**Chapter 13**

**The Importance of National Identities and Intergroup Relations in Disaster Aid**

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The Importance of National Identities and Intergroup Relations in Disaster Aid

Disasters are frequent and long-lasting. Although events such as the Japan Tsunami, Hurricane Katrina, the Syrian Crisis, and the Darfur conflict are unique due to their scale, humanitarian disasters themselves are ubiquitous. In 2016, the United Nations estimated that over 125 million people required humanitarian assistance (OCHA, 2016). Moreover, there has been a steady rise in the intensification of these disasters and conflicts, such that the number of victims has increased by nearly 200% over the past decade (OCHA, 2015). In this chapter, we will review research which highlights the importance of group identities for driving helping behaviour.

With regards to raising charitable donations for disaster victims, an intriguing question is how a salient intergroup context can affect a request for financial aid in a disaster context. More specifically, is it the case that merely framing a donation appeal in an intergroup context engenders a lack of helping? If so, a corollary would be that people are less willing to help outgroup members relative to ingroup members. Fundraising would become more challenging when outgroup members are involved, as people would be less willing to help when they are told of a flood, earthquake, or tsunami that occurs somewhere else in the world. There are reasons to suspect that people will often be reluctant to help outgroup members, and this can be seen in economic data pertaining to individual donations in western countries. For example, the vast majority of funds donated by individuals in the United States go towards causes within the U.S. and only a mere 3% of donations is directed overseas (Charities Aid Foundation, 2006). The U.S. is not unique in this respect. In the United Kingdom, around 10% of individual donations are contributed towards overseas aid (Dobbs, Harrison, Jochum, Smith, & Wilding, 2012).

Further evidence that an intergroup context can sometimes reduce charitable donations comes from experimental data (e.g. Levine and Thompson, 2004; Levine, Prosser, Evans, & Reicher, 2005). Levine and others have demonstrated that people often prefer to help ingroup members over outgroup members (but see research on strategic motives for outgroup helping, section 2 of this volume). By manipulating the nationalities of the victims of a disaster, and thereby making an ingroup or outgroup identity salient, such paradigms demonstrate that it is psychological distance – rather than physical distance, that affects donation behaviour. Overall, it seems clear that the intergroup context is a vital consideration if one wishes to better understand donation behaviour.

In this chapter we will draw upon research that broadly falls under four themes pertaining to intergroup relations and disaster aid. These four themes are far from exhaustive. However, we believe these themes to be both interesting and pertinent for understanding aid in an intergroup context. The themes are *group identification and familiarity, the donor-perpetrator relationship, the donor-victim relationship,* and *intergroup relations between nations*. Before we move on to discuss these themes, we provide a brief overview below of the social identity approach. This is the main theoretical approach that underpins the four themes and much of the research that we will discuss, and it serves to highlight why the four suggested themes are of relevance.

## **Social identity theory and how it pertains to intergroup donation behaviour**

In order to understand why so much is donated inwards towards local causes, and why relatively little is donated outwards towards overseas causes, we need to understand the importance of donor. Group memberships are of fundamental importance to social identity theory (henceforth referred to as SIT; Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). According to SIT, the social identities of individuals are formed in part by the social groups that those individuals belong to. These social groups are important in terms of an individual’s identity and self-worth, meaning that social groups can prescribe social norms (Hewstone, Rubin, & Willis, 2002; Hogg & Reid, 2006; Rutland, Hitti, Mulvey, Abrams, & Killen, 2015). It is easy to see how such social norms could influence donation choices. After all, according to SIT, individuals have a vested interest in promoting the ingroup as doing so is linked to their self-esteem (Brewer, 1979, 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1986; Turner, 1987). Due to our ingroups being of such importance to us, if our ingroup has done well, then by some measure we have also done well (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). In this sense, donating towards an ingroup cause is almost tantamount to helping the self. SIT does offer a compelling account of why group categorisations can result in ingroup favouritism. Perversely, analysing donation behaviour from a social identity perspective can reframe helping behaviour in a way one might not expect. When a donor gives to an overseas cause, and assuming that no other relevant group identities are salient, then they are helping those who are not part of their ingroup. In this way, those donors are demonstrating behaviour that is more altruistic in nature, i.e. they can be considered to be donating ‘outwards’ – beyond themselves as much as their own national borders. However, one should bear in mind strategic motives for helping outgroup members before drawing this conclusion (section 2, this volume).

## **Group identification and familiarity**

Belonging to a certain group may not be enough in order for this membership to shape giving behaviour: for the membership to be impactful, it is necessary that the individual cares about the group. Being a woman, being British, or being Black, will only meaningfully impact on behaviour when those categories are imbued with subjective significance. The psychological construct of group identification (Leach et al., 2008; Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, Halevy, & Eidelson, 2008) is often used as a measure of the extent to which people care about the social groups they belong to. Plenty of evidence exists which shows that high identifiers and low identifiers differ significantly in their reactions when confronted with exactly the same state of affairs (e.g., Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998; Simon, Stürmer, & Steffens, 2000).

Importantly, not only can one identify with a social ingroup or with ingroup members, but one can also identify with (former) outgroup members. After all, members of outgroups can be re-categorised to share the observer’s ingroup membership by emphasising superordinate categories (Gaertner, Dovidio, Nier, Ward, & Banker, 1999). For example, a German and a Frenchman will be ingroup members if they stress their common membership in Europe. Put simply, identifying with someone means feeling similar, close and connected to them (Ashmore, Deaux, & McLaughlin-Volpe, 2004). Identification in this sense is related to the concept of ‘oneness’ (Cialdini, Brown, Lewis, & Neuberg, 1997), whereby the mental representations of the self and the other overlap to such an extent that the two entities are perceived to be interchangeable. Identification is also related to the concept of fusion (Swann, Gómez, Seyle, Morales, & Huici, 2009), which can lead to people making extreme personal sacrifices to benefit those they feel close to.

Defining identification as a sense of shared closeness and connection allows for donors to identify with disaster victims even if those victims do not share the donors’ nationality. From a social identity perspective, group identification is defined in terms of ingroup/outgroup categorisations. However, categorisations are fluid, and identification with former outgroup members is far from impossible (Stürmer, Snyder, & Omoto, 2005). Moreover, identification with someone in need should be expected to increase motivation to help. After all, if I feel close to those who are in need, then their plight should be more distressing for me, I should empathise more with them, and be more motivated to alleviate their suffering. Our own research has yielded evidence that donors can identify with people who, in other circumstances, would be perceived as emotionally irrelevant outgroup members, and that this identification can increase willingness to donate. In a study which asked about responses to the earthquake that hit the Chinese Province of Sichuan in 2008, we found clear evidence that identification with the victims increased willingness to donate money to help the victims (Zagefka, Noor, & Brown, 2012).

Importantly, we also investigated whether identification itself could be enhanced by increasing a potential donor’s knowledge about a region and the disaster event. The rationale here was that it might be easier to relate to and feel connected to those others whom one is familiar with. Interpersonal research has long confirmed that familiarity breeds feelings of closeness and interpersonal attraction (Reis, Maniaci, Caprariello, Eastwick, & Finkel, 2011), and it is reasonable to assume that the same would hold at an intergroup level. Results indeed supported the hypothesis that greater familiarity with the victims and their situation fostered greater identification with them, which in turn positively impacted on donation proclivity. This of course is not to say that group identification is impossible without intimate familiarity with other group members – we know that it is. However, these data suggest that even though identification might not absolutely require knowledge, this variable can nonetheless act as a facilitator.

From a practitioner’s perspective, our programme of work found that familiarity can be relatively easily induced. In one study, giving participants a brief 5-minute quiz about a disaster area, followed by revelation of the correct answers, greatly increased familiarity, and hence identification and donations (Zagefka et al., 2012). This mechanism of familiarity inducing helping via identification might be behind the pattern that people are more likely to donate to a disaster appeal if they have themselves previously visited the affected area (e.g. on holiday before the disaster occurred). The mechanism could have important implications for fundraisers, who could arguably capitalise more on these beneficial effects of simple knowledge about a disaster affected region when soliciting for donations.

Overall, then, group identities and identification can be an important driver of donation behaviour. Firstly, donors prefer to help ingroup rather than outgroup members, suggesting that practitioners should stress common group memberships wherever possible. Secondly, it may be possible to induce identification with former outgroup victims by introducing superordinate categories to include them in the ingroup. According to SIT, the self is made up of both personal identities and group identities, and it may be possible to include outgroup victims within the former for example by increasing the donors’ knowledge about, and familiarity with, the disaster situation. Furthermore, if personal identification with outgroup victims has been encouraged, then this identification will have a positive impact on the donors’ desire to help outgroup victims.

## **The donor-perpetrator relationship**

In this next section we would like to focus on an area of donation research that has received relatively little attention. When they solicit donations, charities have become adept at picturing victims in terms of their tragedy and in terms of their suffering; yet, the more complex issue of who or what is to blame for their situation may be avoided. However, these causal attributions can be of significance to potential donors. If the perpetrator (defined henceforth as whoever or whatever is perceived to be responsible for the disaster) is a member of the donor’s ingroup, then the donor may well identify with the perpetrator and feel some sense of responsibility to help the victim. This may happen if the donor feels an existential measure of guilt. This is in line with SIT, as donors can of course identify with the perpetrators as well as the victims. Even if donors do not feel guilt, they may be more inclined to help if they feel that their relationship with the perpetrator makes them at least partly responsible for making reparations.

There is an extensive literature on collective guilt and helping which is worth touching upon if but briefly. Conceptually, guilt (feelings of moral transgression) is closely related to shame (where negative feelings are linked to public embarrassment), and there is evidence that both guilt and shame affect helping behaviour in intergroup relations. For example, guilt and shame have been shown to be central processes in understanding white participants support (or lack of support) of black community programs in the U.S. (Harvey & Oswald, 2000). ‘Nuestra culpa’, feelings of collective guilt and shame for historical wrongdoings, have been shown to predict the helping of indigenous populations in Chile (Brown, González, Zagefka, Manzi, & Cehajic, 2008). Moreover, forgiveness of historical wrongdoings can be facilitated by recategorising the group memberships of those involved to superordinate categories, e.g from ‘German’ to ‘human’ (Wohl & Branscombe, 2005). Studies such as these clearly link category memberships with group level feelings of guilt and shame, which in turn can be used to predict pro-social responses.

The importance of group memberships in helping behaviour, particularly when persons highly identify with their group nationality, should not be overlooked. Zebel, Doosje and Spears (2009) demonstrated that taking the perspective of the wronged outgroup can promote group-based guilt, which in turn can promote support for reparation – but the effectiveness of such an intervention is contingent upon levels of group identification. Of course, drawing upon social identity theory, negative messages that the ingroup were guilty and responsible for past events may be resisted, as such messages can be seen as a direct criticism of a domain that is highly contingent to one’s self-identity. In an interesting study involving helping intentions between Dutch participants (ingroup) towards Jews (outgroup), appeals to collective pride were more effective than guilt appeals for high identifiers (van Leeuwen, van Dijk, & Kaynak, 2013). These results are in keeping with the social identity approach. High identifiers are more likely to react strongly to negative connotations that are associated with the ingroup. Moreover, the results appeared to be driven by the increased levels of empathy for the outgroup that were generated when high identifiers were exposed to the pride appeal.

If group memberships matter so much when it comes to intergroup helping decisions, then one might predict different outcomes depending on whether the perceived perpetrator is an ingroup member or an outgroup member. Yet, despite the importance of salient group memberships in a charitable context, few studies have considered how perpetrator group membership can affect donor decision making. In our own research (James & Zagefka, under review), we investigated this line of research in order to better understand theoretically how perpetrator group membership at a national level affects intergroup helping. For example, would an individual feel the need to make reparations on behalf of their national ingroup? We also wanted to test whether perpetrator group memberships could be manipulated (made salient) in order to boost pro-social responses in the field, i.e. whether a causal attribution related to a shared group membership can affect donation intentions.

To begin, we asked participants to think about a plane crash that had occurred in another country. The fault of the plane crash was either due to their own country, the fault of the country in which the plane crash occurred, or the fault of a third neighbouring country. In this way, the perpetrator of the crash either shared a group membership with the donor, the victims, or with a third-party. The results indicated that participants were more willing to help when the perpetrator of the plane crash was from their own country, and surprisingly, they were also more willing to emphasise the scale of the disaster and the psychological harm suffered by the victims. We expected participants to downplay the harm caused when a perpetrator group that they belonged to was involved, but participants did the opposite. It is possible that participants felt more personally involved when they shared a group membership with the perpetrator, which might have led to the scale of the disaster being perceived as psychologically greater. Equally, it is possible that the disaster felt more distant and abstract for participants when they read of a third-party country harming another. This interpretation is supported by observed donation levels. Participants were *less* willing to help when the perpetrator was ostensibly from a neighbouring country. In fact, mean donations were lowest in the third-party condition, more so even than when the victims shared a group membership with the perpetrators of the crash.

In a second study using a similar paradigm, this time involving a military incursion (the perpetrator being the government that sent had sent troops to the victims’ country), participants were asked who they felt was responsible to help innocent victims that were caught up in the military conflict. When the troops belonged to the donor’s country, they felt that their government was responsible. When the troops belonged to the victims’ country (i.e., a civil conflict), they felt that the victims and the victims’ government were responsible. Interestingly, when the troops belonged to a neighbouring country, they felt that the victims were also responsible, in addition to the government of the neighbouring country. Moreover, participants’ own sense of individual responsibility to help was significantly lower when a neighbouring country was responsible for the military action than in the other conditions. In sum, these results support the idea that a shared group membership between donors and perpetrators can function to elicit perceived responsibility in the donors to remedy the problem (see Figure 13.1).

INSERT FIGURE 13.1 ABOUT HERE

In the above paradigms, we instructed participants to focus on categorical relationships between abstract countries. In another study, we told participants of a poorly built dam that had caused severe flooding (Urschler & James, in preparation), this time using a genuine country name for the victims’ country (Tajikistan) as well as for the neighbouring country (Kyrgyzstan). German adults were recruited as participants in a local shopping centre and were presented with what was ostensibly a news report describing a faulty dam and subsequent flooding in Tajikistan. In order to avoid suspicion, they were told that the purpose of the research was to gauge the public’s interest in international news events not currently being covered by the German media. The results indicated a significant difference, with participants more likely to donate when a Tajikistani company (related to the victims) owned responsible the dam, and much less likely to donate when the dam was owned by a company in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan. This study, although not directly speaking to the effects the donor-perpetrator relationship has, emphasises that the victim-perpetrator relationship should also not be neglected when studying drivers of donation behaviour.

In all of the aforementioned studies, the experimental conditions were identical except for the manipulation of where the disaster took place and which nation was implicated as the perpetrator. These findings lend strength to the importance of intergroup relationships in disaster aid, as merely making the categorical relationship of the nations involved salient affected helping intentions. The findings also suggest that consideration of donor-perpetrator relationships can be important in soliciting donations, as the relationship of the perpetrator with both the donors and victims are factors that can influence donation decisions.

From a practitioner’s point of view, it can be concluded that encouraging the perception of a shared group membership between donors and perpetrators might be favourable, according to the results obtained here, because it will increase perceptions of guilt and responsibility, which in turn seem to encourage donations. Although not speaking directly to the effects of the donor-perpetrator relationship, it is interesting that in each of these studies participants were less willing to help when a third-party neighbouring country was involved. In a sense, one can think of these findings in terms of a lack of bystander intervention, essentially demonstrating that bystander processes also operate at an international level. Staub (1999) has argued that many atrocities, such as attempted genocide, can be anticipated by observing political and economic markers. Yet, when a conflict of this magnitude occurs (e.g. Rwanda, Darfur), other nations and international onlookers can be slow to react and to provide aid. From our own research, one could speculate that delays in such circumstances are tied to a lack of perceived responsibility on the part of the donor to intervene, particularly when a third-party country is involved. Therefore, one suggestion for practitioners is to make the ingroup perpetrator relationship salient, when relevant, as a method of combatting indifference. However, it is imperative that the group memberships highlighted are an important part of one’s self-integrity, e.g. a national group identity. If donors are merely told that their government was involved, then they are likely to view the appeal as a political issue, passing on responsibility to the state (as in Figure 13.1).

Practitioners may be understandably reticent with regards to flagging perpetrator group memberships when soliciting for donations. Yet, casual attributions are an important consideration in donor reasoning (see González & Lay, this volume). Donors may assume that an overseas tragedy or conflict has little to do with their ingroup, even if that is far from the truth. Consequently, if a donor does not feel that their ingroup was involved, then concerns relating to justice and equity may preclude individual helping behaviour. A second suggestion then, particularly for situations where the ingroup was not involved, is to redirect the donor’s attention away from perpetrator group memberships. This is not to say that group memberships and perpetrator attributions should be ignored. As we have already argued and demonstrated in our research, donors will make judgements of responsibility, and they will likely place their own responsibility to help as lower than either the state or the victims involved. However, in these contexts, practitioners could deliberately shift focus to personal identity and values (e.g. ‘do you want to make a difference?’).

Both of the practical suggestions made here are done so tentatively. Applying social identity theory to the practical issue of fund raising is new and exciting, and as a consequence, field research is needed in order to generalise findings from the laboratory to the ‘real’ world. Nonetheless, there is scope for advancement here, as one could argue that the application of social theories to charitable work has been largely neglected, possibly due to a dichotomy between those who are interested in theory and those who are interested in practical application. Although we can only make tentative suggestions at this stage, the take home message is that practitioners should keep perpetrator group memberships in mind when designing fundraising campaigns. For example, when it comes to raising funds for an international appeal, say the Syrian crisis, practitioners are advised to make perpetrator group memberships a central part of their fundraising strategy. This strategy may involve highlighting the ingroup perpetrator (suggestion 1), or it may involve carefully avoiding any mention of groups, so that nationalities are not made salient, when doing so would not be beneficial (suggestion 2). Finally, it should be noted that the effectiveness of both strategies may depend upon the level of identification of the donors. Therefore, the first step for practitioners may be information-gathering, not only with regards to demographics, but also with regards to a donor’s values and sense of personal and group identity. Charities may not see the initial value in collecting data on their donor’s self-identity, but understanding donors on a deeper level may lead to innovation. Although perpetrator group memberships are difficult to address in marketing materials, avoiding them entirely may have deleterious consequences in the form of bystander apathy, or in the form of a psychological ‘shrugging of the shoulders’ when it comes to individual helping behaviour.

## **The victim-donor relationship**

In this section we will focus on the relationship between the donors and the victims, and on empathy and individual responsibility to help the victims. Empathy is one of the most well researched variables in the helping literature, as we will discuss below shortly, while responsibility has been shown to mediate empathy effects in a charity appeal (Basil, Ridgway & Basil, 2006).

First, one of the key variables implicated in helping behaviour is empathy, which has been shown to be an important predictor of helping that begins in infancy (Eisenberg et al., 1987; Sierksma & Thijs, this volume), and predicts prosocial behaviours such as volunteering (Atkins, Hart & Donnelly, 2004) and donating to a telethon (Davis, 1983). Batson, Duncan, Ackerman, Buckley and Birch (1981) conceptualise empathy as an affective variable that measures feelings of concern and distress towards a person in need, and these authors argue that the existence of empathy can be used to support the notion of human altruism. Importantly, much of the aforementioned research (and a great deal more which we do not have the space to discuss here) has utilised paradigms that have measured empathy towards fellow ingroup members (albeit sometimes inadvertently as in the Batson studies). Empathy may also help in understanding why identifiable victims fare better than statistical victims in charitable requests (Kogut & Ritov, this volume). Researchers have also nuanced the role of empathy in an intergroup context, arguing that empathy is a predictor of ingroup helping but not so much outgroup helping (Stürmer, Snyder, Kropp, & Siem, 2006). One explanation for this is that empathy is somehow dampened or disrupted for outgroup members (Cikara, Bruneau & Saxe, 2011).

In our own research (James, 2015), we have demonstrated across numerous studies that empathy is a proximate ingroup helping mechanism, often predicting prosociality towards fellow ingroup members beyond common sense variables such as the perceived need for a donation, the scale of the disaster, the effectiveness of donating, and even the individual impact that making a donation will have. Although we have found all of these variables to be significant predictors of helping, empathy is a consistent predictor that often remains significant even when considered simultaneously alongside the other aforementioned variables in a regression model. This is not to say that empathy cannot be felt towards an outgroup member, but it may be the case that empathy can be more easily aroused when one shares a connection with the victim in need.

Another important variable to consider when theorising about predictors of intergroup helping is how individually responsible a person feels for helping the person in need. Group-based guilt is more likely to occur when a privileged ingroup takes the perspective of a wronged outgroup member (Zebel, Doosje & Spears, 2009). The individual may then feel a measure of responsibility to help as a representative of a group that has collectively harmed another group. Further, as mentioned above, individual responsibility to help has been shown to mediate empathic concern towards victims in a charitable appeal (Basil, Ridgway & Basil, 2006). In our own research (study 3; James & Zagefka, under review), we exposed participants to a mock news report detailing a coach crash and manipulated the nationalities of both the victim and the driver (who was the perpetrator of the crash which happened due to reckless driving). Using structural equational modelling, and in line with the findings by Basil et al. (2006), we found the most robust helping model to be one where individual responsibility mediated empathic responses, which in turn led to prosocial intentions.

As an aside, and as already alluded to above, there is evidence to highlight the importance of perceived human involvement in soliciting aid. Zagefka et al. (2011) conducted a series of studies where participants donated actual or hypothetical money to victims of an international disaster. We manipulated whether the disaster was caused naturally by extreme weather conditions, or whether the disaster was due to political failings and human involvement. The findings demonstrated that participants prefer to donate to naturally-caused as opposed to humanly-caused disasters. One reason this may be the case is that human acts may be seen to be intentional, and intentional acts are perceived as more harmful, and judged less favourably, than non-intentional acts (Ames & Fiske, 2013; 2015; see also Lagnado & Channon, 2008). Presumably, donors are less forgiving when there is human involvement as they believe the consequences to be preventable. An interesting question for future research would be to see how propensity for victim blame is influenced by shared group membership between donors and victims: one might predict that group memberships influence how donors attribute both intentionality and foreseeability, and consequently, may be more reluctant to blame ingroup victims compared to outgroup victims. Alternatively, and somewhat more aligned with the previous discussion on guilt-based helping, participants may feel little responsibility to help when other social groups are implicated. After all, from both an equity perspective, and from a justice perspective, why should a donor help another social group without the presence of collective guilt to motivate their actions? It is even possible that donors would make reparations on behalf of their group due to social norms pertaining to duty or obligation, even in the absence of negative emotions such as guilt.

So far, in this section, we have considered how prosocial behaviour is shaped by donors and victims sharing a group membership, and in the previous section we have considered how prosocial behaviour is shaped by donors and perpetrators sharing a group membership. However, an interesting question is whether the two can interact. There has been a great deal of interesting research that has investigated either perpetrator groups, or victim groups, but we are not aware of research which has considered the two types of memberships simultaneously (and certainly not in the context of helping behaviour). Yet, we reasoned that an interaction could occur, given that both seem to be underpinned by processes related to feelings of individual responsibility to help. Drawing upon SIT, we predicted that donors would be most willing to help when they shared group memberships with both the victims and the perpetrators.

In the coach crash study we mentioned previously (James & Zagefka, under review), we found a strong interaction between the donors sharing a group membership with the victims on the one hand and the perpetrators on the other hand, such that shared group membership with both led to the highest levels of prosociality. Overall, the results suggest that shared group membership of donors with victims and perpetrators can amplify each other’s effect on helping. As already discussed, researchers have taken the position that empathy is somehow muted for the outgroup (Cikara, Bruneau & Saxe, 2011) and that empathy is a better predictor of ingroup helping (Stürmer, Snyder, Kropp, & Siem, 2006). In line with this position, we found that helping ingroup victims was more related to empathy, whereas helping when an ingroup perpetrator was involved was more due to feelings of guilt. However, the interaction suggests that feelings of collective responsibility may be important even when soliciting aid for ingroup victims.

From a practitioner’s point of view, one can conclude that it would be advantageous to emphasise shared group memberships with the victim where relevant. Charities could make salient shared group memberships that a donor highly identifies with, *before* soliciting for aid. This could mean stressing a national identity, ‘Mark is homeless, but he’s still British’, or a sporting identity, ‘Mark is homeless, but he loves football too’; or any other relevant social category. In situations where it might be difficult to find a shared social category, charities could focus on re-categorisation (e.g. ‘deep down, they’re just like you and me’). Finally, casual observation suggests that charities are adept at focusing on emotions such as empathy and guilt in their ad campaigns, but as our research suggests, combining a message about an ingroup victim alongside a message that includes an ingroup perpetrator may be particularly affective. For example, a campaign about British domestic violence that affects British victims could be persuasive, as it allows for the donor to feel both feelings of empathy towards the victim, and collective responsibility to help due to their self-identity being entwined with the perpetrator group.

## **The importance of intergroup relations between national groups**

A true intergroup account of helping would not be complete without considering, in addition to identification and shared or separate group memberships of the relevant entities, the nature of intergroup relations between different national groups, and more specifically, whether foreign relations are perceived positively or negatively by individual constituents. Indeed, evidence suggests that perceived intergroup conflict has a host of different effects on the behaviour of group members (Brown, Maras, Masser, Vivian, & Hewstone, 2001; Sherif, 1966). One would expect people to be more inclined to help members of outgroups if those outgroups are not seen to be hostile enemies of the ingroup (although these effects may be attenuated in situations where strategic motivations drive helping, e.g. Nadler, 2002; van Leeuwen, 2007; Wakefield & Hopkins, this volume).

The impact of perceived foreign relations on the propensity to help members of the outgroup was the main focus of some work we did in China, following the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011 (Shaojing, Zagefka & Goodwin, 2013). Of course, there are a number of historical incidents involving the two countries. Participants were asked about their views with regards to the Chinese-Japanese war (1937 to 1945), and about the long-time territorial dispute over the Fishing Islands. In addition, participants were also asked about the image they had of Japan more generally, particularly in terms of Japan’s perceived economic power, industrial development, technological competence, social fairness, public healthcare, citizen happiness, military power and political influence. These dimensions were combined into the underlying constructs of ‘perceived resources’, ‘social well-being’, and ‘perceived power’.

Results showed that those Chinese participants who perceived a high degree of intergroup conflict had more negative emotions toward the Japanese, and in turn were less concerned about the victims. Low concern for the victims manifested itself in various ways: those low in concern were less likely to discuss the disaster event with friends, they were less likely to pray for the victims, and – crucially – they were less likely to donate money to aid the victims.

Perceptions of historical conflict between China and Japan had the (perhaps unsurprising) result of reducing proclivity to help outgroup victims. However, a positive image of Japan simultaneously increased and decreased concern for the Japanese victims, via two separate mechanisms. Firstly, those who had a positive imagine of Japan, i.e. those who perceived the country to be resourceful, with higher social well-being, and with greater power, in turn had more positive emotions towards Japan, and this increased concern for individual Japanese victims of the disaster. Secondly, those who had a positive image of Japan also perceived the Japanese people to be more competent, and this decreased concern for the victims. Quite clearly, if a group struck by disaster is perceived to be extremely capable and efficient, then people are less concerned for the victims, because they assume the victims will be able to help themselves sufficiently without relying or needing additional outside support.

From a practitioner’s point of view, it is therefore unsurprising that traditionally many donation appeals have tended to portray victims as extremely needy and helpless, and played down the victims’ ability to help themselves. However, some research has found positive effects of perceived efforts by the victims to help themselves (Zagefka et al., 2011) on donors’ willingness to help, calling into question whether underlining the victims’ passivity is always advantageous. The question of how victims are portrayed is also related to the distinction between dependency orientated helping (where the victims are portrayed as incapable) and autonomy oriented helping (where one assumes that the victims can help themselves if given the tools to do so) (Nadler, 2002). More research is needed to determine when exactly emphasising the victims’ passivity or activity will yield most assistance from donors. Based on the data obtained by Zagefka et al. (2011), one can tentatively conclude that a medium level of self-directed aid efforts and perceived competence of the victims might result in the least reluctance to assist them.

## **Discussion**

We would like to end this chapter by stressing the importance of group identities and intergroup relations in disaster aid. To summarise, drawing on research with European and Chinese participants, and focussing on a wide array of disasters, the findings presented in this chapter point to the importance of various factors which can enhance or hinder donors’ willingness to help victims. Identification with victims and familiarity with their plight was found to incentivise helping. Although identification is often higher with ingroup members, evidence was presented that identification with outgroup members is not impossible. Shared group membership with perpetrators was found to incentivise helping via guilt and perceived responsibility. Shared group membership with victims was found to prompt donations via empathy and perceived responsibility. Finally, the nature of the relations between members of different nations also clearly impacts on willingness to engage in intergroup helping.

Confirming previous findings, empathy appears to be an important (and powerful) predictor of helping. However, there are numerous other variables that may be of equal or greater importance in intergroup contexts, depending upon the specific context. A sense of individual responsibility to help victims in need appears to be an important variable when the context emphasises a perpetrator group. In our own research we found individual responsibility to be often lower than either the responsibility attributed towards the state or to victims. Responsibility also appears to be related to empathy, and in our own research it acted as a mediator in a sequential process. Although we do not make the claim that a different order may not be possible, e.g. in a different context.

We would like to end this chapter with some suggestions for future research. These suggestions are based around three areas, *intentionality, perceived scale and harm,* and *the international bystander effect.*

Previous research has identified the importance of intentions in perceptions of harm caused by a tragic event (Ames & Fiske, 2013; 2015). However, we are not aware of research that has examined prosocial behaviour by investigating intentionality alongside group memberships. This could yield a promising line of research, given that both group memberships and intentionality have been independently shown to affect prosociality. It is possible that any negative effects of intentionality may be amplified when the perpetrator shares a group relationship with the donor, and when that relationship is made salient.

Another interesting line of research may pertain to how donors perceive the scale of a disaster and the psychological suffering of the victims. Ames and Fiske (2013; 2015) found that financial estimates of harm were magnified when the harm was caused by an intentional act, presumably due to a cross-modal correspondence effect due to intentional acts being perceived as more psychologically harmful. Given that reasoning, it is likely that estimates of psychological harm would also be inflated when intentionality is made salient. Moreover, economic estimates pertaining to the scale of the disaster, as well as the psychological harm of the victims, may be affected by salient group memberships (perpetrator and/or victim).

Further, the manner in which perpetrator groups can affect donation behaviour is not necessarily straightforward. Although we can only make a tentative claim at this time, we found that donors were more willing in some cases to donate when victims brought the tragedy upon themselves than when a neighbouring country was implicated as the perpetrator. This behaviour appears to be somewhat irrational as one could predict donors to attribute increased levels of victim blame when the victims and perpetrator groups are related. Although, this behaviour does make sense from an equity perspective as donors may refuse to ‘fix the mess’ caused by another nation. Consequently, when another party cannot be held responsible, these donors are forced (albeit reluctantly) to help. It would be interesting if traditional work on the bystander effect, which typically involves interpersonal helping in an emergency context, can be extended towards intergroup prosociality. This may be enlightening, and help to predict the helping behaviour of international onlookers in humanitarian disasters.

Psychological work investigating donations has both theoretical and applied value. From a theoretical perspective, there is still much to discover, particularly as donation research is an emerging field and given that there are a large number of psychological variables that are relevant at face value. Our own research has highlighted the importance of intergroup contexts in investigating the psychological processes that pertain to donation behaviour. From an applied perspective, charities have clearly inferred the importance of how the victim is portrayed when it comes to soliciting donations. However, portraying victims in a favourable light might ‘fall on deaf ears’ if donors do not see themselves as individually responsible for events that happen overseas. In these cases, charities may wish to consider more novel solutions, e.g. making an ingroup perpetrator salient, or better still, making salient memberships with donors share with victims and perpetrators. Given the huge sums that mentioned at the start of this chapter, a small theoretical insight which can help instigate even small behavioral changes could save many lives.

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