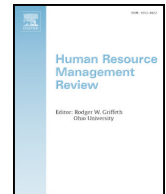




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Antecedents and effects of host country nationals negative stereotyping of corporate expatriates. A social identity analysis

Jaime Bonache^b, H el ene Langinier^{a,*}, Celia Z arraga-Oberty^b

^a Ecole de Management de Strasbourg, Humanis, 61 avenue de la For et Noire, 67085 Strasbourg Cedex, France

^b Universidad Carlos III, Calle Madrid, E-28903 Getafe, Madrid, Spain

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ABSTRACT

This paper extends the influential analysis on stereotyping from cultural studies to the realm of international assignments. Drawing on social identity theory, the paper takes the perspective of host country nationals (HCNs) as the basic units of analysis, and develops a theoretical model on the antecedents and effects of HCNs' negative stereotyping of expatriates. The paper also suggests some initiatives that, according to social identity theory, can be used to combat negative stereotyping in multinational corporations and so overcome the cross-cultural interpersonal conflicts that lie at the heart of expatriates' adjustment issues.

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1. Introduction

"I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? Fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?"—William Shakespeare (1905), *The Merchant of Venice*

Stereotypes are generalisations about people based on group membership (Lippmann, 1922; Katz & Braly, 1933; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Wyer & Srull, 1989; see Stangor, 2009, for a review). They are beliefs that all members of a particular group have the same qualities that define the group and differentiate it from other groups (Hogg & Abrams, 1988; Operario & Fiske, 2001). As our opening quote from Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* suggests, such beliefs emphasise differences and ignore the similarities, having the potential of to make the relationships between certain groups difficult and conflictual.

Given the prevalence of stereotypes in wider society, it is logical that their study is an important area of research in a number of fields and specialties, including cross-cultural organisational behaviour (Schneider & Barsoux, 2003; Triandis & Trafimov, 2001), social psychology (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Kulik & Bainbridge, 2006; Operario & Fiske, 2001; Wyer & Srull, 1989), and moral philosophy (Blum,

* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: jaime.bonache@uc3m.es (J. Bonache), helene.langinier@em-strasbourg.eu (H. Langinier), czarraga@ing.uc3m.es (C. Z arraga-Oberty).

2004). Studies in each one of these areas have analysed what stereotypes are, what they consist of, what lies behind them, their influence on relationships between people and society at large, and what can be done to reduce or avoid them.

In the specific area of international assignments, however, it is not so common to find analyses and discussions about stereotypes. Where they are considered, attention seems to be mainly restricted to the case of women (e.g., Caligiuri & Cascio, 1999; Caligiuri & Lazarova, 2002; Harris, 2004; Izraeli & Adler, 1994; Linehan & Scullion, 2004) or highly skilled migrants (e.g., Al Ariss & Özbilgin, 2010; Mamman, Kamoche, & Bakuwa, 2012; Syed, 2008), while other categories of employees are somewhat neglected. It is particularly surprising that despite the prevalence of national stereotypes in wider society, few attempts have been made systematically to analyse the impact of nationality on relationships among different national groups within multinational corporations (MNCs) (for exceptions see Al-Waqfi & Forstenlechner, 2010; Olsen & Martins, 2009). This is unfortunate because research shows that expatriates adjust themselves more or less successfully to the same host country according to their nationality (Selmer, 2001). For instance, French expatriates display a lower level of adjustment to China than their American, British and German counterparts. The demographic characteristics of expatriates have an impact on their adjustment. To understand this phenomenon, it is important to understand how these demographic characteristics relate to those of HCNs (Olsen & Martins, 2009). Interpersonal conflict between expatriates and HCNs emerges as the main cross-cultural issue faced in the realm of expatriation. Conflictual situations appear to be enhanced by co-workers' negative stereotypes: for example, American expatriates can be perceived as the exploiters of an underdeveloped local economy (Jassawalla, Truglia & Garvey, 2004). Elsewhere, Dolainski (1997) mentions "the ugly American expatriate". Multinationals need to take this phenomenon into account because cross-cultural conflict with HCNs has an impact on the coping strategies expatriates develop to adjust (Selmer, 1999). If the relationships with HCNs are too negative they will opt for a symptom-focused strategy instead of a more adapted strategy that focuses on problem solving. Unable to cope positively with their new environment expatriates may choose to go back home (Selmer, 1999). Despite the increasing recognition of the importance of the relationships with HCNs in expatriates' adjustment process, Toh and DeNisi (2007) denounce the relative absence of research on what drives HCNs to support expatriates' adjustment. Some researchers call for more attention to HCNs and the training they should receive in order to welcome expatriates (Jassawalla et al., 2004; Olsen & Martins, 2009); however to do this successfully, the perceptions of HCNs need to be understood. To reduce interpersonal conflict between HCNs and expatriates, with a view to improving their adjustment experience, it is crucial to understand the perceptions HCNs have of expatriates and the effect of these perceptions on the level of support they give. The purpose of this paper is to investigate stereotyping processes among HCNs in order to gain an understanding of this perception. Understanding the effect of stereotyping on expatriates is important, as the pool of expatriates grows increasingly diverse, reflecting the changing nature of the workforce and the global mobility of employees.

Here, we are interested in two of the more salient groups in the international HRM area: corporate expatriates (i.e. HQ managers assigned to a foreign subsidiary) and host-country nationals (i.e., local employees in an overseas subsidiary). Our aim is to offer a theoretical framework demonstrating when and why HCNs develop negative stereotypical perceptions of corporate expatriates, and the effects of these stereotypes on a number of key expatriate outcomes.

Our framework is based on social identity theory (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Tajfel, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner & Reynolds, 2004). We adopt this approach for two reasons. First, social identity theory explains what prompts identification with a group and the effects this has on relationships and conflicts between groups (Abrams & Hogg, 1988). Our second reason is empirical: the application of social identity theory to explanations of group behaviour is well supported by numerous studies (for a recent review, see Haslam, Ellemers, Reicher, Reynolds, & Schmitt, 2010).

Our paper starts by clarifying the notion and the origin of stereotypes and the way they are conceptualised within social identity theory. Drawing on this framework, we present a model of the antecedents and (dysfunctional) effects of HCNs' negative stereotypical perceptions of corporate expatriates, and of the factors that help to weaken those stereotypes. In proposing this model, we hope to make an analytical contribution that may guide future empirical research in the field of expatriation area. We also aim to suggest some theoretically based initiatives that companies might take to combat negative stereotyping on the part of HCNs.

2. Stereotypes and social identity theory

2.1. Statistical generalisations and the notion of stereotypes

Stereotypes are generalisations about people based on group membership. The group may be a gender (e.g., women), a job category (e.g., public sector workers) or a nationality. This paper focuses on the stereotypes associated with nationality. To understand how they affect the way locals perceive expatriates, it is important to understand the underlying mechanism at the source of stereotyping. A recurring question related to stereotypes is the "kernel of truth" hypothesis: do they have a basis in reality? Terracciano et al. (2005) answer this in the negative for stereotypes linked to nationality and show that national character, as described by group members themselves, are not consistent with aggregate personality data. This assessment of personality traits through the five-factor model is recognised as valid and reliable (Costa & McCrae, 1992) whereas the accuracy of beliefs about national character still raises questions among scholars (McCrae, 2001). When compared to personality traits that are rooted in biology, national character appears to be a social construct and does not rely on the generalisation of a unique individual's experience. These aggregate personality traits have been compared to Hofstede's cultural dimensions. Mean personality scores from 33 countries were significantly and substantially correlated with cultural dimensions scores (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004). Stereotypes need to be differentiated from both personality traits and cultural dimensions. Indeed, when popular authors such as Hofstede, Hofstede, and Minkov (2010), Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1999), and Inglehart, Basanez, and Moreno (1998) define societies in terms of, for instance, their degree of individualism, their power distance index, or respect for rules or traditionalism, they are in effect

making statistical generalisations based on the relative prevalence of such traits in different national groups. As with stereotypes, many of these generalisations are commonly accepted and shared by the population (e.g., “Americans are very individualistic”, “Mexicans don’t obey rules”). Consequently, it is important to clarify the difference between stereotypes and statistical generalisations, and so provide a much more accurate delimitation of our concept.

Unlike statistical generalisations, stereotypes have a series of specific attributes. First, they are not pure generalisations but *overgeneralisations* (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Stangor, 2009; Wyer & Srull, 1989). This means they apply to all the members of a group, irrespective of the extent to which they may fit any particular individual. With stereotyping, people are not seen as individuals but as members of a group (i.e., “If you belong to that group, you are X”) with no consistent personality traits (Terracciano et al., 2005). Second, in contrast to the neutral description that is typical of statistical generalisations (e.g., high or low work centrality, task orientation versus people orientation), stereotypes incorporate an *evaluative connotation* that was initially thought to be linked to antipathy and negative evaluation of the “out-group” (Allport, 1954). Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, and Xu (2002) present a nuanced version of this view. They clarify the content of stereotypes through the dimensions of warmth and competence towards out-group members and allow room for more mixed overgeneralisations. A final attribute that differentiates stereotypes from statistical generalisations is their *degree of explicitness* (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981; Stangor, 2009). Whereas statistical generalisations are always explicit, stereotypes may be implicit: individuals may not be aware of their own stereotypes. Devine (1989) suggests that we are still influenced by stereotypes when we judge others, even if we do not subscribe to those stereotypes.

In light of this, and in keeping with other authors (e.g., Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981; Blum, 2004; Stangor, 2009), we can define national stereotypes as evaluative overgeneralisations about the more-or-less explicit traits of individuals from a particular country. In this way, we see stereotyping as a sub-category of generalisation that has clearly defined characteristics. This differentiation is key, because whereas generalisations may be useful in helping us understand and predict management approaches in different cultural environments (Bonache, Trullen, & Sanchez, 2012; Schneider & Barsoux, 2003), stereotypes are intrinsically deceptive and (as we shall see) have much more pernicious effects.

According to the specialised literature, national stereotypes are expected to be a highly prevalent feature of multinational corporations (MNCs) (Jenner, 1982). Indeed, with a view to reducing complexity and giving meaning to the world, the cognitive approach of social psychology recognises that individuals often mutually stereotype each other as members of a group (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996; Brewer & Campbell, 1976; Haslam, Oakes, Reynolds, & Turner, 1999). Given that corporate expatriates and local employees are two clearly differentiated groups within MNCs, it is feasible that, in their mutual relations, they may both have stereotypical perceptions of the other group.

Focusing on these two groups, our interest lies in the development of negative stereotypes on the part of HCNs towards corporate expatriates. We pose three specific questions: When is it more likely that HCNs will activate pre-existing negative stereotyping of corporate expatriates? What impact might this have on the performance of corporate expatriates? What management initiatives can help reduce the prevalence of these negative stereotypes?

We address these questions through the lens of social identity theory (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Tajfel, 1982; Turner & Reynolds, 2004). This approach allows us to propose a series of hypotheses that together constitute a causal model of the determinants and effects of the development of HCNs’ negative stereotyping of corporate expatriates. Before we answer these questions, we will look at the theory of social identity.

2.2. The social identity approach

Whenever HQ managers are assigned abroad to work as expatriates, they enter a social milieu, namely the foreign country, in which they have to interact with a series of people, including local staff (HCNs). How will they see themselves in their interactions with local staff and how will local staff view them? This is what sociologists mean by identity (Haslam et al., 1999). Valsiner (2007) defines identity as the sundry ways in which individuals see themselves and others within their social milieu. This can also be described as the different selves that individuals adopt in their social interactions.

Identity is constructed on multiple spheres or levels (Cole, 1996; Valsiner, 2007) and there are three basic types of identity. The first is personal identity (Perry, 2008), the aspects of individuals that define their personality. In the case of our two focal groups, personal identity would apply to the manner in which individual members behave or interrelate with others (e.g., whether they are outgoing, polite, trustworthy, optimistic, etc.). The second is role identity (Ashforth, 2001), which includes professional or organisational identity. As its name suggests, this refers to the part an individual is expected to play within a group (e.g., manager, auditor, salesperson, etc.). All local members of staff have a role to play within their milieu (i.e., the subsidiary’s environment), and that role will complement the parts played by others (e.g., corporate expatriates). Finally, there is social identity, which is imposed by demographic variables, such as gender, age, ethnicity, or nationality. Tajfel (1972, 292) identifies social identity as “the individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership”. People derive their self-concept (identity) largely from the social group to which they belong. Social identity is thus contained within the individual (Hogg & Abrams, 1988).

Our primary focus falls on this third identity type and how national (social) identity is applied to the relationship between corporate expatriates and HCNs. We set out to explain the conditions under which national identity is more salient than personal or role identity in the self-conception of these two groups, and what type of group behaviour it is more likely to generate when this is the case. Our explanation will be informed by the social identity approach.

According to the social identity framework, people have a natural tendency to categorise when they encounter differences (Tajfel, 1982). This means that a category only has meaning through its contrast with another. For example, the social category “expatriate” is

only meaningful if it differentiates between people who are “expats” and those who are not (i.e., HCNs, the contrasting category). Any individual is simultaneously a member of many different social categories (e.g., a male American expatriate manager). We therefore have a range of different identities to fall back on.

Differences tend to form two categories (the in-group and the out-group), exaggerating similarities between members of the in-group and differences from members of the out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). This accentuation effect is (a) more pronounced when the categorisation is important or salient (of personal value to the individual) and (b) selective and driven by individual motivation for self-esteem. This means that accentuation occurs mainly on dimensions where the in-group is more favourably placed than the out-group.

By accentuating differences in self-enhancing dimensions, the group acquires a positive social identity in comparison to the out-group, which is portrayed as having negative traits (Ellemers, 1993; Haslam, Powell, & Turner, 2000; Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997). Given that self is defined in terms of the in-group, selective differentiation accomplishes a relatively positive self-evaluation. This is the process that leads to negative stereotypes and the ethnocentric character of intergroup differentiation (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). This general tendency has been challenged in some specific contexts (Mlicki & Ellemers, 1996). Under specific conditions, having a distinct national identity is more important than creating a positive national image. In Mlicki and Ellemers' study investigates the self-enhancement motive of the Social identity Theory, to understand whether in-groups members always look for a positive comparison with out-group members. They answer in the negative. In a wish to lay stress on their distinctiveness, Polish students identify more strongly with their negatively evaluated traits than Dutch students with their positive evaluated traits.

In the case of HCNs' perception of expatriates, we need to clarify under what specific circumstances group members may have an interest in accentuating intergroup distinctiveness based on negative traits.

From this perspective, negative stereotypes serve a number of functions, at both the individual (i.e., increase self-esteem) and the social or organisational level (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). As Hogg and Abrams (1988) show, negative stereotypes can be used to explain distressing social or organisational events (social causality), rationalise actions committed against the out-group (social justification), or accentuate favouritism towards the in-group (social differentiation).

On the basis of this framework, we can predict that, in a given group, negative stereotypes will be more readily encountered where there is a marked contrast with out-groupers, in whom it is easy to identify a series of negative traits, and when power is distributed unequally between the in-group and the out-group. These situations can be found readily in the relationship between corporate expatriates and HCNs. However, under some specific circumstances, HCNs may have an interest in accentuating intergroup distinctiveness based on negative traits.

3. A model of the antecedents and effects of HCNs' negative stereotyping of corporate expatriates

Drawing on the principles of social identity theory outlined here, we build a model of the determinants and effects of HCNs' negative stereotyping of expatriates (Fig. 1). The figure shows our three research questions and the main variables we considered when answering them. In this section, we explain each of the elements of our model.

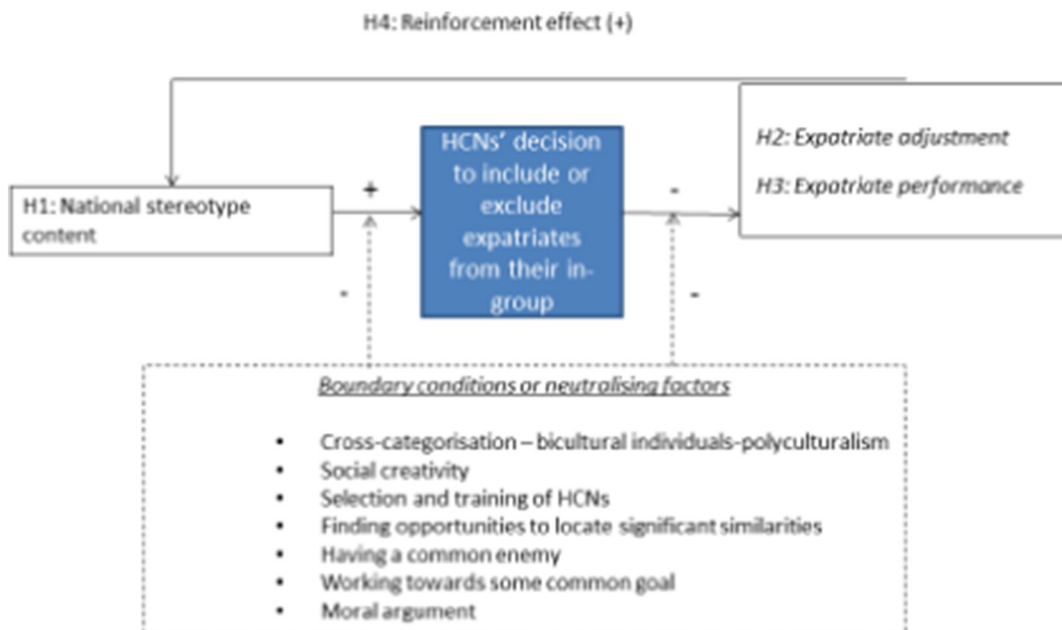


Fig. 1. Antecedents and effects of HCNs negative stereotyping of corporate expatriates.

3.1. Content of national stereotype bias

Fiske et al.'s (2002) stereotype content model captures stereotypes through the dimensions of warmth and competence, assuming that social perception answers two key questions: Is the out-group well- or ill-intentioned towards me or my group (warmth)? and can out-group members enact their intention (competence)? From this perspective high status out-groups are stereotypically envied (people think of them as competent but not nice) and low-status out-group are pitied (their niceness compensates for their lack of competence). Other combinations are possible although less often observed: low warmth and low competence out-groups evoke contempt, characterized by disgust and the impulse to avoid, while out-groups construed as having high warmth and high competence evoke admiration and attraction. This model has been applied to American perceptions of immigrants (Lee & Fiske, 2006) and reveals different stereotyping according to immigrants' nationality: low competence for immigrants from Africa, medium competence for Eastern Europeans and high competence for Asians. We propose extending this view to HCNs' perception of expatriates, assuming that they may perceive expatriates differently in function of their nationality. Lee and Fiske's research focuses on Americans' stereotypical perceptions. Could HCNs' stereotyping of expatriates differ according to their cultural (home) environment? In other words, are stereotypes universal or culturally specific? Cuddy et al. (2009) reveal that the content of stereotypes might be linked to culture to some extent, although they found mainly cross-cultural similarities across 10 non-US nations. Their data uncover only one cross-cultural difference: more collectivist cultures do not locate their in-group in the most positive cluster.

From this perspective it might naïve to expect nationality to play no role in the relationship between expatriates and HCNs, but in fact anecdotal evidence suggests the opposite. For example, a study by Al-Waqfi and Forstenlechner (2010) reported on how citizens of the United Arab Emirates are viewed in a negative stereotypical manner by HQ managers working in the area, which conditions policy on labour localisation. Similarly, almost 20 years ago, Davison and Punnett (1995) were already reporting that negative nationality (and gender) biases found at the headquarters of most corporations affected the selection of international assignees. It is worth mentioning that these examples refer to stereotypes held by HQ managers towards HCNs. Our point is that it would be surprising if the same thing did not happen in the opposite direction.

There are, of course, numerous questions asked about nationality bias. It would be interesting to analyse the nature of specific biases between countries, whether certain individuals or nationalities are more or less prone to stereotyping, what makes an individual resort to stereotyping in some circumstances but not in others, or the part that organisational variables play in the potential for stereotyping by nationality.

Research shows that wealth and status can be the bases for attributing competence to a member of a group (Cuddy, Norton, & Fiske, 2005) and that people in wealthier countries are perceived more favourably than those in developing countries. Therefore in our context economic development seems to deserve special attention. The reason is to be found in the recent tendency to classify corporate expatriates according to the level of development of their country of origin (see Mercer's report "outbound" from everywhere, 2011). Although the number of expatriates from developing countries is small, compared to the number from developed countries, there is a trend towards an increasing use of these "non-traditional" expatriates in some industries. People whose countries are linked to a negative stereotype typically suffer from a lower level of credibility within an MNC (Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999; Thomas & Lazarova, 2014). When compared to corporate expatriates from these countries, HCNs have a vested interest in being associated with a category that is positive (their own and "superior" nationality), as this can give them positive self-esteem. This striving for positive self-evaluation accounts for the ethnocentric view of HCNs when they compare their culture to that of an expatriate from a country that has a poor image. Clearly, the poorer the image of the expatriate, the more favourable HCNs will appear in comparison, and the easier it will be to accentuate the differences.

The social identity approach also suggests that the more salient a demographic characteristic is, the more likely it is to be used as a basis for social categorisation. By definition, expatriates are foreigners, so their membership of a "foreigner" out-group is likely to be salient, at least initially, to HCNs (Toh & DeNisi, 2005). Stereotypes appear as an important element of people's cognitive economy, in the sense that they operate as "resource preserving tools" (Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne, Thorn, & Castelli, 1997, p 484). Stereotyping is therefore particularly useful when people face high levels of mental demands (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000). HCNs experiencing cross-cultural conflicts with expatriates may easily be in this situation of reverting to stereotypes. Under what circumstances will this lead to their accepting expatriates in their in-group and under what circumstances will they not?

We posit that if expatriates really acknowledge the importance of the knowledge and competencies brought by expatriates, they are likely to stress their similarities with expatriates from countries corresponding to the high-competence and high-/low-warmth stereotype attributed to a high status out-group. (Typically more developed economies, like the USA, are seen as high in competence and low in warmth.) They will be likely to include expatriates from these countries in their in-group in an attempt to enhance their own self-esteem, in line with the social identity theory. Similarly they will try to differentiate themselves from expatriates from countries with a low-competence and high-/low-warmth stereotype (typically expatriates from developing countries) by excluding them from their in-group.

However, if HCNs feel their distinctiveness is threatened, preserving their identity is more important than creating a positive image (Mlicki & Ellemers, 1996). For instance, in the case of an ethnocentric MNC that imposes strict national procedures in a subsidiary, expatriates originating from countries that have a high-competence, low-warmth stereotype may experience the reverse: HCNs will emphasise their difference from these expatriates and exclude them from their in-group, despite their perceived high status. The cross-cultural conflict encountered by American expatriates linked to negative American stereotypes illustrates this situation (Jassawalla et al., 2004).

Hypothesis 1. The likelihood that HCNs will include expatriates in their in-group is dependent on their stereotypical perception of the expatriates' country of origin and the circumstances of their assignment.

3.2. Effects

3.2.1. Expatriate adjustment

Stereotypes leading HCNs to exclude expatriates from their in-group may have important implications for the adjustment process of the latter. As [Toh and DeNisi \(2007\)](#) highlight, HCNs are important socialising agents. Expatriates' demographic characteristics in general have been recognised to influence HCNs support be it nationality, ethnicity, age, sex ([Olsen & Martins, 2009](#)) which in turn impacts the success of the assignment. The social support and information received from HCNs can help expatriates to decipher social and cultural codes and behaviours in the host country, and alleviate much of the stress associated with the three traditional elements of adjustment: work, interaction with locals and general environment ([Black, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 1991](#)). If HCNs develop negative stereotyping of expatriates, the lack of information and support the latter receive will have a negative impact on their adjustment process.

Hypothesis 2. The more national stereotyping leads HCNs to exclude corporate expatriates from their in-group, the more difficult the adjustment of the latter will be.

3.2.2. Expatriate performance

Stereotyped expatriates can see how their performance is affected by their vulnerability to stereotype threat ([Steele & Aronson, 1995](#)), the anxiety or concern experienced when they are at risk of confirming, as a self-characteristic, a negative stereotype about their social group ([Steele & Aronson, 1995](#)). Stereotype threat has been shown to impair the performance of individuals who belong to negatively stereotyped groups in a variety of domains, including white men in sports ([Stone, Lynch, Sjomeling, & Darley, 1999](#)), gay men providing childcare ([Bosson, Haymovitz, & Piel, 2004](#)), or the elderly in memory performance ([Levy, 1996](#)). In the case of expatriates who are stereotyped negatively on the dimension of competence, stress linked to stereotype threat may lead them to perform less competently than they would in a normal situation. For expatriates stereotyped negatively on the dimension of warmth, the stress linked to stereotype threat may lead them to behave inappropriately with their co-workers. In any case, stereotype threat may hinder expatriates' ability to perform at their peak level.

Hypothesis 3. The more negative HCNs' stereotypes of corporate expatriates are, the poorer the performance of the latter.

3.2.3. Reinforcement effect

Stereotypes carry an evaluative connotation and have a bearing on self-esteem. Individuals have an interest in upholding the superiority of the characteristics of the in-group and/or reaffirming the stereotypical inferiority of the out-group to clarify their distinctiveness. If expatriates join HCNs' in-groups, there will be more interaction; HCNs will perceive expatriates as unique individuals and may realise that they do not fit the stereotype they have. Conversely, if HCNs categorise expatriates as out-group members, fewer interactions will occur and HCNs will not have the opportunity to see expatriates in any other light than that of a pre-existing stereotype. This situation will reinforce stereotypes linked to nationality. The situation of Mauritian expatriates in an international audit firm in Luxembourg illustrates this situation well ([Langinier & Gyger Gaspoz, 2015](#)). The Mauritians were clearly perceived as incompetent by the HCN manager, who did not want to programme them into an audit assignment. As a result, HCNs were not able to assess the Mauritians' real competencies. The Mauritians received poor annual evaluations because they did not bring in enough fees. This was directly due to the lower hours they were allocated on the audit assignments. Predictably, it reinforced the perception of Mauritians as poor performers. A Chinese manager in a Chinese joint venture displayed the same type of stereotypical reasoning when she described the people she and her colleagues would prefer to work with ([Li, Xin, Tsui, & Hambrick, 1999 p 55](#)):

"The first choice would be to work with an American joint venture partner. They are polite, honest, friendly, quick to make decisions. Next would be Singaporeans, they are efficient and trustworthy. Taiwanese and Hong Kong Chinese – mostly they are fine but sometimes they will take advantage of you. The problem is that they think they understand the culture and language and know all the answers to problems in China. They don't."

In this case we see that historical circumstances have a strong influence on stereotypical views. This raises the issue of the origin of national stereotype content. This issue is complex in so far as the origin of stereotypes might differ from country to country ([Terracciano & McCrae, 2007](#)). Post-colonial studies show how history influences national stereotyping and work relation still today. For example the relation between British and Indians is far from being neutral and this influences the content of national stereotypes between groups ([Prasad, 2006](#)). Yet national stereotyping in other circumstances may escape this influence and American stereotype content has not been affected by Iraq invasion ([Terracciano & McCrae, 2007](#)). Individuals who uphold negative stereotypes do not have the same response to the evidence placed before them. Examples that disprove the stereotype are unlikely to impact upon it: they simply become a "curious" exception. By contrast, examples that confirm a negative stereotype receive more attention, as they reinforce the initial nationality bias and allow the implementation of social strategies involving exclusion and justification

(e.g., “Expats are no good as managers, they don't work in the same way, they do not understand our culture, they don't support our own managers”).

Hypothesis 4. The more the country stereotype leads HCNs to exclude corporate expatriates from their in-group, the more the stereotype will be reinforced.

3.3. Strategies for banishing negative stereotypes

Social identity theory enables us to show how the out-group categorisation of expatriates is based on HCNs' perceptions of national stereotypes. However, it is important to consider the boundary conditions of our model, which may help multinationals to design measures to banish the national stereotyping displayed by HCNs.

3.3.1. The boundary conditions of the model: supplanting the salience of national characteristics

An analysis of the tendency to stereotype among members of different groups must consider cross-categorisation (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). When one category (e.g., expatriate/local) is crossed with another (e.g., manager/worker), the accentuation of differences in terms of traits within one tends to be balanced by the accentuation of similarities within the other. Accordingly, cross-category membership may neutralise the differentiation.

National stereotypes may evolve over time. Polyculturalists show how cultures are changed by contact with other cultures (Morris, Chiu, & Liu, 2015), especially with the current increasing globalisation. For instance, American perceptions of the Irish have evolved from low to high competence (Lee & Fiske, 2006). Moreover HCNs might have difficulties in assigning a national stereotype to bicultural or multicultural individuals. The success in Japan of Carlos Ghosn, the CEO of Renault and Nissan, is partly due to his multicultural identity, French–Lebanese–Brazilian. (Kets de Vries & Florent-Treacy, 2012). In fact, multicultural individuals are recognised as key contributors within multinationals (Fitzsimmons, 2013), where they appear as boundary spanners, building bridges between groups of locals and expatriates. Such individuals have the ability to develop dual identification which is an essential coping mechanism for expatriates' executives (Sanchez, Spector, & Cooper, 2000). In some organisations, like Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts, biculturalism is a criterion for reaching key positions as hotel directors (Hallowell, Bowen, & Knoop, 2012). Recruiting multicultural individuals with extensive international experience could be a way for multinationals to banish the negative effects of national stereotypes.

Emotional intelligence (EQ) emerges as an essential skill enabling expatriates to manage effectively the interpersonal conflicts linked to cross-cultural conflict (Jassawalla et al., 2004). As well as focusing on EQ in the recruitment of expatriates, multinationals should have the same requirement for HCNs. If HCNs are aware of cultural differences, inclined to empathy and benefit from strong social skills, they will be able to cross the out-group border established by national stereotypes. Once recruited, training key host nationals for collaborating with corporate expatriates might support multinationals in achieving this objective. Indeed Sanchez et al. (2000) observe that such training is known to reduce the discriminatory treatment expatriates often face, and which can lead them to reject the host culture.

Another pathway is the social creativity strategy (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Groups may find new dimensions in which to compare themselves. For example, HCNs with negative stereotypical perceptions of the competence of particular expatriates may conclude that although they are themselves more proficient when negotiating with local authorities, for example, the expatriates are better at dealing with headquarters or at implementing the practices headquarters imposes. Multinationals need to communicate the specific skills of expatriates whose nationality is linked to a negative stereotype, if HCNs are to develop an awareness of them.

3.4. Group-based approaches

We have seen how stereotypes accentuate the differences between groups. When do these group differences disappear?

Overarching identities can be activated that reduce within-group identification and reduce intergroup hostilities. There are different ways of creating an overarching identity (Stets & Burke, 2000). The first and most traditional involves two groups coming together to confront a common enemy (Ellemers, De Gilder, & Haslam, 2004). The same principles of social identity theory can be used to explain how hostility towards the out-group can be overcome. For example, when two groups encounter another salient out-group, its perceived dissimilarity to both might overcome the existing perceptions of dissimilarity between the first two groups. The pernicious effects of negative HCN stereotypes will be moderated or neutralised by the extent to which both groups (e.g. expatriates and HCNs) identify a common enemy. Indeed HCNs and expatriates who have to cope with a difficult boss or deal with new colleagues in a difficult situation, for example, following a merger or an acquisition, are likely to have common interests, which can bring them closer together. Sociology teaches us that conflict has a rallying role (Simmel & Wolff, 1964), bringing together groups that would have nothing to do with each other without a common enemy. At the corporate level, this overarching identity could be created to confront a competitor identified as the common enemy of both HCNs and expatriates.

A second strategy is to create opportunities to detect significant similarities (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). For this, the frequency and quality of interactions between expatriates and HCNs is critical. At first, this interaction will vary. Corporate expatriates can work side-by-side with locals, or appear only occasionally to perform a specific task (Yan, Zhu, & Hall, 2002). Social identity theorists suggest that interpersonal interaction with a member of the out-group can lead to personalisation or individuation of the out-group member (Brickson & Brewer, 2001). HCNs' appreciation of corporate expatriates is no longer guided by a lack of knowledge, as they realise that the members of this particular out-group are in fact unique relative to one another (Ravlin, Thomas, & Ilsev,

2000). Similarly, HCNs may realise that they have more traits in common with expatriates than they first thought. Roberge and van Dick (2010) explain how the process of learning from another identity within a group can increase group performance. It is therefore important for MNCs to promote interactions between HCNs and expatriates, to have them work on the same projects and to organise events where they can socialise together.

A third strategy is having and working towards a common goal (Stets & Burke, 2000). For example, an HCN might dislike an expatriate who is also prejudiced against the HCN, but both are assigned to the same group project. In these circumstances they will usually try to get along and be pleasant to each other. As a result, they might even become friends. Variables such as their relative technical and interpersonal competencies (Bonache, Sanchez, & Zarraga-Oberty, 2009) or the existence of a common language (Stets & Burke, 2000) may have an important bearing on whether the possibility of overcoming differences becomes a reality.

Finally, a sense of social justice reflected in the values of the MNC may help to overcome identity barriers between HCNs and corporate expatriates. It is questionable whether any multinational that claims to be socially responsible can accept any other situation.

Stereotypes need to be fought from a moral standpoint (Blum, 2004) because

- They annul the individuality of group members of a group. Instead of seeing an array of traits that define each individual, stereotyping means individuals are seen solely in terms of the rigid and narrow attributes that define their group.
- They conceal diversity within a group.
- They intensify a sense of difference and separateness.

To restore social justice, MNCs could promote diversity within their teams with the aim of banishing social categorisation linked to national stereotypes and many other stereotypes linked to demographic characteristics like gender, age and ethnicity.

4. Conclusion

In this article, we have developed a model of the antecedents and effects of HCNs' negative stereotyping of corporate expatriates. This model has been built by focusing on the issue through the lens of social identity theory. Drawing on this framework, we identify national stereotypes as key determinants for the exclusion of expatriates from HCNs' in-groups and explain how, in turn, these negative outcomes have a number of dysfunctional effects for expats, including difficulty in adjusting to the organisational and home country environment and poor performance. Over and above an efficiency rationale, we adopt a moral standpoint to discuss why these effects should be combated, identifying strategies that can be used to do so, according to a social identity framework. Our research shows that clarifying different kinds of national stereotypes, linked to the origin of individual expatriates, is important for minimising cross-cultural conflicts between HCNs and expatriates, which have been identified as one of the main issues in the adjustment process. Selecting HCNs who have a high level of emotional intelligence, and training HCNs in relation to specific national stereotypes, are possible ways to improve expatriates adjustment and manage diversity within the organisation. This point is essential for the effective deployment of expatriates in MNCs, where the flow is evolving in tandem with global economic change, and there is a growing trend of sending expatriates from emerging countries to developed countries. It is important for multinationals to banish national stereotypes as far as they can to avoid the interpersonal conflicts that are so unfavourable to expatriates' adjustment. We trust that some of these and other potential strategies can be tested and, if significant, used to overcome a phenomenon that, although little studied, can have a highly detrimental effect on MNCs and the people who work in them.

One limit of this model is that it has not been tested. It would be interesting to use a multilevel analysis within the same multinational, focusing on the national stereotyping of expatriates displayed by HCNs, and to investigate the way the expatriates in question perceive their relationship with the HCNs. Replicating this research in different units of the MNC located in different countries would be an effective way to test this model.

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