completely eliminate the salience of differences among stakeholders. Addressing this issue, we now describe three complementary strategies aimed at managing the meaning of those differences so that category-based biases can be reduced more directly: *inclusion, education*, and *perspective taking*.

Inclusion

Promoting inclusion requires creating and maintaining an environment where diverse individuals can be authentic while still feeling safe, involved, respected, and valued (Ferdman 2014; Fredette et al. 2016). These kinds of environments not only allow individuals to be themselves, but also provide a context within which self-views are positively affirmed by non-similar others (Swann et al. 2004). The intent is to help individuals maintain a delicate balance between exclusive and inclusive social categories so that they perceive themselves as simultaneously similar to and different from other individuals (Brewer 1991; Kreiner et al. 2006; Shore et al. 2011). Within the context of INGOs, inclusive management has been successful when careful adjustments to policy are combined with adequate training (e.g., Richter 2014). A fitting example of a humanitarian organization utilizing this tactic is how one (an international advocacy organization aimed at campaigning governments to fund programs that fight preventable disease, corruption, and poverty) leverages diversity toward the common good. In their words: 'By building a community of people with diverse backgrounds, experience and perspectives, we believe that we are stronger and better equipped to fight for the world we want to see: where people can fulfill their full potential and be part of decisions that affect their lives' (Diversity and Inclusion 2019).

Proposition 9 *Inclusion reduces the effect that salience of social differences has on biased category-based thinking.*

Education

Research has shown the benefits of diversity are to some extent contingent upon individuals actually believing that those benefits exist (Homan et al. 2007). Thus, another way to ameliorate the relationship between salience of differences and unhelpful category-based biases is to change the meaning of those differences through education (e.g., Ely 2004), and organizations such as EENET (What We Do 2019) provide inclusive education materials to a wide variety of different stakeholders (e.g., teachers, parents, government officials, etc.) in resource-poor contexts. To be sure, traditional classroom-style professional development is likely to be impractical when INGOs are responding to an urgent need and when educational efforts are targeted at external stakeholders. However, even under these circumstances, there may be some opportunity to utilize educational formats that are more informal and ephemeral (e.g., social marketing: Lefebvre 2013).

Proposition 10 *Education reduces the effect that salience of social differences has on biased category-based thinking.*

Perspective Taking

When individuals imagine the world from another's perspective (Galinsky and Moskowitz 2000), there is a tendency to evaluate others more positively and in a less stereotypical manner. This effect stems from being better able to acknowledge and understand differences while also being better able to imagine others as being similar to oneself. Hence, perspective taking typically has a positive effect on intergroup relationship leading to a more cooperative and less adversarial attitudes and behaviors (Todd and Galinsky 2014), and it is likely to be equally useful among INGO stakeholders for ameliorating the category-based thinking stemming from salience of differences. Interestingly, the idea of diversity management through perspective taking has taken a novel technological turn as the United Nations has started using virtual reality films as a tool to raise multicultural awareness and empathy (UN News 2016).

Proposition 11 *Perspective taking reduces the effect that salience of social differences has on biased category-based thinking.*

The Difficulties of Exclusive Identities

Up until this point, our arguments and theory development has assumed that the salience and the meaning of social differences is manageable. Unfortunately, these assumptions may not fully hold when INGO stakeholder identities are defined more by *who 'we' are not* than by who 'we' are (i.e., exclusionary: Bloul 1999), and it is important to qualify some of our logic.

First, when INGO stakeholders define themselves in opposition to others, they have a very strong motive to create and maintain strict and polarized definitions of social differences. So much so, they are likely to seek information and experiences that validate their own adversarial expectations, while completely ignoring or rationalizing away any disconfirming evidence (Claire and Fiske 1997). Given that perceiving a 'we' is inherently difficult and potentially impossible for exclusive identity stakeholders such those who hold exceptionally strong religious, ethnic, and/or political affiliations (e.g., South 2008), diversity management strategies that ameliorate the salience of differences by drawing attention to common social categories (i.e., vertical and horizontal recategorization) are likely to be less effective those that attempt to ameliorate salience by drawing attention away from social categories altogether (i.e., individualization and task orientation).

Proposition 12 *The more that stakeholder identities are exclusive, the more that individualization and task orientation will be more effective than vertical and horizontal recategorization for managing the salience of differences.*

Second, INGO stakeholders with exclusive identities have linked their sense of self-worth directly to the perception of relative social standing (Branscombe et al. 1999). In effect 'we' are inherently better than 'them' and any change the status quo is a potential threat (Scheepers and Ellemers 2005) as part of a perceived zero-sum game (Esses et al. 2001). The more identities are defined in exclusionary terms, the more that stakeholders will tend to resist efforts to manage the meaning of identity-defining social distinctions. When identities are only slightly or moderately exclusive, this resistance might take a passive form, and meaning management strategies might simply have less than desired impacts. However, when identities are highly exclusionary, such as when members of religious (e.g., Seul 1999) and political (e.g., Heurlin 2010) organizations define themselves in opposition to others on the basis of allegedly inherent superiority, stakeholders have a very strong motive to protect their sense of self by actively creating strict and polarized definitions of social differences (Hogg et al. 2010). Under these kinds of circumstances, attempts to manage the meaning of social categories may be aggressively rejected and have the opposite of the intended effects (Leslie 2018) on category-based biases and discretionary behavior.

Proposition 13 *The more that stakeholder identities are exclusive, the less effective meaning management activities will be at reducing bias.*

Proposition 14 *When stakeholder identities are highly exclusive, meaning management activities have the potential to increase bias.*

Discussion

The propositions developed in this paper represent a versatile model of diversity management that is well suited to the normative management needs of INGOs—of great importance if such organizations are to accomplish their missions effectively. Rather than focusing on standardized managerial control of employees, we emphasize managing the salience and meaning of social distinctions so as to influence the discretionary behavior of widely diverse internal and external stakeholders. Further, our theory is unique in that it draws clear distinctions between various salience management and meaning management strategies whose relative efficacy is likely to vary depending on contextual factors such as the magnitude of differences and the exclusiveness of stakeholder identities. As such, our theory overcomes many of the criticisms of previous perspectives (as discussed below) and begins to address a need for a diversity management theory that is sufficiently flexible and robust to account for the complex identities and contexts (Lewis 2002; Weisinger et al. 2016) associated with INGO operations.

Managing Categories Without Being Category Blind

Management theories that are primarily based on the dynamics of social categorization are sometimes described as a 'blind' approach (e.g., Plaut et al. 2009) that over-relies on preventing the salience of social distinctions either by not drawing attention to distinctions in the first place or by focusing attention primarily on all-inclusive categories. Our model overcomes this criticism by explicitly acknowledging that differences will at times be so large or meaningful that they are impossible to ignore. We also recognize that the social categories to which people belong are often inherently tied to their personal identities, and they are unlikely to completely subsume these identities under an overarching and universal social group. Hence, it is likely impossible to prevent the salience of distinctions entirely, and we make no claims aimed at this objective. Rather, we present our four salience management strategies and our three meaning management strategies as complementary tools that would allow the projects of INGOs and their multiple constituencies to move forward as efficaciously as possible due to their ability to understand and manage diversity challenges with more nuanced expectations.

Managing Salience While Still Appreciating Diversity

Management theories based on the ideas that diversity should be appreciated either as an inherent value (e.g., multiculturalism: Plaut et al. 2009) or as a pragmatic way to enhance organizational functions (e.g., Kochan et al. 2003) emphasize the fact that attitudes and behavior can change based on the extent to which an individual believes that diversity is important (e.g., Homan et al. 2007). These kinds of dynamics are acknowledged in the development of Propositions 9–11, where it is argued that the meaning of differences can be managed through inclusion, education, and perspective taking. These propositions are important because they allow for normative diversity management efforts that potentially reinforce the salience of differences (e.g., multicultural celebrations) as long as those differences are framed in a way that effectively manages what those differences mean to individuals and as long as stakeholders do not rigidly hold to exclusive identities.

Common In-Groups Without Sacrificing Individual and Subgroup Identity

It is important to recognize that the common in-group identity model (Gaertner et al. 2000) of diversity management as well as many multicultural perspectives (e.g., Plaut et al. 2009) previously acknowledges some of the dynamics presented in this paper, including the ideas of recategorization and individualization. However, it is equally important to recognize that the emphasis of these previous theories is clearly on creating the perception of a shared in-group, while ours is not. Further, the distinctions between and among activities aimed at managing salience of differences and those aimed at managing the meaning of differences is central to our model are not fully represented in either common in-group or multiculturalist research.

These points of differentiation are critical because, as argued in the development of Propositions 8, 12, 13, and 14, large salient differences and exclusive identities can make the perception of common in-groups extraordinarily difficult and potentially impossible. Since these kinds of circumstances are potentially commonplace for INGOs, the primary prescriptions of previous theories are not always viable. For example, when humanitarian emergencies are defined by intractable conflicts (Bar-Tal 2007), identity-defining functional, cultural, socioeconomic, and power differences are likely to be inescapable and directly linked to highly exclusive definitions of self (McKeown et al. 2016). Under these kinds of circumstances, our theory acknowledges that creating the perception of common ground may not be possible, and it predicts that promoting

individualized task orientations will likely be the most successful strategy for influencing discretionary behavior.

Directions for Future Research

Our model also suggests potentially fruitful streams of future research. In particular, we encourage the development of inductive comparative case studies (Eisenhardt and Graebner 2007) aimed at clarifying how various salience management and meaning management techniques interact with contextual variants or other factors. From an individual-level perspective, it would be interesting to know how the propositions in the model are impacted by personality (e.g., tolerance for ambiguity, self-monitoring, and locus of control) and other individual differences. From a group-level perspective, it may be worthwhile to explore how team structure and leadership style influence the salience and meaning of differences. From a more macro perspective, our model would benefit from an exploration of how different mixes of cultures (e.g., national and organizational) and crises (e.g., political or natural) and hemispheres (e.g., Northern and Southern: Ashman 2001; Mawdsley et al. 2005) interact.

We also encourage future researchers to adopt deductive quantitative tests of our theoretical propositions. Of note, adequately testing Propositions 13 and 14 may require multiple studies or samples that are each aimed at capturing different degrees of identity exclusiveness. Future studies could usefully compare groups of individuals with identities ranging from flexibly inclusive to rigidly exclusive to determine when meaning management strategies cease to be effective at ameliorating category-based bias and, instead, begin to have the reverse effect. Researchers taking a quantitative theory-testing approach should also keep in mind the potential for social desirability bias (Nederhof 1985) to affect results. Individuals may not feel free to admit to highly exclusive identities, and they may be reluctant to explicitly recognize adverse attitudes and beliefs related to inclusion, education, and perspective taking. Thus, it may be useful researchers to at least consider using indirect questioning (e.g., Fisher 1993) and implicit measures (e.g., Fazio and Olson 2003).

Finally, we developed our theoretical model to reflect the difficult realities of INGO operations that fundamentally challenge existing diversity management frameworks. That is, when INGOs have limited authority under dynamic circumstances with inherently diverse stakeholders, it may not be possible to effectively create a sense of common in-group identity (e.g., Gaertner et al. 2000) while celebrating differences (e.g., Plaut et al. 2009). In effect, we have used the difficulties that INGOs face as a vehicle for developing new theory. That said, while our theory as a whole is new and reflects the needs of a specific kind of organization, many of the individual components are rooted in basic research grounded in more conventional contexts. Hence, we believe that there is potential for our theory to reciprocally inform this body of work. Two issues deserve particular attention in this regard. First, even organizations with considerably more resources and greater formal authority face challenges created by inherently diverse contexts and exclusive identities, and the normative approach described in our model potentially represents an important ancillary tool that complements traditional management practices. Second, the idea that diversity needs to be managed in a 360-degree manner that extends beyond organizational boundaries is a novel contribution of our work that may also be broadly applicable. We look forward to studies that explore these kinds of possibilities in more detail in organizations of all kinds.

Practical Implications

Given that international INGOs are often helpful outsiders, they will at times be pursuing social welfare goals with a certain amount of international naiveté. It may not be obvious which functional, cultural, socioeconomic, and power differences are salient, leading to bias or false assumptions, and ultimately having an adverse impact on discretionary behavior supporting INGO goals. Thus, we caution against actively managing categorization effects without first understanding the nuances of local societies. It would be unfortunate if management efforts were unintentionally perceived as a form of identity threat that exacerbates resentment and conflict by further highlighting ostensibly irreconcilable differences. Toward this end, we believe that INGOs not only need to decipher and manage local diversity, but they also need to critically consider how their own identity interacts with local perceptions. If nothing else, knowledgeable residents and past visitors should be consulted in earnest. If more resources are available, it may be worthwhile to engage in a more rigorous assessment. For example, Mackie et al. (2015), in association with UNICEF and the University of California, San Diego, provide an introductory guide for assessing localized social norms related to group identity.

Assuming that an initial understanding of relevant social categories exists, we also recommend that INGOs continuously monitor the nature of social categories and adapt their management practices accordingly. While functional, cultural, socioeconomic, and power differences can be persistent, identities and circumstances can and do change. A group that was once well accepted as a 'normal' part of society may one day become marginalized as their religious and political views fall out of favor. Social groups that were once friendly and collaborative may one day find themselves locked in competition when resources become

scarce. Unified and stable social groups can one day find themselves divided over newly contentious issues challenging their basic nature. Effective diversity management demands that these kinds of changes be recognized quickly and addressed. Related to this issue, the *raison d'être* of many INGOs is to improve society by reducing the power differentials and inequality that are frequently diversity related. Progress, lack of progress, or even reversals of progress toward this goal will likely be reflected in the nature of the social categories individuals use to define themselves and others. Accordingly, we believe that ongoing monitoring of social categories potentially provides a useful measure of INGO effectiveness.

Assuming that an adequate understanding of relevant social categories exists and continues to exist, we also recommended that salience and meaning management strategies be used in conjunction with each other whenever possible. They are not discrete recommendations whereby the use of one tool precludes the use of another. While the current situation might dictate their relative effectiveness and it might be necessary to avoid or minimize the use of one or more strategies when they draw unnecessary attention to problematic differences, we believe that there is the potential for synergy among multiple management methods in our model used in combination. For example, while the previously mentioned work of Grassroot Soccer (What We Do 2019) is an interesting example of using horizontal recategorization on the basis of a common-interest group, this organization also engages in meaning management as a core part of their work relates to attaining improved gender equity through education.

Conclusion

Managing diversity effectively is particularly important for INGOs that necessarily operate under complex conditions that highlight the functional differences, differential access to resources, ideological incompatibilities, and varying degrees of authority and power that make distinctions between social groups evident and potentially contentious. In response to this conundrum, we suggest that these kinds of organizations actively manage the salience (through vertical recategorization, horizontal recategorization, individualization, and task orientation) and meaning (through inclusion, education, and perspective techniques) of differences among their many external and internal stakeholders. These management strategies are offered as equally important tools whose relative effectiveness is defined by contextual factors such as the magnitude of differences and exclusiveness of stakeholder identities. It is our hope that INGOs will be able to leverage all of these tools in synergistic ways that help them accomplish their goal of making the world a better place.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Ethical Standards This research complies with all Voluntas ethical standards.

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