Helping Them Stay Where They Are:
Status Effects on Dependency/Autonomy-Oriented Helping

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On the basis of expectation states theory and Weiner's attributional model of help giving (Weiner, 1980), we predicted that low-status help seekers would be viewed as chronically dependent and their need as due to lack of ability, leading to the giving of dependency-oriented help (i.e., full solution to the problem). High-status help seekers were expected to be viewed as competent and their request as representing their high motivation to overcome a transient difficulty, resulting in autonomy-oriented help (i.e., tools to solve the problem). Help seeking is viewed as a stigma-consistent behavior that implies weakness when help seekers are low-status individuals and as strength when they are high-status individuals. Three experiments supported these predictions. The 4th experiment indicated that low-status persons who seek autonomy-oriented help are not seen as chronically dependent. Implications of these findings for helping and inequality are discussed.

Keywords: status, help seeking, autonomy/dependency-oriented help, attributions, feelings

Past research on the social psychology of helping has centered on personal, interpersonal, and situational determinants of people's readiness to help others (Batson, 2011; Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder, & Penner, 2006; Nadler, 2012). This research has paid little attention to the kind of help given. The present study moves beyond the binary focus on giving versus not giving help and examines psychological processes that explain why helpers respond differentially to requests for help by providing dependency-oriented or autonomy-oriented help (i.e., the solution to a problem or tools with which to solve it, respectively; Nadler, 1998, 2002, in press). Past theorizing suggests that helpers' expectations of needy persons' ability to help themselves is a major determinant of the decision to give either kind of help (Brickman et al., 1982). The person requesting help is more likely to be given dependency-oriented help when perceived as relatively weak and to be given autonomy-oriented help when regarded as competent and able to help him- or herself. We propose, based on expectation states theory (EST; Berger, Conner, & Fisek, 1974), that social status is a distal variable that shapes these expectations and the subsequent kind of help provided.

Help Seeking: A Sign of Weakness or Strength?

The research question regarding the effects of the needy persons' status on the kind of help provided to them is part of a broader research concern with helping and inequality (Nadler & Halabi, in press). In addition to comprising relationships of compassion and caring, helping relations are relations of inequality (Nadler, 2012). In interpersonal, intragroup, and intergroup contexts, self-reliance is a marker of strength and competence, whereas dependence implies relative weakness and inability (Nadler, in press). In fact, because high status and prestige are conferred upon group members who are viewed as altruists, group members often try to outdo other group members in generosity (competitive altruism; Van Vugt, Roberts, & Hardy, 2007).

On the other hand, dependency on other group members results in low prestige in the group. For example, employees who frequently ask for help are assigned lower status in the work group (Blau, 1963; Flynn, 2003; Lee, 1997). Recent research on intergroup helping also indicates that helping the outgroup is a marker of the ingroup's higher status, whereas depending on the outgroup's assistance is a signal of the ingroup's lower status (Nadler, 2002; Nadler & Halabi, 2006). These findings regarding dependency as a marker of relative weakness suggest that compared to a person who has not requested outside assistance to cope with a given problem, one who has would be viewed as relatively weak and incompetent.

Yet, a request for outside assistance may also signal the needy person's strength and drive for individual success. It may imply that, compared to persons in need who do not request assistance, those who do employ all available means to overcome the problem. From this perspective, seeking help does not indicate passivity, weakness, or resignation but rather active coping. This view has been advanced by research on gender differences in help seeking. The common interpretation of women's greater readiness to rely on outside help (Galdas, Cheater, & Marshall, 2005; Veroff, 1981) has been that it is consistent with the traditional gender role of relative incompetence and dependency (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). This view is challenged by the view that seeking help is a

form of active social coping (Greenglass, 1993; Hobfoll, Dunahoo, Ben-Porath, & Monnier, 1994; Nadler, 1998). This alternative perspective suggests that women's greater readiness to rely on external assistance represents active and effective coping, whereas men's rigid adherence on self-reliance represents a relatively ineffective form of coping. Observations that successful women managers value individual achievement and are also readier to seek coworker assistance support this more benign view of women's greater readiness to seek outside help (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Rosner, 1990).

Research in developmental psychology also indicates that help seeking is not necessarily a sign of resignation. Resilient children, well adjusted despite difficult life circumstances, were more willing to seek help than were less resilient children (Milgram & Palti, 1993), and Folkman and Lazarus's (1988) influential model of coping regards seeking outside help as an active coping mechanism. From this perspective, compared to a person who chooses not to seek help, one who does may be viewed as more motivated to solve the problem and better able do so if provided the appropriate tools.

These two diametrically opposed ways of interpreting a request for help—as a sign of passivity and weakness or of motivation and strength— determine whether the helper would provide the help seeker with dependency-oriented or autonomy-oriented assistance. When the request for help is viewed as an expression of the help seekers' inability to cope on their own, help will take the form of dependency-oriented assistance. When the helper, however, interprets the request for help as an expression of active social coping, help is likely to be autonomy oriented. It is proposed here that the help seeker's social status is a determinant of either of these two interpretations of a request for help, as well as of the subsequent kind of help given. This hypothesis relies on EST and related research (Correll & Ridgeway, 2006).

Status as a Determinant of the Meaning of Help Seeking

Expectation states theory views social status as affecting people's performance expectations and evaluations of each other. Social status can be any characteristic, such as gender or skin color, on which people are hierarchically ordered as higher or lower. Regardless of the content of the status dimension, high-status people are more positively evaluated than low-status people and are therefore expected to perform better (Berger, Wagner, & Zelditch, 1985). Status characteristics may be specific or diffuse. A person's rating on a specific status dimension, such as computer expertise, carries expectations in a limited range of tasks, whereas his or her standing on a diffuse dimension (e.g., gender) carries expectations in a wider range of social situations. The link between status and performance expectations suggests that the help seeker's status would determine the helper's causal perceptions of why the person in need has requested help, expectations about his or her future performance, and the kind of help appropriate for the person. Accordingly, the helper would tend to view a request for help from a high-status person as a sign of active coping. Compared to a high-status person who has not requested help, one who has would be perceived as more motivated and better able to solve the problem. The same request for help by a low-status person would be interpreted as lack of ability, passivity, and resignation to

being dependent on others. Compared with a low-status person who had not sought help, one who has would be perceived as relatively incompetent. These attributions and evaluative perceptions would result in providing autonomy-oriented assistance to the high-status person requesting help and dependency-oriented assistance to the low-status person requesting help under the same circumstances.

Attributional-Affective Mediators of the Status–Help Giving Link

A social-psychological approach that places similar emphasis on the way helping is affected by explanations of the needy person's predicament is Weiner's attribution-affect model of help giving (Weiner, 1980). When the cause for seeking help is beyond the person's control, he (or she) is not held responsible for his need, and feelings of pity are said to drive the readiness to give much help. When, however, the need for help is attributed to reasons under the needy person's control, he is viewed as having brought his predicament upon himself, and feelings of anger are said to inhibit the readiness to help the needy person. Summarizing this view, Weiner wrote that "perceived control is an essential cognition regulating social reactions and mediates between an event or state and the reaction it elicits" (Weiner, 2006, p. 25).

In keeping with Weiner's theorizing, if information exists that the needy person's predicament has in fact been controllable (e.g., he has chosen not to make an effort), the resultant anger is likely to inhibit helping. If, however, such information does not exist, as in the present research, the effects of the needy person's status on the helper's view of the recipient as chronically dependent or not represent a more complex link among status, attribution of the need for help, feelings toward the needy, and the giving of autonomy- or dependency-oriented help. Because of the low performance expectations associated with low-status persons, their need for help implies chronic dependency and is expected to be attributed to the uncontrollable, internal, and stable causes of lack of ability and characteristic low motivation to cope. These attributional patterns will be associated with feelings of pity and social responsibility toward the person seeking help, and dependency-oriented help will be provided. The need state of the high-status person, to whom helpers assign high performance expectations, will be attributed to unstable, external, and uncontrollable reasons that imply transient dependency. Thus, in keeping with the motivation for upward comparison in performance settings (Festinger, 1954), participants who in the present research were medium- or medium-high-status individuals were likely to think that under similar circumstances they could have also sought outside help. Therefore, they are expected to identify with the high-status person in need and provide autonomy-oriented help.

Help Seeking Reinforces Previous Expectations: A Stigma-Consistent Behavior

This analysis suggests that help seeking reinforces expectations of high- or low-status others and generates helping responses consistent with these expectations. Because helpers' interpretation of requests for help is said to be shaped by a priori expectations emanating from the help seeker's status, a request for help in the context of unequal social relations is conceptualized as stigma-

consistent behavior: It reinforces a priori and, in the case of low-status people, often stigmatic perceptions. By giving low-status help seekers dependency-oriented help, the help giver may inadvertently contribute to perpetuating the former's relative inferiority by assigning them the role of chronically dependent individuals. When the request for assistance comes from a higher status person, it reinforces the view of the help seeker as an able and motivated person who explores all available avenues to solve the given difficulty. In this case, dependency is likely to be regarded as transient, and the giving of autonomy-oriented help constitutes a ladder on which the recipient can climb to self-reliance. This suggests that by giving dependency- or autonomy-oriented assistance to low- and high-status individuals respectively, the helper may inadvertently reinforce the existing inequality. The predictions of the present research are summarized in Figure 1.

Three experiments were conducted to assess these hypotheses, and a fourth was designed to demonstrate that these links among the help-seeker's status, attributions, feelings, and kind of help given are malleable. The first experiment examined the effects of the induction of high and low performance expectations to the person requesting help on the kind of help given and feelings toward and evaluations of a high- or low-expectations protagonist who had or had not requested help. The second and third experiments examined the role of socioeconomic and scholastic status, respectively, as distal determinants of performance expectations that determine helpers' reactions to a request for help.

All three experiments had two related objectives. The first was to investigate the effects of performance expectations, induced directly or by information about status, on perceived causes and

Figure 1. Research model describing the hypothesized links between help seeker status, attributions of a help request, feelings, and giving autonomy-oriented versus dependency-oriented help.

feelings toward help seekers and the kind of help given to them. This was assessed by a one-way comparison between responses of participants who had been exposed to a request for help from a high-status protagonist and reactions of those exposed to the same request from a low-status protagonist. The second objective was to demonstrate the differential effects that a request for help has on the evaluations and liking of high- and low- status protagonists who had or had not requested help. The low-status person who had sought help was expected to be less well liked and more negatively valued than the one who had not, and the high-status person who had requested help was expected to be better liked and more positively valued than the one who had not. These hypotheses were assessed by a 2 (Request vs. No request for help) $\times$ 2 (High vs. Low status protagonist) analysis of variance (ANOVA). The fourth experiment examined the hypothesis that active seeking of autonomy-oriented assistance would override the effects of social status and generate high expectations about the help seekers' future performance, regardless of their social status.

Study 1

The first experiment examined the effects of induced performance expectations on participants' perceptions of help seekers and the kind of help they chose to give. The hypotheses were that compared to a high-expectations individual who had not sought help, one who had sought help would be viewed as more able and motivated and given autonomy-oriented help. Conversely, a low-expectations person who had requested assistance would be viewed as less able than one who had not requested help and would be given dependency-oriented help.

Method

Participants and design. The experiment consisted of a 2 (Request for help vs. No request for help) $\times$ 2 (High vs. Low performance expectations assigned to the person in need) between-participants experimental design. Participants were 48 Israeli men and 18 Israeli women distributed in equal proportions in the four experimental cells, with a mean age of 27.21 years ($SD = 6.05$) and an age range of 18–49, who participated in an online experiment. Participants were approached by an e-mail inviting them to participate in virtual problem-solving interactions. Following the induction of performance expectations, half the participants were exposed to a request of assistance from another, whereas the other half were not. Participants' perceptions of the person in need and the kind of help they decided to provide were assessed.

Procedure. Upon their entering the experimental website, participants were informed that the study explored patterns of social interactions in online problem solving. They were told that they had been randomly assigned to work with another person who was online at the same time. It was indicated that because the study focused on what was described as "bipolar" interactions, where one person guided the work of another, one participant would be assigned the role of guide and the other would be the problem solver. All participants were then informed that they had been randomly assigned the role of guide. It was further indicated that in order to simulate real-world conditions where people who serve as guides have basic background information about problem solvers, they would receive such information. Participants were then
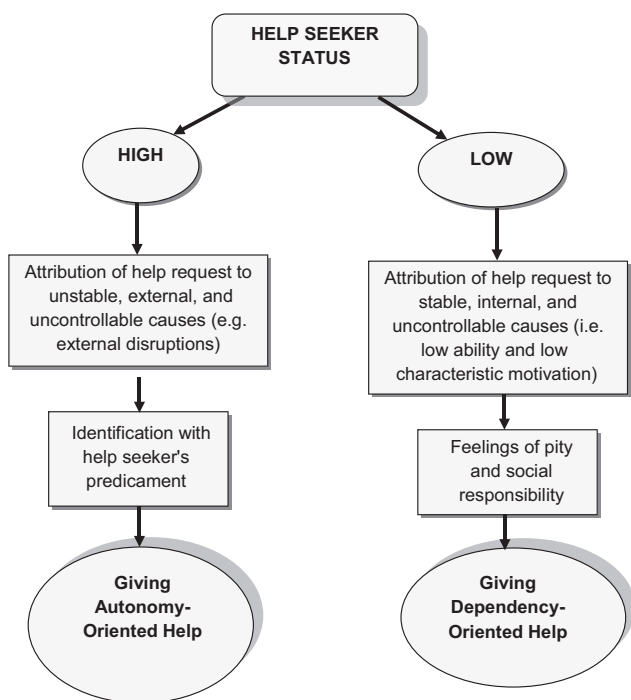
informed that the problem solver was a 24-year-old male who lived with his parents and two siblings in the Tel Aviv area and that on a previous task, similar to the present one, he had a 90% or 30% success rate (High or Low performance expectations conditions, respectively). Participants were then asked to rate the stimulus person on three dimensions that constituted the performance expectations manipulation check (intellectual ability, expected future success on similar tasks, and desire for success). Responses to the three questions were highly intercorrelated ($\alpha = .90$), and they were summed to obtain a single index that served as a check on the expectations manipulation. It was clear to all participants there would be no further interaction between them and the problem solver.

Next, participants were informed that the problem solver had been presented with three mathematical problems (e.g., "If $b - c = 3$ and $a + c = 32$, which of the following is b?") and four verbal analogy questions (e.g., "The relationship between 'by mistake' and 'intentional' is similar to which of the following pairs?"). At the same time participants, in their role as guides, received the correct answers to these problems and ways to arrive at them. After the problem solver had supposedly been working on the seven problems for 10 minutes, all participants were notified that the problem solver had not solved two problems. Subsequently, participants in the help-seeking conditions received a message from the problem solver requesting their assistance on those two problems. The other half, in the no request for help control condition, received a neutral message ("How did you find out about this experiment?"). No participant in the no-help condition offered to help the protagonist who had sent them this neutral message. Following this, dependent measures were collected. After participants in the request condition had responded to the helping questions (i.e., willingness to help, kind of help, and feelings toward the help seeker), all participants rated their evaluation and liking of the problem solver. They were then fully debriefed about the study, its goals, and the hypotheses.

Dependent measures.

Manipulation checks. Before the dependent measures were assessed, participants were asked (a) to indicate their performance expectations for the problem solver and (b) whether the problem solver had requested help.

(a) Effects of help seekers' status on giving autonomy- or dependency-oriented help. After participants had received a request for help or a neutral message from the problem solver, they were asked whether they had received any messages from the problem solver during the experiment. After they responded affirmatively, participants were asked to indicate the nature of this message. They were informed that in previous trials messages from the problem solver fell into one of three content categories: general friendly message, request for help in solving one or more problems, and a general question about the experiment. They were asked to check the kind of communication they had received. They were then asked (a) whether they would help, and those who answered in the affirmative were asked (b) whether they would prefer giving the answer to the problem or an explanation of the way such problems can be solved (i.e., dependency- or autonomy-oriented assistance, respectively).

(b) Evaluations and liking of the needy. All participants were then asked to rate the problem solver on eight 5-point bipolar rating scales. A subsequent factor analysis using varimax rotation

with a .40 criterion for an item's inclusion yielded two independent factors of general ability (weak–strong, intelligent–unintelligent, creative–uncreative, and dependent–independent) and friendliness (warm–cold and friendly–unfriendly). In addition, participants were asked to indicate on 5-point scales the degree to which they "like" and "would want to work with" the problem solver. Ratings were significantly correlated ($r = .51$, $p < .01$), and they were summed to obtain a single index of attraction (the Interpersonal Judgment Scale measure of liking; Byrne, 1971).

Results

Manipulation checks. A 2 (High vs. Low performance expectations) $\times$ 2 (Seeking vs. Not seeking help) ANOVA indicated that performance expectations were lower in the low expectations than in the high expectations condition, $F(1, 62) = 104.20$, $p < .001$ ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.09$, and $M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.10$, respectively). Neither the help-seeking main effect nor the two-way interaction was significant. All participants in the help-seeking condition and none in the no-help-seeking control condition indicated that they had received a request for assistance from the problem solver.

Dependent measures.

(a) Effects of help seeker's status on giving autonomy- or dependency-oriented help. Most (88%) of the participants in the help-seeking condition indicated readiness to help the stimulus person. The difference between the two performance expectations conditions in overall readiness to help was not significant. In the low performance expectations condition, 78% and 22% of participants who had indicated readiness to help preferred to provide dependency-oriented and autonomy-oriented help, respectively, $\chi^2_{(2)} = 8.72$, $p < .05$. In the high performance expectations condition, 88% of those who had indicated readiness to help preferred to give autonomy-oriented help, compared to 12% who preferred to give dependency-oriented help, $\chi^2_{(2)} = 10.73$, $p < .05$.

(b) Evaluations and liking of the needy. A 2 (High vs. Low performance expectations) $\times$ 2 (Help seeking vs. No help seeking) ANOVA on participants' perceptions of the other's general ability yielded a performance expectations main effect, $F(1, 62) = 48.44$, $p < .001$, which was qualified by a significant interaction between performance expectations and help seeking, $F(1, 62) = 7.80$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2_p = .21$. This interaction is due to the fact that in the high performance expectations condition, the problem solver was viewed as more able when seeking help than when not, $t(32) = 2.54$, $p < .05$ ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 0.52$, and $M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.65$, respectively). In the low performance expectations condition, participants tended to rate the other as less able when the other had sought help, $t(32) = 1.40$, $p = .8$ ($M = 2.65$, $SD = 0.67$, and $M = 3.01$, $SD = 0.36$, respectively). On the friendliness scale neither of the two main effects nor the two-way interaction was significant.

A 2 (High vs. Low performance expectations) $\times$ 2 (Seeking vs. No help seeking) ANOVA on the attraction scores yielded a main effect of performance expectations, $F(1, 62) = 9.02$, $p < .05$, which was qualified by a marginally significant two-way interaction, $F(1, 62) = 3.02$, $p = .08$, $\eta^2_p = .12$. This interaction suggests that participants' attraction to the high-expectations other was higher when the other had sought help, $t(32) = 2.70$, $p < .05$ ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.77$, and $M = 3.22$, $SD = 0.71$, respectively) and was not different in the low-expectations condition, $t(32) < 1$ ($M =$

3.00, $SD = 0.34$, and $M = 2.91$, $SD = 0.84$, for the help-seeking and no-help-seeking conditions, respectively).

Discussion

The findings support the main hypotheses. Participants gave autonomy-oriented assistance to a "high performance expectations" individual and gave dependency-oriented assistance to a "low performance expectations" person. Comparing the evaluations and liking of a target person who has requested help to those of a target person who has not supports the role of help seeking as a stigma-consistent behavior. Compared to the no-help-seeking condition, the request for help increased positive evaluations and liking of a high expectations individual who had sought help and decreased positive evaluations of a low expectations individual who had sought help.

The second experiment sought to extend these findings by examining the role of socioeconomic status as a distal variable that affects performance expectations and the kind of help given. Also, this experiment assessed the helper's attributions and feelings toward the help seeker.

Study 2

The second experiment examined the hypothesis that the help seekers' social status is a distal variable affecting helpers' perceptions of and feelings toward the help seekers, as well as the kind of help given. It was predicted (a) that more dependency- than autonomy-oriented help would be offered to a low-status individual who had sought help and vice versa; (b) that the low-status person's request for help would be attributed to the uncontrollable, stable, and internal causes of lack of ability and dispositional low motivation; conversely, the high-status person's request would be attributed to transient difficulty due to lack of concentration, and (c) that the helper would cite feelings of pity and social responsibility as motivating help for the low-status person and identification with the other's predicament as motivating the decision to help the high-status individual. Consistent with the findings of the first experiment, an active request for help was expected to constitute a stigma-consistent behavior that amplifies the status-related perceptions of the person in need. It was expected to have positive and negative consequences for the evaluations and liking of the high- versus low-status individuals, respectively.

Method

Design and participants. The experiment consisted of a 2 (High–Low socioeconomic status) × 2 (Request–No request for help) between-participants design and was conducted online. Participants were 50 Israeli women and 36 Israeli men who were similarly distributed across the four experimental cells. They had an average age of 26.41 years ($SD = 6.5$) and an age range of 18–62 years.

Procedure. With the exception of the status manipulation, the procedures were identical to those employed in Experiment 1. After the study and their role as guides were explained to them, participants were asked to fill out a short demographic questionnaire that asked them to indicate their residential neigh-

borhood. Responses to this question indicated the participants' socioeconomic status. An examination of participants' place of residence revealed that all reported living in what could be described as medium and medium-high income neighborhoods. Following this, participants were exposed to information about the problem solver, who was said to be a 24-year-old male living with his parents and two siblings in either a very high socioeconomic status (SES) residential area (Savion) or a very low SES residential area (Hatikva). In fact, these neighborhoods are emblematic in Israeli society of very rich and very poor populations, respectively. This constituted the manipulation of the target person's socioeconomic status. Participants were then asked to rate the problem solver's status on a 7-point scale. Subsequently, half the participants received a request for help from the stimulus person and the other half received a neutral, non-help-related message.

Dependent measures.

Manipulation checks. Before the dependent measures were assessed, participants were asked (a) to indicate the target person's socioeconomic status and (b) whether he had requested help.

(a) Effects on help giving, attributions of need for help, and feelings. After participants in the help-seeking condition had indicated that the problem solver had requested their assistance, they were asked (a) whether or not they would want to comply by helping; (b) those who answered in the affirmative were asked to indicate whether they preferred giving the answer to the problem or an explanation on how such problems can be solved (i.e., dependency- and autonomy-oriented assistance, respectively). Helpers were asked to indicate on 5-point scales the degree to which they felt "pity," "social responsibility toward the needy," or "identification with the needy person's situation" when they had decided to help. They were subsequently asked to rate on 5-point scales the degree to which they attributed the person's need for help to (a) lack of intellectual abilities, (b) lack of motivation, and (c) momentary lack of concentration.

(b) Effects of help seeking and status on evaluations and liking. After participants in the help-seeking condition responded to the help-related questions, all were asked to rate the stimulus person on seven 5-point bipolar adjective scales. Based on factor analyses, two measures of general perceptions of the other emerged: (a) *general ability* (i.e., weak–strong, smart–stupid, intelligent–unintelligent, independent–dependent, and creative–uncreative) and (b) *friendliness* (i.e., warm–cold and friendly–unfriendly). We also assessed, via responses to two separate items, (c) the perceived likelihood that the problem solver would need assistance in similar tasks in the future, and (d) the degree to which he was perceived as characteristically motivated to succeed. Finally, participants rated their liking of the problem solver on the liking measure used in Experiment 1.

Results

Manipulation checks. A 2 (High vs. Low status) × 2 (Request vs. No request for help) analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) revealed that a problem solver described as living in a high SES neighborhood was viewed as having higher status than one described as living in a low SES neighborhood ($M = 5.48$, $SD = 0.89$, and $M = 2.80$, $SD = 0.78$, respectively), $F(1, 82) = 225.20$, $p < .001$. None of the other effects were significant. In this and

other analyses, participants' self-ratings of their own social status were used as a covariant. Use of this covariate did not alter the pattern of findings in any of the subsequent analyses.

(a) Effects on help giving, attributions of need for help, and feelings.

Helping responses. Most (85%) of participants requested to help decided to comply. There were no differences in willingness to help between the high- and low-status cells. In the low-status condition, 88% of participants who decided to help chose dependency-oriented help and 12% of them chose autonomy-oriented help, $\chi^2_{(2)} = 14.03$, $p < .001$. In the high-status condition, 76% of helpers chose autonomy-oriented help and 24% of them chose dependency-oriented help, $\chi^2_{(2)} = 10.81$, $p < .01$.

Causal perceptions. The low-status target person's need for help was attributed more to lack of motivation, $t(38) = 7.31$, $p < .001$ ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.73$, and $M = 2.62$, $SD = 0.85$, respectively) and lack of ability, $t(38) = 16.06$, $p < .001$ ($M = 5.79$, $SD = 0.60$, $M = 1.75$, $SD = 0.90$, respectively) than was the high-status person's need for help. Conversely, the high-status person's request for help was attributed more to temporary lack of concentration than to lack of ability, $t(38) = 3.33$, $p < .05$ ($M = 5.21$, $SD = 1.75$, and $M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.20$, respectively).

Feelings. Pity and social responsibility toward the needy were cited more frequently as the reasons for helping in the low- than in the high-status condition, $t(38) = 2.73$, $p < .05$ ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.41$, and $M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.11$, respectively), and $t(38) = 3.41$, $p < .05$ ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.62$, and $M = 2.32$, $SD = 1.60$, respectively). On the other hand, identification with the other's predicament was cited as being more of a reason to help the high-status than the low-status person, $t(38) = 4.72$, $p < .001$ ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.08$, and $M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.55$, respectively).

(b) Effects of help seeking and status on evaluations and liking. A 2 (High vs. Low status) × 2 (Request–No request for help) between-participants ANCOVA on perceptions of the stimulus person's general ability yielded a status main effect, $F(1, 82) = 105.87$, $p < .001$, the meaning of which was qualified by a significant two-way interaction, $F(1, 82) = 9.11$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2_p = .33$. This interaction is due to the fact that although there were no differences in perceptions of the low-status person who had or had not sought help, $t(41) = 1.22$, ns ($M = 2.31$, $SD = 0.64$, and $M = 2.42$, $SD = 0.51$, respectively), a high-status helper who had sought help was viewed as more able than one who had not, $t(41) = 3.02$, $p < .05$ ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.46$, and $M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.63$, respectively).

A low-status stimulus person was viewed as more likely than a high-status person to need help in the future, $F(1, 82) = 23.07$, $p < .001$ ($M = 3.35$, $SD = 0.65$, and $M = 2.48$, $SD = 0.93$, respectively). The interpretation of this main effect is qualified by a marginally significant two-way interaction, $F(1, 82) = 1.71$, $p = .08$, $\eta^2_p = .22$, which indicates that a low-status stimulus person who had asked for help was viewed as more likely to need future help than one who had not, $t(41) = 4.83$, $p < .001$ ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 0.89$, and $M = 2.95$, $SD = 0.97$, respectively). The comparable difference was not significant in the case of the high-status stimulus person, $t(41) = 1.52$, ns ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 0.62$, and $M = 2.33$, $SD = 0.65$, respectively).

The overall correlations between the protagonist's perceived status, collapsed over high- and low-status cells, support the hypothesis that the request for help had strengthened the link between high status and future self-reliance. In the help-seeking condition, the higher the protagonists' perceived status the less likely they were perceived as needing future help ($r = -.69$, $p < .001$). The same correlation in the no help-seeking condition was only marginally significant ($r = -.24$, $p < .10$). The difference between these two correlation coefficients (using Fisher r-to-z transformation; Fisher, 1921) was significant ($z = 2.37$, $p < .01$).

A high-status stimulus person was perceived as characteristically more motivated to succeed than a low-status person, $F(1, 82) = 79.75$, $p < .001$. This status main effect was qualified by a significant interaction between status and help seeking, $F(1, 82) = 9.61$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2_p = .41$. This interaction is due to the fact that although participants perceived a high-status stimulus person who had requested help as characteristically more motivated than a high-status person who had not, $t(41) = 2.70$, $p < .05$ ($Ms = 4.33$ and 3.95, respectively), they perceived a low-status person who had sought help as characteristically less motivated, $t(41) = 4.06$, $p < .05$ ($Ms = 2.01$ and 2.90, respectively).

A 2 (High vs. Low status) × 2 (Request–No request for help) between-participants ANCOVA on ratings of friendliness revealed that a stimulus person who had asked for help was regarded as friendlier than one who had not, $F(1, 82) = 3.58$, $p < .01$ ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.42$, and $M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.91$, respectively). Although the two-way interaction failed to reach a conventional level of significance, $F(1, 82) = 2.20$, $p = .16$, between-cell comparisons indicate that a high-status but not low-status stimulus person who had sought help was rated as friendlier than one who had not, $t(41) = 4.1$, $p < .05$ ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.23$, and $M = 2.52$, $SD = 1.80$; $M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.61$, and $M = 3.25$, $SD = 0.90$, for the high- and low-status conditions, respectively).

The 2 × 2 between-participants ANCOVA indicated higher attraction scores for high- than for low-status stimulus persons, $F(1, 82) = 29.44$, $p < .001$ ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 0.81$, and $M = 2.62$, $SD = 0.87$, respectively). The interpretation of this main effect is qualified by a marginally significant two-way interaction, $F(1, 82) = 2.83$, $p < .09$, $\eta^2_p = 0.12$, which suggests that although a low-status stimulus person who had sought help tended to be less liked than one who had not ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.01$, and $M = 2.79$, and $SD = 0.75$, respectively), a high-status person who had sought help tended to be more liked than one who had not ($M = 4.81$, $SD = 0.73$, and $M = 2.43$, $SD = 0.86$, respectively).

Discussion

Our findings suggest two distinct patterns of helping responses depending on the help seeker's social status. One pattern is associated with viewing the needy as chronically dependent actors unable to help themselves. This pattern is adopted toward low-status help seekers whose need for help is viewed as stemming from uncontrollable, internal, and stable lack of ability. Consistent with these perceptions, helpers experience pity and social responsibility toward the low-status persons in need and provide them with dependency-oriented help. The other pattern is associated with viewing the help seekers as able to help themselves and the request for help as reflecting transient dependency that emanates from uncontrollable, unstable, and internal causes that could be induced by external disruptions, such as momentary lack of concentration. This pattern is adopted when the request comes from a high-status person in need who is viewed as a characteristically

able and motivated individual. This perception of transient dependency is associated with identification with the help seeker's predicament and the provision of autonomy-oriented help.

The second experiment supports the idea that the request for help constitutes a stigma-consistent behavior. When the request for help came from a high-status person, it was taken as evidence of strength and motivation. Compared with a high-status person who had not sought help, one who did was viewed by the helper as more able, motivated, and likely to be independent in the future. When the same request came from a low-status individual, it was taken as evidence for his relative weakness and lack of motivation. Compared with a low-status person who had not sought help, one who had was viewed as characteristically less motivated and more likely to be independent in the future. Concomitantly, help seeking by a high-status individual increased his perception by others as a friendly individual and the liking for him. A request for help by a low-status individual decreased his perceived friendliness and the liking for him.

Study 3

The third experiment sought to replicate and extend the findings of the first two experiments and examined the role of (a) helpers' attributions and (b) feelings as mediators of the effects of status on the kind of help given. In this experiment, unlike the previous two studies, measures of attributions and feelings were taken prior to the participants' decision whether to help, to enable this assessment. This allowed the examination of a model linking (a) status to (b) attributions for the help request and linking (c) affective reactions to (d) the kind of help given, by way of structural equation modeling (SEM). In order to increase the generalizability of the previous findings, we used a high or low scholastic status (i.e., scores on an SAT-type test).

Method

Design and participants.   The study consisted of a 2 (High vs. Low scholastic status) × 2 (Seeking vs. Not seeking help) between-participants design. Participants were 64 Israeli women and 43 Israeli men, with a mean age of 27.75 years ($SD = 6.04$) and an age range of 19–45, similarly distributed across the four experimental cells.

Procedures.   The experimental procedures were similar to those used in the first and second experiments. After participants had entered the experimental website, they received explanations about the study and their role as guides. Participants were then asked to fill out a short demographic questionnaire that included a question asking them to indicate their score on the Israeli equivalent of the SAT. These scores range between 200 and 800, with a mean around 530 ($SD \sim 110$). Because taking this test is a precondition for application to academic institutions in Israel, most Israeli college and university students (or those planning to apply in the future) know their score. In our sample, 77% of the respondents knew their score and reported it on the demographic questionnaire. Following this, participants were notified that the problem solver was a 24-year-old male living with his family in the Tel Aviv area and that his "psychometric score" was either 520 or 711 (i.e., low and high scholastic status, respectively). Participants' psychometric scores ranged between 560 and 690 with a mean of

606 ($SD = 41$). As in the second experiment, the protagonist's SAT scores indicated either a very high or a very low scholastic status and participants' average score was midpoint between these two extremes (i.e., 86 points higher than the SAT of low-status protagonists and 105 points lower than the SAT of high-status protagonists).

Participants then completed a three-item manipulation check (i.e., the likelihood that the stimulus person's father is a well-earning professional; the likelihood that he would graduate successfully from a prestigious university; and the general economic status of his family). Responses were summed ($\alpha = .90$) and used as a check on the status manipulation.

Participants in the help-seeking condition received a request for assistance from the stimulus person. Before they responded to the request, they were asked to indicate their feelings about that person and their perception of the causes that drove the problem solver to seek help. Only afterward were they asked if and how they were willing to assist. Subsequent to the collection of help-related measures, all participants were asked to fill out the dependent measures of their evaluation and liking of the stimulus person.

Dependent measures.

Manipulation checks.   Before the dependent measures were assessed, participants were asked (a) to respond to the status manipulation check items and (b) whether the target person had requested help. With slight modifications, the dependent measures in Study 3 were identical to those used in Study 2.

(a) Effects on help giving, attributions of need for help, and feelings.   In the help-seeking condition, before participants responded to the request for assistance, they had indicated on a 7-point scale the perceived causes for the request for help and on a 5-point scale their feelings toward the help seeker. Subsequently, participants indicated whether they intended to help the problem solver and whether this would be autonomy- or dependency-oriented help.[1]

Most (90%) of the participants chose to help. Because the SEM analysis requires the dependent measure to be a continuous variable, we constructed a "certainty about kind of help" measure. Participants were asked if they had indicated a preference for giving the solution to the problem or the explanation for it. All participants correctly checked the appropriate kind of help. Following that, they indicated on a 7-point scale the degree to which they felt certain that this kind of help was the right kind of help for the protagonist.

(b) Effects of help seeking and status on evaluations and liking. All participants were asked to rate the stimulus person on seven 5-point bipolar adjective scales. The ratings on these scales were subjected to a factor analysis using varimax rotation with a .40 criterion for inclusion. This analysis yielded two subscales: (a) *general ability* (i.e., weak–strong, smart–stupid, intelligent–unintelligent, and independent–dependent) and (b) *overall friendliness* (i.e., warm–cold, friendly–unfriendly, and creative–uncreative). These two scales were similar in structure and content

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[1] We alternated between 5- and 7-point scales and alerted participants to this change, because experience had indicated that this caused participants to be more vigilant and attentive when responding to the dependent measures.

to the ones identified in Experiment 2.[2] In addition, we collected measures of (a) the likelihood that the help seeker would need help in the future, (b) his characteristic motivation to succeed, and (c) the Interpersonal Judgment Scale measure of attraction.

Results

Manipulation checks. A 2 (High vs. Low status) $\times$ 2 (Help seeking vs. No help seeking) between-participants ANCOVA indicated that the problem solver in the low scholastic status condition was rated as having lower social status than the one in the high scholastic status condition, $F(1, 103) = 482.61$, $p < .001$ ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 0.45$, and $M = 5.84$, $SD = 0.57$, respectively). Participants' own score served as a covariate in this and other analyses in this experiment. The use of this covariate did not alter the pattern of findings observed with ANOVAs that had not used a covariate. Participants in the help-seeking condition correctly remembered that the problem solver had requested help from them.

(a) Effects on help giving, attributions of need for help, and feelings.

Help responses. Most (90%) of the participants who had been asked for help decided to help the problem solver. There were no differences in the general willingness to help between the high- and low-status cells. In the low-status condition, 79% of the participants gave dependency-oriented help and 21% of them gave autonomy-oriented help, $\chi^2_{(2)} = 21.20$, $p < .001$. In the high-status condition, 87% provided autonomy-oriented help and 13% provided dependency-oriented help, $\chi^2_{(2)} = 10.81$, $p < .01$. The certainty scores of those gave dependency-oriented help were not different than the certainty scores of those who chose autonomy-oriented help, $t(51) = 1.81$, ns ($M = 6.44$, $SD = 1.43$, and $M = 6.24$, $SD = 1.82$, respectively).

Causal perceptions. The request for help of the low-status person was viewed as caused more by lack of intellectual ability, $t(52) = 12.57$, $p < .001$ ($M = 5.73$, $SD = 0.92$, and $M = 2.72$, $SD = 0.90$, respectively); lack of motivation, $t(52) = 7.73$, $p < .001$ ($M = 4.42$, $SD = 0.50$, and $M = 2.52$, $SD = 0.76$, respectively); and task difficulty, $t(52) = 8.11$, $p < .001$ ($M = 4.44$, $SD = 0.85$, and $M = 2.53$, $SD = 0.85$, respectively) than was the request for help by a high-status person. Momentary lack of concentration was seen more as the cause of the request for help by a high- than a low-status person, $t(51) = 7.94$, $p < .001$ ($M = 4.72$, $SD = 0.91$, and $M = 2.81$, $SD = 0.95$, respectively).

Similarly, correlational analyses in the help-seeking condition, collapsed over high- and low-status cells, indicate that the higher the perceived status of the protagonist, the lower the attribution of the request for help to lack of ability ($r = -.85$, $p < .001$) and lack of motivation ($r = -.87$, $p < .001$) and the higher its attribution to momentary lack of attention ($r = .60$, $p < .001$). The differences between the correlation coefficients (using Fisher r-to-z transformation) were significant (lack of ability vs. momentary lack of attention, $z = 2.76$, $p < .01$; lack of motivation vs. momentary lack of attention, $z = 3.14$, $p < .01$).

Feelings. Pity was rated higher when the request for help came from a low-status than a high-status individual, $t(53) = 10.34$, $p < .001$ ($M = 4.54$, $SD = 0.58$, and $M = 2.42$, $SD = 0.96$, respectively), and identification with the other's predicament was rated higher when the request came from a high-status than a low-status individual, $t(53) = 9.01$, $p < .001$ ($M = 4.36$, $SD = 0.85$, and $M = $

2.10, $SD = 1.0$, respectively). The difference between the two status groups in ratings of social responsibility toward the needy was not significant, $t(53) = 1.52$, ns ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.12$, and $M = 2.88$, $SD = 0.96$, respectively).

Correlational analyses indicate that in the low-status but not the high-status condition, feelings of pity were positively related to the perception that the protagonist would need help in the future ($r = .36$, $p < .05$). Finally, in the help-seeking condition, collapsed over high- and low-status cells, the higher the help seeker's perceived status the stronger the perceived identification ($r = .72$, $p < .001$) and the weaker the feelings of pity toward the help seeker ($r = -.81$, $p < .001$).

SEM assessment of the model. Structural equation modeling (Schumacker & Lomax, 1996) with EQS software was conducted to assess the proposed theoretical model's validity. This allowed us to assess the validity of the links suggested by the model: that the effects of status on giving dependency- or autonomy-oriented help are mediated by the causes that the helper attributes to the need for help and associated feelings. The advantage of SEM over other approaches to analyzing direct and mediated relationships is that it examines the validity of the proposed model and additional links between the variables in an effort to present an optimal model that fits the data (Carte & Russell, 2003; Henseler & Chin, 2010).

In the present study, the variables were assessed in the order suggested by the theoretical model: the independent variables, followed by the attributional and affective mediators, and finally the dependent variable of the degree of certainty regarding the appropriateness of autonomy-oriented or dependency-oriented help. The current model included 10 free parameters for 57 observations (i.e., participants in the help-seeking condition). The size of this sample falls short of the recommended 10 observations for each parameter, which would call for at least 100 participants. Yet, based on reports that include five observations per parameter (e.g., Bentler & Chou, 1987) and because the previously reported analyses supported the logic of this model, this analysis may be considered informative with the existing data set.

The hypothesized model fit the data very well, with a small and insignificant chi-square value, $\chi^2(2, N = 57) = 2.5$, ns, and other fit indices that also indicated excellent fit: normed fit index = 0.99; nonnormed fit index = 0.99; comparative fit index = 0.99; root-mean-square error of approximation = 0.09 (see Figure 2).

The model indicates that the effects of help seeker status on the kind of given help are mediated by attributions of the request for help to lack of ability and feelings of identification with the help seeker's predicament. Because the omission of these mediators from the model reduced but did not eliminate the influence of the perceived help seeker's status on the kind of help, these effects represent partial mediation effects.

To test whether the effects of help seeker status on the kind of help were significantly mediated by attributions of a help request to ability and consequent feelings of identification, we performed Sobel tests. A Sobel test for mediation indicated, consistent with the model in Figure 2, that the effects of perceptions of help seeker status on identification with the help seeker's predicament were

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[2] The inclusion of creativity in the friendliness factor may have reflected participants' view of a noncreative person as rigid and therefore cold and unfriendly.
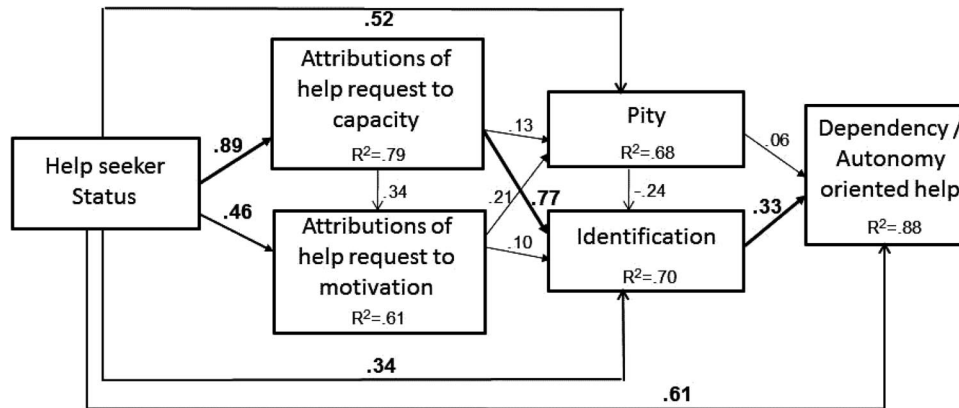
Figure 2. Structural equations modeling of help seeker status, causal attributions, feelings toward the help seeker, and the kind of help given. The values in bold indicate beta coefficients significant at $p < .05$.

significantly mediated by attributions of a help request to lack of ability ($z = 2.41$, $p < .05$), and that the effects of attributions to help seeker lack of ability on the kind of given help were significantly mediated by identification with the help seeker's predicament ($z = 3.12$, $p < .05$).

(b) Effects of help seeking and status on evaluations and liking. A 2 (High vs. Low status) $\times$ 2 (Help seeking vs. No help seeking) between-participants ANCOVA on perceptions of the stimulus person's general ability yielded a status main effect, $F(1, 103) = 122.73$, $p < .001$, the meaning of which is qualified by a significant two-way interaction, $F(1, 103) = 21.94$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .42$. This interaction is due to the fact that whereas perceptions of the general ability of the low-status stimulus person who had sought help were lower than those of one who had not, $t(52) = 3.49$, $p < .05$ ($M = 2.52$, $SD = 0.55$, and $M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.60$, respectively), a high-status stimulus person who had sought help was viewed as more able than one who had not, $t(51) = 3.16$, $p < .05$ ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 0.43$, and $M = 3.81$, $SD = 0.65$, respectively).

A 2 (High vs. Low status) $\times$ 2 (Help seeking vs. No seeking) between-participants ANCOVA revealed that a low-status stimulus person was viewed as more likely to need help in the future than a high-status person, $F(1, 103) = 47.23$, $p < .001$ ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 0.70$, and $M = 2.54$, $SD = 0.80$, respectively). The interpretation of this main effect is qualified by a significant two-way interaction, $F(1, 103) = 10.36$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .23$, which indicates that a low-status stimulus person who had asked for help tended to be viewed as more likely to need future help than one who had not, $t(52) = 1.82$, $p = .07$ ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.60$, and $M = 3.32$, $SD = 0.89$, respectively), whereas a high-status stimulus person who had sought help was viewed as less dependent on future help than one who had not, $t(51) = 3.55$, $p < .001$ ($M = 2.29$, $SD = 0.88$, and $M = 2.80$, $SD = 0.59$, respectively).

Correlational analyses indicate that the overall relationship between help seeker perceived status and the likelihood they would need future help was stronger in the help-seeking condition, collapsed over high- and low-status cells, than in the no-help-seeking condition ($r = -.64$, $p < .001$, and $r = -.37$, $p < .01$, respectively; difference between correlations using Fisher r-to-z transformation was significant, $z = 1.81$, $p < .05$). These relationships

further corroborate the concept of help seeking as a stigma-consistent behavior. As in Experiment 2, the request for help strengthened the link between higher status and future self-reliance.

Finally, a high-status stimulus person was perceived as characteristically more motivated to succeed than a low-status person, $F(1, 103) = 238.88$, $p < .001$ ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 0.81$, and $M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.90$, respectively). Neither the help-seeking main effect nor the interaction between status and help seeking was significant, $F(1, 103) < 1$.

A 2 (High vs. Low status) $\times$ 2 (Help seeking vs. No seeking) between-participants ANCOVA on ratings of friendliness revealed that a high-status person was rated as friendlier than a low-status person, $F(1, 103) = 10.73$, $p < .001$ ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 0.65$, and $M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.43$, respectively). Neither the main effect of help seeking nor the two-way interaction was significant.

The 2 $\times$ 2 between-participants ANCOVA on the interpersonal attraction scores indicated a status main effect, $F(1, 103) = 102.39$, $p < .001$, qualified by a significant Status $\times$ Help-seeking interaction, $F(1, 103) = 11.44$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .33$. This indicates that although a low-status stimulus person who had sought help was less liked than one who had not, $t(52) = 2.16$, $p < .05$ ($M = 2.35$, $SD = 0.81$, and $M = 2.74$, $SD = 0.50$, respectively), a high-status person who had sought help was more liked than one who had not, $t(51) = 2.79$, $p < .05$ ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 0.62$, and $M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.59$, respectively).

Discussion

This experiment replicated and extended the findings of Studies 1 and 2. The findings indicate that a request for help by a low-status person is attributed to lack of ability and motivation, elicits feelings of pity, and leads to dependency-oriented assistance. The same request for help by a high-status person is attributed to momentary lack of concentration, elicits feelings of identification with the seeker's predicament, and leads to autonomy-oriented assistance. These findings reinforce the suggestion that the help seekers' status determines the meaning of a request for help. When they enjoy high status, the request for assistance indicates transient difficulty, high motivation to overcome it, and ability to do so.

Conversely, when their status is relatively low, the same request indicates inability and chronic dependency.

SEM analysis supported the path between viewing the high-status help seeker as more able, identifying with his predicament, and giving autonomy-oriented help. The predicted path among status perceptions, attributions of inability to the person in need, feelings of pity, and dependency-oriented help was not supported. It should be noted that a significant path emerged between low status, help-seeker-perceived inability, less identification with their predicament, and the eventual giving of dependency-oriented help. These findings indicate that identification with the stimulus person's predicament plays a key role in the helper's decision to provide autonomy- or dependency-oriented help. This suggests an extension of the well-substantiated link between empathy and helping. We elaborate on this point in the General Discussion.

The comparison of evaluations and liking between high- and low-status individuals who had or had not sought help replicates earlier findings and further supports the idea of help seeking as a stigma-consistent behavior. High-status individuals who had requested help were viewed as more able, less likely to need help in the future, and better liked than their counterparts who had not requested help. On the other hand, low-status individuals who had sought help were rated as less able, more likely to depend on help in the future, and less liked than their counterparts who had not requested help.

Study 4

The first three experiments assessed the effects of help-seeker status on the kind of help given and found that dependency-oriented help is provided to low-status help seekers, whereas autonomy-oriented help is given to high-status help seekers. In these experiments, the autonomy–dependency nature of help was the dependent variable. In contrast, in the fourth experiment the kind of help was the independent variable. This study considered the effects of seeking autonomy- or dependency-oriented help by high- and low-status people on observers' perceptions. It examined whether the kind of help requested would override the effects of the help seeker status by exploring the possibility that, compared to a low-status person who had not requested help or one who had requested dependency-oriented help, the low-status person who requested autonomy-oriented help would be perceived as more motivated to succeed and able to do so. If this is the case, it will suggest that seeking autonomy-oriented help uncouples the link between low status and the attribution of a request for help to chronic dependency. In the case of the high-status person, this will suggest that relative to a high-status person who has not sought help or who has requested autonomy-oriented help, one who requests dependency-oriented help will be viewed as relatively less motivated and less competent.

To assess these possibilities, we had participants watch a short video depicting a high- or low-status female student asking for dependency- or autonomy-oriented help in order to solve an academic problem and then assessed perceptions of the help seeker, attributions of her need for help, and expectations of her future performance.

Method

Design and participants. One hundred and eighteen Israeli undergraduate psychology students (M_{age} = 23.10 years, SD = 2.36, age range = 21–37) participated in the experiment as part of their course requirements. The experiment consisted of a 2 (High vs. Low SES) × 3 (Request for autonomy-oriented vs. dependency-oriented help vs. No request) between-participants design with 19–20 participants per cell. Gender distribution in the experimental cells was identical or similar.

Procedures. The experiment was conducted in small groups of 10 participants each. It was described as assessing the links between personal demographics and social judgments. Participants first filled out a demographic questionnaire that asked them about their age, gender, and family SES. The latter measure included four questions. One general question asked participants to rate their family's social status, two questions asked about the desirability of the family's residential area, and one question asked about the family's economic position. Answers to these questions were summed into a single status score (α = 0.71).

Subsequently, all participants were asked to watch a short videotape clip depicting the first meeting between a female university student who volunteered to work with an 11th-grade female student who was said to have failed a comprehensive math test in school and been given another opportunity to take the test (hereafter, the protagonist). When asked to describe her family background, the protagonist in the high-status condition said that her family lived in a large apartment in a wealthy neighborhood of Tel Aviv and her father was a self-employed corporate lawyer. In the low-status condition she indicated that her family lived in a small apartment in a relatively poor neighborhood of Tel Aviv and her father was a self-employed maintenance worker. The protagonist then proceeded to tell about her failure on the math test and that she was allowed by her teacher to retake the test in a few weeks' time.

In the no-help-seeking control condition the protagonist concluded by saying that she needed to start thinking on how to approach this forthcoming test. In the autonomous help-seeking condition she concluded by asking the interviewer if she could explain the mathematical principles to her so that she could master the material by herself. In the dependency-oriented help-seeking condition the protagonist asked the interviewer if she could solve many similar questions and show her the correct answers in this kind of test. After the participants had finished watching the short video clip, they were asked to answer questions that included (a) the manipulation checks, (b) the perceptions of the protagonist, and, in the help-seeking conditions, (c) the attributions for the protagonist's request for help. After they had completed this questionnaire, participants were thanked and debriefed.

Dependent measures.

Manipulation checks. To check the effectiveness of the status manipulation, we asked participants to indicate on a 7-point scale (a) whether the protagonist came from a high (7) or a low (1) social class, (b) whether or not she had requested help, and (c) the kind of help she had requested (asking the university student to explain the mathematical principles or to show her the correct answers).

Perceptions of the protagonist. Participants were asked to rate, on 5-point scales ranging from 5 (*very much*) to 1 (*not at all*), the degree to which they viewed the protagonist as characterized by 15

characteristics. A factor analysis using varimax rotation on these ratings revealed three independent subscales. The criterion for an item's inclusion in a scale was an eigenvalue of .40. The first was an Overall favorability subscale made up of eight items (pleasant, genuine, friendly, honest, well-intentioned, tolerant, sincere, and nice); the second was an Efficacy subscale consisting of three items (confident, motivated, and actively coping with difficulties); the third was an Intellectual ability subscale comprising three items (intellectually able, likely to succeed on similar tasks, and likely to succeed in academic studies).

Attributions of the request for help. Participants in the request for help conditions were asked to rate on a 7-point scale the degree to which they thought that the protagonist's request for help was explained by her lack of ability, her high motivation to succeed, and the difficulty of the task.

Results

Manipulation checks. The protagonist whose family had been described as a high-SES family was rated as having higher social status than the protagonist whose family had been described as a low-SES family, $F(1, 112) = 358.47$, $p < .001$ ($M = 6.03$, $SD = 1.11$, and $M = 2.42$, $SD = 0.95$, respectively). Neither the help-seeking main effect nor the interaction between status and request for help was significant. Regarding the request for help manipulation, all participants except one had correctly reported whether or not the protagonist had requested help and the kind of help she had requested.

Perceptions of the protagonist. Participants' ratings on the Perceived favorability, Efficacy, and Intellectual ability subscales were analyzed separately in 2 (High vs. Low SES) $\times$ 3 (Request for autonomy-oriented vs. dependency-oriented help vs. No request) between- participants ANCOVAs in which participants' self-reports of their families' SES served as a covariate. The inclusion of this covariate did not alter the pattern of findings observed with ANOVAs that had not included it.

Perceived favorability. The 2 $\times$ 3 ANCOVA revealed a request for help main effect, $F(2, 112) = 29.91$, $p < .001$. Post hoc tests indicated that the favorability ratings of a protagonist who had requested dependency-oriented help were lower than if she had not requested help or had requested autonomy-oriented help ($M = 3.20$, $SD = 0.78$; $M = 3.86$, $SD = 0.64$; and $M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.54$, respectively). A 2 $\times$ 3 interaction, $F(2, 112) = 3.26$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .15$, indicates that the favorability ratings of high- and low-status protagonists did not differ in the no-request condition, $t(38) = 1.73$, ns ($M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.63$, and $M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.42$, respectively) and the dependency-oriented help condition, $t(37) = 1.65$, ns ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 0.55$, and $M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.45$, respectively). However, in the autonomy-oriented help condition the favorability ratings of the low-status protagonist were higher than those of the high-status protagonist, $t(37) = 5.62$, $p < .01$ ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.44$, and $M = 3.52$, $SD = 0.51$, respectively). In fact, the mean favorability ratings of the low-status protagonist who had requested autonomy-oriented help were higher than all other cell means.

Perceived protagonist efficacy. A 2 $\times$ 3 ANCOVA yielded a request for help main effect, $F(1, 112) = 26.17$, $p < .001$, which is due to the lowest efficacy scores in the dependency-oriented help condition relative to the no request for help and autonomy-

oriented help conditions ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 0.74$; $M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.45$; and $M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.63$, respectively). The interpretation of this main effect is qualified by an interaction between status and request for help, $F(2, 112) = 5.11$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .18$. This interaction is due to the fact that although there was no difference in the ratings of the high- and low-status protagonist's efficacy in the no request condition, $t(38) = 0.62$, ns ($M = 3.77$, $SD = 0.47$, and $M = 3.68$, $SD = 0.44$, respectively), the high-status protagonist was perceived as more efficacious than the low-status protagonist in the dependency-oriented help condition, $t(37) = 1.99$, $p = .05$ ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.64$, and $M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.78$, respectively). In contrast, in the autonomy-oriented condition, the low-status protagonist was perceived as more efficacious than the high-status protagonist, $t(37) = 2.12$, $p < .05$ ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.54$, and $M = 3.43$, $SD = 0.66$, respectively). Again, the mean efficacy rating of the low-status protagonist who had requested autonomy-oriented help was the highest cell mean.

Perceived intellectual ability. A 2 $\times$ 3 ANCOVA yielded a request for help main effect, $F(2, 112) = 3.45$, $p < .05$, indicating lower ratings for the protagonist who had sought dependency-oriented help than for the one who had not requested help or had requested autonomy-oriented assistance ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 0.81$; $M = 3.90$, $SD = 0.53$; and $M = 4.00$, $SD = 0.74$, respectively). Neither the status main effect nor the interaction between status and request was significant.

Attributions of the request for help. Because these measures had been collected only in the two request for help conditions, analyses consisted of a 2 (High vs. Low status) $\times$ 2 (Request for autonomy vs. dependency-oriented help) between-participants ANCOVA.

A 2 $\times$ 2 ANCOVA on the attribution of the request for help to intellectual ability yielded a request for help main effect, $F(1, 74) = 4.70$, $p < .05$, indicating that the request for help was attributed less to insufficient intellectual ability when the help seeker had asked for autonomy-oriented help than when she had asked for dependency-oriented help ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 0.41$, and $M = 2.93$, $SD = 0.50$, respectively). The interaction between status and kind of requested help was not significant, $F(1, 74) = 1.4$, ns.

A 2 $\times$ 2 ANCOVA revealed that the request for help was attributed more to high motivation for success when the protagonist had asked for autonomy-oriented help than dependency-oriented help, $F(1, 74) = 26.67$, $p < .001$ ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.14$, and $M = 3.28$, $SD = 0.17$, respectively). This effect is qualified by an interaction between status and kind of requested help, $F(1, 74) = 3.01$, $p = .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .22$, indicating that compared to that of the high-status protagonist, the low-status protagonist's request for autonomy-oriented help was attributed more to high motivation to succeed, $t(37) = 3.53$, $p = .05$ ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 0.90$, and $M = 3.95$, $SD = 0.71$, respectively). However, when the help seeker had asked for dependency-oriented help, the degree to which her request was attributed to high motivation to succeed was similar in the high- and low-status conditions, $t(37) = 0.05$, ns ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.7$, and $M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.8$, respectively).

Finally, no significant main effects, $F(1, 74) < 1$, or interaction effects, $F(1, 74) = 1.32$, ns, were found on the measure of attribution of the request for help to task difficulty.

Discussion

This experiment assessed how a request for dependency- or autonomy-oriented help by a high- or low-status person in need affected observers' perceptions of the help seeker. The findings indicate that a request for autonomy-oriented assistance had positive effects on the way observers perceived and evaluated the help seeker. This was especially the case for a low-status protagonist requesting autonomy-oriented assistance, who was viewed more favorably, $t(36) = 5.97$, $p < .001$ ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.44$, and $M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.45$, respectively) and as being more efficacious than when she had requested dependency-oriented assistance, $t(36) = 5.65$, $p < .001$ ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.54$, and $M = 2.61$, $SD = 0.78$, respectively). In fact, when she had requested autonomy-oriented assistance, the protagonist was viewed more favorably and perceived as more efficacious than the high-status person who had sought such assistance. Moreover, the low-status person's request for autonomy-oriented assistance was attributed to her motivation to succeed more than that of the high-status person who had sought autonomy-oriented assistance, as well as the high- or low-status protagonist who had sought dependency-oriented assistance. The high-status person was viewed more negatively when seeking dependency-oriented assistance than when she had sought autonomy-oriented assistance, $t(38) = 3.81$, $p < .001$ ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.55$, and $M = 3.42$, $SD = 0.51$, respectively) or had not requested help, $t(37) = 4.95$, $p < .001$ ($M = 2.82$, $SD = 0.55$, and $M = 3.72$, $SD = 0.63$, respectively). A similar but nonsignificant pattern suggests that the high-status protagonist who had requested dependency-oriented help was viewed as less efficacious than the one who had not requested assistance or had requested autonomy-oriented assistance.

Overall, the findings indicate that low-status persons gain by seeking autonomy-oriented assistance. Under these conditions, they are viewed relatively favorably as efficacious and motivated, and their request for help is taken as indicating a transient rather than chronic dependency. On the other hand, high-status persons requesting dependency-oriented assistance "lose" in the eyes of observers. They are viewed less favorably when seeking dependency-oriented help than when not requesting help or when seeking autonomy-oriented help. Thus, a request for help that is consistent with the expectations that observers associate with the high- and low-status protagonist (i.e., dependency- and autonomy-oriented help for low- and high-status people, respectively) reinforces existing perceptions of the help seeker. Yet, when the request for assistance is inconsistent with these expectations (i.e., autonomy- and dependency-oriented assistance for the low- and high-status person in need, respectively), people base their judgments of the help seeker on the latter's behavior rather than on status-related expectations. In fact, the association between social status and the view of the needy as chronically or transiently dependent on outside assistance is malleable and is determined by the kind of assistance sought.

General Discussion

The findings of the present research indicate that the helper can interpret a request for help in two opposing ways. A request for help can be taken as a sign of the help seeker's inability, general passivity, and chronic dependency on more powerful and knowledgeable others or as a sign of active coping. Perceiving the request as indicating chronic dependency prompts the helper to solve the problem for the help seeker by giving him (or her) dependency-oriented assistance. In contrast, when the request for help is seen as an effort to cope with transient difficulties by an otherwise self-reliant individual, the helper provides the help seeker with autonomy-oriented assistance. The findings of the first three studies support the hypothesis that the help seeker's social status determines either of these two interpretations of the help seeker's request for help and the resultant kind of help given.

A request for help by a low-status individual is attributed to internal, stable, and uncontrollable causes (i.e., lack of ability and low characteristic motivation to succeed) and prompts the giving of dependency-oriented help. The same request for help by a high-status individual is attributed to an external and unstable reason, such as momentary lack of concentration, and prompts autonomy-oriented assistance. Momentary lack of concentration, which is likely to have been caused by some external distraction, is an uncontrollable cause. As noted previously, based on Weiner's (2006) theorizing, if the cause had been unstable, internal, and controllable (e.g., purposeful neglect to make the required effort) it would have aroused feelings of anger toward the high-status person in need and led to unwillingness to help him. This distinction between unstable internal and uncontrollable causes and unstable internal and controllable causes and its consequences for helping high-status individuals in need remains to be explored by future research.

Studies 2 and 3 assessed participants' reported feelings toward the help seeker. In both experiments, the would-be helper reported feelings of pity toward low-status help seekers. However, when the help seeker was said to be a high-status individual, helpers cited identification with his predicament as the feeling that prompted the giving of autonomy-oriented help. The link between attributions of the need for help to lack of ability, feelings, and helping was substantiated by numerous studies within the framework of Weiner's attributional-affective model of help giving (Rudolph, Roesch, Greitemeyer, & Weiner, 2004). Yet, none of these studies investigated the consequences of the helper's attributions and feelings for the giving of autonomy- or dependency-oriented help.

A SEM analysis supported the conceptual progression from the help seeker's high status to attributions of high ability, through feelings of identification to the giving of autonomy-oriented help. It should be noted that identification with the high-status help seeker's predicament is likely to have been facilitated by the fact that participants in these experiments were themselves of medium to medium-high status. Few, if any, participants described themselves as being of high or low socioeconomic or scholastic status. Given the tendency for upward comparison in performance settings (Festinger, 1954), participants identified with the high-status protagonist in need. This identification mediated ratings of certainty that autonomy-oriented help is the appropriate kind of help required by the high-status protagonist. This is a reminder that the present empirical patterns are limited to helping interactions between a help seeker of very high or very low status and a helper of medium or medium-high status. Although in most helping interactions the helper is likely to be of medium status at least note that the findings may be expected to have been quite different given other status combinations. For example, a helper of very low socioeconomic status may experience anger, rather than identification, when the help seeker is socially advantaged. This and

related hypotheses relevant to variations in the helper's status remain to be examined by future research.

Our SEM analysis did not support the hypothesis that feelings of pity mediated between the perceived lack of ability of low-status protagonists and the certainty that dependency-oriented help was appropriate for them. Yet, low feelings of identification with the help seeker's predicament mediated the helper's certainty that dependency-oriented help was appropriate for the low-status protagonist. Thus, in both the high- and low-status conditions identification with the help seeker's predicament mediated the certainty that autonomy- and dependency-oriented assistance was the appropriate kind of help, respectively. When such identification is viewed as a proxy for empathy, these findings suggest a more complex view of the well-established empirical link between empathy and help giving (Batson, 2011). These findings raise the possibility that when the helper can choose between giving autonomy- or dependency-oriented assistance, feelings of empathy will result in autonomy-oriented help and their absence will result in dependency-oriented help.

The robustness and generality of these findings are enhanced by the fact that similar empirical patterns were observed across different status conceptualizations. The first experiment induced different performance expectations; the second and third experiments manipulated information about the protagonist's socioeconomic and scholastic status, respectively. In the language of expectation states theory, the same findings were obtained when status indicators were diffuse (i.e., SES), relatively more specific (i.e., scholastic status), and highly specific (i.e., expectations about performance on certain kind of tasks). The empirical consistency across these different operationalizations reinforces the view of status as a content-free variable that determines the perceived meaning of a request for help and the resultant helping response.

The findings discussed above are based on comparisons between participants' responses to a request for help from a high- or low-status individual. They do not bear directly on the conceptualization of help seeking as a stigma-consistent behavior that suggests that because a request for help by a high-status individual is attributed to valued attributes such as motivation to succeed, compared to a high-status person who does not seek help, one who does will be better liked and evaluated. Conversely, because the request for help by a low-status person is attributed to negatively valued properties such as chronic dependence, compared to a low-status person who does not seek help, one who does will be less liked and more negatively evaluated. Across the first three experiments, comparisons of evaluations and liking of high- and low-status individuals who have or have not sought assistance support these predictions. Moreover, the request for help by high- and low-status individuals had an opposite effect on the perceived likelihood of their future need for assistance. Low-status individuals who had requested help were viewed as more likely to need future help, whereas high-status help seekers were viewed as less likely to need future help.

These findings suggest that the reactions of would-be helpers to requests for help by high- and low-status people in need may inadvertently reinforce social inequalities. When the help seeker is a low-status individual, his request for help is regarded as an additional link in a chain of chronic dependency. It is taken as evidence of inability and prompts the helper to give dependency-oriented help that further reinforces the help seeker's low status.

These perceptions lead to lower evaluations and less liking of a low-status help seeker. The effects of the request for help by a high-status individual are diametrically opposite. His request for help is viewed as reflecting a transient need, he is viewed as generally able and motivated to cope, and the helper provides autonomy-oriented help that is consistent with these perceptions. Moreover, the high-status protagonist who had sought help was better evaluated and more liked than one who had not sought help. This pattern of perceptual and behavioral reactions is likely to further solidify the former's relatively high social status as an individual imbued with the socially desirable attribute of self-reliance.

These social dynamics represent an important aspect of the link between helping interactions and inequality in interpersonal and intergroup relations. They amplify the affinity between low status and the nonvalued social role of "dependent" persons and between high status and the valued social role of self-reliant individuals. The present research has analyzed this link from the perspective of the help giver who responds to a request for assistance by low-status and high-status persons. Yet, similar mechanisms may characterize the help seeker's perceptions of himself. The recurring receipt of dependency- or autonomy-oriented assistance is likely to translate into self-perceptions of incompetence and weakness or efficacy and strength, respectively. These, in turn, result in attaching the stigmatic self-image of dependency to the low-status help seeker and the valued self-image of self-reliance to the high-status help seeker. This possibility remains to be assessed by future research.

The results of the fourth experiment indicate that the link between social inferiority and chronic dependency is more tenuous and malleable than is suggested by the findings of the first three experiments. In fact, seeking of autonomy-oriented help overrides the low expectations associated with low status. Observers viewed a low-status student who had sought autonomy-oriented help as more competent and motivated than her counterparts in the no-help and dependency-oriented help conditions and more so than the high-status student who had sought autonomy-oriented help. On the other hand, the high-status student who had sought dependency-oriented help was viewed as relatively more incompetent and unmotivated. Conceptually, these findings emphasize the important role of the consistency between status-related expectations and behavior in the formation of social judgments, and they are congruent with the inconsistency effect posited by expectation states theory. This effect suggests that "a single piece of positive status information in a field of negatively evaluated characteristics will be accorded more weight" (Correll & Ridgeway, 2008, p. 34). In the context of the present research, the request for autonomy-oriented assistance was the positive information in the field of negative attributes associated with the low-status help seeker.

The present findings are limited in several aspects that detract from their generalizability but also point at potentially fruitful future research directions. First, the present research did not devote systematic attention to the effects of the helpers' status. Information about the help-seekers' status has been systematically controlled, but the helpers' status has been left to vary at random. Yet, the latter is likely to have important effects on the phenomena under study. For example, a request for help by a high-status person in need is likely to be interpreted and responded to differ-

ently by a high- or low- status helper. The low-status helper may resent a request for assistance from a high-status person. Another limitation concerns the limited external validity of the present findings, which are based on laboratory experiments. This can be amended by future research that will examine these processes in the field (e.g., in educational or organizational settings). An important third direction for future research concerns the long-term consequences of the links between the social status of the help seekers and the kind of help provided to them. Repeated receipt of dependency-oriented help may have adverse effects on the recipients' self-image, which may be particularly detrimental when they are members of disadvantaged groups (cf. Leone's work on "over-helping" directed at immigrant children, Leone, 2012).

In conclusion, the present research represents a novel approach to the study and conceptualization of helping relations on several levels. First, due to its focus on autonomy- versus dependency-oriented help, it is one of few research efforts that go beyond the prevailing dichotomy between giving and not giving help. Second, it constitutes the first programmatic line of research that links the structural element of social status with the question of chronic compared to transient dependency. Moreover, as the findings of the fourth experiment indicate, it considers the conditions under which this link does not hold. Third, an important contribution of the present research is its introduction of the empirically based concept of help seeking as a stigma-consistent behavior. This conceptualization suggests that when considered within the unequal social structure in which they occur, requests for help and the responses to them constitute an important element that reproduces this social inequality. Finally, the present research relies on an integration of sociological and social-psychological conceptualizations (i.e., expectation states and helping research, respectively). This reliance emphasizes the importance that such an integrative view has for the social-psychological analysis of human behavior.

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