But it's my right! Framing effects on support for empowering policies

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HIGHLIGHTS

- Rights framing presents inequality as violating minority groups’ basic rights
- Rights framing implies that the solution lies in a fundamental structural change
- This frame reduced Israeli Jews’ support for policies intended to empower Arabs
- This effect was mediated by increased zero-sum perceptions of intergroup relations
- Highlighting group interdependence eliminated the negative effect of rights framing

ABSTRACT

Rights framing—presenting intergroup inequality as violating a minority group's basic rights—challenges the status quo of intergroup relations because it implies that the solution lies in a fundamental structural change. We suggest that majority-group members may show a backlash response to this challenge. Three studies revealed that Israeli Jews’ support for policies that empower Israeli Arabs was lower when exposed to rights framing, compared to distress framing, i.e., presenting inequality as causing distress to the minority group (Studies 1–2), or a no-framing, control condition (Studies 2–3). This effect was mediated by increased zero-sum perceptions (Study 2). When rights framing was combined with a manipulation highlighting intergroup positive interdependence (thus counteracting zero-sum perceptions), its negative effect disappeared (Study 3). Theoretical and practical implications are discussed.

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Several social observers (e.g., Chomsky & Foucault, 2011; King, 1963; Moscovici & Pérez, 2009) have noted that any discourse of civil rights and group-based justice marks an underlying power struggle. Based on this observation, the premise guiding the present research is that rights framing—presenting the plight of a minority group as reflecting an unjust violation of its rights—implies that the current social arrangement is illegitimate, and thus needs to be changed to empower the minority group and protect its rights. Given these structural implications, our goal was to explore how members of a majority group respond to claims conveyed through media presentations that the rights of a minority group have been violated. In particular, we examined the influence of rights framing on majority-group members’ support for empowering policies, that is, policies that protect disadvantaged minority groups’ rights and provide them with the social power to achieve their goals (Jackson & Esses, 1997).

According to Entman (1993), frames actively "promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation" (p. 52). We theorized that the use of rights framing challenges the legitimacy of the current social structure, implying that the appropriate solution should be a structural change; namely, the introduction of governmental legislation, policies, and programs to empower and protect the rights of the disadvantaged minority group (Blader & Tyler, 2002). The type of solution prescribed by rights framing has critical implications for existing intergroup power relations; it can potentially reduce the majority group’s dominance while enhancing the power of the minority group. Thus, rights framing may be highly intimidating and elicit a negative response from majority-group members. In the present research, consisting of three studies, we examined whether majority-group members show a backlash response to the challenge posed by framing a potentially threatening minority group’s disadvantage as a violation of its rights.

Our guiding theoretical framework was the unified instrumental model of group conflict (Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001; Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong, 1998; Esses, Jackson, Dovidio, & Hodson, 2005). Integrating earlier perspectives on realistic group conflict theory (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961; LeVine & Campbell, 1972) on the one hand, and social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986;
Zero-sum beliefs, in turn, have been shown to promote various strategic attempts to eliminate group competition as well as to rationalize these attempts, which might otherwise be perceived as immoral, as necessary under the circumstances. For example, perceiving intergroup relations in zero-sum terms has fostered European Canadians’ negative stereotyping of Indigenous Canadians as savage and bloodthirsty (as opposed to an earlier stereotypical view of them as innocent and spiritual), which in turn promoted and justified the expropriation of land and resources from them (Jackson, 2011).

Applying the unified instrumental model’s logic to the present research, we theorized that to the extent that a minority group is perceived as threatening to the majority group, the exposure to rights framing— which challenges the majority group’s position and implies that it should relinquish power to the minority group—would increase majority-group members’ sense of competition and consequent endorsement of zero-sum beliefs. Put differently, using the unified instrumental model’s terminology, we argue that rights framing would serve as a situational factor contributing to the majority-group members’ sense of competition, leading to perceptions of intergroup relations in zero-sum terms. These perceptions, in turn, would increase majority-group members’ strategic attempt to minimize competition.

One strategy for minimizing the competitiveness of a potentially threatening minority is the opposition to empowering policies, which aim to change the social structure to advance the minority group (Jackson & Esses, 2000). The present research focused on this particular strategy, testing the prediction that rights framing would reduce majority group members’ support for empowering policies intended to advance and protect the minority group’s rights.

Our studies examined the effects of rights framing within contexts in which the plight of the minority group did not represent a clear-cut case of illegitimate violation of its members’ rights. We concentrated on ambiguous, “gray area” contexts because, due to a strong social norm against group-based discrimination, modern bias is often subtle and occurs primarily in ambiguous situations (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). Specifically, Studies 1 and 2 focused on Jewish landlords’ preference not to rent their apartments to Arab students, and Study 3 focused on nightclub owners “selection policy.” These are gray areas because it could be cogently argued that, due to their right for property, people are entitled to decide to whom to rent or give access to their private property. As such, these ambiguous contexts of bias permit different interpretations and responses.

1. Overview of the present studies

We designed three studies to test our hypotheses. Participants in the studies were Israeli Jews, representing an advantaged majority group compared to Arabs within the Israeli society. Arabs are often perceived by Jews as posing both realistic threats (e.g., due to security threats and drain on social services such as welfare; Canetti-Nisim, Arieli, & Halperin, 2008) and symbolic threats (e.g., because they have an adversarial national and religious identity; Bar-Tal, 2013; Canetti-Nisim et al., 2008). Study 1 tested the hypothesis that rights framing would have a negative effect on Israeli Jews’ support for empowering policies to benefit Israeli Arabs compared to distress framing, in which the plight of the Arab group was characterized as a source of severe psychological distress to its members.

Our choice of distress framing as the appropriate control corresponding to the rights framing was guided by Moscovici and Pérez’s (2009) theorizing that minorities can establish either political or ethical relationships with the majority. In the first type of relationship, the minority is characterized as active and demands mobilization through a radical social change, whereas in the second type—the minority is characterized as victimized, and highlights and seeks the majority’s recognition for its suffering (yet without challenging the existing social structure). An empirical test of the free-associations evoked by the exposure to the two types of minorities revealed that the ideas that came to the mind of majority group members (specifically, Spaniards referring to the Gypsy minority) following the exposure to “an active minority,” as compared to “a victimized minority,” more often related to conflict, confrontation and struggle (Moscovici & Pérez, 2007). These findings support our prediction that rights framing, which is associated with the representation of the minority as active, would elicit a greater sense of competition (and consequent strategic attempts to reduce it) as compared to distress framing, which is associated with the representation of the minority as victimized. Thus, Jews’ support for empowering policies was expected to be lower in the rights framing as compared to distress framing condition.

Study 2 aimed to replicate and extend Study 1. First, in order to support our theorizing that the difference between the two framing conditions stemmed from a decrease in Jews’ support for empowering policies in the rights framing condition (rather than an increase in the distress framing condition), we compared the two framing conditions to a no-framing control condition. Second, to support our reasoning that majority-group members do not endorse the “problem definition” implied by the rights framing in the “gray area” context that we studied, we measured their personal belief with regards to whether right violation has indeed occurred, expecting that it would not be influenced by framing condition. Third, to illuminate the mechanism leading to the negative effect of rights framing, we tested whether the reduction in Jews’ support for empowering policies was mediated by heightened zero-sum perceptions of their ingroup’s relations with the Arab group.

Finally, Study 3 examined the hypothesis that counteracting zero-sum perceptions can eliminate the negative effect of rights framing. Specifically, the negative effect of rights framing on Jews’ support for empowering policies was expected to disappear once this frame was combined with an intervention that highlighted the positive interdependence between Jews and Arabs, stressing that gains or losses for one group are associated with corresponding gains or losses for the other group. This allowed us to strengthen our conclusion, in line with recent recommendations for making inference regarding causal mechanisms (Spencer, Zanna, & Fong, 2005; Stone-Romero & Rosopa, 2008), that zero-sum perceptions are indeed the mediator responsible for the negative effect of rights framing on support for empowering policies.

Taken together, the three studies were designed to increase an understanding of the unique effect of rights framing, and the psychological mechanism underlying this effect, on majority-group members’ support for policies that empower a minority group. As such, these studies extend existing social psychological research on the topic of framing effects within contexts of intergroup relations. This topic has received increasing attention in the recent decade. In particular, several lines of research have demonstrated that framing racial inequity as Whites’ advantage or privilege, as compared to Blacks’ disadvantage or discrimination, threatens Whites’ positive identity (Lowery, Knowles, & Unzueta, 2007), leading to their heightened levels of collective guilt.
(Powell, Branscombe, & Schmitt, 2005) and increased support for policies perceived to harm Whites in an attempt to improve their ingroup’s esteem (Lowery, Chow, Knowles, & Unzueta, 2012). Other research has revealed that dominant-group members’ strength of ingroup identification increases when their advantage is framed as reflecting their ingroup’s superiority as compared to their outgroup’s inferiority (Chow, Lowery, & Knowles, 2008). Together, the existing and the present research contribute to the growing recognition that frames shape people’s thoughts, feelings, motivations and even world-view, and can therefore initiate or hinder social change (Lakoff, 2004).

2. Study 1

The main goal of Study 1 was to test the hypothesis that the exposure to a rights framing of the bias against Arabs would produce less support by Israeli Jews for empowering policies intended to protect Arabs’ rights compared to a distress framing of the same bias. According to the unified instrumental model (Esses et al., 1998, 2001, 2005), individual differences related to threat and competition systematically affect support for policies that empower minority groups. In particular, majority-group members who are high on Social Dominance Orientation (SDO; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), that is, who view hierarchical relations between groups as inevitable and even desirable, tend to see minority groups as a source of threat to their ingroup and to conceptualize intergroup relations in zero-sum terms (e.g., Ho et al., 2012). Consequently, they generally oppose policies intended to empower minority-group members (Esses et al., 1998, 2001; Jackson & Esses, 2000). In addition, attitudes towards minority groups are also critically shaped by situational factors. For example, when the economic situation in a country is poor or declining, majority-group members perceive greater levels of competition with the minority group, and hence generally express lower levels of support for empowering policies (Esses et al., 2001). Thus, individual and situational factors that make zero-sum relations between groups salient have independent effects on majority-group members’ support for policies that empower minority groups.

Applying this logic to the present research, we hypothesized that in the Israeli context, in which intergroup threat is chronically salient (Bar-Tal, 2013), Jews would be generally intimidated by the implications of rights framing; namely, that their ingroup should relinquish power to the Arabs. Hence, we predicted that rights framing would have a negative effect on support for empowering policies among Israeli Jews, independent of the expected negative effect of SDO level. In addition, we explored the potential interactive effect of SDO and rights framing. One possibility was that high-SDO Jews, who endorse group hierarchy more firmly, would respond more negatively to rights framing, because it undermines the legitimacy of the social structure that benefits their ingroup. Alternatively, because people high in SDO already view intergroup relations as zero-sum and show relatively little support for empowering policies, rights framing may have a greater negative impact on Jews who are low on SDO.

To test our predictions, after participants completed an SDO measure, they were randomly assigned either to the rights or the distress framing condition. In both conditions, participants were exposed to the same text, which described ostensible “recent findings” about Jewish landlords’ preference to rent their apartments, adjacent to a large Israeli university, to Jewish rather than Arab students looking for accommodations. In the distress framing condition, this information was followed by a paragraph that highlighted the psychological distress caused to Arab students due to this bias; in the rights framing condition, it was followed by a paragraph that highlighted that this bias violated the right of Arab students for equal educational opportunity. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Esses et al., 2001), we predicted that Jewish participants higher in SDO would be generally less supportive of policies that empower Arabs (e.g., in the form of affirmative action). Moreover, the main novel prediction was that Jews’ support for empowering policies would be lower in the rights compared to the distress framing condition.

An additional goal of Study 1 was to investigate feelings of accusation as an alternative explanation for this predicted effect of rights framing. Specifically, it is possible to argue that beyond their different structural implications, distress and rights framings also differ in terms of the extent to which they imply that the majority group has perpetrated wrongdoings. Rights framing focuses on the group level, identifies the cause of the problem as breach of justice, and implies that the minority group should be angry at the majority group (because anger is the emotion elicited among group members who learn that their group had been treated unfairly; e.g., Smith, 1993). By contrast, distress framing focuses on the suffering of individual minority-group members, on the consequences of the problem (rather than on its cause), and implies that emotions that should be elicited in response to it are empathy, compassion, pity, sympathy and the like (i.e., the emotions evoked in response to others’ suffering; e.g., Batson, Klein, Highberger, & Shaw, 1995). As such, rights framing may be interpreted as depicting the majority group as more blameworthy than distress framing. If so, it was possible that the rights framing would make Jews feel that their ingroup is accused of behaving immorally, yet due to the ambiguous, “gray area” nature of the bias, they would not think that injustice has indeed occurred.1 Perceptions of being wrongfully accused for treating a minority group unfairly were found to undermine support for empowering policies intended to promote group-based equality (Saguy, Cehrnynak-Hai, Andrighetto, & Bryson, 2013). We therefore considered the possibility that reduced support for empowering policies in the rights framing compared to the distress framing condition might reflect a negative response to the accusation of participants’ ingroup, rather than to the structural implications of this frame.

To rule out this interpretation, we measured participants’ feeling that the text to which they were exposed implied that their ingroup is guilty of treating Arabs unfairly, as well as their feeling that, in general, their ingroup is often wrongfully accused of treating Arabs unfairly (see Saguy et al., 2013). In line with our theorizing that majority-group members respond to the structural implications of rights framing, we predicted that the frame type would not influence their feelings of being accused. Moreover, we expected the negative effect of rights framing to persist even when controlling for Jews’ feelings of being the target of such accusations.

Finally, the third goal of Study 1 was to examine the effect of rights framing on Jews’ support for non-empowering help in the form of charitable activity. Previous research found that feelings of competition enhanced majority-group members’ opposition to policies that strengthen the minority group (i.e., the removal of barriers that immigrants face when trying to help themselves), yet it did not influence support for non-empowering help (i.e., direct assistance through the straightforward provision of resources needed by immigrants) (Jackson & Esses, 2000). This is because providing such direct assistance bestows moral legitimacy on the majority’s privileged status and allows it to reassert its superiority while leaving the recipient group in its inferior, dependent position (Nadler, 2015; van Leeuwen & Täuber, 2010). As such, it may contribute to the perpetuation of (rather than challenge) the existing power relations (e.g., Shnabel, Bar-Anan, Kende, Bareket, & Lazar, 2015). Based on these findings, we predicted that rights framing would not reduce Jews’ support for providing Arabs with help that does not involve a structural change (i.e., non-empowering help).

1 This possibility is based on the distinction between feeling guilt, which may lead to attempts to rectify the situation, and feeling accused, which may lead to moral defensiveness, and attempts to protect the ingroup’s image at any cost (see Shnabel, Halabi, & Noor, 2013).
3. Method

3.1. Participants

Participants were 77 Israeli Jewish undergraduate university students, who participated in this study in exchange for course credit. Two participants were excluded because they failed the instructional manipulation check (Oppenheimer, Meyvis, & Davidenko, 2009). Thus, the final sample included 75 participants (58 women and 17 men, $M_{age} = 23.5, SD = 3.56$).

3.2. Procedure and measures

Participants, who responded to the materials presented online, were told that they would take part in a survey about issues regarding the Israeli society. Following a measure of their SDO using an 8-item scale (the Hebrew version developed by Levin & Sidanius, 1999; $\alpha = .83$) all participants read the following article, allegedly retrieved from a popular Israeli news website:

The Students' Association published the results of a residence survey, conducted at the start of the academic year. The most prominent figures concern the Arab student population. Specifically, beyond the general increase in rent prices, which makes it difficult for students to find apartments in the area of Haifa University, in recent years there has been an increase in Jewish landlords' apprehension and reluctance to rent their apartments to Arab students, who often fail to find an apartment even after a long search. A survey by the Students' Association revealed that often Arab students are asked to pay unusually high rent, are requested to make high security deposits and are given various sorts of indirect refusals. Moreover, even when presenting their pay slips and recommendations from their professors, Arab students still encounter these obstacles, which prevent them from finding housing solutions.

Participants in the rights framing condition read the additional paragraph below:

The Students' Association stated that because Arab students are equal-rights citizens of Israel this is a direct violation of the principles of justice and equality on which the State of Israel is founded and as defined in its Proclamation of Independence and the Basic Law on Human's Dignity and Liberty. Refusal to rent to Arab Israeli students is absolutely illegitimate as it violates the fundamental right of every individual who pursues higher education to be treated with respect and as equal, and not be discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity or religion.

Participants in the distress framing condition read the following additional paragraph:

The Students' Association stated that the Arab students experience great suffering due to the hardships they encounter. The combination of limited available places in the student dorms and the difficulty in renting apartments that are adjacent to the university creates significant hardships in terms of both time and money, which culminate in a major negative effect on their studies. Moreover, the spread of this phenomenon causes Arab students to feel humiliation, insult, shame and loss of respect, adding to the dissatisfaction and frustration that are already experienced by Arabs due to their sensitive status in the country.

Next, participants completed the following measures, using 7-point scales ($1 =$ not at all to $7 =$ very much).

3.3. Manipulation checks

Participants indicated whether the article stressed that the reluctance of Jewish landlords to rent their apartments to Arab students (a) constituted a violation of their rights, and (b) caused them severe distress.

3.4. Accusation of the ingroup

Three items measured the extent to which participants felt that the article was accusing Jews of unfair treatment of Arab students (e.g., “The article implied that according to the Students' Association Jews are to blame for causing unfair harm to Arabs”); $\alpha = .82$.

3.5. Feeling wrongfully accused

Three items taken from Saguy et al. (2013) measured participants' feelings that, in general, Jews are often being wrongfully accused of treating Arabs unjustly (e.g., “Jews in Israel are often being accused, for no good reason, of racism against Arabs”); $\alpha = .90$. (Note that this measure does not specifically relate to the article to which participants were exposed.)

3.6. Support for non-empowering help (charity)

Five items measured Jews' support for charity, a non-empowering form of help that was relevant to the Israeli context (“I support civil society organizations whose purpose is providing food for needy Arab families”; “I support social initiatives to provide Arab patients with medical equipment such as wheelchairs, breathing machines, etc.”; “I'd enjoy hearing the news if it reported the establishment of an organization dedicated to fulfilling wishes for Arab children who suffer from cancer”; “I support hiring Arab-speaking representatives in the Child Welfare hotline in order to cater for children in need from the Arab sector”; “High priority should be given to ensure that welfare services in the Arab sector are capable of sheltering women who suffer from domestic abuse”), $\alpha = .85$. We chose not to use the measure of direct assistance, which was developed by Jackson and Esses (2000) to study responses to immigrants, because the items did not apply to the Israeli context of intergroup relations between Jews and Arabs.

3.7. Support for empowering policies

Participants indicated their agreement with the following statements: (a) “The government should take action against discrimination towards Arabs”; (b) “The Ministry of Interior should act to improve the infrastructure in Arab villages”; (c) “The State budget should be distributed equally such that the resources that are allocated to Arabs are proportional to those that are allocated to Jews”; (d) “The Ministry of Education should initiate a curriculum that would stress the importance of equality between Jews and Arabs”; (e) “The Ministry of Education should provide more financial assistance to Arab students who apply for higher education”; (f) “Universities should allocate more places to Arab students as a form of affirmative action”; (g) “A committee aimed at exposing and dealing with incidents of discrimination of Arab academics in employment settings should be established”; (h) “Jewish citizens should act to stop inequality between Jews and Arabs”; (i) “Arabs should have greater representation in Israeli politics”; (j) “Arabs should obtain more power in the decision-centers of our society”; $\alpha = .93$.

A factor analysis confirmed that in line with our theorizing, charity and empowering policies represented different constructs. The items measuring empowering policies strongly loaded on the first factor ($50$ to $87$; most values are in the $.70$’s), but not on the second ($10$ to $41$; most values are in the $.20$’s), whereas the items measuring non-
empowering help (i.e., charity) strongly loaded on the second factor (.57 to .89; most values are in the .70’s), but not on the first (.14 to .29).

Upon completing the experiment, participants were thanked and debriefed.3

4. Results

4.1. Manipulation checks

As intended, participants’ perception that the article stressed that the bias against Arab students violated their rights was higher in the rights framing compared to the distress framing condition, t(73) = 7.80, p < .001; Ms = 6.21 (SD = 1.19) vs. 3.14 (SD = 2.11). Correspondingly, participants’ perception that the article stressed that the bias against Arab students caused them severe distress was higher in the distress framing than in the rights framing condition, t(73) = 7.05, p < .001; Ms = 6.14 (SD = 1.16) vs. 3.34 (SD = 2.12).

4.2. Accusation of the ingroup

As predicted, participants’ feeling that the article was accusing Jews of treating Arab students unfairly did not differ between framing conditions, t(73) = .680, p = .498, t₂ = .006, Ms = 5.48 (SD = 1.28) and 5.28 (SD = 1.31) in the rights and distress framing conditions, respectively.

4.3. Feeling wrongfully accused

Similarly, participants’ feeling that, in general, Jews were often wrongfully accused for treating Arabs unfairly did not differ between the framing conditions, t(73) = 2.18, p = .031, t₂ = .001, Ms = 3.81 (SD = 1.45) and 3.73 (SD = 1.61) in the rights and distress framing conditions, respectively.

To test our main hypotheses, we conducted two regression analyses. The dependent variable in the first analysis was support for non-empowering help and in the second — support for empowering policies.

4.4. Support for non-empowering help

A regression model in which the predictors were framing type (distress framing = 0, rights framing = 1), SDO (standardized), and their interaction, and the dependent variable was support for non-empowering help in the form of charity, was significant, F(3,71) = 6.03, p < .001, and ΔR² = .203. The effect of SDO was significant, b = − .529, SE = .177, t₁ = −.447, and p = .004, such that higher levels of SDO predicted less support for charity. As expected, the effect of framing condition on support for charity failed to reach significance, b = − .351, SE = .245, t₁ = −.152, and p = .156, suggesting that Jews’ support for charity did not significantly differ across framing conditions; Ms = 5.72 (SD = 1.33) vs. 6.14 (SD = .92) in the rights and distress framing conditions. The framing condition × SDO interaction also failed to reach significance, b = .103, SE = .246, t₁ = .064, and p = .677.

4.5. Support for empowering policies

A regression model with the same predictors yet with support for empowering policies as the dependent variable was significant, F(3,70) = 17.16, p < .001, and ΔR² = .442.4 Consistent with previous research, higher levels of SDO predicted significantly less support for empowering policies, b = − 1.02, SE = .178, t₁ = −.69, and p < .001. With respect to the novel prediction for this study, as anticipated, the effect of framing condition was significant, b = − 557, SE = .247, t₁ = −.21, and p = .027, such that Jews’ support for empowering policies was lower in the rights framing compared to the distress framing condition, Ms = 4.02 (SD = 1.36) vs. 4.64 (SD = 1.32).5 The two-way interaction between framing type and SDO was not significant, b = − 311, SE = .270, t₁ = .14, and p = .254, suggesting that the negative effect of rights framing did not depend on participants’ SDO level.6

In addition, when beyond framing type, SDO, and their two-way interaction, we entered as additional predictors all the measured dependent variables — the obtained model was significant, F(7,66) = 15.70, p < .001, and ΔR² = .625. All the additional predictors had significant effects on support for empowering policies. Specifically, accusation of the ingroup had a significant negative effect, b = − 1.173, SE = .085, t₁ = −.16, and p = .047; feeling wrongfully accused had a significant negative effect, b = − .269, SE = .075, t₁ = −.30, and p < .001 (see Saguy et al., 2013 for consistent findings); perceptions of Arabs as agentic and competent (see footnote 3) had a significant positive effect, b = .281, SE = .123, t₁ = .192, and p = .026; and support for charity also had a significant positive effect, b = .336, SE = .107, t₁ = .29, and p = .003. Moreover, consistent with the previous analysis, the negative effect of SDO was significant, b = − .400, SE = .183, t₁ = −.27, and p = .032, and the SDO × framing type was nonsignificant, b = .168, SE = .236, t₁ = .08, and p = .478. Most importantly, the negative effect of rights framing persisted, b = − .451, SE = .212, t₁ = −.17, and p = .038, suggesting that it cannot be accounted for simply as a general negative orientation towards Arabs, or as participants’ negative response to perceptions of wrongful accusations against their ingroup.

5. Discussion

Consistent with our prediction that rights framing would elicit a backlash response among majority-group members, Study 1 found that rights framing, compared to distress framing, decreased Israeli Jews’ support for empowering policies such as ensuring greater

3 Beyond the reported measures, Study 1 additionally included four items, modeled after Moscovici and Pérez (2007), which measured participants’ view of Arabs as agentic and competent (e.g., “technologically advanced”; “emphasize education”); α = .71. Moscovici and Pérez (2007) found that “active minorities,” who demand social change and mobilization, were perceived as more capable and ambitious than victimized minorities, who focus on their suffering without demanding a structural change. However, in our study, framing type did not affect participants’ perception of Arabs as agentic and competent, t(73) = .93, p = .366, Ms = 4.32 (SD = .84) vs. 4.12 (SD = 1.03), in the rights and distress framing conditions, respectively. A possible explanation for this discrepancy may be that in Moscovici and Pérez’s (2007) research the source of the demand for change was a representative of the minority group. Perhaps when the source of this demand is not located within the minority group, as was the case in the present study, it does not affect the minority’s image as agentic and competent.

4 To avoid the disproportionate influence of single observations on our analysis (McClelland, 2002), one outlier (Cook’s distance = .36) was excluded from analysis. The negative effect of rights framing persisted even when this outlier was included in analysis, b = −.509, SE = .250, and p = .045.

5 Importantly, the effect of rights framing remained significant when separately examining the three items (e, f, and g) that refer to Arab students/academics in particular (β₁ = −.22, p = .018) and the seven items that refer to Arabs in general (β₁ = −.19, p = .049). This suggests that the negative effect of rights framing was not driven solely by the policy-items that are directly relevant to the text to which participants were exposed (i.e., it generalized to the Arab group as a whole).

6 In light of theorizing that women tend to employ care-based ethics whereas men employ rights-based ethics (Cilligan, 1982), and because women constituted the majority of participants, a possible alternative explanation to our findings was that the negative effect of rights framing stemmed from women’s negative response to a frame that is incongruent with the type of ethics they employ (rather than from the structural implications of this frame). To examine this possibility, in supplementary analyses we additionally tested whether the negative effect of rights framing was more pronounced among women than among men, by entering gender and its interaction with rights framing into the above reported models. In Study 1, neither the main effect of gender, nor its interaction with framing type reached significance, Ms = 503. In Study 2, we found a main effect for gender (p = .024) such that men showed greater support for empowering policies than women, Ms = 4.80 (1.30) vs. 4.27 (1.19), yet gender did not interact with rights framing (p = .743). Finally, in Study 3, neither the main effect of gender, p = .137, nor its interaction with framing condition, p = .332, reached significance. These additional analyses allow ruling out the possibility that due to their endorsement of a care-based ethics, women were especially likely to respond negatively to rights framing. Because gender effects were not part of our hypotheses, they were not included in our main analyses.
representation of Arabs in centers of decision making. This effect was not moderated by participants’ SDO. While it is possible that rights framing may sometimes arouse negative cognitive and affective reactions because it implies accusations against the majority (e.g., as responsible for violating the minority’s rights), the results of Study 1 further reveal that the negative effect of rights framing in this context cannot be fully accounted for simply as a negative reaction to perceived accusations against one’s ingroup. That is, our findings that participants did not differ in the extent to which they perceived that their group was being wrongfully accused between the rights and distress framing conditions, and statistically controlling for these perceptions did not eliminate the difference between these conditions, is supportive of our theorizing that a critical factor is the structural implications of rights framing.

While the present line of research focuses on these structural implications, future research might explore additional effects of rights framing, such as the emotional reactions it elicits (e.g., anger or guilt), the explanations it puts forward for disparate treatment and discrimination, and the divergence of the frame recipients’ attention towards the minority-group (vs. the broader situation) or towards group-level (vs. individual level) problems. Future research might also explore the effects of distress framing—while not being the focus of the present research due to its lack of structural implications, this frame can possibly influence non-structural outcomes such as empathy towards the particular minority-group members who experience distress, which can in turn improve feelings towards the minority group as a whole (Baton et al., 1997).

From a broader theoretical perspective, the finding that rights framing did not affect group members’ support for charity is consistent with the unified instrumental model’s (Esses et al., 1998, 2001, 2005) theorizing that majority group members’ reactions to perceived competition are instrumental, in the sense that they do not reflect an “irrational” response; rather, they are strategically intended to achieve the reduction or elimination of competition from the outgroup (Jackson, 2011). Therefore, in response to challenges to the existing social structure, majority group members may reduce their support for policies that might further undermine this structure, but still show a “noble but obliging” response, that is, support seemingly benign actions, such as charity, that cannot lead to a substantial change of group inequality and might even contribute to its reinforcement (Leach, Snider, & Iyer, 2002).

6. Study 2

Study 2 aimed to replicate and extend Study 1 in three ways. First, building on theorizing that minority can be represented as either “active” or “victimized” (Moscovi & Pérez, 2009), in Study 1 we exposed participants to rights or distress framings. Also, because both frames may have created the impression among participants that the text was followed by a paragraph that framed the debate regarding same-sex marriage as a question of tolerance rather than of rights). Accordingly, we expected that even though Jews assigned to the rights framing condition would understand that this frame implies that the bias against Arab students unjustly violates their rights, it would not influence their personal belief regarding the nature of the bias (i.e., whether or not it reflected a case of right violation) compared to participants in the distress or framing conditions. In other words, participants exposed to the rights framing were expected to recognize but not endorse this frame.

Second, Study 2 aimed to examine whether, in line with the reasoning and findings of the unified instrumental model (Esses et al., 1998, 2001, 2005), the mechanism responsible for the negative effect of rights framing on Jews’ support for empowering policies was stronger perceptions of intergroup relations in zero-sum terms. Specifically, we examined whether compared to the control condition, rights framing (but not distress framing), would increase Israeli Jews’ perception of Jewish-Arab relations in zero-sum terms and this perception, in turn, would reduce their support for policies intended to empower Israeli Arabs.

Finally, Study 2 examined the effect of rights framing on participants’ personal belief regarding whether the bias against the minority group constituted a violation of its rights. According to Hull (2001), majority group members may reject the “problem definition” offered by the rights frame, for example, by suggesting an alternative frame to the issue at hand (e.g., they may frame the debate regarding same-sex marriage as a question of tolerance rather than of rights). Accordingly, we expected that even though Jews assigned to the rights framing condition would understand that this frame implies that the bias against Arab students unjustly violates their rights, it would not influence their personal belief regarding the nature of the bias (i.e., whether or not it reflected a case of right violation) compared to participants in the distress or no-framing conditions. In other words, participants exposed to the rights framing were expected to recognize but not endorse this frame.

7. Method

7.1. Participants

Participants were 94 Israeli Jewish students (63 females, 31 males; M_age = 24.5, SD = 3.64) who participated in the experiment in return for credit in an advanced course in psychology. All participants passed the instructional manipulation check (Oppenheimer et al., 2009).

7.2. Procedure and measures

Participants completed the SDO scale (α = .80) and were then randomly assigned into the three experimental conditions. In all conditions, participants read the text about landlords’ bias against Arab students; in the rights and distress framing conditions (but not in the control condition) this text was followed by a paragraph that constituted the experimental manipulation (see Study 1). Next, using 7-point scales (1 = not at all to 7 = very much), participants completed the manipulation checks (see Study 1) and the following measures.

7.3. Personal beliefs

Participants indicated whether they personally believed that the reluctance of Jewish landlords to rent their apartments to Arab students (a) constituted a violation of their rights, and (b) caused them severe distress.

7.4. Zero-sum beliefs

Modeled after Esses et al. (1998), three items measured participants’ perception of intergroup relations in zero-sum terms (e.g., “Every policy that benefits the Arabs involves taking something away from the Jews”; α = .85).

7.5. Support for empowering policies

Ten items (see Study 1) measured participants’ support for policies intended to empower Israeli Arabs; α = .92.
8. Results

8.1. Manipulation checks

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed a significant effect for framing condition, $F(2,91) = 16.28, p < .001$, and $\eta^2_p = .263$. As intended, participants’ perception that the article stressed that the bias against Arab students violated their rights was higher in the rights framing condition compared to the distress framing condition, $t(91) = 5.09, p < .001$, and the control condition, $t(91) = 4.92, p < .001$; $M_s = 6.32 (SD = .86), 4.15 (SD = 2.08)$, and $4.19 (SD = 1.73)$, in the rights framing, distress framing, and control conditions, respectively.

An additional one-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect for framing condition, $F(2,91) = 12.08, p < .001$, and $\eta^2_p = .210$, on participants’ perceptions that the article stressed that the bias against Arab students caused them severe psychological distress. As intended, this perception was stronger in the distress framing condition compared to the rights framing condition, $t(91) = 4.79, p < .001$, and the control condition, $t(91) = 3.22, p = .002$; $M_s = 6.03 (SD = 1.11), 4.11 (SD = 1.81)$ and $4.78 (SD = 1.76)$, in the distress framing, rights framing, and control conditions.

8.2. Personal beliefs

A one-way ANOVA revealed that, as expected, the effect of framing condition on participants’ personal belief that the bias against Arab students violated their rights was nonsignificant, $F(2,90) = .23, p = .799$, and $\eta^2_p = .005$; $M_s = 4.61 (SD = 2.08), 4.41 (SD = 2.11)$, and $4.74 (SD = 1.79)$ in the rights framing, distress framing, and control conditions. Similarly, as expected, the effect of framing condition on participants’ personal belief that the bias against Arab students caused them severe psychological distress failed to reach significance, $F(2,91) = 1.08, p = .344$, and $\eta^2_p = .023$; $M_s = 4.14 (SD = 1.80), 4.76 (SD = 1.50)$, and $4.59 (SD = 1.79)$ in the rights framing, distress framing, and control conditions.

8.3. Support for empowering policies

To test our main hypothesis, we conducted a regression analysis with support for empowering policies as the dependent variable, and experimental condition (coded as two dummy-variables with the control condition as the reference group), SDO (standardized), and the rights framing $\times$ SDO and distress framing $\times$ SDO interactions as predictors. The obtained regression model was significant, $F(5,88) = 5.92, p < .001$, and $\Delta R^2 = .252$. Generally consistent with previous studies, SDO had a marginal negative effect on support for empowering policies, $b = -.388, SE = .231, \beta = -.31$, and $p = .096$. With respect to the novel prediction for this study, as expected, the negative effect of rights framing, compared to the control condition, was significant, $b = -.588, SE = .287, \beta = -.22$, and $p = .044$, whereas the effect of distress framing failed to reach significance, $b = .101, SE = .274, \beta = .04$, and $p = .713$; $M_s = 3.99 (SD = 1.21), 4.71 (SD = 1.24)$, and $4.56 (SD = 1.21)$ in the rights framing, distress framing, and control conditions. The interaction effects for both rights framing $\times$ SDO, $b = -.340, SE = .289, \beta = -.18$, and $p = .243$, and distress framing $\times$ SDO, $b = .069, SE = .309, \beta = .03$, and $p = .823$, failed to reach significance.

To verify that the results of Study 1 replicated, we conducted an additional regression analysis in which the predictors were framing type, SDO and their two-way interactions, but this time framing type was coded such that the rights framing condition served as the reference group. A direct comparison between the two framing conditions revealed that, as in Study 1, participants’ support for empowering policies was significantly higher in the distress compared to the rights framing condition, $b = .689, SE = .283, \beta = .27$, and $p = .017$.

8.4. Mediation analysis

We used the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2013; Model 4) to assess whether the decrease in participants’ support for empowering policies in the rights framing condition was mediated by increased zero-sum perceptions (for which the means were 2.92 ($SD = 1.44$) in the rights framing condition, 2.25 ($SD = 1.08$) in the distress framing condition, and 2.35 ($SD = 1.08$) in the control condition). Rights framing (i.e., the dummy variable representing the contrast between the rights framing and control condition) was entered as the independent variable, zero-sum perceptions as the mediator, and support for empowering policies was the dependent variable. SDO and distress framing (i.e., the contrast between the distress framing and control condition) were controlled for in this analysis (SDO had a significant positive effect on zero-sum perceptions and a significant negative effect on support for empowering policies, $ps < .001$; the effects of distress framing on both zero-sum perceptions and policy support were nonsignificant, $ps > .762$). Bootstrapping analysis (1000 re-samples) revealed a significant indirect effect of rights framing on support for empowering policies through zero-sum perceptions, the 95% Confidence Interval = $-.608$ to $-.074$. Fig. 1 illustrates the obtained mediation.

An alternative analysis in which the independent variable was the contrast between the rights and the distress framing condition (controlling for SDO and the contrast between the rights and the control condition) yielded conceptually identical results: (a) the effect of rights framing (vs. distress framing) on zero-sum perceptions was significant, $p = .015$; (b) the direct effect of rights framing on support for empowering policies was only marginal, $p = .074$, whereas (c) the indirect effect through zero-sum perceptions was significant, the 95% CI was [.092, .846].

![Fig. 1. Mediation model with the effect of rights framing (compared to the control, no-framing condition) as the independent variable, zero-sum perceptions as the mediator, and support for empowering policies as the dependent variable (Study 2). SDO and distress framing (compared to the control condition) are used as covariates. Standardized regression coefficients (betas) are presented. For the path between rights framing and support for empowering policies, the coefficients shown inside vs. outside the parentheses represent the total and direct effects, respectively. Coefficients with one or two asterisks indicate beta weights’ significance level of $p < .05$ or $p < .001$, respectively.](image-url)
9. Discussion

Study 2 replicated and extended Study 1. First, we found that even though participants correctly understood that the rights frame implied that right violations had occurred, their personal belief with regards to whether the bias against Arab students indeed violated their rights was not influenced by framing condition. This finding may explain an apparent discrepancy between the present research’s findings and previous findings that the perception that the rights of minority groups have been unjustly violated leads majority-group members to support a structural change, even at the cost of sacrificing their own advantage (e.g., Iyer & Leach, 2010; Leach et al., 2002; Thomas, McGarty, & Mavor, 2010). Apparently, majority-group members exposed to the rights frame in the present study did not endorse the “problem definition” it offered; that is, they did not necessarily think that a violation of rights had occurred and hence did not exhibit the patterns observed in previous research.

Second, consistent with our predictions, rights framing increased Israeli Jews’ perception of their ingroup’s relations with Israeli Arabs in zero-sum terms, which in turn led to reduced support for empowering policies. As expected, the exposure to distress framing did not have similar effects: Distress framing did not differ from the control condition in terms of resulting zero-sum perceptions and policy support. These results support the integrated logic of the present research and the unified instrumental model (Esses et al., 1998, 2001) regarding the process leading to a negative backlash response to rights framing among majority-group members. In particular, the observed causal chain is consistent with the general process identified by the unified instrumental model, in which the combination of a potentially threatening group and situational factors that challenge the existing power relations leads to the experience of group competition, manifested in increased zero-sum beliefs, which promote strategic attempts to reduce intergroup competition.

10. Study 3

Study 3 aimed to strengthen our conclusion that zero-sum perceptions are the mechanism responsible for the effect of rights framing on policy support. According to Spencer et al. (2005; see also Stone-Romero & Rosopa, 2008), the use of a series of experiments in which the proposed mediator is not only measured (as done in Study 2) but also directly manipulated, permits stronger inferences with regard to its role in the hypothesized causal chain. Therefore, Study 3 used a manipulation intended to counter zero-sum perceptions and tested whether it would eliminate the negative effect of rights framing on Jews’ support for empowering policies.

Our manipulation of countering zero-sum beliefs was based on previous literature showing that challenging intergroup commonality (e.g., emphasizing membership in shared social categories) or interdependence (e.g., presenting evidence that the benefits of one group can lead to positive consequences for the other group as well) can indirectly counter zero-sum beliefs (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). Of direct relevance to our purposes, findings obtained within the unified instrumental model’s framework (Esses et al., 1998, 2001) revealed that counteracting zero-sum beliefs among host population members by highlighting intergroup positive interdependence improved their attitudes (e.g., willingness to engage in contact) towards immigrants. Based on these findings, Study 3 tested the prediction that highlighting intergroup interdependence, and thus implicitly countering zero-sum perceptions would eliminate the effects of rights framing on Jews’ support for empowering policies.

Instead of the context of the relations between Jews and Arabs in general (a group whose vast religious majority, 84%, is Muslim; Central Bureau of Statistics, 2014), we tested the predictions of Study 3 in the context of the relations between Israeli Jews and Druze, a religious minority group of Arab descent. This particular context was chosen due to our concern that presenting the relations between Jews and Arabs in general as characterized by positive interdependence would not be credible to participants, due to the deeply-rooted hostility and distrust between the two groups (Bar-Tal, 2013; Smooha, 2013). We reasoned that the manipulation of interdependence would be more reliable in the particular case of the relations with Druze Arabs, with whom the relations of Israeli Jews’ are more positive (Hamdy, 2008). For instance, while some Druze Arabs may be perceived by Jews as posing a security threat to their ingroup (e.g., due to their support of the Assad regime in Syria and refusal to accept Israeli citizenship), others serve in the Israeli army and are considered loyal to the state (Falah, 2002). Thus, the context of the relations between Jews and Druze Arabs seemed appropriate for our purposes, in the sense that it may lend itself to a successful manipulation of positive intergroup interdependence. In addition, using this context allowed us to test the generalizability of the negative effect of rights framing to a different situation of rights violation.

We used a 2 (rights framing [yes, no]) × 2 (interdependence [yes, no]) experimental design, in which following a measure of their SDO, Israeli Jewish participants read a short text discussing an ostensibly anti-Druze practice of refusing them entry to certain bars and nightclubs (a practice known in the Israeli discourse as the “selection phenomenon,” and which has received extensive media coverage and was even discussed by the parliament and government). Then, depending on the experimental condition, participants were either exposed or not exposed to (a) rights framing, and (b) a short paragraph that highlighted the positive interdependence between Jews and Druze Arabs in Israel. Following the manipulation checks for text comprehension and the measure of participants’ personal belief regarding whether the “selection phenomenon” violated Druze’s rights, we measured participants’ support for policies intended to empower the Druze group.

We predicted that consistent with Study 2, without highlighting intergroup interdependence, the exposure to rights framing would reduce Jews’ support for empowering policies compared to the no-framing condition. However, we also predicted that combining the rights frame with a manipulation highlighting intergroup interdependence (and thus implicitly countering zero-sum perceptions) would prevent the decrease in Jews’ support for empowering policies. In other words, we predicted a two-way interaction, such that rights framing would exert a negative effect on support for empowering policies in the absence, but not in the presence, of the manipulation highlighting intergroup interdependence.

11. Method

11.1. Participants

Only respondents who passed an instructional manipulation check (Oppenheimer et al., 2009) that appeared prior to the beginning of the study were allowed to take it. Participants were 101 Israeli Jews from the geographical center of Israel (50 women: Mage = 31, SD = 3.17) recruited by a commercial research firm to participate in “an online survey on intergroup relations.”

11.2. Procedure and measures

Participants, who responded to the materials presented online, were told that they would take part in a survey on intergroup relations. After filling out an 8-item measure of their SDO (α = .66) participants read that “as you may know, for various reasons some bars and nightclubs limit the admission of certain audiences. This survey examines attitudes regarding this practice, aka as the ‘selection phenomenon.’ In particular, the survey focuses on the barring of Druze youngsters, which occurs primarily in the North.” (The vast majority of Druze live in the Northern part of Israel; hence the reference to this geographical region).
Following this explanation, participants assigned to the control condition filled out the manipulation checks and measures of dependent variables. Participants in the rights framing condition further read: “A study recently published by a leading Israeli journal has established that the selection phenomenon blatantly contradicts the Proclamation of Independence statement...[the selection phenomenon breaches the principles of equality and justice and violates Druze Arabs’ legitimate right to not to be discriminated against on the basis of their origin.” Participants in the interdependence condition further read: “The relations between neighboring Jewish and Druze settlements in the Carmel and Galilee are characterized by good neighborhood and cooperation in various domains such as culture, education and sport, to the mutual satisfaction and benefit of both parties—Druze and Jews alike.” We intentionally used a mildly worded manipulation of positive interdependence, because previous work guided by the unified instrumental model’s framework found that an explicit targeting of zero-sum beliefs (e.g., exposing participants to statements such as, “It is not the case that when immigrants make gains in employment, it is at the expense of Canadians already living here”) can lead to “a rebound effect” (Esses et al., 2001, p. 404), eliciting more negative attitudes towards immigrants. Participants in the combined condition read a paragraph comprised of the texts of both the rights framing and the interdependence manipulations.

As manipulation checks, using 7-point scales (1 = not at all to 7 = very much) participants indicated the extent to which the text referred to (a) the selection phenomenon as violating Druze youngsters’ rights, and (b) the relations between Jews and Druze Arabs in Israel as characterized by mutual interdependence. We then measured participants’ personal belief regarding whether the selection phenomenon violated Druze Arabs’ rights. Finally, participants completed the 10-item measure of support for empowering policies, slightly adjusted to the Jewish-Druze context (e.g., “Universities should allocate more places to Druze Arab students as a form of affirmative action,” “The resources allocated to Druze Arabs from the State budget should be substantially increased”); $\alpha = .89$.

12. Results

12.1. Manipulation checks

A two-way ANOVA revealed a significant effect for framing condition, $F(1,97) = 72.63, p < .001$, and $\eta_p^2 = .428$, such that, as intended, participants in the rights framing condition indicated that the text related to the selection phenomenon as violating Druze youngsters’ rights, and the relations between Jews and Druze Arabs in Israel as characterized by mutual interdependence. We then measured participants’ personal belief regarding whether the selection phenomenon violated Druze Arabs’ rights. Finally, participants completed the 10-item measure of support for empowering policies, slightly adjusted to the Jewish-Druze context (e.g., “Universities should allocate more places to Druze Arab students as a form of affirmative action,” “The resources allocated to Druze Arabs from the State budget should be substantially increased”); $\alpha = .89$.

12.2. Personal beliefs

As expected, framing condition did not affect participants’ personal belief regarding whether the selection phenomenon violated Druze’s rights, $F(1,97) = 2.73, p = .102$, and $\eta_p^2 = .027$. If anything, participants’ belief that the selection phenomenon violated Druze’s rights tended to decrease in the rights framing condition compared to the condition that did not include this frame, $M_S = 5.92$ ($SD = 1.37$ vs. $6.35$ ($SD = 1.18$). The effects of the interdependence manipulation and its interaction with framing condition also failed to reach significance, $p > .573$.

12.3. Support for empowering policies

To test our main hypothesis, we conducted a regression analysis with support for empowering policies as the dependent variable; the predictors were SDO (standardized), framing condition (coded as “0” in the no-framing condition and as “1” in the rights framing condition), interdependence (“0” in the condition that did not mention intergroup interdependence; “1” in the interdependence condition) and the two-way and three-way interactions. The obtained model was significant, $F(7,92) = 2.90, p = .009$, and $\Delta R^2 = .181$.7 The effects for SDO, rights framing, interdependence, and their interactions are presented in Table 1. As seen in the table, the expected Framing $\times$ Interdependence interaction was significant.

Fig. 2 presents the estimated means and standard errors in the four experimental cells. Planned comparisons revealed that consistent with Study 2, when intergroup positive interdependence was not highlighted, the exposure to rights framing reduced Jews’ support for empowering policies, $F(1,92) = 4.00, p = .048$, and $\eta_p^2 = .042$. By contrast, when intergroup positive interdependence was highlighted, rights framing tended to have a positive effect on support for empowering policies, $F(1,92) = 3.13, p = .080$, and $\eta_p^2 = .033$. An alternative way to interpret this interaction would be to compare each of the three experimental cells to the control (no-framing, no-interdependence) condition. This analysis revealed that while both the rights-framing alone (see above) and the interdependence alone, $F(1,92) = 4.58, p = .035$, and $\eta_p^2 = .047$, reduced Jews’ support for empowering policies compared to the control condition, the “combined” cell did significantly not differ from it, $F(1,92) = .23, p = .635$, and $\eta_p^2 = .002$. Thus, the “combined” cell cancelled out rather than added the negative effect of each of the separate manipulations.

13. Discussion

Study 3 showed, consistent with the findings of Study 2, that in a condition that did not mention interdependence between Israeli Jews and Druze Arabs, Jewish participants exposed to rights framing were significantly less supportive of policies that would empower Druze Arabs than were participants in the control condition without rights framing. However, when interdependence between Jews and Druze in Israel was emphasized, rights framing did not elicit such a backlash response, and in fact tended to elicit somewhat more support for empowering policies than did the condition that emphasized solely interdependence (i.e., without using a rights frame). This finding directly supports our theorizing regarding the mediating role of zero-sum perceptions, demonstrating that once these perceptions were countered, the negative effect of rights framing on policy support was eliminated.

Interestingly, in the absence of rights framing, Jewish participants were less supportive of empowering policies for Druze when intergroup interdependence was stressed than when it was not mentioned. Positive interdependence between groups creates a sense of common fate and common identity among members of the separate groups (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). Hence, this result may be viewed as consistent with findings that when majority-group members think of members of a minority group primarily in terms of a common, superordinate group identity (i.e., rather than in terms of the separate groups identities), they attend less to group-based disparities, and, as a consequence, and are less responsive to inequities based on racial or ethnic group membership (Dovidio, Saguy, Gaertner, & Thomas, 2012). For example, Banfield and Dovidio (2013) found that when common national (American) identity was made salient, compared to when

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7 One outlier who ran counter to the general pattern inspected in the boxplots was excluded from analysis. The reported pattern of results persisted even when including this outlier; in particular, the two-way interaction remained significant, $b = .99, SE = .44$, $\beta = .38$, and $p = .029$. 
separate racial group identities were emphasized, White Americans were less likely to perceive subtle bias against Blacks as unfair discrimination, and therefore were less likely to endorse action to address unfair treatment. However, Banfield and Dovidio (2013) also found that when bias against Blacks was blatant, White participants were as responsive – and somewhat more responsive – to group-based injustice when a common identity, compared to when separate racial identities, was salient. This finding is consistent with Study 3’s finding that combining interdependence with a rights framing, which made the injustice involved in the “selection phenomenon” more blatant, tended to increase participants’ responsiveness to this bias compared to the condition in which interdependence was highlighted without the rights framing.

At the practical level, finding a way to expose majority-group members to rights framing without leading to a backlash response is important because repeating a certain frame over and over again can initiate a process of reframing, which may eventually change its recipients’ world view (Lakoff, 2004). Therefore, to the extent that a minority group consistently uses rights framing when presenting its plight, it may ultimately influence the majority’s view regarding the need to change the existing social structure. This possibility is consistent with classic studies showing that persistent, unwavering minorities can influence majorities to adopt their perspectives (Moscovici & Nemeth, 1974).

14. General discussion

Three studies investigated the effect of rights framing, referring to the plight of a minority group as stemming from and reflecting an illegitimate violation of its members’ basic rights. We found that, compared to a distress-framing (Studies 1–2) or no-framing condition (Studies 2–3), rights framing reduced Israeli Jews’ support for policies to empower Israeli Arabs. This negative effect was mediated by increased perceptions of intergroup relations in zero-sum terms (Study 2) and buffered when zero-sum perceptions were countered using a manipulation that highlighted intergroup interdependence (Study 3). Consistent with our theorizing that majority-group members respond to the structural implications of this frame, the negative effect of rights framing could not be accounted for simply by Jews’ feelings of being wrongfully accused of behaving unfairly towards Arabs, and rights framing did not exert a negative effect on the support for non-empowering help (Study 1). Our findings regarding the negative effect of rights framing on support for empowering policies are consistent with the observation that historically, minority groups’ demand for group-based justice and equal rights (e.g., the Civil Rights or the Feminist Movements) have often led to increased intergroup conflict because it signaled an intergroup power struggle (Dovidio, Saguy, & Shnabel, 2009).

Interestingly, the exposure to a corresponding distress framing which highlighted the suffering of the minority group without implying that structural change is the required “treatment recommendation,” did not lead to a backlash response (Study 1). However, it also failed to increase majority-group members’ support for empowering policies (Study 2). From the perspective of minority-group members who are interested in change, this dynamics presents a dilemma: framing their plight in a way that highlights their distress and suffering does not incite conflict with the majority (see also Moscovici & Pérez, 2009), but it is also unlikely to facilitate support for structural change. Framing their plight in terms of an unjust rights violation is therefore vital for promoting the understanding that the solution lies in a structural change. Ironically, however, precisely because rights framing points to the need for a structural change, using this type of framing might lead to a backlash response among majority-group members and reduce their support for this very change.

Theoretically, our research extends the unified instrumental model of group conflict (Esses et al., 1998, 2001, 2005) by applying its logic to a context in which the “situational factor” that increased majority group members’ experience of intergroup competition was not concrete, as in the case of competition over water, agriculture land, and oil (Esses & Jackson, 2008) or economic opportunities such as well-paying jobs (Jackson & Esses, 2000). Rather, rights framing represents a more abstract and implicit challenge to the existing power relations, which has not been examined thus far within the model’s framework. From a broader theoretical perspective, due to the immense impact of frames on public opinion, the study of framing effects has received extensive attention in political science, sociology and communication studies. As such, “framing processes have come to be regarded … as a central dynamic in understanding the character and course of social movements” (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 611). Along with other social psychological studies on framing (e.g., Chow et al., 2008; Lowery et al., 2007, 2012; Powell et al., 2005), our research may contribute to interdisciplinary cross fertilization. For example, framing theory developed in other disciplines may be enriched by linking its knowledge to established social psychological constructs such as SDO or zero-sum perceptions which, as illustrated in the present research, can determine the effects of different frames.

15. Limitations and future directions

One limitation of the present research is that the sample sizes, which were determined at the time by feasibility-related considerations, are somewhat lower than prescribed by current recommendations. To address this limitation, we conducted a small-scale meta-analysis, comprising of the three reported studies, in which we compared support for empowering policies in the rights framing condition to the conditions that did not include this frame (i.e., the control and distress framing conditions). To allow for an estimation of the weighted mean effect size across studies, we calculated Cohen’s $d$ as a standardized measure of the effect size of rights framing in each study, using the $t$-test value.

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Table 1

Study 3: Results of regression analysis on support for empowering policies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$b$</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>.001</td>
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<td>.285</td>
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<td>.048</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interdependence</td>
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<td>.317</td>
<td>-2.14</td>
<td>.035</td>
</tr>
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<td>.326</td>
<td>-4.31</td>
<td>.667</td>
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<tr>
<td>SDO × interdependence</td>
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<td>.320</td>
<td>1.11</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>2.66</td>
<td>.009</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDO × rights framing × interdependence</td>
<td>-0.309</td>
<td>.436</td>
<td>-0.71</td>
<td>.481</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. $N = 100$ Jewish participants. Framing was coded such that it had the values “0” and “1” in the control vs. the rights framing conditions, respectively. Interdependence was coded such that it had the values “0” and “1” in the control vs. the interdependence conditions, respectively. SDO was standardized (even though the effect of SDO in this model failed to reach significance, consistent with Studies 1–2 it was negatively correlated with support for empowering policies, $r = -.319$, $p < .001$).

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Fig. 2. Estimated means and standard errors for Jewish participants’ ($N = 100$) support for policies intended to empower Druze Arabs in the four experimental cells.
of the appropriate regression slope.\(^8\) For Study 2, we calculated Cohen's \(d\) from a new regression slope contrasting rights framing with both control and distress framing (i.e., collapsing no-framing and distress framing into a single cell), to assess the overall effect of rights framing against all other conditions in the study.\(^9\) For Study 3, the regression slope estimated the simple effect of the rights framing manipulation within the no-interdependence condition. All effect sizes were coded such that positive values corresponded to lower support for empowering policies in the rights framing condition. To allow for larger samples to have relatively more weight in the final analysis, an inverse variance weight was also calculated.\(^10\) A fixed-effect meta-analysis (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001; Wilson, 2005) showed that across all three studies, rights framing significantly reduced support for empowering policies, \(d = .53, 95\% \text{ CI} [.25, .81], k = 3, \) and \(n = 268.\) The variance of the effect size did not differ across studies, Cochran’s \(Q = .23, df = 2,\) and \(p = .892.\) This meta-analysis bolsters our confidence in the validity of the main argument of the present research, that is, that rights framing indeed leads to a backlash response, in the form of reduced support for empowering policies, among majority-group members.\(^11\)

Another limitation of the present research is that it focused on a context in which the hegemonic perception among the majority group is that the minority threatens its security and safety (e.g., Bar-Tal, 2013). In such contexts, the demand to relinquish power to the minority, which is implied in the use of rights framing, may be especially intimidating for majority-group members. However, consistent with Entman's (1993) suggestion that the effects of a given frame are dependent on the frame recipients’ pre-existing schemas, future research might explore the possibility that, in contexts where the outgroup is not perceived as threatening, rights framing would not bring about a backlash response, because giving up power to a non-threatening outgroup is unlikely to harm the advantaged group.

A pilot study, associated with the present line of research, which focused on the relations between human beings and animals (specifically, the use of animals in medical research) supported this possibility. In particular, we found that rights framing, but not distress framing, of the maltreatment of lab animals increased participants' support for policies that advance and protect these animals’ rights compared to a no-framing condition (full methods and results are reported in the Appendix A).\(^12\) Thus, in the context of “speciesicism” (Singer, 1975) against a non-threatening outgroup, participants endorsed the “treatment recommendation” prescribed by the rights frame. This result is consistent with findings that when empowering the outgroup was not expected to harm their own ingroup, majority group members were relatively open to supporting empowering policies (Lowery, Unzueta, Knowles, & Goff, 2006).

Another intriguing direction for future research would be to examine the effects of rights framing in contexts in which the unjust violation of the minority’s rights is clear-cut (e.g., discriminatory apartheid legislation). As explained earlier, within societies that formally endorse egalitarian values, bias is more likely to occur in ambivalent, “gray area” situations, which are less recognizable as expressions of unjust treatment (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). In particular, in the contexts examined in the present research, the bias against the minority can be viewed as justified by the need to protect majority-group members' right for property. Theorizing on social justice suggests that issues of fairness and justice are of primary concern within the ingroup, and less so across group lines. Thus, the principles of moral and fair treatment that normally apply within one’s ingroup are sometimes not extended to members of another group (Clayton & Opotow, 2003). In line with this theorizing, participants in the present study were unwilling to sacrifice their ingroup's rights for the sake of advancing the rights of an outgroup. Nevertheless, it is possible that in clear-cut contexts of bias, majority-group members would find it difficult to reject the rights frame. As we noted earlier, when majority group members recognize and acknowledge injustice, they are likely to support structural change, even at some cost to their ingroup (e.g., Iyer & Leach, 2010; see also Becker, 2012 for majority-group members' readiness to exhibit “solidarity-based collective action”). Thus, exposure to rights framing when violations of justice and fairness are clear-cut and undeniable would be expected to motivate members of majority groups to support empowering policies that aim to restore justice, even when these policies involve structural changes that might erode their ingroup's dominance.

Finally, in the present research, due to our interest in majority-group members' backlash response to frames that challenge the existing social structure, we focused on the process initiated by the use of rights framing, while using the distress frame as an additional control condition (beyond the no-framing condition). However, it may be valuable to further explore the process set in motion in response to exposure to distress framing. For example, based on Moscovici and Pérez's (2007) findings that the exposure a victimized minority (as compared to an active minority) increased majority-group members' sense of guilt, it is possible that the exposure to distress framing increases majority-group members' readiness to compensate individual minority group members who were harmed by the bias against them.

In conclusion, a just social arrangement in which the rights of minority groups are protected requires a fundamental structural change (Shnabel & Ulrich, 2013). The present research explored majority group members' responses to this challenge to the existing structure, which is embedded in the use of rights framing. Understanding these responses has important practical implications. For example, our findings suggest that promoting perceptions of intergroup relations in win–win rather than zero-sum terms may be a prerequisite for preventing a backlash response and making rights framing effective in promoting support for empowering policies. As such, our research has direct implications for the planning of effective social and political communication such as anti-discrimination campaigns and protests.

Appendix A. A pilot study on the effect of rights framing in the context of using animals in medical research

The goal of this pilot study was to test the effect of rights framing in the case of a minority group (see Seyranian, Atuel, & Crano, 2008 for different conceptualizations of the terms “majority” and “minority”; e.g., based on relative power) that is generally perceived as non-

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\(^8\) Using the formula: \(d = \frac{\text{mean}_{X} - \text{mean}_{Y}}{SD}\) (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1991). Two outliers were excluded, as reported in footnotes 4 and 7.

\(^9\) Specifically, the predictors in this regression analysis were experimental condition (coded as one dummy-variable), SDO (standardized), and the rights framing × SDO interaction. The obtained regression model was significant, \(F(3,90) = 10.00, p = .001, \) and \(\Delta R^2 = .25.\) As expected, rights framing had a significant negative effect on support for empowering policies, \(b = -.638, SE = 248, \beta = -.24, p = .012; M_S = 3.99(\text{SD} = 1.21)\) and 4.64 (SD = 1.22) in the rights framing and the combined control-and-distress conditions, respectively (SDO had also a significant negative effect, \(\beta = -.28\) and \(p = .021,\) and the two-way interaction did not reach significance, \(\beta = -20\) and \(p = .108).\)

\(^10\) Using the formula: \(w = \frac{m_{X} + m_{Y}}{n_{X} + n_{Y}}\) (Cooper, Hedges, & Valentine, 2009).

\(^11\) Also, conceptually similar results were obtained in two alternative small-scale meta-analyses: the first found that rights framing significantly reduced support for empowering policies when compared specifically with distress framing (Studies 1–2), \(d = .53, 95\% \text{ CI} [.19, .87], k = 2, \) and \(n = 168.\) The second found that rights framing significantly reduced support for empowering policies when compared specifically to the no-framing condition (Studies 2–3), \(d = .43, 95\% \text{ CI} [.05, .81], k = 2,\) and \(n = 194.\)

\(^12\) The pilot study reported in the Appendix A also helps to rule out the possibility that the negative effects of rights framing found in Studies 1–3 were actually driven by an interaction between the measure of SDO and the experimental manipulation. That is, perhaps completing the SDO scale (which was employed prior to the framing manipulation in all studies) made zero-sum beliefs salient to participants, and this heightened salience, in turn, led to their negative response to the rights framing. However, if this possibility was true, one would expect the same pattern to emerge in the pilot study as well. That is, participants responding to the SDO scale would be expected to increase the salience of zero-sum beliefs (i.e., that the protection of animal rights must come at the expense of humans) and consequent negative reaction to the animal-rights framing condition. The fact that the opposite pattern emerged supports our conclusion that the effect reported in Studies 1–3 was driven by the rights framing in itself.
threatening. As demonstrated in Studies 1–3, in the case of a potentially threatening minority group, the challenge to the legitimacy of the existing power relations that is implied by the use of rights framing resulted in a backlash response in the form of reduced support for empowering policies. However, the implicit demand to give up power to for the sake of a just social arrangement was not expected to be experienced by advantaged majority-group members as highly intimidating in the case of a non-threatening outgroup, because empowering it would not directly harm their ingroup. Therefore, we therefore hypothesized that in the case of a non-threatening group not only that rights framing would not lead to a backlash response, but it may also have a positive effect on support for empowering policies, because it implies that the existing arrangement is unjust and points to empowering policies as the appropriate “treatment recommendation.” This prediction is consistent with findings that when empowering the outgroup was not expected to harm their own ingroup, majority-group members were more open to supporting empowering policies (Lowery et al., 2006).

We tested this hypothesis in the context of the relations between human beings and animals, focusing on the use of animals in medical research. Due to the common perception that animals are inferior to humans and hence their maltreatment is morally appropriate (i.e., speciesism; Ryder, 1975; Singer, 1975), animals used in medical research received treatment that is far worse than that received by human beings (e.g., in terms of getting pain relief or medical care following surgeries, PETA, n.d.). Therefore, animals may be viewed as an outgroup that does not pose any direct threat to participants’ ingroup (i.e., humans). Using the same experimental design as in Study 2, participants first completed a self-reported measure of their SDO and were then randomly assigned to the rights framing, distress framing, or no-framing control conditions. We then measured their support for empowering policies.

Consistent with Studies 1–2, SDO, which reflects the wish to keep inferior groups “in place” (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), was predicted to be associated with less support for empowering policies. Of direct relevance for our purpose, we predicted that rights framing would increase participants’ support for empowering policies to protect animal rights (e.g., legislation that restricts the use of animals in medical research), as opposed to the pattern found in Studies 2–3. In line with Study 2, distress framing, which does not identify structural change as the appropriate “treatment recommendation,” was not expected to influence participants’ policy support.

A.1. Method

A.1.1. Participants

Participants were 83 undergraduate students registered in the subject pool of an Israeli university (41 women; $M_{age} = 26, SD = 2.53$). Participation in this study was restricted to participants who did not identify themselves as animal-rights activists in a pre-screen survey.

A.1.2. Procedure and measures

Participants who responded to the materials presented online were told that they would take part in a survey on intergroup relations. Next, they completed an eight-item SDO scale ($\alpha = .78$). Participants were then told that “this survey examines attitudes regarding one of the issues that has recently engaged the public; namely, the use of animals in medical research.” Participants assigned to the control condition were then directed to the measure of policy support. Participants in the rights framing condition further read that “in recent years there has been growing awareness that just like human beings, animals too have fundamental rights. Current research suggests that the use of animals in medical research is illegitimate because it severely violates animals’ fundamental rights to which they are entitled by the virtue of being living creatures.” Participants in the distress framing condition read that “in recent years there has been growing awareness that just like human beings, animals too can suffer from severe emotional distress. Current research suggests that the use of animals in medical research might cause them psychological distress that is manifested in fear, panic, depression, loss of their natural joy of living and feelings of helplessness.”

A.1.3. Manipulation checks

Participants in the rights and distress conditions indicated whether the text they had read stressed that using animals in medical research (a) constituted a violation of their rights, and (b) caused them severe psychological distress. Participants in the control condition, who were not exposed to any text beyond the sentence presenting the topic, did not respond to these items.

A.1.4. Support for empowering policies

Participants indicated their agreement with nine statements ($\alpha = .86$), relating to various issues involving the use of animals in medical research: (a) “A significant portion of the budget of the Office of Environmental Affairs should be dedicated to protecting the rights of animals used in medical research (e.g., inspecting their living conditions);” (b) “I support the law that allows researchers to conduct experiments in primates to find cures for severe human diseases” (reverse coded); (c) “Significant governmental funds should be allocated to developing alternative ways to examine the effectiveness of medications that do not involve experiments on animals”; (d) “There should be strict supervision and restriction of the number and type of animals used in medical experiments”; (e) “Generous governmental grants should be provided to pharmaceutical firms that test new medications without making use of animals (e.g., by using tissues culture techniques);” (f) “The import of medication tested on animals should be limited”; (g) “The psychological wellbeing of lab animals should not be a consideration that affects the planning and design of medical research” (reverse coded); (h) “The suffering caused to animals that are used in medical research should be minimized, even if it significantly increases research costs”; (i) “It should be forbidden to use animals in research for other purposes beyond developing life-saving medications (e.g., curing minor illnesses).”

A.2. Results and discussion

A.2.1. Manipulation checks

A one-way ANOVA revealed a significant difference between the two framing conditions, $F(1,52) = 19.92, p < .001$, and $\eta^2 = .277$ (the control condition did not include manipulation checks, hence the lower degrees of freedom). As intended, participants in the rights framing condition indicated that the text stressed that the use of animals in medical research violated their rights to a greater extent than participants in the distress framing condition; $M_s = 5.93 (SD = 1.31)$ vs. $3.84 (SD = 2.10)$. Correspondingly, participants in the distress framing condition indicated that the text stressed that the use of animals causes them severe distress to a greater extent than participants in the rights framing condition; $F(1,52) = 151.54, p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .745$, and $M_s = 6.44 (SD = 1.16)$ vs. $2.07 (SD = 1.41)$.

A.2.2. Support for empowering policies

To test our main hypothesis, we conducted a regression analysis with support for empowering policies as the dependent variable, and experimental condition (coded as two dummy-variables with the control condition as the reference group), SDO (standardized), and their interactions as predictors. The regression model was significant, 1Two outliers (Cook’s distance = .54 and .17) was excluded from analysis. The reported results generally persisted when these participants were included in analysis. In particular, while the effect of distress framing failed to reach significance, $b = .440, SE = .305, p = .18$, and $p = .152$, rights framing had a marginally significant positive effect, $b = .530, SE = .280, |t| = .23$, and $p = .063$.
Appendix B. Supplementary data
Supplementary data to this article can be found online at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2015.11.007.

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