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Dear Professors Brown, Donato, Isaac, and McCammon,

I would like to begin by thanking you and the reviewers for offering such a thorough and thoughtful evaluation of my manuscript, entitled: "Can You Help Me Get Ahead? Social Class Differences in Elementary Students' Efforts to Negotiate Opportunities for Learning." The reviewers helpfully pointed out a number of concerns about the manuscript, and also offered deeply insightful (and often overlapping) suggestions for improving the piece.

Broadly, the reviewers identified four primary concerns about the manuscript. First, they felt that the theoretical goals and contribution of the analysis were not clear to the readers. Second, the reviewers suggested that the manuscript did not offer a full engagement with other relevant literature, particularly in discussing the implications of my findings. Third, they cited the insufficiency of the data to illustrate key findings, noting that other readers might question whether I simply observed what I set out to observe. Fourth, the reviewers noted that the discussion section was too repetitive, and did not sufficiently advance new theoretical arguments.

In light of the feedback that you and the reviewers provided, I drafted a substantially revised version of the manuscript that I believe offers a clearer argument and a stronger analysis while still remaining within the 12,000 word limit. I now call the manuscript: "'I Need Help!' Social Class and Children's Help-Seeking in Elementary School." Overall, I am hopeful that this substantially revised manuscript will satisfy the concerns that you and the reviewers raised.

Thank you very much for considering my study for publication in ASR. I will look forward to hearing from you in the future. Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is any additional information that you need regarding this resubmission.

With deepest thanks and best regards,

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## **Memo to Reviewers:**

I would like to begin by thanking you for offering such a thorough and thoughtful evaluation of my manuscript, previously entitled: "Can You Help Me Get Ahead? Social Class Differences in Elementary Students' Efforts to Negotiate Opportunities for Learning." Building from your deeply insightful comments and suggestions, I have substantially revised the original manuscript, which I now call: "I Need Help! Social Class and Children's Help-Seeking in Elementary School."

In this memo, I will begin by discussing the major concerns that the reviewers raised about the manuscript and the steps that I took to address them. I will then describe how I sought to alleviate some of the more minor issues that the reviewers highlighted.

### Major Issues

Broadly, the reviewers identified four primary concerns about the manuscript. First, they felt that the theoretical goals and contribution of the analysis were not clear to the readers. Second, the reviewers suggested that the manuscript did not offer a full engagement with other relevant literature, particularly in discussing the implications of my findings. Third, they cited the insufficiency of the data to illustrate key findings, noting that other readers might question whether I simply observed what I set out to observe. Fourth, the reviewers noted that the discussion section was too repetitive, and did not sufficiently advance new theoretical arguments.

#### *Clarity of Goals and Contributions*

In light of the reviewers' concerns about the contributions of the analysis, I reformulated the research questions that I address in the piece. Rather than focus on social reproduction, the manuscript now examines how children contribute to the stratification of opportunities for learning. I explore how middle-class and working-class children activate their cultural capital in the classroom and what profits they gain from doing so. The revised manuscript states these goals more directly in the abstract and the literature review (drawing on the works of Rist, Mehan, and others that the reviewers suggested), and also seeks to more clearly articulate in the analysis and conclusion how the findings answer these central questions.

On a related note, Reviewer 2 also suggested that I consider more fully the role of children's agency. To address these concerns, and in line with the reviewers' suggestions, the revised manuscript recognizes that it is not inevitable that children will use the socialization they receive to influence their own opportunities. Drawing on work by Mehan (1992), MacLeod (1995), and Willis (1980), I highlight the limitations of a top-down, structural view of stratification, and suggest that analyses of children's agency can more fully explain inequalities in students' opportunities for learning.

Reviewers 1 and 3 also noted that there were times when the argument came before the evidence. To avoid these problems, I reworked the analytic focus of the manuscript. Drawing on work by Lareau, Bourdieu, Nelson, Swidler, and others, the new manuscript takes as given that there are class differences in cultural capital, and that schools privilege different forms of cultural capital in different ways. Rather than try to demonstrate that middle-class and working-class children possess different forms of cultural capital, the new manuscript documents how children activate this cultural capital in the classroom, and what profits they gain from doing so.

#### *Engagement with Relevant Literature*

Citing concerns about the extent to which the manuscript fully engaged other relevant literatures, the editors and reviewers all asked for more discussion of works by Rist (1970), Mehan (1992), Lareau (2000, 2003), Willis (1981), and Dreeben (1968). In light of these suggestions, I tried to incorporate these various works more fully into both the review of the literature and the discussion of the study's

contributions. Specifically, and in light of Reviewer 2's suggestion, I included two paragraphs (one in the literature review, and one in the discussion) engaging Mehan's arguments about the importance of culture and agency in the creation of inequalities. Furthermore, and in line with Reviewer 3's suggestions, I considered more fully (both in the literature review and the discussion) the connections between my own findings and those put forth in other related works. Finally, and in recognition of Reviewer 3's point, I acknowledged in a footnote (Note 19) that the findings of this study (particularly when coupled with research highlighting the growing emphasis on cooperative learning in schools) call into question Dreeben's arguments about the extent to which schools teach norms of "independence."

#### *Sufficiency of the Data to Sustain the Argument*

The editors and reviewers all asked for more evidence to illustrate the key findings and more information about the frequency of the patterns that I observed. The reviewers suggested that I could address this issue in three different ways, including: 1) using multiple examples to illustrate each pattern; 2) adding count data of particular types of interactions, and 3) adding more detail about the conditions under which these interactions occur. The revised manuscript utilizes all three of these suggestions, doing so in the following ways:

- More Examples: I include more examples (more than 14 in total), and often use multiple examples to illustrate each point. If the editors and reviewers prefer, I would be happy to prepare additional examples for inclusion in an online supplement. I also clarify that the examples presented are simply illustrations of the larger patterns that I observed throughout my observations. While I have a vast array of examples to support the claims that I make in this paper, space constraints allow me to present only a select few.
- Count Data: I add count data describing the frequency and scope of students' requests for help from teachers during particular class periods. There is a new sub-section under "research methods" that describes how I collected and analyzed this data, which I present in a new table labeled "Table 1" and discuss in a new section entitled "Frequency and Scope of Help-Seeking."
- Context: I discuss the contexts in which students ask for help from teachers. As I suggest in the text, however, a full discussion of the role of classroom contexts in shaping student help-seeking would require a much lengthier analysis than that which I am able to include here.

The editors and reviewers also pointed out potential problems with some of the examples that I used in the original manuscript. I removed these examples from the text, and sought to replace them with examples in which middle-class and working-class children were involved in comparable situations.

The reviewers raised concerns about subjectivity in my descriptions of class differences in students' help-seeking behavior, suggesting that I either remove analysis of class differences in the "comfort" or "confidence" that children displayed in their interactions with teachers, or else explain how I came to define students as being more "comfortable" or "confident." In light of these suggestions, I reworked the analysis to avoid discussion of how children *felt* in seeking help. Instead, I focus explicitly on class differences that I observed in children's actual *behaviors*.

#### *Breadth of Discussion*

In drawing on the various studies that I discuss above, I also sought to address the reviewers' concerns about the limited scope of the discussion. In line with the reviewers' suggestions, the revised discussion section does not simply reprise the literature review, but instead advances new theoretical claims about the implications of these findings for research on cultural capital and research on the creation and reproduction of social and educational inequalities.

The revised discussion section also more fully examines the potential consequences of class differences in children's help-seeking. It recognizes that while I cannot directly assess how help-seeking affects

student achievement, I do find that children's help-seeking styles and strategies influence their ability to complete assignments quickly, fully, and correctly. The discussion then goes on to suggest possible long-term consequences of such class differences. This section also includes a footnote (Note 18) in which I discuss these findings in relation to literature on "seasonal comparisons" in student achievement.

### Minor Points

The revised manuscript also addresses a number of more minor concerns that the editors and reviewers raised in their analyses. To alleviate these concerns:

- I added a new section entitled "Alternative Explanations" that describes how I looked for other explanations of variation in help-seeking (gender, age, etc.).
- I added a paragraph to the discussion where I consider the possibility that working-class students might have behaved differently in a predominantly working-class school.
- I included a paragraph (citing Metz 1978) recognizing that working-class students might have signaled their need for help in other ways (e.g., by acting out or misbehaving).
- I more fully developed the point in the analysis about possible disadvantages to middle-class children's help-seeking styles, adding examples to support these claims.
- Drawing on Mehan (1992), I discussed in more depth my argument that middle-class children's help-seeking styles are only "better" than those of their working-class peers because of their alignment with the social-historical conditions that exist in today's elementary school classrooms.
- I removed Appendix A, Appendix C, and Figure 1. In doing so, I also:
  - Moved details about the research site to the text.
  - Presented the description of the research sample and the criteria that I used for determining students' class backgrounds in the text, eliminating the need for Appendix B.
- I added a footnote (Note 2) strengthening the rationale for discussing the children of middle- and upper-middle-class parents together as members of one analytical group.
- I avoided excessive use of the male pronoun.
- I removed the word "kids" from the manuscript, instead referring to study participants as "children" or "students." While I know that Reviewer 1 found the term "kids" to be distracting, I would appreciate the other reviewers' insights on their preferences regarding the use of this term. If the other editors and reviewers prefer "kids," I can revert back to this original language and add a footnote justifying this choice. The footnote would explain that I use "kids" for two reasons:
  - First, as Thorne (1993) suggests, "children" implies a "top-down," "adult-ideological viewpoint," while "kids" feels more "side-by-side," recognizing these young people's agentic role in shaping their own life chances (9).
  - Second, the term "children" is generally associated with preschool or early elementary students. "Kids" evokes a slightly older image. Because the group I studied was in their later elementary years (grades 3-5), and because they were approaching their teen years (ages 9-11), I felt that the term "kids" more accurately captured their unique life course position.
- I clarified some of the language that I used in the original manuscript, in particular my statements that "working-class and middle-class children rarely attend the same school," and that "almost all" of the students at Maplewood seemed to want to succeed in school.

Overall, I am hopeful that this substantially revised manuscript will satisfy the concerns that the reviewers raised about the original manuscript. I am deeply grateful for all of the insights and suggestions that the editors and reviewers have shared, as I feel that they have helped me tremendously in improving the manuscript