Helping Relations as Status Relations

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Most, if not all, human societies tell us that we should be sensitive to the plight of our fellow human beings and if we fail to respond to others in need, we are likely to incur social costs and be labeled as immoral. This emphasis on the importance of helping in social life has also been reflected in social psychological research. As the talks in this meeting clearly indicate, for almost 50 years social psychological research has been concerned with specifying the conditions under which help is more or less likely to be given, the psychological dynamics that propel this behavior, and the demographic and personality characteristics that are its antecedents (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin & Schroeder, 2005; Dovidio, Pliaivin, Schroeder & Penner, 2006). This research has given less attention to the fact that helping relations are also power relations between a helper who has more knowledge or resources and a recipient who is dependent on his or her help. In today’s talk I propose to focus on this aspect of helping relations and present theory and data on helping relations as power relations.

My colleagues and I have pursued work in this context within the “threat to self-esteem model of seeking and receiving help (Nadler & Fisher, 1986) and the more recent model of “helping relations as status relations” (Nadler, 2002). The two models differ in that the first focuses on interpersonal helping relations and the second on intergroup helping relations but are united in two major respects: (a) both view helping relations as power relations, and (b) emphasize the consequences of social inequality that is implied by helping to the full spectrum of helping relations (i.e., help giving, help seeking and reactions to receiving help) and not only for helping giving. I shall begin the present discussion by addressing the general link between helping and power inequality between helper and recipient, continue to a brief presentation of the threat to the self-esteem model of reactions to help and devote most of the
presentation to more recent research which my colleagues and I have conducted within the model of intergroup helping relations as Status Relations (i.e., IHSR). This model explicates the ways in which groups use helping relations as implicit mechanisms to create, maintain or challenge status relations between them.

(A) Helping and Power: Social Inequality in Helping and the “Threat to Self-Esteem” Model of Reactions to Help

The process of human development is one of a gradual movement from complete reliance on powerful others to self-reliance. This process is often stormy and conflictual (e.g., adolescence) and reaches its conclusion when we become independent and have learned to be proud of our achievements when they are individual achievements. Later in life as we grow frail in body and mind we lament our need to become dependent on more powerful others. In all, self reliance implies strength and dependence on others implies weakness. This finds expression in the positive value that is assigned to independence in various cultures around the globe. The Koran states: “A charitable deed must be done as a duty man owes to man, so that it conveys no idea of the superiority of the giver on the inferiority of the receiver.” In the Jewish prayer book we pray to God not to “make us in need of others’ gifts or loans” and the poet Walt Whitman has captured this sentiment most eloquently by writing that we should be “helping every feeble neighbor seeking help from none” (cited in Nadler & Fisher, 1986). In all, society holds a schizophrenic attitude as far as helping relations are concerned. It tells us to give a helping hand to all who are in need, but warns us about seeking or accepting help when we are those who are in need of help.

The link between helping and power is echoed in research in the social sciences in general and in social psychology in particular. In the context of animal
behavior, research on helping in groups of "babblers" (i.e., a small bird that lives in intricate social systems) notes that helping in the group is uni-directional and downward: The more dominant member in the group displays its advantage by sharing with the lower status member (Zahavi, 1990). This downward helping has been viewed as a private case of the “handicap principle” (Zahavi, 1997) which tells us that individual members advertise their genetic fitness by expanding energy in the short-run in order to gain long-term genetic advantages. In applying this to human altruism, Boone has recently noted that “expenditure of time or energy in altruistic behavior signals the sender’s ability to bear the short-term costs of cooperation…” and therefore results in gains in status (Boone, 2000, p. 12). On the intergroup level Alexis de Toqueville, in his book Democracy in America, written 200 years ago, observed that members of advantaged groups exercise their dominance over low status groups by providing them with assistance (1853/1956), and Marcel Mauss in a classic essay titled "The Gift" described the custom of Potlach, where tribal leaders confer lavish gifts on other tribal leaders to signify their clan’s superiority (1907/1954).

Research in social psychology has also noted the link between helping and status. Van Vugt and his colleagues report empirical evidence showing that helping within the group is motivated by the helper’s desire to obtain status in the group (Van Vugt & De Cremer, 1999; Hardy & Van Vugt, 2006) and Brown & Smart (1991) report that people remedy injuries to their self-esteem by giving help to others. Research on reactions to help and the willingness to seek it indicates that when the receipt of help implies inferiority on ego-central dimensions people in need prefer to continue to suffer hardships rather than seek assistance that poses a threat to their self perceptions as able individuals (Nadler, 1991). Under similar conditions people who
had received help respond negatively to its receipt (Fisher, Nadler & Whitcher-Alagna, 1982).

The view that being dependent on others may imply relative weakness while giving it implies relatively higher status and strength is the underlying conceptual building block of the “threat to self-esteem” model of reactions to help (Nadler & Fisher, 1986). The model begins with the observation that receiving help is a mixed blessing as far as recipient’s self-esteem is concerned. On the one hand, help can constitute a self-supporting experience for the recipient. In addition to the instrumental benefits of allowing the recipient to overcome his or her predicament, it can be a message of caring from the helper. When this is the case, recipients are said to respond favorably to the receipt of aid (i.e., feel good about themselves and have positive perceptions and feelings towards the helper). On the other hand, help can constitute a self-threatening experience for recipients. Receiving help may contain a salient message about the recipient’s lower standing relative to the helper. When this occurs recipients will feel bad about themselves will view the helper unfavorably and work to terminate the self-threatening dependency. The exertion of self-help efforts to regain independence occur when recipients believe that they can regain self-reliance by investing in such efforts. Research within this model indicates that characteristics of the (a) help (e.g., its ego-centrality, Nadler & Fisher, 1986), (b) the recipient (e.g., dispositional self-esteem, Nadler, 1986; 1997), and (c) the helper (e.g., their similarity to the recipient, Nadler & Fisher, 1986) determine the amount of self-threat in aid and the willingness to seek or receive it and the consequences of receiving it.

This body of research reflects a shift from the more common research emphasis on trying to understand who gives help to whom and why to research that seeks to understand the other side of the helping paradigm: The recipients and their
willingness to seek and receive help. Further, this research views helping relations as a complex and multi-faceted social behavior rather than a uniformly positive behavior that needs to be encouraged. Recently, the model of Intergroup Helping Relations as Status Relations (i.e., IHSR, Nadler, 2002; Nadler & Halabi, 2006) has extended this view on helping relations to the analysis of intergroup relations. The model builds on an integration between key concepts from research on helping relations and the social identity perspective (Turner & Reynolds, 2001) and is based to the idea that when social identity is salient people’s behavior is explainable by their group membership and needs to be analyzed with the conceptual tools of theories concerning intergroup relations.

(B) Intergroup Helping as Status Relations (IHSR): The model and supportive research

The model suggests that (a) by giving to the outgroup ingroup members maintain their group’s positive distinctiveness, that (b) the willingness to receive from the outgroup signifies acceptance of the receiving group's lower status and that by (c) the refusal to seek or receive help from the outgroup, the low status group members challenge to existing social inequality. Such reluctance to be dependent on the high status group is an expression of the low status group's motivation for equality with the outgroup. Before proceeding to detail the model and supporting evidence it should be noted that I do not maintain that people give to outgroup members only because they want to assert their superiority and are willing to be dependent on the outgroup only because they accept their group’s relatively lower social standing. We often give to members of other groups because we truly and genuinely care (Sturmer, Snyder, & Omoto, 2006). We often help those of different color or culture because of our common humanity and not in order to ascertain the ingroup’s positive distinctiveness.
Yet, as was the case with interpersonal helping, here too intergroup helping represents a multi-faceted phenomenon. It can be driven by empathy and caring or the desire to maintain dominance and social advantage. A full understanding of intergroup helping relations necessitates attention to both these aspects.

The model suggests that the dynamics of intergroup helping relations as status relations depend on characteristics of the social structure (i.e., security of status relations), the help (i.e., autonomy or dependency orientation of the help), and the individual group member (i.e., ingroup identification) (Nadler, 2002; Nadler & Halabi, 2006). I shall first outline the three layers of the model and then proceed to briefly describe data which support its assertions.

Structural characteristic: Security of intergroup status relations. Social identity theory tells us that secure status relations are viewed as stable and legitimate and insecure relations are perceived as illegitimate and unstable. To make this important distinction clearer we can consider status relations between men and women in past centuries and at present. In the past men's social advantage over women was a secure social phenomenon. The dominance of men over women was viewed as a stable and legitimate part of social life. In more recent years men's position of social advantage became insecure: It is viewed as neither stable nor legitimate social phenomenon. When a status hierarchy is secure neither the high nor the low status group is motivated to change the unequal status quo. When status hierarchy is perceived as insecure members of high status groups are motivated to defend their social advantage and members of low status groups view their disadvantaged position as changeable and will therefore work to change the unequal status-quo (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

How is this reflected in intergroup helping relations? When status relations are secure members of advantaged groups are expected to care for members of the lower
status group and help them whenever they need it. Members of low status groups, on the other hand, are expected to be receptive to the high status group’s help. Under such conditions repeated instances of downward uni-directional flow of assistance is consistent with, and behaviorally solidifies, the unequal status hierarchy. To continue the previous example, in past centuries when status relations between men and women were perceived as secure women were routinely helped by men to confront daily economic challenges. This helped to institutionalize gender inequality. When status relations are perceived as insecure members of high status groups are expected to defend their social advantage by reinforcing the low status group's dependence on them by giving them much assistance even when assistance is not requested. Turning to the low status group, when status relations are insecure dependency on the high status group's help is inconsistent with the motivation for equality and members of low status group are therefore unlikely to seek or receive help from the high status outgroup. Yet, these dynamics depend on the 2nd building block of the model which is the autonomy or dependency oriented nature of help.

Characteristics of the help: Dependency vs. Autonomy oriented help (Nadler, 1997; 1998). Dependency oriented help consists of providing recipients with full solutions to their problem. Recipients of such help are viewed as relatively weak and unable to help themselves. They are viewed by the helper and themselves as chronically dependent on outside sources to overcome their difficulties. Autonomy-oriented help consists of giving recipients assistance which consists of tools with which they can solve the problem on their own. When helpers provide such help they view the needy as able to help themselves. Autonomy-oriented help is unique in circumventing the self-threat that is inherent in dependency. The recipient is being helped but retains self control and large measure of independence. To use a very well-known metaphor,
dependency-oriented help consists of giving the hungry cooked fish while autonomy-oriented help consists of giving them fishing rods and teaching them how to fish.

The merits of autonomy-oriented help have been noted by Maimondes a Jewish physician and philosopher who wrote in the 13th century: “There are eight steps of generosity, one is higher than the other. The highest of them all is when one gives a gift or a loan or makes a partnership with the needy or teaches him a vocation in order to empower him so that he will not need to ask them again…” In our own research we also found evidence for the lesser effectiveness of dependency-oriented style of help. In one study we measured three different behavioral styles of dealing with difficulties amongst high school students: (a) seeking dependency-oriented help (i.e., asking for solutions to the problem), (b) seeking autonomy-oriented help (i.e., asking for instructions on how to solve the problem on one's own) and (c) avoiding the seeking of help. We subsequently correlated these expressed behavioral preferences with students' GPA at the end of the school year and found that higher preferences for dependency-oriented help predicted low GPA at the end of the school year (Harpaz-Gorodeisky & Nadler, 2008).

The way in which group members use helping relations to maintain or challenge intergroup status relations depends on the dependency or autonomy orientation of the help. Since high status groups are motivated to retain their social advantage they are expected to dispense to the low status outgroup dependency oriented rather than autonomy oriented help. Low status groups are expected to welcome dependency oriented help when status relations are viewed as secure. When status relations are perceived as insecure members of low status groups are expected to decline and not seek dependency oriented help from the high status outgroup and
be receptive only to autonomy oriented help which serves as a tool to expedite future independence and equal status.

**Characteristics of individual group members.** The third layer of the model suggests that these relationships will be affected by group members’ individual characteristics. Consistent with much research within the social identity perspective these patterns are likely to be affected by level of ingroup identification (Ellemers, Spears & Doosje, 1999). Second, people with a dispositional need for relatively stratified social environments, such as Social Dominance Orientation (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) or Authoritarianism (Altmeyer, 1982) are more likely than people with more egalitarian tendencies to use helping as a tool to establish social dominance.

Figure 1 summarizes this analysis: When intergroup status relations are secure the high status group is expected to provide dependency oriented help to the low status group whenever it needs it and members of low status groups are expected to be receptive to such help. When status relations are insecure members of high status group will give the low status group dependency-oriented help even when this help is neither requested nor needed. Under these conditions of status insecurity members of low status groups are expected to avoid seeking dependency-oriented help from the high status outgroup and react negatively to its receipt. They will be receptive only to autonomy oriented help. Finally, these patterns are expected to be affected by relevant personal characteristics of group members. I shall proceed to present empirical findings which bear on the validity of this model.
(C) Helping and Status: Empirical Findings

The next sections will present empirical findings which bear on the validity of the view that helping can be a social mechanism to assert the helper's power and the specific predictions of the model. It begins with data which demonstrate that group members respond to a threat to group's identity by giving help to the outgroup which is the source of this threat. Because such help is said to be motivated by group members' motivation to defend against threat to their social identity we have labeled it as defensive helping (Nadler, Harpaz-Gorodeisky & Ben David, 2008). This support for the assertion that helping can be a vehicle to maintain group's positive identity creates the empirical background for the examination of the hypotheses of the IHSR which centers on helping relations between high and low status groups. These studies examined the model's hypothesis that when status relations are insecure members of low status groups are unwilling to seek or receive dependency-oriented help from the high status group. We close this empirical section by describing the results of a recent experiment which indicate that in line with the IHSR model under conditions of status insecurity the high status group maintains its social advantage by giving dependency-oriented to the low status group. Importantly, this experiment has also demonstrated that by induction of a common identity with the low status outgroup the phenomenon of defensive helping (i.e., giving much dependency oriented help to the source of threat) disappears and is replaces by the giving of autonomy-oriented help.

Defensive helping: Giving help to defend against threat to social identity. In the first phase of our research we sought to substantiate the assertion that group members can remedy threat to ingroup identity by giving help to the source of this threat. In the language of social identity theory: Group members achieve positive ingroup distinctiveness by positive means such as helping the outgroup. Consistent
with research within the social identity perspective the motivation for defensive helping should be highest when group members experience threat to social identity and have a high level of ingroup identification. Our aim was to substantiate this phenomenon and by so doing lend empirical support to our assertion that group members can defend against threats to social identity by making the source of threat dependent on their help. My colleague Gal Harpaz-Gorodeisky and I ran two experimental studies that examined this proposition. The first was a minimal group 2 (high vs. low threat to social identity) X 2 (high vs. low ingroup identification) experiment in which participants who had or had not been induced to identify with the ingroup experienced a high or low level of threat to their group identity from an outgroup. The main dependent measure in this experiment was the amount of help that participants gave to the outgroup member. The significant “threat to social identity” X “ingroup identification” interaction, F(1,88) = 4.45, p<.05, indicates that in line with our prediction high identifiers who had experienced a high level of threat to the ingroup’s identity gave the highest amount of help to this source of threat. The interpretation of this finding is that “high identifiers” in the “high threat” condition experienced the highest level of threat to their social identity and was a vehicle to defend against this threat and uphold their positive ingroup distinctiveness.

Although this finding is consistent with expectations it is open to alternative interpretations. One such alternative is that “high identifiers” whose “social identity” had been threatened had experienced more negative affect than their counterparts in the other experimental cells and that they had given much help to remedy their negative mood (e.g., Cialdini, Darby & Vincent, 1973). This interpretation would suggest that the increased helping in the "high identification-high threat" condition represents an individual process of remediating a negative mood rather than an
intergroup behavior aimed to increase the ingroup's positive distinctiveness. To examine this alternative, replicate this finding and extend its external validity, we ran a 2nd experiment using real groups. In this experiment high school students could provide help to a student from another school which threatened participants’ social identity or to a student from another school which did not pose a threat to social identity. Since “defensive helping” is help that is given to the source of threat to social identity we reasoned that if our interpretation of "defensive helping" is valid more help will be given to a member of the outgroup that is the source of threat to social identity than to an outgroup which does not pose such a threat. If, however, increased helping is driven by individual-level processes such as remedying a negative mood higher levels of help should be given by high identifiers who had experienced threat to ingroup identity, regardless of whether the outgroup which is the target of help is or is not the source of this threat, than to high identifiers who had not experienced a threat to identity.

The findings indicate that participants gave significantly more help to an outgroup which had posed a threat to social identity than to an outgroup which had not, or to an outgroup in a no-threat control condition (means were 6.36, 3.63 and 3.5, respectively). This finding corroborates the concept of “defensive helping”. Further, consistent with the findings of the first experiment defensive helping characterized helping behavior of high ingroup identifiers. Finally, the findings indicate that defensive help is given relatively irrespective of the recipient actual state of need. High identifiers in the "outgroup-source of threat" condition provided help on difficult problems and easily soluble problems. Participants in the other cells gave help according to need. They helped more on difficult than easy problems.
Beyond ingroup members' level of ingroup identification research indicates that group members' level of Social Dominance Orientation (SDO, Sidanius & Pratto, 1999) also moderates the phenomenon of defensive helping. Since members of high status groups who are high on SDO are more likely to be threatened by threats to their group's status that are those characterized as low on SDO they are more to engage in defensive helping. This hypothesis was supported by Halabi, Dovidio & Nadler (in press). Their study focused on “defensive helping” of the high status group within the context of Israeli society. It found that high SDO Israeli-Jews gave Israeli-Arabs (i.e., high and low status groups in the Israeli society, respectively) more dependency-oriented help than did low SDO participants. This was not the case with autonomy-oriented help. This finding indicates that individuals who are motivated to uphold their high group’s status in a stratified social setting do so by giving such dependency-oriented help to the low status group.

Taken together these experiments demonstrate the validity of the concept of “defensive helping” and are an important empirical corroboration of the link between helping and status. This link is important also because social identity research has considered only negative and injurious means (e.g., discrimination) that group members use to cope with threats to social identity. These findings set the stage for the empirical examination of the predictions of the IHSR which suggests that this, and related, phenomena depend on the perceived security of status relations and the autonomy or dependency-oriented nature of help. In the present talk I shall address myself to two major predictions. The first is that members of disadvantaged groups will show reluctance to seek or receive help from the high status group when status relations are perceived as insecure and help is dependency-oriented. The second is that when status relations are insecure the advantaged position of high status groups is
threatened and its members will defend the ingroup's high status by giving much 
dependency oriented help to the low status group.

**Receptivity of low status group members to help: Effects of perceived stability of status relations and autonomy-dependency nature of help.** To examine the 
receptivity of the low status group members to help from the high status group under 
conditions of secure and insecure status relations, we had first conducted a minimal group experiment that was followed by studies using real groups. Our main prediction 
was that because depending on the high status group when status relations are 
unstable is inconsistent with the low status group members’ motivation for greater equity with the high status group and the receipt of help under these conditions will threaten group members’ social identity. This will lead to characteristic reactions such as devaluation and discrimination against the high status helper. We obtained support for this prediction in a 2 (help-no help) X 2(stable-unstable status) minimal group experiment which found that members of low status groups who had been induced to 
view status relations with the high status group as unstable and later received help from that outgroup experienced the highest level of threat to their social identity and exhibited highest level of discrimination against it (Nadler & Halabi, 2006, 
experiment 1).

A second experiment examined the same hypothesis with real groups. In this experiment Israeli-Arabs, who represent the low status group in Israeli society 
received help from an Israeli-Arab or Israeli-Jew to complete a scholastic task. Prior to that, half of the participants had received information that the status differences between Israelis and Arabs in Israel are narrowing in the last decade. The other half had been informed that the status differences between the two groups have remained unchanged. This represented the unstable and sable status relations conditions,
respectively. The results supported our prediction. Arab participants who had been
told that their group is making headway in closing the gap with the higher status
Israeli Jews responded most negatively to help from an Israeli Jew. They had the
lowest affect scores (mean is 4.3, other 3 means ranged between 5.3 and 5.5), highest
ingroup favoritism score (mean is 554, other means ranged between 200 and 295) and
and devalued the outgroup the most (mean is 2.7 other means ranged between 4.3 and
4.5). Other experiments in this research program indicate that in line with the model's
prediction this phenomenon of negative reactions to receiving help from the high
status outgroup under conditions of status instability was especially true for members
of low status groups who were characterized as high identifiers.

In another experiment we examined the model’s predictions that when status
relations are perceived as unstable members of low status groups will be most
reluctant to seek needed help from a member of the outgroup, and that this reluctance
will be more characteristic of high ingroup identifiers and occur only when help is
dependency oriented. This experiment is particularly important because it examines
the interaction between variables that represent the three conceptual layers in the
IHSR model: The structural level of security of status relations (i.e., stability of status
relations), the level of characteristic of the help (i.e., autonomy or dependency
oriented) and the level of individual group member's characteristics (i.e., ingroup
identification). To test this prediction we ran an experiment in which high school
students, who had or had not been induced to identify with their school, could seek
autonomy or dependency oriented help from a member of another school which was
higher in its academic status than their school. Further, half of the participants were
under the impression that the scholastic differences between the two schools is stable
over the years, and the other half thought that these differences are consistently
narrowing. The results fully support our predictions. Highest avoidance of help seeking occurred when high identifiers had perceived status relations as unstable. This reluctance to seek help originates from differences on the index of willingness to seek dependency oriented help. Specifically, while no participant in the 'unstable status-high identification' cell was willing to seek dependency-oriented help from the high status group, participants in the other 3 cells showed a medium and similar willingness to seek dependency oriented help from members of the high status group.

There were no differences in help seeking when help was autonomy oriented.

**Giving Dependency and Autonomy Oriented help by the high status group: Effects of status stability and self categorization.** In a final part of this section I want to describe a recent experiment which supports the model’s hypothesis that high status group members give much dependency-oriented help to the low status group when the status relations between the groups is unstable. This increase in defensive helping is not expected to occur with autonomy-oriented help. Another purpose was to study the role of self-categorization processes as mechanisms that can be employed to reduce defensive helping. Consistent with theoretical and empirical work within the common ingroup identity model (CIIM) by Gaertner and Dovidio (2000) inclusion of the low status group which threatens the high status group's advantaged position in a larger common group should reduce the motivation of the high status group to maintain its advantaged position by defensive helping directed at the low status group.

We conducted a field experiment with real groups to explore these hypotheses. We had set up a computer interaction between Israeli high school students in a prestigious high school in the Negev region of the country (i.e., high status group) and a member of a high school from the same region with substantially lower academic status (i.e., low status group). Participants belonged to the high status school. Half of
them received information that the status differences with the lower status outgroup is narrowing and the other half received the information that it stayed unchanged over the last 5 years. This constituted the manipulation of perceived status instability and stability, respectively. Further, one third of the participants were exposed to a manipulation which highlighted the uniqueness of their school as compared to other schools in the Negev region (i.e., salient ingroup identity condition) another third was exposed to information that stressed the uniqueness of schools in the Negev region as compared to other schools in the country (i.e., common ingroup identity condition). Since both the ingroup and the outgroup were situated in the Negev, this manipulation induced a common ingroup identity with the outgroup. The last third were exposed to neutral information and made up the control condition. Participants later interacted with a student from the low status outgroup who was said to experience difficulties in solving mathematical problems and they could provide them with dependency or autonomy oriented help. The amount of autonomy and dependency oriented help which was given to the outgroup member served as the main dependent measure.

A 2(stable-unstable status) x 3 (ingroup identity-common identity – control) interaction, F(2,6) = 4.92, p<.05 indicates that in line with our predictions highest amount of dependency-oriented help was given to the outgroup when status relations had been described as unstable and ingroup identity had been made salient. Importantly, least amount of dependency-oriented help was given to the outgroup when status relations had been described as unstable and common group identity had been induced. There were no differences between the three identity conditions in the stable status condition. A mirror image empirical picture was observed for the measure of autonomy-oriented help. A 2x3 interaction, F(2,86) = 3.59, p<.05, indicates that in the unstable status condition most autonomy-oriented help was given
to the outgroup when it had been perceived as sharing a common identity with the ingroup. Lowest amount of autonomy-oriented help was given to the outgroup in the condition when the identity of the ingroup had been made salient. No differences between the 3 identity groups were observed in the stable status condition.

(D) Summary and Conclusions

The findings support the view that intergroup helping relations represent social mechanisms through which group members maintain or challenge existing status hierarchies. Regarding the giving of help the phenomenon of "defensive helping" indicates that group members remedy threats to the ingroup by giving help to the outgroup that is the source of this threat. Moreover, the finding that such help is given on problems that are perceived as difficult and easy suggests that such helping constitutes the helper's wish to assert his or superior social position rather than a response to the recipient's difficulties. This research has also supported the major assertions of the IHSR model of intergroup helping. In the face of information that status relations are unstable high status groups work to maintain their group's advantage by giving high amount of dependency oriented help to the low status group and low status groups avoid seeking such help and respond negatively to its receipt. Finally, self categorization processes play an important role in this context. When status relations are unstable and the high and low status groups share a common ingroup identity the patterns of help giving change dramatically. Under these conditions members of the high status group adopt a helping pattern that aims to promote the recipient's future self reliance by giving them autonomy-oriented help. The velvet glove which humiliates the recipient through dependency-oriented help changes into helping the recipient to climb the ladder towards future self-reliance.
Security of Status Relations: The conceptual linking pin between the threat to self-esteem model and the IHSR. This empirical picture emphasizes the fact that helping relations are multi-causal and multi-faceted phenomenon. It reminds us that although helping is often driven by genuine caring for the recipient and is an expression of the nobler side of social behavior it can also be an expression of inequality in social relations. Both our early work on the threat to self-esteem in help and the more recent work within the IHSR model tell the same story. In interpersonal and intergroup interactions helping can humiliate the recipient or support and empower them. The concept of "security of status relations" is central in both levels of analysis. As such it represents a conceptual linking pin between the two models of helping relations. Although this concept was developed within the context of research on intergroup relations it is also applicable to the analysis of interpersonal helping relations. On both levels of analysis, when recipients' lower social position (e.g., low status within the group, disadvantaged position within society) is perceived as both legitimate and stable dependency is viewed as consistent with their social standing and expectations of themselves. Under these conditions being helped is not self-threatening. Dependency on more powerful others conforms to the actor's and others' expectations. Helping relationships between parents and their children, a new employee and their experienced manager or between teacher and student represent such dependency relationships. Social inequality and the ensuing dependency of the weaker party on the strong one are socially consensual.

The situation is different if status differences between two individuals or two groups are perceived by the recipient as illegitimate and/or unstable. Under these conditions recipients expect equality with the other and being helped by them is inconsistent with these expectations and therefore self-threatening. Our early research
which indicates that people find reliance on similar others who serve as a frame of reference for self-judgments to be self-threatening corroborates this line of reasoning (Nadler, Fisher & Ben Itzhak, 1983). Further, the finding that high self-esteem individuals are more threatened by dependency than are low self-esteem people is also consistent with this conception (Nadler, 1986; 1997). In fact, relative to the low self-esteem person the high self-esteem individual is more likely to view dependency on others as unstable and illegitimate as far as his or her view of him or herself is concerned. This emphasis on security of status relations in interpersonal and intergroup relations integrates the "threat to self-esteem" and the IHSR models of helping relations. Both models tell us that when status relations are secure dependency of the weak on the strong is consistent with expectations and is therefore a source of self support for the recipient. When these hierarchical relations are insecure dependency is inconsistent with self-expectations and dependency is threatening to self esteem. By the same token, dependency on another group when status relations are perceived as insecure is threatening to social identity. In both cases individuals and group members are likely to shy away from seeking help and respond negatively to its receipt.

Importantly, both models tell us that the degree of threat to self esteem or social identity that is inherent in receiving help shapes recipient's behavioral responses. If this level of threat is high people, whether categorized as individuals or group members, will shy away from seeking help. In a case where threatening help had been given the threat to self esteem model of reactions to help asserts that if recipients also believe that they can change the situation of uneasy dependency and attain independence they will do so by investing in self help efforts. Thus, self threatening help, while a source of discomfort in the short term, encourages long term
independence. The same is expected to hold for intergroup helping relations. Under conditions of status insecurity members of low status groups who had received help are expected to invest efforts to terminate their group's dependency on the high status outgroup. From this perspective help that is given on the background of unsecure low status (i.e., perceptions that inferiority is illegitimate and/or unstable) is a precursor of change towards future independent coping on the interpersonal and intergroup levels.

The meaning of help: Transient or chronic dependency. The receipt of help can denote transient or chronic recipient dependency. Some of the characteristics of help which had been addressed by our research address this distinction. Dependency oriented help is associated with a message of chronic dependency. Such help is predicated on the belief that the recipient is not "strong" enough to contribute to the solution of the problem (Brickman, Rabinowitz, Karuza, Coates, Cohn & Kidder, 1982). Autonomy-oriented help is linked with the view that recipient's dependency is transient and regards him or her as able to contribute to the solution of the problem. Another characteristic of help which is linked with chronic dependency is its "assumptive nature" (Schneider, Major, Luthanen & Crocker, 1996). Assumptive help is given without waiting for the recipient to ask for it and implies the helper's assumption that the recipient cannot solve the problem on their own and needs help. Such help is more likely to imply chronic dependency than one which is given in response to the recipient's request. It should be noted that in our research helping was assumptive. This raises the possibility that under similar conditions to the ones we have studied receiving help would not have been a source of threat to self-esteem or social identity had it been given in response to the recipient's request. A final characteristic of help which is related to its implications for chronic or transient dependency is the ease or difficulty of the task on which it is given. When help is
given assumptively on easy problems it implies more chronic dependency than when it is given only on difficult problems that many are expected to have difficulty with.

To recapitulate dependency-oriented assumptive help on relatively easy problems conveys a message of chronic dependency. On the interpersonal and intergroup levels, such help is likely to characterize assistance that it motivated by the helper's wish to maintain their advantaged position relative to the recipient. Receptivity to such help signals the recipients' acceptance of the fact that this dependence is part of a secure status hierarchy in which they are socially inferior. The unwillingness to seek or receive such help challenges the existing inequality and signals recipients' desire for greater equality and their belief that such a desire is realizable.

I want to conclude by addressing two general issues that this approach to helping relations as power relations raises: The first is the answer to the question: What is a helpful act? The answer may depend on whether we adopt the recipient or the helper's perspective. The second concerns the implications of this approach to the understanding of social change on the interpersonal and intergroup levels. Regarding the first issue of what constitutes help, the conditions under which receiving help is linked to chronic dependency or to efforts to regain equality are important for specifying the link between being helped and future independent coping. Further this empirical and theoretical discussion raises the question of what is helpful behavior. Is help which is driven by the helper's caring and empathy but encourages long term dependency helpful? From the helper's perspective it is, but from the recipient's perspective it is not. Beyond the conceptual implications of this research and theory for the understanding of interpersonal and intergroup helping it has important applied implications. One such implication is for the understanding of processes of social
change. It suggests that during times of change high status groups, and individuals, will exert efforts to maintain their advantaged position by giving help which implies chronic dependency while the low status recipient is likely to view such actions suspiciously and reject the help. This occurs between groups during times of large scale social changes (e.g., helping between advantaged and disadvantaged racial/gender groups during a transition from a rigidly stratified to a more open and equal social system) or between individuals (e.g., during times of organizational change where an employee expects greater equality with his or her supervisor). In these and similar instances tensions around helping relations may anticipate social change and be associated with them once they had taken place.
References


Nadler, A., Fisher, J.D., Ben - Itzhak, S., (1983). With a little help from my friend:


**Behavior Stability of Power Relations Between Groups**

**Motivation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-Status Group</th>
<th>Low-Status Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High motivation to reassert power and diffuse threat to social dominance</td>
<td>High motivation to challenge existing hierarchy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Behavior**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-Status Group</th>
<th>Low-Status Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased effort to provide dependency-oriented help to low-status outgroup</td>
<td>No help-seeking from high-status outgroup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unwillingness to receive assumptive help from high-status outgroup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Greater willingness to seek and receive autonomy-oriented help</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**High Perceived Legitimacy and Stability of Differential Power**

**Motivation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-Status Group</th>
<th>Low-Status Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Medium to low motivation of the high-status group to assert power</td>
<td>Low motivation to challenge existing hierarchy. Dependency on the high-status group is relatively non-threatening to social identity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Behavior**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High-Status Group</th>
<th>Low-Status Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High level of giving dependency-oriented help to low-status outgroup</td>
<td>High level of seeking dependency-oriented help from high-status outgroup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willingness to receive dependency-oriented help from high-status outgroup</td>
<td>Willingness to receive dependency-oriented help from high-status outgroup</td>
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</tbody>
</table>