

Social Influences on the Development of Children's Adaptive Help Seeking: The Role of Parents, Teachers, and Peers

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An important way in which elementary- and middle-school students regulate their own learning and intellectual development is by obtaining assistance from others at times of need. At school, a child who engages in *adaptive help seeking* monitors his or her academic performance, shows awareness of difficulty he or she cannot overcome independently, and remedies that difficulty by requesting assistance from teachers and classmates. In this article, I discuss how parents, teachers, and peers contribute to the development of children's skills and attitudes associated with adaptive help seeking. I trace early help-seeking behaviors, in particular, in the home and link these to help-seeking behaviors in the classroom. © 2000 Academic Press

A common complaint among elementary-, middle-, and secondary-school teachers is that many of their students do not take an active role in their own learning; in particular, when the students face challenge and difficulty. Despite awareness of academic problems they may have and despite availability of assistance, many schoolchildren tend to give up prematurely, sit passively, or persist unsuccessfully on their own without ever asking for help (Good, Slavings, Harel, & Emerson, 1987). This characterization of students differs from the typical picture of young children as innately curious, inquisitive, and eager to learn (Harter, 1978; White, 1959). Something happens that transforms many children into passive learners who neither enjoy challenge nor take the initiative required to overcome adversity. Of course, many other students do not fit this developmental pattern, but rather exhibit continuing curiosity, resilience, and eventual academic success. And still others fall somewhere between, actively meeting challenges in some domains but remaining more passive in others.

Although decades of psychological, sociological, and educational research have addressed the question, "What undermines student motivation to learn?" (see Brophy, 1998; Covington, 1992; Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele,

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1998; Finn, 1989; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996), relatively little research has focused on how students deal with academic difficulty; in particular, how they go about seeking help from teachers and classmates. In the existing help-seeking literature, there are studies relating classroom characteristics (e.g., activity structure, goal orientation, and type of learning task) to help seeking. Studies have identified personal characteristics of students (e.g., achievement level, personal goals, and self-perceptions of ability) that predict those individuals who tend to seek help and those who do not. Several studies have examined and shown age- and grade-related differences in student help seeking (see Nelson-Le Gall, 1985, 1992; Newman, 1991, 1994; Shell & Eisenberg, 1992). Missing from much of the research, however, is a developmental perspective (although see discussions by Nelson-Le Gall, 1981; Nelson-Le Gall, Gumerman, & Scott-Jones, 1983).

The purpose of this article is to provide a developmental perspective on help seeking; in particular, one that focuses on socialization. What accounts for individual differences in elementary- and middle-school students' academic help seeking? The article traces the origins of students' attitudes and behavioral patterns of help seeking and examines how parents, teachers, and peers contribute to this development. A central goal of the article is to explore how parents begin, and how teachers and classmates continue, the socialization process. Understanding continuities between the home and school in this particular domain promises to help explain why some children are able to cope successfully with academic difficulty and some are not.

Before reviewing the relevant literature on this topic, it is necessary to clarify the different ways in which help seeking has been conceptualized. Until recently, it was viewed in largely negative terms, i.e., as an indicator of children's incompetence, dependence on others, and immaturity. According to this view, as children developed independence, they would no longer need to rely on others (e.g., Hartup, 1963; Maccoby & Masters, 1970; Winterbottom, 1958). In the past decade-and-a-half, however, research has differentiated between help seeking that indicates overdependence and help seeking that is necessary, or "instrumental," for learning (see Ames, 1983; Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985). It has been demonstrated that when children monitor their academic performance, show awareness of difficulty they cannot overcome independently, and exhibit the wherewithal and self-determination to remedy that difficulty by requesting assistance from another individual, they are exhibiting mature, strategic behavior. Help seeking can maintain task involvement, avert possible failure, and, in the long run, optimize students' chances for mastery and autonomy (Corno, 1989; Kuhl, 1985; Skinner & Wellborn, 1994). Indeed, help seeking can be viewed in positive terms, i.e., as an *adaptive strategy of self-regulated learning* (Newman, 1991, 1994, 1998a).

A good deal of research has recently focused on self-regulated learning in the classroom (see Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000; Pintrich, 1995;

Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994, 1998; Zimmerman & Schunk, 1989). Cutting across various theoretical accounts is the notion that the self-regulated learner possesses a repertoire of cognitive and social strategies for dealing with academic challenges and is motivated to use these strategies at the appropriate time. Importantly, the self-regulated learner is autonomous and purposeful. The self-regulated learner's actions, thoughts, attitudes, and feelings support his or her attainment of self-determined academic goals. Thus, the concept of self-regulated learning incorporates, along with behavior, (a) cognitive, (b) social, and (c) affective-motivational processes. With regard to *adaptive help seeking*¹ in the classroom, it follows from this conceptualization that the self-regulated learner possesses particular competencies and resources, which include (a) *cognitive skills and understanding*, i.e., knowing when assistance is necessary and knowing how to frame a request that will yield precisely the action or information that is needed; (b) *social skills and understanding*, i.e., knowing that others can help, knowing who is the best person to approach for help, and knowing how to carry out a request in a socially appropriate way; and (c) *affective and motivational resources*, i.e., goals, attitudes, self-beliefs, and feelings that are associated with the child's sense of agency and control, desire for challenge, tolerance for task difficulty, willingness to admit personal difficulty, and desire for social interaction with teachers and more knowledgeable peers (for further discussion of components of adaptive help seeking, see Nelson-Le Gall, 1985; Newman, 1991, 1994). Throughout this article, I use the term "help-seeking skills" to refer to the cognitive and social skills and understandings that underlie adaptive help seeking. Similarly, "help-seeking attitudes" refers to the affective and motivational resources listed above.

Nelson-Le Gall and Resnick (1998) have discussed help seeking as one of a number of strategies in the self-regulated learner's "tool kit." It is qualitatively different, however, from the other strategies that the child carries out alone or perhaps with the assistance of notes, reference books, or a computer. Academic help-seeking behaviors are, by definition, social transactions that involve teachers and peers (Ellis, 1997; Newman, 1998a). School is a very social place, where students face academic challenges with others present

¹ "Adaptive help seeking" refers to a particular subset of speech acts that individuals use for the purpose of seeking information, i.e., for correcting a knowledge deficit that interferes with academic task completion. These speech acts, or requests, typically take the form of an interrogative (e.g., "How do I do the problem?") but may also be stated in an imperative (e.g., "Tell me how to do it") or declarative (e.g., "I need to know what to do") mood. The delimiter, "adaptiveness," implies that the request for help is necessary (i.e., the child cannot correct the knowledge deficit without assistance), well-planned (i.e., the child chooses a potentially helpful target and frames a request that elicits exactly the information needed), and well-processed (i.e., the child poses his or her request in a socially appropriate way and succeeds in obtaining the required help). Similar schemes for analyzing requests and questions are found in Clark and Schaefer (1989), Flammer (1981), and Graesser, Person, and Huber (1992).

and where a myriad of academic as well as social goals motivate students' behavior (Wentzel, 1996). Admitting task difficulty, approaching teachers or peers, and figuring out how to make a socially appropriate request for assistance require complex interpersonal processes. In this article, I examine how children are socialized to carry out these processes.

The article's developmental perspective is based on two theories, namely sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and self-system theory (Connell, 1990). First, the article draws on the notion set forth by Vygotsky that a child's cognitive development is integrally linked to social experience; in particular, interactions with more knowledgeable social partners. The child is not a passive recipient of knowledge from more skilled individuals. Rather, the child is an active participant in social interaction with other individuals within a sociocultural context. Initially, the main players in the social context surrounding children are their parents; and then, on entrance to school, teachers and classmates become important. Assistance, coaching, questioning, and guided participation are provided in the form of "scaffolding," whereby the adult or more knowledgeable peer carefully monitors how the child is doing and what support the child needs so that just the right amount of help—not too little and not too much—can be given. Through such experiences, the child not only has opportunities to remedy academic misunderstandings and master difficult tasks, but he or she may also internalize the adult's or peer's directions and patterns of discourse and take over the other person's regulating role and goals. In this way, the child gradually comes to regulate his or her own learning and development (see Rogoff, 1990; Wertsch, 1985).

A main premise of the article follows from this theoretical position. That is, a critical way in which children come to participate in regulating their own learning and development is by learning how to obtain assistance from others at times of need. When engaging in difficult tasks on their own, children occasionally must take the initiative to actively enlist the help of others. At these times, children are responsible for erecting and removing their own scaffolding. With development, and its associated expectation of independence, the responsibility for obtaining assistance falls increasingly on the child's shoulders.

The article also draws on notions from self-system theory (Connell, 1990; Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Ryan & Deci, 2000; see notations below for related theoretical support). Children have three innate, psychological needs that underlie self-regulated learning. These needs are *relatedness*, *autonomy*, and *competence*. First, children have a need to feel a sense of connectedness to individuals who are important to them and are part of their learning environment. Children must feel that others care about their well-being and success (cf. theoretical issues of attachment, e.g., Bowlby, 1969). Second, children need to feel a sense of agency or volition, i.e., that they are in charge of their own actions. They must be free to think independently and participate in decisions regarding their own learning (cf. theoretical issues of intrinsic

motivation, e.g., DeCharms, 1968; Deci & Ryan, 1985). Third, children have a need to experience themselves as competent. They must realize their actions have a causal relation to successful outcomes (cf. theoretical issues of perceived competence, e.g., Harter, 1982, and perceived control, e.g., Skinner, 1995). According to self-system theory, the degree to which children experience these needs being met in various contexts, e.g., the home and school, is related to the development of inner resources that influence actions. These resources, i.e., perceptions of relatedness, autonomy, and competence, influence the degree to which children's actions in the various contexts reflect engagement and self-regulation, or alternatively, disaffection. Patterns of action, in turn, influence outcomes such as academic success or failure. It follows that socializing agents, in order to facilitate the development of self-regulatory mechanisms, have three important tasks, i.e., to provide children with (a) *involvement* (i.e., dedication of resources such as shared time and activities, nurturance, and affective closeness), (b) *support for autonomy* (i.e., valuing and supporting the child's initiatives and efforts at independence and absence of extrinsic and coercive pressures), and (c) *support for the development of competence* (i.e., consistent and structured rules, expectations, and lessons that instill competence and provide an understanding of contingent connections between actions and consequences).

A second premise of the article then follows from this theoretical position. By helping children meet their needs for relatedness, autonomy, and competence, social partners have the opportunity to influence the development of particular skills and attitudes that are associated with adaptive help seeking. There presumably are experiences in the home and school to which individual differences in students' adaptive help seeking in the classroom can be traced.

The goal of the article is to identify and discuss these socializing experiences. In the article, I use Connell's (1990) three self-system needs as an organizing tool for specifying experiences and pathways by which parents, teachers, and peers contribute to children becoming adaptive help seekers.² How do children come to know that social transactions may help them get past a difficulty they are having; how do they learn how to engage partners in a way that is responsive to their needs; and how do they learn to regulate these interactions so that they can resume independent work at the right time? The article examines early experiences in the home that provide the child

² According to Connell (1990) and other self-system theorists, inner resources (or self-system processes) that drive one's actions are personal perceptions or feelings or appraisals (i.e., feeling related, autonomous, and competent). For the purpose of organizing the help-seeking literature, I have expanded the meaning of "inner resources" to include affective-motivational resources as well as cognitive and social skills and understandings. So, for example, rather than following Connell's (1990) emphasis on "structure" as the key feature of contextual support needed for feeling competent, I discuss more broadly various features of contextual support needed for both feeling competent *and* being competent.

this sort of knowledge and resource and that set the stage for the further development of help-seeking skills and attitudes once the child enters school.

The article is divided into four sections. In the first section, I examine how parents contribute—largely prior to the school years—to the socialization of adaptive help seeking. In the second and third sections, I focus on the classroom, examining the influence of teachers and classmates, respectively. Each of these three sections is organized according to socializers' provision of (a) involvement, (b) support for autonomy, and (c) support for the development of competence. I conclude, in the fourth section, with a discussion of several new directions for developmental research on adaptive help seeking.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

In this first section, I address whether adaptive help seeking in the classroom is related to experiences that children have at home. There are few studies that explicitly relate, either concurrently or longitudinally, dimensions of the home environment to student help seeking. However, there would appear to be important linkages. Numerous studies have shown that family background, home characteristics, and parenting behavior contribute to individual differences in children's achievement, achievement motivation, and adjustment at school (e.g., Epstein, 1990; Gottfried, Fleming, & Gottfried, 1998; Steinberg, Brown, & Dornbusch, 1996; Stevenson & Baker, 1987). More specifically, parents' involvement, support for autonomy, and support for the development of competence have been shown to influence inner motivational resources that, in turn, are related to self-regulation and school achievement (Grolnick, Kurowski, & Gurland, 1999; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991). How might parental involvement, support for autonomy, and support for competence be related to the development of skills and attitudes associated with adaptive help seeking?

Involvement: Parent-Child Attachment and Affective-Motivational Resources

In order to obtain academic assistance in an adaptive way, children require certain goals, attitudes, self-beliefs, and feelings. Children must have a desire for challenge and a tolerance to persevere and not give up in the face of difficulty and potential failure. Yet they must be willing—when necessary—to admit that they need help. Children must have a desire for social interaction and confidence that they can approach a teacher or classmate, socially and intellectually engage the helper, and express to the helper their particular need. How might parents' personal involvement with their young child help explain the development of these affective-motivational resources?

A useful way to think about continuities between interactions at home and children's patterns of behavior at school is attachment theory. According to Bowlby (1969; see also Ainsworth, 1989; Osofsky, 1995; Sroufe, 1986), relationship patterns throughout life mirror mother-infant attachment. Cer-

tain qualities of the early caregiver–child relationship provide opportunities for the child to develop inner resources needed for coping. Based on the early relationship between the infant and his or her primary caregiver, children form internal representations or models that act as a template for future relationships. The child who has experienced supportive and caring parents is likely to develop an internal representation, and accompanying expectations, of others as respectful and helpful. Further, the child with secure representations of others and the self is likely to approach new situations and experiences with a healthy sense of confidence and trust.

In the early attachment relationship, mother's responsiveness to the infant's needs is essential for development (Bowlby, 1969). She must monitor and read the infant's needs and act accordingly, with actions such as cuddling, holding, touching, and establishing eye contact. Almost simultaneously, within a context of intersubjectivity [i.e., an attunement of mother's and infant's affect (Stern, 1985; Trevarthen, 1980) as well as purpose, meaning, and focus (Rogoff, 1990; Rommetveit, 1985)], infants elicit contact with mother. With smiling, crying, facial expressions, vocalizations, gestures, and initiating proximity and eye contact, infants seek to obtain emotional support. Tronick (1989; Tronick & Cohn, 1989; see similar accounts in Stern, 1985; Osofsky, 1995) describes mother-and-infant interacting in an affective communication system in which infants use "other-directed regulatory behaviors" to obtain from mother not only emotional support but also behavioral responses that facilitate the infant's goal-directed activities. Very early attempts at "help seeking" are illustrated in the following interaction in which the infant is trying to get an object that is just out of reach:

The six-month-old infant stretches his hands out toward the object. Because he cannot get hold of it, he becomes angry and distressed. He looks away for a moment and sucks on his thumb. Calmer, he looks back at the object and reaches for it once more. But this attempt fails too, and he gets angry again. The caretaker watches for a moment, then soothingly talks to him. The infant calms down and with a facial expression of interest gazes at the object and makes another attempt to reach for it. The caretaker brings the object just within the infant's reach. The infant successfully grasps the object, explores it, and smiles. (Tronick, 1989, p. 113)

According to Tronick, it is the degree of coordination between mother and infant in interactions such as this—accumulated over time—that is important for the development of the child's ability to self-regulate in future situations.

In early interactions with parents, the child presumably learns that others can share his or her experience of wonderment, of something not being understood, of a "problem" that needs to be solved (Stern, 1985; Winnicott, 1965). By the time the infant is 7 to 9 months old, mother and infant participate in extended periods of joint engagement (Bakeman & Adamson, 1984; Carpenter, Nagell, & Tomasello, 1998). They share their focus of attention by smiling and vocalizing; and they share subjective feeling states such as

happiness, fear, and uncertainty (Brazelton, Koslowski, & Main, 1974; Trevarthen, 1980; Trevarthen & Hubley, 1978). A shared sense of uncertainty—and its successful resolution—may give the child experience in tolerating, with another individual, stress and difficulty.

In time, the infant feels comfortable to explore his or her environment. According to Matas, Arend, and Sroufe (1978), parents whose attachment with their infants at 12 and 18 months is secure tend to have children who, as toddlers, show confidence on easy problem-solving tasks and who enlist mother's help on more difficult tasks. In contrast, insecure-attachment relations are predictive of toddlers becoming frustrated, whiney, and negative. Avoidant-attachment relations are predictive of toddlers seeking little help from mother, even when they are unable to accomplish the task on their own. Mothers of this latter group of toddlers show minimal investment in their children's success, offering little help on difficult tasks. Similar findings led Bretherton (1985) to conclude that maternal involvement and responsiveness to the child's needs are instrumental in the development of a sense of efficacy and confidence to step away from the secure base and explore novel and challenging situations:

Confidence in the mother's physical and psychological availability appears to lay the groundwork for autonomous exploration and problem solving, coupled with the expectation that help will be forthcoming when needed. (Bretherton, 1985, p. 21)

The child with self-confidence presumably will be able, in the future, to step outside himself or herself and approach others for assistance when it is needed.

The critical importance of the early attachment relationship is evidenced by the fact that the quality of the relationship is predictive, years later, of how parents respond to their children's needs and how children cope with challenging situations that might require assistance from others. For example, in dyads that had been classified as securely attached at 2 years, parents promptly give advice and instructions and demonstrate partial solution of problems on joint activities when the children are 5 years old (van der Veer & van IJzendoorn, 1988). According to Estrada, Arsenio, Hess, and Holloway (1987), mothers who exhibit warmth, responsiveness, and sensitivity in their relationship with their 4-year-old children tend to interact with their children tactfully and with few criticisms when the children make errors on problem-solving tasks. The same children, at 6 years of age, tend to choose challenging rather than easy tasks, show initiative with new activities, and exhibit social competence around adults.

Thus, in a securely attached relationship with the primary caregiver, the child is likely to develop self-confidence that will be useful when he or she later confronts challenge and difficulty at school. Parents' affective involvement, support of the child's exploration, and responsiveness to the child's

needs arguably lay the groundwork for the child's self-beliefs and his or her early understanding that problem solving can be a shared experience and that others can help when difficulty cannot be resolved independently.

Although the preceding discussion has focused on parents' affective involvement with their young children, parental involvement takes on multiple dimensions as children enter school. For instance, parents' personal interactions with the school (e.g., meeting the teacher and participating in parent-teacher conferences) and shared cognitive/intellectual activities with the child (e.g., helping with homework and taking the child to the library) play a role in the development of competencies required for self-regulated learning and—it is argued subsequently—adaptive help seeking (e.g., Brody & Flor, 1998; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Lareau, 1987). Indeed, throughout the school years, parental involvement facilitates the maintenance and continued development of children's affective-motivational resources that support self-regulation (see Eccles, Wigfield, & Schiefele, 1998).

Support for Autonomy: Joint Engagement and the Child's Sense of Agency

Certain social and cognitive skills and understandings are needed for adaptive help seeking. The following section examines how several of these competencies develop as a result of parent-child interaction. I focus on children's intentionality and questioning skills.

Intentional communication. In order to seek help adaptively, children must know that another person can provide them with assistance and that they have the ability to actively enlist the assistance of this person. Research shows that the child's sense of agency develops quite early. From birth, according to Trevarthen (1980; Trevarthen & Hubley, 1978), infants are able to share attention with, and communicate their needs to, mother. From 6 to 18 months, competencies needed for joint engagement (e.g., the infant looking from an object to the mother's face and then back to the same object) improve dramatically (Bakeman & Adamson, 1984). However, it is not until infants and toddlers are able to actually engage in intentional communication, i.e., directing their signals toward another person for the purpose of attaining some goal, that children appear to understand the other person as a communicative partner whose behavior they can influence and from whom they can expect assistance (Carpenter, Nagell, & Tomasello, 1998).

Carpenter, Nagell, and Tomasello (1998) differentiate between two types of early intentional communication, i.e., declarative gestures and imperative gestures. With declarative gestures, children try to get an adult to attend to something in the environment; perhaps the child holds up an object and gestures for the adult's attention. Declarative gestures suggest that the child values—for its own sake—the sharing of attention with someone else. With imperative gestures, children try to direct the adult's behavior to help obtain some goal; perhaps the child reaches toward an object (e.g., with opening

and closing hand), whines, and looks to mother's face. Children tend to use declarative gestures earlier (i.e., at 10 months) than they use imperative gestures (i.e., at 13 months). According to Carpenter et al. (1998), a stringent measure of imperatives (e.g., looking at mother's face rather than her hand) seems to indicate the child's awareness of mother as a true, psychological being, i.e., one who can understand and who can be responsive to the child's needs.

In initiating intentional communication with mother, it can be argued that the child demonstrates awareness that another person can provide emotional, behavioral and, in time, informational assistance. Intentional communication also provides evidence that the child is aware of his or her own agency as well as the agency of others. Mosier and Rogoff (1994) interpret initiating interactions with parents as the child's early use of other people as "tools" to achieve his or her goals or as a way of seeking—albeit in a very subjective sense—assistance in understanding his or her world. According to Mosier and Rogoff (1994), between 6 and 13 months, children increasingly use their mothers instrumentally as agents in order to help them, e.g., to access a toy. When young children need help, they tend to use rudimentary pointing and gesturing and alternating gaze between object and person. When older children need help, they gesture both indirectly (e.g., attempting to use a toy and, at the same time, alternating looks at the toy and the helper) and directly (e.g., taking the helper's finger and pushing it down on a button that they cannot operate alone).

Between 18 and 24 months of age, children's gestures become less frequent, social-interactional skills become more complex, and cognitive and linguistic capabilities become better developed (e.g., Bates, 1979; Bates, Camaioni, & Volterra, 1975; Brownell, 1986, 1990). In DeCooke and Brownell (1995), dyads of 18- and 24-month-olds who were engaged in a problem-solving task and in free play had opportunities to seek help. They could go to one another, their mother, or an experimenter. Most times, children sought help from one of the adults. Both 18- and 24-month-olds sought help more often during problem solving than during free play. However, whereas 18-month-olds sought help with indirect gestures, 24-month-olds directly verbalized their need (e.g., "you move it"; "get it out"). The fact that children at both ages sought help more often in the problem-solving context suggests that toddlers can discriminate between situations that do, and do not, require assistance. Consistent with this, Stipek, Recchia, and McClintic (1992) have shown that, beginning before the age of 2, young children exhibit awareness of their capabilities, calling their mothers' attention to their successes during free play. When they achieve a goal, they smile and clap and seek positive reactions; and when they fail, they show frustration, distress, and avoidance. Furthermore, according to Stipek et al. (1992), toddlers seek help from adults more often as a reaction to failure than to success.

Hence, children between 18 and 24 months of age show sensitivity to

failure. They seem to understand when help is needed; they are aware that adults, outside themselves, may possess the ability to satisfy that need; and they associate help seeking as a strategy within their means for dealing with difficulty and failure. Intentional communication with mother in order to obtain her assistance with a difficult "problem" suggests an emerging sense of agency, i.e., a personal competence likely to be instrumental in future situations requiring informational help seeking.

Questioning skills. Over time, the child's use of gestures for the purpose of seeking assistance with challenging and difficult problems is replaced with the use of language. Gestures elicit from mother speech that refers to objects and events beyond the dyad (Bruner, 1983). Gestures become more frequent at the time children are acquiring vocabulary. Often when young children point to objects, for example, in books and during play and feeding, adults provide the names for the objects (Masur, 1982; Murphy, 1978). Early gestures serve an important "bootstrapping" function that goes beyond the infant's or toddler's immediate needs of solving problems such as accessing or operating a toy. With gestures, children are able not only to seek help but also to engage their parents in interactions that are essential for language development, and with language, children have even more powerful means for future occasions when they might need to ask for assistance.

With language, toddlers are able to get their parents' attention, to express to parents their needs, and to request from them actions. Rice (1989) points out social dimensions of language development that are pertinent to the development of help-seeking skills. That is, social and communicative needs control the child's early use of language; and in turn, the social setting (e.g., the responsiveness of parents and the results of early attempts at help seeking) provides the child with confirmation of his or her effectiveness as a communicator. The degree to which the child's help-seeking requests are successful and his or her needs are met would seem to provide the child important feedback for future attempts at requesting help. Moreover, resultant success may provide the child reinforcement for his or her developing sense of agency.

Language provides a bridge between two component skills in help seeking, namely getting the attention of a potential helper and formulating questions that request precisely the assistance the child needs. From 2 to 4 years, children use their emerging language and communication skills to maintain conversational interactions that provide opportunities for further knowledge acquisition. Again, this illustrates children bootstrapping their own intellectual development (Shatz, 1987). As a result of conversational experience with parents, toddlers learn the semantics and syntax of questioning (see Hood & Bloom, 1979; Smiley & Greene, 1995). Interrogatives are used to ask for information, to influence parents' actions, and to clarify miscommunications (Holzman, 1972). Children's understanding of the linguistic aspects of ques-

tioning no doubt influences help seeking. This is evident as children come to differentiate among different forms of questions that potentially can be used for requesting help. For example, open questions, usually formed with *wh-* construction, can take an infinite number of answers, whereas closed questions take a simple *yes/no* response (Kearsley, 1976; Shatz & McCloskey, 1984). Children learn that these two types of questions vary according to cognitive demands. Open questions (e.g., "What am I supposed to do?") are easier to ask than are closed questions (e.g., "Am I supposed to count?") because the latter type of question typically presupposes that the child possesses some already-existing knowledge about possible responses (e.g., in this case, about early numerical skills). Understandably, young children tend to ask one another more open than closed questions (van Hekken & Roelofsen, 1982).

From ages 2 to 4, emerging linguistic capabilities help children not only with behavioral and cognitive demands of tasks (e.g., assistance operating a toy or information about a new word), but also with affective demands of tasks such as dealing with their limitations and inevitable failures. In the second and third year, communication skills in conjunction with newly acquired understanding of mental states (Wellman, 1990) provide children a degree of control over their own emotions, in particular, frustration and anger. Young children's ability to talk about their feelings allows them to enlist the help of others in alleviating physical as well as emotional discomfort (Dunn & Brown, 1991). Children come to understand that verbally asking for help is an instrumental means both to solve difficult problems and to regulate, i.e., soothe, their own feelings.

During the same years, i.e., ages 2 to 4, children encounter new academic and social challenges as well as new potential helpers—both at home and at preschool. There is increased opportunity and increased need for children to be agents in their own learning. There is increased need to be able to carry out requests for help in socially appropriate ways—getting the helper's attention and making a request that is clear and persuasive (see Ervin-Tripp & Gordon, 1986). Children come to understand social rules of both the family and the preschool that help them act in accordance with social norms. So, for example, children learn to preface requests for help with "please" and follow-up the helper's response with "thank you" (Kopp, 1991).

Children may also learn social rules of questioning as a result of interactions with siblings. Between 2 and 3 years, children typically intrude into conversations between an older sibling and their mother. With age, they increasingly bring in new information and turn the topic of conversation in a socially acceptable way to include themselves (Dunn & Shatz, 1989). Success in this type of discourse may help children differentiate effective and ineffective ways of approaching and verbally addressing others who may be

more knowledgeable and more competent than themselves. It is important that children be able to transfer social skills of discourse such as this (i.e., assertively yet politely entering into conversations in order to request help) to future classroom situations.

Thus, to enlist the help of others, infants and toddlers use their early and somewhat limited communicative skills. With these skills, children learn more advanced communicative skills. That is, gestural help seeking is used under the child's own initiative as a tool for transforming the very process of help seeking into one that is verbal. Once transformed into a verbal process, i.e., question asking, children have a voice—a cognitive-social strategy—for expressing and meeting their external and internal needs and for extending further their social and intellectual development.

Support for Development of Competence: Discourse in the Home

Ideally, during the preschool years, children learn that questions can produce informational responses, that adults are prime targets for answering their questions and meeting their affective needs, and that they have the verbal means to regulate and control their needs. These are powerful lessons for when children go to school and encounter academic challenges and difficulties that require assistance from teachers and classmates. However, not all children have the sorts of interpersonal learning experiences with their parents that provide such lessons and that ensure competencies needed in the classroom. There is great variability in the type of discourse that children experience in the home. This variability is important in helping to explain different trajectories according to which socialization of help-seeking skills and attitudes proceeds.

A critical feature of the home environment that may be related to help-seeking outcomes is how adults jointly engage in, and talk about, activities with their children. Although few studies have examined relations between specific types of discourse at home and children's help seeking at school, it is likely that how parents talk to their children when working together, in particular, how parents provide help, serves as a model for how children handle problems and difficulties when working on their own. This would be consistent with Vygotskian theory (1978; see also Rogoff, 1990; Wertsch, 1985). That is, the instructional tool of questioning that is used by parents to regulate their children's activity, in time, is taken over by children as a tool for regulating their own learning.

For young children and their parents, typical joint activities include categorizing objects, assembling puzzles, and reading stories (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). For older children, parents and children interact in the context of games, sports, school homework, and defining and agreeing on rules and social norms (e.g., Chen & Stevenson, 1989; Wertsch, 1979). During joint picture book reading, when mothers utilize hints, prompts, questions, verbal reasoning, and explanations rather than direct answers and imposed solu-

tions, 2-year-olds are apt to learn literacy skills (Whitehurst, Falco, Lonigan, Fischel, DeBaryshe, Valdez-Menchaca, & Caulfield, 1988; see also Snow, 1983). When they encounter difficulty in the context of shared activity, preschool children typically use speech; they verbally ask questions and request assistance from parents (Bus & van IJzendoorn, 1988; Ninio & Bruner, 1978; Wertsch, 1979). And, ideally, parents are responsive to their children's needs during these interactions. Skinner (1986) observed mothers and 3-1/2- to 4-1/2-year-olds working together on a paper-folding task. The more sensitive mothers were to their child's task-related actions, e.g., asking the child open-ended questions and requesting opinions, the greater was the child's active engagement in the task and the greater was his or her perceived control.

Beyond the preschool years, as well, parents influence children's motivation and learning through the type of discourse they support in the home (Brice-Heath, 1982; Hess & McDevitt, 1984). For instance, according to Hermans, ter Laak, and Maes (1972), during joint problem solving, 4th- and 5th-graders who are rated high in achievement motivation receive from their parents different types of help than do children rated low in achievement motivation. Parents of high-achievement-motivated children tend to use hints and tend not to simply give their children the answer. Discourse that resembles scaffolding and that emphasizes self-questioning and questioning of others may help children gain experience in how to think critically and how to formulate questions of their own in order to attain needed information. Importantly, experiences with parents potentially teach the child that there is a causal connection between his or her actions (i.e., help seeking) and successful task outcomes.

From research with deaf as well as normal-hearing preschool and elementary-aged children, Wood (1989) identified particular patterns of parental discourse that are related to particular patterns of children's discourse. If parents verbally overcontrol or "overscaffold" (e.g., when they are too quick to help out when children show signs of difficulty; too slow to relinquish initiative when they succeed; and too frequent with closed questions and didactic, controlling comments), young children's verbal initiatives tend to be inhibited. On the other hand, if parents listen, acknowledge what children have to say, and communicate in a way that is contingent on the children's contributions to the conversation, children are much more likely to show curiosity, elaborate on their answers, offer ideas, and ask questions. According to Wood (1989), parental discourse that is responsive and sensitive to children's individual needs is critical in order for children to internalize strategies of self-regulation, such as questioning and help seeking.

Cases of dysfunctional communication between parents and children emphasize how important responsive discourse can be for the socialization of help seeking. Hokoda and Fincham (1995) found, with 3rd-graders, that mothers interacted with their children on joint problem-solving tasks differ-

ently according to whether they perceived their children as mastery-oriented (i.e., children who, in the face of adversity, typically maintain high expectation for success and show increased effort) or helpless (i.e., children who have low expectation for success, attribute failure to lack of ability, and quickly give up; Diener & Dweck, 1978). Mothers of “helpless” children were less responsive to their children than were the mothers of “mastery-oriented” children. That is, mothers of “helpless” children did not adapt their teaching style to the solvability of the task (i.e., some problems were solvable and some insolvable), whereas the other mothers engaged in more teaching on the insolvable than the solvable problems. Moreover, mothers of “helpless” children often did not respond or offer help even when their children explicitly requested it. Findings suggest linkages between how parents think about their children, how they respond to their children’s needs, and how children might develop particular ways of responding—sometimes adaptive and other times not—in performance-related situations that require assistance.

Finally, one can imagine that as children of all ages experience with their parents interactions centered around joint problem solving and as they observe their parents dealing with adversity in their own lives, there can be indirect but powerful lessons that impact children’s attitudes about help seeking. To the extent that partial knowledge, ambiguity, questionable results, uncertainty, and dilemmas can be tolerated—and perhaps shared, managed, and even transformed into intellectual challenge—children might develop a mastery orientation to learning, which views help seeking as an important, adaptive strategy (see Ames, 1992; Ames & Archer, 1988). Ideally, children learn from their parents that it is normal not to be able to solve all problems independently. To the extent that parents respond to children’s requests for help with hints and contingently scaffolded instruction rather than direct and controlling answers, the lesson is that collaborative effort, discussion, and social interaction for solving problems can be effective. To the extent that parents show children that they deserve, and moreover, expect answers to their questions, there would seem to be a powerful societal and political message as well. Parent–child interaction, in particular, involving questioning, may reflect patterns of attitude and behavior that are associated with either a sense of empowerment or a sense of disaffection and alienation (see Goodnow, 1990; Nelson-Le Gall & Resnick, 1998).

In summary, parent–child interactions provide lessons that would seem to be crucial for the development of children’s adaptive help seeking. Through parental involvement, support for autonomy, and support for the development of competence, children potentially learn that difficulty and failure may require assistance and that they can count on adults for such assistance. Children learn that they have in their repertoires both other-directed and self-directed behaviors for coping with difficult and challenging situations. Par-

ents' responsiveness to their children's communicative needs plays an important role in the development of social competence, effective patterns of discourse, and ability to self-regulate. These developmental accomplishments are likely to benefit children in future classroom situations when they encounter challenges and need to engage teachers and classmates for assistance.

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS

By the time they enter school, children have had numerous experiences that contribute to the development of skills and attitudes regarding help and help seeking. The classroom brings new challenges—both academic and social—that reinforce and modify already-existing individual differences. Also, during the school years, there are profound changes in social-cognitive capabilities that influence children's views about help and their actual skills needed for adaptive help seeking (see Paris & Cunningham, 1996).

For a number of normative, developmental reasons, one might expect an increase over the school years in students' adaptive help seeking. First, children generally become better at regulating their own learning. They increasingly understand task difficulty and spontaneously employ both cognitive and metacognitive strategies to aid in academic performance (Paris & Newman, 1990). Second, children show an increase over the school years in question asking in naturalistic settings. For example, during play, children typically use information-seeking questions with one another (van Hekken & Roelofsen, 1982). Third, there are changes in social skills that are important in the help-seeking process. Children become better at identifying effective helpers and more cognizant of different ways in which adults can help them learn (Barnett, Darcie, Holland, & Kobasigawa, 1982; Kreutzer, Leonard, & Flavell, 1975; Myers & Paris, 1978).

It is not surprising then that studies show a positive association between age and adaptive help seeking. For example, according to Nelson-Le Gall, Kratzer, Jones, and DeCooke (1990), 5th-grade students are more discriminating in their help seeking than are 3rd-graders. On an experimental vocabulary task, the older—but not younger—children were more likely to restrict requests for help to situations where the help was necessary (vs unnecessary). In fact, 5th-graders differentiated among different types of assistance. They requested a greater "dosage" of help only in difficult situations that warranted it; 3rd-graders did not show this differentiation. Likewise, on mathematics problems, 6th-graders have been shown to have a keener sense than 3rd-graders of what exactly is required to alleviate difficulties. According to Newman and Schwager (1995), older children are less likely than younger children to express a vague lack of understanding and are more likely to request specific, process-related hints that help in solving problems.

Importantly, however, this picture of a developmental increase in adaptive

help seeking is not consistent with the common classroom observation that many students, especially as they get older, are passive and infrequently seek needed academic assistance (Dillon, 1988; van der Meij, 1988). Or, if they seek assistance, older students often want “just the answer,” as an expedient way to complete the task without regard to actual learning (see Butler, 1998). According to Wentzel (1989), high school students put less effort into getting academic help for themselves than they put into achieving any other classroom goal. Some have proposed a divergence over the school years in help-seeking behavior, with some students (e.g., high achievers) becoming increasingly self-regulated in their learning and others (e.g., low achievers) increasingly passive and disaffected (e.g., Good et al., 1987). Ideally, teachers socialize all children in the same way. However, research shows that this is not the case. Children come to school with already-existing individual differences in skills and attitudes, and different patterns of socialization in the classroom (e.g., involving teachers’ expectations, teacher–student interactions, and actual instruction) lead to even wider variation in students’ learning and academic success (see Brophy & Good, 1986; Eccles, 1983; Eccles & Wigfield, 1985).

What role do teachers play in the socialization of students’ help seeking? According to a self-system model of motivation, the influence of teachers may be manifest in three ways (see Skinner & Belmont, 1993; Skinner, Wellborn, & Connell, 1990). First, through involvement with their students, teachers establish a personal relationship that influences how children perceive their teacher and thereby may facilitate student–teacher communication. Second, teachers co-construct with their students a classroom context. A particular feature of the classroom that is related to students’ willingness to seek assistance from teachers and classmates is academic goals that are supportive of autonomous learning. Third, teachers orchestrate the day-to-day operation of the classroom in ways that may help children develop questioning skills, experience academic competence, and establish a causal connection between help seeking and success. In the following sections, I examine each of these influences.

Involvement: Costs and Benefits of Seeking Help from the Teacher

Academic help seeking is a social transaction between students and their teacher and, as such, takes place within an interpersonal relationship (Newman, 1998a). Typically, student–teacher relations are asymmetrical (McCaslin & Good, 1986). However, a caring relationship may mitigate the power differential and thereby facilitate student–teacher communication. When teachers are personally involved with them, students tend to feel respected (Goodenow, 1993; Moos, 1979). Feelings of respect, in turn, influence emotional engagement (i.e., happiness and interest), behavioral engagement (i.e., effort, attention, goal-pursuit, and self-expression), and achievement

(Ames & Archer, 1988; Birch & Ladd, 1996; Covington, 1992; Skinner, Wellborn, & Connell, 1990; Wentzel, 1996, 1997).

Typically, teacher involvement is conceptualized on dimensions such as affection (e.g., liking, appreciation, and enjoyment of the student), dedication of resources (e.g., aid, time, and energy), dependability (e.g., availability when needed), and attunement (e.g., understanding of students' personal and academic needs; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). It is important to recognize, however, that children at different ages may experience their involvement with teachers in different ways. Children develop a set of beliefs about teachers—with specific regard to their helpfulness, on the one hand, and the potential costs of approaching them for help, on the other hand. Although parents are the child's major helper at home, students often have a choice in the classroom between going to either the teacher or a peer when they need assistance (although see later discussion of constraints from certain classroom activity structures). This choice likely reflects children's personal views about the benefits and costs of help seeking and, more generally, about the type of personal involvement they have with their teacher.

Children as young as preschoolers and 1st-graders say they go to the teacher for academic help because of specific needs (e.g., "'Cause I want to know how to use the ruler'") and because of the teacher's global, affective traits (e.g., "'Cause the teacher is nice'") and competence ("'Cause she knows how to use a ruler"; Nelson-Le Gall & Gumerman, 1984). Similarly, according to Barnett et al. (1982), kindergartners think that people are good helpers if they are nice and kind and if they have been helpful in the past. As they become better at understanding other people's motives, abilities, and behaviors (see Shell & Eisenberg, 1992; Wellman, 1990), children become increasingly aware of the multiple ways in which teachers are involved with them and the multiple ways in which teachers can potentially meet their needs and provide them with benefits (Newman, 1998a). Middle-elementary school students tend to focus on helpers' dedication of resources (e.g., competence and skills; Barnett et al., 1982). By the upper-elementary grades, children's perceptions of helpfulness are based on teachers' dependability (i.e., willingness to help), attunement (i.e., awareness of others' problems and abilities), and quality of advice and guidance (Barnett et al., 1982; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). Over the elementary grades, children increasingly think about teachers according to traditional academic roles and duties (e.g., "I ask the teacher for help because that's the teacher's job"; Nelson-Le Gall & Gumerman, 1984). Consistently across the elementary grades, children express the belief that asking the teacher questions when they do not understand their schoolwork helps them learn (Newman & Goldin, 1990).

However, very early in the school years, students become concerned about negative aspects of teacher involvement (for discussion of adults' perceived costs of help seeking, see Nadler, 1983; Rosen, 1983; Shapiro, 1983). Start-

ing at Grade 2, students say they fear negative reactions from their teacher if they ask for help with schoolwork (e.g., "I think the teacher might think I'm dumb when I ask a question"; Newman & Goldin, 1990). When Newman and Schwager (1993) asked children to choose a label for students who typically ask the teacher questions, 3rd-graders strongly identified them as the "dumb kids" rather than the "smart kids." (Interestingly, 5th-graders were evenly split; and 7th-graders identified them as the "smart kids," perhaps indicating an awareness of the adaptiveness of certain types of questions). Fifth- and 6th-graders occasionally perceive their teacher as a source of conflict rather than help; this is especially so for boys rather than for girls. And, boys feel less affection and affirmation of competence from teachers than do girls (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). Perceived costs tend to be especially high if students need help with "old" rather than "new" material. Review lessons are seen as a time when teachers expect students not to require additional assistance; at these times, unsupportive comments (e.g., "If you had paid attention, you wouldn't need to ask that question") tend to magnify perceived costs (Newman & Schwager, 1993; van der Meij, 1988). Inhibitions to help seeking are no doubt further magnified when children experience teachers as undependable, unavailable, or unwilling to help (van der Meij, 1988).

Over the school years, perceived benefits and costs influence in increasingly complex ways children's decisions about whether to take the initiative and ask for help when they encounter difficulty. When students at Grades 3, 5, and 7 were asked why they go to the teacher for help when they do not understand an assignment in math class, personal involvement (i.e., perceptions of mutual liking and friendship with the teacher) was consistently predictive. At the two upper grades, explicit encouragement of question asking also predicted help seeking, over and above the influence of personal involvement (Newman & Schwager, 1993). Newman (1990) asked students at the same three grade levels about both benefits and costs of asking their teacher for assistance; he also asked the students if, in fact, they would go to the teacher when they experienced difficulties in math. Students at all grades expressed an awareness of benefits (e.g., learning and feeling smart) and a concern about costs (e.g., embarrassment in front of the teacher). In fact, awareness of benefits and concerns about costs were no stronger (or weaker) among older than younger children, nor were there grade differences in children's intentions to seek help. However, there were grade differences in relations among variables. Path analysis showed that, at all grades, beliefs about benefits had a positive influence on students' stated intentions of requesting help. It was only at Grade 7 (i.e., middle school) that students' beliefs about potential costs also entered the picture, with the two sets of beliefs—about costs and benefits—having competing influences on help seeking. Hence, in spite of elementary-school students being aware of potential costs, this awareness may not affect their intentions to seek help. Young

children's decisions depend on the degree to which they feel they will benefit from the teacher's help. With age and transition to middle school, however, students' thoughts and fears about costs take on a more prominent, causal role in decision making. Decisions now depend on both factors, i.e., perceived costs and benefits. It appears that older children increasingly struggle in deciding what to do when they need help.

A strong inhibiting effect of fear of looking dumb in front of the teacher (i.e., "social editing"; Graesser & Person, 1994) is consistent with older students' need to maintain peer approval and acceptance (Berndt & Keefe, 1992) and to protect their sense of self-worth (Covington, 1992; see subsequent discussion on peers' influence). It is also consistent with older students' understanding of the stability of personality (Eisenberg, Cialdini, McCreath, & Shell, 1987; Ruble & Frey, 1991). That is, with older students more than younger ones, greater sensitivity to the negative implications (e.g., lack of ability and personal failure) of their behavior may help explain greater vulnerability to help seeking.

Especially among children with poor self-perceptions of ability and self-esteem (i.e., students who are often low achievers and arguably need help the most), thoughts and fears about looking dumb in front of the teacher are powerful inhibitors of help seeking (Good et al., 1987; Newman, 1990; Newman & Goldin, 1990). The teacher's personal involvement with his or her students, however, may serve as a buffer. Ryan, Gheen, and Midgley (1998) have shown that 6th-graders with low self-efficacy tend to avoid academic help seeking. Importantly, this avoidance is ameliorated in certain classrooms, namely ones in which the teacher believes his or her responsibility is to attend to students' social and emotional as well as academic needs.

In sum, teachers potentially influence academic help seeking by eliciting in students a feeling of trust. Across the elementary- and middle-school grades, children perceive their relationship with the teacher in different ways, and teacher involvement takes on different meanings. Consistent across grades, the quality of the personal relationship influences the degree to which students are confident that they can count on the teacher for assistance. However, concerns about potential costs having to do with embarrassment can have a strong inhibiting effect on help seeking, especially among older children.

Support for Autonomy: Academic Goals

By creating a classroom environment that is supportive of autonomy, teachers can potentially facilitate students' self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learners tend to take control and responsibility for their own learning. One way students do this is by actively seeking assistance when they encounter schoolwork they cannot do on their own. Important in a classroom environment that is supportive of student autonomy and self-regulated learn-

ing are achievement-related goals that stress task mastery and personal responsibility for learning and that deemphasize external rewards.

Contextual goals. Classroom, or contextual, goals are embedded in the cues and structural features of the student's learning environment (e.g., Ames, 1992). In classrooms that emphasize *learning goals* (or, alternatively, task-involved or mastery goals), success is seen as dependent on effort. Teachers stress the importance of long-term mastery and autonomy, and they provide students with performance feedback tailored to, and supportive of, each individual child's intellectual and social development. In classrooms that emphasize *performance goals* (or, alternatively, ability or ego-involved goals), success is seen as dependent on ability. Here, teachers stress the importance of getting good grades and being judged competently, and they provide students with performance feedback that stresses social comparison with classmates (Ames & Archer, 1988; Nicholls, 1979).

Students working under conditions that stress learning goals tend to be energized by challenge, and when facing difficulty, often persevere and strategically attempt to overcome obstacles to learning (e.g., Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Graham & Golan, 1991). Classrooms emphasizing learning goals tend to encourage students to seek assistance when it is necessary. Research shows that elementary- and middle-school students working on difficult puzzles in this sort of goal context are more likely than students in performance-goal contexts to seek task-related information as well as confirmation of previous work. These particular types of requests typically help students debug errors, resolve difficulties, and proceed toward task mastery (Butler, 1993; Butler & Neuman, 1995; Newman & Schwager, 1995). Students in learning-goal contexts often explain that if they do avoid seeking help, it is because they are interested in succeeding on their own (Butler & Neuman, 1995; see also Butler, 1998).

Students working under conditions that stress performance goals, on the other hand, tend to avoid challenge and difficulty in order to maintain their self-perceptions of ability relative to others (e.g., Elliott & Dweck, 1988; Graham & Golan, 1991). Classrooms emphasizing performance goals tend to encourage students to deal with academic difficulty with maladaptive self-attributions and negative affect and by either giving up or finishing their work as quickly as possible. Students working in this sort of goal context often engage in expedient, noninquisitive patterns of questioning, e.g., immediately asking for the correct answer on a problem-solving task without first attempting the task on their own (Newman & Schwager, 1995). Or, to mask low ability, they simply avoid asking for assistance altogether (Butler & Neuman, 1995; see also Butler, 1998).

Personal goals. Teachers influence help seeking according to the goals that they establish in the classroom. However, in order to understand fully how contextual goals are associated with help seeking, it is necessary also to consider students' personal goals, i.e., trait-like orientations that students

bring with them to the classroom. Personal goals represent children's prior socialization (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Maehr & Pintrich, 1991). Research focusing on personal academic goals has distinguished between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic orientations*, which are similar in conceptualization to learning and performance goals, respectively (although, see Ryan & Deci, 2000). Harter (1981) has differentiated among three components of intrinsic (vs extrinsic) orientation. That is, children with an intrinsic orientation (a) strive toward independent mastery, (b) prefer academic challenge, and (c) show curiosity and interest in their schoolwork. Children with an extrinsic orientation, on the other hand, (a) are overly dependent on the teacher, (b) prefer relatively easy assignments, and (c) do their schoolwork to satisfy the teacher and get good grades.

Intrinsic orientation is predictive of children's cognitive engagement, in general (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988; Nolen, 1988), and of help seeking, in particular. For example, Nelson-Le Gall and Jones (1990) showed that students with an intrinsic orientation (i.e., striving for independent mastery) are more likely than those with an extrinsic orientation (i.e., dependence on the teacher) to request assistance in a way that supports their desire for long-term autonomy. Third- and 5th-graders were asked to define vocabulary words by, first, giving a tentative answer, then having the option of requesting help from an experimenter, and then giving a final answer. They were told they could receive either a hint or an answer "left behind by a child who had played the game earlier and had done well." At both grade levels, on trials where they thought they were incorrect, intrinsically oriented students were more likely to ask for hints than direct answers, whereas extrinsically oriented students showed no preference between hints and answers. Findings suggest that, for those with an intrinsic orientation toward learning, seeking certain types of help can actually provide an opportunity for students to figure out problems for themselves—and presumably learn—rather than simply provide an expedient way of completing the task.

Other research has shown a more complex relation between intrinsic orientation and help seeking. According to Newman (1990), the relation is moderated by two variables, i.e., children's age and subtype of intrinsic orientation (i.e., striving toward independent mastery vs preference for academic challenge). Students at Grades 3, 5, and 7 were asked whether they would go to the teacher for help if they did not understand a math assignment. Among 7th-graders, students with an intrinsic orientation (i.e., striving for independent mastery) were relatively likely to seek assistance, whereas among 3rd- and 5th-graders, students with an extrinsic orientation (i.e., dependence on the teacher) were relatively likely to do so. A separate subscale of intrinsic orientation (i.e., preference for academic challenge) was positively related to help seeking at all three grade levels, suggesting that those students— young and old alike—who prefer challenge also tend to know their limits in terms of task difficulty. Findings suggest that young children who go

to the teacher may do so, at least partially, because of dependency needs, whereas older children may be motivated by an awareness that help can lead in the long term to mastery and autonomy.³ Findings also provide a reminder that students may ask for help in the classroom in order to achieve simultaneously several different goals (see later discussion of social as well as academic goals related to help seeking).

Finally, it is important to consider the implications of whether contextual and personal goals coincide. Research shows that the “fit” between person and environment variables often influences students’ task performance, attitudes toward learning, and actual school success (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Harackiewicz & Sansone, 1991; Wentzel, 1996). It makes sense then that personal and contextual goals may have an interactive effect on help seeking. In a recent study of 3rd- and 4th-graders working on difficult math problems, Newman (1998b) examined possible interactions. Findings showed that a learning-goal context, in comparison to a performance-goal context, did not necessarily lead to more process-related (i.e., adaptive) assistance. For those students who had a strong internal striving for good grades and looking smart, help-seeking efforts were facilitated in a context stressing learning; however, there was no facilitation for students who did not care especially about grades and looking smart. Further, when *both* personal and contextual goals emphasized performance, students’ reluctance to seek help was reinforced. When students with strong performance goals were placed in a learning-goal context, students appeared to overcome—and perhaps compensate for—their personal tendencies. Hence, by emphasizing learning goals in their classrooms, teachers may potentially help students who otherwise might avoid seeking assistance with schoolwork.

Thus, important factors in explaining help seeking are academic goals that teachers establish in the classroom, personal goals that students bring with them to the classroom, and the “fit” between classroom and personal goals. To the extent that teachers encourage autonomy and emphasize the importance of learning and task mastery rather than performance and looking smart, chances are that students will seek assistance with work they cannot do on their own. However, students enter a classroom with personal goals that have developed over the years through socialization processes involving parents and previous teachers, and these personal goals may not always coincide with classroom goals. In fact, personal performance goals may be an asset in certain classroom conditions. Further research is needed to determine ways in which teachers might adapt classroom goals to individual students’ motivational background and personal orientation.

³ Relations between intrinsic orientation and help seeking are independent of relations discussed in an earlier section of the article (i.e., perceived benefits and costs enter into help-seeking decisions of 7th-graders, whereas only perceived benefits enter into decisions of 3rd- and 5th-graders). Both sets of findings were obtained from the same data and same path analysis (Newman, 1990).

Support for Development of Competence: Instructional Factors

According to a self-system model of motivation, self-regulated learning is contingent on the child having both perceived academic competence and perceived control (Connell & Wellborn, 1991; Skinner, 1995). It follows that, with regard to adaptive help seeking, the task of classroom teachers is to help the child realize that he or she can endure academic difficulties and that seeking assistance can be an effective means for achieving success. Teachers potentially accomplish this task by structuring classroom activity in particular ways and, within these structures, adopting certain types of curriculum and instruction.

Classroom activity structure. Teachers generally employ in their classrooms different types of activity structure, e.g., individual, whole-class, and small-group. Associated with each type of activity are various rules and expectations—both explicit and implicit—regarding instruction, classroom management, student–teacher interaction, and communication among students. Each set of rules forms distinct constraints on student help seeking.

When they structure their classroom with an emphasis on individual activity, teachers typically expect students to strive for independence and to persist without relying on help from others (see McCaslin & Good, 1996; Nelson-Le Gall & Scott-Jones, 1985). Social norms emphasize the importance of not disturbing classmates. If they need help, students generally go to the teacher. However, because of the nature of tasks typically assigned (e.g., worksheets, silent reading, or drill and review), teachers tend to expect students not to need assistance during individual activity (van der Meij, 1988). During whole-class activity, on the other hand, teachers often present new lessons to the entire class. With mastery of the material not yet expected, teachers encourage students to ask questions. Yet, there is a high level of teacher control in most classrooms, and questioning tends to flow in the direction of teacher to student rather than student to teacher (Cazden, 1986; Mehan, 1979). In front of all their classmates, students experience an especially strong sense of social comparison and potential embarrassment that can inhibit question asking and help seeking (Dillon, 1988; Karabenick & Knapp, 1988). Inhibiting features of whole-class activity tend to be particularly salient at the middle-school and junior-high-school levels in comparison to the elementary-school level (Eccles & Midgley, 1989). Both individual and whole-class activities arguably reflect Western cultural values that traditionally have stressed the importance of competitiveness and downplayed the importance of collaboration and help seeking (Nelson-Le Gall & Resnick, 1998; see accounts of classrooms more facilitative of help seeking in non-Western countries, e.g., Stevenson, Stigler, Lucker, Lee, Hsu, & Kitamura, 1987).

The third type of classroom structure, i.e., small-group activity, is explicitly designed to promote children interacting with one another, for example,

by requesting and giving help (Nelson-Le Gall, 1992; Webb & Palincsar, 1996). In fact, a good deal of the research on academic help seeking has involved small-group, collaborative activity because of the relative frequency of requests for help under these conditions. Students working in small groups, in contrast to those working individually or in whole-class activity, are more likely to seek assistance from other students and—it has been suggested—from the teacher as well (see Meece, Blumenfeld, & Puro, 1989; Nelson-Le Gall & Glor-Scheib, 1985; Newman, 1991). Facilitation of help seeking may be attributed to several features common to collaborative activity. First, working collaboratively is associated with a relative lack of social comparison; students' performance is not in public view of all other children. Therefore, students may feel less inhibited about asking questions (e.g., Johnson & Johnson, 1987). Second, it can be argued that working collaboratively gives students a sense of self-determination. Opportunities to pursue multiple goals, both academic and social, may increase children's personal incentives to be actively engaged in their own learning (see Wentzel, 1992). Third, children working collaboratively tend to talk with one another in ways that may facilitate help seeking (e.g., Cooper, Marquis, & Ayers-Lopez, 1982; see subsequent section on influence of peers).

A variation of small-group activity, namely tutoring, is also designed to help children actively engage with other individuals, usually an adult or peer tutor (Graesser, Person, & Huber, 1992). Studies show that students often learn more, e.g., in math and reading, in one-to-one tutoring sessions than in classroom settings (Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982). This may be at least partially due to facilitation of help seeking (Graesser & Person, 1994). Tutoring sessions generally concentrate on specific knowledge deficits and, as a result, tutors may have a sustained opportunity to interactively diagnose and remedy such deficits. Students potentially acquire good question-asking skills from tutors who can model "good" questions (i.e., ones that diagnose knowledge deficits and focus on substantive issues of understanding and reasoning). And, because embarrassment in front of tutors is generally reduced, students may be less inhibited from seeking help (although, for possible exceptions, e.g., when tutees acquire a lower status than peer tutors, see Rosen, Powell, Schubot, & Rollins, 1978).

In sum, by their implementation of different activity structures, teachers influence the degree to which the learning environment supports help seeking. Collaborative activities, both involving small groups of students and one-to-one tutoring, may facilitate the child's developing competencies and sense of control with regard to help seeking.

Curriculum and instruction. In addition to establishing particular types of structure in the classroom, teachers influence student help seeking according to what they teach and how exactly they teach it. The following discussion focuses on, first, ways in which help seeking is related to formal school

curriculum (for example, regarding academic subject areas) and, second, ways in which help seeking is related to teachers' individual styles of instruction.

A major goal for teachers is to help students gain knowledge in a variety of academic subjects. Regardless of subject area, there are certain guidelines for learning tasks that facilitate adaptive help seeking. For example, when tasks are novel, challenging, personally meaningful, and just beyond the reach of their current capabilities, students tend to need assistance, feel supported in seeking assistance, and have an opportunity to learn that seeking assistance can lead to success and feelings of self-efficacy (e.g., Ames, 1992; Stipek, 1996, 1998; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). Yet, different academic subjects may place unique constraints on instructional practice and, in turn, influence children's ideas and feelings about learning and, more specifically, about help seeking. Differences between mathematics and language arts provide an example of how different curricula can potentially lead to individual differences, for example, according to gender, in student help seeking.

In traditional math classes in the elementary grades, teachers typically are characterized as "experts" who present or "tell" to the class an explanation and then expect students to practice (Stigler & Perry, 1990; Stodolsky, 1988). This characterization of teachers is perpetuated in many math textbooks that primarily provide students with problems to solve, few explanations, and little actual instruction. Classwork and curriculum materials consequently may provide little expectation that the child is an independent learner. With an engendered sense of dependence on the teacher, elementary-school students are more likely in math than in social studies class to report difficulty and anxiety (Stodolsky, 1988). In math, compared with reading or English, children are more likely to report that they need help with their schoolwork (Newman & Goldin, 1990) and, in fact, are more likely to go for help (Nelson-Le Gall & Glor-Scheib, 1985). Over time, students report liking math less and finding it more difficult (see Stodolsky, Salk, & Glaessner, 1991). Students may feel less of a threat to their self-esteem admitting difficulty and asking for assistance in a subject, like math, that is perceived as having a low expectancy for success.

Because expectations for success in math are typically lower among girls than boys (e.g., Eccles, 1983), there may be fewer inhibitions to seeking help in math class for girls. Findings of more frequent help seeking among girls confirm this (Eccles & Blumenfeld, 1985; Ryan, Gheen, & Midgley, 1998; see also Nadler, 1998). Interestingly, though, it appears that other cultural attitudes embedded in the classroom (e.g., gender-role stereotypes and teachers' expectations) may add to the complexity of boys' and girls' help-seeking decisions. At the elementary grades, girls express greater concern than boys that their teacher—in math but not reading class—might perceive them as dumb if they ask questions (Newman & Goldin, 1990). Why exactly

girls have this belief and whether the concern might be responsible for girls not getting adequate help in math are questions that remain to be answered.

In addition to following a formal curriculum, teachers bring to the classroom their own individual resources (e.g., academic strengths, interests, and level of caring) and styles of classroom management and instruction. These factors also may influence students' attitudes and skills regarding help seeking.

Teachers who are caring provide a learning context that has been characterized by intersubjectivity (see Eccles, 1993; Noddings, 1992). It has been argued that when teachers and students share a sense of task and purpose, teachers are especially able to take the child's perspective and understand his or her thinking (e.g., regarding a particular academic task) and, based on this understanding, appropriately guide the child's learning. Friendly and caring teachers have been described as having lines of communication open to students and as demonstrating "democratic interaction" styles (Wentzel, 1997). During classroom discourse, these teachers tend to pay attention, listen, ask questions, inquire if students need help, make sure students understand difficult material, and provide help in nonthreatening ways (Wentzel, 1997). When they experience this type of communication, students potentially learn that teachers are effective and trustworthy helpers.

Furthermore, according to Vygotskian theory, students may internalize patterns of classroom discourse and gradually adopt the teacher's regulating and interrogating role (see Rogoff, 1990; Wertsch, 1985). In collaborative "learning communities" that stress conversation, discussion, and inquiry, students participate by formulating and evaluating questions, hypotheses, evidence, and conclusions (e.g., Brown & Campione, 1994; Lampert, 1990; Yackel, Cobb, & Wood, 1991). In such contexts, students may learn the value, usefulness, and skills of self-monitoring, self-questioning, and questioning of others and presumably become better at judging task difficulty, detecting inconsistencies in their understanding, and asking questions that successfully remediate misunderstandings (Graesser & Person, 1994). Teachers' questions and probes used to diagnose students' misconceptions may help students think and ask questions—both of themselves and of others—in a way that supports self-monitoring. The importance of learning good questioning skills is evident in curricular programs that explicitly teach questioning and inquiry. Effectiveness of direct instruction in self-monitoring and "intelligent questioning" has been demonstrated in academic subject areas such as reading, social studies, and science (e.g., Davey & McBride, 1986; Gavelek & Raphael, 1985; King, 1994; Palincsar & Brown, 1984). Students in programs such as these typically are able to ask for help at appropriate times, i.e., when help is truly necessary, and with questions that request precisely what is needed for successful task completion.

Teachers may influence help seeking by providing students particular types of performance feedback. Feedback lets children know when they need

help. Moreover, interactive and instructional feedback may provide useful models for self-regulation. For instance, giving students no more assistance than is necessary would seem to be important for helping children make distinctions between necessary (i.e., adaptive) and excessive (i.e., dependency-oriented) help seeking and, in the long run, for promoting autonomy (see Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1992). Explicitly encouraging students to strategically use the help that is given to them (e.g., in going back to an incorrect problem and trying to resolve it) may help students continue to monitor their understanding and determine if they need further assistance (Webb, Troper, & Fall, 1995). Research has shown that the following types of feedback maximize intrinsic motivation and, as a result, support students' continued effort following task difficulty: (a) providing guidance rather than answers when students respond incorrectly, (b) providing personally encouraging comments that focus on specific strengths and weaknesses in performance rather than global assessments, and (c) using individualized student progress reports rather than normative or standardized grades (Butler, 1987, 1988; Maehr & Anderman, 1993).

Finally, it can be argued that teachers' success in implementing the entire "instructional package" (including activity structure and curriculum and instruction) is instrumental in student help seeking. As students increase their knowledge in various task domains, there are associated improvements in cognitive and metacognitive capabilities that function as component skills of adaptive help seeking (Nelson-Le Gall, 1981, 1985). With increased expertise, students show greater awareness of task difficulty and more accurate monitoring of their knowledge states (Chi, Bassok, Lewis, Reimann, & Glaser, 1989; Miyake & Norman, 1979; Newman & Wick, 1987). And, with increased expertise, students show improved ability to formulate questions that address specific task demands (Nelson-Le Gall et al., 1990; van der Meij, 1990). For example, when defining difficult vocabulary words, elementary-school children with relatively good domain-specific knowledge (i.e., good vocabularies) ask more necessary and fewer unnecessary questions than do children with poor vocabularies. Children with good vocabularies, but not those with poor vocabularies, limit their requests for direct answers (vs hints) to trials on which they know they are having the most difficulty. A similar argument for the role of knowledge or expertise comes from studies showing that, in academic domains such as math, English, and computer programming, high achievers are more likely than low achievers to rely on more knowledgeable others when necessary (e.g., Rohwer & Thomas, 1989; Wood & Wood, 1999; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1986). For teachers, the implication is that the more successful they are at improving students' domain-specific knowledge, the more likely students will ask questions that home in on precisely the information they need when they encounter difficulties.

In summary, although children start school with certain skills and attitudes

pertaining to help seeking, classroom teachers play an obviously important role in continuing the socialization process. Teachers' personal involvement with students can have a powerful, facilitating influence on classroom help seeking. Caring and responsive teachers with democratic interaction styles tend to have students who feel relatively comfortable asking for help. Task-oriented goals that teachers emphasize in their classroom influence help seeking, both directly and in interaction with personal goals that students bring to the classroom. The degree to which the teacher challenges students and supports autonomous and self-regulated learning contributes to children's belief that they are in charge of their own academic outcomes and that obtaining help is a legitimate and often-effective strategy for learning. Importantly, teachers contribute to the socialization of children's expectations for success. How teachers manage the day-to-day operation of the classroom can have a direct bearing on cognitive and social competencies as well as motivational resources needed for adaptive help seeking. For example, in a learning context that stresses collaboration, students can work together and practice interpersonal skills of giving and requesting help. As students learn and become more knowledgeable, they become more attuned to when they need assistance and more skillful at framing questions that address their specific deficits in understanding.

THE ROLE OF PEERS

When children begin school, they face new academic and social challenges, posed not only by teachers but by classmates as well. Children become prominent socializing agents for one another (see Rubin, Bukowski, & Parker, 1998). In the classroom, peers share experiences, exchange information, and learn from one another. Interactions are both academic and social. In this section, I focus on ways in which classmates influence the development of one another's help-seeking skills and attitudes.

Although Connell's (1990) model of self-system processes—with regard to involvement, autonomy, and competence—has not been directly applied to peers as socializers, there are linkages that may prove useful in understanding the development of self-regulatory processes involved in adaptive help seeking. First, relationships among peers provide an interpersonal context that may support or undermine children's collaboration. Just as involvement with parents and teachers is related to help seeking, it is reasonable to expect the same with regard to classmates. Second, children naturally compare their academic performance with that of peers. Because of negative implications about one's competence and self-worth, social comparison typically undermines students' autonomy and, as a result, inhibits help seeking. Third, as children talk with one another in the classroom, especially during collaborative activities, they have unique opportunities to develop questioning skills needed for help seeking. It should be noted that each of these connections

among peers is best viewed according to a broader ecological perspective (e.g., Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which recognizes that the influence of peers is related to—and often constrained by—influences of teachers and parents. That is, the teacher establishes classroom conditions under which children may or may not provide one another with involvement, support for autonomy, and support for the development of competence. And, parents choose the particular schools and classroom settings their children attend.

Involvement: Peer Relations and Social Goals

School children spend many hours each day with their classmates, and, over the course of frequent interactions, students influence one another in multiple ways (Berndt, 1999). A growing body of research on how peers influence students' school adjustment provides a basis for understanding several ways, involving friendships and social goals, in which peer involvement may be related to help seeking.

Friendships. Certain qualities of relationships among peers help explain children's propensity for working together and seeking academic assistance from one another. The definition of friendship involves helping and supporting one another (Berndt, 1999). At kindergarten, the more likely children perceive that their friends provide assistance at time of need, the more children enjoy school (Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1996). Among elementary- and middle-school students, "quality" friendships are ones characterized by help and support as well as by certain features that would seem to mediate students' efforts at help seeking, i.e., self-disclosure, reliability, affection, companionship, intimacy, and lack of conflict and rivalry (e.g., Buhrmester, 1990; Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). When friendships satisfy their needs, children tend to be engaged in classroom learning and tend to do well academically (Berndt & Keefe, 1995; Birch & Ladd, 1996; Parker & Asher, 1993). Over time, students' achievement goals and attitudes, for example, about the value of schoolwork and studying, become more similar to those of their friends. As a result of modeling (Sagotsky & Lepper, 1982) as well as discussion and exchange of ideas (Berndt, Laychak, & Park, 1990), students presumably influence one another's attitudes about the value of help seeking.

While quality friendships provide an interpersonal context in which children feel comfortable expressing their need for help and support, children in conflictual relationships most probably are reluctant to disclose difficulties they may have. One can predict that they would not expect help to be forthcoming even if they requested it. In close relationships, on the other hand, children tend to be less concerned about self-disclosure and threat to self-esteem (see Nelson-Le Gall, 1981; Nadler, 1983; Rosen, 1983; Shapiro, 1983). Among friends, children also tend to be less concerned about being indebted to one who helps them (DeCooke, 1992; also see Clark, 1983). In

a context marked by familiarity and friendship, children presumably find it easier to manage and negotiate the social demands of interactions and hence may be better able to focus their mutual efforts on task-related, academic issues of learning and problem solving (see Nelson-Le Gall, 1992).

DeCooke and Nelson-Le Gall (1989) examined peer help seeking among 3rd- through 5th-grade students in mainstreamed and self-contained special-education classrooms. These are two settings in which familiarity among students tends to vary. Where there was greater familiarity and friendship among students, help seeking was more likely to be successful (i.e., to result in requested information) and hence more likely to be positively reinforced as a useful strategy for confronting academic difficulty. The importance of familiarity for children's initiation of help-seeking requests is also suggested in Nelson-Le Gall and DeCooke's (1987) finding that, among 3rd- and 5th-graders, boys and girls seek help from classmates of their same sex more frequently than from classmates of the opposite sex.

Social goals. Up to now, discussion of goals has pertained to academic achievement. The influence on help seeking is more complex, however, when one recognizes diverse social goals that also drive everyday classroom interactions and academic outcomes (Ellis, 1997; Urdan & Maehr, 1995; Wentzel, 1992, 1996). Particular social goals that may be related to help seeking are social affiliation (i.e., desire for friendship and intimacy) and social status (i.e., desire for peer approval and popularity).

Students for whom social affiliation is important and who have been successful at making new friends and maintaining friendships tend to be well adjusted at school (Birch & Ladd, 1996; Ladd, 1990; Parker & Asher, 1993). One would expect social affiliation goals to be positively related to willingness to approach peers for academic assistance. Ryan, Hicks, and Midgley (1997) have shown that, among 5th-graders, the more strongly children feel that social affiliation with classmates is important to them, the less they avoid asking questions (of teachers and/or peers) when they encounter academic difficulties. Social affiliation goals were unrelated to a measure of perceived costs (e.g., embarrassment) of help seeking. Findings suggest that children who care about maintaining friendships view help seeking as a valued classroom activity. Perhaps for certain children, reciprocal peer interactions (e.g., both giving and receiving help) are viewed as a way to bridge, or combine, social and academic goals. This may be the case especially with students who care about maintaining friendships, recognize the importance of helping others, and, at the same time, care about getting help from individuals who are competent.

It is important to note that friendships and social affiliation goals do not guarantee "adaptiveness" of help seeking. Factors such as social maturity, value of learning, and experience in working with others may moderate a relation between friendship and type of help seeking. One can envision situa-

tions in which friends appear to work together and request help from one another but really just have fun or “goof off.” Requests can be socially inappropriate (e.g., shouting questions across the room or making domineering demands) as well as cognitively inappropriate (e.g., asking for unnecessary help; see Eisenberg, Cameron, Tryon, & Dodez, 1981; Nelson-Le Gall & Glor-Scheib, 1986). Nor are social affiliation goals necessarily related to academic success. In a study of 6th-graders working in small, collaborative groups in math class, Newman and Gauvain (1996) found that the more students were engaged within their groups and the more they liked to work and talk with their classmates, the more they reported seeking help from group members. However, the more important it was for students to do well in their work, the more they reported seeking help from the teacher. Hence, in some learning contexts, peers may be sought out by those who have a need for social affiliation and who are satisfied with their peers’ ability to provide assistance, whereas teachers may be sought out by those who are more strongly motivated by academic goals and believe that peers’ assistance is not adequate.

In addition to social affiliation, students often are motivated by a desire for social status. According to Ryan, Hicks, and Midgley (1997), at Grade 5, the more strongly children feel that social approval from classmates is important, the more strongly they are concerned about being embarrassed in front of their peers and the more they avoid carrying out requests for assistance. Perhaps, the role of social status goals on help seeking is moderated by several factors, namely the child’s self-worth and the child’s—and peer group’s—sense of what it takes to win social approval. If the child’s self-worth is easily threatened and if the child and his or her peer group do not value behaviors that typically lead to school success, striving for social status may inhibit help seeking (see Nelson-Le Gall & Resnick, 1998; Ogbu, 1987; Steinberg, Dornbusch, & Brown, 1992). On the other hand, one can envision that an inhibitory effect of social status goals is buffered if the child has a strong sense of self-worth and if his or her peer group values learning and task mastery.

At the transition to middle school or junior high school, when students are especially concerned about maintaining a positive image in front of classmates (Berndt & Keefe, 1992), social status goals may play an especially important role in help seeking. It is not uncommon that children have to coordinate multiple goals—both social and academic—vis-à-vis help seeking. The child who truly wants to learn but feels peer pressure not to look dumb has to reconcile opposing forces. Goal coordination may be even more difficult for the child who wants to learn but whose peer group would ostracize him for pursuing such a goal (see Dodge, Asher, & Parkhurst, 1989; Dweck, 1996; Phelan, Davidson, & Cao, 1991; Wentzel, 1996).

In sum, certain peer relationships provide an interpersonal context that

supports children working together, in particular, by seeking assistance from one another. Friendships that are characterized by self-disclosure, intimacy, and mutual support can potentially facilitate help seeking. In relationships in which children are concerned primarily with how peers view them, help seeking most likely is inhibited, except in situations in which the effect is buffered by positive characteristics of the child and his or her peer group.

Support for Autonomy: Developmental Functions of Social Comparison

In most classrooms, children have numerous opportunities to compare their academic performance with that of peers. Social comparison serves several functions with regard to the development of help-seeking skills and attitudes. First, social comparison gives children performance feedback, which is important for developing an accurate sense of when assistance may be necessary. Second, social comparison typically inhibits children from revealing their needs in public because of perceived implications about competence and self-worth. Although teachers can influence the extent to which one function or the other is emphasized, both have an influence on students' help seeking.

Performance feedback. For preschoolers, social comparison provides valuable information (i.e., social referencing) that is used as a benchmark for defining performance norms and, ultimately, for improving task performance and competence. During preschool years, children notice how they perform tasks in comparison with peers and are sensitive to task failure (Burhans & Dweck, 1995; Stipek et al., 1992). Their expectations for success tend to be unrealistically high (Stipek & Mac Iver, 1989). Although there may be an adaptiveness to young children being overly optimistic (see Bjorklund & Green, 1992), it is important, in time, for children to develop an accurate understanding of task difficulty and an accurate internal system of self-monitoring (Markman, 1981). Adaptive help seeking requires self-knowledge that is calibrated both to the reality of task performance and to one's metacognitive "feelings" of confidence (see Flavell, 1979).

With age and expertise, children become increasingly able to sense when help is necessary on difficult tasks and increasingly able to adjust their help seeking according to task difficulty (Nelson-Le Gall & Jones, 1990; Nelson-Le Gall et al., 1990). Social comparison information that is presented in a constructive and nonjudgmental way may facilitate this development, for example, by helping children begin to think about effort and persistence and to make judgments about whether they have "tried enough" before asking for help (Nelson-Le Gall & Scott-Jones, 1985). Social comparison can be important in other ways as well. When elementary- and middle-school students compare their academic performance with that of classmates and realize that others also need assistance, i.e., it is "normal" to need help, potential costs of embarrassment tend to be minimized (Newman & Schwager, 1993; see also Karabenick, 1996). Partially because of their overly optimistic view

of competence—of both themselves and others—young children tend to make indiscriminately positive evaluations of peer helpers. Social comparison can provide students important information about a peer's competence and hence the peer's ability to be an effective helper (Frey & Ruble, 1985; Ruble & Frey, 1991).

Thus, social comparison allows children to know when help might be needed, it can normalize help seeking, and it gives children an opportunity to identify individuals who are academically competent and therefore might serve as helpers in the future. To the extent they perceive and use social comparison information in these particular ways, it can be argued that children indirectly support one another's developing sense of autonomy and control with regard to learning.

Competition, competence, and self-worth. Certain classroom factors, because of the salience and meaning of social comparison that they convey, support—or undermine—students' autonomy and self-determination. When classrooms emphasize intrinsic motivation, learning goals, and individualized grading, children tend to feel comfortable approaching classmates and requesting assistance. On the other hand, when classrooms emphasize extrinsic motivation, performance goals, and norm-referenced grading, children tend to be reluctant to share their difficulties with classmates (Butler, 1987; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Stiller, 1991). In the latter case, social comparison information has potentially negative implications about children's competence and self-worth. In this section, I examine how children experience and perceive social comparison with their peers and how these perceptions are related to help seeking.

In general, preschoolers do not draw conclusions about their own competence or the competence of others based on comparison with peers (Frey & Ruble, 1985; Ruble & Frey, 1991). At an early age, it is natural for children to turn to peers for help. When needing assistance at preschool, say with difficult puzzles, 4- and 5-year-olds are equally likely to ask for help from a peer and an adult (Nelson-Le Gall & Scott-Jones, 1985). For kindergartners, there actually is less stigma associated with receiving help from classmates than from teachers (Graham & Barker, 1990). Whereas 5- and 6-year-olds start to think of classmates who receive unsolicited help from the *teacher* as having relatively low ability, children this age do not have this same negative perception of classmates who receive help from *peers*.

Starting at ages 6 to 7, however, children begin to feel bad when receiving help from peers as well as from teachers. Help confirms poor task-specific performance (Shell & Eisenberg, 1992). At around ages 7 or 8, receiving unsolicited help from either teachers or classmates comes to be seen by children as a cue for low ability (Graham & Barker, 1990), and going for assistance to either teachers or classmates carries with it the cost of potential embarrassment (Newman & Goldin, 1990). It is likely that children's reactions to receiving academic help become increasingly negative once children

come to understand consistency, across time and settings, of both their own and others' psychological traits, e.g., ability (Eisenberg et al., 1987), and once pressure to compete academically with classmates becomes the norm (Stipek, Feiler, Daniels, & Milburn, 1995; see also Rescorla, Hyson, & Hirsh-Pasek, 1991).

At second grade and beyond, students are more concerned about negative reactions to seeking help from classmates than from teachers (Newman & Goldin, 1990). Over the elementary grades, children increasingly value the opinions of peers and strive for peer acceptance. Going to a peer for help often entails a threat to their self-worth (Berndt & Keefe, 1992; Brown, 1990). Students believe that asking peers, rather than the teacher, for help is not only more likely to result in the helper thinking they are "dumb," but also less likely to result in needed information (Nelson-Le Gall & Gumerman, 1984; Reid, Landesman, Treder, & Jaccard, 1989; also see Newman & Gauvain, 1996). In their sample of 2nd-, 4th-, and 6th-graders, Newman and Goldin (1990) found that greater concern with negative reactions from peers than from teachers was evident especially among 4th-grade girls and then, in the 6th grade, among both boys and girls. It appears that fear of embarrassment from looking silly or incompetent in the eyes of classmates when asking for help may be salient for girls several years earlier than for boys. Factors such as familiarity with the helper may be especially important in mitigating this sort of fear in girls (see Wintre, Hicks, McVey, & Fox, 1988).

At the transition to middle school—around the same time that it becomes so important for older students to be socially accepted by classmates—reluctance to seek help from peers is especially strong. There is an increase in the degree of social comparison and competitiveness in the classroom (Eccles & Midgley, 1989; Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1984; Ruble & Frey, 1991). Also, at this time, there typically are changes in how students conceptualize ability. These changes can magnify inhibitions against help seeking. Students around age 12 come to understand ability and effort as covarying factors responsible for school performance. This contrasts with younger students' belief that ability, effort, and performance are undifferentiated (Nicholls & Miller, 1984). The seemingly immature understanding of younger students is associated with optimism: all one needs to do is try hard in order to not only get a good grade, but also to "get smart." The seemingly mature understanding of older students is associated with the belief that a "smart" child who does not have to try very hard and a "dumb" child who has to work extra hard can get a similar grade on an assignment. Thus, older students believe that children who need help are not very smart. Expending too much effort, especially in a public way that is easily observed by classmates, tends to have a cost to most adolescents' self-worth (see Covington & Omelich, 1979).

In spite of this negative characterization of social comparison vis-à-vis help seeking, it should be noted that several child and classroom variables

tend to mitigate increased threat to self-worth and inhibition against help seeking in the early adolescent years. Students who perceive themselves as socially competent (e.g., able to easily relate to others) tend to not feel so threatened about the prospect of having to obtain assistance from their peers (Ryan & Pintrich, 1997). The same is true regarding academic self-perceptions. Students who perceive themselves as competent in math tend to believe strongly in the benefits of help seeking (e.g., learning) and tend to downplay the potential costs (e.g., embarrassment) (Newman, 1990). Both personal and contextual goals that stress learning (vs performance) can buffer students from typical inhibitions due to social comparison (Newman & Schwager, 1995; Newman, 1998b). "Multidimensional" classroom organization, which emphasizes students working at their own pace and deemphasizes the salience of social comparison, tends to support students' autonomy and hence may also facilitate help seeking (see Rosenholtz & Simpson, 1984).

In sum, social comparison with peers is a natural aspect of children working together. With preschoolers, social comparison provides useful performance feedback. This feedback may facilitate the development of attitudes and skills associated with adaptive help seeking. Starting in the lower elementary grades, however, the salience of social comparison often undermines autonomous and self-regulated behaviors. Older children tend to be inhibited from asking for help because of the negative way in which they perceive social comparison information.

Support for Development of Competence: Collaborative Discourse

Peers potentially provide one another an invaluable source of information and encouragement. Assuming that classroom organization and norms allow it, for example, when activity includes small-group collaboration, the child can turn to classmates rather than to the teacher when he or she needs help. Through collaboration, children are especially likely to experience academic and social benefits of learning. In this section, I examine children's patterns of collaborative discourse that involve help seeking and help giving and describe how these patterns vary according to children's age.

Young children generally lack sociolinguistic competencies required for truly collaborative learning (for discussion of constraints on collaborative learning, see Azmitia, 1996; Ellis & Gauvain, 1992; Tomasello, Kruger, & Ratner, 1993; Tudge & Rogoff, 1989). Toddlers infrequently seek help from one another or ask one another questions (e.g., DeCooke & Brownell, 1995). French and Pak (1995) observed children 2-1/2 to 3-1/2 years old in play sessions. When children asked each other questions, they typically did not get answers; they were much more likely to get a response from mothers who were also present in the sessions. Still, regardless of whether exchanges were with peers or mothers, children asked and responded to questions with

equal frequency. Findings suggest that children this age are able to manage the give and take of questioning exchanges and that they can do this equally well with peers and mothers.

At preschool, children have opportunities to work and play together. They often interact in the context of play or “work” activities such as block building or problem solving at a computer; at times, they turn to one another for help (Nelson-Le Gall & Scott-Jones, 1985). However, such interactions generally do not involve collaboration. Rather, preschoolers tend to work in parallel, dividing up tasks and working on the parts separately (see Azmitia, 1996; Ellis & Gauvain, 1992). Exceptions to this rule are noted by Azmitia (1988), who observed dyads of 5-year-olds verbally interacting, i.e., both giving explanations and demonstrating task-related behaviors to one another, while trying to build a replica of a Lego model. Also, Perlmutter, Behrend, Kuo, and Muller (1989) observed pairs of 4-year-olds and pairs of 5-year-olds working together and giving instructions to one another on computer problem-solving games. At both ages, in most instances in which children helped one another, help was initiated by the “helper” child. Still, in about 25% of the instances, help was in direct response to a child’s question.

As they become more mature and gain experience working collaboratively, children become better at asking questions that address their academic needs. Requests for help are more skillfully executed. For example, 2nd-graders are more likely than kindergartners to precede requests for help with attention-focusing devices. They often elicit an acknowledgement that the potential helper is paying attention before actually making a request. This is evidenced in the interchange, “Hey Bill, are you busy?” “No” “What is this called?” (Cooper, Marquis, & Ayers-Lopez, 1982, p. 77). Older and more skilled students tend to make requests to peers that are direct, sincere, and polite and that make it relatively clear what exactly is being requested (Wilkinson & Calculator, 1982). For more experienced students, requests for help are often revised and clarified if they are initially unsuccessful in obtaining a response (Cooper et al., 1982).

At upper-elementary and middle-school grades, collaborative activity is designed to provide students a chance to “think in public” and to exchange with one another their thoughts, goals, strategies, hypotheses, and other sorts of “interpretive talk” (e.g., Cooper, 1980; Rogoff, 1998; Teasley, 1995). Thought processes that are normally private are open to examination. Importance is placed on students questioning one another. Built into many collaborative activities, for example, in math and science class, are opportunities for children to ask—and be asked—questions for purposes of monitoring their own and others’ understanding and for requesting information (e.g., clarification, justification, and elaboration of other students’ ideas) in order to resolve difficulties (e.g., Brown & Campione, 1994; Lampert, 1990; Yackel, Cobb, & Wood, 1991). Children hear others’ questions and observe their

effectiveness. Recognizing that different individuals can contribute unique skills and knowledge to a collaborative activity may help children learn how, in the future, to choose effective helpers according to the helper's competencies.

Ideally, questions that children ask in a collaborative context are "transactive" in the sense that they allow an exchange of perspectives among individuals who are working on relatively equal footing with one another (see Kruger & Tomasello, 1986). Transactions remove asymmetry and perceptions of control that are common to many interactions between teacher and child (Kruger & Tomasello, 1986) and even between older and younger children (Duran & Gauvain, 1993). An implicit goal of collaborative activity is for children to realize that help seeking is a normal, and indeed, adaptive, part of the learning process (see McCaslin & Good, 1996).

Research shows that requesting and receiving help during collaborative activity is most likely to facilitate learning when the help is "elaborated" (e.g., explanations of how to solve math problems) and when children then use the help in a constructive way (e.g., by reworking problems using the new information; Webb, Troper, & Fall, 1995). Requests that are clear, precise, and direct rather than vague and indirect are especially likely to elicit explanations and other types of elaborated help (Webb & Kenderski, 1985; Wilkinson & Calculator, 1982; Wilkinson & Spinelli, 1983). When students request elaborated help from their peers but in fact receive a nonelaborated response (e.g., the answer to a problem without any description of how to do it) or no response at all, performance tends to suffer (see Webb & Palincsar, 1996). When students initially make vague and unsuccessful attempts at help seeking but persist by reformulating and clarifying their requests, performance tends to improve (Webb & Farivar, 1994).

Finally, it is important to note that, because of underlying linguistic competencies, age-related improvements in students' ability to successfully *seek* assistance from classmates are likely to parallel improvements in their ability to *give* assistance to classmates. This is nicely illustrated in a study by Dorval and Eckerman (1984), who observed conversations among small groups of 2nd-, 5th-, 9th-, and 12th-graders. One particular category of conversation, i.e., factually related questions, is especially informative regarding help seeking. With age, children increasingly asked each other factually related questions, answered each others' questions, and gave answers that tended to "fit" the questions. Factually related questions tended to call for either minimal answers (e.g., "What time is it?") or expanded answers (e.g., "How did you figure out that math problem?"). Although there was no age difference in the proportion of questions that called for an expanded answer, there was an age difference in how children responded to these questions. When 2nd-graders requested an expanded answer, they tended to get *no answer* at all from their classmates. When 5th- and 9th-graders asked similar questions,

they got only *minimal answers*. It was only the 12th-graders whose requests for expanded answers received *expanded answers*. Thus, with age, students appear to be more responsive to classmates' requests for help. And, responsiveness likely reinforces students' help-seeking efforts, whereas nonresponsiveness may thwart motivation for future help seeking.

In summary, peers play an important role in the development of students' help-seeking skills and attitudes. Classmates provide one another invaluable opportunities to experience and benefit from social aspects of learning. During the elementary- and middle-school years, classmates are a resource for one another; they provide an alternate person to turn to when they need help and the teacher is unavailable. Especially in the context of collaborative activity, children have opportunities to talk with, and help, one another. In collaborating, children may gain experience with different types and uses of questioning. Help seeking can satisfy academic as well as social purposes. For preschoolers and kindergartners, observing how others perform academically can provide important social-comparison information about one's personal competencies as well as one's areas of weakness where academic assistance might be needed. For older students, social-comparison information often promotes competition, inhibits children from publicly admitting they need assistance, and presents a personal threat that can interfere with collaboration.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

According to Vygotsky (1978), the child's intellectual development can be viewed as a transition from other-regulation to self-regulation. Parents and teachers participate in activities with the child, monitor the child's progress, and provide guidance, scaffolding, and regulation as needed. The child gradually internalizes the adults' strategies, values, and practices. At some point in time, the child presumably is able to proceed on his or her own. Rather than this progression from other-regulation to self-regulation having some final endpoint, however, it seems clear that individuals have an ongoing, lifelong need to return at times to a state of regulation by others. In certain domains, children might initially need much support, later less support, and, still later, small hints or just encouraging words, such as "You can do it!" In other domains, even after supposedly mastering a task, children might need to fall back to an earlier, more substantive sort of assistance if faced with difficulty. Using the metaphor of sociocultural construction (e.g., Rogoff, 1990), it is seldom the case that scaffolding is ever fully removed.

This article has emphasized how, with development, children are increasingly responsible for regulating this scaffolding process by monitoring their own task performance and by obtaining assistance from others when it is necessary. In school, especially, it is the child's responsibility for obtaining needed academic help. In busy classrooms in which teachers may be unavail-

able and in which one's performance is in public view, obtaining assistance from teachers and classmates typically requires initiative and goal-directedness. *Adaptive help seeking* is an important academic behavior because of what it represents (i.e., self-regulated learning), what it requires (i.e., cognitive and social skills and affective-motivational resources), and what—if successful—it accomplishes (i.e., a bootstrapping of further learning and development). A request for assistance can lead to solutions for specific academic problems but also to knowledge that potentially can be used in the future for helping oneself. Moreover, a request for assistance provides an entree for adults to pass on to the child feedback about his or her effectiveness as a communicator as well as their attitudes, beliefs, and values regarding help and, more generally, regarding learning and academic success.

In this article I have attempted to show how children develop the skills and affective-motivational resources they need for adaptive help seeking. According to Connell's (1990) self-system model, when social contexts provide children with *involvement*, *support for autonomy*, and *support for competence*, self-system processes (i.e., feelings of relatedness, autonomy, and competence) are likely to facilitate the children's task engagement and self-regulated learning. The model has served as a guide for understanding how parents, teachers, and peers contribute to the development of skills and attitudes related to help seeking. Each socializer contributes in his or her own unique way, yet there appear to be several commonalities across context and continuities across time.

First, the child's willingness to request help is facilitated to the degree that the transactional partner—whether parents, teachers, or peers—is nurturant, trustworthy, and friendly. The need for affective *involvement* is present with infants and toddlers. Young children learn that a secure relationship can serve as a base from which one can safely venture outward. Throughout the school years, parent and teacher involvement, i.e., dedication of nurturance as well as personal resources, facilitates help seeking. Even though children perceive both benefits and costs of being helped by the teacher, in the early school years, it is the perceived benefits (e.g., belief that the teacher is "there" for them) that are positively related to help seeking. With older children, perceived costs (e.g., fear of embarrassment in front of the teacher) also become salient. For many children and adolescents, deciding whether to seek academic assistance is not clear-cut; students typically have good reason to protect their self-worth by not revealing their vulnerabilities. Importantly, however, affective involvement with teachers and friends can buffer students' inhibitions.

Second, when parents, teachers, and peers support the child's *autonomy*, they facilitate the development of adaptive help seeking. Parents' joint attention and engagement, responsiveness to gestural and verbal requests for help, and conversational interactions help the young child develop linguistic competencies of questioning as well as personal sense of agency (e.g., "I am in

charge of my own actions and able to enlist the help of others’’). With school-aged children, teachers facilitate help seeking by establishing classroom goals that emphasize mastery and task orientation rather than performance and grades. With autonomy-supportive goals, children tend to request assistance only when necessary and ask questions (e.g., hints) that retain for them a sense of personal challenge in completing work on their own. Peers can facilitate one another’s help seeking by downplaying the potentially negative aspects of social comparison. Of course, the degree to which peers can accomplish this, for example, during collaborative activities, is constrained by classroom factors that are largely under the control of teachers.

Third, parents, teachers, and peers facilitate help seeking by supporting the development of the child’s questioning skills and accompanying perceptions of *competence*. Conversations characterized by particular types of discourse can be especially facilitative. When parents and teachers listen, acknowledge what the child has to say, inquire if the child needs help, and refrain from overcontrolling or providing help too quickly, children tend to show verbal curiosity and respond with questions. At school, teachers can model “good” questions, for example, by engaging the student in interactive dialogue that includes diagnostic probes and monitoring of what the child knows and does not know. Further, teachers can provide examples of how to formulate questions that are aimed precisely at needed information. Peer collaboration, in particular, when students work for a common purpose, “think in public,” ask questions of oneself and of others, and get feedback about their effectiveness as questioners, can increase children’s competence and sense of control with regard to strategic help seeking.

This attempt at “fitting” the help-seeking literature to a self-system model suggests that particular types of experiences at home and at school facilitate the development of adaptive help seeking. Although the article has focused on concurrent and longitudinal relations between contextual supports and help seeking, it is clear that very little developmental research has empirically tested these relations. From the review, a number of questions and directions for future research emerge. Of particular interest are points of transition in children’s lives, e.g., entry to school and transition from elementary to middle or junior high school.

For instance, evidence of stability of individual differences in adaptive help seeking is lacking. Examples of questions that might be addressed are (a) “Do preschool-aged children who seek help adaptively at home, say, with parents in the context of joint book reading, tend to seek help adaptively at elementary school?”; (b) “Do children who adaptively seek help from teachers (and peers) at elementary school tend to do so with teachers (and peers) at middle school?”; (c) “Over time, what is the relative importance (for students’ adaptive help seeking) of parents’ and teachers’ involvement, support for autonomy, and support for competence?” For example, “Does support for autonomy become especially important as students transition

from elementary to middle school?" and (d) "Over time, are relations between parents' and teachers' involvement, support for autonomy, and support for competence, on the one hand, and students' adaptive help seeking, on the other hand, actually mediated by students' perceptions of relatedness, autonomy, and competence?"

Evidence of interindividual differences in development is lacking as well. Each of the research questions in the preceding paragraph can be reformulated with a focus on group differences, e.g., according to children's achievement level and gender. Examples of questions that might be addressed are (a) "At the point of transition from elementary to middle school, do different groups of students proceed at different trajectories with regard to help seeking (e.g., engagement vs avoidance)?" For example, "Are low achievers more likely than high achievers to decrease their frequency of help seeking?"; (b) "To what extent do parent, teacher, and peer involvement, support for autonomy, and support for competence place, and maintain, different groups of students on different developmental trajectories?" For example, "Are parents of girls less likely than parents of boys to positively influence help seeking in math class with their involvement, support for autonomy, and support for competence?"; and (c) "Are there particular parent-child or teacher-child experiences (e.g., regarding homework) and parent or teacher attitudes (e.g., regarding the value of studying and collaborating) that buffer different groups of students from otherwise potentially negative trajectories?"

Addressing research questions such as these, aimed at understanding the socialization of adaptive help seeking, is important for both theoretical and applied reasons. The larger theoretical issue is, "Why is it that certain children come to regulate their own learning and others do not?" It is becoming increasingly evident that to understand students' academic life, interactions of school and out-of-school factors need to be considered (e.g., Pianta, 1992; Steinberg, Brown, & Dornbusch, 1996). A developmental perspective on help seeking necessarily links the home and the school. How children cope with difficulty and failure, for example, by seeking others' assistance, reveals the various ways in which parents, teachers, and classmates contribute to children's social and intellectual development. With this understanding, educators might be better able to establish ways, both in the classroom and in coordination with parents at home, to help students take a more active role in their own learning.

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