Independent field experiments in 23 large cities around the world measured three types of spontaneous, nonemergency helping: alerting a pedestrian who dropped a pen, offering help to a pedestrian with a hurt leg trying to reach a pile of dropped magazines, and assisting a blind person cross the street. The results indicated that a city's helping rate was relatively stable across the three measures, suggesting that helping of strangers is a cross-culturally meaningful characteristic of a place; large cross-cultural variation in helping emerged, ranging from an overall rate of 93% in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to 40% in Kuala Lampur, Malaysia. Overall helping across cultures was inversely related to a country's economic productivity; countries with the cultural tradition of *simpatia* were on average more helpful than countries with no such tradition. These findings constitute a rich body of descriptive data and novel hypotheses about the sociocultural, economic, and psychological determinants of helping behavior across cultures.

CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES
IN HELPING STRANGERS

ROBERT V. LEVINE
California State University, Fresno

ARA NORENZAYAN
University of Michigan

KAREN PHILBRICK
California State University, Fresno

Anecdotal observation and empirical research suggest that strangers are more likely to receive help in some cities than they are in others (e.g., Steblay, 1987). These differences have been explained by theories from a number of perspectives, ranging from explanations focusing on the importance of objective demographic indicators like population size (e.g., Milgram, 1970), rate of population change (e.g., Rubington & Weinberg, 1977), and economic prosperity (e.g., Linsky & Straus, 1986) to those focusing on subjectively measured social-psychological variables such as cultural values (e.g., Triandis, 1989).

Although many studies have demonstrated that helping rates differ between communities in a single country, almost none have systematically compared any of these manifold of explanations for the differences. (Two notable intracultural exceptions, discussed below, are the study by Amato (1983) of 55 Australian cities and the study by Levine, Martinez, Brase, and Sorenson (1994) of 36 U.S. cities.) Virtually all of the studies of community differences in helping have focused on the single variable of population size, most often testing the popular hypothesis that the tendency to help strangers declines as the size of a city increases. In a

meta-analysis of 65 of these studies, Steblay (1987) found general support for this hypothesis. She reported a significant effect size of 0.29 for population size, with the decline in helping rate beginning at populations of 300,000.

Population size, however, is only one of many qualities that defines the character of a city and that differentiate cities from each other (e.g., Cutter, 1985; Fischer, 1976; Krupat & Guild, 1980; Levine, Miyake, & Lee, 1989). Strauss (1976) has argued that "the entire complex of urban life can be thought of as a person rather than a distinctive place, and the city can be endowed with a personality of its own." Explaining why strangers are more likely to receive help in some cities than in others requires investigating the complexities of cities' personalities beyond knowing the size of their population. However, the virtual absence of systematic cross-cultural investigations of helping is a serious impediment to a richer understanding of how the personality of a place relates to helping behavior.

SAMPLING ISSUES

The present study attempted to avoid sampling problems common to previous studies of this type. In large part, the lack of empirical assessment of explanations other than population size for community-level differences in helping may be a by-product of shortcomings in the sampling used in the previous studies. All but the studies by Amato (1983) and Levine et al. (1994) have been limited to convenience samples of a few (often two) readily testable large and small communities. To compare multiple predictors of helping at the city/community level, however, it is necessary to conduct an ecological analysis (Hofstede, 1980). This consists of treating each city as a single subject in a correlational-type design. By treating each city as a single subject, rates of helping can be correlated to other available data on community characteristics (e.g., community-level data reflecting population attributes, economics, and social-psychological qualities). Ecological analysis, however, requires testing considerably more subjects (i.e., cities) than most previous studies have done.

Another important shortcoming of most previous community-level helping studies is their general lack of attention to cultural differences (Smith & Bond, 1993). The few studies that have been conducted outside the United States have focused on urban-rural differences within a single country or on differences between two or three countries. Urban-rural differences have been examined in Amato's study (1983) of 55 Australian cities; in the studies by Korte and his colleagues of cities and towns in Turkey (Korte & Ayvalioglu, 1981) and the Netherlands (Korte, Ypma, & Toppen, 1975); and in studies by Collett and O'Shea (1976) and Moghaddam and Stringer (1979) of the Iranian cities of Tehran and Isfahan. Differences between two or three countries have been studied by Feldman (1968) in comparisons of helping in Boston, Athens, and Paris; L'Armand and Pepitone's (1975) study of Philadelphia and Madras, India; and Hedge and Yousif's (1992) comparison of the United Kingdom and the Sudan. We found no studies in the literature that compared helping behaviors using identical procedures in more than three countries. In contrast, the present study measured helping in a wide range of cultures.

The present study focused on a large city—in most cases, the largest—in each country. There were several reasons for this choice. First, for practical reasons, the slow pedestrian flow of most small communities would have made it difficult to carry out a wide range of field experiments. Second, although no single city represents the entirety of a country, it was judged that the largest city in each country would be most comparable for purposes of making meaningful cross-national comparisons of helping behavior. Third, there is a strong

international population movement to large cities. It is estimated that more than half of the world's population will be living in urbanized areas within the next decade (Gottdiener, 1994).

GOALS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

We examined cultural differences in helping behavior in a cross-national sample of 23 large cities. The study had three main goals:

1. *Is helping of strangers a cross-culturally meaningful characteristic of a place?* The first objective of this study was to determine if a city's tendency to offer nonemergency help to strangers is stable across situations over a wide range of cultures. It is conceivable that the substantial internal reliability of helping behaviors observed within a single nation—say, the United States (Levine et al., 1994)—may depend on a web of local cultural and socioeconomic factors unique to that culture. Pepitone (1999), for example, argues that there are multiple, distinct motivations underlying different helping behaviors, which may become particularly apparent when one compares helping behavior across cultures. Is it valid to generalize across situations about a city's tendency to grant everyday favors to strangers? Because of the absence of large-scale cross-cultural studies of helping, this was a first attempt to assess the interrelationships of different helping measures in nonemergency situations across cultures.
2. *Does helping of strangers vary cross-culturally?* A second objective of this study was to obtain a descriptive body of data on helping behavior across cultures using identical procedures. Because our study focused on cities with relatively large populations, the role of population size in helping can be considered minimal in this sample. An important question, therefore, is whether substantial variation exists across the cultures that we studied. To the extent that such cross-cultural variation is observed, researchers should consider explanations other than population size.
3. *What are some community characteristics that are related to helping of strangers across cultures?* As Steblay's (1987) meta-analysis demonstrated, people in large cities tend to be less helpful than those in smaller places. Although the main goal of the present study was to provide descriptive data on helping rates across cultures, we made a preliminary attempt to identify country-level variables that might relate to differences in helping.

Three overlapping theoretical explanations for community-level differences in helping behavior were tested; none of these explanations have been considered in past cross-cultural research.

Economic explanations. A central tenet of many sociological theories is that stressful conditions are associated with maladaptive individual behaviors that are detrimental to the social functioning of the community. There is some empirical support for this relationship. Linsky & Straus (1986), for example, found that communities with poorer economies, as measured by variables such as unemployment rates and frequency of business failures, had higher rates of crime and other social pathologies. Lee (1995) found that workers who were satisfied with their pay were more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors. Levine et al. (1994) found moderate support for a positive relationship between the economic health of cities and helping in the United States.

On the other hand, there are reasons to believe that helping might be negatively correlated with economic health. Prosperous countries may require their citizens to be more individualistic in their pursuit of personal needs and to ignore, in general, traditional societal values that prescribe helpfulness toward fellow members of society (Inkeles, 1997). These factors may mean less willingness or ability to be concerned with the well-being of strangers.

Cultural values. Two cultural values were considered in this study. One was what many cross-cultural psychologists believe to be the most important construct for explaining the social psychological patterns of cultures: individualism versus collectivism. Briefly, individualistic societies are characterized by an orientation to the individual and their nuclear family, whereas collectivistic societies give highest priority to the welfare of one or more larger collectives (Triandis, 1995). At this level of explanation, it might be predicted that collectivistic societies should be more likely to attend to the needs of strangers. As recent discussions of individualism-collectivism point out, however, equating collectivism with concern for individuals outside of one's relevant collective is not necessarily true. It has sometimes been argued, in fact, that collectivistic cultures often focus less attention on outsiders than do individualistic cultures (see for example, Sethi, Lepper, & Ross, 1999). If this were the case, helping strangers might actually be more frequent or no different in individualistic cultures (Triandis, 1995). At the least, it appears that there are many subtypes of individualism-collectivism and that these subtypes may differ in their orientation to the needs of strangers (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995; Triandis, 1996).

A second cultural value orientation we considered was the notion of *simpatia* (in Spanish) or *simpatico* (in Portuguese), which characterizes Spanish and Latin American cultures (Rodrigues & Assmar, 1988; Sanchez-Burks, Nisbett, & Ybarra, 2000; Triandis, Marin, Lisansky, & Betancourt, 1984). Simpatia cultures are defined by their proactive socio-emotional orientation and concern with the social well-being of others. This cultural syndrome includes an implicit prerogative to be actively friendly, polite, and helpful toward strangers. Therefore, we predicted that simpatia cultures in our sample would on average be more helpful toward strangers than non-simpatia cultures.

Cognitive explanations: pace of life. Cognitive processing theories predict that a rapid pace of life decreases the likelihood of finding time for social responsibilities, particularly when those responsibilities involve strangers. Milgram's (1970) system overload theory, in particular, argues that one of the consequences of a rapid pace of life is inattention to the needs of strangers. Milgram hypothesizes that people who are confronted with more sensory inputs than they are able to process experience psychological overload. This is frequently the case in modern cities—the larger the city, the greater the overload. One way that the overloaded urbanite adapts to this predicament is by screening out nonessential stimuli. In essence, the city dweller focuses on his or her goals and moves directly toward them as quickly as possible. Because the needs of strangers are usually low on the urbanite's hierarchy of necessities, attention to these needs becomes a frequent casualty of the screening process. Tests of this hypothesis at the city level have produced conflicting findings. Levine et al. (1994) found only limited support for the relationship between pace of life and helping in their 36-city study. However, other studies have found that people who are pressed for time are less likely to help a stranger than people who are not in a hurry (Darley & Batson, 1973). The present study provided a test of the pace-of-life hypothesis at a cross-national level.

METHOD

OVERVIEW

Three measures of helping were sampled in a large city in each of 23 countries. These measures were correlated with statistics reflecting population size, economic well-being, cultural values (individualism-collectivism, simpatia), and the pace of life for each location.

SUBJECTS (CITIES)

The subjects in this study were large cities in each of 23 countries. The selection of countries was aimed at the widest possible sampling of the regions and cultures of the world. For practical reasons, however, subject selection was sometimes driven by convenience. Data collection at the various international sites was conducted by interested, responsible students who were either traveling to foreign countries or returning to their home countries for the summer, or by cross-cultural psychologists and their students in other countries who volunteered to assist the authors. Although this method of subject selection was clearly less than random, the final list of countries did encompass a wide range of locales in North and South America, Eastern and Western Europe, Africa, and Asia.

In each country, data were collected in either the largest city or another major city: Austria (Vienna), Brazil (Rio de Janeiro), Bulgaria (Sofia), China (Shanghai), Costa Rica (San Jose), Czech Republic (Prague), Denmark (Copenhagen), El Salvador (San Salvador), Hungary (Budapest), India (Calcutta), Israel (Tel Aviv), Italy (Rome), Malawi (Lilongwe), Malaysia (Kuala Lampur), Mexico (Mexico City), the Netherlands (Amsterdam), Romania (Bucharest), Singapore (Singapore), Spain (Madrid), Sweden (Stockholm), Taiwan (Taipei), Thailand (Bangkok), and the United States (New York City).

SELECTION OF HELPING BEHAVIORS

We selected three representative helping behaviors in the context of Pearce and Amato's (1980) empirically derived three-dimensional model of helping.[1] Pearce and Amato's model poses a threefold structure of helping: (a) *doing* what one can; direct help versus *giving* what one has, indirect help; (b) *spontaneous*, informal help versus *planned*, formal help; and (c) *serious* versus *nonserious* help. These three dimensions correspond, in order, to the type of help offered, the social setting in which help is offered, and the degree of need of the recipient. In a previous study (Levine et al., 1994), the three helping situations, described below, were found to differ on the spectrum of each of Pearce and Amato's dimensions in ratings by independent judges. All three situations were, however, judged to be higher on doing rather than giving, and higher on spontaneous rather than planned help. The blind person and hurt leg situations were judged to be more serious than the dropped pen situation.

HELPING MEASURES

Each of the three helping measures and the walking speed measure were administered in two or more locations, in main downtown areas, during main business hours, on clear days, during the summer months of 1 or more years between 1992 and 1997. For the two measures that required approaching pedestrians (dropped pen and hurt leg situations), only individuals

walking alone were selected. Children (younger than 17 years old), and people who were physically disabled, very old, carrying heavy packages, and so forth (i.e., those who might not be fully capable or expected to help) were excluded. Subjects were selected randomly, usually by approaching the second potential subject who crossed a predetermined line.

Dropped pen. Walking at a carefully practiced, moderate pace (15 paces/10 seconds), experimenters walked toward a solitary pedestrian passing in the opposite direction. When 10 to 15 feet from the subject, the experimenter reached into his pocket and accidentally, without appearing to notice, dropped his pen behind him, in full view of the subject, and continued walking past the subject. A total of 214 men and 210 women were approached. Participants were scored as having helped if they called back to the experimenter that he had dropped the pen and/or picked up the pen and brought it to the experimenter.[2]

Hurt leg. Walking with a heavy limp and wearing a large and clearly visible leg brace, experimenters *accidentally* dropped and unsuccessfully struggled to reach down for a pile of magazines as they came within 20 feet of a passing pedestrian. A total of 253 men and 240 women were approached. Helping was defined as offering to help and/or beginning to help without offering.

Helping a blind person across the street. Experimenters, dressed in dark glasses and carrying white canes, acted the role of a blind person needing help getting across the street. (The canes and training for the role were provided by the Fresno Friendship Center for the Blind.) Experimenters attempted to locate downtown corners with crosswalks, traffic signals, and moderate, steady pedestrian flow. They stepped up to the corner just before the light turned green, held out their cane, and waited until someone offered help. A trial was terminated after 60 seconds or when the light turned red, whichever occurred first, after which the experimenter walked away from the corner. A total of 281 trials were conducted. Helping was scored if participants, at a minimum, informed the experimenter that the light was green.

EXPERIMENTERS

In most cities, one local individual—usually, a student returning home for summer vacation—collected all data. All experimenters were college age and dressed neatly and casually. To control for experimenter gender effects and to avoid potential problems in some cities, all experimenters were men.

Several steps were taken to ensure standardization in scoring and to minimize experimenter effects. First, all experimenters received both a detailed instruction sheet and on-site field training for acting their roles, learning the procedures for subject selection and scoring of subjects. Second, the experimenters practiced together. Third, no verbal communication was required of experimenters. Given the large number of experimenters, it is difficult to precisely assess standardization between experimenters in acting their parts and scoring subjects' responses. However, in the previous study conducted by the first author and his colleagues using these measures (Levine et al. 1994), it was demonstrated that, with the same training and measures, interexperimenter effects were minimal. Still, the possibility that there were experimenter effects in the present study cannot be completely ruled out.

COMMUNITY VARIABLES

Population size. Although we selected cities that tended to be large (all had populations of more than 230,000), there were still differences in population size. Population size for each metropolitan area was taken from the most current United Nations *Demographic Yearbook* (United Nations, 1996). This statistic allowed us to rule out the possibility that variation in helping could be attributable to variation in population size.

Economic indicator. As an indicator of the economic well-being that is experienced by the average citizen, estimates of what is called per capita gross domestic product with purchasing power parity (PPP) were extracted for the year 1994 (World Bank, 1996). This economic indicator measures how much the average income earned in each country is capable of purchasing.

Cultural values. Six internationally expert cross-cultural psychologists were asked to rate the 23 countries in the sample on the dimension of individualism-collectivism.[3] Triandis' (1996) definition of the dimension was presented to raters. Countries were rated on a 10-point scale (1 = *the most collectivistic*, 10 = *the most individualistic*). The overall alpha for the six raters was .92. Deletion of any single item would have raised the overall alpha to no more than .93. All six ratings were averaged to produce an overall individualism-collectivism score for each country. Spain and all the Latin American countries in our sample (Brazil, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico) were considered simpatia cultures, and their average helping rate was compared with the rates for non-simpatia cultures in our sample.

Walking speed. Male and female walking speed, an indicator of the pace of life, was measured over a distance of 60 feet in the same downtown locations as the helping measures. Measurements were taken on clear summer days. All locations were flat and unobstructed, had broad sidewalks, and were sufficiently uncrowded to allow pedestrians to move at potentially maximum speeds. To control for the effects of socializing, only pedestrians walking alone were selected. Children, individuals with obvious physical disabilities, and those stopping to window-shop were not timed. Thirty-five men and 35 women were timed in most cities.

RESULTS

CONSISTENCY ACROSS HELPING MEASURES

Although multiple measurements were taken for each helping situation in each country, it should be noted that for purposes of analyses, each of the 23 countries was treated as single subjects. Intercorrelations among the three measures are presented in Table 1. Given the small sample size, and the unidirectionality of predictions concerning the interrelationship between the three helping measures (i.e., they should be correlated positively), the statistical significance of the intercorrelations were evaluated at the .10 level with one-tailed tests. (All other statistical analyses in this study were evaluated at the .15 level by two-tailed tests.) Using these liberal criteria, it may be seen that two of the three intercorrelations were significant. As expected, all three intercorrelations were in the positive direction. Consistent with the idea that these helping measures cohere across cultures, a factor analysis (principal

TABLE 1
Intercorrelations of Helping Measures

	Helping Measure		
	Blind Person	Dropped Pen	Hurt Leg
Dropped Pen	.28**		
Hurt Leg	.21	.36***	
Blind + Pen + Leg	.67****	.77****	.73****

**p < .10. ***p < .05. ****p < .01 using 1-tailed significance test. n = 23 in all cases.

components method) revealed a 1-factor solution that explained 52.40% of the variance. The factor loadings were fairly consistent for the dropped pen, hurt leg, and blind person measures (.78, .73, and .65, respectively).

For each country, the three measures were converted to z scores, which were then averaged to produce an overall helping index. The overall alpha for the three situations was .55. Deletion of any single item would have reduced the alpha to .53 if the blind person measure was removed, to .44 if the hurt leg were deleted, and to .35 if the dropped pens were deleted. The means and ranks for each country on each helping measure are presented in Table 2.

GENDER DIFFERENCES

Although gender differences in helping were not a major focus of the present study, we did compare the proportion of men versus women who helped in the applicable situations. For the two measures in which relatively equal numbers of male and female subjects were targeted by the experimenter (hurt leg, dropped pen), it was possible to observe gender differences in the proportion of individuals offering help.

Gender differences were analyzed by independent sample t tests, using gender as the independent measure and the two experimenter-sensitive helping measures as dependent measures. Neither of these differences approached significance: dropped pen, M (men) = .67, M (women) = .69, $t(22)$ = .39, ns; hurt leg, M (men) = .63, M (women) = .65, $t(22)$ = .75, ns. Because previous studies of helping in the United States (e.g., Dovidio, Piliavin, Gaertner, Schroeder, & Clark III, 1991) have tended to find more helping from men than from women, particularly toward a male target, the lack of overall gender differences in the present cross-cultural samples may be worthy of systematic investigation in a future study.

Beyond these analyses, the present study did not focus on gender differences. Thus, for the city-level analyses reported, total city scores on the dropped pen and hurt leg situations were derived by averaging the proportion of male and female helpers in each city.

RELATIONSHIP OF COMMUNITY VARIABLES TO HELPING

First-order correlations. Table 3 presents country scores for the community variables and the overall helping index. Table 4 presents the first-order correlations between the community variables and each of the helping measures. Note, again, that these correlation analyses treat each of the 23 countries as single subjects (in some correlations, because of missing data, there were even fewer subjects). Because of the small sample size and the large number of independent data points that went into each country's helping score, the statistical signifi-

TABLE 2
Cross-Cultural Differences

City, Country	Overall Helping Index			Blind Person		Dropped Pen		Hurt Leg	
	Rank	z Scores	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank	%
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	1	1.66174	93.33	1	100	1	100	4	80
San Jose, Costa Rica	2	1.52191	91.33	1	100	7	79	1	95
Lilongwe, Malawi	3	1.14903	86	1	100	2	93	13	65
Calcutta, India	4	.91598	82.67	6	92	16	63	2	93
Vienna, Austria	5	.79946	81	12	75	6	88	4	80
Madrid, Spain	6	.68293	79.33	1	100	9	75	14	63
Copenhagen, Denmark	7	.56641	77.67	15	67	4	89	8	77
Shanghai, China	8	.49650	76.67	17	63	9	75	3	92
Mexico City, Mexico	9	.42658	75.67	6	92	17	55	4	80
San Salvador, El Salvador	10	.35667	74.67	6	92	4	89	20	43
Prague, Czech Republic	11	.37997	75	1	100	17	55	9	70
Stockholm, Sweden	12	.17023	72	18	58	3	92	11	66
Budapest, Hungary	13	.10031	71	15	67	8	76	9	70
Bucharest, Romania	14	−.06282	68.67	6	92	14	66	19	48
Tel Aviv, Israel	15	−.10943	68	10	83	13	67	16	54
Rome, Italy	16	−.43570	63.33	12	75	21	35	4	80
Bangkok, Thailand	17	−.59883	61	23	42	9	75	11	66
Taipei, Taiwan	18	−.73866	59	21	50	15	65	15	62
Sofia, Bulgaria	19	−.87849	57	11	80	12	69	23	22
Amsterdam, Netherlands	20	−1.11154	53.67	18	58	19	54	17	49
Singapore, Singapore	21	−1.50772	48	21	50	20	45	17	49
New York, United States	22	−1.74077	44.67	12	75	22	31	22	28
Kuala Lampur, Malaysia	23	−2.04374	40.33	20	54	23	26	21	41

NOTE: Overall Helping Index is the average of the *z* scores for each of the three situations. For the other measures, scores represent the percentage of help received in each country (1 = *most helpful*).

cance of the correlations with community variables were evaluated at the .15 level (two-tailed).

As shown in Table 4, on average, the community variables showed low to moderate correlations with the helping measures. The only statistically reliable relationship that emerged was between the economic productivity measure and overall helping, as well as with two of the subcomponents of the helping measure. Cities that are more helpful tended to have lower PPP. None of the other correlations was significant at the (two-tailed) .15 level. However, note that this may be partially the result of the small number of subjects in these analyses. Figure 1 shows a scattergram of the relationship between overall helping in cities and country-level economic productivity.

Although statistically nonsignificant, there was a small relationship between walking speed and overall helping, with participants in faster cities somewhat less likely to offer help. More individualistic countries showed somewhat less overall helping and less helping in the hurt leg situation, but none of the correlations achieved significance. There was no relationship between the population size of cities and helping, which was expected given that the sample was limited to large cities.

It should be noted that the two community variables of economic productivity and individualism-collectivism and walking speed were highly intercorrelated. Economic productivity was positively correlated with individualism (r [$n = 22$] = .81, $p < .001$) and negatively

TABLE 3
Values of Community Variables by Country

City, Country	Overall Helping (z scores)	Population Size (City)	PPP	Walking Speed	Individualism
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil	1.67	5,473,909	5,630	16.76	3.50
San Jose, Costa Rica	1.52	315,909	5,760	13.33	3.40
Lilongwe, Malawi	1.15	233,973	600		3.25
Calcutta, India	0.92	4,399,819	1,290	14.41	2.33
Vienna, Austria	0.80	1,539,848	20,230	14.08	7.80
Madrid, Spain	0.68	2,976,064	14,040	13.66	5.50
Copenhagen, Denmark	0.57	619,288	20,800	12.21	7.83
Shanghai, China	0.50	8,205,598	2,510	21.65	2.17
Mexico City, Mexico	0.43	8,235,744	7,050	13.54	3.67
San Salvador, El Salvador	0.36	422,570	2,510	14.04	2.80
Prague, Czech Republic	0.38	1,216,513	7,910	13.80	5.00
Stockholm, Sweden	0.17	674,680	17,850	12.74	8.33
Budapest, Hungary	0.10	2,002,121	6,310	13.75	4.83
Bucharest, Romania	−0.06	2,343,824	2,920	16.72	4.20
Tel Aviv, Israel	−0.11	357,100	15,690	11.05	6.00
Rome, Italy	−0.44	2,693,383	18,610	12.75	5.87
Bangkok, Thailand	−0.60	5,876,000	6,870		2.50
Taipei, Taiwan	−0.74	1,769,568		13.58	3.00
Sofia, Bulgaria	−0.88	1,114,476	4,230	15.57	4.00
Amsterdam, Netherlands	−1.11	721,976	18,080	11.46	8.17
Singapore, Singapore	−1.51	2,930,000	21,430	14.74	3.17
New York, United States	−1.74	7,311,966	25,860	12.03	9.80
Kuala Lampur, Malaysia	−2.04	1,145,075	8,610		2.67

NOTE: All data pertain to country as a whole, except for helping and population size. PPP refers to per capita gross domestic product with purchasing power parity. Individualism refers to expert ratings of country individualism-collectivism scores, with higher numbers indicating more individualism. For walking speed, higher numbers indicate slower speed.

correlated with walking speed (r [$n = 19$] $= -.58$, $p < .01$) (i.e., faster places had stronger economic productivity). Individualism was also negatively correlated with walking speed (r [$n = 20$] $= -.60$, $p < .01$) (i.e., faster places were more individualistic). Overall, cities enjoying stronger economic productivity were more individualistic and had a faster pace of life.

Simple regression analyses. Because only one predictor variable—economic productivity—was significantly correlated with helping, a series of simple regression analyses were conducted in which economic productivity served as the predictor variable and one of the four helping measures (overall helping index, blind person, dropped pen, or hurt leg situations) served as the criterion. As can be seen in Table 5, economic well-being significantly predicted three of the four helping measures: the overall helping index, the blind, and the dropped pen measures.

Comparisons of simpatia versus non-simpatia cultures. Finally, to test whether simpatia cultures—defined as Latin American countries and Spain—were more likely to help than non-simpatia cultures, the percentage of overall helping in the five simpatia cultures in our

TABLE 4
Correlations Between Helping Measures and Other Community Characteristics

Community Characteristic	Helping Measures			
	Overall Helping	Blind Person	Hurt Leg	Dropped Pen
Population size (city)	−.03	−.06	.22	−.21
	(23)	(23)	(23)	(23)
Purchasing power parity (PPP)	−.43***	−.42***	−.21	−.32*
	(22)	(22)	(22)	(22)
Walking speed	.26	.06	.23	.24
	(20)	(20)	(20)	(20)
Individualism-collectivism	−.17	−.09	−.21	−.07
	(23)	(23)	(23)	(23)

NOTE: *p <.15. ***p <.05, 2-tailed. Sample sizes in parentheses. Statistics for some community characteristics were not available for some countries, resulting in smaller sample sizes for those analyses.
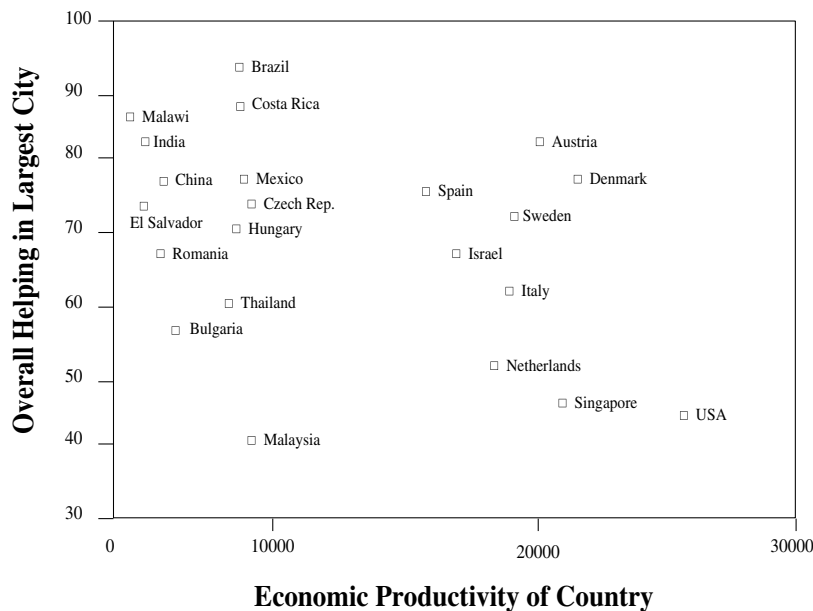

Figure 1: Scattergram representing the relationship between overall helping rates in cities and country-level economic productivity, measured in terms of per capita gross domestic product with purchasing power parity

sample (Brazil, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, and Spain) were averaged and compared with the average percentage of helping in the non-simpatia cultures in our sample. As predicted, simpatia countries (M = 82.87%, SD = 8.84) were on average more helpful than non-simpatia countries (M = 65.87%, SD = 13.41, t(21) = 2.65, p < .02 (two-tailed)).

TABLE 5
Simple Regression Analyses of Helping
on Economic Productivity (standardized betas)

Predictor Variable	Overall Helping	Blind Person	Dropped Pen	Hurt Leg
PPP ($n = 22$)	–.43*	–.42***	–.32*	–.21

NOTE: Adjusted R^2: Overall Helping = .15; Blind = .13; Pen = .06; Leg = .01. PPP = Gross domestic product with purchasing power parity.
*$p < .15$. ***$p < .05$, 2-tailed.

DISCUSSION

MEASURING HELPING BEHAVIOR ACROSS CULTURES

Can we generalize across situations about a city's overall tendency to help strangers? The present data provide at least qualified support for such a general tendency. At least for the behaviors measured under the specified situations, large international cities may be endowed with a helping temperament, which may be a part of the larger personality of a place. We can tentatively conclude that helping rates across cities can be measured with some reliability despite large variation in local cultural practices and socioeconomic conditions. However, it is important not to overstate this claim. The degree of interrelationships among the three helping measures was modest. Furthermore, the measures used in this study were rather similar to those in Pearce and Amato's (1980) taxonomic space and in that they all measured everyday favors rather than helping rates in life-threatening situations. It is still an open empirical question of whether helping rates of cities around the world would generalize to helping situations that vary considerably from those assessed in this study.

COUNTRY/CITY RANKING

Countries differed greatly in the amount of help offered to a stranger. The average percentage of help offered by pedestrians was as high as 93% in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and as low as 40% in Kuala Lampur, Malaysia. New York City, in the United States, true to its stereotype as an unfriendly place, came in a close second to last in this sample, with an average of 45%. Perhaps this explains the recent civility campaign of the mayor of New York to make the streets of New York friendlier (Tierney, 1998).

An interesting characteristic of the rankings is the absence of any clear cultural or geographic clustering of countries along helping lines. The most helpful group included places as diverse as Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Lilongwe, Malawi; Calcutta, India; and Vienna, Austria. Similarly, the least helpful group attracted bedfellows as dissimilar as Sofia, Bulgaria; Amsterdam, Netherlands; New York; and Kuala Lampur, Malaysia. Even economically, these countries are not very homogenous, although as we will see, economic vitality was a good predictor of helping rates across cultures as a general trend.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HELPING OF STRANGERS AND COMMUNITY VARIABLES

The strongest and only reliable correlate of cross-national differences in helping in the present study was economic productivity. Countries where residents had higher per capita

purchasing power tended to be less helpful overall. None of the other relationships was statistically significant. Traditional sociological theory would suggest that people enjoying stronger economies would be more helpful, a finding that has received at least partial support in previous studies conducted on cities in the United States (e.g., Levine et al., 1994). This has been explained by the fact that stressful economic conditions, as reflected in variables such as unemployment rates and frequency of business failures, lead to maladaptive individual behaviors that are detrimental to the social functioning of the community.

The present results may reflect cross-cultural limitations of these economic hypotheses. At the level of countries, lack of strong economies may sometimes be accompanied by a traditional value system. These traditional value systems often include ethical guidelines that mandate assisting strangers. In fact, some social psychological work suggests that economic productivity and attitudes toward benevolence are negatively related, with students in economically developed countries less likely to endorse altruistic values (Gordon, 1967; Inkeles, 1997). This may explain the general helpfulness at the top of the list (Rio de Janeiro, San Jose, Lilongwe, Calcutta)—all of which are third-world environments. This revised hypothesis might be tested in a future study by including measures of traditionalism. Clearly, however, this economic trend was far from perfect. Big cities in some economically advanced countries (Vienna, Madrid, Copenhagen) were high on helpfulness, whereas some cities in poorer countries (Kuala Lampur) were the least helpful.

Another strong finding in this study is that cities from Latin America (Brazil, Costa Rica, Mexico, El Salvador) and Spain were all above the mean in overall helping, and on average were more helpful than the other international cities. This difference can be attributed to the importance of the cultural script of simpatia (in Spanish) or simpatico (in Portuguese) in Latin American and Hispanic cultures (Rodrigues & Assmar, 1988; Triandis et al., 1984). These terms, which have no equivalent in English, refer to a range of amiable social qualities—to be friendly, nice, agreeable, and good-natured (i.e., a person who is fun to be with and pleasant to deal with). Helping strangers is also part of this script. Simpatia and simpatico emphasize prioritizing amiable social behaviors as compared with, for example, emphasizing achievement and productivity.

This explanation in terms of simpatia is of course merely suggestive in that it is correlational. Other explanations are possible. All the simpatia cultures have primarily Roman Catholic populations. Furthermore, these are societies that are cultures of honor. It is plausible that cultural traits associated with Roman Catholicism or the friendliness derivative of honor cultures may be the crucial variable that accounts for the higher rates of helping among Hispanic cultures. Although these variables overlap greatly in the current sample, future studies can disentangle them through systematic cross-national and cross-religious investigations.

General trends—overall tendencies but with many exceptions—appeared between both walking speed and helping and the cultural value of individualism-collectivism and helping. Although statistically not significant, there was some tendency for participants in faster cities to be less helpful, consistent with Milgram's (1970) system overload theory. Some of the faster cities in the sample (e.g., New York, Amsterdam) scored low on helpfulness, whereas other cities with fast walking speed (e.g., Copenhagen) were relatively helpful. Interestingly, this relationship between pace of life and helping and its statistical unreliability mirrors findings in the study of 36 cities in the United States by Levine et al. (1994). The lack of a strong and reliable relationship between pace of life and helping also suggests that the link between economic health and helping is not a by-product of a fast pace of life in affluent societies. Thus, to the extent that walking speed can be seen as a good indicator of an urbanite's ability

to attend to unnecessary stimuli, cognitive processing theories of helping (e.g., Milgram, 1970) fall short of explaining the negative relationship between economic health and helping across cultures.

Similarly, the cultural value of collectivism-individualism was unrelated to helping. Given the diffuseness of the collectivism-individualism construct, particularly because it does not make clear predictions about behaviors toward one's outgroup (and whether pedestrians would be categorized as such by individualists and collectivists), it is not surprising to see a low correlation for this variable with helping. Although there was a slight overall tendency for big cities in individualistic countries to be less helpful, several cities were diametrically opposed to this trend: Some individualistic places were relatively helpful, and some collectivistic places were relatively unhelpful.

It is important to note that all three community variables—economic productivity, walking speed, and individualism—were highly intercorrelated. There was a positive relationship between economic productivity, faster walking speeds, and individualism. Even if economic productivity were not the only reliable predictor of helping, the fact that there was considerable overlap between these variables indicates that they may not be the optimal set of multivariate predictors for explaining international differences in helping in big cities.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

It would be helpful in future studies to identify other culture-level variables that account for unique variance in international helping. We may speculate on several possibilities. As discussed above, one possibility, suggested by the present economic findings, is a measure of traditionalism. Another might be to focus more directly on prosocial value orientations. Van Lange, Otten, De Bruin, and Joireman (1997), for example, distinguish between individualists, who tend to maximize their own outcomes with little concern for others; competitors, who seek to gain an advantage in their own outcomes relative to those of others; and prosocials, who seek to maximize both their own and others' outcomes, with an emphasis on equality. Yet another possible refinement of the concept of individualism might focus on the value of communitarianism. Popenoe (1994), for example, distinguishes between individualistic cultures that value communitarianism (e.g., Sweden, Denmark) versus individualistic cultures that are more characterized by egoism (e.g., United States).

The present study used expert ratings to measure cultural values instead of sampling values through self-reports among individuals in different cultures. This expert-rating strategy is a valid alternative to measuring cultural values through self-reports. Expert ratings can side step a number of problems faced by survey-driven approaches and have been shown to be good predictors of cultural differences in an individual's thoughts and behaviors even when values derived from survey data fail to predict these differences (for a discussion of these issues, see Peng, Nisbett, & Wong, 1997). However, data sets of cultural values continue to be irreplaceable as a rich source of information that can be tapped to understand cultural differences in behavior.

The two largest data sets of cultural values are Hofstede's (1980, 1991) rankings of 39 countries on four empirically derived values and Schwartz and his colleagues' (1994, 1995) rankings of 86 samples from 36 nations on seven empirically derived value types. Two values from Hofstede's research that might be relevant for explaining country-level differences in helping, for example, are his data for collectivism and for masculinity (the tendency to value traditional masculine activities). From Schwartz's research it might be fruitful to examine country-level differences in, for example, hierarchy, an emphasis on the legitimacy of

hierarchical allocations of fixed roles and resources; affective and intellectual autonomy, an emphasis on protecting independent pursuit of positive affective experiences and one's own intellectual directions; and egalitarian commitment, the value a culture places on transcending selfish interests, when necessary, to promote the welfare of others. (For further description of these value types, see Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Schwartz, 1994; and Schwartz & Ros, 1995.) These two data sets were not used in the present study because they do not include rankings for several countries in the present sample. Future studies, however, could be designed around the available data sets, by conducting empirical studies of helping in those countries for which researchers have already gathered data.

It is possible, of course, that the present findings have been weakened by methodological problems, particularly those concerning experimenter effects. As pointed out earlier, although a number of steps were taken to minimize these effects, they remain a significant possibility. It should be noted, however, that these same methodological procedures have been used successfully in previous large-scale studies in the United States (Levine et al., 1994). In those studies, conducted in cities within a single culture, the strongest predictors of helping were population density and population size. Data for population density are not readily available for many international cities and, because the present study focused on large cities, population size was not a relevant variable. This suggests the possibility that population density and size are also the critical variables in predicting helping on an international level, a hypothesis that was not tested in the present study.

International cities differ on a multitude of dimensions, many of which are not adequately captured by existing statistics. Even for those statistics that are available, the numbers may have different significance in different countries. In exploring economic explanations, for example, we found that two of the least helpful cities were New York City, which has a strong economy, and Kuala Lampur, which does not. It is possible, however, that economic conditions are the driving force in the helping scores of both cities. For New York, it may be that the city's economic vitality has led to a rapid pace of life (and vice versa), which has led to system overload, resulting in a lack of attention to the needs of strangers (e.g., Milgram, 1970). In Kuala Lampur, on the other hand, it could be that rapid industrialization and urban growth have produced economic distress, which has resulted in a breakdown of social and community stability, resulting in a lack of attention to the needs of strangers (e.g., Rubington & Weinberg, 1977). In other words, a multitude of variables needs to be tracked to capture the complexity of the personality of countries and cities, particularly for a complex behavior such as reaching out to strangers. This sort of multivariate analysis would require considerable more city- and country-level statistics than are currently available.

The findings of this study have something to offer to the evolutionary analysis of altruism, which has been a central concern of modern evolutionary theory. The psychology of altruism critically depends on the recipient of the altruistic act, whether it is targeted toward kin members (Hamilton, 1964) or reciprocating strangers (Trivers, 1985), and the biological significance of the helpful act (i.e., whether it is an everyday favor versus a life-saving move) (Burnstein, Crandall, & Kitayama, 1994). Although people everywhere may be equipped with the same social psychological heuristics that make various forms of human altruism possible (Burnstein et al., 1994; Cosmides & Tooby, 1992), the present cross-cultural data indicate that the rate of actual helping behavior for stranger-to-stranger everyday assistance varies greatly between cultures and is profoundly affected by local conditions such as economic well-being, cultural values, and other factors yet to be identified by researchers. It would be interesting to examine in future research the extent of cultural variability of other types of helping behaviors. It stands to reason, for example, that more cross-cultural

similarity in helping rates (or in helping intentions) would emerge in situations having strong evolutionary significance, such as when the helping act is targeted toward a close relative whose life is at stake (Burnstein et al., 1994).

Finally, our ranking of places may serve two practical purposes. First, they provide tangible information for study of the quality of the helping environment in individual cities around the world. Second, as social indicators, they may be compared over time to mark trends in urban life throughout the world.

NOTES

1. Two other helping studies were also conducted: Asking for change (for a quarter in the United States or its functional equivalent in native currency in other countries) and lost letters, using the classic lost-letter technique (Milgram, Mann, & Harter, 1965). Each of these measures, however, caused considerable cross-cultural translation problems. In the asking-for-change experiment, we found that for reasons ranging from monetary inflation to prepaid telephone cards, people in several cities could not understand the need for specific small-value coins. In some cities (e.g., Calcutta), there was a general shortage of small-value coins and bills, a problem that occurs throughout India during some festival seasons. In a few cities (e.g., San Salvador), people were afraid to transact money with strangers. The lost-letter experiment was even more troublesome. In some cities (e.g., Tel Aviv), people were afraid to touch the letter, for fear of explosives. Also, in many less developed countries we found that local mailboxes were either unattended or nonexistent, therefore, mailing a letter in these places requires walking to a central post office rather than simply going to the letter box on the corner or in front of one's home, as is the custom in other countries. Most problematic of all, in several countries (e.g., India, which has a 52% illiteracy rate), we found that letters and postal communications were peripheral to many residents' lives. As a result, data for these two studies were not analyzed in the final results. These data are, however, available upon request from the first author.

2. The dropped pen, hurt leg, and blind person measures were also scored on weighted multipoint scales reflecting increasing prosocial involvement. The dropped pen measure, for example, was scored on a 5-point scale: 1 = *Did not appear to notice*, 2 = *Noticed but offered no help*, 3 = *Didn't pick up pen, but called back to experimenter that he'd dropped it*, 4 = *Picked up pen and called back to experimenter that he'd dropped it*, and 5 = *Picked up pen and caught up to the experimenter to hand it to him*. The hurt leg measure was scored on a similar 3-point scale, and the blind person on a 4-point scale. Initial reliability checks, however, indicated difficulty in accurately distinguishing between some of the categories, particularly for the blind person measure. There were also questions about the equivalence of each of the scales from measure to measure. As a result, these scales were collapsed into overall categories of helping versus not helping. Results based on analyses using multipoint scales are available from the first author.

3. In addition to individualism-collectivism, the experts also rated each country on the horizontalism-verticalism dimension. A vertical orientation is one in which hierarchy is very important and where in-group authorities determine most social behavior. In horizontal cultures, social behavior is more egalitarian. Vertical cultures are more concerned with power and achievement, whereas horizontal cultures are more concerned with benevolence and universalism—benevolence in horizontal collective cultures, and universalism in horizontal individualistic cultures. Helpfulness, according to this reasoning, should be higher in horizontal cultures.

The overall alpha for horizontalism-verticalism, for the six raters was .77. Deleting the scores of one rater resulted in an overall alpha of .95. Because ratings of horizontalism-verticalism were almost identical with those of individualism-collectivism (r (23) = .93, p < .01), it was dropped from further analyses.

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Robert V. Levine is a professor of psychology at California State University, Fresno. He is the author of A Geography in Time *(Basic Books, 1997). His main research interests are in the areas of cross-cultural differences in the psychology of helping behavior and the psychology of persuasion.*

Ara Norenzayan is an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Illinois. His research focuses on cultural psychology, including the role of cultural-historical influences in thinking, the role of psychological processes in emergent collective phenomena, and cognition and communication. His research interests also include social psychological differences across cultures and the cultural transmission of beliefs.

Karen Philbrick received her M.A. degree in psychology from California State University, Fresno.