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Defensive Helping: Threat to Group Identity, Ingroup Identification, Status Stability, and Common Group Identity as Determinants of Intergroup Help-Giving

Arie Nadler
Tel Aviv University

Gal Harpaz-Gorodeisky
Open University of Israel

Yael Ben-David
Tel Aviv University

On the basis of development of the concept of "defensive helping," the authors demonstrated that high ingroup identifiers thwart a threat to group identity through defensive help-giving (i.e., by extending help to an outgroup member whose achievements jeopardize their status). Participants were 255 Israeli high school students (130 boys and 125 girls) ages 16–18. The phenomenon of defensive helping was demonstrated in a minimal group (Study 1) and real-group (Study 2) experiment. Study 3, which examined real groups, supported the extension of the phenomenon of defensive helping to relations between high- and low-status groups, showing that members of a high-status group who perceive status relations with the low-status outgroup as unstable will protect the ingroup's identity by providing dependency-oriented help to the low-status outgroup. Priming for common ingroup identity reversed this pattern, with participants electing to offer autonomy-oriented rather than defensive help. Theoretical and applied implications of these findings are discussed with respect to social change, paternalism, and helping between nations.

Keywords: defensive helping, status relations, threat to social identity, common ingroup identity, dependency/autonomy-oriented help

For the past 50 years, social psychological research on helping has focused on specifying the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and collective variables that predict when people will help others in need (Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder, & Penner, 2006; Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005). The motivation to help has been variously attributed to empathy (Batson, 1991), compliance with social norms (Warburton & Terry, 2000), and the desire of helpers to feel better about themselves (Yinon & Landau, 1987).

Emerging research has transcended the conventional interpersonal focus on helping to examine helping relations at the intergroup level (Stürmer & Snyder, in press). Recent studies indicate that people give more to ingroup than to outgroup members (Flippen, Horenstein, Siegal, & Weitzman, 1996), especially when givers are highly committed to their group (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999), and that the motivations that underlie helping ingroup members differ from those for helping outgroup members (Stürmer, Snyder, Kropp, & Siem, 2006). Building on this intergroup focus, we examined in the present research the extension of help to members of an outgroup that poses a social identity threat to the helper, in which the purpose of offering help is to defuse that threat. We label this phenomenon "*defensive helping*". In the present research, we sought to validate the existence of defensive helping, the conditions under which it arises, and its unique characteristics.

Defensive Help: Definition and Unique Characteristics

Defensive help is help that is proffered to a member of an outgroup that poses a threat to the ingroup's status and that is used with the purpose of mitigating that threat. Defensive help has three unique characteristics, which are defined by (a) the *target of help*, (b) the *responsiveness of help to the recipient's need*, and (c) the *dependency-* or *autonomy-oriented nature* of the help.

Regarding the target of help, defensive help aims to restore positive distinctiveness relative to a particular outgroup whose achievements or standing threaten ingroup social identity. Thus, it is targeted exclusively toward the threatening outgroup rather than toward any generic outgroup who can be helped as a means to positive self-regard. Second, because defensive help is motivated by the helper's need to ameliorate threat to social identity, its extension is independent of the recipients' expressed or perceived need. Rather, the helper may help the outgroup member preemptively and without being asked, thus conveying an implicit assumption that the help target is incompetent or inadequate. Such helping, which has also been labeled *assumptive help* (Schneider, Major, Luhtanen, & Crocker, 1996), is also more likely for prob-

Arie Nadler and Yael Ben-David, Department of Psychology, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel; Gal Harpaz-Gorodeisky, Department of Psychology, Open University of Israel, Ra'anana, Israel.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Arie Nadler, Department of Psychology, Tel Aviv University, 69978. E-mail: arie@freud.tau.ac.il

lems that seem easy rather than hard to solve. That is because the provision of help for easy problems underscores the relative ineptitude of the recipient and further amplifies the ingroup's positive distinctiveness.

A third characteristic of defensive help is that it advances the dependence, rather than the autonomy, of the help target. Dependency-oriented help reinforces recipients' reliance on external sources of assistance and consists of full solutions to problems. It conveys the message that recipients are unable to solve the problems on their own and may require repeat assistance on similar problems in the future. Autonomy-oriented help encourages recipients' independence by providing tools with which recipients can solve their problems independently (Nadler, 1997, 1998). Because only dependency-oriented help underscores recipients' inferiority (Halabi, Dovidio, & Nadler, 2008; Nadler, 2002; Nadler & Halabi, 2006), this type of help will more likely be used to maintain positive ingroup differentiation.

We propose that defensive help is more likely to arise when group members are threatened on an identity-relevant dimension of comparison (e.g., relative skills or performance), because studies of status threat show that threat to social identity is higher when the dimension of comparison is important to identity. Furthermore, because highly committed group members are more motivated to protect their social identity from threat (Branscombe, Wann, Noel, & Coleman, 1993), defensive helping is more likely to be used by strongly than by weakly committed group members.

Social Identity: Responding to Social Identity Threats

The conceptualization of defensive helping merges two lines of social psychological research: social identity research on reactions to identity threat and research on the motivations of helping for positive self-regard.

The social identity perspective on intergroup relations posits that when ingroup commitment is high, threats to ingroup identity are experienced as threats to personal identity and evoke protective responses. Threat to social identity may take one of three forms (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Turner, 1999), imperiling *group distinctiveness* (the threat that one's group may be perceived as indistinct from other groups; Tamir & Nadler, 2007), *group values* (the threat that ingroup values may be construed as less moral; Wohl & Branscombe, 2005), or *relative status* (the threat to the ingroup's apparent edge over another group in competence, knowledge, or resources; Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999). Our analysis focused on how outgroup helping averts imminent threats to an ingroup's relative abilities, resources, or existing privileges, thereby securing the ingroup's *positive* distinctiveness from the outgroup. Thus, the research program presented here focuses on threats to relative group status.

Status may be jeopardized when an equal outgroup threatens to exceed the achievements of the ingroup (e.g., Doosje, Ellmers, & Spears, 1995) or when a disadvantaged outgroup threatens to attain parity with the ingroup by accruing resources and advantages (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). The responses of group members to such status threats differ according to their commitment to the ingroup (i.e., high or low ingroup identification): Uncommitted group members are likely to dissociate themselves from the ingroup and join a more esteemed outgroup, whereas highly committed members are apt to sustain their group membership but reduce external threats by other means. One of the primary defense techniques is to positively differentiate the ingroup from the outgroup (Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999), such as by derogating outgroup members (Branscombe & Wann, 1994).

Helping as a Vehicle to Positive Self-Regard

In the present research, we propose that helping is an outwardly benign instrument by which groups can avert a status threat to social identity. By proffering help to a threatening outgroup, committed group members can advance their group's positive distinctiveness and thus avert an imminent threat to group status. This theorizing is based on research at the intragroup level, which shows that administering help is a vehicle for greater self-esteem, prestige, and status in a group.

Volunteers cite positive self-regard as a major motivation for devoting their time and resources to others (Omoto & Snyder, 1995), and one of the reasons why people sustain their volunteering is that it makes them feel good about themselves (Midlarsky & Kahana, 1994). In an experimental demonstration of the link between giving help and helpers' quest for positive self-regard, J. D. Brown and Smart (1991) showed that people help others to remedy an injury to self-esteem following an earlier failure. Similarly, Van Vugt and his colleagues found evidence that people help others because they want to gain status and influence in their group (Hardy & Van Vugt, 2006; Van Vugt & Van Lange, 2006). These researchers framed the link between status and helping within evolutionary theory and with particular reference to the handicap principle (Zahavi & Zahavi, 1997), which holds that intragroup helping builds the helper's reputation as someone who can afford to forgo his or her resources for the benefit of others. This reputation, in turn, translates into higher status in the group.

Status

In social research, "status" is conceptualized as either a structural or situational condition. *Structural status* refers to the stratification of groups in a given society, in which differences are institutionalized in a manner that sustains social inequality (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980), such as between men and women or between people of European versus African heritage. *Situational status* differences are contextual differences that arise when in a given situation groups from each other on a dimension that is relevant to group identity. For example, children from Summer Camp A will experience lower situational status when rival Camp B outperforms them on a relevant dimension of comparison, such as a swimming contest.

Although situational expectations of an outgroup's performance may be affected by structural status differences—for example, boys may be expected to swim faster than girls—situational status differences emanate from conditional advantages, such as when one unit of a corporation outperforms a comparable unit or when two "minimal groups" (groups that have no history or significance outside an experiment) learn they have achieved different scores on a psychologically relevant task (e.g., Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). Although both structural and situational status advantages can be threatened, the form of the status threat in either case may take a different shape. Structural status differences characteristically involve real groups who have a long-standing

history of inequality in a shared society. Here, status gaps are typically seen to narrow due to the advance of the lower status party toward parity with the higher status party, such as when women are granted the same voting rights that already exist for men. Situational status differences are fluid advantages that can be threatened by the declining achievements of a superior group or by the introduction of an achievement gap between two previously equivalent groups, such as the repositioning of sports teams on a ranking chart over the course of a season.

Defensive helping is an instrument used to avert or ameliorate status threat, whether structural or situational. Tajfel and Turner's (1986) theorizing on intergroup status relations, and the application of their theorizing to the intergroup helping as status relations model (IHSR; Nadler, 2002; Nadler & Halabi, 2006), focused on structural status differences between high- and low-status groups. The present analysis of defensive helping broadens this course of inquiry by examining helping as a means to disarm the situational status threat posed by an *equal-status* outgroup in a minimal group (Study 1) and real-group (Study 2) context. In Study 3, we examined defensive help given to a *structurally low-status* outgroup in order to complete the demonstration of the three characteristics of defensive help proposed herein and to explore how self-categorization processes affect defensive helping.

The Present Research

The empirical validation of the concept of defensive helping requires an experimental demonstration that (a) more help is given to *an outgroup that poses a threat to ingroup status* than to one that does not, (b) help is *relatively independent of the recipient's actual state of need*, and (c) help takes a *dependency-oriented* form. Moreover, such an experimental demonstration of defensive helping must show that it is influenced by variables that are known to moderate threat to group identity, such as ingroup identification (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999), and that it can be modified through manipulation of group members' self-categorization (e.g., the degree to which the separate identity of two groups is salient).

Social identity theory posits that when an existing status hierarchy is perceived as insecure and therefore changeable, high-status groups fear that their advantaged position may be short-lived. In these circumstances, the IHSR model suggests that high-status group members will use defensive helping to avert such a status threat—underscoring their relative superiority by giving copious amounts of help to the threatening low-status outgroup. This prediction has not yet been empirically tested. Until now, research within the IHSR framework has centered on the implications of status insecurity in stratified social environments for the willingness of *members of low-status* groups to *seek or receive* help from a high-status group (e.g., Halabi et al., 2008; Nadler & Halabi, 2006). We aimed to demonstrate the phenomenon of defensive helping when status differences are situationally determined (e.g., when ingroup members learn that a relatively equal outgroup has outperformed them). We also aimed to garner empirical support for the prediction of the IHSR model regarding defensive help-giving by a structurally higher status group that wishes to defend itself from a threat to its advantaged position.

In the first two experiments in the present research, we examined the hypothesis that in order to maintain positive ingroup distinctiveness in the face of an incoming threat to social identity, high identifiers would provide relatively more help to the source of threat than low identifiers. We examined the basic relationship between threat to social identity, ingroup identification, and amount of help given to a member of the threatening outgroup in the first experiment using ad hoc minimal groups. The use of experimentally induced groups is important to establishing this basic link because the present article is the first to demonstrate its existence. In the second experiment, we replicated and extended the results of the first experiment by using real groups and testing the hypotheses that defensive help is *targeted at the source of threat to social identity* and is *relatively unresponsive to the recipient's state of need*. In this experiment, the amount of help given to a social identity-threatening outgroup was compared with the amount of help given to a neutral outgroup on problems that were viewed by the helper as difficult versus easily soluble. We expected defensive helping to be reflected (a) in greater help given to the outgroup that posed a threat to the ingroup's social identity than to a neutral outgroup and (b) on difficult and easy problems. We expected that these patterns of defensive helping would characterize high- but not low ingroup identifiers. We assessed ingroup identification via a modified version of the Collective Self-Esteem scale (CSE; Luthanen & Crocker, 1992). We also obtained participants' scores on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and expected that the amount of defensive helping would be moderated by *collective* but not by *personal* self-esteem (PSE) scores. This empirical demonstration would substantiate the assertion that group-level psychological processes underlie participants' greater amount of help to a threatening outgroup.

Our aim in the third experiment was to examine the phenomenon of defensive helping in a stratified social environment. When an advantaged group's position in the existing status hierarchy is perceived as insecure and therefore changeable, members are expected to give greater help to the low-status group that jeopardizes their social advantage. These efforts should be manifested by offering more dependency- than autonomy-oriented help. Furthermore, we explored the role of self-categorization processes in defensive helping. Because the induction of common identity lessens expressions of competitive intergroup behaviors and perceptions (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000), defensive helping is less likely to arise when a perception of common identity is induced than when the distinct identity of the high-status group is salient. This should be expressed in higher levels of autonomy-oriented help in the first case and dependency-oriented help in the second.

Study 1

In Study 1, we used the minimal group paradigm and varied ingroup identification and level of threat to ingroup identity. The central prediction was that the greatest amount of help would be extended by high identifiers to the outgroup when the latter posed a high threat to their social identity.

Method

Design and Participants

The experiment followed a 2 (high- vs. low ingroup identification) × 2 (high- vs. low threat to ingroup identity) between-

participants design. Participants were 47 male and 49 female Israeli high school students aged 16 and 17.

Procedure

The experimental procedures were fully computerized. Once participants entered the room, they were informed that they would be taking part in an experiment in which the link between spatial perception and analytic ability would be examined. On the basis of their performance on the dot estimation task (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997), half received feedback that they were "global" perceivers and half that they were "specific" perceivers. Participants had to click the appropriate box on the computer screen to reinforce this group affiliation manipulation. *Ingroup identification* was manipulated by informing participants, based on a second estimation task, that they were either typical or atypical members of the specific/global perceivers group (high- and low-ingroup identification, respectively). Thus, consistent with past research in which the minimal group paradigm has been used, ingroup identification was manipulated by varying levels of prototypicality.[1]

Next, the manipulation of *threat to social identity* was introduced by presenting information that constituted a threat to group status (Branscombe et al., 1999; Doosje et al., 1995; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). Participants were asked to compare 10 pairs of complex geometrical shapes on the computer, a task that was said to constitute a test of "integrative thinking." In the high-threat condition, participants learned that their ingroup scored 51, and the outgroup scored 71 (out of 100); in the low-threat condition, the scores were reversed.

Dependent Measures

Manipulation checks. Before participants' help-giving was assessed, they were asked (a) whether they perceived themselves to be typical or atypical group members and (b) whether their group was higher or lower than the outgroup on "integrative thinking." The percentage of correct responses served as checks on the ingroup identification and threat to ingroup identity manipulations.

Main dependent variable: Amount of help-giving. Participants were informed that they would now begin the second part of the experiment, measuring the speed and effectiveness of their "integrative observational skills." It was explained that the task would be conducted using a computerized test in which participants were required to identify figures embedded in 12 drawings, each presented on the computer screen for 20 s. Participants were told that the quiz was being conducted over the Internet with students from schools across the country. It was explained to participants that the task would be conducted in teams of 4 students—2 "global" perceivers and 2 "specific" perceivers—and that the other 3 team members were located at the other schools. One member of the four-person team would be assigned the role of "quiz administrator," and 2 would be "quiz takers." After participants received this overview, they were given 2 min to become acquainted with the technical aspects of the upcoming quiz. Then the experimenter made some phone calls to make it appear that she was verifying that the team members at the other sites were ready. After ostensibly receiving confirmation, she instructed participants to commence the embedded-picture task.

At the beginning of the task, all participants learned that they had been randomly assigned the role of quiz administrator and that the 2 outgroup members were the quiz takers. The other ingroup member was said to be waiting until the end of the session to commence the task. At the end of each of the 12 trials, the participant received a computerized message indicating the outgroup members' performance. In 9 out of 12 trials, the two outgroup members were presented as having difficulty, and the quiz administrator (i.e., the participant) was invited to help them by pointing to the exact area on the screen where the embedded figure was hidden. Helping was scored as the number of times that the participant chose to help out of these nine opportunities.

Auxiliary dependent variables: Ingroup favoritism and ingroup bias. Following the assessment of help-giving, participants were asked to respond to measures that assessed level of discrimination and devaluation of the outgroup. For the *ingroup favoritism* measure, participants were asked to assign four roles of varying levels of prestige in a student newspaper (e.g., chief editor, marketing manager, and so forth) to members of the ingroup and the outgroup. Scores ranged from 0 (*extreme ingroup favoritism*) to 14 (*extreme outgroup favoritism*), with 7 representing an equal allocation to the ingroup and the outgroup.[2]

To measure *ingroup bias*, participants were asked to rate "global" and "specific" perceivers on five bipolar adjective scales (*industrious/lazy*, *competitive/cooperative*, *curious/not curious*, *creative/not creative*, and *intelligent/not intelligent*) by marking the range where they felt most group members lay on a 574-pixel axis. Participants were first asked to rate their ingroup and later the outgroup. The midpoint of the range was defined as the evaluative judgment of the ingroup or outgroup and the length of the range as perceived heterogeneity (R. Brown & Abrams, 1986; Kelly, 1989; Tamir & Nadler, 2007). The midpoints for the five trait evaluations were summed to create an ingroup and outgroup evaluation score; Cronbach's alphas for these scales were .55 and .71, respectively. Ingroup bias was measured by subtracting participants' ingroup evaluation from their outgroup evaluation (cf. Mullen, Brown, & Smith, 1992).

Results

Manipulation Checks

Of the participants, 95% correctly classified themselves as being typical or atypical of their group, and 97% correctly classified themselves as being higher or lower than the outgroup on integrative abilities.

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[1] For a similar manipulation of ingroup identification, see Doosje et al., 1995, and Jetten, Spears, and Manstead, 1998. The link between prototypicality and ingroup identification was first discussed by Lewin (1948), who showed that ingroup identification depends on how similar people think they are to other group members.

[2] Participants were to rank order the roles by assigning a score of 2–5 (lowest to highest rank) to each of the four roles. Participants later allocated each of the four roles to a member of the ingroup (0) or the outgroup (1). The ingroup favoritism score was calculated by multiplying the allocation choice that the participant had made (i.e., 0 or 1) times the importance score assigned to each of these four roles (i.e., ranks 5, 4, 3, or 2) and summing up the total. Thus, this index could range from 14, representing the highest level of outgroup favoritism (multiplying ranks 5, 4, 3 and 2 by 1 and summing these to reach 14) to 0, representing extreme ingroup favoritism.

Main Dependent Measure: Help-Giving

A 2 (high- vs. low ingroup identification) × 2 (high- vs. low threat) analysis of variance (ANOVA) on amount of help-giving revealed a Threat × Ingroup Identification interaction, $F(1, 92) = 4.45$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$. To pursue our findings for the prediction that only high identifiers would respond to a heightened identity threat by giving more help, we used orthogonal contrasts to compare helping under high- and low-threat conditions for high- and low identifiers separately. This analysis indicated that participants in the high-identification condition gave more help to the outgroup when it posed a relatively high than low threat to social identity ($M = 4.30$, $SD = 2.40$ and $M = 2.57$, $SD = 2.10$, respectively), $F(1, 45) = 7.80$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .13$. The amount of help given in the high-threat cell did not differ from the amount of help given in the low-threat cell in the low-identification condition ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.91$ and $M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.86$, respectively), $F(1, 47) < 1$ (see Table 1).

Auxiliary Dependent Measures

Ingroup favoritism. The mean ingroup favoritism score was 4.62 ($SD = 3.02$), which was significantly lower than the 7.0 midpoint, $t(95) = 7.73$, $p < .001$, indicating that participants exhibited a significant degree of ingroup favoritism. None of the other main or interaction effects were statistically significant.

Ingroup bias and ingroup homogeneity. A 2 (high- vs. low ingroup identification) × 2 (high vs. low threat) ANOVA found no significant main or interaction effects on this measure. A paired samples *t* test revealed that participants evaluated the ingroup more positively than the outgroup, $t(78) = 6.31$, $p < .001$ ($M = 89.85$, $SD = 69.92$ and $M = 7.67$, $SD = 88.68$, respectively, on a scale of computer pixels ranging from +287 to −287). A similar ANOVA on perceived homogeneity scores of the ingroup and outgroup revealed that participants in the high-identification condition perceived the ingroup and the outgroup as more homogenous ($M = 120.16$, $SD = 64.76$ and $M = 164.63$, $SD = 120.64$, respectively), $F(1, 71) = 5.05$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = 0.07$, than participants in the low-identification condition ($M = 129.98$, $SD = 66.00$ and $M = 182.13$, $SD = 121.89$, respectively), $F(1, 71) = 5.97$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = 0.07$. None of the other main or interaction effects were significant.[3]

An examination of the relationships between amount of help given, ingroup favoritism, and outgroup devaluation indicated that the more participants helped the outgroup, the more they were later willing to give its members influential roles in the newspaper ($r = .26$, $p < .01$; i.e., the lower their ingroup favoritism) and the less they subsequently devalued them ($r = -.30$, $p < .01$).

Table 1
Average Amount of Help Given to the Outgroup as a Function of Ingroup Identification and Level of Threat to Ingroup Identity in Study 1 (N = 96)

Level of threat to ingroup identity	Ingroup identification	
	Low	High
Low	3.46 (1.86)	2.57 (2.10)
High	3.36 (1.91)	4.30 (2.40)

Note. Help-giving ranged from 0 to 9. Higher scores indicate a greater amount of help-giving. Standard deviations appear in parentheses.

Discussion

Participants provided most help to the outgroup when they identified with the ingroup and when the outgroup posed a threat to their social identity. This finding supports the hypothesis that group members defend against threats to social identity by helping the source of this threat.

The pattern of correlations between measures of helping and measures of ingroup favoritism and outgroup devaluation support the logic of our interpretation. In this experiment, the measures of ingroup favoritism and outgroup devaluation were collected after participants had been given the opportunity to give help to the source of threat to their social identity. Therefore, these correlations suggest that when the motivation for positive ingroup distinctiveness had been satisfied by helping the source of threat, the drive to secure positive distinctiveness using unconstructive behaviors (i.e., discrimination and devaluation) diminished. Although the pattern of findings supports the logic of defensive helping, it should be treated with caution because of its correlational nature and because of the relatively low reliability coefficient of the measure of ingroup favoritism.

Last, the significant ingroup favoritism expressed by participants validates the minimal group manipulation that we used, and the finding that high identifiers perceived the ingroup and the outgroup as more homogenous supports the validity of the ingroup identification manipulation (cf. Doosje et al., 1995).

Study 2

Although the findings of Study 1 support the predictions of defensive helping, they are susceptible to alternative interpretations. First, it is possible that increased helping in the high-identification/high-threat cell resulted from individual-level processes linking negative mood to helping (Cialdini, Darby, & Vincent, 1973) rather than from group-level processes aimed at achieving positive ingroup distinctiveness through helping. Second, greater helping in the high-threat condition may be interpreted as reflecting deference, albeit only by high-identifying ingroup members, toward an outgroup represented as having higher status (i.e., an outgroup that was said to have surpassed the ingroup on a relevant dimension of comparison).

In Study 2, we assessed two characteristics of defensive helping: (a) the target of help and (b) the lack of responsiveness to recipients' actual need. In this study, we compared the amount of help given by high and low identifiers who experienced a threat to their ingroup identity with three types of outgroups: the outgroup that served as the source of the threat, a third-party outgroup that was

[3] Because these perceptions could have been affected by the actual amount of help given to the outgroup member, we performed a 2 × 2 × 2 analysis of covariance on the perceived homogeneity of the ingroup and outgroup, using amount of help as a covariant. The main effect for ingroup identification remained significant in both of these analyses: $F(1, 70) = 4.98$, $p < .05$, for the measure of ingroup homogeneity and, $F(1, 70) = 6.13$, $p < .05$, for the measure of outgroup homogeneity.

unrelated to the source of the threat, and an outgroup under a no-threat control condition.

Because defensive helping is driven by the helper's desire to establish the ingroup's relative advantage, it should be relatively nonresponsive to the recipient's state of need. Participants who use help most defensively (strong identifiers helping a threatening outgroup) were expected to offer relatively high levels of help on both easy and difficult problems, whereas participants in other groups were expected to calibrate their helping efforts to the difficulty of the problem at hand.

Study 2 was designed to extend the validity and generalizability of defensive helping in a number of ways. First, we measured participants' collective self-esteem in the context of a real ingroup—their high school—rather than of an experimentally induced group. Second, we measured both collective and PSE and predicted that collective self-esteem, but not personal self-esteem, would moderate the amount of help extended to the threatening outgroup. This would further bolster the interpretation that increased helping reflects an attempt to protect social, rather than personal, identity.

Method

Design and Participants

The experiment consisted of a 2 (high- vs. low ingroup identification) × 3 (recipient of help is a threatening target vs. nonthreatening target vs. control) between-participants design. Participants were 31 male and 36 female Israeli high school students, aged 16 and 17.

Procedure

The study was presented as an investigation of the links between attitudes, cognitive-perceptual abilities, and school performance. Participants were told that the study was being supported by the Ministry of Education and was being conducted simultaneously at many schools across the country. They were also told that to help them become familiar with some of the other schools taking part in the study, they would be receiving information about the scholastic achievements of those schools and their performance on an embedded figure task that they would later carry out themselves.

After filling out measures of identification with their school and a PSE scale, threat to social identity was manipulated by giving participants information about the scholastic achievements of two similar schools that were ostensibly taking part in the same study. In the two threat conditions, participants were told that on various indices (e.g., creative thinking, logical analysis ability, general knowledge, and the like), one school scored similar to theirs, whereas the other school scored substantially higher. Participants in the no-threat control condition were told that the other two schools were similar to their school in overall scholastic abilities.

The experimental task and procedures were similar to those carried out in Study 1, except that in Study 2 these were not computerized. All participants were told that to increase their familiarity with the task, they would receive "sample information" about the performance of one of the other two schools on the embedded figure items.

Ingroup identification was measured using the overall score of an adapted version of the CSE (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992), which was reworded to assess attitudes toward the participants' school. The total CSE score has been used in past research as an index of ingroup identification (i.e., Shah, Kruglanski, & Thompson, 1998) and was internally reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$). There were no significant differences between the three experimental groups on this measure, $F(2, 64) = 1.55$, *ns*.

Following the observation of Leach et al. (2008) that *satisfaction* with group membership is distinctly related to the defense of group identity, this variable was also used (i.e., the sum of public and private CSE subscales) as an index of ingroup identification. The satisfaction score was internally reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$), and there were no significant differences between the three groups on this measure, $F(2, 64) = 1.36$, *ns*. Thus, the main hypothesis regarding defensive helping were assessed using both the overall CSE scores and the satisfaction scores as indices of ingroup identification.

PSE was assessed using the 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965; e.g., "I have a positive attitude about myself"). Internal reliability was satisfactory (Cronbach's $\alpha = .73$, and the three experimental groups did not differ on this measure ($F < 1$).

Dependent Variables

Manipulation checks. The effectiveness of the threat manipulation was assessed using two measures. The first asked participants to answer the question: "On the basis of the information just given, are the abilities of students in your school *higher than/similar to/lower than* the abilities of students in School X?" The second measure assessed participants' affective state after they received the information about the scholastic achievement of the other schools, using four bipolar items: good/bad, pleasant/unpleasant, bothered/not bothered, and hurt/not hurt (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$).

Main dependent variable: Amount of help-giving. Participants were informed that the student from the other school was having difficulty on 8 of the 10 embedded figure items and that because in previous runs participants were allowed to help each other, they could now choose to do the same. Participants received the solution to the embedded figure item and could send a message to the other student indicating the exact location of the hidden figure, with the experimenter as intermediary. To highlight the intergroup nature of this act of help, it was indicated that the assistance, if given, would be relayed by the experimenter on behalf of the participant's entire school. The *target of help* was manipulated by varying the school affiliation of the outgroup member who needed help. In the threatening-outgroup condition, participants learned that the other student belonged to the higher achieving school, whereas in the nonthreatening-outgroup and control conditions, they learned that the other student attended a school where scholastic achievements were similar to those of their own school.

Participants were told that in the future they would perform the embedded figure test and that another student, from a different school, would receive information about their performance. To mitigate considerations of future reciprocity, the experimenters emphasized that in the future stage of the experiment, participants would be paired up randomly via computer with a student from

one of hundreds of other participating high schools across the country. The central dependent variable of the study was whether participants chose to help the other school on each of the eight drawings.

Perceived difficulty of the task. Participants were asked to rate the difficulty of locating each of the eight embedded figures for which the other student required help on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*very easy*) to 7 (*very difficult*). There were no differences between the three groups on the perceived difficulty of the problems ($F < 1$).

Results

Manipulation Check

All participants in the low- and high-threat conditions indicated that their school was academically inferior to the threatening outgroup and academically similar to the nonthreatening and control outgroups. The effectiveness of this manipulation was corroborated by the significant differences in affect scores across the three groups, $F(2, 64) = 7.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .19$. Post hoc tests revealed that participants in the two threat groups had significantly lower affect ($M = 3.40$, $SD = 0.96$) than participants in the no-threat control condition ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 0.48$), $F(1, 65) = 57.60$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .47$.

Main Dependent Variable: Help-Giving

Participants were divided into high- and low-identification groups on the basis of a median split of their ingroup identification scores ($M = 5.02$, $SD = 0.45$ and $M = 3.70$, $SD = 0.61$, respectively). The eight drawings on which help could be given were divided, based on the participants' average perceived difficulty, into a group of four easy and four difficult problems ($M = 2.24$, $SD = 1.28$ and $M = 3.35$, $SD = 1.19$, respectively), $t(65) = 6.41$, $p < .001$.

We conducted a 3 (group) × 2 (CSE) × 2 (problem difficulty) ANOVA, where the first two factors were between-subjects, and the third was a within-subject factor on amount of help-giving. This analysis revealed a significant main effect for group, $F(2, 61) = 25.18$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .42$, indicating that participants in the threatening-outgroup condition ($M = 5.80$, $SD = 1.30$) provided more help to the outgroup than those in the nonthreatening-outgroup ($M = 2.90$, $SD = 1.40$) and control ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.34$) conditions. This finding supports our main assertion that in the context of helping under conditions of threat to social identity, greater helping directed at the outgroup is a defensive tactic, reflecting the motivation for positive ingroup differentiation from the threatening group. If helping were motivated by mood repair rather than by social defense, we would have observed similarly high helping scores for the two threat groups, and for both groups to exceed the no-threat control group. A main effect for problem difficulty, $F(1, 61) = 47.80$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .37$, indicates that more help was given on difficult than on easy problems ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.18$ and $M = 1.38$, $SD = 1.28$, respectively).

The significant Group × Problem Difficulty interaction, $F(2, 61) = 5.50$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .09$, should be interpreted in light of a significant three-way Group × Problem Difficulty × Ingroup Identification interaction, $F(2, 61) = 3.66$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .06$. To interpret this interaction, we conducted a 2 (problem difficulty) × 3 (group) between-within ANOVA for high and low identifiers separately. For low identifiers, more help was given on difficult than on easy problems, $F(1, 35) = 13.19$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .27$. Neither the main effect for group, $F(2, 35) < 1$, nor the Group × Problem Difficulty interaction, $F(2, 35) < 1$, was significant (means for helping on difficult problems were 3.00 [$SD = 1.22$]1.70, [$SD = 1.30$] and 2.33 [$SD = 1.60$]; means for helping on easy problems were 2.09 [$SD = 1.22$], 0.70 [$SD = 0.93$], and 1.11 [$SD = 1.00$] for the threatening-outgroup, nonthreatening-outgroup, and no-threat control condition, respectively).

The equivalent analysis for high identifiers revealed a significant Group × Problem Difficulty interaction, $F(2, 26) = 15.71$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .44$. This interaction indicates that although the amount of help given on difficult versus easy problems did not differ in the threatening-outgroup condition ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.78$ and $M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.75$, respectively), participants offered more help for difficult than for easy problems in the nonthreatening-outgroup ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.00$ and $M = 0.75$, $SD = 0.70$, respectively) and the control ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 0.78$ and $M = 0.40$, $SD = 0.70$, respectively) conditions. As can be seen in Figure 1, when the target of help embodied the source of the threat to social identity, high identifiers gave the same amount of help for difficult problems as for easy ones.

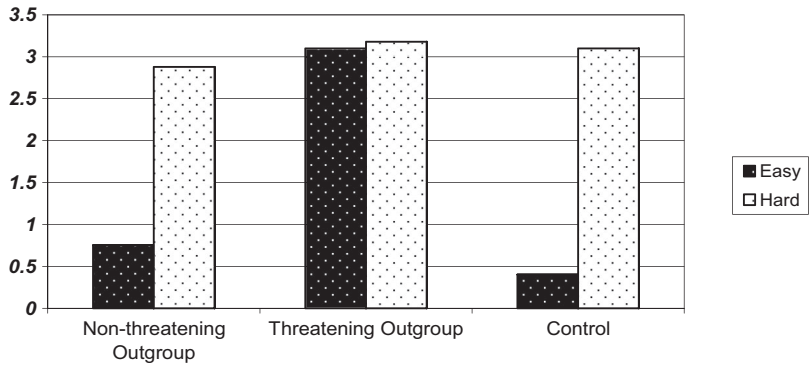

Figure 1. Helping and threat to social identity: Amount of help given by high identifiers to a nonthreatening outgroup, a threatening outgroup, and in a no-threat control condition on easy versus hard problems in Study 2 ($N = 33$). Help-giving ranged from 0 to 4. Higher scores indicate a greater amount of help.

We expected that the CSE × Group interaction would be significant for easy problems and insignificant for difficult problems. Because CSE (i.e., ingroup identification) is a continuous variable, we assessed this hypothesis using a hierarchical regression model (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In line with expectations, the CSE × Group interaction term was significant for easy problems ($\beta = .25$), $t(66) = 2.39$, $p < .05$, whereas the parallel interaction term was insignificant for difficult problems ($\beta = .12$), $t(66) = 0.92$, *ns*.

The use of satisfaction scores as an index of ingroup identification yielded a similar empirical pattern. Here, too, the Satisfaction × Group interaction approached significance for easy problems ($\beta = .20$), $t(65) = 1.80$, $p = .08$, and was nonsignificant for difficulty problems ($\beta = .04$), $t(65) = .30$, *ns*.

The Role of PSE

We conducted a 2 (problem difficulty) × 3 (group) × 2 (PSE) between-within ANOVA on amount of help-giving, for which PSE served as the dependent variable. Neither the main effects for PSE nor any of the interactions involving self-esteem were significant. Using a hierarchical regression model, the Group × PSE interaction was insignificant ($\beta = .09$), $t(63) = 0.85$, *ns*.

Discussion

The principal finding of Study 2 was that the greatest amount of help was given when the target of help was the source of threat to social identity. This replicates the finding of the first experiment. Furthermore, the findings that such help is determined by the specific target of help, and is characterized by a relatively unconstructive response to the recipient's need, supports the interpretation that such help is aimed to rehabilitate an imperiled social identity.

Consistent with our conceptualization, the findings indicate that significantly more help was given to the outgroup that embodied a threat than to outgroups that did not pose a threat. This was true for outgroups in the threat and no-threat control conditions. Because high-threat participants did not offer the same amount of help to neutral outgroups as they did to the threatening outgroup, the interpretation that greater help was roused by negative affect or some other psychological process can be ruled out.

We proposed that because defensive helping is a strategy to ameliorate threats to social identity, helpers would demonstrate scant consideration of recipients' actual need. Consistent with this prediction, high identifiers gave similarly high amounts of help to the threatening outgroup on problems they thought were easy as for those they viewed as difficult.

The finding that differences in collective self-esteem moderated the link between threat to group identity and help-giving, whereas differences in PSE did not, further supports the interpretation that different levels of help-giving reflect differential threats to *social* identity. Finally, this experiment replicated the findings of Study 1 with real groups, thus extending the external validity of its results (for discussions of the importance of replicating group effects with real groups, see Mlicki & Ellemers, 1996, and Mullen et al., 1992).

Study 3

The first two studies supported the idea that extending help to an outgroup can be driven by ingroup members' desire to defend social identity against an external threat. In Study 3, we explored the phenomenon of defensive helping in the context of relationships between structurally high- and low-status groups. We examined patterns of defensive helping by a structurally high-status group upon learning that its advantaged position vis-à-vis a low-status outgroup was jeopardized. The predictions for Study 3 were based on the IHSR model, which states that when intergroup status relations are perceived to be relatively insecure (i.e., unstable and/or illegitimate), members of high-status groups will maintain their social advantage by giving relatively more dependency-oriented help to the low-status group. Thus, this study also bears on our prediction regarding the third characteristic of defensive helping—namely, its taking the form of dependency- rather than autonomy-oriented help.

A second goal of this experiment was to explore how self-categorization processes affect defensive helping. The common ingroup identity model asserts that when group members perceive the ingroup and the outgroup as sharing a common group identity, they are less likely to exhibit ingroup favoritism and outgroup devaluation (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000) and more likely to help an outgroup member (Dovidio, Gaertner, Validzic, Matoka, Johnson, & Frazier, 1997). Applied to the present context, this suggests that under conditions of unstable status, members of the high-status group will be less motivated to engage in defensive helping by providing the low-status group with dependency-oriented help when the separate identities of each group are made salient than when these identities are framed under an overarching group identity.

Method

Design and Participants

Participants were 52 male and 40 female students at a prestigious high school in Israel's southern Negev region, ages 17 and 18. The experiment consisted of a 2 (stable vs. unstable status hierarchy) × 3 (separate identities vs. common identity vs. control) between-participants design. There were 15–16 participants per cell, and the gender ratio was comparable in all six cells.

Procedure

The experiment was described as part of a research program to develop new psychological tools for making placement decisions in elite Israel Defense Forces units. Because all participants were about 1 year away from commencing their mandatory military service, this was a highly relevant task for them. Participants were informed that the study was being conducted at various high schools throughout the country and that because of procedural considerations, the research would be carried out in pairs of schools, where the pairing of schools was random. The students then learned that their school had been paired with another school in the same geographical region (i.e., the Negev region). The other school had an inferior academic reputation and less prestige than the participants' own school. The structural status differences between the two schools were ascertained by asking 10 educators from the Negev region to rank the prestige and status of the two schools. Of these 10 educators, 9 ranked the participants' school as more prestigious, and 1 person ranked them as equal in prestige.

Participants were then told that the test would consist of three sections assessing different psychological skills (e.g., "generalized logical-verbal ability").

The experimenter then proceeded to describe the first section of the test, which in fact served as a manipulation of levels of self-categorization. Participants were asked to read a page containing information on which they would later answer a few questions. In the separate identities condition, the section focused on the participants' high school and its unique character among high schools in Israel. In the common identity condition, the section focused on the special qualities of schools in the southern Negev region in Israel. Participants in the control condition read a short section on an unrelated topic. Subsequently, participants were asked general questions about the section they had just read. One of the items, which served as a manipulation check on the levels of categorization manipulation, required participants to choose which of four diagrams best represented the relationship between their school and other schools in the Negev region. The diagrams depicted pairs of progressively overlapping circles (i.e., the pair of circles in the first diagram were depicted as entirely separate and in the fourth as overlapping almost completely; see Schubert & Otten, 2002, and Tamir & Nadler, 2007).

Following this, the experimenter introduced the second test section, which in fact manipulated the stability of intergroup status relations. Participants were told that this section would assess their ability to deal with specific information about objects in the outside world and would involve a short text followed by some questions. Participants were then given details about the achievements of the outgroup over the past 5 years. In the stable status condition, they learned that the relative performance and overall position of the low-status outgroup had not changed, whereas in the unstable status condition, they learned that the other school had been steadily improving over the past 5 years. Following this, participants were asked to answer several general questions about the section they had just read. The check on the status stability manipulation consisted of ratings of agreement with the statement, "In a few years, there will be no real difference between [*the ingroup*] and [*the outgroup*]," on a 7-point scale ranging from 7 (*strongly agree*) to 1 (*strongly disagree*).

The third section of the study constituted the main measure—the extension of autonomy- or dependency-oriented help to the outgroup. Participants were given a form containing 14 analogy problems. Six of the items on the form were marked to indicate that a student from the other school was having difficulty solving that problem. The students were told that because this phase of the study assessed decision-making behavior and not problem-solving abilities, they need not try to solve the problem that the other student was supposedly working on and that, therefore, the correct answers had been marked next to each question. They were then asked to decide whether to help the outgroup member. To do so, participants were given a separate form containing each of the six items and were asked to indicate for each problem whether they would choose to provide the other student with (a) the full solution to the question (i.e., dependency-oriented help), (b) a hint that would allow the other person to solve the problem on their own (i.e., autonomy-oriented help), or (c) no help at all. It was explained to the participants that their decisions would be presented to the other side as those made by a member of their school. The number of items on which participants chose to provide dependency- or autonomy-oriented help served as the major dependent measure.

Results

Manipulation Checks

Level of categorization. A one-way ANOVA on the perceived overlap between the participants' school and other schools in the Negev region was significant, $F(2, 87) = 33.4$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .43$. Planned comparisons revealed that, as intended, participants in the common identity condition had a higher overlap score ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.57$) than students in the separate identities condition ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 0.74$), $t(89) = 7.5$, $p < .001$. The mean score in the control condition ($M = 3.44$, $SD = 0.66$) was significantly higher than in the separate identities condition ($M = 2.27$, $SD = 0.74$), $t(89) = 6.9$, $p < .001$, but did not significantly differ from the common identity condition ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 0.57$). The absence of a significant difference between the control and the common identity groups may be due to a ceiling effect, as means were at the high end of the 4-point scale.

Status stability. Participants in the unstable status condition expressed stronger agreement that the two schools would be relatively equal in the future ($M = 6.08$, $SD = 1.4$) than participants in the stable status condition ($M = 2.40$, $SD = 1.15$), $F(1, 84) = 179.4$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .67$. The main effect for level of categorization and the Stability × Level of Categorization interaction were not significant.

Help-Giving

We measured help-giving separately by the amount of dependency-oriented and autonomy-oriented help that participants chose to provide.

Dependency-oriented help. A 2 (status stability) × 3 (level of categorization) ANOVA on the amount of dependency-oriented help offered revealed main effects for status stability, $F(1, 86) = 4.92$, $p < .05$, $h^2 = .05$, and level of categorization, $F(2, 86) = 12.59$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .22$. The Status Stability × Level of Categorization interaction was statistically significant, $F(2, 86) = 4.12$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .08$. This interaction is due to the finding that although amount of help did not differ between the three categorization levels under the stable status condition, $F(2, 86) = 1.33$, *ns* (for separate identities, $M = 1.8$, $SD = 1.6$; for commoniIdentity, $M = 1.0$, $SD = 1.19$; and for the control condition, $M = 1.12$, $SD = 1.14$), they did differ in the unstable status condition, $F(2, 86) = 13.29$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .38$. A contrast analysis in the unstable status condition indicated that participants in the separate identities condition gave more dependency-oriented help ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.5$) than participants in the control condition ($M = 1.9$, $SD = 1.9$), $t(46) = 2.7$, $p < .001$, who in turn gave more help than participants in the common identity condition ($M = 0.53$, $SD = 0.9$), $t(46) = 2.5$, $p < .001$.

Autonomy-oriented help. A 2 (stable vs. unstable status) × 3 (separate identities vs. common identity vs. control) ANOVA yielded a main effect for level of categorization, $F(2, 86) = 7.46$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$, and a significant Status Stability × Level of Categorization interaction, $F(2, 86) = 3.59$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .07$. Subsequent analyses indicated that whereas the three level-of-

gategorization groups did not differ in the stable status condition, $F(2, 86) < 1$ (for separate identities, $M = 3.2$, $SD = 2.1$; for common identity, $M = 3.6$, $SD = 1.9$; for the control condition, $M = 3.2$, $SD = 1.55$), help-giving differed between the three groups in the unstable status condition, $F(2, 86) = 12.77$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .37$. An examination of cell means indicated that this difference was due to greater autonomy-oriented help in the common identity condition ($M = 4.66$, $SD = 1.67$) than in the separate identities ($M = 1.86$, $SD = 0.99$) and control ($M = 2.43$, $SD = 1.96$) conditions, $t(46) = 3.86$, $p < .001$. The means in the separate identities and control conditions did not differ significantly from each other, $t(46) < 1$, *ns*.

Finally, we correlated participants' extension of dependency- and autonomy-oriented help with their perception that the difference between their school and the other school would disappear in the foreseeable future, measured by the stability manipulation check. The perception that the status gap would disappear was positively correlated with the extension of dependency-oriented help in the unstable status/separate identities cell ($r = .59$, $p < .001$). Thus, among participants whose high status was most at risk, higher levels of threat were significantly correlated with the extension of dependency-oriented help. None of the other correlations were statistically significant (see Table 2).

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that members of structurally high-status groups thwart threats to their social advantage by extending defensive help. The effects of status instability on defensive helping were dependent on level of self-categorization: Upon learning that status relations were unstable, participants who had been primed to think about the uniqueness of their group gave more dependency-oriented help and less autonomy-oriented help than those who saw both groups as similar, or those in the control condition. The significant correlation in this cell between dependency-oriented help and the perception of a waning ingroup advantage supports the defensive-helping interpretation.

Participants facing status instability who were primed to consider their commonality with the up-and-coming outgroup gave the outgroup more autonomy-oriented help and less dependency-oriented help than those whose group status was unstable but whose common identity was not primed. In effect, these participants declined to marshal defensive help toward enhancing the ingroup's positive distinctiveness or curbing the outgroup's progress toward equality. These findings support and extend the predictions of the IHSR model because they show that although status instability can stir defensive help strategies, those effects can also be mitigated and transcended.

Table 2
Amount of Help Extended to the Outgroup Under the Condition of Unstable Status, by Type of Help and Induced Level of Categorization in Study 3 (N = 92)

	Level of categorization		
Type of help	Separate identity	Common identity	Control
Autonomy oriented	1.86 (0.99)	4.66 (1.67)	2.43 (1.96)
Dependency oriented	3.46 (1.59)	0.53 (0.91)	1.93 (1.94)

Note. Standard deviations appear in parentheses.

General Discussion

The first studies in this research program demonstrate the validity of defensive helping as a social psychological phenomenon: Group members ameliorate a threat to ingroup identity by helping the outgroup that embodies the source of this threat. In the first study, we used ad hoc groups and experimentally induced different levels of ingroup identification, whereas in the second study, we used real groups and assessed existing levels of ingroup identification. The findings from the second and third studies support our conceptualization of the three characteristics of defensive help: It is directed at the source of threat to social identity (Study 2), it is relatively impervious to recipient need (Study 2), and takes a dependency-oriented form (Study 3). This need not imply that all three characteristics must be simultaneously present to qualify help as defensive. Defensive help may accord with any or all of these criteria depending on the options that are at hand.

The joint consideration of the three studies reinforces the generalizability of defensive helping as a social psychological phenomenon. Defensive helping occurs in experimental and real groups, and across different structurally and situationally determined intergroup status conditions. The findings of the third study indicate that in a stratified social environment, a high-status group may guard its relative prestige by providing dependency-oriented help to the outgroup that threatens to destabilize those structural status relations. The first two studies indicate that this also occurs when situational status difference is orchestrated, such as when ingroup members are informed that an outgroup surpasses them on a dimension of relevant comparison. In these studies, members of groups whose equal status was jeopardized worked to deflect this threat by directing help at the threatening source.

The finding that high-status group members who learned that their social advantage was relatively unstable gave the greatest amount of dependency-oriented help to the low-status group (Study 3) is consistent with the predictions of the IHSR model. Notably, such defensive help depended on the helpers' self-categorization. Defensive help was highest when the separate identities of the groups were primed but lowest when perceptions of common group identity were induced.

The findings concerning the effects of self-categorization highlight the malleable nature of status security in the context of intergroup helping. When members of a high-status group categorize the social world into "us" and "them," the insecure status hierarchy imperils the group's advantaged position and precipitates defensive behaviors to protect social advantage. Past research within the social identity perspective has focused on patently injurious social behaviors, such as discrimination and devaluation of the outgroup, as mechanisms for maintaining positive ingroup distinctiveness. Our research suggests that the same outcome can be achieved by using a seemingly normative behavior—helping—when such helping takes a defensive, dependency-oriented form. Furthermore, these findings suggest that when groups' separate identities are salient, high-status groups may use defensive helping as a "velvet glove" to maintain their social advantage (Jackman, 1994). This behavior may be especially characteristic of individ-

uals who score high on the Social Dominance Orientation scale (SDO; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), because high-SDO individuals are more likely to endorse the social hierarchy and to rebuff egalitarian attitudes and policies. In support of this, Halabi et al. (2008) found that high-SDO Israeli Jews offered more dependency-oriented help to members of the Israeli Arab minority than to fellow Israeli Jews in an equivalent experimental situation.

When high-status groups perceive they share an overarching common identity with an outgroup, they may provide the kind of empowering help that outgroups can use as a stepping-stone to greater equality. This may also suggest that when common group identity is salient, low-status, needy parties may be more willing to seek and receive assistance from a high-status outgroup as long as this help takes an autonomy-oriented form. Conversely, if members of disadvantaged groups discern the ulterior intentions of defensive help, they may be unwilling to seek or receive needed help (Halabi et al., 2008; Nadler & Halabi, 2006), thus increasing intergroup tensions. For example, in the post-Oslo cooperation projects between Israelis and Palestinians, the advantaged group (Israelis) often regarded its sharing of knowledge and resources as emblematic of its generosity and goodwill, whereas the disadvantaged group (Palestinians) often experienced these as humiliating reminders of its relative disadvantage (Nadler & Saguy, 2004). The events that unfolded from 2000 onward illustrate the inefficacy of these initiatives.

A real-world example of the dynamic of helping and categorization may be found in cases of international assistance between adversarial parties in the wake of a major natural disaster. An example of this is the humanitarian assistance sent by Greek government ministries to Turkey in the aftermath of the 1999 earthquake in that country. Although in regular times such offers of assistance are likely to have been turned down because of the associated implications of relative inferiority, this was not the case after the 1999 earthquake. Moreover, this assistance led to a thawing of tensions between these two adversarial countries. Viewed through the prism of the present analysis, this example suggests that the trauma of an unexpected natural disaster may elicit the common identity category of "human beings" who are equally imperiled by the forces of nature. This, in turn, allows intergroup helping relations to move beyond competition, status concerns, and inequality to relations of genuine caring by the giver for the welfare and eventual equality of the recipient.

The seemingly opposite behaviors of defensive helping versus discrimination and devaluation of the outgroup are driven by the same underlying motivation to maintain positive ingroup distinctiveness in the face of a threat to ingroup identity. Because the participants in the studies described herein were not offered a choice of helping versus discriminating against the threatening outgroup, the question as to the conditions under which either of these two behavioral routes will be used remains unanswered. To approach this question, we suggest applying the principle of relative cost and benefit. Although social psychological research typically focuses on the use of discrimination and devaluation to achieve positive ingroup distinctiveness (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), such explicit strategies may be impracticable or costly to reputation in the face of prohibitive social norms, and in socially progressive periods may be censured outright (e.g., Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995). When normative pressure forces the pursuit of relative advantage underground, high-status groups may resort to seemingly inoffensive forms of paternalistic dominance (Jackman, 1994; Jackman & Crane, 1986), of which defensive helping is one such strategy.

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