RESEARCH ARTICLE

"Poor is pious": Distinctiveness threat increases glorification of poverty among the poor

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Abstract

The current study examines whether a threat to group distinctiveness motivates the poor to glorify poverty as an identity management strategy. Research shows that threat to ingroup distinctiveness can motivate people to positively differentiate their group from similar outgroups on relevant dimensions of comparison. Little is known however about whether such processes would occur also with respect to devalued group characteristics that are not reflective of explicit group norms. This question is of high theoretical and practical importance because it can illustrate that people internalize and glorify even adverse traits as means of managing their social identity when faced with threat. We therefore tested whether among a poor community, individuals would glorify poverty when faced with distinctiveness threat. We collected data from Haredim (ultra-Orthodox Jews), a poor and highly religious population in Israel. Across two experiments, we manipulated distinctiveness threat via inducing similarity between Haredim and seculars in Israel. We found that poverty was reconstrued as positive and desirable following distinctiveness threat, but only among Haredim who have a high commitment to group norms (Study 1) and who strongly justify their own social system (Study 2). Theoretical and applied implications of the findings are discussed.

Poverty ranks among the most serious social and political problems facing the world. The United Nations has declared that eliminating poverty is one of the top millennium development goals (Ban Ki-Moon, 2013). Even though poverty can be defined in individualistic, absolute terms (United Nations, 1995), it always occurs in a context of social relations embedded in power inequalities (Lemieux & Pratto, 2003). As such poverty can be considered as a group-based phenomenon in which the poor are members of an economically disadvantaged social group relative to the more affluent group in society (Akfirat, Polat, & Yetim, 2015). Psychological processes associated with social identities and related threats may therefore be applied to the understanding of poverty. In the current research, we draw on such processes in an attempt to gain insight into why, in some cases, people do not oppose poverty. In particular, we pursue the question of whether, and under which circumstances, the poor themselves may support or even glorify poverty.

The bulk of research on poverty has focused on how individuals who are not poor perceive poverty, revealing that poverty is seen by many as a "deserved" social status (Bullock, 2008), such that poor individuals are viewed often times as lazy and irresponsible (Cozzarelli,

Tagler, & Wilkinson, 2002; Feagin, 1975; Furnham, 1982; Lott, 2002). Moreover, even low income individuals explain poverty in terms of victim-blaming attributes, such as individual responsibility and personality weakness of the poor (Hunt, 1996; Kluegel & Smith, 1986; Napier, Mandisodza, Andersen, & Jost, 2006). Notwithstanding this impressive work, there is relatively little research which directly examines how the poor themselves react to, and manage their disadvantaged social status position (see Akfirat et al., 2015 for one example of the positive evaluation of poverty).

According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), individuals derive a significant part of their self-definition from memberships in social groups. Given the basic need for positive self-worth, people are motivated to identify themselves with a valued group. Such positive social identity can be achieved by distinguishing one's group from relevant outgroups via social comparisons which promote a positive social identity. As a result of such intergroup comparisons, members of disadvantaged groups are more prone to have a devalued or threatened social identity (Ellemers, Wilke, & Van Knippenberg, 1993; Scheepers & Ellemers, 2005).

A large body of research has examined strategies that low status groups adopt to manage their threatened

identity (Becker, 2012; Ellemers, Knippenberg, & Wilke, 1990; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Scheepers, Spears, Doosje, & Manstead, 2006; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990). When low status group members believe that it is possible to move individually to the high status group, they are likely to opt for individual mobility, attempting to improve their personal standing in society (exit strategy). If however, group boundaries seem impermeable, other strategies come into play. The most studied strategy in this respect is social competition, reflecting group members' motivation to improve the status of the group as a whole via collective action (Tausch et al., 2011; Van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008). Social competition is most likely to emerge when status relations seem unjust and potentially changeable (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; see also Ellemers et al., 1993; Saguy & Dovidio, 2013).

Another strategy for managing a low status identity, referred to as social creativity, is most likely when low status groups see the hierarchical structure as impermeable, stable and (to some extent) legitimate (Becker, 2012; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social creativity, in essence, is an attempt to cognitively change certain aspects of the intergroup comparison, such that positive distinctiveness can still be achieved. Such cognitive "tricks" can take different forms, all being considered as social creativity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). For example, comparing one's group to a different outgroup, which is relatively disadvantaged compared to the ingroup, in order to avoid upward social comparisons (Blanton, George, & Crocker, 2001); comparing the ingroup to the outgroup on a different dimension on which the ingroup is advantaged (Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish, & Hodge, 1996; Lalonde, 1992; Lemaine, 1974; Mummendey & Simon, 1989; Van Knippenberg & Oers, 1984); or reevaluating or redefining a central dimension of the identity, on which the ingroup is considered devalued (Galinsky, Hugenberg, Groom, & Bodenhausen, 2003). This latter strategy was exemplified by Tajfel and Turner (1986) using the "Black is beautiful" movement, aimed at redefining a negative attribute into a positive value connotation.

In cases where group-based poverty is rather stable with a relatively little possibility for change in the social hierarchy (Corak, 2006; Moore, 2005), the poor could potentially adopt a social creativity strategy to manage their disadvantaged group position. For example, a survey study conducted among a poor population in Turkey by Akfirat et al. (2015) showed that to the extent that they perceived the social structure as stable, they were more likely to adopt a positive perspective on their poor identity (e.g., "What is important is not economic wealth, but richness of the heart"). In the current work we wish to go beyond Akfirat et al.'s work by demonstrating the psychological mechanism that may underlie a relatively positive view of poverty by the poor. Unlike Akfirat et al. (2015), our research focus was to understand what motivates the poor to glorify poverty and under which circumstances this tendency is likely to be most pronounced.

If positive perception of poverty is indeed a social creativity strategy, then it should be driven by a sense of threat to group identity. One such common type of threat has to do with threat to group distinctiveness, or to the uniqueness of one's social identity (Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 2001). Given the importance of intergroup comparisons for establishing one's group value and self-worth, dissimilarity between groups is considered as one of the important sources of group identity. Indeed, being too similar to the outgroup, particularly on important and central (versus peripheral) dimensions of comparison, often threatens ingroup's uniqueness and distinctiveness (Moghaddam & Stringer, 1988; Mummendey & Schreiber, 1984; Roccas & Schwartz, & Wilder, 1986). Consistent with this notion, perceived similarities between groups were shown to motivate group members to search for reactive group distinctiveness by positively differentiating their ingroup from similar outgroups on relevant dimensions of comparison (Brown & Abrams, 1986; Jetten & Spears, 2003; Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1996, 1997; Roccas & Schwartz, 1993; Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997). For example, perceived similarity between ingroup and outgroup norms led ingroup members to display positive differentiation via the reevaluation of group attributes (Jetten, Schmitt, Branscombe, & McKimmie, 2005; Lemaine, 1974) and also via ingroup bias (Jetten et al., 1996). Thus, cross-group similarity can induce a threat to group identity (distinctiveness threat), which in turn can trigger identity management strategies aimed at differentiating one's group from the relevant outgroup.

Little is known, however, about whether such processes would occur also with respect to devalued group characteristics that are not reflective of explicit group norms. In other words, whereas much research had shown that people tend to adhere and glorify explicit and relatively positive group attributes (e.g., Jetten, Spears, & Manstead, 1997; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999; Ojala & Nesdale, 2004; Wilson & Hugenberg, 2010), little research had examined whether people would internalize and glorify even adverse traits that are not necessarily part of the way group members define themselves. This question is of high theoretical and practical importance because it can illustrate just how potent the processes of identity management are.

Drawing on these ideas, we hypothesized that the poor will redefine poverty in a desirable way when they faced with distinctiveness threat in relation to the more affluent comparison outgroup. As such, glorification of poverty will function as a social creativity strategy, which bolsters the social identity of threatened group members. We examined this idea among Haredi Jews in Israel, with the relevant intergroup context being that between the Haredi (Ultra-orthodox) and secular Jews. The members of the Haredi community comprise 10 % of Israel's population and commit to a unique lifestyle organized around traditional Jewish religion norms and practices. National census data on average income per household clearly indicated that the Haredi

community in Israel is the poorest (Endweld, Berkeley, Gottlieb, & Heller, 2014). which renders it a low status group relative to the more affluent secular group (Kaufmann, Marciano, & Regev, 2016).

A prolonged tension exists between the Haredi community and the secular community in Israel. The root of the conflict can be traced in the Jewish "Enlightenment" in the eighteen century (Friedman, 1986; Katz & Cooperman, 2000). The Haredi lifestyle emerged against the Jewish secular movement in order to maintain the traditional Jewish religion. Today, both groups have different and largely separate lifestyles, with Haredi norms prescribing necessity of preserving a religious lifestyle via separation from the non–Haredi Jews. For example, Haredi Jews do not serve in the military, which is mandatory for the non-Haredi Jews, live in separate neighborhoods, have a very specific dress code, and send their children to special schools where they study Torah (Jewish religious law and philosophy). This separatist orientation also results in very little empirical research on this population (e.g., Friedman, 1991). Various scholars from different disciplines analyzed the relationship between the secular and Haredi Jews and see them as the most stable disparity that existed within the Israeli society (Caplan & Stadler, 2009; Grilak, 2002). Considering this stability, social creativity is likely to be a dominant strategy for managing a low status identity (see Becker, 2012).

Beyond the poverty element, and associated stability, the choice of the Haredi community in Israel is highly relevant for the current examination also because poverty is not a virtue or doctrinal norm explicitly stated and encouraged within the Haredi culture. Poverty is indeed seen as characteristic of the community, with Haredim perceiving money making and wealth as values of the secular segments (Grilak, 2002). However, still, in the Jewish religious traditions, there are many prayers for prosperity and wealth on a daily basis and having money is considered as a blessing (Grilak, 2002; Stadler, 2009). Thus, poverty does not seem to constitute a central aspect of the Haredi identity but rather to be a by-product of another norm of preserving the Haredi lifestyle. Therefore, within this context, the glorification of poverty would illustrate strategic adherence to a devalued attribute that is merely a by-product of Haredi norms, and not itself explicitly valued within the identity.

Beyond examining whether Haredim glorify poverty in response to distinctiveness threat, we further aimed to examine boundary conditions to this proposed process. Specifically, we focused on two moderators that are highly relevant to the study context: commitment to group norms (Turner, 1991) and system justification (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). Group norms reflect accepted ways of thinking, feeling or behaving, that are endorsed by group members and expected from them (Turner, 1991). Those who highly adhere to group norms are more committed to the group's way of life that is perceived appropriate for group members, and often differentiate the ingroup

from relevant outgroups (Bar-Tal, 1990; Ojala & Nesdale, 2004). It could also be the case that because high norms adherents are clearer about how their own group is different from relevant outgroups, they would be *less* threatened by group distinctiveness threat (see Jetten & Spears, 2003). An alternative reasoning, which we predict to be more plausible, is that due to their investment in the group's norms and values, those who strongly adhere to group norms will be more sensitive to distinctiveness threat and thus be more motivated to differentiate the ingroup from the relevant outgroup (see Jetten & Spears, 2003). This notion is supported by several lines of work. For example, the link between distinctiveness and differentiation was found to be particularly pronounced among those who highly identify with their group (Jetten et al., 2001) and in cases in which the comparison dimension was highly central to group members (Jetten, Spears, & Postmes, 2004). Both these aspects are likely to be particularly relevant for ingroup members who strongly adhere to group values and norms (Turner, 1991). Thus, we expect to find that those who highly adhere to group norms will respond more strongly to distinctiveness threat and will be more likely to adopt social creativity strategy via glorification poverty.

A related moderator that we will explore in the current study is the degree to which group members justify their own social system. System Justification Theory suggests that individuals are motivated to legitimate, perpetuate, and justify the status quo (Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost et al., 2004; Jost et al., 2012). System justification is particularly relevant to the current research because it deals with psychological routs via which inequality is legitimized. A growing body of research, ironically, showed that not only advantaged group members, but also disadvantaged group members justify the unequal status quo by supporting the social system (Ashburn-Nardo & Johnson, 2008; Ashburn-Nardo, Knowles, & Monteith, 2003; Jost, Burgess, & Mosso, 2001; Jost, Pelham, Sheldon, & Sullivan, 2003; but see Brand, 2013 for a critique this idea). Research demonstrated that as system justification tendencies increase, individuals exhibit increased legitimization of inequalities (e.g., Jost et al., 2001; Jost & Burgess, 2000). As such, we can expect that the poor who strongly justify their own social system will be more likely to respond to distinctiveness threat and to glorify poverty. To be sure, we do not simply argue that those disadvantaged group members who justify the system (in which they are poor) will be likely to glorify poverty - but rather that this very group of individuals will be most likely to justify poverty in response to distinctiveness threat, because this group is most likely to be sensitive to potential threats to their ingroup system.

Overview of Present Studies

As indicated earlier, we tested our ideas among the Haredi community in Israel, a highly poor segment of the Israeli society. In general, Haredi Jews tend to worry

for the preservation of their identity and their lifestyle, given the potential influence of the secular segments of Israel (Friedman, 1986, 1989, 1991; Stadler, 2002, 2009; Valins, 2003). This threat is mostly derived from the perception that the Haredi's lifestyle is changing through assimilation into the secular Jews lifestyle (Ben-Haim, 2007; Friedman, 1986; Lupo, 2003). Therefore, the secular Jews are a highly relevant outgroup for the Haredi community in terms of intergroup comparison and distinctiveness threat.

To examine our predictions that distinctiveness threat would lead Haredi to glorify poverty, we conducted a pilot study and two experimental studies among members of the Haredi community in Israel. In the Pilot Study, we sought to confirm our presumption according to that being poor is a characteristic of the Haredi identity. Then, in Studies 1 and 2, we manipulated a distinctiveness threat via increased intergroup similarity. Specifically, in Study 1, we manipulated distinctiveness threat by presenting participants with a fictional research report suggesting that the secular and the Haredi Jews in Israel have the same value system. In Study 2, distinctiveness threat was manipulated by presenting a fictional article demonstrating that the Haredi community was assimilated into the secular society in Israel. Our central outcome measure was glorification of poverty. We further explored potential boundary conditions by measuring adherence to group norms in Study 1 and system justification in Study 2.

Pilot Study

As a first step, we conducted a pilot study to examine whether being poor is perceived as a typical characteristic of Haredi identity among members of the Haredi community. As such, we manipulated the socioeconomic status of an ingroup member, followed by an assessment of the target's typicality. We predicted that the poor Haredi target will be perceived as a more typical group member than the affluent Haredi target.

Method and Results

Participants were 121 Israeli Jews from the Haredi community in Israel. Two out-of range values were identified as univariate outliers having standard deviation higher than 2.5, and were excluded from the analyses. The final sample included 119 participants (52.1 % female, M_{age} = 26.77, SD = 7.39). Considering difficulty in accessing members of the Haredi community, participants were recruited with a snowball sampling method through personal connections. The data were collected in the Haredi neighborhoods in Jerusalem and Bnei-Berek. Participants were presented with a short story of a Haredi man who had seven children. In the story, Haredi man was described as a person who had both an average family income ($ 4500 per month) and lived in a large apartment (living financially comfortably condition; N = 54) or a low income

($ 1000 per month)[1] and lived in a small apartment (poor condition; N = 67) (see Appendix). Participants then indicated the extent to which the man in the story is a typical Haredi, with the following three items (α = .83): "To what extent is the man described in the story different from a typical Haredi in general?", "To what extent the apartment size reflects a typical Haredi apartment?", "To what extent the wage reflects a typical Haredi?"; Responses were provided on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Not typical at all*) to 7 (*Typical to a large extent*). A higher score indicated stronger perception of typicality. Upon completion of the questionnaire, participants were debriefed and got a bar of chocolate. As expected, it was found that a poor Haredi was perceived as a more typical (M = 4.96, SD = 1.49) than the affluent Haredi (M = 3.23, SD = 1.58), $t(119)$ = 6.10, $p < .001$. This result demonstrated that members of the Haredi community consider poverty as a typical characteristic of their ingroup.

Study 1

Study 1 was designed to test whether under threat to group distinctiveness, glorifying poverty is used as a social creativity strategy to maintain positive distinctiveness. We further explored whether a commitment to Haredi norms influences this process. As explained in the introduction, perceived similarity with the relevant outgroup threatens the distinctiveness of the ingroup. As a result, ingroup members are likely to enhance ingroup distinctiveness through accentuating the differences between groups on central components of their social identity. To test this idea in the context of poverty, we manipulated threat to group distinctiveness via intergroup similarity between Haredim and secular Jews, and then examined Haredims' glorification of poverty. We expected Haredi members to glorify poverty as means of managing their threatened social identity. We further tested whether this will be particularly true for those who display a strong commitment to the Haredi norms. Haredi community requires a strong adherence to fulfill, protect, and maintain Halacha, which defines what is the appropriate Jewish norms and lifestyle (e.g., marriage, customs). In Study 1, we measured commitment to group norms in terms of commitment to the Halacha and the Haredi lifestyle.

Method

Participants. Participants were 84[2] Israeli Jews from the Haredi community in Israel (73.8 % female, M_{age} 28.6, SD = 10.9).

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[1] According to the date published by the Central Bureau of Statistics, the Israel's monthly minumum wage was 4300 NIS ($1194). An Israeli family of five must earn more than NIS 9230 ($2593) to be considered above the poverty line. The average Israeli household had a gross monthly income of 17 771 NIS ($4936)

[2] Study 1 was conducted as a part of a large research project on the Haredi Jews community in Israel.

Procedure and measures. The data, again, were collected in Haredi neighborhoods in Jerusalem and Bnei-Brak by using a snowball sampling. Participants first reported their commitment to group norms by answering two items which were specifically designed to tap the level of adherence to the Halacha (general Jewish religious laws) and the Haredi lifestyle on a 7-point scale (α = .75): (1) "In the Haredi community, there are different levels of Halacha observant, ranging from very lenient to very strict. Where do you place yourself on this continuum ranged from 1 *(Very Lenient)* to 7 *(Very Strict)*"; (2) "The Haredi moves on an axis between very modern Haredi (e.g., men are not dressed up on Haredi dress code) and very radical (e.g., no internet use, not reading the secular newspaper but reading only the Haredi newspaper). Where do you place yourself on this continuum ranged from 1 *(Low adherence to group lifestyle)* to 7 *(High adherence to group lifestyle)*?" A high score indicates a stronger commitment to the Haredi norms.

Participants, then, were randomly assigned to read one of two articles: one communicating high distinctiveness threat (N = 44) and the other communicating low distinctiveness threat (N = 40). We manipulated distinctiveness threat via intergroup value similarity between the Haredi community and the seculars (see Appendix). We chose a value that seculars and Haredi Jews are likely to differ on, namely, attaching importance to money making and wealth. A survey among Haredi and secular Jews had revealed that even though Haredi Jews in Israel are the poorest group in the country, they are less likely than seculars to report that being successful in high-paying professions is important for them (Cooperman, Sahgal, & Schiller, 2016). This reflects their little emphasis on money making and wealth and fits Haredi's perception that money making and wealth are values mostly adopted by the secular segments (Grilak, 2002). In order to manipulate distinctiveness threat, all participants were presented with a table of results from an international survey ostensibly published in a mainstream Israeli newspaper. The survey reflected ratings, ostensibly provided by the Haredi community and by seculars, of the importance of different aspects of life to them on a scale from 0 to 100 (e.g., army, security, health, career, wealth, money making, modesty, and simplicity of life). In the low distinctiveness threat condition, the Haredi community and the seculars had the expected differences scores in attaching importance to money making and wealth (i.e., while the mean score of the Haredi members was 47 %, the mean score for the seculars was 78 %). In the high threat condition, Haredi Jews and secular Jews in Israel were described as having very close ratings regarding money making and wealth (i.e., in terms of attaching importance to wealth on a measure ranged from zero to hundred percent, the mean score of the Haredi members was presented as 55 %, whereas the score of the secular was presented as 52 %).

Next, we measured glorification of poverty with two items (α = .59) ("Poverty leads to a cohesive, caring, and giving society"; "Poor people donate to others more

Table 1. Correlations and descriptive statistics in Study 1

	1	2	3	*M*	*SD*
1. Glorification of poverty	--	0.09	−0.02	4.17	1.30
		0.36*		4.26	1.25
		−0.01		2.04	1.39
2. Commitment to group norms		--	0.20	4.60	1.31
				4.45	1.18
				4.87	1.35
3. Condition (High distinctiveness threat = 1; Low distinctiveness threat = 2)			--	1.10	0.83

Note: The correlation coefficients reflect the whole sample, high distinctiveness threat condition, and low distinctiveness threat condition respectively.
*p < .05.

than rich"). These items were assessed on a 7–point scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). A high score represents a more positive evaluation of poverty. Upon completion the questionnaire, participants were debriefed and received a bar of chocolate.

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations are provided in Table 1. To test our predictions that commitment to group norms would moderate the relationship between distinctiveness threat conditions (1 = high distinctiveness, 2 = low distinctiveness) and glorification of poverty, we then employed Hayes' Model 1 (2012) PROCESS bootstrapping command with 5000 iterations (Model 1). The analysis yielded only a significant two-way interaction between group distinctiveness threat and commitment to group norms (b = −.48, SE = .23, t = −2.10, p = .039; 95 % CI [−.94, −.03])[3]; no other effects were significant. As shown in Figure 1, participants who were highly committed to norms reported stronger glorification of poverty in the high distinctiveness threat condition compared to the low distinctiveness threat condition (b = −.90, SE = .41, $t(78)$ = −2.16, p = 0.034). However, there was no difference in glorification of poverty as a function of distinctiveness threat for low committers (b = .34, SE = .41, $t(78)$ = .82, p = .421).

Discussion

Study 1 provided evidence for our prediction that distinctiveness threat can lead the poor to glorify poverty – particularly those who highly adhere to the ingroup's norms. The findings provide support for the hypothesis that Haredi members who have

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[3]We also analyzed each of the glorification of poverty items separately, due to their relatively low reliability. We found that the interaction between the experimental condition and adherence to Haredi norms marginally predicted each items (p = 0.07 and p = 0.09).
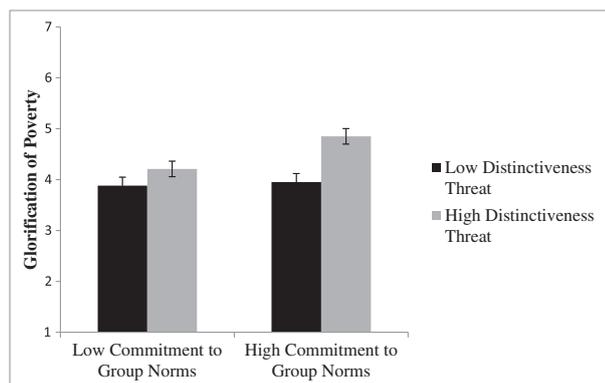
Fig. 1: Moderating effect of commitment to group norms on the relationship between experimental condition and glorification of poverty in Study 1

high commitment to group norm are more prone to glorify poverty likely due to their stronger commitment to the group's way of life. In the next study, we sought to replicate the association between distinctiveness threat and glorification of poverty and to gain a wider understanding of the boundary conditions surrounding it. In Study 2, we aimed to considered a related construct-system justification, which captures the strength of adherence to group norms. Another goal of Study 2 was to employ an alternate manipulation of distinctiveness threat. We wanted to test whether there would be differences in glorification of poverty in response to distinctiveness threat on other Haredi value dimensions-namely, military, work force, and education. Moreover, the first study did not have any manipulation check. In Study 2, therefore, we included manipulation check questions.

Study 2

In Study 2, we aimed to conceptually replicate Study 1, using a different manipulation of distinctiveness threat, different moderator, and more items of glorification of poverty. The new manipulation exposed participants to increased similarity in terms of the group lifestyle, instead of values. One distinctive norm of the Haredi community is defending and sustaining the traditional Jewish religious lifestyle against social change (Stadler, 2009). Haredi Jews believe that they dedicate themselves to maintain the unchanged tradition of Judaism, reflecting the preserving of untouched Judaic lifestyle (Grilack, 2002). This time, therefore, we investigated the moderating influence of justification of Haredi lifestyle on the glorification of poverty. In doing so, we used several items drawn from General System Justification scale (Kay & Jost, 2003) and adjusted them to the study context to capture the Haredi members' tendency to preserve their community religious lifestyle. We expected again that distinctiveness threat will lead Haredim to glorify poverty and examined the potential moderating role of system justification.

Method

Participants. Participants were 80 Israeli Jews from the Haredi community in Israel (63 % female $M_{age} = 24$, $SD = 6.70$).[4]

Procedure and measures. Data, as in the previous studies, were collected in Haredi neighborhoods and colleges in Jerusalem and Bnei-Brak in Israel. Participants were approached through personal connections. We first measured the extent to which participants view the Haredi lifestyle and society as just and fair with four items drawn from General System Justification Scale (Kay & Jost, 2003), applied to the Haredi context ($\alpha = .79$) ("Generally the Haredi society is very fair", "In my opinion, the Haredi society needs to undergo significant change" (reversed);" Most Haredi politicians really only work for the public good"; "The Haredi society is deteriorating day by day"-reversed). Answers ranged from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). A higher score indicates higher system justification tendency.

Participants were then randomly assigned to either a low distinctiveness threat condition ($N = 40$) or a high distinctiveness threat condition ($N = 40$). In the high distinctiveness threat condition, participants read a fictional article describing the Haredi community as rapidly assimilating into the secular society. Specifically, the article quoted fictional percentage of the members of the Haredi community that have been joining the general force labor and recruiting for the army service. In the low distinctiveness threat condition, the article emphasized that the Haredi community is withdrawing from the force labor and army service, implying the separation of the ingroup from the secular society (see Appendix). Following the manipulation, in order to understand whether the Haredi members perceived more distinctiveness threat in the high distinctiveness threat condition compared to low distinctiveness threat condition, participants answered two manipulation check questions on a 7-point scale ("To what extent are you afraid of the second Enlightenment Movement?"; "To what extent are you afraid that the Haredi society is facing extinction?").[5] The higher score represented higher perceived group distinctiveness threat. Next, participants answered several questions capturing glorification of poverty and attitudes toward seculars. Glorification of poverty was measured with the same scale used in Study 1, with one additional item ("Poverty pushes people to big successes in life") ($\alpha = .67$). Responses were given on the scale ranging from 1(*Not at all*) to 5(*To a large extent*).

Table 2. Correlations and descriptive statistics in Study 2

	1	2	3	*M*	*SD*
1.Glorification of poverty	--	0.16	−0.07	4.60	1.00
		0.43*		4.70	0.99
		−0.22		4.58	1.02
2. System justification		--	0.04	4.63	1.38
				4.58	1.31
				4.58	1.27
3. Condition (High distinctiveness = 1; Low distinctiveness =2)			--	1.10	0.82

Note: The correlation coefficients reflect the whole sample, high distinctiveness threat condition, and low distinctiveness threat condition respectively.
*$p < .01$.

Results

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics and correlations. The manipulation check showed that participants in the high distinctiveness threat conditions (($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.27$) reported higher level of distinctiveness threat than those in the low distinctiveness threat condition ($M = 2.93$, $SD = 1.15$); $t(77) = 3.00$, $p = .004$. We then ran a moderation analysis using Hayes' (2012) PROCESS bootstrapping command (model 1). We tested the moderating effect of system justification on the relationship between experimental conditions (1 = high distinctiveness, 2 = low distinctiveness) and glorification of poverty. As predicted, the analysis yielded a significant interaction between distinctiveness threat and system justification ($b = .50$, $SE = .17$, $t = −2.96$, $p = .004$; 95 % CI [−.84, −.16]); the rest of the effects were non-significant. As shown in Figure 2, participants with high levels of system justification reported significantly more positive evaluation of poverty in the high distinctiveness threat condition than participants in the low distinctiveness threat condition ($b = −.76$, $SE = .31$, $t(76) = −2.48$, $p = .015$; 95 % CI [−1.36, −0.15]). However, glorification of poverty did not significantly vary as a function of distinctiveness threat among those who were low on system justification ($b = .53$, $SE = .31$, $t(76) = 1.72$, $p = .089$; 95 % CI [−0.08, 1.13]).[6]

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[6]We also included an additional measure of attitudes toward seculars. Results again revealed a significant interaction between distinctiveness threat and system justification ($b = −.42$, $SE = .13$, $t = −3.31$, $p = .001$; 95 % CI [−.67, −.17]). Participants who were high on system justification had more negative attitudes toward seculars in the high distinctiveness threat condition compared to participants in the low distinctiveness threat condition ($b = −.58$, $SE = .23$, $t(76) = −2.53$, $p = .014$; 95 % CI [−1.03, −.12]). However, participants with low level of system justification reported significantly less negative attitudes toward the seculars in the high distinctiveness threat condition than those in the low distinctiveness threat condition ($b = .50$, $SE = .23$, $t(76) = 2.17$, $p = .033$; 95 % CI [.04, .95]). These findings suggest that our hypotheses apply to other measures of distinctiveness, such as outgroup negativity.

Discussion

In Study 2, we again found that distinctiveness threat leads poor participants to glorify poverty – particularly those who strongly justify the group's social system. This indicates that those who care more about the legitimacy of the status quo will be also those more defensive against threat.

General Discussion

In recent years, there is a growing understanding that poverty cannot be fully examined and understood without considering the psychological processes that maintain it (Haushofer & Fehr, 2014; Shah, Mullainathan, & Shafir, 2012). In this respect, in the current research, we attempted to experimentally investigate whether a threat to group distinctiveness motivates individuals to glorify poverty in the context of intergroup tensions between the religious (the Haredi community) and the secular community in Israel. Our results showed that under distinctiveness threat derived from manipulated intergroup similarity, poverty was reconstrued in a positive and desirable way, but only among those who are strongly committed to the norms of the Haredi community and justify the Haredi social system. Hence, the question of when individuals are prone to think that "poor is pious" can be answered in the following terms: the poor (the Haredi members in the current study context) who strongly adhere to their ingroup's religious norms and legitimize the social status quo, glorify poverty as a reaction to group distinctiveness threat that comes from the relevant outgroup.

This research can contribute to the social psychological understanding of poverty by illuminating the process through which a positive evaluation of poverty is created among the poor. Nevertheless, it is important to underline the fact that we do not claim that Haredi Jews may feel that their group "deserves" to be poor. Rather we suggest that in some circumstances, the poor are more likely to positively reevaluate poverty to cope with the threat associated with their devalued identity. Previous
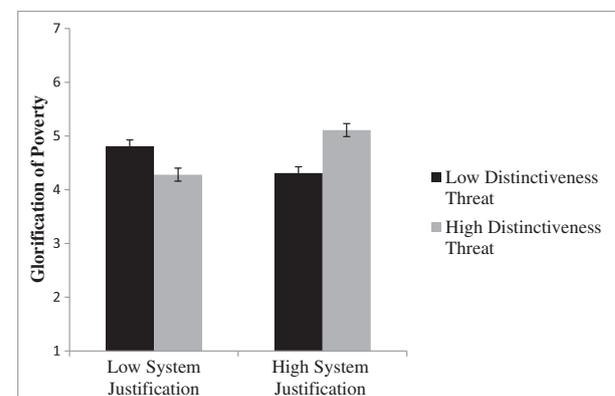
Fig. 2: The moderating effect of system justification on the relationship between experimental condition and glorification of poverty in Study 2

research, as mentioned in the introduction, has typically shown that group members tend to glorify rather positive or central group attributes. In the current study we demonstrated that distinctiveness threat plays a role in motivating the poor to positively evaluate poverty, even though poverty itself is neither a positive nor central element of the Haredi identity – pointing to the strength of social creativity as an identity management strategy.

Moreover, the identified boundary conditions to this effect can further illuminate the nature of the studied phenomenon. First, the finding that the reaction to distinctiveness threat is particularly pronounced among those who are committed to the group norms is in line with previous research (Jetten & Spears, 2003; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), further validating that indeed Haredim in our sample reacted to distinctiveness threat (and not to other potential forms of threat). In addition, the moderation by system justification suggests that the motivation to justify one's system, even if it is a system of inequality, plays a key role in shaping reactions to distinctness threat among the disadvantaged. Previous research has shown that poverty is endorsed by disadvantaged group members who suffer the most from the unequal distribution of resources in society (Henry & Saul, 2006; Jost et al., 2003). Integrating system justification literature with distinctiveness threat, our work demonstrates that Haredi members (the poorest group in Israel) who justify their own system are more responsive to distinctiveness threat, and thus more likely to glorify poverty. Neither the main effect of threat nor the main effect of system justification predicted glorification of poverty. Instead, the interaction between distinctiveness threat and system justification shaped responses to poverty. One possible explanation for these results is that among those who justify the Haredi lifestyle, identity threat triggers the tendency to further value and justify Haredi attributes, even if these are not necessarily positive. This process can have further downstream consequences worth examining in future work. For example, although the poor achieve positive distinctiveness through glorification of poverty, this reconstrual of poverty masks the existence of inequality. As a result, the poor may view the existing social and economic arrangements as more legitimate and even desirable, which can potentially undermine their motivation for social change.

Beyond its theoretical contributions, the current research offers some insights to practitioners attempting to reduce poverty. We offer to conceptualize poverty as a socio-psychological phenomenon, embedded in the context of intergroup relations. From this perspective, our results suggest that emphasizing that the ingroup is very similar to the outgroup in terms of group values can increase social identity threat among low power group members, leading this group to segregate themselves from the rest of the society through justifying processes, which, as we have shown, involve the glorification of poverty. Thus, an emphasis on similarities, which is considered the hallmark of many interventions aimed at bringing groups together, can be highly problematic in the context of poverty. Taking the motivational factors into consideration, any interventions, media messages, and vocational trainings toward the economic promotion of the Haredi community should be done in a way that acknowledges perceived threat of assimilation among Haredi members.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present research has several limitations. Given the unique group studied, we have relied on snow-ball sampling which renders the findings difficult to generalize. We do see much value in studying this very phenomenon in other intergroup context (e.g., among the Bedouin in Israel, a highly poor community, see Abu Bader & Gottlieb, 2008), and potentially with other attributes.

It would be also useful to understand why high norm adherents are more likely to perceive threat and glorify poverty under distinctiveness threat manipulation. One potential mechanism for this effect might be perceived typicality as a group member among high group adherents. A study by Jetten et al. (1997) demonstrated that only group members who defined themselves as a prototypical were motivated to display ingroup bias under distinctiveness threat. In our research perceived prototypically might function as a mediating variable between distinctiveness threat and glorification of poverty, but only among high norm adherents. In particular, one might expect that under distinctiveness threat high norm adherents might perceive that they are becoming less typical of their group, which can threaten their sense of membership in the group, and lead to more defensive response via social creativity strategy. Future research could explore that and other possible mediators between distinctiveness threat and glorification of poverty among high norm adherents and high system justifiers.

In conclusion, our work highlights the interplay between social context and social perceptions in shaping the poor's positive reevaluation of poverty. This line of our work speaks to the utility of considering social-motivational factors and relevant boundary conditions when trying to understand the positive evaluation of poverty and potentially, the lack of motivation to address it.

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Appendix A: Pilot Study

A.1. The living financially comfortable [poor] condition described the following the situation:

Chaim is 35 years old. He was born in Jerusalem and he attended one of the prestigious Ultra-Orthodox yeshiva and got married when he was 21. His wife grew up in Bnei-Brak and attended the main elite Ultra-Orthodox high school. After they got married, they settled in a 5-bedroom [3-bedroom] apartment in Bnei-Brak. During the first year of their marriage, they spent alternating weekends (Shabbat) in Jerusalem and Bnei-Brak. After a year, when their first child was born, they visit their parents in Jerusalem once a month. Now they have seven children and his wife is a teacher in the Beth–Yacob (the Ultra-Orthodox school system) in Beni-Berek. This year they celebrated Pesach Seder alone at home for the first time. Chaim's income is 18 000 shekels [4000 shekels].

A.2. The high [low] distinctiveness threat condition described the following situation in Study 1

An acquaintance referred me to an interesting poll published last week. The International Gallup Institute, one of the most important and well-known research institutes in the world, conducted a survey examining the degree of importance that people attached to various values in their lives.

In each country, the survey examined the data according to the various populations in the country. In the State of Israel, the Ultra-Orthodox sector gets a separate attention by itself in the survey. Here is part of the survey data:

Life values	Percentage according to the **secular**	Percentage according to the **Ultra- Orthodox**
Military and security	67	34
Home and Family	70	93
Health	91	87
Career	95	46
Getting rich and capital accumulation	52 [78]	55 [47]
Modesty and simplicity of life	60 [89]	62 [51]

A.3. The high [low] condition described the following situation in Study 2:

Last week, the annual report of the IDF was published, showing a growth [declining] of 34 % in recruiting Haredi population for the army. Those numbers are surprising, giving the incitement campaign that is going on in the Ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods. This secularization trend is also consistent with the data coming from the "2013Central Bureau of Statistics", pointing out a sharp increase [decrease] in the number of joining the workforce in secular workplaces among Haredi men with age range from 22 to 28. Prof Stern from the Israel Democracy Institute responded to the survey results commenting that "In the last few years, we have been witnessing more and more [less and less] Haredim who identify with the secular state and integrate with the secular society. It is no more rare [more and more rare] to see a Haredi person join entertainment events with the secular colleagues. I predict that this trend will intensify in the coming years and separate walls between the seculars and the Ultra-Orthodox individuals will be dissolved [will growing higher]".