

Response to Reviewers:

I would like to begin by thanking you for offering such a thorough and thoughtful evaluation of my manuscript, entitled: “‘I Need Help!’ Social Class and Children’s Help-Seeking in Elementary School.” As you may recall, this paper uses data from a longitudinal, ethnographic study of one socioeconomically diverse, public, elementary school to examine class differences in children’s requests for help from teachers. In doing so, it considers children’s role in the stratification of opportunities for learning.

I am pleased that the manuscript has received a conditional accept, and that the reviewers praised the manuscript for fully addressing the previous reviews, and for improving the quality of the data and the analysis. That said, the reviewers also highlighted six new areas of broad concern, as well as a number of smaller issues to consider. Using the reviewers’ suggestions, I drafted a 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.

Clarifying the Theory

The reviewers insightfully pointed out that the theoretical framework of the paper was not always consistent and clear. To address these concerns, I rewrote the introduction and literature review to develop a more focused argument about the ways in which existing research has not fully considered children’s contribution to education stratification. In doing so, I drew on cultural capital theory, citing work by Bourdieu, Lareau, and Weininger to define this term and discuss how middle-class skills and strategies become a form of cultural capital because they align more closely with teachers’ expectations, and thus generate meaningful profits when activated in the classroom. Drawing on work by Bourdieu, Lamont, and Lareau, I also noted that while working-class students can acquire middle-class skills and strategies, they lack the fluency and ease that their middle-class peers possess in demonstrating these competencies. In the analysis and conclusion, I returned to these central themes, highlighting and discussing how middle-class help-seeking skills became a form of cultural capital and yielded meaningful advantages for those who activated them.

In clarifying the theory on which this analysis is based, I also responded to Reviewer 1’s questions about the relative resources that middle-class and working-class students possess. I clarified that because middle-class students’ help-seeking propensities and strategies aligned more closely with teachers’ expectations, they became a form of cultural capital that generated advantages in this setting. I also emphasized that even when working-class students did seek help, and even when they used “middle-class” strategies, they did so less frequently and with less fluency and ease than did their middle-class peers. Finally, citing work by Kohn, Lamont, and Lareau, I noted that working-class students’ propensities and strategies (e.g., patience, self-reliance, and obedience) may have facilitated interactions in other settings (most notably at home with their families).

Clarifying Alternative Explanations

A number of reviewers requested more thorough consideration of alternative explanations of class differences in students’ help-seeking. To address these concerns, I first added two new tables (Appendix B1 and B2) using the count data to show that children’s help-seeking did not vary substantially by gender or academic achievement. Similarly, to strengthen my argument that working-class students participated actively in other classroom interactions, I created another new table (Appendix C) that uses

count data to describe the limited class differences that I observed in other types of voluntary student-teacher interactions.

In light of Reviewer 4's concerns, I also included a more nuanced assessment of the relationship between the research setting and the findings that emerged. In doing so, I avoided generalizing directly from these results about how help-seeking might play out in other school settings. Instead, I discussed how, contrary to Rist's conclusions, my research does not suggest that class differences in children's classroom behavior reflected differences in the treatment that they received from teachers or peers.

Clarifying the Methods

Reviewer 4 also raised concerns about the description of the data collection and analysis, suggesting that more detail in this section would help to counter lingering questions about the quality and objectivity of the data. To address this issue, I first added more discussion of my observational techniques, describing the jottings that I made during my observations, the process of expanding these into detailed fieldnotes, and the themes that I used in coding the data. I also created a new table (Appendix A) noting the number of observation sessions that I completed in each classroom.

Reviewer 4 also rightfully noted a lack of clarity regarding the source of the count data in Table 1, questioning whether the data was collected in the same classrooms and during the same time period as the rest of the project. To alleviate confusion, I rewrote the methods section, explaining that while the fieldnotes were collected throughout the project, the count data was collected during the last six months of these observations (in the same classrooms and with the same students), while the students were in fifth grade.

Clarifying the Meaning and Importance of Help-Seeking

There were also questions about the significance of help-seeking in elementary school classrooms. Specifically, Reviewer 4 asked: "How many total student-teacher interactions did the author observe? What percentage of these were help-seeking behaviors?" I discussed these questions with a number of colleagues and advisors. While I recognized the point that could be made by answering such questions, I also did not want to go beyond the evidence. Thus, to address this issue, I began by explaining that, given the turbulent, busy, and buzzing nature of contemporary elementary school classrooms, it was impossible to keep track of every interaction that I observed. Reviewing my count data and my fieldnotes from 345 hours of observation, I then added a rough estimate of the frequency of students' help-seeking as a portion of all student-initiated, teacher-student interactions.

More broadly, I also clarified the significance of help-seeking in the classroom by discussing the ramifications of these behaviors. In both the literature review (in a new section on "The Importance of Help-Seeking"), and the discussion, I reviewed Stanton-Salazar's work on the importance of help-seeking as a mechanism for accessing the support of teachers and other powerful "institutional agents." Per Reviewer 4's suggestion, I also removed the discussion of the consequences of help-seeking for classroom achievement, focusing instead on the consequences for children's relationships with institutional agents, and these agents' perceptions and treatment of children.

Clarifying the Contexts of Children's Help-Seeking

In light of Reviewer 4's concerns, I included more discussion of the contexts in which students asked for help. In the analysis, I added detailed descriptions of the situations in which help-seeking was most common, and noted how the contexts of students' help-seeking varied along social class lines.

Reviewer 4 also requested more analysis of the relationship between help-seeking and misbehavior, and specifically asked me to note how often teachers were interrupted by students. Because I did not keep explicit counts of interruptions, I could only note that my fieldnotes suggested that middle-class children interrupted teachers more often than their working-class peers. That said, I did take Reviewer 4's suggestion to discuss more thoroughly the implications of class differences in interruptions. Drawing on Stevenson's work on classroom rules, I argued that because interruptions were not technically "against the rules," middle-class students were not actually more likely to "misbehave" in making requests. In the analysis and discussion, I also emphasized that the lack of explicit rules regarding help-seeking put the burden on students to deal with this ambiguity and choose when and how to seek help. Finally, in the discussion, I noted that while proactive help-seeking did not technically break the rules, working-class students were more concerned about making teachers "upset" with their requests. I then linked these findings with Lareau's work on working-class individuals' reluctance to challenge authority.

Clarifying the Role of Children's Agency

Reviewers 4 and 5 called for greater consideration of children's agency in classroom interactions. Specifically, Reviewer 4 requested a discussion of the "mental processes" that children go through when seeking help. To address this point, I added a brief description of the results of interviews that I conducted with Maplewood students, discussing how these students consciously chose when and how to seek help. Because space constraints prohibited a complete analysis of the findings from these interviews, I also pointed readers to another manuscript in which I more fully articulate both the methods used in conducting these interviews and the conclusions that I draw from them.

In line with Reviewer 5's suggestion, I also strengthened the discussion of children's agency in the literature review by incorporating Carter's work on students' navigation of school expectations. In doing so, I also pointed out that my primary goal in this paper is to consider students' classroom behaviors and the profits that they derive from them. I noted that because teachers respond to behaviors, it is how students act in the classroom, and not the dispositions that guide these behaviors, that matter most for children's opportunities. Finally, to further strengthen this point, I edited the analysis to focus on the micro-interactional strategies that children activated in the classroom, the fluency and ease that they exhibited in doing so, and the profits they gained from them.

Other Issues

In the revised draft, I also made a number of changes that addressed more minor concerns raised in the reviews. I did so by:

- Adding more discussion of work by Willis and McRobbie and their argument that children create the conditions of their own reproduction. Clarifying that while these authors focused on active resistance to school authorities, I instead consider how students' actions in the classroom can bolster their educational opportunities.
- Adding a fuller description of Rist's work in the literature review so as to provide a better foundation for the comparisons that I developed in the "Alternative Explanations" section. Noting that Rist focused on very low-income, African-American students, and not on students from what Rubin calls "settled-living" working-class families.

- Explaining more carefully the differences in middle-class and working-class students' family backgrounds.
- Discussing these findings in relation to Lewis's work on status construction theory and teachers' assumptions about white students' class backgrounds.
- Removing references "cultural resources" and instead using and defining the term "cultural capital" to conceptualize class differences in children's behaviors and the profits they generate.
- Recognizing that while there were potential drawbacks to middle-class students' help-seeking strategies, the benefits usually outweighed the risks.
- Considering the ways in which schools and teachers might help to prevent class differences in students' help-seeking or alleviate their consequences.
- Editing carefully for redundancy, using each paragraph and example to push the argument forward. Tightening the prose to offset additional discussion in other areas. Defining all terms.
- Clarifying statements that the reviewers found confusing.

As noted above, the revised manuscript includes four new tables. Because these tables do not speak directly to the central focus of the manuscript—class differences in students' help-seeking—I feel that they are best suited for inclusion in an online supplement (either on the ASR website or on my own website). That said, if the editors and reviewers would prefer, I would also be happy to incorporate these new tables into the text of the manuscript.

Overall, I am hopeful that this substantially revised manuscript will satisfy all of the concerns that the reviewers raised about the original manuscript. I am 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 both the quality of the manuscript and its contribution to the literature.

Thank you very much for considering my study for publication in ASR.