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How we interpret strategic help-seeking

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Abstract

Little is known about strategic intentions of help-seekers. The current research explored potential interpretations of help requests based on help-seekers' traits. Participants ($n = 189$) read a scenario, in which one group requests help from another, and indicated their agreement with statements regarding help-seekers' intentions. Scales for help-seekers' intentions were constructed using the dimensions warmth and competence from the stereotype content model by Susan Fiske: exploitation (unfairly benefitting from support), assistance (having someone else do the "dirty work"), genuine request (asking help out of need) and gentle dominance (showing appreciation). A help-request was more likely to be perceived as gentle dominance for help-seekers perceived as warm, and exploitation and assistance interpretations were more likely when help-seekers were perceived as cold. No effects were found for competence. It is argued that these results suggest that a request for help itself might label help-seekers as incompetent, while warmth influences the perceived intention.

Introduction

Helping is, according to the Oxford dictionary (2019): the act of facilitating something for someone, by offering services or resources. Help can be exercised by sharing information, wealth, knowledge or expertise (Van Leeuwen & Taüber, 2010). However, the act of helping often entails more than simply the instrumental exchange of support. In many cases, helping has a lot of strategic potential. For example, helping another person or group can be used to promote the image of the in-group towards the helped out-group (Wakefield & Hopkins, 2017). Additionally, intergroup helping can be used to maintain status differences, and to uphold power dynamics between groups (Nadler, 2002; Halabi, Dovidio & Nadler, 2014). A great deal of literature has examined strategic intentions for giving help, but rarely considers the motives a person can have when requesting help. DePaulo, Nadler and Fisher (1983) pointed out that literature pays this little attention to help-seekers, because it has implicitly declared them as the incompetent and less interesting object to study. However, as will be discussed in more detail later on, some help-seekers can request help for strategic purposes, even without the need for any instrumental support. It can be argued that this group currently seems to be neglected and underestimated in literature, while research into their intentions might potentially be a source of useful insights in the understanding of helping as a strategic construct. The current research attempts to explore and map potential intentions of the help-seeker.

(In)competent help-seeking

It is not surprising that help-seekers are labeled as incompetent; asking help is, in other words, sending the message that oneself cannot complete the task at hand.

Additionally, when asking for help, one acknowledges inferiority to, and dependence on other people (Lee, 2002). Thus, helping and asking for help can threaten the self-esteem of the recipient and can damage group image (Nadler, 2002; Wakefield & Hopkins, 2017). However, as mentioned earlier, literature suggests that people in the need for help are not the only ones to ask for help. An interesting example of “competent” help-seeking behavior was introduced by Halabi, Dovidio & Nadler (2014). They describe a phenomenon that, at first glance, seems counterintuitive; namely the concept of gentle dominance. Gentle dominance represents the prosocial, yet strategic and dominance-confirming help-seeking behavior of a person with high social status and/or competence towards a person of a lower social status; presumably in order to demonstrate appreciation (concerning the low-status group’s opinion and contribution). In the case of gentle dominance, a person with a high social status seeks help from a person with a low social status, while it is likely that the person with the high social status is competent enough to complete the particular task without requiring any help. The concept of gentle dominance suggests that this type of help-seeking behavior might reduce the difference in status between the involved people (Halabi, Dovidio & Nadler, 2014). This phenomenon inspired the current research to explore the strategic intentions of help-seekers.

Dimensions for expected intentions

In order to map the intentions of a person requesting help, it is important to understand how an interpretation of an individual’s or group’s intentions are formed. According to the stereotype content model (Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2008), warmth and competence can be defined as the two fundamental universal dimensions for social perception of groups and individuals. These two dimensions combined describe how the

perceiver assigns an intention to another individual or group, and his or her ability to act on this intention. Warmth entails the degree to which a person is perceived to either be potentially harmful and/or competitive (low warmth) or helpful and/or cooperative (high warmth). In other words, warmth as a dimension for social perception constitutes two different perceived intentions (being warm, and having good intentions, or being cold and having bad intentions). Warmth scales that are used in research consist of words such as friendly, trustworthy, sincere and good-natured (Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2008).

Competence relates to the extent a person is perceived to be capable to act on these assumed intentions. If a person is perceived to be competent, they will, according to the model, be able to act on the perceived intentions. For example, if a person is perceived as warm and competent, it can be expected that they want to cooperate and help, and are capable to do so. If they seem warm and incompetent, they might want to help, but lack the skills to actually fulfill their intentions. Competence scales that are used in research entail words such as skillful, intelligent and knowledgeable (Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2008). Additionally, it should be noted that according to this model, competence is often linked to social status. People tend to judge a person with high social status (i.e. highly educated or wealthy) to be competent. This means that people will consider a man who seems wealthy, for example because he appears to own an expensive car, to be competent, even though he has not demonstrated any capabilities. As, according to the stereotype content model, any person is subjected to those two “questions”, (“Is that person harmful or helpful?” And; “Can they act on their intention?”), it can be assumed that the intention behind a request for help will be interpreted according to these two questions as well.

From the possible combinations of the two fundamental universal dimensions of social perception, warmth and competence, arise four different expectations (i.e. high on both warmth and competence, high on competence and low on warmth, low on both competence and warmth, and low on competence and high on warmth), which can be described by having either good or bad intentions and the ability or inability to act on those.

In line with these expectations, a request for help by a person who is perceived to be high on both competence and warmth would be seen as an act resulting from good intentions by a person who is capable. This combination seems to describe the previously discussed phenomenon of gentle dominance, which was characterized as seeking help with good intentions, such as showing appreciation for another one's abilities, while oneself is competent and has a high social status. It could therefore be argued that a request for help from seemingly warm and competent person is interpreted as an act that can be described as gentle dominance.

A request for help by a person who is perceived to be competent, but not warm, would suggest that this person is capable (and not necessarily in need of help), but does not come from good intentions, and instead was meant to cause harm rather than be helpful. This could for example be a boss who instructs his subject(s) to do the dirty work that he doesn't like to do himself, possibly in order to establish dominance. In the present study this intention will be referred to as "assistance". Assistance as a strategic perceived intention for seeking help should not be seen as a respectful interaction, and does not have the same meaning as giving someone assistance or being an assistant. Assistance as a strategic help-seeking construct means requesting help when having bad intentions and

being competent and/or high in status.

The combination of both being perceived as low in competence and warmth, likely describes the help seeking intention of having bad intentions, and actually requiring help. This could be interpreted by potential helpers as exploitation. The person actually needs help, but has bad intentions. Their request might be seen as an attempt to use another person for his/her resources or services. Therefore the perception of a help seeker who has cold (low in warmth) intentions and seems to be incompetent can be labelled exploitation.

Lastly, a person who seems to be incompetent but warm, is also interpreted as actually requiring help, but in contrast to exploitation, does ask for help out of good intentions. He doesn't seem to want to use anyone for their resources or services, but simply genuinely asks for help. Possibly also to show appreciation for another one's ability, as is the case with gentle dominance, while actually requiring this help too. A request for help from people, who seem warm and incompetent, could be labelled a genuine request, since they ask for help without wanting to cause harm.

Considering these four expectations on perceived intentions of requesting help, a matrix was constructed (see table 1). The possible combinations of the dimensions of social perception, warmth and competence, as described in the stereotype content model, are reflected in the following constructs (as also previously described): exploitation, genuine request, assistance and gentle dominance.

The main goal in the current research is to examine how helpers will interpret a request for help from different types of help-seekers. Predicted were the following outcomes: A request for help from a group described as high in competence and high in

warmth was expected to be interpreted more as gentle dominance than a request for help from a group described as low in warmth but high in competence or from groups described low in competence (*Hypothesis 1*). A request for help from a group described as high in competence and low in warmth was expected to be interpreted more as assistance than a request for help from a group described as high in warmth and high in competence, or from groups described as low in competence (*Hypothesis 2*). A request for help from a group described as low in competence and low in warmth was expected to be interpreted more as exploitation than a request for help from a group described as low in competence but high in warmth, or from groups described as high in competence (*Hypothesis 3*). A request for help from a group described as low in competence and high in warmth was expected to be interpreted more as a genuine request than a request for help from a group described as low in warmth and low in competence or from groups described as high in competence (*Hypothesis 4*).

Method

Participants and design

Participants were 189 Dutch speaking citizens of the Netherlands of 18+ year old ($M_{\text{age}} = 32.78$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 14.37$). 88 of them were men (45%), 101 women (52.1%), 1 other (0.5%), and one participant did not self-report their gender (0.5%). Participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions: warm and competent ($n = 49$), cold and competent ($n = 49$), cold and incompetent ($n = 48$) and warm and incompetent ($n = 48$).

Procedure and measures

Participants were asked to complete a questionnaire which, based on the condition

the participant was assigned to, was preceded by one of four different scenarios.

Participants were either recruited in person at several public locations such as a dentist or the city hall ($n = 100$), or received an invitation to an online version of the questionnaire on Qualtrics through e-mail or social media (Facebook) ($n = 89$).

Before taking part in the study, the participant was asked to read the informed consent, and would, upon agreeing, proceed with one of the four scenarios he was then randomly assigned to. These scenarios consisted of a brief description of a situation between two different groups (namely department A and department B). In all of the scenarios, department A would ask department B for help with an unknown task. The scenario as provided was as follows (translated from Dutch): “During the restructuring of a large organization 5 years ago, two different departments were created through the abolishment or reorganization of existing departments. From now on, we will call these two departments: department A and department B. Department A is known as an unfriendly and coldhearted department. In addition, department A is known as incapable and incompetent. One day, department A requests help from department B. Department A asks department B for help with the fulfillment of particular tasks.” The scenario differed between conditions in its description of department A, which was described to be either warm or cold, and competent or incompetent. Following the scenario, the participant was presented with the questionnaire, which took approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. On each of the questions, unless otherwise specified, participants were asked to indicate their agreement with the given statement using a 5-point answering scale (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *very much*). After the questionnaire, the participant was provided with the debriefing on the study.

During the questionnaire, the participant was first presented with questions regarding the interpretation of the help seeker's (department A) intentions. To examine this, four scales were constructed; exploitation, assistance, genuine request, and gentle dominance. Participants were asked why they thought that department A had asked help from department B, and was then provided with twelve statements. Exploitation was measured with three items (e.g. 'in order to take advantage of department B'; $\alpha = .71$). The score for the scale was obtained by dividing the sum of these items by the number of items. Assistance was measured with three items (e.g. 'because they did not want to carry out the work themselves'; $\alpha = .86$). The score for the scale was obtained by dividing the sum of these items by the number of items. Genuine Request was initially measured with three items ($\alpha = .58$). However, one item ('because they valued the help of department B') was taken out of the analysis on the basis of the reliability analysis. In addition, a PCA (which is described in more detail below) of all the items for the scales exploitation, assistance, genuine request and gentle dominance revealed that this particular item seemed to be more closely related to the items of the scale for gentle dominance, then to the items of the scale it was intended for. Therefore, genuine request was constructed out of the remaining two items (e.g. 'because they needed help from department B'; $\alpha = .65$). The score for the scale was obtained by dividing the sum of these items by the number of items. Gentle dominance was measured with three items (e.g. 'in order to give them the feeling that their contribution is valuable'; $\alpha = .89$). The score for the scale was obtained by dividing the sum of these items by the number of items. In order to explore the scales that were constructed for this study regarding the help-seeker's intentions, a Principal Component Analysis was conducted. This PCA revealed that the data considering the

scales exploitation, assistance, genuine request and gentle dominance consisted of three components with an Eigenvalue of $> .1$, with a cumulative sum of the squared loadings of 68.34%. The items for the scales of exploitation and assistance load on the same component. The items for genuine request seem to form the second component, as both items have the highest loading on this factor. Lastly, the items for gentle dominance all load on the same component as well.

After the items on the intentions of the help-seeker, 18 questions followed on constructs such as empathy (e.g. “Department A feels empathy for department B”), superiority (e.g. “Department A thinks they are better than department B”), relative status (e.g. “Which of the following images best displays the status relationship between department A and department B”) and social distance (e.g. “Which of the following images best displays the relationship between department A and department B”). However, these questions will not be discussed in this paper for practical reasons (limited time).

In order to analyze the different conditions, two variables were constructed based on the conditions participants were assigned to, namely warmth and competence. Participants were divided among 4 groups, and were provided with a description of department A that was characterized as either warm or cold, and either competent or incompetent. Participants in conditions that were characterized as cold were placed in the category cold in the variable warmth, and participants in conditions that were characterized as warm were placed in the category warm in this same variable. Similarly, participants in conditions that were characterized as incompetent were placed in the category incompetent in the variable competence, and participants in conditions

characterized as competent were placed in the category competent in the same variable.

A manipulation check was included at the end of the questionnaire, in which the participant was asked to indicate the degree to which they thought department A was friendly and warmhearted (for the category warm of warmth), cold and coldhearted (for the category cold of warmth), capable and competent (for the category competent of competence), and incapable and incompetent (for the category incompetent of competence). The two items for cold and the items for incompetent were reversed for the analyses. The reversed items for cold were then added to the two for warm and this sum was divided by four in order to obtain the variable “perceived warmth”. The reversed items for incompetent were added to the two items for competent, and this sum was divided by four in order to obtain the variable “perceived competence”. The questionnaire ended with two demographic questions regarding gender and age.

Results

Manipulation checks

The effectiveness of the manipulation of warmth was analyzed by conducting a one-way Anova. Warmth (consisting of two categories: warm and cold) was used as independent variable, and perceived warmth and perceived competence were used as dependent variables. The analysis of perceived warmth showed a significant difference between the different conditions $F(1, 185) = 534.12, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .74$. In warm conditions department A was perceived to be more warm ($M = 4.34, SD = .69$) than cold ($M = 1.83, SD = .79$), which means that participants in warm/cold conditions perceived their condition as intended. The level of warmth did not seem to have influence the perception of the unrelated construct of perceived competence ($F(1, 185) = 2.49, p =$

.117, $\eta_p^2 = .01$).

The effectiveness of the manipulation of competence was analyzed by conducting a one-way Anova. Competence (consisting the two categories: incompetent and competent) was used as independent variable, perceived competence and perceived warmth were used as dependent variables. There was a significant difference in perceived competence between the different competence conditions; $F(1, 185) = 161.92, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .47$. In competent conditions department A was perceived to be more competent ($M = 4.23, SD = .92$) than in incompetent conditions ($M = 2.31, SD = 1.14$), which means that the manipulation was successful, and participants in competent/non-competent conditions perceived their condition as intended. The level of competence did not seem to have influence the perception of the unrelated construct of perceived warmth ($F(1, 185) = .67, p = .414, \eta_p^2 > .01$).

Hypothesis testing

A request for help from a group described as high in competence and high in warmth was expected to be interpreted more as gentle dominance than a request for help from a group described as low in warmth but high in competence or from groups described low in competence (*Hypothesis 1*). In order to test this hypothesis, a two-way Anova was conducted, with warmth (consisting of the categories cold and warm) and competence (consisting of the categories incompetent and competent) as independent variable, and gentle dominance as dependent variable. It was found that participants in warm conditions were more likely to interpret the request for help as gentle dominance ($F(1, 184) = 18.91, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .093$; warm: $M = 3.71, SD = 1.06$, and cold $M = 2.46, SD = .90$). There was no significant effect of competence on the interpretation of gentle

dominance, however, there seemed to be a non-significant trend of competence on gentle dominance ($F(1, 184) = 3.54, p = .062, \eta_p^2 = .019$). As previously said, it was expected that participants in competent conditions would be more likely to interpret the request for help as gentle dominance. The results show a tendency in line with this expectation; participants in incompetent conditions were less likely to interpret the request for help as gentle dominance (incompetent conditions: $M = 2.64, SD = .94$, competent conditions: $M = 2.91, SD = 1.11$). No interaction effect was found. On the basis of these results, hypothesis 1 was rejected.

A request for help from a group described as high in competence and low in warmth was expected to be interpreted more as assistance than a request for help from a group described as high in warmth but low in competence, or from groups described both high in competence and warmth (*Hypothesis 2*). In order to test this hypothesis, a two-way Anova was conducted, with warmth (consisting of the categories cold and warm) and competence (consisting of the categories incompetent and competent) as independent variable, and assistance as dependent variable. A significant effect was found for warmth ($F(1, 184) = 27.67, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .131$). It was found that a request for help from help-seekers who were seen as cold, was more likely to be interpreted as assistance ($M = 2.42, SD = .95$), than a request from help-seekers who were perceived as warm ($M = 1.75, SD = .79$). There was no significant effect of competence. A significant interaction effect (see table 2) of warmth and competence was found on assistance ($F(1, 184) = 3.96, p = .048, \eta_p^2 = .021$ (see Figure 1). A test for the simple main effect of warmth and competence for assistance revealed that the effect of competence was significant when department A was perceived to be warm ($p = .03$), but not when department A was perceived to be cold ($p =$

.41). When the help-seeker was perceived to be warm, participants in competent conditions were unlikely to interpret the help-request as assistance ($M = 1.56, SD = .69$), while participants in incompetent conditions were more likely to interpret the request as assistance ($M = 1.94, SD = 1.94$). On the basis of these results, hypothesis 2 was rejected.

A request for help from a group described as low in competence and low in warmth was expected to be interpreted more as exploitation than a request for help from a group described as low in competence but high in warmth, or from groups described as high in competence (*Hypothesis 3*). In order to test this hypothesis, a two-way Anova was conducted, with warmth (consisting of the categories cold and warm) and competence (consisting of the categories incompetent and competent) as independent variable, and exploitation as dependent variable. A significant effect was found for warmth ($(F(1, 184) = 24.13, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .116)$). It was found that a request for help from help-seekers who were characterized as cold ($M = 2.67, SD = .84$) was more likely to be interpreted as exploitation, than a request from help-seekers who were characterized as warm ($M = 2.08, SD = .80$). The level of competence had no influence on this interpretation. No interaction effect was found. On the basis of these results, hypothesis 3 was rejected.

A request for help from a group described as low in competence and high in warmth was expected to be interpreted more as a genuine request than a request for help from a group described as low in warmth but high in competence or from groups described both high in competence and warmth (*Hypothesis 4*). In order to test this hypothesis, a two-way Anova was conducted, with warmth (consisting of the categories cold and warm) and competence (consisting of the categories incompetent and competent) as independent variable, and genuine request as dependent variable. Neither

warmth nor competence had any significant effect on the interpretation of genuine request (warmth: $F(1, 184) = 2.27, p = .134, \eta_p^2 = .012$, and competence: $F(1, 184) = .99, p = .321, \eta_p^2 = .005$). No interaction effect was found. On the basis of these results, hypothesis 4 was rejected.

All hypotheses were rejected. However, several significant effects were found. Warmth showed a significant effect for gentle dominance, assistance and exploitation. One interaction effect of warmth and competence was found for assistance. Competence only showed a non-significant trend for gentle dominance, but had no main effect on assistance, exploitation and genuine request.

Discussion

The current research aimed to explore the strategic intentions of help-seekers. In order to do so, two dimensions for helpers' traits, namely warmth and competence, were used to construct four different strategic helper's intentions. The first intention for requesting help, exploitation, was hypothesized to be characterized by being cold and incompetent. The results of this study did not support this expectation. People were more likely to describe the intention of the help-seeker as exploitation if the help-seeker was perceived to be cold. However, the extent to which the help-seeker was perceived to be competent had no influence on the degree to which his intentions were seen as exploitation. Additionally, there was no interaction effect of warmth and competence.

Secondly, it was hypothesized that a request from a help-seeker, who was perceived cold and competent, would result in an interpretation described as assistance. It was found that a request from a cold help-seeker is more likely to be seen as an act of assistance, but competence did not seem to be of any influence. However, an interaction

effect was found for warmth and competence on assistance. The effect of competence on assistance revealed to be significant given that the help-seeker was perceived to be warm. In this case, participants in incompetent conditions were more likely to interpret the request for help as assistance than participants in competent conditions. When the help-seeker was seen as cold, the effect of competence was not significant. This interaction effect was not in line with what was hypothesized.

For the intention genuine request, it was expected that participants would interpret a request for help from warm and incompetent help-seekers more as genuine request than participants in conditions in which the help-seeker was perceived as both low in warmth and competence or high in competence. The results did not show any main effects for both dimensions. Additionally, no interaction effect was found. Therefore, these results did not support the hypothesis.

Lastly, it was hypothesized that people would see a request for help from a help-seeker perceived as warm and competent as gentle dominance. When the help-seeker was seen as warm, it was more likely that his intention was seen as gentle dominance. However, there was no effect for competence, but there seemed to be non-significant trend for competence. There was a tendency for participants in competent conditions to interpret the request for help more as gentle dominance, than for participants in incompetent conditions. No interaction effect was found, and therefore, these findings were not in line with what was hypothesized.

Firstly, it is important to note that a request for help seems to be evaluated based on the perceived warmth of the help-seeker. When the department described as cold asked for help, this act was more likely to be seen as exploitation or assistance. And the

request from warm help-seeker was more likely to be interpreted as gentle dominance. The extent to which the request for help was seen genuine request, which can be seen as simply asking for instrumental support, was uninfluenced by warmth. It seems therefore that, when asking for help with intentions besides needing support, the extent to which the help-seeker is either perceived to be warm or cold changes how this request is interpreted. A request from a “cold” person/group can be seen as unfairly benefitting from someone else’s work, or using someone else to get tasks done that oneself would not want to do, whereas a request from a “warm” help-seeker might be seen as a way to show appreciation.

Secondly, competence seemed to have little effect on the assumed intentions of a help-seeker. Even though these findings were not in line with what was expected considering the stereotype content model by Fiske, or the intentions that were derived from this model, a potential explanation for the lack of effect could be found in previously discussed literature. As mentioned, very little research even considered the intentions of help-seekers, because they were deemed to be the incompetent and therefore uninteresting side of a help-exchange. Participants might have assumed the same: “department A asked for help, and is therefore incompetent”, neglecting the description provided in the (competent) scenarios. It could be that competence had no influence on the perceived intention of the help-seeker, simply because the request for help itself has possibly implied the help-seeker’s incompetence for the task at hand, even when the help-seeker was perceived to be competent in general. If this is the case, there was no actual difference in competence between the different conditions, and therefore, no effect has been found.

Theoretical implications

This study is the first to identify warmth as a dimension that influences how a request is interpreted. The results propose that a request for help by perceived to be cold help-seekers is more likely to be interpreted negatively; in terms of assistance and/or exploitation, while a request for help by perceived to be help help-seekers is more likely to be interpreted positively; for example in terms of gentle dominance. These findings suggest that people consider that a person who seeks help might have different (strategic) intentions.

The results of this study also provide some support for the construct of gentle dominance. A non-significant trend was found for competence on gentle dominance, suggesting that a request for help from help-seekers who were seen as competent was more likely to be interpreted as gentle dominance. Additionally, when the help-seeker was seen as more warm, the request for help was more likely to be interpreted as gentle dominance. The act of asking for help, when being perceived as warm and competent, is more likely to be interpreted as “showing appreciation for another” than being perceived as incompetent and/or cold.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

The current study might suffer from a number of limitations. Firstly, the brevity of the design has possibly influenced the outcomes. The participant was asked to evaluate a very limited description of a situation. This allowed for clean interpretation, but could have caused the participant to rely on the provided information more firmly than a more realistic situation would have. The effect found in this experimental setting could therefore be stronger than when the study was more elaborate, or had been in a non-

experimental setting. However, the limited information provided could also have caused the participant to experience reactance. In that case, the participant might have felt forced to give particular answers, and responded with in a rebellious manner, giving an answer that is not in line with what he would have answered if the participant did not feel forced. Another, similar effect could have played a role as well, namely the good-participant role; fellow students and acquaintances might have tried to “help” the researchers in order not to “ruin” the experiment. Since some participants were recruited in the faculty of social sciences in Leiden, or via social media pages made for students of psychology, they might have wanted to help their fellow students. This could have influenced the results (for example, stronger effects could have been found if fellow students understood the underlying meaning of the experiment).

Additionally, this study is the first to make an attempt to map the strategic intentions of help-seekers. Therefore, as previously mentioned, it suffers from an absence of support from existing literature. The constructs and corresponding scales were distilled from an interpretation of the stereotype content model, and the very limited literature considering help-seekers’ strategic intentions. The validity of the constructs was not tested. In addition, exploration of the results suggested that instead of four, there might have been only three underlying factors. The scales for exploitation and assistance seemed to be very similar, and did load on the same factor in a PCA.

Even though the results did not support the expectations, significant effects were found. The current study explored potential help-seeker’s intentions, and found that perceived warmth can influence the interpretation of a request for help. Future research could explore help-seeker’s intentions in more detail. For example, a more exploratory

study could include a wider range of potential intentions. Additionally, future research could examine factors besides characteristics of the help-seeker, such as characteristics of the help-request (for example, the manner in which the help-seeker asks for help or the magnitude of the request), the relation between the two parties involved, and so on.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to examine the consequences of these different help-seeker's intentions. For example, do the perceived intentions lead to different reactions from help-providers?

Practical implications

The most important finding in this study, is that a request for help seems to be evaluated based on the perceived warmth of the help-seeker. Requests from a cold help-seeker are interpreted more negatively (for example, as exploitation), and requests from a warm help-seeker are interpreted more positively (for example, as a demonstration of appreciation). When asking for help, it would be advised to establish a warm image, in order for the intentions to be perceived as positive. For example, a beggar's intentions could maybe be evaluated more positively (and less as exploitation) when he himself is perceived as more warm towards the person he is asking for money. On a larger scale, this could also be of influence for how requests from charities or immigrants are perceived. Future research might provide more insights in help-seekers intentions and if and how the consequences of these intentions differ.

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Tables

Table 1. Matrix perceived intentions of help seeker

		Warmth	
		Low	High
Competence	Low	Exploitation	Genuine Request
	High	Assistance	Gentle Dominance

Table 2. Means (and standard deviations) of exploitation, assistance, genuine request and gentle dominance.

	Warm	Cold
Exploitation	2.08 (.80)	2.67 (.84)
Assistance	1.75 (.79)	2.42 (.95)
Genuine Request	4.16 (.81)	3.97 (.88)
Gentle Dominance	3.09 (1.06)	2.46 (.91)

Figures

Figure 1. Interaction effect of warmth and competence on assistance

Appendice 1

Scenarios

(Cold and incompetent)

Bij de herstructurering van een grote organisatie 5 jaar geleden zijn er twee nieuwe afdelingen gecreëerd door bestaande afdelingen op te heffen of te reorganiseren. We noemen deze in het vervolg afdeling A en afdeling B. Afdeling A staat bekend als een **onvriendelijke** en **koudhartige** afdeling. Afdeling A staat daarnaast bekend als **onbekwaam** en **incompetent**. Op een bepaalde dag vraagt afdeling A hulp aan afdeling B. Afdeling A vraagt hulp aan afdeling B bij het vervullen van bepaalde taken.

(Cold and competent)

Bij de herstructurering van een grote organisatie 5 jaar geleden zijn er twee nieuwe afdelingen gecreëerd door bestaande afdelingen op te heffen of te reorganiseren. We noemen deze in het vervolg afdeling A en afdeling B. Afdeling A staat bekend als een **onvriendelijke** en **koudhartige** afdeling. Afdeling A staat daarnaast bekend als **bekwaam** en **competent**. Op een bepaalde dag vraagt afdeling A hulp aan afdeling B. Afdeling A vraagt hulp aan afdeling B bij het vervullen van bepaalde taken.

(Warm and incompetent)

Bij de herstructurering van een grote organisatie 5 jaar geleden zijn er twee nieuwe afdelingen gecreëerd door bestaande afdelingen op te heffen of te reorganiseren. We noemen deze in het vervolg afdeling A en afdeling B. Afdeling A staat bekend als een **vriendelijke** en **goedaardige** afdeling. Afdeling A staat daarnaast bekend als **onbekwaam** en **incompetent**. Op een bepaalde dag vraagt afdeling A hulp aan afdeling B. Afdeling A vraagt hulp aan afdeling B bij het vervullen van bepaalde taken.

(Warm and competent)

Bij de herstructurering van een grote organisatie 5 jaar geleden zijn er twee nieuwe afdelingen gecreëerd door bestaande afdelingen op te heffen of te reorganiseren. We noemen deze in het vervolg afdeling A en afdeling B. Afdeling A staat bekend als een **vriendelijke** en **goedaardige** afdeling. Afdeling A staat daarnaast bekend als **bekwaam** en **competent**. Op een bepaalde dag vraagt afdeling A hulp aan afdeling B. Afdeling A vraagt hulp aan afdeling B bij het vervullen van bepaalde taken.

Appendice 2

Questionnaire

Welkom bij dit onderzoek van de Universiteit Leiden.

Lees de onderstaande tekst a.u.b. zorgvuldig door, en beantwoord daarna de vragen.

Bij de herstructurering van een grote organisatie 5 jaar geleden zijn er twee nieuwe afdelingen gecreëerd door bestaande afdelingen op te heffen of te reorganiseren. We noemen deze in het vervolg afdeling A en afdeling B.

Afdeling A staat bekend als een **onvriendelijke** en **koudhartige** afdeling. Afdeling A staat daarnaast bekend als **onbekwaam** en **incompetent**. Op een bepaalde dag vraagt afdeling A hulp aan afdeling B. Afdeling A vraagt hulp aan afdeling B bij het vervullen van bepaalde taken.

In de tekst heeft afdeling A om hulp gevraagd aan afdeling B. Waarom denkt u dat afdeling A dit deed? (omcirkel het antwoord van uw keuze)

	Absoluut niet					Zeer sterk
Om afdeling B uit te buiten	1	2	3	4	5	
Om afdeling B te gebruiken	1	2	3	4	5	
Om te profiteren van afdeling B	1	2	3	4	5	
Omdat ze het werk zelf niet uit willen voeren	1	2	3	4	5	
Om hun eigen werk door iemand anders op te laten knappen	1	2	3	4	5	
Omdat ze het ondankbaar werk vonden	1	2	3	4	5	
Om aan afdeling B te laten zien dat ze hen waarderen	1	2	3	4	5	
Om afdeling B het gevoel te geven dat ze worden gerespecteerd	1	2	3	4	5	
Om afdeling B het gevoel te geven dat hun bijdrage	1	2	3	4	5	

waardevol is

Omdat ze het werk zonder hulp niet aan konden	1	2	3	4	5
Omdat ze waarde hechtten aan de hulp van afdeling B	1	2	3	4	5
Omdat ze de hulp van afdeling B nodig hadden	1	2	3	4	5

In hoeverre zijn de volgende uitspraken naar uw idee op afdeling A van toepassing?

	Absoluut niet				Zeer sterk
Afdeling A heeft bewondering voor afdeling B	1	2	3	4	5
Afdeling A voelt minachting voor afdeling B	1	2	3	4	5
Afdeling A heeft medelijden met afdeling B	1	2	3	4	5
Afdeling A benijdt, afdeling B	1	2	3	4	5
Afdeling A voelt empathie voor afdeling B	1	2	3	4	5
Afdeling A voelt sympathie voor afdeling B	1	2	3	4	5

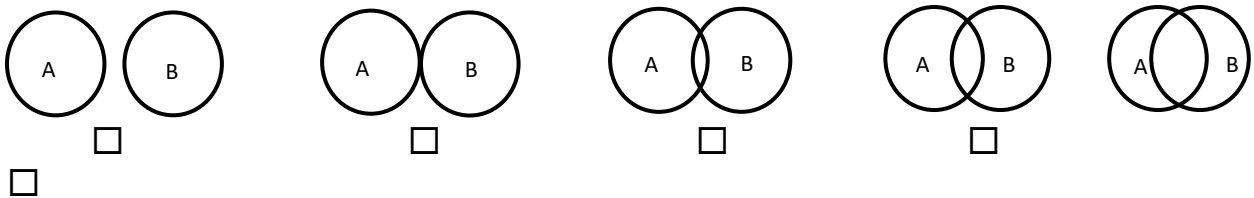
	Zeer laag				Zeer hoog
Hoe hoog schat u de status van afdeling A?	1	2	3	4	5
Hoe hoog schat u de status van afdeling B?	1	2	3	4	5

In hoeverre bent u het eens met de volgende uitspraken?

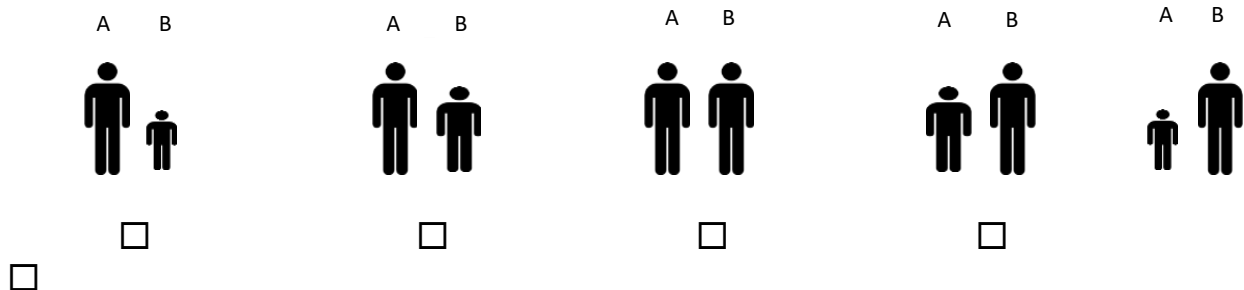
	Absoluut niet				Zeer sterk
Afdeling A heeft waardering voor afdeling B	1	2	3	4	5
Afdeling A heeft respect voor afdeling B	1	2	3	4	5
Afdeling A heeft vertrouwen in afdeling B	1	2	3	4	5
Afdeling A vindt zichzelf beter dan afdeling B	1	2	3	4	5

Afdeling A voelt zich superieur aan afdeling B	1	2	3	4	5
Afdeling A kijkt neer op afdeling B	1	2	3	4	5
De bedoelingen van afdeling A waren goed	1	2	3	4	5
Bij het vragen om hulp aan afdeling B was er sprake van kwade opzet bij afdeling A	1	2	3	4	5

Welk cirkelpaar geeft naar uw idee het beste de relatie weer tussen afdeling A en afdeling B? *Kruis het vakje aan onder het cirkelpaar van uw keuze.*



Welk plaatje geeft naar uw idee het beste de verhouding weer tussen afdeling A en afdeling B?



In hoeverre komen de volgende termen overeen met hoe afdeling A in de tekst aan het begin van deze vragenlijst werd omschreven?

	Absoluut niet				Zeer sterk
vriendelijk	1	2	3	4	5
warmhartig	1	2	3	4	5
bekwaam	1	2	3	4	5

competent	1	2	3	4	5
onvriendelijk	1	2	3	4	5
koudhartig	1	2	3	4	5
onbekwaam	1	2	3	4	5
incompetent	1	2	3	4	5

Wat is uw leeftijd? _____

Wat is uw geslacht? (omcirkel) man vrouw anders

Hartelijk dank voor het invullen van de vragenlijst.