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Restoring identity through outgroup helping: Beliefs about international aid in response to the December 2004 tsunami

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Abstract

In this paper, the December 2004 tsunami tragedy was used as a background to investigate beliefs about intergroup helping. The general aim of the research was to test the proposal that helping can be used to reaffirm a threatened social identity. Two experiments conducted with Dutch participants (N = 78 and N = 73) tested the hypothesis that a threatened Dutch national identity would result in stronger preferences for help to the victims of the tsunami, but only in a domain that is positively and distinctly related to that national identity (i.e. water management). Results from both studies confirmed this hypothesis. Study 2 also showed a reversal of this effect in a domain negatively related to that identity. Moreover, perceived identity threat in Study 2 reduced over time in the high threat condition but not in the low threat condition, and this reduction was positively associated with the endorsement of water management help. Also, as predicted, in both studies a threatened national identity resulted in stronger beliefs that Dutch relief organisations should stay in control over their aid. Copyright © 2006 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

On 26th December 2004, an earthquake followed by a tsunami impacted on wide areas of Southeast Asia. The human and economic impact was devastating. It is estimated that more than 200,000 people in 13 different countries died as a result of this disaster, and that it will take more than 9 billion US dollars to rebuild the area (BBC News, 26 June 2005). The tragedy triggered a huge international effort to provide immediate aid and help with the area's reconstruction. In the present paper, the December 2004 tsunami constitutes a background for the investigation of beliefs about Dutch aid to the victims of the tsunami. Two studies tested the notion that a threatened national identity promotes intergroup helping in a domain that is positively and distinctly related to that identity.

The act of helping is a way to share information and expertise, it allows us to distribute wealth, and it is a tool by which we take care of the sick, the elderly, the infants, and the mentally or physically disabled. We often do this, as a society, out of genuine empathic concern for others (Batson, 1994), sometimes augmented by reciprocity beliefs (Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, & Rhoades,

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2001; van Vugt, Roberts, & Hardy, in press). An important factor is the perception that we share a meaningful group membership with those we aim to help. Indeed, research has shown that people are more likely to help others with whom they share a connectedness by means of a common group membership (Dovidio et al., 1997; Levine, Prosser, Evans, & Reicher, 2005). However, one could argue that the very nature of helping implies that it most frequently occurs between people who do *not* share the same group membership. It is typically the wealthy who help the poor, and the educated who share their knowledge with the uneducated. Moreover, since this distinction between helper and recipient is often the primary reason for the exchange of help, at the time of that helping interaction the ingroup–outgroup distinction will automatically be salient. Therefore, in line with the social identity approach (Haslam, 2004; Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), helping that occurs between members of different groups should be studied from an intergroup perspective.

Only recently have researchers begun to investigate helping from an intergroup perspective, resulting in important insights into the differential motives for helping ingroup and outgroup members. Some studies have provided evidence for a general ingroup favouring bias in helping (e.g. Dovidio et al., 1997; Gaertner, Dovidio, & Johnson, 1982; Levine, Cassidy, Brazier, & Reicher, 2002; Levine et al., 2005; Stürmer, Snyder, & Omoto, 2005, Study 1). The reasons for this bias may vary.[1] For example, people may feel threatened by the different norms and values of the target outgroup, which could inhibit their motivation to help members of that group (Jackson & Esses, 1997). People could also feel less responsible for helping outgroup members compared to ingroup members, as for example has been observed in studies on bystander intervention (Levine et al., 2005). While several motives may be identified for why people would favour the ingroup in helping, it should also be recognized that many studies have failed to find such a bias (e.g. Simon, Stürmer, & Steffens, 2000), or even report evidence of outgroup favouritism in helping (e.g. Dovidio & Gaertner, 1981). It is therefore important to gain more insight into the motives underlying outgroup helping.

Nadler (2002) presented a model of intergroup helping that is extremely helpful in understanding under what conditions people will be motivated to help the outgroup. Nadler assumes an explicitly intergroup perspective and argues that people sometimes help members of other groups because it is good for their own group. In other words, outgroup helping can be conceived of as an ingroup-serving motivation. The underlying idea is that the provision of help is typically associated with a high status position (e.g. Nadler, Ellis, & Bar, 2003)—to be viewed as a provider of help boosts the perceived value of one's group (see also Hardy & van Vugt, in press, for a similar idea at the interpersonal level).

In Nadler's (2002) model, an important distinction is made between dependency-oriented help and autonomy-oriented help. Dependency-oriented help is defined as 'providing the recipients with the full solution to the problem', whereas autonomy-oriented help is defined as 'providing the recipients with the tools to solve their problems on their own' (Nadler, 2002, p. 491). Dependency-oriented help implies that the help-giver remains in control, whereas control shifts (to some extent) to the recipient of help in the case of autonomy oriented help. Thus, compared to autonomy-oriented help, dependency-oriented help implies a continuation of the dependent role of the aid-recipient on the aid-giver.

The distinction between autonomy and dependency-oriented help signifies that being able to provide help not only implies that one is valued, but also that one is needed. Strong dependency relations often shape our identity to the point where part of who we are is defined by the fact that others depend on us—for example, in the case of parents or nurses. As helping, and in particular dependency-oriented helping, implies a salient and continued dependency relationship between the aid-recipient and the aid-giver, helping can serve as a tool to provide meaning to one's existence. To take this a step further, when the meaningfulness of one's existence is questioned, people could use helping to restore it. Research of what has been labelled the 'Scrooge effect' (Jonas, Schimel, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2002)

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[1]A complete discussion of the factors underlying ingroup favouritism in helping is beyond the scope of the present paper.

provides some preliminary evidence of the identity-reaffirming function of helping. Jonas, Schimel, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski (2002) confronted participants with their own mortality. Participants subsequently reported more favourable attitudes towards what they perceived as important charities (Study 1), and contributed more to a charity supporting an ingroup cause (Study 2). These results suggest that participants attempted to restore the meaningfulness of their existence through helping.

The question arises as to whether a threat to the existence of an important ingroup will result in a tendency to restore that ingroup identity through outgroup helping.[2] In their overview of different sources of social identity threat, Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, and Doosje (1999) argued that groups can be threatened in their existence by an impending (real or imaginary) merger of groups, which can trigger high identifying group members to preserve or restore their social identity, for example through discrimination (Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004; van Leeuwen, van Knippenberg, & Ellemers, 2003).

In the present research, threat to an important group identity was manipulated by emphasising or de-emphasising the insecure future of the Dutch culture and identity within the European Union.[3] With the growing importance of the EU as a political and economical unit, and the decreasing power of the individual EU member states, fears exist regarding the future of particularly the smaller and less significant member states. These fears certainly existed in the Netherlands at the time of this study. Analysts suggested that the 62% Dutch voters who voted against the European constitution in a referendum held on 1st June 2005 did so in part to express their concerns about the future of the Netherlands within the larger EU (European Commission, 2005). Stressing the insignificant position and insecure future of the Netherlands within the EU should enhance the salience of these existential fears.

If the Dutch national identity is perceived to be under threat, would Dutch respondents in general be more in favour of helping the victims of the December 2004 tsunami? In a situation where many countries are involved in similar aid-efforts, a general kind of aid that does not distinguish the Netherlands from other aid-giving countries might not be sufficient. Instead, Dutch respondents might seek out those kinds of help that enable them to restore the positive distinctiveness of their threatened identity. To this end, they should focus on help in domains that are uniquely and positively related to the Dutch national identity. One such domain is that of water management. With approximately one-third of the country lying below sea level, the Dutch have a long history of fighting and managing water. As a result, the Netherlands have built a strong international reputation as being experts in water management, which includes a high level of expertise in the construction of advanced flood protection systems and storm surge barriers. Another domain that is uniquely related to the Dutch identity is the Dutch royal family. In a large-scale tragedy like the December 2004 tsunami, it would be appropriate for a delegation of one or more members of the Dutch royal family to travel to the tsunami area to provide moral and political support. Thus, when their national identity was perceived to be under threat, Dutch respondents were expected to be more in favour of providing help in the water management domain, and more in favour of delegating a member of the Dutch royal family to the affected area than when identity threat was low (*Hypothesis 1*).

In addition to help in identity-related domains, beliefs were assessed about the nature of help. *Coordination and control* refers to the belief that the Dutch government and Dutch relief organisations should play a coordinating and controlling role when providing aid, because it is believed that the

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[2]For the act of helping to restore a threatened identity, the behaviour should be directed towards a target at the same level of inclusiveness. Thus, a threatened personal identity may increase the helping of other individuals, including other ingroup members (c.f. Jonas et al., 2002), but a threatened group identity could only be restored (in principal) through the helping of (members of) other groups.

[3]It is important to note that the source of this threat (EU) is not identitical to target of helping in this study (i.e. the areas in South East Asia that were affected by the tsunami). In that sense, the present study differs from the research conducted by Jackson and Esses (1997), which showed that people are less willing to help outgroups who are perceived as presenting a direct threat to the norms and values of the ingroup.

recipients of help are unable to use the tools that are handed to them in an appropriate and successful manner. Conversely, *autonomy* refers to the belief that coordination and control should lie in the hands of the recipients of help. Together, these constructs reflect the underlying belief structures of what Nadler (2002) labelled dependency-oriented help, and autonomy-oriented help, respectively. It was predicted that under conditions of high threat to the Dutch national identity, respondents would be more in support of the Netherlands occupying a coordinating and controlling role when providing relief than would respondents in the low identity threat condition (*Hypothesis 2*). As the struggle for identity affirmation appears to take place primarily in terms of giving more or less dependency-oriented help (see Nadler & Halabi, 2005), no effects were predicted for beliefs about autonomy.

STUDY 1

The first study was conducted 5 weeks after the tsunami of 26th December 2004, and was designed to test Hypotheses 1 and 2. Hypothesis 1 assumes that water management is an area of distinct Dutch expertise. Data from a separate study ($N = 112$) confirmed this assumption. When asked on a 7-point scale to what extent the Netherlands is an expert in the area of water management, Dutch students strongly indicated that this was indeed the case ($M = 6.10$). In comparison, the expertise of France in this domain was rated much lower ($M = 3.67$; $t(111) = -16.03$, $p < 0.001$). Help in the area of water management can thus be viewed as a type of help that is distinctly and positively related to Dutch culture and identity.

Method

Eighty-eight students from the Free University Amsterdam (33 men and 45 women, $M_{age} = 21$, $SD = 2.95$) were randomly assigned to one of two experimental conditions: Low threat or high threat. The participants were seated in separate cubicles in front of a computer, which was used to provide instructions and questions, and to register the answers.

The experiment was introduced as two separate, unrelated studies. In the first study, participants were presented with an internet article about the position of the Netherlands within the EU. In the *low threat condition*, the article stressed that the position of the Netherlands within the EU was secure. The country was described as an important and respected EU member, with a highly successful period of presidency of the EU in 2004. The article emphasised that even with the growing importance of the overarching EU, the Dutch identity will not be threatened because its culture and identity are clearly reflected in more general European values. In the *high threat condition*, the article stressed the opposite, i.e. that the Dutch identity was under threat. The article described the Netherlands as a country that receives little respect from other EU member states, and as a country that was unable to achieve anything important during its presidency in 2004. It further stressed that, because of its insignificance as an EU member, the Netherlands will ultimately assimilate and disappear within the larger context of the EU.

After reading the article, participants were presented with a series of questions about the content of the article (to support the cover story that this was a separate study of the position of the Netherlands within the EU), and a measure of *perceived threat* (To what extent do you think that the Dutch culture will disappear in the future? 1 = not at all, 7 = very much). Participants were then told that the first study had ended, and they were directed to another computer programme for the second study.

The second part was introduced as a study of beliefs about aid to the victims of the December 2004 tsunami. Participants were asked to indicate on 7-point scales (1 = not at all, 7 = very much) to what extent they agreed with a number of propositions about various forms of aid to the tsunami area. *Water management help* was measured with three items (e.g. 'The Netherlands could help with making constructions such as dikes that will be able to stop future tsunami's', $\alpha = 0.65$). *Royal representation* was measured with one item ('Queen Beatrix should travel to the involved areas to provide moral support to the local population'). *Beliefs about coordination and control* were measured with four items (e.g. 'If the Netherlands will send financial support, they should also send coordinators to insure that the money is well spent'; $\alpha = 0.63$). *Beliefs about autonomy* were measured with three items (e.g. 'It is very important that control of the reconstruction lies in the hands of the local authorities in the areas devastated by the tsunami'; $\alpha = 0.71$).

Results and Discussion

The manipulation check and dependent variables were analysed in one-way analyses of variance. An overview of the results is presented in Table 1.

The threat manipulation was successful: Participants in the high threat condition reported a stronger belief that the Dutch culture would disappear in the future than participants in the low threat condition. As predicted, participants in the high threat condition more strongly favoured help in the water management domain than participants in the low threat condition. Participants in the high threat condition were also more in support of delegating the Dutch Queen Beatrix to the tsunami areas to provide moral support. In addition, participants in the high threat condition expressed stronger beliefs that the Netherlands should occupy a coordinating and controlling role when sending aid to the tsunami areas than participants in the low threat condition. No difference between conditions was found in their beliefs about autonomy.

These results support both hypotheses: A threat to the existence of the group that constitutes the basis for one's national identity resulted in stronger preferences for help in domains that are uniquely related to the Dutch national identity, as well as a stronger belief that the Netherlands should coordinate and keep control over the help.

Table 1. Perceived identity threat, helping, and beliefs about the nature of help, Study 1

	Low Threat M (SD)	High Threat M (SD)	$F(1, 76)$	part. η^2
Perceived identity threat	3.51 (1.49)	4.40 (1.60)	6.28*	0.08
Identity-related help				
Water management help	4.54 (1.18)	5.08 (1.13)	4.23*	0.05
Royal representation	2.20 (1.34)	3.26 (1.80)	8.82**	0.10
Beliefs about the nature of help				
Coordination & control	4.38 (0.92)	4.84 (.99)	4.40*	0.05
Autonomy	4.08 (1.04)	4.06 (1.50)	0.01[n.s.]	0.00

Note: *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$.
[n.s.] = not significant.

STUDY 2

Study 1 showed that, following a threat to their national identity, Dutch respondents more strongly endorsed help in domains that are uniquely related to the Dutch identity than respondents who did not feel that their national identity was threatened. However, as this study only included identity-relevant measures, it was unable to investigate if, and to what extent, the effects of identity threat are limited to identity-relevant domains. Study 2, therefore, also investigated beliefs about helping in domains that are not uniquely related to the Dutch national identity. If the stronger endorsement of help in the high identity threat condition occurs because respondents want to restore the positive distinctiveness of their identity, as theorised, then the effect of a threatened national identity should be limited to the endorsement of help in a domain that is positively and uniquely related to that identity (i.e. water management), and not occur in domains that are not unique to that identity (i.e. construction work and communication technology; *Hypothesis 3*).

Moreover, a threat to the national identity should lower the endorsement of a type of help that is negatively related to the Dutch national identity (*Hypothesis 4*). In order to test this last hypothesis, beliefs were measured about Dutch aid to the people in the Indonesian province Aceh, at the same time as making an explicit appeal to collective responsibility stemming from the Dutch colonial history in Indonesia. Just as Dutch expertise in the area of water management can be considered a part of the Dutch national pride, the Dutch colonial history in Indonesia is generally considered to be part of their collective national guilt (Doosje, Branscombe, Spears, & Manstead, 1998). If people wish to restore the positive distinctiveness of their threatened national identity, they would be less inclined to agree with the notion that their colonial history provides them with an obligation to help the victims in Aceh.

A final aim of this study was to test the relationship between supporting water management help and a reduction in perceived identity threat. If helping in a domain that is positively associated with the Dutch national identity is used to secure that identity in a situation where it has been threatened, then following the endorsement of that particular kind of help, perceived threat to the national identity should be reduced (*Hypothesis 5*). Perceived threat to the national identity was therefore measured twice: Once before the helping measures, and again directly following the helping measures.

Method

This second study was conducted in March 2005, 11 weeks after the tsunami. The design was the same as that of the previous study and consisted of two experimental conditions: Low threat versus high threat. Seventy-three students from the Free University Amsterdam participated (27 men and 46 women, $M_{age} = 21$, $SD = 3.04$).

The procedure of Study 2 was similar to Study 1, with a few exceptions. Perceived threat was measured twice: After the manipulation of threat (Time 1), and after the helping measures at the end of the study (Time 2). To create a more reliable measure, it was measured with fout items, instead of the single item measure used in Study 1 ('To what extent do you think the Dutch culture will disappear in the future?', 'To what extent do you think the Netherlands is facing an insecure future?', 'To what extent do you fear that the Netherlands cannot compete with superpowers such as Germany or France?', and 'To what extent do you think the Netherlands is respected by other EU member states?' (this last item was reverse coded); Time 1 $\alpha = 0.64$; Time 2 $\alpha = 0.69$).

In the second part of the study, participants were asked to indicate on 7-point scales ($1 =$ not at all, $7 =$ very much) to what extent they agreed with a number of propositions regarding aid to the tsunami areas. *Water management help* was measured with three items (e.g. 'The Dutch expertise in the area of

water management could be very useful in the Dutch aid towards the tsunami areas; $\alpha = 0.86$). *Royal representation* was measured with one item ('Queen Beatrix should travel to the involved areas to provide moral support to the local population'). *Help to Aceh* was also measured with one item ('Given the colonial history, it would be appropriate if the Netherlands would at least try to help the people in Aceh').

In addition to these identity-related helping measures, three items were included to assess the endorsement of help in domains that are not specifically related to the Dutch national identity. One item measured help in the domain of *construction work* ('It would be a good idea for the Netherlands to send professional builders to help with the reconstruction'). Two items measured help in the domain of *communication technology* ('It would be a good idea for the Netherlands to send experts in the area of mobile phone technology to restore the communication networks' and 'It would be a good idea for the Netherlands to send computers and internet experts to get the devastated areas online again as soon as possible'). Because these last two items correlated highly ($r = 0.70$), they were averaged into one scale.

Beliefs about coordination and control were measured with five items (e.g. 'It is important that leadership over the reconstruction lies in the hands of the countries that provided the financial support'; $\alpha = 0.76$). Finally, *beliefs about autonomy* were measured with three items (e.g. 'It is very important that control of the reconstruction lies in the hands of the local authorities in the areas devastated by the tsunami'; $\alpha = 0.64$).

Results and Discussion

Table 2 presents an overview of the analyses of the manipulation check and dependent variables. The threat manipulation was again successful: Participants in the high threat condition reported more perceived threat than participants in the low threat condition.

As predicted in Hypothesis 1, participants in the high threat condition more strongly endorsed help in the water management domain than participants in the low threat condition. Contrary to the first study, no effect was found for the belief that the Dutch queen should travel to the tsunami-devastated

Table 2. Perceived identity threat, helping, and beliefs about the nature of help, Study 2

	Low threat M (SD)	High threat M (SD)	$F(1, 71)$	Part. η^2
Perceived identity threat				
Time 1	3.47 (.98)	4.35 (.98)	14.74***	0.17
Time 2	3.39 (.84)	4.05 (1.11)	8.09**	0.10
Identity-related help				
Water management help	4.79 (1.32)	5.63 (1.03)	9.09**	0.11
Royal representation	3.30 (1.60)	2.97 (1.54)	0.78[n.s.]	0.01
Aceh help	4.95 (1.10)	4.33 (1.77)	3.16+	0.04
Identity-unrelated help				
Construction work	5.05 (1.51)	5.11 (1.86)	0.02[n.s.]	0.00
Communication technology	3.42 (1.56)	3.32 (1.33)	0.09[n.s.]	0.00
Beliefs about the nature of help				
Coordination & control	4.10 (1.07)	4.67 (0.92)	5.96*	0.08
Autonomy	4.80 (1.02)	4.45 (1.23)	1.74[n.s.]	0.01

Note: +$p = 0.08$; *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$; ***$p < 0.001$.
[n.s.] = not significant.

region to provide moral support. Given the timing of this study (approximately 3 months after the tsunami), the period within which it is considered appropriate to send an official delegation to provide moral support may have passed. As a result, this type of help may no longer have been viewed as a means to achieve positive differentiation.

In support of Hypothesis 4, a reversed effect of the threat manipulation was found for willingness to help the people in Aceh. Although this effect was only marginally significant, the means indicate that participants in the high threat condition were less in agreement than participants in the low threat condition with the notion that its colonial history obligated the Dutch government to help the people in Aceh. Also as predicted (in Hypothesis 3), no differences were found for help in the two domains that are not uniquely related to the Dutch identity (i.e. construction work and communication technology).

With respect to beliefs about the nature of help, findings replicate those from Study 1 and support Hypothesis 2. Participants in the high threat condition more strongly believed that it was necessary and appropriate for the Netherlands to assume a coordinating and controlling role in the exchange of aid than participants in the low threat condition, whereas no difference was found with respect to beliefs about autonomy.

Analysis of perceived threat as measured at Time 2 continued to reveal an effect of Threat, $F(1, 71) = 8.09$, $p < 0.01$, part. $\eta^2 = 0.10$. However, a repeated measures analysis with perceived threat at Time 1 and Time 2 as the two levels of a within-participants factor and Threat as a between-participants factor showed a main effect of Time, $F(1, 71) = 9.86$, $p < 0.01$, part. $\eta^2 = 0.12$, and a marginally significant interaction, $F(1, 71) = 3.32$, $p = 0.07$, part. $\eta^2 = 0.04$. Tests of the simple main effect of Time within each condition of threat showed that the reduction in perceived threat was significant in the high threat condition, $F(1, 71) = 12.15$, $p = 0.001$, part. $\eta^2 = 0.15$, but not in the low threat condition $F(1, 71) = 0.88$, *ns*, part. $\eta^2 = 0.01$. In order to test the extent to which the reduction in perceived threat over time was related to help in the water management domain (Hypothesis 5), a new variable was computed by subtracting Time 2 perceived threat from Time 1 perceived threat (thus higher values on this measure represented a greater reduction in perceived threat over time). In the high threat condition, the observed reduction in perceived threat was positively correlated with the endorsement of help in the water-management domain ($r = 0.38$, $p < 0.05$). In other words, the stronger participants supported help in the domain of water-management, the lower their reported levels of threat at Time 2 compared with Time 1. In the low threat condition, water management help was unrelated to threat reduction ($r = -0.21$, *ns*).[4] These results are in line with Hypothesis 5.

In conclusion, Study 2 replicated and extended the findings from the first study in a number of important ways. Compared with participants who did not experience a threat to their national identity, participants who did experience such a threat showed more support for help in a domain that was positively related to that identity (i.e. water management), but less support for help in a domain that was negatively related to that identity (i.e. help to Aceh), whereas no effects were found for two domains that were not uniquely related to the national identity. Moreover, water management help correlated positively with a reduction in identity threat over time in the high threat condition, but not in the low threat condition.

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[4]To test if these associations differed significantly from each other, a regression analysis was performed in which reduced threat (the difference score) was regressed on threat (the manipulation, coded as -1, 1), the water management helping scale (centred around the scale mean), and the interaction term between threat and helping. The interaction term in this analysis was significant ($\beta = -0.31$, $t = -2.72$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that water management help was indeed more strongly (and positively) related to a reduction in perceived threat in the high threat condition ($\beta = 0.29$, $t = 2.48$, $p < 0.05$) compared with the low threat condition ($\beta = -0.14$, $t = -1.24$, *ns*).

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In this paper, it was proposed that an increased willingness to help would result from a perceived threat to people's national identity. The results supported this argument, however, an alternative explanation requires some attention. When primed with thoughts of death, people sometimes seek refuge into one or more meaningful groups by strengthening their social identity (e.g. Castano, Yzerbyt, & Paladino, 2004). Is it possible that respondents who perceived their national identity under threat also 'sought higher ground' by identifying with the most inclusive category of all: Humanity? If so, increased helping in the high threat condition might not have been a reflection of an ingroup-serving motive, but reflect an intragroup motivation to help fellow human beings. Indeed, with 13 different countries being devastated, it is easy to perceive the tsunami disaster as one that struck humanity in general. However, it is difficult to interpret the present findings in terms of an intragroup motivation to help fellow ingroup members (i.e. other humans). The reason for this lies in the specific helping propositions that participants chose to endorse. Following a threat to their national identity, participants expressed more support for help in domains that were uniquely and positively related to their *national* identity, and less support for a domain that was not only negatively but also uniquely related to that identity (Study 2). If a threatened national identity had led to a stronger human identity, and if this strengthened human identity was the primary reason for helping, then an increase in helping would have been found on a variety of different measures, and not specifically on those that are uniquely related to the nested national identity.

On a more practical side, the results from these studies paint a somewhat mixed picture. While a threatened group identity can promote outgroup helping (on positive identity-related domains), it simultaneously strengthens the belief that one should remain in tight control over this aid—the type of belief that underlies dependency-oriented help. Although these results are in line with the notion that helping is used to reaffirm a threatened identity (and both strong dependency relations and the positive distinctiveness obtained by providing help on identity-relevant domains suit this purpose), they may not be unequivocally positive with respect to the recipient of help. Dependency-oriented help is often inconsistent with the recipients' self-view, as it assumes that recipients lack the necessary resources or skills to help themselves. Research has shown that people are reluctant to seek dependency-oriented help and often prefer autonomy-oriented help (Nadler & Halabi, 2005). However, there are also conditions under which dependency-oriented help is appreciated, for example because of its instrumental value (van Leeuwen, Täuber, & Sassenberg, 2006). When helping outgroups, it is important that help is expressed in a manner that does not threaten the recipient's self-view. If one of the motives underlying the decision to lend a helping hand is an ingroup-serving one, for example an attempt to restore the meaningfulness of the ingroup's identity, it seems crucial to pay extra attention to the potential psychological consequences for the recipient of the help. Well-intended offers may easily backfire when perceived as condescending and controlling.

In conclusion, this research was able to show that a threat to an important social identity can serve as a catalyst for intergroup helping. It is important to note that the present research investigated beliefs about helping, instead of actual helping. To investigate intergroup helping, one often faces a choice between studying the behaviour of individual group members who act as a representatives of their group, or studying group members' beliefs and opinions regarding what (official) representatives of their group should do. The present study focused on the latter, which allowed it to study intergroup helping in domains that reflect the group's expertise (e.g. water management), even though one can expect that none of the individual group members that participated in these studies possessed these skills themselves. Nonetheless, the step from beliefs to actual behaviour is a big one, and should be taken in future research.

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